

1996

Forging a New Indian Religion in Seventeenth-Century Huronia

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<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-afgy-h954>

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**FORGING A NEW INDIAN RELIGION
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY HURONIA**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia**

In Partial Fulfillment

**Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

by

David J. Silverman

1996

APPROVAL SHEET


This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

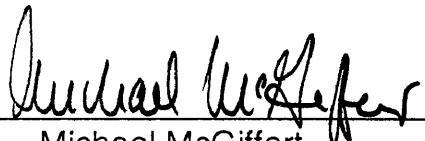


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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While I have deeply profited from the professional and intellectual experience of writing this thesis, the support that I have received from others has brought me the greatest satisfaction.

The staffs of Gelman Library of the George Washington University, the Alexander Library of Rutgers University, the William Paterson College Library, and especially the Swem Library of the College of William and Mary have been most helpful in the attempt to gather the materials upon which this work is based. My thanks for their unvarying courtesy.

While I was an undergraduate at Rutgers University, Professors John Chambers, Paul Clemens, Philip Greven, Calvin Martin, and Thomas Slaughter offered professional examples to which I continue to aspire and guidance which I strive to follow. Professor Martin's influence has been particularly noteworthy. His stimulating lectures on the consequences of cultural contact as well as his written challenges to traditional (and even not-so-traditional) historical interpretations spurred my work. Furthermore, even while my approach to the discipline grew farther from his own, he continued to offer gracious advice.

In graduate school at the College of William & Mary, a number of faculty members served as sounding boards for my developing ideas. Jon Sensbach was ever patient even as I disrupted his class with analogies from a subject seemingly unrelated to the matters at hand. Michael McGiffert's office was a place in which to find valued advice and Kathleen Bragdon steered me through anthropological literature that radically changed this work.

As director of this thesis, and as my graduate advisor, James Axtell taught me that I did not know nearly as much as I had previously thought. The painstaking attention that he paid to my writing, his demands for a full consideration of evidence, and his subsequent comments concerning my interpretations often felt harsh; upon reflection, I have recognized the full worth of his criticism. He demanded that I do the job properly and I now realize just how much work and thought that entails.

James Dergay, Cameron Taylor, Karla Leybold-Taylor, and Brian Horvitz have greatly improved this work. All of them have endured endless complaining, offered valued criticism as well as encouragement, and provided exceptionally strong companionship. I am grateful for such steadfast and thought-provoking friends.

Richard and Julia Silverman have sustained their usual roles as the ideal parents. They financed both my undergraduate and graduate education, but far more important, they served as patient reserves of support, advice, and love, always gauging what was best for me by my own dreams.

My wife, Linda Silverman, deserves a great deal of credit for this thesis. She dragged me into my first class on American Indian history and since then has lent her keen literary eye to my work. She has read each chapter innumerable times and instigated improvements throughout. While all errors remain my own, this work is very much a product of our collaboration.

Most of all, Linda has provided me with the greatest friendship and love anyone could ask. Whether enduring a move from her New Jersey home to an unfamiliar Virginia, living with a person whose thoughts are somewhere in the seventeenth century, or spending countless hours quiet or alone as I worked,

she has sacrificed much for me. Because of her constant selflessness and affection, I dedicate this thesis to her.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine why thousands of Huron Indians converted to Catholicism during the seventeenth century.

The study begins with an analysis of "traditional" Huron cosmology and religion in the early seventeenth century and suggests that this system of belief and ritual derived from an attempt to rationalize the Hurons' hunter-gatherer/agriculturalist economy.

The shift to Catholicism is placed within the context of this system as well as the economic, demographic, military, and intellectual challenges of the period following direct contact with Europeans.

It is argued that the decision to convert to Catholicism was driven primarily by intellectual needs.

FORGING A NEW INDIAN RELIGION
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PROLOGUE:

Regarding the Invisible

"The name of the Big Snake was Oyale'rowek. The folks living here long ago often heard the whistling of a monster, under the falls right near the village. They supposed that a Big Snake was dwelling in a long cave extending from the hill top down to the river bed.

The Jesuit missionaries received a warning from the hunters. The monster, they thought, was a dangerous one, and might at any moment capture animals and even children on the Indian reserve. The missionaries for this reason decided to have recourse to exorcism. Quite a number of other monstrous serpents also infested the neighbourhood. So it seemed as if exorcism were a good means of getting rid of them all.

The Jesuit preacher, one Sunday, informed his parishioners from the pulpit that one of the next mornings, after mass, he would exorcise the Big Snake. The men were requested to attend the ceremony with their guns loaded and other weapons. The women and the children, for their part, were ordered to shut themselves up in their houses.

On the appointed day, after mass, the missionary and the Huron hunters went to the river's edge. There the missionary recited long prayers, exorcised the monster, and summoned him and all the other serpents to quit the river at once. After some hesitation the Big Snake, whistling in a frightful manner, showed his head outside the cave. Everyone was terrified. But the priest continued his prayers and forced him to come out. The monster slowly crawled upon the high river bank towards the village. Lined up along the main Lorette street, all the men were waiting for the monster with loaded guns, while the women, children, and the domestic animals were shut up in the houses. Then, whistling in a terrific manner, it crawled past them towards Lake Tantaré (St. Joseph). Following the Big Snake with his ornaments, and a cross in his hand, the missionary would sprinkle holy water on it. Soon it disappeared in the woods. And it is said still to be in Lake St. Joseph, for many people have seen it there at various times.

The people from that time lived in peace here and were no longer in dread of the Big Snake. A number of smaller snakes also dwelling near the falls were,

on the same occasion, changed into stone. These stone snakes were for a long time kept by the people here, and I myself have seen some in the garrets when I was young. Now they have all been lost, it seems. The shape of snakes may still be seen encrusted in rocks along the river bank.

Even to the present day, some traces of the Big Snake are still to be seen along the Lorette main street. A deep trail, in fact, being left after its passage, the chiefs forbade the people to fill it, so that it might remain as a means of remembering the Big Snake and its expulsion from the reserve."¹

In 1911, anthropologist Marius Barbeau traveled to Lorette, Québec, to document stories that circulated through the town's Huron community. There he heard a variety of narratives that linked a longstanding oral tradition about the Trickster, shape-shifting animals, and other mythological characters with the historic events of the previous three hundred years. In particular, the Reverend Prosper Vincent and Maurice Bastien's story about 'the Big Snake' revealed the manner in which the Hurons had internalized their Christian heritage.² Despite the fact that only one hundred years had passed since the Jesuits last resided in Lorette, the story-tellers placed their activities in the same mythological era that saw the first Hurons emerge from under the ground. In 1911, the Hurons were a Christian people: to syncretize the missionaries' legacy with more ancient tales was a comfortable means for this oral culture to explain contemporary life.³

Yet the historic relationship between the Society of Jesus and the Hurons is not so easily resolved for modern academics. The *Jesuit Relations* are the most abundant source materials pertaining to the Huron mission, and because the Blackrobes produced these documents with the hope of winning French support for the Society's activities, the scholarly debate has largely centered on

¹ Marius Barbeau, ed. and trans., "The Big Snake," in *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, Canada Department of Mines Memoir no. 80, Anthropological Series no. 11 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915), 257-59.

² *Ibid.*, 257.

³ See James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 14-15, for a summary of the shared characteristics of oral cultures.

the *Relations'* legitimacy.⁴ However, the participants in this dialogue have largely focused on anthropological social theory rather than on the Jesuit writings themselves. The issue of Huron conversion is therefore intrinsically linked in ethnohistorical circles to the enduring debate over what determines human behavior.⁵

Author of a two-volume study of the Hurons titled *The Children of Aataentsic*, Bruce G. Trigger has contributed most actively to this discussion. Trigger questions the Jesuits' claims to successful conversions because he believes that the Hurons' de-centralized traditional spirituality did not allow them to comprehend the full significance of the Jesuits' rigidly hierarchical faith.⁶ While he concedes that some Indians *appeared* to have practiced Christianity with sincerity, he submits that the "so called converts" were mostly enterprising individuals adjusting their outward appearance in order to maximize profit from the fur trade.⁷ In the seventeenth century, the French offered Christian Indians favorable exchange rates as well as otherwise prohibited firearms; the Hurons acknowledged their dependence on European imports; it was therefore prudent for the Indians to alter their religious life to take advantage of the marketplace. While pointing to evidence that leaves room for dissenting conclusions, Trigger defends his argument with the social theory that "human behavior is shaped mainly by calculations of self-interest that are uniform from one culture to

⁴ The term 'Blackrobe' was frequently applied to the Jesuits because of their dress by the Indians of colonial North America. It will be used throughout this thesis to refer to the missionaries of the Society of Jesus.

⁵ Ethnohistory is "the use of historical and ethnological methods and materials to gain knowledge of the nature and causes of change in a culture defined by ethnological concepts and categories." See James Axtell, "Ethnohistory: A Historian's Viewpoint," in *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 5.

⁶ Bruce G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's 'Heroic Age' Reconsidered* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 292-94.

⁷ Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987 edition), 567.

another."⁸ The Hurons, it seems, simply allowed their ideological concerns to function in the service of less elastic needs; conversion was the offspring of commercial politics.⁹

Why is it, asks James Axtell, that "for traditional historians looking over the missionaries shoulders, the offer--or, as they would see it, the imposition--of Christianity by the 'invaders' is seen only as religious insult added to cultural injury[?] I suggest that we see it through Indian eyes as a powerful and effective new answer--however distasteful, grieving, or upsetting--to the urgent and mortal problems that faced them."¹⁰ Axtell's effort to understand conversion from a "native perspective" produced *The Invasion Within*, in which he generally supported the Jesuits' claims to successful conversions among the Indians of New France, the Hurons included. He does not deny that non-religious forces such as economics and politics played a significant role in winning converts to the imported religion, but nevertheless doubts that the "linguistically gifted, extremely motivated, indefatigable, and pedagogically astute" missionaries could be so easily fooled as to baptize non-believing, upwardly-mobile capitalists.¹¹ Instead, he portrays the Jesuits as increasingly skilled and tolerant conductors of a faith that appealed to the intellectual as well as the material needs of their intended subjects.

By rejecting the notion that the Hurons accepted Roman Catholicism in its own right and substituting the encompassing explanation of cultural materialism, Trigger and his followers reduce religion, Axtell submits, "to a mere

⁸ Bruce Trigger, "Early Native North American Responses to European Contact: Romantic versus Rationalist Interpretations," *Journal of American History* 77 (March 1991): 1195.

⁹ In support of Trigger's interpretation, see Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend or Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), and Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot: The Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹⁰ James Axtell, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions," in *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 52.

¹¹ James Axtell, "Were Indian Conversions Bona Fide?" in *After Columbus*, 117-19.

epiphenomenon of socio-economic realities."¹² He adds to this criticism by refuting Trigger's claim that Northeastern Woodland Indians were strangers to hierarchy or that they were incapable of learning French concepts of ritual and moral obedience. Rather, Axtell suggests that "the difference between European and Indian ideas of hierarchy was one of degree, not of kind or of existence vs. nonexistence."¹³ By examining the historical record as well as the success of Christianity throughout the rest of the world, he concludes that the Jesuits provided their subjects with "a better--comparatively better--answer to the urgent social and religious questions that Indians were facing at the particular juncture in their cultural history."¹⁴ It is time, he holds, to stop debunking the Blackrobes.

This thesis considers the arguments of Trigger and Axtell by examining how the Hurons in the early-to-mid-seventeenth century came to understand Christianity. It contends that the Hurons' traditional cosmology and religion during the period of initial contact with Europeans were the filter through which new ideas were processed. However, it also accepts that Huron ideology was a changing and practical conglomeration of beliefs and rituals that did not fully articulate themselves as a coherent body until forced into debate by the French missionaries. The reader is therefore cautioned that the presentation of "traditional" Huron religion and cosmology describes, generally, a mutually intelligible universe at a distinct moment in time.

In *Stone Age Economics*, Marshall Sahlins argues persuasively that "culture is precisely the organization of the current situation in terms of the

¹² Ibid., 118.

¹³ Ibid., 119.

¹⁴ Axtell, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions," 49.

past."¹⁵ However, without supporting data, this theory is useless to the historian who examines a specific event. This study subsequently heeds James Axtell's caution that scholars "are in no position to know if converts *unconsciously* interpreted the new religion (solely, largely?) in traditional terms, or for how long. Second, if they *consciously* did so, we must have some kind of documentary proof."¹⁶ In order to demonstrate how the Hurons of the seventeenth century discerned the religious message of the Society of Jesus, this thesis provides that evidence in the form of the *Jesuit Relations*, native oral traditions, and the specialized studies of various historians and anthropologists. When one pieces together the invisible, immeasurable, and abstract Huron thoughtworld in the era of European contact, a new Indian religion emerges.

¹⁵ Marshal Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 154. See also Sahlins, "On the Sociology of the Primitive Exchange," in *Stone Age Economics* (The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 186-199.

¹⁶ Axtell, "Were Indian Conversions Bona Fide," 117.

CHAPTER I

A Braided Reality

The Society of Jesus viewed New France as a spiritual battlefield in the early seventeenth century. Its members believed that the Devil had reigned in the Americas for an untold period, sending countless Indian souls to an eternal fiery torment. Yet the Jesuits aimed to challenge that supremacy by fulfilling God's divine will that "The Gospel of the kingdom, shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come."¹ With this command, the Society of Jesus accepted the responsibility to spread the 'true faith' of Roman Catholicism to the 'godless savages' of New France. But in order to achieve that goal among the Huron Indians, the missionaries had to displace an encompassing world view and religion that expressed the Huron identity and provided the conceptual framework through which the Hurons encountered Christianity.²

THE HURONS EXPERIENCED a deeply interactive relationship with their world in the early seventeenth century. They imagined that Huronia--the Huron country--lay upon a turtle's back where a web of interdependence linked humans and animal beings, rock beings, lake beings and other spirits of 'the place.'³

¹ Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 73 volumes (Cleveland, 1896-1901), 1:59 (hereafter cited as JR).

² This thesis uses A.F.C. Wallace's definition of cosmology and religion. Wallace describes cosmology as "a theory of the universe. It includes *pantheon*, *myth*, and various *beliefs* about such matters as planes of existence (for example heaven, hell, death, sleep, and dreams) and the relations of causes and effects." Religion--"a set of rituals, rationalized by myth, which mobilizes supernatural power for the purpose of achieving or preventing transformations of state in man or nature"--functions within these established relationships. See A.F.C. Wallace, *Religion, An Anthropological View* (New York: Random House, 1966), 17, 71.

³ Bruce Trigger writes: "The Huron country was located at the southeastern corner of Georgian Bay, on a narrow strip of land sandwiched between Matchedash and Nottawasga Bays on the west and Lake Simcoe

These relationships were essential to the construction of the individual and collective Huron identity because the nation looked to the non-human powers to sustain them in an otherwise dangerous world. Yet the Hurons did not develop a similar affinity with all the spirits in their cosmological realm. The sky gods--the humanlike beings who created the Hurons and taught them to farm--operated beyond the boundaries of spirit-being familiarity. Such a contrast reflected the duality of the Hurons' cosmological orientation because this was a society influenced by the non-human forces of both hunter-gatherers and farmers.

The Hurons expressed their worldview through myths and ceremonies that defined the nation's seventeenth-century experiences as those of the ancestors. The song, the dance, the hunt, the harvest, and the spiritual relationships were part of a cyclical pattern that stretched from the characters of myth to the modern humans and even to the deceased. It was clear to the Hurons that they participated in a timeless way of life. This was their reality.

Myths were the cornerstones of Huron cosmology. They were fascinating tales that described the beginning of time when animal and plant beings commonly transmuted from form to form and interacted with humans at the most basic level. During this magical period, boys turned into stars, girls made love to beavers disguised as humans, bears raised little children, and the slapstick

on the east. It was further delineated on its southern boundary by the drainage basin of the Nottawasga River, which at that time was a vast swamp hindering communication with the south. The Huron villages were concentrated in an area that measured no more than 35 miles east to west and 20 miles north to south." Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 27-30. For a discussion of other geographical aspects of Huronia, see Conrad Heidenreich, *Huronia: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians, 1600-1650* (Ontario: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971).

Trickster spread his mischief everywhere.⁴ Yet in the course of this madcap activity there were important lessons to internalize because these stories functioned not only as entertainment, but as repositories of ancient knowledge. When the Hurons spoke their tales, they conjured up a powerful intermingling of the present and a period Mircea Eliade labeled “the strong time.” Eliade wrote:

The mythical time of origins is a “strong” time because it was transfigured by the active, creative presence of the Supernatural Beings. By reciting the myths one reconstitutes that fabulous time and hence in some sort becomes ‘contemporary’ with the events described, one is in the presence of the Gods or Heroes . . . One is no longer living in chronological time, but in the primordial Time, the Time when the event *first took place*. This is why we can use the term the “strong time” of myth; it is the prodigious, “sacred” time when something *new, strong, and significant* was manifested.⁵

The invocation of this era through communication of the sacred myths assured their elder speakers that the Hurons' most valuable knowledge was transferred to succeeding generations, that the Huron life cycle was regenerated. Certainly, the young listeners would benefit from the same powerful instruction that sustained the ancestors.⁶

One of the vital functions of the stories was to delineate the shared vivacity of the world. Huron narratives portrayed the ancestors as active and cooperative participants on a transmutable stage that survived in a weakened form in seventeenth-century Huronia. The lessons of the mythic plots were therefore held as immediate to the listener's experience. As adventurous tales incorporated the animals, plants, and natural formations of the modern

⁴ Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, 12; Barbeau, ed. and trans., *Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives: In Translations and Native Texts*, National Museum of Canada Bulletin, no. 165, Anthropological Series, no. 47 (Ottawa: Queens Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1960), 4-54. This study cites tales recorded by Barbeau when they lend support to historically relevant sources and, in a number of cases, survive as relatively unchanged compared to seventeenth-century accounts.

⁵ Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, World Perspectives, vol. 31, ed. Ruth Anshen, trans. William R. Trask (New York & Evanston: Harper & Row, 1963), 18-19, 30, 34.

⁶ JR, 30:61-63; Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 5-6, 14, 124, 136; Calvin Martin, *In the Spirit of the Earth: Rethinking History and Time* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 15.

landscape, the Hurons were exposed to the power-laden relationships that these entities shared with the ancient humans. Such wisdom enabled its possessors to explain the origins of Huronia and its inhabitants, as well as to contemplate the degree of potency that the world retained from the past.⁷ Yet many aspects of the continuity between the strong time and the present were clear. By carrying the names of the most prominent spirit beings, the Huron clans demonstrated that the mythic order was a symbolic outline for the Huron confederacy and a means of understanding the experienced forces of the world.⁸

Courtesy was vital to the maintenance of amicable interaction with these powers. Myths taught their listeners to treat the spirit-beings with respect and to take their words seriously, for the spirit-beings were willing to share their power with individuals who conducted themselves properly. Politeness inclined the animal spirits to give their 'physical-selves' to humans in the chase or to produce a charm that brought good luck to its holder. "You are taken care of" was the message to those who demonstrated reciprocity with the powers, behavior that was manifested in a number of forms.⁹

⁷ Mircea Eliade demonstrated that "the story narrated by the myth constitutes a 'knowledge' which is esoteric, not only because it is secret and is handed on during the course of an initiation but also because the 'knowledge' is accompanied by a magicoreligious power. For knowing the origin of an object, an animal, a plant, and so on is equivalent to acquiring a magic power over them by which they can be controlled, multiplied, or reproduced at will." Eliade also noted that among most peoples of non-urban-based religions, a distinction was made between Trickster stories, generally considered 'false,' and the creation or culture-hero tales, generally held as 'true.' Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 14.

⁸ Barbeau, "The Big Turtle," "Phratries Established," "The Deer and the Owl," and "The Rabbit and the Wolf," in *Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives*, 9, 11, 29-32. For an identification and explanation of the Huron clan names and their sources see, John Steckley, "The Clans and Phratries of the Huron," *Ontario Archaeology* 37 (1982): 31; Barbeau, "Supernatural Beings of the Huron and Wyandot," *American Anthropologist* 16 (1914): 295.

⁹ Martin, *In the Spirit of the Earth*, 88.

The stories explained that humans should be careful with their words because language was potent.¹⁰ Spoken magic formed Huronia during the strong time, while in the seventeenth century it retained its manipulative powers of creation *and* of destruction. Consequently, the Hurons chose names for one another after a meticulous consultation of the mythic record, hoping that the right match would imbue the name-holders with ancient abilities. Yet the acquisition of such power carried the corresponding responsibility to use it carefully so as not to abuse the gift. It is not surprising, then, that the Hurons were hesitant to reveal the significance of their names to European visitors.¹¹ Mythic associations were not designed to be flaunted but rather to remind the people that the present was merely a reflection of past events. Jesuit Paul Le Jeune explained that it was common for Hurons to say, "Behold . . . the fallen star,' when they see some one who is fat and corpulent; for they hold that once upon a time a star fell from Heaven in the form of a fat Goose."¹² All things hearkened back to the strong time.

Words demonstrated a particular potency within the context of the feast, for in this arena, they interacted with other sources of intense and enduring force. Methodical dance steps matched the rhythm of the ancient drum and drove carefully worded songs with trembling melodies. Among this activity drifted the scents of the ritual foods--nutritional substances provided by the place beings and prepared in time-honored ways. After observing a war feast, Father Le Jeune commented on the primordial strength that the mystical carnival lent its participants:

¹⁰ Barbeau, "Tatenri'a," in *Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives*, 27; Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, 13-14.

¹¹ Gabriel Sagard, *Histoire du Canada et voyages que les Frères mineurs recollects y ont faits pour la conversion des infidèles depuis l'an 1616 . . . avec un dictionnaire de la langue huronne* (Paris, 1636), trans. H.H. Langton, University of Toronto Library (MS in the possession of James Axtell), 264.

¹² JR, 10:123.

During these songs and dances, some take occasion to knock down, as if in sport, their enemies. Their most usual cries are *heii*, *heii*, or *hééééé*, or else *wiiiii*. They ascribe the origin of all these mysteries to a certain Giant of more than human size, whom one of their tribe wounded in the forehead when they dwelt on the shore of the sea, for not having given the complimentary answer, *Kwai*, which is the usual response to a salute. The monster cast among them the apple of discord, in punishment for his wound; and after having recommended to them war feasts, *Ononharoia*, and this refrain, *wiiiii*, he buried himself in the earth and disappeared.¹³

The Huron creativity that dominated the feast was part of a vast network of revelation defined by the originals. It enabled humans to communicate with the power beings and to remember that "the earth continues to be an exceedingly powerful, prickly place."¹⁴

Not all the mythic spirits engaged in such a concert with the ancestors, as the story of Aataentsic and Iouskeha illustrates.¹⁵ The Jesuits gathered that Aataentsic was the mother of the Huron nation because she was human in form and her fall from the sky led to the creation of the earth.¹⁶ The Hurons gave various reasons for this accident, but most agreed that when the animals below saw her plummeting, they held a council and decided to pile up soil on the Turtle's back.¹⁷ It was upon this created earth that Aataentsic safely landed and humans eventually came to live. Soon after her fall, Aataentsic bore twins, Iouskeha and Tawiscaron, whose opposing dispositions bred a conflict that profoundly shaped the Huron world. Iouskeha slew his evil brother and

¹³ JR, 10:181-83.

¹⁴ Martin, *In the Spirit of the Earth*, 73. See also Barbeau, "How the Famine was Averted," in *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, 262.

¹⁵ Spellings vary in both of these names. Aataentsic can also be found as *Ataentsic*, *Eataentsic*, and *Ataensiq*. Iouskeha as *Tijuska'a*, *Jouskeha*, and *Yoscaha*.

¹⁶ In a topographical sense, the mythic heavens were Huronia-like in form. See JR, 10:127-31.

¹⁷ For the different versions of this creation story, see Elisabeth Tooker, *An Ethnography of the Huron Indians, 1615-1649* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 145-48.

Aataentsic subsequently committed herself to foil the plans that her triumphant son had for the world, including his intention to act as a benevolent force in the lives of human beings.¹⁸ Therefore, when Iouskeha created the Hurons, and gave them agriculture, abundant game, and fire, Aataentsic countered by sending death and sickness among them. Iouskeha formed placid lakes and rivers; Aataentsic created treacherous wakes and falls.¹⁹ Yet the Hurons were incapable of influencing the outcome of these critical matches, for the sky gods, unlike the spirit beings, were independent in their own affairs.

The differing qualities of the spirit-beings and the sky gods in Huron myth communicate the dual nature of the Indians' cosmology. Individual spirit-beings were associated with a particular creation in what Europeans called the "material world." The Beaver and Eagle might slip from shape to shape in mythical narrative, but they always returned to their identities as Beaver and Eagle. Such characters engaged in close interaction with their human neighbors. They ate together, made love, and acted as parents, uncles, and grandparents. They taught humans the lessons of courtesy and promised to respond favorably with the proper execution of their teachings. They had always existed 'below' the sky in the world that humans came to inhabit.

In contrast, the sky gods descended from 'above'. They were humanlike entities who, nevertheless, did not form reciprocal relationships with the mythic humans. Instead, Iouskeha and Aataentsic dictated the terms of the interaction by including the ancient Hurons in a binary game of good-against-evil. Despite

¹⁸ The blood that Tawiscaron shed during the battle with Iouskeha became flint, as was reflected in the Huron name for the stone. See JR, 10:131.

¹⁹ JR, 30:27. Huron legend held that animals were released from a sealed cave by Iouskeha so that humans would have game to hunt. With the exception of the wolf, Iouskeha slightly wounded all of the animals so that they would be easier to catch. See JR, 10:135-137.

their obvious power, both Aataentsic and Iouskeha owed important debts to the animal-spirits, particularly the Turtle, as did the humans who bore the sky gods' likeness. The Turtle served as the foundation for the earth upon which Aataentsic came to live and also passed on his knowledge of fire to an otherwise ignorant Iouskeha. Apparently, the animal spirits were concerned with the welfare of the sky gods as well as the original people in ancient days.

The Hurons' reality encompassed both the sky gods and the spirit-beings because these mythic powers oriented the nation to its universe. Father Jean de Brébeuf observed that "the old men relate certain fables, which they represent as true," despite their inability to determine when the events took place.²⁰ Such specifics were irrelevant. Myths had *always* existed, just like the characters that marked their plots, and therefore they did not require authentic dates to be viable. The logical order that the narratives outlined and to which Huronia conformed was all the evidence the Hurons required. Consequently, the descendants of the seventeenth-century Hurons ended their mythical tales about the spirit-beings with the saying "It is likely that they still live at the same place!"²¹

Even though the dizzying transmutation of the mythical era did not thrive in seventeenth-century Huronia, many of the ancient conditions continued to relate to Huron existence. The reciprocal exchange of courtesy that once took place between humans and the spirit-beings was still tangible within the context of

²⁰ JR, 10:127 and 8:121.

²¹ Barbeau, "The Old Bear and His Nephew," and "Tawidi'a and His Uncle," in *Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives*, 32-35, 40-44.

dreams and visions. Similarly, the contest between Iouskeha and Aataentsic persisted in its influence upon human affairs through the phenomena of harvest, sickness, and death. Belief in the authority of traditional-mythic logic was therefore less a product of faith, than of a scientific process by which the Hurons experienced their world and compared it to the model of venerated origins.²²

According to seventeenth-century Huron cosmology, no distinction existed between the corporeal and the spiritual. A "magnified personal double,"--or "boss-spirit"--"possessed of reason," controlled the activities of each animal species, while rocks, lakes, rivers, mountains, and even thunder demonstrated a similar intelligence.²³ All these spiritual entities were capable of conversing with humans at a variety of levels. In the 1620s, Gabriel Sagard encountered this phenomenon when he presented a Huron visitor with the gift of a cat. Noting the man's reaction to the animal's knowledge of its name, Sagard wrote:

After having humbly thanked me for so rare a gift, he [the Huron] begged us to tell the cat when it should be in his land it must not behave badly nor be running into the other lodges nor in the woods, but remain always in his abode to eat the mice, and that he would love it as his own son and not let it be in want of anything. I leave you to think and reflect on the candor and simplicity of this good man, who supposed that just the same understanding and the same power of reason belonged to the rest of the animals of the settlement . . . He had already put the same question to me regarding the ebb and flow of the sea, which he believed on that account to be alive, to understand and have volition.²⁴

²² For an extensive analysis of scientific thought in the context of "primitive societies," see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. N.I. Stone (New York: Doubleday Anchor Press, 1963).

²³ Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, 320; JR, 10:167. See also JR 10:159 and Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 410. Seventeenth-century Hurons believed that thunder was produced by a giant bird flapping its wings. Lightning flashed when the bird winked its eyes and the deadly thunderbolts were held to be arrows sent forth by the bird against its enemies. Consequently, in the midst of a drought in the 1630s, the Hurons petitioned the Jesuits to take down a large wooden cross by their quarters "so that the thunder and the clouds may not see it, and no longer fear it." "After the harvest," the Hurons added, "thou mayest set it up again (JR, 10:45)."

²⁴ Father Gabriel Sagard, *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*, ed. and trans. George M. Wrong (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), 270.

Yet Gabriel Sagard did not fathom the potential depth of communication between his Indian guest and the world around him. The Huron believed not only that the cat and the sea possessed reason, volition, and the ability to understand human language, but that they also used humans to express their desires and to see them fulfilled. This was true of all spirit-beings. To accomplish these goals, they could leave their physical forms and enter a shape-shifting realm that resembled the strong time. This was when the spirits demonstrated the breadth of their power.

Visions were the forums in which humans and the spirit-beings conversed most intensively. At adolescence, males undertook a vision quest designed to forge a personal relationship with an other-than-human power.²⁵ This ritual began when a young man went into the woods alone where he denied himself sleep and food for a number of days. Jesuit Paul Le Jeune noted the Huron belief that "fasting renders their vision wonderfully piercing and gives them eyes capable of seeing things absent and far removed."²⁶ Accordingly, a spirit-being came to the deprived youth in human form. It offered the adolescent its guardianship, eventually revealed its true identity, and taught the young man its song as a symbol of spiritual connection. The song was power. Its performance reminded the singer throughout his life that he was taken care of, that the spirit-being was a part of him, and that the strong time endured.

The dream was another arena imbued with mythical force. A spirit-being could enter a sleeper's thoughts to identify himself and to award the slumbering human with a gift, frequently an offering of the spirit's corporeal self or a

²⁵ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 48. See Zena Pearlstone Matthews, "Huron Pipes and Iroquoian Shamanism," *Man in the Northeast* 12 (1976): 27, for an illustration of how the Hurons documented such relationships through their art.

²⁶ JR, 10:207.

prediction of future events.²⁷ "A Moose will present itself to a man in his sleep," one Jesuit observed, "and will say to him, 'Come to me.' The Savage, upon awakening, goes in search of the Moose he has seen. Having found it, if he hurls or launches his javelin upon it, the beast falls stone dead."²⁸ In a similar encounter, "a sort of war God" contacted several members of a Huron war party to reveal the outcome of an impending battle.²⁹ Those who experienced frequent and truthful dreams were persons of power.

Yet the burdens of spiritual contact tempered its many advantages, for the dream offering required the Hurons to fulfill the smallest details of a spirit-being's wishes. To add to this responsibility, human "soul desires" revealed in the dream-state were to be executed with the same accuracy as the requests of the other-than-human powers. Should one fail to address these voices, literally or metaphorically, he or she risked bringing death and disease upon the community.³⁰ The degree to which dream fulfillment dominated Huron activity led one Jesuit to exclaim, "I might truly say that Dreams are indeed the God of these poor Infidels, because it is they who command in the Country--they alone are obeyed and honored by all."³¹ Dreams dictated feasts, dances, games of lacrosse, orgies known as *andacwander*, distribution of gifts, and, occasionally, violence against an individual.³² Yet Bruce Trigger argues that the dream also enabled the Hurons to "treat personal frustrations and illicit desires as forces that were neither part of their overt personality, nor subject to conscious control." He explains that "in a society where there were strong pressures for social conformity and personal restraint, this device provided a necessary outlet for

²⁷ JR, 54:141

²⁸ JR, 12:13.

²⁹ JR, 10:183.

³⁰ JR, 19:133; 39:19.

³¹ JR, 30:171. See also JR, 10:169-73.

³² Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 660.

personal feelings."³³ However, all members of the community were not capable of experiencing such a release. "There are some," observed Father Le Jeune, "who dream in vain."³⁴

The fulfillment of a spirit-being's desires was not the only way the Hurons demonstrated courtesy to the non-human powers. When hunters killed an animal in the chase, they carefully ate all of its meat and offered its boss-spirit gifts of tobacco. This behavior derived from the Huron belief that animal spirits willingly offered their fleshy-selves to provide for human needs, that the hunted dictated "the terms of abundance, location, and timing."³⁵ Sagard wrote:

[The Hurons] take care not to throw any fish-bone into the fire, and when I threw them in they scolded me well and took them out quickly, saying that I did wrong and that I should be responsible for their failure to catch any more, because there were spirits of a sort, or the spirits of the fish themselves whose bones were burnt, which would warn the other fish not to allow themselves to be caught, since their bones also would be burned. They have the same superstition in hunting deer, moose, and other animals, believing that if any of the fat drops into the fire, or any bones are thrown into it, they will be unable to get any more.³⁶

Courtesy also determined the way humans reacted to their success in the hunt. For instance, the hunter did not advertise his prosperity. Rather, when he

³³ Ibid., 84.

³⁴ JR, 10:171.

³⁵ Martin, *In the Spirit of the Earth*, 54. On the surface, the Huron practice of caging and fattening bear cubs for a few years until they were old enough for slaughter appears to contradict the human role in the reciprocal exchange. However, the sparse records of this practice do not sufficiently enlighten the reader to the possible religious aspects of this action. In a sense, the Hurons were taking on the role of mother if the cub's mother had been killed by their hunters. Additionally, the Indians ate the cub in the context of a religious feast. Finally, as reverence for the bear was common among peoples of northern Eurasia and North America, it is likely that the domestication of bear cubs held religious significance to add to its economic benefit. H.P. Biggar, ed., *The Works of Samuel Champlain*, 7 vols. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1929), 3:130; Sagard, *Long Journey*, 220; Barbeau, "The Bear and the Hunter's Son," and "The Old Bear and His Nephew," in *Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives*, 20, 32-35; A. Irving Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere" *American Anthropologist* 28 (1926): 1-125; Daniel K. Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience," *William and Mary Quarterly*, XL (October, 1983): 535.

³⁶ Sagard, *Long Journey*, 186-7.

returned to his cabin, he dropped his catch outside, entered without saying a word, and only after a considerable period of silence informed his wife that he caught "something."³⁷ This solemn process demanded particular restraint by the hunter because game was scarce in Huronia and animal flesh was a rare treat in the Huron diet. Consequently, the ritual communicated great respect for the spirit being. Yet should the hunter neglect to show his regard, he could expect that the spirit of the game or other powers would inform the rest of the animals to withhold themselves from being killed.³⁸ The observance was therefore essential.

Huron reciprocity extended further to the spirit-beings of inanimate objects, in particular, to those of prodigious size.³⁹ Among the most noted displays of reverence was a gift-giving ceremony paid to a massive stone lying beside the Ottawa River. Gabriel Sagard noted:

[The Hurons] showed me many mighty rocks on the way to Québec, in which they believed a spirit lived and ruled, and among others they showed me one, a hundred and fifty leagues from there which had something like a head and two upraised arms, and in the belly or middle of this mighty rock there was a deep cavern very difficult to approach. They tried to persuade me and make me believe absolutely, as they did, that this rock had been a mortal man like ourselves and that while lifting up his arms and hands he had been transformed into this stone, and in the course of time had become a mighty rock, to which they pay respect and offer tobacco when passing it in their canoes, not always, but when they are in doubt of a successful issue to their journey. And as they offer the tobacco, which they throw into the water against the rock itself, they say to it, 'Here take courage, and let us have a good journey.'⁴⁰

³⁷ JR, 11:211.

³⁸ Sagard, *Long Journey*, 187; Martin, *In the Spirit of the Earth*, 14.

³⁹ Sagard, *Long Journey*, 253.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 171. Apparently, some Hurons also believed that this stone housed a monstrous snake. See JR, 10:165-167; Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 660-61.

To the Hurons, this rock was a reminder of the strong time, the time of shape-shifting, and when they offered it tobacco the rock was expected to reciprocate by taking care of them on their travels. A similar relationship existed between the Hurons and their fishing nets. Legend spoke of a time when the fish refused to be caught because the fishing net's wife had died. To placate the net and the fish, the ancient Hurons established a ritual in which the fishing net was married to two virgins, six or seven years of age.⁴¹ The seventeenth-century Hurons maintained this ritual because the strong time continued to define human relations with the rest of the world.

Huron interaction with the sky gods did not demonstrate the same reciprocity as their concourse with the spirit-beings. Aataentsic and Iouskeha were humanlike in form, possessed human skills, and consequently did not need the Hurons to fulfill their desires. Le Jeune noted that "this God and Goddess live like themselves, but without famine; make feasts as they do, are lustful as they; in short, they imagine them exactly like themselves."⁴² But the sky gods clearly functioned in a realm that was other-than-human. Legend told of four men who traveled to the West where they visited Aataentsic's traditional bark cabin. However, violent conflict between rapidly shape-shifting beings quickly shattered this customary setting.⁴³ The lesson was clear; the familiar appearances of Aataentsic and Iouskeha should not be misunderstood to represent human limitations because these spirits wielded many powers that were alien to the human experience.

⁴¹ JR, 17:197-201; 10:167.

⁴² JR, 8:119.

⁴³ JR, 10:135. For similar tales see JR, 10:149-57.

In the seventeenth century, the sky gods conformed to their roles established during the time of origins. Every year, Iouskeha foresaw and communicated the outcome of the agricultural activities that supplied the bulk of the Huron diet. The Jesuits reported that in a time of plenty "he bears in one hand ears of Indian corn, and, in the other a great abundance of fish."⁴⁴ But when the harvest would be less fruitful he appeared to the Hurons "quite dejected, and thin as a skeleton, with a poor ear of corn in his hand."⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the old woman Aataentsic constantly attempted to negate the positive efforts of her son by disrupting Huron life with various catastrophes.⁴⁶ The fate of the nation was therefore joined to the works of the sky gods. Yet the familial terms of "uncle, nephew, and grandfather" that marked relations between Hurons and the animal spirits did not exist with Aataentsic and Iouskeha.⁴⁷ One Jesuit remarked that Iouskeha "recognized [the Hurons] as children, although they did not recognize him as father."⁴⁸ This was indicative of the essentially one-way relationship that flowed from the sky gods to the Hurons as opposed to the symbiotic nature of spirit-being/human relations. Despite the familiar appearance of Aataentsic and Iouskeha, the Hurons formed their closest supernatural relationships with those spirits who bore the likeness of animals

Yet missionaries had a difficult time pinpointing the physical form of the sky gods because these powers could transmute from their humanlike forms. Father Jean de Brébeuf reported that the sky gods' "Home is situated at the ends of the earth, namely towards our Ocean sea," but expressed bewilderment at the

⁴⁴ JR, 30:27.

⁴⁵ JR, 10:137-9.

⁴⁶ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 77.

⁴⁷ "The Beaver Teeth as a Charm," "The Bear and the Hunter's Son," "The Old Bear and His Nephew," and "The Origin of the Sun Shower," in Barbeau, *Huron-Wyandot Traditional Narratives*, 18, 20, 32-35..

⁴⁸ JR, 30:27.

corresponding belief "that Iouskeha is the Sun and Aataentsic the Moon."⁴⁹ It was these very forms, however, to which the Hurons most often directed their petitions to the sky gods. Brébeuf continued:

On the Eclipse of the Moon, of August twenty-seventh [1635], our Barbarians expected a great defeat of their men, because it appeared over their enemies' Country, which is on their Southeast; for if it appears in the East, it is on their account that the Moon is sick or has experienced some displeasure; they even invited us, perhaps in jest, to shoot at the Sky, to deliver it from danger, assuring us that it was their custom to discharge several arrows for this purpose. Indeed, they all cry out as loudly as they can on such occasions, and make imprecations against their enemies saying, 'May such and such a Nation perish.'⁵⁰

The source of this association between celestial bodies and the sky gods was probably the commanding visual presence of the sun and moon, as well as the connection of those entities with farming.⁵¹ However, the Blackrobes frequently misrepresented this relationship in their reports on Huron religious practice.⁵² When a person drowned or perished from the cold, it was necessary for the Hurons to burn the corpse's flesh in order to appease an irritated Aataentsic.⁵³ Such action might win her favor and pre-empt other such accidents. Yet the Jesuits suggested that it was the "Sky" to whom the Hurons presented their human offering. Similarly, the Blackrobes recounted a famine remedy that asked

⁴⁹ JR, 10:133.

⁵⁰ JR, 10:133

⁵¹ Anthropologist Lynn Ceci wrote of an annual agricultural schedule among Northeastern Indians that was possible because "the date and time of particular celestial positions often correlate with important seasonal changes and activities." This scientific use of such bodies, she argued, is communicated by Indian myth and ceremony. See "Watchers of the Pleiades: Ethnoastronomy Among Native Cultivators In Northeastern North America" *Ethnohistory* 25 (Fall 1978): 301-17. See also "Origin of the Pleiades," and "Origin of the Seven Stars," in Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, 56-59.

⁵² Barbeau, "Supernatural Beings of the Huron and Wyandot," 301.

⁵³ JR, 10:163-65.

each Huron to "go every day to his field, throw some tobacco on the fire, and burn it in the honour of the Demon whom he consulted, calling aloud this form of prayer, 'Listen O Sky! Taste my tobacco; have pity on us.'"⁵⁴ Despite their faulty characterization of Aataentsic in this episode, the missionaries did capture one vital aspect of the relationship between the sky gods and the Hurons.

Unlike the spirit-beings, Aataentsic and Iouskeha were not of the earth. They were from the sky but were not the sky itself. Furthermore, they were independent of any animal, plant, rock, or body of water because they possessed an anthropoid form. Given this appearance, it is not ironic that a sky god functioned as the mythical impetus for Huron agriculture. The power relationship between humans and spirit beings required the farmers to construct a justification for denying the volition of the plants they would engineer. By shifting the terms of abundance, location, and timing from the harvested to a sky god whom the farmers resembled, the Hurons could embark on an agricultural effort "so that nothing might fail for the livelihood of men."⁵⁵ There was no need to fear that the plants would stop giving themselves when a humanlike skygod controlled the endeavor.

It is probable that somewhere in the course of shifting from a hunting-gathering to an agriculture-based economy at the turn of the millennium, the Hurons transferred the gift of vegetable bounty to Iouskeha and its failure to

⁵⁴ JR, 13:55. See also JR 10:159-165; 39:15.

⁵⁵ JR, 30:27.

Aataentsic.⁵⁶ Every other corporeal being of Huron reference had an accompanying boss-spirit that exercised power in its relationships with humans. Only plants lacked this quality. Transferring flora volition to humanlike gods enabled the Hurons to comfortably explain the mass agricultural effort. Yet the transfusion of the plants' power simultaneously robbed human control. The distribution of influence between the Hurons and the sky gods was disproportionately skewed in the latter's favor, for their wills controlled the prosperity of horticulture and the subsequent outcome of the Huron food quest. By planting seeds and harvesting the resulting fruit, the Hurons exercised authority over the life of corns, beans, and squash, but the sky gods circumscribed the abundance of this effort and therefore dictated the terms of life and death for humans. Consequently, the transfer of the plants' volition was a subconscious reflection of hegemony in this changed society. Iouskeha and Aataentsic, controlling the terms of life and death for humans, were metaphors for the very people who engineered masses of corn, beans, and squash into

⁵⁶ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 104. Mircea Eliade writes that "Many primitive tribes, especially those arrested at the hunting and gathering stage, acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being; but he plays almost no part in religious life. In addition little is known him, his myths are few and, in general quite simple. This Supreme Being is believed to have created the World and man, but he soon abandoned his creations and withdrew into the Sky. . . In general, for all these primitive cultures that have known a Supreme Being but have more or less forgotten him, the "essential" consists in these characteristic elements: (1) God created the World and man, then withdrew to the Sky; (2) His withdrawal was sometimes accompanied by a break in communications between Sky and Earth, or in a great increase in distance between them; in some myths, the original nearness of the Sky and the presence of God on Earth constitute parricidal syndrome (to which must be added man's original immortality, his friendly relations with the animals, and the absence of any need to work); the place of this more or less forgotten *deus otiosus* was taken by various divinities, all of whom are closer to man and help him or persecute him in a more direct or constant way." Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 93.

existence. When the Hurons asked the Sky, Aataentsic, for pity, that action placed them in a location similar to that of the crops they raised; they were no longer the masters of their own future.

The Hurons of the early seventeenth century possessed a dual biological and anthropological orientation that dictated the terms of human/non-human interaction. This mindset permitted animal spirits to visit people in dreams and visions, rock spirits to offer them protection in travel, and the will of the sky gods to govern them in farming and death. Of these powers, the spirit-beings were firmly grounded in the earth as the keepers of game, mountains, lakes, rivers, and fish. Furthermore, they commanded services from the Hurons within the context of the reciprocal exchange. Such was the cosmological world of the hunter-gatherer. In contrast, the sky gods implemented an agenda that placed both humans and plants in a position of unequal dependency. The permission--the justification--to engineer the behavior of corn, squash, and beans came from Iouskeha's mythic gift to humans. Seemingly an action that would benefit the human endeavor, the offer served to create a hierarchy of reliance headed by the sky gods. Not surprisingly, Huron relations with Iouskeha and Aataentsic lacked the familial connotations of those with the spirit-beings. In a world that crackled with the powers of the hunter-gatherer *and* of the farmer, all things could not be equal.

Feasts, games, and ceremonies filled the seasonal life of Hurons and enabled them to connect with this spiritual vivacity in their world. These events

were a means to petition the sky gods, to demonstrate courtesy to the spirit-beings, to counter the spells of witches, to honor the dead, and to participate in the dynamics of the strong time. Religious activity therefore served not only as a forum for community bonding but as a reinforcement for Huron cosmological orientation. The functions of the shaman and the protective security of individual power objects also contributed to Huron spiritual life. Collectively, this was the Huron religion, the way of life that defined the nation's identity.

The most frequent catalysts for Huron religious events were dreams and sickness, for the Hurons believed that the unfulfilled soul desire of either a human or a spirit-being caused disease and that the dream revealed those yearnings before the repercussions took effect.⁵⁷ Ceremonies designed to satisfy these wishes often took on remarkable qualities. In 1636, Jean de Brébeuf described the boisterous proceedings surrounding the *ononharoia* or the "turning the brain upside down."⁵⁸ He observed:

The *ononharoia* is for the sake of mad persons, when someone says that they must go through the Cabins to tell what they have dreamed. Then, as soon as it is evening, a band of maniacs goes about among the Cabins and upsets everything; on the morrow they return, crying in a loud voice, 'We have dreamed,' without saying what. Those of the Cabin guess what it is, and present it to the band, who refuse nothing until the right thing is guessed...they go away in a body to the woods, and there, outside the Village, cast out, they say, their madness; and the sick man begins to get better.⁵⁹

Europeans found other religious events equally striking. Some "eat-all feasts" had as many of thirty or forty kettles of deer meat and no one could leave until all the food was gone.⁶⁰ Participants threw tobacco into the fire to petition

⁵⁷ JR, 39:17, 25.

⁵⁸ JR, 10:175.

⁵⁹ JR, 10:177

⁶⁰ JR, 10:179-81.

Aataentsic or to thank the animal-spirit of the meat whose identity was established before the feast began.⁶¹ Specific rules, the product of a dream or the direction of a shaman, frequently dictated banquet behavior. In one instance, Gabriel Sagard observed that "it is not allowed them to break wind for twenty-four hours, during which time if they did they would be convinced that they should die, although they might have eaten Andataroni, that is bran-biscuits or pan-cakes, very windy substances."⁶² At another feast that Sagard attended, "the guests must enter by a certain door of the Cabin, and not by the other, or that they must pass only on one side of the kettle."⁶³ Details were as varied as people's dreams.⁶⁴

Yet there were common trends that marked religious activities. Hurons believed that annoying an offending spirit until it left the cabin of an ill person was a means of curing the ailment. They accomplished this by striking bark and yelling, creating such dissonance "that it was not possible to hear oneself."⁶⁵ With any luck, the spirit would share the displeasure of Le Jeune and quit the Huron village. Another characteristic of Huron religious ceremony was dancing, which often functioned as a symbolic return to the shape-shifting of the strong time. Mircea Eliade notes that "the man of the archaic societies is not only obliged to remember the mythical history but also to *re-enact* a large part of it."⁶⁶ Correspondingly, the Hurons participated in shape-shifting dances in which they

⁶¹ Sagard, *Long Journey*, 111.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶³ JR, 10:185. Also see JR, 10:169; 20:103.

⁶⁴ JR, 10:185. Le Jeune recognized four prominent Huron feasts: "*Athataion* is the feast of farewells. *Enditeuhwa*, of thanksgiving and gratitude. *Atouront aochien* is a feast for singing as well as for eating. *Awataerohi* is the fourth kind, and is made for deliverance from a sickness thus named." See JR, 10:177-79.

⁶⁵ JR, 13:265. The Hurons also used such techniques to drive away the souls of tortured enemies. See JR, 39:29; Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 390-91.

⁶⁶ Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 13. See also, Rosalie and Murray Wax, "The Magical World View," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 1 (Spring, 1962): 184.

arrived "each with a bearskin or the skin of some other beast over her head, but a bearskin is the commonest."⁶⁷ At other times, depending on the dream being performed, people danced in the nude or with only a breech-cloth for clothing.⁶⁸ In yet another dance, a shaman in a horned costume yelled insults at Aataentsic and later identified himself as louskeha.⁶⁹ The Hurons held that the sky gods could be in attendance on any of these occasions pretending to be mortals.⁷⁰

The shaman was an important influence in many ceremonies. He derived status from his position as *oki*—a possessor of great spiritual power--which he achieved by demonstrating a particularly active discourse with one or more non-humans.⁷¹ Occasionally, a shaman even claimed to be the human product of a transformed spirit-being.⁷² Sagard noted that the shamans were "great magic workers, great soothsayers and devil raisers. They perform the functions of physicians and surgeons, and always carry a bag full of herbs, and drugs . . . If the business at hand is to get information of matters at a distance he interrogates his demon first and then delivers the oracle."⁷³ The shaman could also achieve this last task by leaving his physical self through a trance or a dream, then traveling to a far-away or future place, in the manner of a spirit-being. After this process he would report on the issue of concern.⁷⁴

Le Jeune identified four shaman specialists. He observed that "there are among these People men who presume to command the rain and winds; others to predict future events; others to find things that are lost; and, lastly, others to

⁶⁷ Champlain, *Works*, 3:148, 155; Sagard, *Long Journey*, 115-16.

⁶⁸ Sagard, *Long Journey*, 115.

⁶⁹ JR, 10:35.

⁷⁰ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 78.

⁷¹ Martin, *In the Spirit of the Earth*, 40; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 79. Father Le Jeune described *oki* as "anything that elevates [a person] above the crowd." See JR, 10:49.

⁷² Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 79.

⁷³ Sagard, *Long Journey*, 192-93.

⁷⁴ JR, 10:197.

restore health to the sick, and that with remedies that have no relation to the sickness."⁷⁵ When requested to enact a cure, the shaman directed the feasts, ceremonies, sweats, and/or games of lacrosse or bones that led to a person's recovery.⁷⁶ Often, he mobilized "curing societies" whose specific rituals channeled the collective *oki* of its members. Participants included those previously restored by the society's rites. One curing-society ritual recorded by the Jesuits had seventy-four men and six women begin a call-and-response song' with a sick person's village. All the members gave "poison" to one another, entered the sick man's cabin, and led a dance called *otakrendoiaë* until the sick man "had fallen over backward and vomited." Finally, the society declared the cured man "to belong to the Brotherhood of Lunatics"--*Atirenda* in Huron.⁷⁷ When such efforts failed, a shaman commonly blamed his unsatisfactory compensation, but if future performances demonstrated similar results, he could expect to lose his status of *oki*.

To avoid such disappointment, the shamans frequently relied on power objects that engaged the spiritual familiars, but such articles could be held by any member or group within the community. Cherished as family heirlooms of a sort, talismans took on diversified forms such as the ashes of a bird, an egg with a leather strap, or a regurgitated concoction of "some hairs, a tobacco seed, a green leaf, and a little twig."⁷⁸ Just as every individual was left to form his own relationships with the spirit-beings, one also developed his or her own affinity with certain articles. If it was effective for the individual, it was authentic. Yet clan-, village-, or tribal-held charms also served as potent spiritual conductors,

⁷⁵ JR, 10:193-95. Also see JR 10:37, 173.

⁷⁶ JR, 10:185-87, 197. 'Bones' involved tossing a number of bi-colored pieces into the air after betting upon the number of dark or light sides that would show when the articles landed.

⁷⁷ JR, 10:193-95. Also see 30:23.

⁷⁸ JR, 10:193, 195, 209; 13:157; 39:25, 27.

particularly since they were established by the ancestors. One such item was the "reed mat of war," or *ond8ta, ecte*, that "contained objects such as ravens' beaks and hawks' talons that were thought to give access to the spirit power necessary to defeat the enemy."⁷⁹ Another was the tortoise shell rattle used by the leaders of group dances or by the shamans of certain curing rites.⁸⁰ Clearly, almost any inanimate object could have power by providing a vital link between humans and spirit-beings beyond the channels of dreaming, vision, and song.

While the shamans were not alone in their possession of charms, they did command a rare and valued skill in their ability to identify witches. Witches were social pariahs who magically placed fatal articles in their victims' bodies and who bred community dissonance through the search to identify the offender. Consequently, if someone recognized a malevolent sorcerer, he or she was sanctioned to kill that person immediately.⁸¹ Bruce Trigger argues that the charge of witchcraft really served as a sort of social police since the accused was usually a public outcast.⁸² But Le Jeune's lengthy experience with the Hurons led him to interpret witchcraft as a spiritual matter of common concern. In 1637 he wrote:

About this time another old man of our village was sorely troubled; people talked of nothing else than of going to break his head. For a long time he had been suspected of being a Sorcerer and a poisoner, and quite recently an Oaca had testified that he believed this Savage was making him die; and some of them said they had seen him at night roaming around the Cabins, and casting flames from his mouth. . . These people are extremely suspicious, especially when life is involved; the experiences that they have

⁷⁹ John Steckley, "The Warrior and the Lineage: Jesuit Use of Iroquoian Images to Communicate Christianity," *Ethnohistory* 39 (Fall, 1992): 486. Huron vowels are pronounced as follows: *8* = the English *ou*; *a* = resembles the vowels in the English *mat* and the French *parade*; *e* = the French *é* and the English *a* in *cave*. Consult Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, xiii.

⁸⁰ Sagard, *Long Journey*, 192-93.

⁸¹ JR, 39:27.

⁸² Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 67.

had in this manner, and a thousand instances of people whom they believe to have died through witchcraft or poison, maintain them in this distrust.⁸³

The man to whom Le Jeune referred lived in danger because the community believed that his actions violated personal, familial, and village coherence. His spells separated the bewitched from their families, robbed society of their talents, and bred terror that countered the extensive Huron efforts to maintain control in their world.

Yet witchcraft also disturbed the relations that actively took place between living and deceased Hurons. Ultimately, human spirits resided in the Village of the Dead, located somewhere in the vicinity of Iouskeha and Aataentsic's longhouse. This setting allowed the ancestors to enjoy their traditional activities because they possessed the ability to farm and hunt with the spirits of the tools that they took to the grave.⁸⁴ In the great Feast of the Dead, the Hurons consequently interred gifts with their deceased relatives to allow the spirits to live comfortably in the next world.⁸⁵ In other words, "death was but a shedding of the fleshy apparel, a concept and phenomenon already familiar from the hunt. The spirit took up residence where all human spirits resided on earth, as one part of that larger, teeming commonwealth of spirit-beings that composed the essence, the chief reality of the earth."⁸⁶ But during the interim between death and burial, a period of up to twelve years, one of the body's two spirits lingered about the village, slipping in and out of its living relatives' daily routine while the other was tied to its physical form.⁸⁷ Weak souls used abandoned cornfields to plant corn while others walked through the village at night to participate in

⁸³ JR, 13:155.

⁸⁴ JR, 10:147, 267; 39:31.

⁸⁵ JR, 10:279-311.

⁸⁶ Martin, *In the Spirit of the Earth*, 51.

⁸⁷ JR, 10:287.

dances and to eat what was left in the kettles.⁸⁸ Infant spirits, whose bodies were interred along paths, lingered on in order to implant themselves in the womb of a passing woman and then to be reborn.⁸⁹ Consequently, some people resembled the deceased. Yet this was the behavior of appeased souls; those who died by witchcraft or murder or in war were not so hospitable. Enraged by the wrongs committed against them, these spirits were barred from the Village of the Dead and they consequently stormed throughout the mentalities of their living relatives with demands of retribution. The living sought to fulfill these desires by killing a member of the murderer's family or by adopting a replacement for the deceased. Without these measures, the tortured souls could not rest.⁹⁰

The remaining Huron spirits found their peace after the Feast of the Dead, a ceremony that released the human-spirits from their ties to Huronia so that they could begin their journey to the Village of the Spirits. "The Kettle," as the Hurons referred to this rite, brought all of the local villages together, and after days of feasting, dancing, singing as well as generous gift-giving to the living and especially to the dead, culminated in a mass burial. To begin this final stage, the Hurons opened the village's raised tombs and removed the lifeless bodies, each one kept in a fetal position symbolizing new birth into the Land of the Dead.⁹¹ Next, relatives shaved the flesh from the corpses and interred the remaining bones in a mass grave that exemplified the Huron confederacy; just as the skeletons were mixed together, so were the fates of the member nations.⁹² When the Hurons emptied the bones into the tomb they released a

⁸⁸ JR, 10:143, 145.

⁸⁹ JR, 10:273.

⁹⁰ For a description of similar beliefs among the Five Nations Iroquois, cultural relatives of the Hurons, see Richter, "War and Culture," 529-537.

⁹¹ Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 564; Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 82.

⁹² JR, 10:279-311.

great cry of lamentation that probably functioned as an emotional release as well as a means to drive the souls away. This sent the spirits on a long journey that presented the challenges of a narrow bridge, a brain-extracting rock spirit named "pierce-head," and snapping dogs.⁹³ But when the souls finally entered the Village of the Dead, they joined their ancestors, returned to the cherished activities of daily life, and proceeded along the continuum of human existence.

The continuity also extended to the living because burial enabled the Hurons to pass on the names of their dead in a lavishly metaphorical 're-quickening' ceremony. Before this transfer, mentioning those names made their spirits long to return to the land of the living, and the Hurons became extremely disturbed when anyone created such spiritual discord. Yet when the spirit passed on, it desired to see one of its relatives inherit the responsibilities and character of its name, just as it had done years before. This was a regeneration, a cycle of humanity whereby the land of living reflected that of the dead, and vice-versa.

One Jesuit noted:

It is so arranged that, if possible, no Name is ever lost; on the contrary, when one of the Family dies all the relatives assemble, and consult together as to which among them shall hear the name of the deceased, giving his own to some other relative. He who takes a new name also assumes the Duties connected with it, and thus he becomes a Captain if the deceased had been one. This done they dry their tears and cease to weep for the deceased. In this manner they place him among the number of the living saying that he is resuscitated, and has come to life in the person of him who has received the name, and has rendered him immortal. ⁹⁴

The renaming was a restoration of balance that expressed gratitude to the dead for the enjoyment of their company and their role in the community, while it also

⁹³ JR, 10:145; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 87.

⁹⁴ JR, 23:165-7, 235, 275-77; Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 264.

served as an opportunity for young men to inherit "the virtues and courage of the deceased."⁹⁵ The link between the ancestors and the living persisted.

The connection between the strong time and the present was a theme that imbued all of the Hurons' religious ceremonies. Collectively the rituals were known as *onderha*, meaning "the 'prop' or 'foundation' of the country."⁹⁶ This term indicated the role of a religion and a cosmology that were held to be as distinct among nations as the individual charms and visions within the Huron villages. The myths, spirit-beings, sky gods, ancestors, Land of the Dead, and ceremonies were of the Huron nation and were not applicable to those removed from Huronia's spiritual relationships. This was a functional cosmology that enabled Hurons to locate their agricultural/hunter-gatherer economy through connection with the mythic power of the strong time. The nation continued to hold onto the concept of the reciprocal exchange with the animal beings while it also experienced a reality of unilateral relationships with the sky gods. But religion assured the Hurons that these were the ways of their ancestors, that they were not disrupting the ways of a timeless order. Consequently, the Hurons

⁹⁵ JR, 10:277.

⁹⁶ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 75.

continued to experience a reality that was a braid of human, spirit-being, and sky
god interaction--just as their fathers and mothers had done.

CHAPTER TWO

The Scourges of God

THE OPPORTUNITY to challenge the Huron conception of reality and to win glory for God seemed imminent to the Jesuits in 1634. Once again, after five years of frustrated hopes, Huronia and its access to North America's interior waterways and peoples were within their reach. Just eight years before, it appeared that the French had solidly established the foundation for a Christian presence among the Hurons. Recollect missionaries lived in the Huron country from 1623, undergoing the initiatory process of learning the Indians' language, and in 1627 Jesuits Jean de Brébeuf and Anne de Nouë joined them by settling the Attignawantan village of Toanché.¹ Once the missionaries became acquainted with their hosts' speech, they began the task of guiding the Indians towards the faith of Christ. But three English ships rudely interrupted this arduous exercise in 1629 when they sailed up the Saint Lawrence River and demanded the surrender of a poorly provisioned Kébec. The Kirke brothers, who ran this expedition, won the capitulation of Samuel de Champlain and

¹ Five tribes made up the Huron confederacy: the Attignawantan, Ataronchronon, Arendarhonon, Atigneenongnahac, and Tahontaenrat.

subsequently sent the 'popish' missionaries and most of the colonists back to France. To the Jesuits, it appeared that the Indians of North America were lost to the false religion of the Protestants.²

Yet the uprooted colonists learned upon their return to Europe that France retained her claims to North America through the recently signed Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, and Champlain consequently accepted the task of rebuilding the French colony in the New World. An important step in this project was the re-establishment of the Catholic missions among New France's Indian allies, particularly the Hurons, who in addition to inhabiting a strategically important geographic area and speaking the *lingua franca* of the St. Lawrence fur trade, also provided the French with their most prolific Indian commercial partners.³ Furthermore, since the Hurons were sedentary farmers, Huronia presented a promising setting in which to establish a permanent mission. From this base, the Jesuits and the administration of New France hoped to spread "the word" as well as the trade in European goods to the other non-believers of the continent.

When the Hurons came to exchange goods with the French at Kébec in 1633, Champlain accordingly presented them with a plan to send the Jesuits to the Huron country, explaining that this would "preserve and strengthen [the Huron] friendship with the French." Champlain told the traders that

² JR, 10:43.

³ Sagard, *Long Journey*, 86; Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 46. Axtell notes that the Hurons supplied two-thirds of the total number of beaver pelts that the French acquired in the St. Lawrence fur trade between 1616 and 1629.

They must receive our belief and worship the god that [the French] worshipped; that this would be very profitable to them, for God, being all-powerful, will bless and protect them, and make them victorious over their enemies; that the French will go in goodly numbers to their Country; that they will marry their daughters when they become Christians; that they will teach all their people to make hatchets, knives, and other things which are necessary to them; and that for this purpose they must next year bring many of their little boys.⁴

The Hurons were hesitant; the last time they harbored Frenchmen, missionaries interfered with the work of shamans and a layman named Etienne Brûlé had been discovered dealing with the enemy Seneca nation.⁵ The Indian traders certainly did not welcome a repeat performance. More important, the Blackrobes whom Champlain asked the Hurons to transport did not carry any firearms, despite the existence of diplomatic tension between the French and the Algonkins along the Ottawa River. Since the Algonkins controlled access to the Jesuit destination, the Hurons rejected Champlain's plan for that year. But with the prospect for safer passage in 1634, Fathers Jean de Brébeuf and Antoine Daniel found themselves paddle in hand as they traveled with their new hosts to Huronia.⁶

The Hurons accepted the missionary presence because of their desire to maintain and increase an already prosperous material exchange with Kébec,

⁴ JR, 8:47-49; 10:25-27. The first group of French missionaries in the 1620s communicated a similar message to the Hurons. When Recollect Gabriel Sagard and Nicholas Viel sought passage to Huronia, they persuaded the Indians that Christian "arms were those of the spirit, with which we [the missionaries] would train them and preserve them from their enemies' attacks through the grace of God, and that if they would trust our council the devils themselves could do no further harm. This reply pleased them greatly." Sagard was henceforth known as "Great War Chief." Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 144, 264-65.

⁵ Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 811; JR, 8:93; 10:43-43.

⁶ JR, 7:225-27; 8:75, 99. The Fathers agreed to help paddle because a number of traders were ill and the Hurons were still uneasy about whether the Algonkins would allow for the safe travel of the French to Huronia.

and to benefit from a military alliance with the French. From at least the 1580s, the Hurons enjoyed a limited supply of European glass beads, iron axes, iron knives, and brass kettles through their trade with Algonquian tribes, and after 1609 the availability of such items increased markedly via direct contact with the French.⁷ The Hurons quickly incorporated these exotic goods into their daily lives. Metal axes supplemented stone tools and eased the amount of labor required to fashion the approximately 20,000 wooden poles of a 10"-12" diameter that constituted the building material for a large Huron village.⁸ Iron knives and brass kettles were more durable and weighed less than their traditional Huron equivalents, thereby gaining status. By the late 1630s, the Hurons believed that these European manufactures were vital to the maintenance of their standard of living.⁹

European goods also played an important role in the Huron etiquette of gift giving. The courtesy of exchanging presents, particularly exotic ones, was essential to the flow of domestic and international affairs. Through gift giving,

⁷ Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 144; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 202, 242; Gavin Taylor, "The Value of French Trade Goods in Seventeenth-Century Huron Society," (Seminar Paper, College of William and Mary, 1993), 4.

⁸ Conrad Hedenreich, "Huron," in *Handbook of North American Indians, Northeast* 15, vol. ed. Bruce G. Trigger, gen. ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 375. In 1967, William Townsend conducted a study among New Guinea natives in which he observed that they chopped down a tree four times faster with a steel axe than with a traditional stone axe. Bruce Trigger placed this study in the Hurons' context by noting that "the iron axes that the French supplied were manufactured specifically for the fur trade and were made of metal that was much inferior to the steel ones that are in use today. They also lacked the large, heavy head above the socket which accounts to no small degree for the efficiency of modern axes. The Huron probably used them in the same way that they used stone axes, that is, cutting with short, quick strokes. Even if a trade axe used in this manner was not as inefficient as it looks, it was probably less time saving than a modern one. Yet if such axes speeded up forest clearance by a factor of two instead of three or four, they would have resulted in a considerable saving of energy." William Townsend, "Stone and Steel Tools in New Guinea Society," *Ethnology* 8: 199-205; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 412.

⁹ JR, 13:215; 17:47.

villages consoled people in mourning, criminals made reparations for their crimes, the sick accomplished the fulfillment of their soul desires, relatives supplied their deceased with materials for the spiritual world, leaders opened diplomatic relations and sealed treaties with other nations, and friends reaffirmed their bonds.¹⁰ In these contexts, individuals who had access to valued products gained prestige by liberally distributing them. Before the advent of European commodities, such persons apportioned the “exotic” goods of copper, buffalo robes, gourds, wampum beads, and black squirrel skins, but in time European objects became valued alternatives to these traditional gifts.¹¹

Beyond practical and social utility, European-made items commanded value because of their association with magical power. It was clear to the Hurons that the French were blessed with spiritual familiars who enabled them to create mysterious objects such as arquebuses, clocks, ships, and glass beads and metal tools such as needles, knives, scissors, fishhooks, and ax heads. Gabriel Sagard reported that the Hurons held a French chasuble to contain “a hidden power to put their enemies to flight,” just like a traditional drum made of an enemy’s skin. Other Hurons used a chasuble to alleviate the sufferings of the ill.¹² To the Hurons, the skill to forge such a potent item was an inherent part of being French--the “Iron People” or “Men of Iron” as the Indians called them--just as the ability to make powerfully charged artifacts such as turtle rattle, the reed

¹⁰ JR, 10:177, 225, 235, 253, 277-311; 23:209-23; 39:31; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 60-61, 64, 84; See also Sahlins, “On the Sociology of the Primitive Exchange,” *Stone Age Economics*, 186-87, 199.

¹¹ JR, 10:177; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 62-63.

¹² Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 358, 416.

mat of war, and bear head-dresses was an intrinsic aspect of being Huron.¹³

“Your world is different from ours,” a Huron man explained to Jean de Brébeuf, “the God who created yours did not create ours.”¹⁴

Yet the French items were all the more incredible because of their remote origins.¹⁵ A Huron youth name Savignon returned from a visit to France and told of such things as “a coach drawn by six or eight horses, a striking clock, and many other matters;” his Indian listeners treated him as a liar until the missionaries verified the boy’s tales.¹⁶ Like the Land of the Dead, where the ancestors dwelt near Aataentsic and Iouskeha, the distance from which the French traveled to New France indicated that they were familiar with the periphery of the world, an area imbued with fantastic power. The killing strength of their firearms and the cutting efficiency of their iron axes supported this belief. Clearly, the French controlled a potency unlike anything the Hurons had ever experienced.¹⁷

The Huron traders who ventured to Québec in 1634 consequently deemed it worthwhile to take the mysterious Blackrobes with them so that they could at once enjoy the material products of French magic, gain military assistance from its possessors and, perhaps, learn how to access its source. Champlain made it clear that these were the benefits of hosting the Jesuits. It would be some time before the Hurons realized that the Jesuits had “not come hither to buy skins or

¹³ Ibid., 366; JR, 13:219.

¹⁴ JR, 11:9. See also 10:135.

¹⁵ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 245; Taylor, “The Value of French Trade Goods,” 10.

¹⁶ Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 290-91.

¹⁷ JR, 13:211; 23:91; 33:213-15; Sagard, *Long Journey*, 146, 154-55.

carry on any traffic, but solely to teach them and win them to Christ, and to procure for them their souls' health, and finally everlasting life."¹⁸ Yet the contests of God and Devil, or of Iouskeha and Aataentsic, were about to manifest themselves in the forms of war, famine, plague, and community divisiveness. As the image of K bec grew smaller in the wake of the Huron traders' canoes, none of the paddlers could have known just how powerful the magic they transported was.



The mysterious Blackrobes who embarked on this trip to the Huron country were members of the Society of Jesus, an organization committed to transmit Roman Catholic belief to the pagans of the world. In New France, most of the Jesuits entered the missionary field with hopes of the Indians' swift and thorough conversion, but they must have known that the formation of a proper relationship with God required an intense struggle. For each Jesuit earned his initiation into the Society of Jesus only after the completion of an extensive training period delineated by Saint Ignatius. During this preparation, the Jesuit candidate sought to experience a self-transformation that would strengthen him for the tribulations of missionary life. More important, the new mind-set enabled

¹⁸ JR, 11:15, 71.

the religious to comprehend the path to salvation and to communicate that route to others. Without sufficient completion of his trials, the missionary could not expect to save himself or others.

The Jesuit candidate's discovery of the holy identity began with a disassociation from any "inordinate attachments." This process entailed "stripping off from themselves the love of creatures to the extent that this is possible, in order to turn their love upon the Creator of them, by loving Him in all creatures and all of them in Him."¹⁹ The severance also included relatives because these ties could lead the religious astray from holy intentions. "They should adopt the habit of saying, not that they have parents or brothers," wrote St. Ignatius, "but that they had them."²⁰ The Jesuits were to be dead to the world so that they could focus their attention on spiritual matters.

Following this emotional isolation, each Jesuit endured humiliation of "the self" through rigorous examinations of conscience. He considered his importance in relation to God's and reflected fervently on sins committed and contemplated. Given the corrupting presence of sin that the Jesuits believed every man possessed, the examinee could not help but exclaim, "How is it that the earth did not open to swallow me up, and create new hells in which I should be tormented forever!"²¹ Yet the recognition of these evils enabled a person to combat them. The society expected its members to purge themselves of all evil

¹⁹ *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus [by] Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. George E. Ganns (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 165. See also JR, 10:87.

²⁰ Ganns, trans., *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, 95; JR, 10:103.

²¹ *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, trans. Louis L. Puhl, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1950), 30.

thoughts, including those that came in the disguise of righteous ones. The Devil was a shape shifter and therefore it was necessary to chart the course of every cogitation. The *Spiritual Exercises* explained:

If the beginning and middle and end of the course of thoughts are wholly good and directed to what is entirely right, it is a sign that they are from a good angel. But the course of thoughts suggested to us may terminate in something evil, or distracting, or less good than the soul had formerly proposed to do. Again, it may end in what weakens the soul, or disquiets it; or by destroying the peace, tranquillity, and quiet which it had before, it may cause disturbance to the soul. These things are a clear sign that the thoughts are proceeding from the evil spirit, the enemy of our progress and eternal salvation.²²

Yet this process of meditation and confession did not necessarily leave Jesuits immune to Satan's advances because man was innately evil and therefore prone to temptation. To emphasize this point, the Jesuits wore hair shirts and engaged in various other punishments that communicated the corruption of physical self and the tortures that one could expect to find in hell. Self-inflicted punishment and its product, humility, were steps towards escaping such agony.

Emotional isolation and disgrace allowed the Jesuit to abandon the self to God, for only by realizing how worthless man was without this relationship could the individual prepare himself for it. In the search to forge this union, the mysticism of the Jesuit order took form. Through intense meditation, the Jesuits undertook a mental journey into Hell, that involved all their senses. Here they smelled the sulfur and the smoke of eternal fires. They heard the wailing of tortured souls and Satan telling his demons to set up traps of riches, honor, and

²² Ibid., 148.

pride in order to ensnare humans. In contrast, the Jesuits also participated in the life of Jesus. They followed him through all his trials and successes and ultimately came face to face with him on the cross. Here they recognized the dichotomous nature of the world: "poverty as opposed to riches; . . . insults or contempt as opposed to the honor of this world; . . . humility as opposed to pride," ultimately, Heaven as opposed to Hell.²³ Entering into a conversation with Christ, "by speaking exactly as one friend speaks to another, or as a servant to a master," the Jesuits realized that the way to escape damnation was to live as Christ lived.²⁴ They sought to become an organic whole with God: to have their bodies become a temple in which he dwelt; to depend solely on god for their necessities; to love God and only God; and through Christ's meditation, to become an instrument for the exercise of God's will, the true state of happiness.

Praising the Creator through the annihilation and abandonment of the self and the exercise of the divine law was therefore the highest achievement that man could attain. The Lord desired to see the propagation of his Gospel which would lead to the resurrection if humans accepted its message. Since the Society of Jesus desired the salvation of its members and of all peoples, the Jesuits accepted the task of missionizing those who did not practice the true religion. This was God's will. The proselytization of the Hurons was therefore only a small act in a much grander scheme.

²³ Ibid., 62.

²⁴ Ibid., 28.



In order to bring the Hurons into Christianity's fold, Jesuits found it necessary to conform to their hosts' etiquette of bridging cultural and emotional distance with gifts. The Hurons were reluctant to teach their visitors the nation's language or to attend the Blackrobes' speeches without receiving presents such as rings, rosaries, iron arrowheads, tobacco, and crucifixes. When the persuasiveness of these items waned, exhibitions of French technology and art in the form of lodestones, clocks, books, prisms, and paintings functioned as effective surrogates.²⁵ Despite the implications of bribery, the missionaries accepted this process as a minor sacrifice that would form a new army of Christians. By whetting the Hurons' appetite for European products, the Blackrobes could instruct a large number of children and a smaller cadre of adults on how to make the sign of the cross and sing the *Paster noster*, in addition to a number of other Catholic chants.²⁶ More important, gift giving allowed the Jesuits to introduce those "leaning towards Christianity" to the basic tenets of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1635, Jean de Brébeuf wrote from Toanché:

We began our Catechizing by this memorable truth, that their souls which are immortal, all go after death either to Paradise or to Hell. It is thus that we approach them, either in public or in private. I added that they had the choice, during life, to participate after death in the one or the other, -which one, they ought to now

²⁵ JR, 5:257-59; 8:111-13, 143; 9:179-81; 10:19-21, 53, 249; 13:141, 219; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 430, 495, 537; Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 112.

²⁶ JR, 8:143-45; 10:19-25, 63-65.

consider. Whereupon one honest old man said to me, 'Let him who will, go to the fires of Hell; I want to go to Heaven;' all the others followed and making use of the same answer, begged us to show them the way, and to take away the stones, the trees, and the thickets therein, which might stop them.²⁷

It did not take long for the Jesuits to realize that the majority of Hurons who expressed their agreement were simply exercising their culture's etiquette of not rebuking a public speaker. Furthermore, most Indians did not understand what the Blackrobes said.²⁸ Not only did the Jesuits lack familiarity with the metaphorical structure of Huron speech, but their ability to communicate the route to the Christian Paradise was obstructed by limitations of vocabulary and delivery. All the missionaries, including the experienced Brébeuf, had to learn the very basics of a language that used "inflection altogether unknown to the most learned of Europe" through "accents, breathings, and changes of tone, without which . . . [Huron] speech would be altogether unintelligible."²⁹ A pidgin Huron facilitated Blackrobe/Indian discussion in the interim, but the stumbling rhetoric was not respected in an oral culture that placed a tremendous value on the fluency of one's speech.³⁰ Paul Le Jeune lamented, "Instead of being a great master and great Theologian as in France you must reckon being here a humble Scholar, and then, good God! with what masters? - women, little children, and all the Savages, -and exposed to their laughter."³¹ The early

²⁷ JR, 8:145-45; 10:15-17.

²⁸ JR, 5:151; 10:11-17, 55, 65, 259; 16:247.

²⁹ JR, 8:133; 10:15-17, 117-23, 219, 257-59; 11:9; 39:103-05.

³⁰ JR, 5:195; 8:133; 10:55.

³¹ JR, 10:15-17.

period of the Huron mission was a time of adjustment, not of gathering a Church Militant.

Even when the Jesuits gained a more substantial understanding of the Huron language in the late 1630s, they necessarily used imprecise terms to detail their Catholic mysteries because Huron terminology was not equipped to express their alien religion. Missionaries typically expressed the Trinity as *sa,oen* (he has them [indefinite] as children), *honaen* (they [masculine or feminine] have him as child), and *hoki daat hoatato, eti* (he is a very [straight] spirit) while similar constructions corresponded to “the Holy Spirit,” “Angels,” “Resurrection,” “Paradise,” “Hell,” “Church,” “Faith,” “Charity,” “Sanctification,” “Heaven,” “Sacrament,” and a host of other stock concepts of the Roman Catholic Church.³² These communicative limitations posed a serious impediment to the ambitious Jesuit goal of Huron christianization.

Another problem that restrained the missionary project was the Huron struggle to fit the Jesuits into the power constitution of their mythic world. This was most apparent through the Indian reaction to European-imported diseases. Between 1634 and 1639, the “virgin soil” population of Huronia faced successive outbreaks of smallpox, measles, and other European contagions, leading to a population decline of approximately 50%.³³ Reflecting upon the relative immunity of the Blackrobes and their servants as well as the timing of the

³² Steckley, “The Warrior and the Lineage,” 480-81; JR, 8:133, 9:89; 10:55, 65, 91, 117, 119, 121; 20:71; Sagard, *Long Journey*, 73-75; Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 108; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 393.

³³ Bruce Trigger, “The Ontario Epidemics of 1634-1640,” in *Indians, Animals, and the Fur Trade: A Critique of Keepers of the Game*, ed. Shepard Krech III (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1981), 23; Hedenreich, “Hurons,” 387.

outbreaks, the effort to determine causality often led to accusations of French witchcraft. All power in the Huron universe was double edged and it was a human decision whether or not to channel it towards positive or negative ends; obviously the mysterious Blackrobes chose to engage in acts of sorcery. Some Indians charged that the missionaries conjured up spells through their strange ceremonial gestures and even that they harbored a monster serpent.³⁴ Others conjectured that disease sprang from Champlain's cloak, Jesuit books, or a wampum collar given to the Hurons as a gift at Kébec since all these objects were of exotic origins. Yet accusations of Blackrobe violence did not lead to the organized persecution of the newcomers. To act brashly would, perhaps, sever the French trade, alienate potential military allies, and invite costly repercussions from the Jesuits' spiritual familiars.³⁵

In order to avert such a fate, a number of Indians looked to the Blackrobes to defend them from the epidemics. The missionaries advertised that they worshipped an all-powerful spirit protector and that their good health was evidence of this. Since the curing ceremonies of traditional shamans enjoyed only limited success against the new diseases, while the Jesuits enjoyed relative immunity to them, a number of Hurons were reasonable to seek the favor of the Blackrobes in exchange for the protection of the Christian powers. This action was consistent with the Huron perception of the Jesuits as

³⁴ JR, 10:67; 12:35-87, 237; 13:209, 215, 247; 14:14-23; 15:37-51; 18:41; 20:31; 39:125; Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, 257-59.

³⁵ By 1636, the French entourage among the Hurons included four men equipped with firearms. See JR, 10:53.

shamans or middlemen between the Indians and the Christian spirits.³⁶

Throughout the early years of the mission, the Hurons asked the Blackrobes to petition the God of the cross for favorable weather or for an end to the impotence of traditional rain-producing rituals.³⁷ "If you cannot make rain," Brébeuf explained, "they speak nothing less of making away with you."³⁸ Yet when these requests were fulfilled, the Jesuits enhanced their prestige, just as a shaman would in similar circumstances.³⁹ Furthermore, like the shamans, missionaries possessed a variety of objects that resonated with spiritual power. A group of Hurons called the Jesuit statues of Saint Ignace and Saint Francis Xavier *Ondaqui*, the plural of *Oki*, signifying their belief that these representations were alive with spirit. The Indians inquired as to whether these statues dwelt in the chapel's tabernacle and dressed in the altar's ornaments. The Jesuits answered in the negative, but were quick to verify that the objects were possessed of spirit.⁴⁰

The sacrament of baptism also commanded respect among those Hurons who witnessed its apparent ability to cure the sick. Missionaries commonly offered brief instruction and baptism to a Huron who was about to die, despite the protest from other Frenchmen that "if he continues to live in Barbarism, you

³⁶ Axtell, "Were Indian Conversions Bona Fide?" 117.

³⁷ JR, 10:35-39, 43-45, 95; 12:85-87; Sagard, *Long Journey*, 78, 173, 178-79. Zena Pearlstone Matthews demonstrates that Huron effigy pipes from the early sixteenth century depicted European-like characters in shamanic pose, suggesting that the Indians believed that the Europeans possessed shaman-like magical power. See Zena Pearlstone Matthews, "Of Man and Beast: The Chronology of Effigy Pipes Among Ontario Iroquoians," *Ethnohistory* 27 (Fall 1980): 302.

³⁸ JR, 10:95.

³⁹ JR, 10:43.

⁴⁰ JR, 5:257-59.

profane the sacrament.” To this Paul Le Jeune answered, “The Sacrament is made for man, and not man for the Sacrament; and consequently it is better to endanger the Sacrament than the salvation of man.”⁴¹ The practice continued, and both the Jesuits and the Hurons came to realize that, throughout the 1630s, baptism was the predecessor of an ill person’s recovery as often as it was a forerunner of death. Therefore, the Jesuits were capable of achieving a shamanic reputation among at least half of the Huron families whom they served when a relative’s days appeared short.⁴² The missionaries actively promoted such inclinations. In 1636, Brébeuf gathered together a number of Attignawantans and, crucifix in hand, launched prayers to petition the Trinity to defend the baptized “that they may not become sick, that they may not sin, which is evil; and if the plague attack us again, turn away all that which is evil.”⁴³ Yet the Jesuits were shocked to find that those who attributed their survival to baptism and considered themselves “Christians,” behaved as if they were simply members of a Huron curing society. Since membership in these societies did not restrict a person from using other curing methods, the Jesuits often found the newly baptized participating in the same “devilish” rites they had before. Father Jérôme Lalemant wrote, “There are some who listen seriously and consent willingly to everything, remaining convinced of the truth, but on being urged to come to the performance of it, and to forsake all their superstitions, --especially

⁴¹ JR, 11:139; 13:35, 225; 19:77-79, 233; 21:135.

⁴² In 1636, 90/100 baptized adults survived after their baptism. Two years later, 50% of the children lived in addition to approximately 60% of the adults. JR, 10:11-13, 67; 11:17; 13:225; 17:25; 20:25.

⁴³ JR, 10:69-71.

their *Aaskwandiks* or familiar demons, real or imaginary, --they lose courage, not being able to resolve on abandoning that which for so many ages they have persuaded themselves to be essential for their preservation and that of their families and the source of good fortune."⁴⁴ One such elder Huron explained to a disappointed Brébeuf that "there is nothing we would not do to preserve our lives; and if it be necessary to dance night and day to drive away the disease, all decrepit as I am, I will begin first, in order to save the lives of my children."⁴⁵

Initially, the Hurons did not fully understand or else accept what the Jesuits strove to explain to them. But as the Jesuits slowly gained command of the Huron language, the Indians discovered that the Christian God was unlike any spirit being they talked to in their dreams. James Axtell delineates the radical scope of the Jesuit's proposed reorientation of the Hurons when he writes:

The novelty of Christian belief stemmed largely from the historical origins of the religion in a course of events surrounding the life of Jesus Christ (a man the Indians had never heard of) in the Near East (a part of the world they did not know existed) more than sixteen hundred years before (an inconceivable length of time for oral peoples). It was all news to the natives that the Great Spirit (God), after creating the universe from nothing, made the first man and woman on earth and promised them eternal life in Paradise for their faith and obedience (many of the northeastern Indians, particularly the Iroquoians, believed that a water-covered earth existed before a Sky-woman fell from heaven to people a gigantic island, formed on the back of a turtle from mud gathered by a diving animal); that the first couple disobeyed God, thereby staining the progeny with original sin and condemning them to eternal punishment in a fiery Hell (the Indians knew only of a beneficent afterlife and nothing of sin); that in His mercy God breathed the holy spirit into the womb of a virgin, who bore His

⁴⁴ JR, 21:133-35. See also 10:35-39; 11:9; 13:175, 203.

⁴⁵ JR, 13:233.

son, Jesus (the Sky-woman, too, became miraculously pregnant by 'the wind' but bore twins, one good, the other evil); and that after a blameless life of teaching God's commandments, Jesus took upon himself the sins of the whole world and sacrificed his life upon a cross so that man might live again in purity and merit the joys of Heaven. Perhaps equally stunning was the news that the Indian peoples of America, a continent unknown to the Old World when Jesus lived, were included in this divine plan, and that the Blackrobes had been sent by Christ's captain on earth to convey the good news."⁴⁶

The complexity of this information required the Hurons to process it through traditional beliefs, without which it would have had no social context. One man insisted that he visited the Land of the Dead only to find that everyone had gone to Heaven.⁴⁷ Other were more skeptical. An elder Huron named Tendousahoronc was shocked to find that the Iroquois might be in Heaven and therefore submitted that these enemies of the Huron confederacy would attack him before they allowed him to live there.⁴⁸ Besides, he added, he could not fish, trade, or marry in Heaven. Another man chipped in, "For my part, I have no desire to go to heaven; I have no acquaintances there, and the French who are there would not care to give me anything to eat."⁴⁹ Instead, he planned to reside, not in Hell, but in the traditional resting place of Huron spirits where he would enjoy his favorite leisure activities in abundance. The polar choice of Christian afterlives simply did not appeal to him.

⁴⁶ Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 105.

⁴⁷ JR, 10:185.

⁴⁸ JR, 13:177.

⁴⁹ JR, 13:127.

To Huron traditionalists, the extensive list of prohibitions issued by the Jesuits' "God" demonstrated the irrelevance of Christianity to the Huron experience. Paul Le Jeune correctly called conversion a "metamorphosis," while Charles Lalemant added, "it would seem that to be a Christian, one must deprive himself not only of pastimes which elsewhere are wholly innocent, and of the dearest pleasures in life, but even of the most necessary things, and, in a word, die to the world at the very moment that one wishes to assume the life of a Christian."⁵⁰ This became abundantly clear in 1636 when a Huron council asked Le Jeune to use his powers to combat the epidemics among them. Le Jeune welcomed such an initiative, but "he proposed to them that, since they were thus inclined, they should henceforth give up their belief in their dreams; 2nd, that their marriages should be binding for life, and that they should observe conjugal chastity; 3rd, he gave them to understand that God forbade vomiting feasts; 4th, those shameless assemblies of men and women (I would blush to speak more clearly); 5th, eating human flesh, 6th those feasts called Aoutaerohi." The Hurons looked to one another in astonishment. How could a spirit make such demands? The leader of the assembly named Onaconchiaronk turned to Le Jeune and said "My Nephew, we have been greatly deceived; we thought God was to be satisfied with a Chapel, but according to what I see he asks a great deal more."⁵¹

⁵⁰ JR, 9:91; 28:53.

⁵¹ JR, 13:169; 10:63.

Many Hurons believed that the Christian God commanded the overthrow of the *onderha*, “the prop of the country,” as they called their religious ceremonies.⁵² To annul these rituals and to suggest that the animal and place beings who protected the Hurons were demons was to break the paradigm set by the ancestors that kept order in the nation’s universe. Furthermore, historically based Catholicism sought to dispossess the body of mythic knowledge that the Huron communities held and passed orally from generation to generation. Myths were more than tales about the heroes of the strong time or models for community living; they facilitated community living by forcing the generations to coalesce frequently and tell the stories that explained their universe and the ties that bound them together. Without such gatherings, traditional Huron narratives would fade from memory and the bridge that myth forged between past, present, and future would collapse. Yet the dialectic process and historical chronicle of Catholicism maintained that the ancestors writhed in the violence of Hell and that their stories and rituals were untrue. If the Hurons wanted to participate in the benevolent universe of the Christian god, they would have to extinguish their dialogue with the natural world and the mythic past and purge their metaphysic of its traditional Huron significance.

⁵² JR, 10:25-27; 13:169; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 75.



Despite such lofty ambitions, the Jesuits realized that the first step in the attempt to save others was the salvation of themselves. Le Jeune noted, “Those who aid in the conversion of souls are not always saved; the first conversion one ought to make is that of one’s self. Woe unto him who acts as a broom, cleaning the house but soiling itself.”⁵³ Consequently, a primary focus of the Huron mission was to imbue the Blackrobes with a sense of their own progress towards the goal of everlasting life.⁵⁴ Propagation of the faith served not only as an opportunity to spread the word of God and to promote the second coming of Christ, but also as an experiment in which the missionaries tested the strength of their own spirituality. The Jesuits hoped that the numerous challenges to their holiness would enable them to assess their individual weakness and corresponding dependence on God.

The Society’s training warned about the obstacles that the Devil would raise to hinder the conversion of souls to Christianity, but in New France this challenge was particularly obtrusive since “Satan’s malevolence” apparently ruled America’s “horrible wilderness.”⁵⁵ The absence of Christianity in North America facilitated the subsequent transformation of the Indian peoples into “the poor slaves of Satan.”⁵⁶ Lucifer contacted the Indians through their dreams in

⁵³ JR, 9:75.

⁵⁴ JR, 10:191.

⁵⁵ JR, 3:33; 11:41.

⁵⁶ JR, 5:47; 10:147, 177-79, 189, 193-95; 11:9, 15.

the guise of animal spirits and commanded them to commit innumerable atrocities against themselves and others. He dissuaded potential converts to Christianity by possessing their bodies and seducing them into lives without restraint, lives of gluttony and lustfulness, just as he spoiled the innocence that man's first ancestors enjoyed.⁵⁷ Le Jeune submitted that the "barbarism, ignorance, poverty, and misery, which render the life of these Savages more deplorable than death, are a continual reminder of us to mourn Adam's fall."⁵⁸ This condition stood in stark contrast to the Christian way that the Hurons would have to accept in order to gain salvation. "O how different are these two states!" exclaimed Le Jeune. "Forever a companion of Angels, and forever an associate of devils!"⁵⁹ This struggle between good and evil forces over the future of New France epitomized the Jesuit missionary experience.

The contest even found its way to France itself, indicating the importance of the North American battlefield to the future of Christianity. In 1611, Fathers Pierre Biard and Enémond Massé were about to set sail from Dieppe to join the first Jesuit mission in New France, but the two Huguenots running the operation suddenly refused to transport them. Biard saw this as an attempt by the Devil to obstruct the passage, but Christ offered his aid and remedied the situation.⁶⁰ Similar confrontations permeated the daily activities of the New World where "God has appointed the conquest of so many other souls whom the Devil holds

⁵⁷ Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 445.

⁵⁸ JR, 10:111-13.

⁵⁹ JR, 9:33.

⁶⁰ JR, 2:83.

yet in his power.”⁶¹ On canoe trips, the missionaries experienced devilish plots to catch their fragile craft in the rapids and smash them against the massive rocks lining the river; God frequently saved them at the last minute. Satan brought famine and drought; Christ countered with gifts of game and water that he veiled as the products of Jesuit action.⁶² Clearly, the material world was not a place where men played out their contests, but where spiritual forces used men to play out their own.

Throughout this “warfare,” God’s omnipotence was never in question.⁶³ Brébeuf explained that the Lord could “covert all these Barbarians without difficulty. But God dispenses such favors when, how, and to whom he pleases; and perhaps he wishes us to wait for the harvest of souls with patience and perseverance.”⁶⁴ God was constantly testing the faith of both the Jesuits and the Indians and He could be extremely rewarding when they pleased Him. Often He revived dying Indian children as soon as the Jesuits baptized them or provided new converts with a good hunt. At other times, God sent “hidden impulses” to those who had earlier blasphemed Him, causing them to suddenly demonstrate a strong desire to embrace the faith.”⁶⁵ But God could also be harsh in his punishments. Le Jeune recalled:

I have often been astonished in thinking it over, how God has let his thunderbolts fall, so to speak, upon the three wicked brothers with whom I passed the winter, for having wickedly violated the promise they had made to acknowledge him as their sovereign, to

⁶¹ JR, 10:97; 10:43; 11:53-55.

⁶² JR, 10:43.

⁶³ JR, 8:139.

⁶⁴ JR, 10:49.

⁶⁵ JR, 8:223; 10:61.

love and obey him as their Lord . . . The eldest, that wretched Sorcerer who had given me a great deal of trouble, was burned alive in his own house. The second . . . who to please his brother, was willing to displease God, was drowned, having lost his mind . . . the Apostate, the youngest of the three . . . died this year of hunger, abandoned in the woods like a dog.⁶⁶

Clearly, the Lord was not to be trifled with, yet he was approachable through prayer.

The Society of Jesus used prayer to solicit God, and through this activity another complex aspect of their cosmology took form. At various times, the Jesuits of New France petitioned Jesus to serve as a mediator between God and man, yet they also addressed Mary, Joseph, or St. Ignatius on occasion in the hope that these spirits could win the sympathy of the Son of God.⁶⁷ The Blackrobes viewed Joseph as the tutelary angel of the Hurons and invoked his aid to request “special protection” for that confederacy.⁶⁸ When matters such as the conversion of women or the establishment of churches and missions were at stake, they entreated Mary. On one occasion, the priests prayed to the Virgin and performed a novena in honor of St. Ignatius to produce rain. On another, they addressed God and Jesus simultaneously, a combination which frequently included Mary as well. Despite the apparent randomness, the Jesuits were constant in their belief that two factors improved the chances of a prayer’s fulfillment. First, the request had to be presented in a humble manner with the purest of intentions. A second but less necessary factor, involved the number of

⁶⁶ JR, 9:69-71.

⁶⁷ JR, 10:41, 69; 11:47, 67; 39:59.

⁶⁸ JR, 10:315.

those praying or the number of times the prayer was offered; the greater the volume, the greater the chance the prayer would be successful. Referring to the numbers of people praying for the success of the Canadian mission, Brébeuf noted, "He [God] would not incite so many devout persons to ask, if he had not the inclination to grant their prayer."⁶⁹ Such a position ventured into the dangerous theological ground of free-will and predestination, for if God induced his followers to pray to him, prayer was consequently an honoring and petitioning of God by God. Yet the Jesuits never allowed this issue to find their discourse. Saint Ignatius advised, "We should not make it a habit of speaking much of predestination . . . we must be very cautious about the way in which we speak of all these things and discuss them with others."⁷⁰ The fathers appear to have been comfortable with this request.

Yet the opportunity to discuss the issue of predestination with the Indians must have seemed aeons away to the Jesuits in the early years of their mission to the Hurons. For just as cultural barriers posed a challenge to the ability of the missionaries to communicate their religion to the Indians, they also presented a constant test to the spirituality of the Jesuits themselves. The missionaries tied their concept of a religious life to a strict daily regimen that enabled them "to guard with great diligence the gates of their senses (especially the eyes, ears, and tongue) from all disorder."⁷¹ But any anticipation of an orderly life that a missionary brought to New France wilted among the European-defined

⁶⁹ JR, 10:7; 11:57-59.

⁷⁰ Puhl, trans., *Spiritual Exercises*, 160.

⁷¹ Ganns, trans., *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, 155.

“disarray” of Indian society. One aspect of this problem concerned the Indian approach to time. St. Ignatius called for a European schedule that regulated eating, sleeping, and rising among his disciples, but the clockless Hurons did not measure their day by hours and minutes.⁷² Their daily schedule was specifically adapted to the seasonal needs of Huron agriculture, hunting, war, trade, and ritual and the shifting rhythm of this routine did not lend itself to Christian time. Sagard complained that the Hurons “consider all days to be alike and one as solemn as another.”⁷³ Therefore, it was necessary for the Blackrobes to adapt to an environment that they were not capable of controlling. “Often you are compelled to deprive yourself of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass,” wrote Le Jeune, “and when you have the opportunity to say it, a little corner of your Cabin will serve you for a Chapel, which the smoke, the snow, or the rain hinders you from ornamenting and embellishing, even if you had the means.”⁷⁴

From a European perspective, order also gave way to Indian eating habits. The Hurons’ spiritually sanctioned eat-all feasts communicated a hunter-gatherer past in which binge-eating allowed individuals to store calories rather than food in anticipation of times of scarcity. Following their shift to an agriculturally-based economy, the banquets functioned primarily as an aspect of Huron social life, for the strict etiquette of participation and reciprocity promoted both community relationships between participants and spiritual relationships between those feasting and the spirits of the game animals. The sight of so

⁷² Ibid., 168-69.

⁷³ Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 390-91.

⁷⁴ JR, 10:93.

many individuals gorging themselves, often to the point of regurgitation, horrified the Jesuits. The fathers understood that it was God's will to exercise restraint in eating; their *Spiritual Exercises* dictated that the religious was "every day to fix the amount that is proper for him to eat. Let him not exceed this, no matter what the temptation. Rather to overcome better every disorderly appetite and temptation of the enemy, if he is tempted to eat more, let him eat less."⁷⁵ The missionaries brought this approach to New France and harangued Indians for their "gluttony" because "God forbids such excess."⁷⁶

In addition to "the almost continual discomforts, --excessive cold, smoke, and the annoyance of the Savages," the sexual temptations and activities that Jesuits observed in the cabins of their Indian hosts were particularly unnerving. For the fathers deemed "their living together promiscuously, girls, women, men, and boys in a smoky hole" as an intolerable environment for Christian practice.⁷⁷ With this in mind, the Jesuits insisted that the Hurons build them separate cabins and explained "that girls and women were not permitted to sleep in our houses, indeed, they never entered them in France; and that, just as soon as we could close our doors, they would not again be opened to them."⁷⁸ The defensive nature of this passage was common among missionaries who confronted the problem of contact with Indian women. Some Jesuits perceived the Society's activities in New France as "a glorious opportunity to unite oneself

⁷⁵ Puhl, trans., *Spiritual Exercises*, 90-91.

⁷⁶ JR, 10:177.

⁷⁷ JR, 6:225. See also 10:93, 97, 111, 313-15; 35:153-55.

⁷⁸ JR, 5:107.

with God, [as] there is not creature whatsoever that gives you reason to spend your affection upon it.”⁷⁹ Yet a number of the Blackrobes implied that they struggled with their vow of mental and physical celibacy because their hearts were not “sufficiently full of God to resist this poison.”⁸⁰ Father Lalemant questioned the entire nature of his presence in New France. “I have not been able to keep the tears from my eyes for several reasons,” he wrote, “but especially in reflecting upon my imperfections which are far from the merit necessary for this vocation, and inspire me with grave fears that I am opposing the purposes of God’s grace.”⁸¹

The Blackrobes frequently expressed this anxiety when threatened with death at the hands of their Huron hosts, Iroquois enemies, or the violence of North American weather. Uncertain safety, they asserted, was the most trying aspect of missionary life since “our lives depend upon a single thread; and if, wherever we are in the world, we are to expect death every hour, and to be prepared for it, this is particularly the case here.”⁸² Most of the missionaries professed that they expected to die in New France, but faced with that reality many discovered the fragility of this resignation. After surviving the throes of a terrible storm, Le Jeune wrote, “It is one thing to reflect upon death in one’s cell, before the image on the Crucifix, but quite another to think of it in the midst of a tempest and in the presence of death itself . . . my weakness makes me fear that

⁷⁹ JR, 10:103-05.

⁸⁰ JR, 10:179.

⁸¹ JR, 4:225.

⁸² JR, 10:93.

if that had really happened, my thoughts and inclinations might have been greatly changed."⁸³ But a complete relinquishment of the self to God required the Jesuit to welcome death as God's will. To do otherwise indicated that the organic relationship had not been formed. This realization led many Jesuits to thoroughly review their consciences, a process that left Le Jeune, "sick in body and soul, God causing me to see what he is and what I really am . . . I stumbled at every step, bringing back nothing from this journey except my faults."⁸⁴ Yet this experience fortified him when he faced death a second time in 1634. Under the stress of constant physical and mental suffering, he saw abandonment of the self to the will of God as the only pathway to consolation. "When I realized that we began to hover between the hope of life and the fear of death," Le Jeune wrote to his superior, "I made up my mind that God had condemned me to die of starvation for my sins; and, a thousand times kissing the hand that had written my sentence, I waited the execution of it with a peace and joy which may be experienced, but may not be described."⁸⁵ The Jesuits found that the only way to survive the trials of missionary life in New France was to build a temple in the mind and heart where God was found at any time. Persistence was the only way to accomplish this. The Society of Jesus expected every missionary to endure his work with the fortification "that these things have served only to confirm me the more in my vocation; that I feel myself more carried away than ever by my affection for New France, and that I bear a holy Jealousy towards those who are

⁸³ JR, 5:13.

⁸⁴ JR, 6:39.

⁸⁵ JR, 7:51.

already enduring all these sufferings; all these labors seem to me nothing in comparison with what I am willing to endure for God.”⁸⁶

The *Spiritual Exercises* warned that “the enemy of our human nature investigates from every side all our virtues, theological, cardinal, and moral. Where he finds the defenses of eternal salvation weakest and most deficient, there he attacks and tries to take us by storm.”⁸⁷ This was how the Jesuits perceived the challenges to their spiritual integrity. Supernatural forces criss-crossed through the human conscience, tearing man between his natural inclination towards sin and the sanctifying exercise of God’s will. The dichotomous and complex nature of this warfare was evident in Huronia, a place that constantly tested and developed man’s faith. Here the Jesuits learned what it really meant to depend solely on God. “For what avail so many exercises, so many fervent Meditations, so many eager desires?” wrote a missionary to Father Le Jeune. “All these are nothing but wind if we do not put them into practice.”⁸⁸

The Blackrobes came to understand that human efforts could accomplish little in the conversion of the Indians because that goal depended upon the will of God. However, this did not mean that the missionary project should end. Rather, it required the Jesuits to undertake proselytization with greater fervor because the challenges of missionary life permitted the steadfast religious to learn what complete abandonment of self meant. Father Brébeuf reached this maturity only after a torturous struggle of the conscience. He explained,

⁸⁶ JR, 10:97, 189-91.

⁸⁷ Puhl, trans., *Spiritual Exercises*, 146.

⁸⁸ JR, 8:177.

“Indeed, it is harder to humiliate oneself deeply before God and men, and to annihilate oneself, than to raise the dead; for that needs only the word, if one has the gift of miracles, but to humiliate oneself as one ought to, --truly, that requires a man's whole life.”⁸⁹ Consequently, God offered the forum of Huronia--with all of its challenges--as the stage on which the believer could stride towards this state. Always, God was in complete control.



Despite the dangers that life among the Hurons posed to the maintenance of the Christian faith, a number of developments in the early 1640s offered the Jesuits a more favorable environment in which to gain converts. The missionaries' ability to speak the Huron language, to develop terms by which to communicate the Catholic religion, and to pass that knowledge on to other brethren who joined their efforts demonstrated increasing skill and confidence.⁹⁰ In addition to these crucial factors, the establishment of the Sainte Marie complex in the Ataronchronon territory and an Indian seminary at Trois-Rivières brought the Jesuits added coordination, stability, and viability.⁹¹ The Society of Jesus finally had centralized bases close to their field of operation where they could store large amounts of French goods, maintain a support network of

⁸⁹ JR, 8:183-85.

⁹⁰ JR, 28:65. The number of missionaries participating in the Huron mission ranged from 13 in 1635 to 18 in the mid-1640s. See JR, 8:65; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 665.

⁹¹ JR, 26:19.

tradesmen and soldiers, and raise food to decrease dependence on the Indians. More important, in a Jesuit-controlled environment the missionaries effectively developed conversion strategies and offered neophyte Christians a place of uninterrupted instruction and reward. By 1642 Jérôme Lalemant could write:

This House [Sainte Marie] is not only an abode for ourselves, but is also the continual resort of all the neighboring tribes, and still more of the Christians who come from all parts for various necessities, - even with the object of dying there in greater peace of mind, and in the true sentiments of the Faith. We have, therefore, been compelled to establish a hospital there for the sick, a cemetery for the dead, a Church for public devotion, a retreat for pilgrims, and, finally, a place apart from the other, where the infidels - who are only admitted by day, when passing that way - can always hear some good words respecting their salvation. *In these countries, more than in any other spot on earth, it is necessary to become all things to all men, in order to win them to Jesus Christ.*⁹²

The opportunity to nurture this ambition, more than any other factor, became the source of burgeoning Jesuit success.

By the time the Jesuits established Sainte Marie, the Hurons found themselves struggling with the aftermath of the smallpox epidemics of the late 1630s. Lalemant estimated that the Huron population shrunk from 30,000 to 10,000 people in ten years.⁹³ Still, the survivors licked more than demographic wounds. Historian Frederick Turner noted that “of all the forms of disruption a society can suffer, perhaps none is so deeply demoralizing as a mysterious disease, for in its ungovernable career it not only destroys the social fabric, obliterating generations and intricate ties that bind humans to one another, but it

⁹² JR, 26:201. By 1643, the Jesuits were capable of supporting converts during a period of drought with maize grown at Sainte Marie. See Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 684.

⁹³ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 638; Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 195-96.

also threatens the philosophical and spiritual assumptions of the populace.”⁹⁴ His argument captures the Huron experience, for the Jesuits observed that the ineffectiveness of traditional curing methods against imported contagions left many Hurons searching for cosmological grounding.⁹⁵ One of the practical appeals of the Blackrobes was that they offered an irrefutable explanation for the nation’s troubles. When an Indian on his deathbed accepted baptism and recovered, he could tell his tribesmen with Jesuit approval that “it is not faith that exterminates us, but our sins, and especially your unbelief; it is you who cause your own death retaining the Demons in your midst.”⁹⁶ For others who were not so fortunate, the Blackrobes explained to their relatives that God presented suffering as a test, offering his flock the opportunity to prove its worthiness for salvation.⁹⁷

The growing familiarity of the Jesuits with Huron language and culture allowed them to emphasize the value of this challenge. As part of the Jesuit conversion strategy, the missionaries acquired as thorough a knowledge as possible of Huron cosmological belief. Afterward, the Blackrobes disputed the logic of those beliefs and offered Christian thought as the only rational alternative. The Hurons were not accustomed to such challenges because they held the ancestral ways absolute and other Indian peoples did not actively seek

⁹⁴ Frederick Turner, *Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit against the Wilderness* (New York: The Viking Press, 1980), 51.

⁹⁵ JR, 13:225; 24:21. While no statistics offer the opportunity for verification, it is probable that the growing number of “disillusioned” included young adults who grew up as a focus of Jesuit attention in the mission’s early years.

⁹⁶ JR, 20:159; 10:13, 29, 59-61; 25:35; Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 97.

⁹⁷ JR, 10:13; 28:71-81.

the proliferation of their own religions. Consequently, the objectification of a previously unquestioned belief system left the Hurons unprepared to engage in doctrinal debate.⁹⁸ Le Jeune wrote: "They think of the soul as divisible, and you would have all the difficulty in the world to make them believe that our soul is entire in all parts of the body. they give to it even a head, arms, legs, -in short, a body; and to put them in great perplexity it is only necessary to ask them by what exit the soul departs at death, if it be really corporeal, and has a body as large as that which it animates; for that they have no reply."⁹⁹ In similar exchanges, the Jesuits found themselves with responses such as "*We do not know; we were told so; our Father never taught us about it.*"¹⁰⁰ By demonstrating improved skill in using the Huron language to advertise and defend their own beliefs, the Jesuits won begrudging admiration from an increasing number of Hurons.¹⁰¹

The Jesuit effort to understand Huron thought revealed the Land of the Dead as a favorable alternative to the Christian Heaven, but the missionaries also discovered that the punishments of Hell were without any cosmological

⁹⁸ In their study of the Protestant missions to the natives of colonial South Africa, Jean and John Comaroff discussed the hegemony of "traditional" culture. They wrote, "we take hegemony to refer to that order signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies - drawn from a historically situated cultural field - that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it. It is rarely contested directly, save perhaps in the roseate dreams of revolutionaries. For once its internal contradictions are revealed, when what seemed natural comes to be negotiable, when the ineffable is put into words--then hegemony becomes something other than itself . . . hegemony homogenizes, ideology articulates. See Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 23-24.

⁹⁹ JR, 10:141-43.

¹⁰⁰ JR, 10:133.

¹⁰¹ For a similar reaction by South African natives to English missionaries, see Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 228.

equivalent in the Huron universe. Consequently, the Blackrobes emphasized escape from the Devil's tortures as the primary motivation to conform to Christian morality and ritual. They presented vivid descriptions of the nether world and stressed that the experiences of its inhabitants were analogous to eternal and unendurable torture at the hands of the Iroquois.¹⁰² Unbelievers, the Blackrobes argued, could look forward to an infinity during which "Hot boiling water would be put inside their mouths. Immediately, they would burn in many places: inside their wombs, intestines, livers, hearts, lungs, everywhere Flame penetrates their entire bodies, including their internal organs. Blood boils in their veins. Their brains boil inside their heads. The boiling will never end."¹⁰³ Such was the destiny of those who rejected the missionaries and continued to participate in the traditional ways.

In order to escape the perpetual scalding and to win acceptance into the alternative joys of Paradise, the Jesuits asked their hosts to take on the traditional Huron role of warrior and follow Jesus into spiritual battle against the devil's forces.¹⁰⁴ This symbolism was extremely effective in a period of Huron impotence against European disease as well as the increasingly militant Iroquois whose raids during the early 1640s left hundreds of people killed or captured.¹⁰⁵ The Blackrobes observed that "the scourges of God have fallen one after the

¹⁰² Steckley, "The Warrior and the Lineage," 482-85, 489-94; Sagard, *Histoire du Canada*, 554; JR, 5:255; 11:9, 89; 13:71; 23:27-29; 26:183; Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 110, 113.

¹⁰³ Steckley, "The Warrior and the Lineage," 490. Steckley's quotation is taken from Potier, *Instructions to a Dying Savage* (1920), 614. See also, JR, 5:255; 10:29; 11:9, 89; 13:71; Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 113.

¹⁰⁴ Steckley, "The Warrior and the Lineage," 485-86, 503.

¹⁰⁵ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 634-647; Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot*, 196.

other, upon this poor Barbarous People; the terror and dread of War have followed the fatal diseases which in previous years caused mourning and desolation everywhere."¹⁰⁶ The Jesuit fathers consequently argued that their faith enabled a person to transcend these horrors, for believers commanded their own futures by focusing their energies on salvation. This mindset found abundant appeal among the Huron traders who were exposed to the greatest danger of anyone in their communities and whose place beings along the river routes seemed incapable of providing safe passage.¹⁰⁷ Before leaving Kébec in 1634, an Attignawantan trader renamed Joseph Taondechoren announced to his fellow Christians:

Here I am, about to depart; and perhaps we shall never have the consolation of seeing one another again here on earth. This makes me feel a desire to speak to you, as if I was myself about to die, with the truest sentiments of my heart. Whatever misfortune may befall us, let us remember that we are Christians; that the object of our hopes is in Heaven . . . Let us make up our minds to die and to endure the pain and sorrow of this life. Let us even now offer the whole to God, so that he may turn it to his glory; and, in exchange for a moment that remains to us to suffer of earth, we may receive an eternal reward in Heaven.¹⁰⁸

Just as the Huron trading venture traditionally held spiritual connotations through the acquisition of power items and contact with the place beings, for the converts it now became a test of faith for a potential reward at death--a new reciprocal exchange. Catholicism allowed its practitioners to find solace by

¹⁰⁶ JR, 22:305.

¹⁰⁷ JR, 10:73; 23:175, 199-201; 26:183, 233; 28:45, 95; 29:279-81.

¹⁰⁸ JR, 26:233. See also 10:61.

reasoning that “Now I shall be at the end of my trials” when confronted by the attacks of the Iroquois or the dangers of rapids.¹⁰⁹

In lieu of facing these dangers, the converts comforted themselves with the increased variety and quantity of goods that they acquired from the French and the victuals that the Jesuits provided them in times of famine, such as the summer of 1642.¹¹⁰ Among the trading advantages that the French gave to a baptized Huron was the opportunity to barter for firearms, a particularly valuable lure in an era of warfare with enemies who gained their main advantage from arquebuses.¹¹¹ The Jesuits openly acknowledged the role this tempting bait played in gathering audiences for their instructions. “This Nation is very docile,” explained Le Jeune, “and when influenced by temporal considerations it can be

¹⁰⁹ JR, 20:163, 179; 21:255; 22:59, 65; 23:59, 293; 24:189. Gauging the great dangers that travel from Huronia to French held territory posed in the 1640s, many Hurons began to question whether it was worth it to continue to trade. Yet French goods had become an integral part of a Huron economy that encompassed inter-tribal politics, kinship relations, religious ritual, and the acquisition of prestige. Consequently, the tribal-wide consensus necessary to completely sever trading relations could not be reached. Additionally, the honor of successfully completing the journey to and from the Huron country appealed to young men seeking to enhance their standing within a society that valued such accomplishment. To complicate matters, the French consistently offered military escorts and assistance when it appeared that the Hurons would abandon the risky trading venture. See JR, 26:71; 27:89; 28:47, 57.

¹¹⁰ JR, 27:63.

¹¹¹ JR, 10:241; 27:71. Bruce Trigger argues that the frightening noise and corresponding psychological reaction that firearms produced was the only advantage that the weapons provided their users. Yet the arquebus was a superior weapon to the bow and arrow for other significant reasons. First, this author’s experience with replicas of early seventeenth-century English firearms indicates that a .65 caliber lead ball could be fired *accurately* at a man-sized target 8/10 times at a distance of a hundred yards, generally 40 yards greater than the corresponding accuracy of a bow and arrow. One took his chances when firing at targets from 100 to the maximum of 300 yards away. Second the damage that a lead ball inflicted on a human being was infinitely greater than that of an arrow. An arrow generally left a clean wound, while a lead ball, composed of a soft metal, flattened out once it hit its target. Finally, the training required to fire an arquebus at a rate of three shots a minute was minimal. Even if French trade guns were not of the quality of modern replicas, these criteria would still apply in varying degrees, especially when one considers that the Jesuits housed a blacksmith--one who performed minor firearm repairs--at Sainte Marie during the 1640s. Such a tradesman was probably accessible to Christian Indians. See Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 617, 629, 632-33; JR, 27:89.

bent as one pleases.”¹¹² Father Isaac Jogues added that firearms were “a powerful attraction to win [the Hurons]: it seems that our Lord intends to use this means in order to render Christianity acceptable in these regions.”¹¹³ Le Jeune and Jogues did not intend to sound sarcastic, for the Jesuits sought to convert only those who demonstrated a testable acceptance of Christian faith and law. Aware that opportunistic Hurons planned to perform their way into a more profitable enterprise or an extra meal, and weary of those neophytes who demonstrated an inclination to tire of Christian restrictions, the Society of Jesus enacted stricter precepts to determine the sincerity of a candidate for baptism.¹¹⁴ With revitalized fervor, the missionaries quizzed the neophytes on their thoughts of being Christians and held their daily lives to Jesuit standards of morality and ritual.¹¹⁵ The Society of Jesus did not expect that every convert would live the life of an ideal Christian--for instance, all of the Hurons would not shatter the nation’s cultural norms and engage in the proselytization of other Indians--but the missionaries were not so propagandistic that they blessed the suspect in order to pad the tally of baptisms by which the French public judged Jesuit success in New France.¹¹⁶ To do so would soil the faith to which the Blackrobes devoted their lives. Instead, the Jesuits constructed innovative and intuitive methods for communicating Catholicism to their challenging subjects.

¹¹² JR, 10:41.

¹¹³ JR, 25:27. See also Axtell, “Were Indian Conversions Bona Fide?” 106.

¹¹⁴ Probationary periods for potential converts generally lasted between one and two years. JR, 19:121-23, 197; 21:133-35, 173-75; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 613, 699, 711.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20:79; 22:47; 23:12; 24:61; 26:213, 221, 227; 27:3-5; 39:143.

¹¹⁶ JR, 27:67; Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 125.

One method directed the Jesuits to spend more time in private, individual council with Hurons in such locations as Sainte Marie and Trois-Rivières. A second permitted the Jesuits to phase out improper traditions among neophytes until they demonstrated the appropriate mindset and behavior of a candidate for baptism.¹¹⁷ Yet another called for the celebration of Christian mass with as much ritual solemnity and aesthetic magnificence as possible, allowing for worship “a thousand time more imposing” than traditional Huron experience.¹¹⁸ Visual aesthetic impression also served the Jesuits in the form of Christian-theme paintings, for pictures facilitated the ability of the Hurons to imagine what the Blackrobes described.¹¹⁹ The Indians’ belief that such representations crackled with spiritual and even corporal life contributed to the effectiveness of this approach.

Yet the Jesuits also moved to relate Christian belief to the wider Huron experience through an emphasis on Catholic and Huron cultural equivalents. One such correlation infused the renaming ceremony that took place at baptism. It was Huron practice to change a man’s name when he assumed important new responsibilities, and baptism certainly marked one of those occasions because it allowed for purification of the soul and membership in God’s flock.¹²⁰ In 1641, a

¹¹⁷ JR, 18:19; 26:19. The archaeological world of W. and E.M. Jury at the Sainte Marie site indicates that among converts, the Jesuits had not successfully abolished the Huron custom of burying the dead with grave goods and food. A number of exhumed coffins contained Christian items such as rosaries and more traditional gifts such as wampum and bone charms. For a summary of their work, see Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 671.

¹¹⁸ JR, 17:39-1; 23:23; 24:117-19. An important aspect of this tactic’s effectiveness was that Christian aesthetics were novel to Huron Christians relative to their familiarity with traditional Huron ceremonies.

¹¹⁹ JR, 19:203-05; Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 278.

¹²⁰ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 55.

Huron man was baptized at Saint Joseph and renamed Charles. After the holy water was placed on his forehead, his godfather broke into a speech that promoted the concept of the Huron warrior ethic inherent in the acceptance of Christianity. He announced, "I rejoice to see you now in the number of God's children; inasmuch as you are freed from the bonds of the Demons, fight valiantly, and keep the word that you have given to God. Baptism has given you arms and strength against your unseen enemies, -use them courageously."¹²¹ The Jesuits also presented baptism as the entrance into a holy lineage that descended from the Virgin Mary and that commanded all the communal responsibilities of membership in a Huron clan. However, Christian reciprocity demanded that converts lead their cherished relatives into Heaven. Without this aid, even a believer's loved ones would follow the ancestors into hell where they would continue the Huron cycle of eternal suffering. Affection for one's living relatives and the desire to maintain a holy lineage therefore became diametrically opposed to the universal Huron concern of losing contact with the ancestors.¹²²

Other Christian replacements for traditional Huron constructs took the form of rosaries and crosses as charms to bring good luck, saints as spiritual familiars, consumption of the spirit protector's body and blood as sacred communion, and attribution of successful hunts to religious practices.¹²³ But

¹²¹ JR, 20:219-21; 39:33.

¹²² Steckley, "The Warrior and the Lineage," 497-98, 500.

¹²³ JR, 10:255; 18:157, 167; 21:77-79; 22:57; 23:31; 26:251-53, 287; 27:21; 29:287-89.

perhaps the most effective crossover was the concept of revelation.¹²⁴ Roman Catholic doctrine held that the Holy Spirit possessed churches during mass, that Christ was present during the Eucharist, and that God offered direct advice to certain spiritual leaders, such as Ignatius.¹²⁵ Furthermore, popular Catholic belief held that dreams, favorable events, and certain meteorological occurrences were divine messages.¹²⁶ All these ideas found corresponding precepts in Huron tradition, including the responsibility of a ceremonial leader to interpret visions.¹²⁷ This was a particularly important task for the Jesuits among the dream-conscious Hurons who relied on them to fulfill the role of shaman. In 1641, an Indian related to the Blackrobes that “being one day in the wood, he saw a man clothed like us, and he heard a voice which said to him ‘Forsake thine old ways; lend an ear to these people, and do as they do; and, when thou shalt be instructed, teach they Countrymen.’ ‘I do no know,’ said he, ‘if it were the voice of the great Captain of heaven, but I saw and conceived great things.’”¹²⁸ Since this vision was favorable to Jesuit efforts, the missionaries accepted it as a revelation, but they quickly rebuked any Huron who

¹²⁴ This thesis uses John Thornton’s definition of “revelation.” Thornton writes, “a revelation is a piece of information about the other world, its nature, or its intention that is perceptible to people in this world or through one or another channel. Revelations provide this world with its window to the other world.” See John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 238.

¹²⁵ Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 239, 248-49.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 239.

¹²⁷ For an analysis of the connection between the stars, Indian spirituality, and Indian agricultural economy, see Ceci, “Watchers of the Pleiades,” 301-17. Ceci demonstrated that the movement of the Pleiades star cluster served as a revelation by which the spirits informed the Indians when to plant and harvest their crops.

¹²⁸ JR, 20:185-87.

independently recognized dreams contrary to their teachings or goals.¹²⁹ If the Indians wanted to become Christians, they would have to accept limits on their own spiritual independence and the strict guidelines of the new religion.

The extent to which converts submitted to these conditions indicated the effectiveness of the Jesuit program in the context of the disasters that decimated Huronia. Some Hurons began to deny that animals had spirits and refused to participate in traditional protective rites of courtesy. Others offered their thanks to God upon the moment of the kill, rather than to the traditionally honored power of the animal being. "My Father I thank you," one hunter said, "it is you who have given me this animal. You have made it to nourish me, and now you present it to me. I thank you for it."¹³⁰ For this man and other converts, the animal beings no longer existed as persons with dominion over themselves, and consequently no longer received the courtesy of the reciprocal exchange. The Christian Hurons now identified these spirits as demons who pried their relatives away from the Jesuit-led faith, the only avenue by which to relieve the nation's physical and spiritual suffering. The demons had to be stifled and the volume of the Huron dialogue with the Christian spirits increased if Huronia was to be saved.

Other adaptations by the converts were equally striking. They abandoned Huron rituals of courting, developing their own instead, and frequently isolated themselves in council or prayer from the rest of the community.¹³¹ Furthermore,

¹²⁹ JR, 21:161-63, 171; 23:159-61, 89-91; 25:251-53, 263; 27:189.

¹³⁰ JR, 20:197-99; 18:149, 157, 167; 22:57.

¹³¹ JR, 23:55, 59, 133, 155.

they willingly endured the scorn of their non-Christian relatives.¹³² This strange behavior implied to other Hurons that the converts participated in the Jesuits' art of witchcraft.¹³³ To add to this social tension, Christians attacked the beliefs of family and friends and physically punished those converts who refused to adhere to the dictates of the all-powerful God.¹³⁴ Finally, in a measure that clearly threatened the link between all Hurons, past and present, converts established their own cemeteries, refusing to participate in the Feast of the Dead that literally and figuratively wove the Huron communities together.¹³⁵ This Christianity bore a factionalism that, indeed, struck at the base of the nation.

The behavior of the Christians sparked the ire of a growing number of Hurons, who vocally expressed their adherence to traditional Huron ways. A source of widespread annoyance was the endless lecturing about the afterlife with which the Jesuits and their Huron supporters pelted non-believers.¹³⁶ "If thou wishest to speak to me about Hell, go out of my Cabin at once," scolded a man whom the Jesuits affronted. "Such thoughts disturb my rest, and cause me uneasiness among my pleasures."¹³⁷ Another man chastised the Blackrobes by adding, "That is not right, we people do not ask such questions, for we always

¹³² JR, 20:197-99; 23:49; 26:253-55, 279.

¹³³ JR, 22:71; 23:31, 135, 267; 26:211; 28:51; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 66-68.

¹³⁴ JR, 20:151; 29:277-79.

¹³⁵ JR, 26:211.

¹³⁶ Native assistants, also known as "prayer captains" or *dogiques* played an important role in the internal spread of Huron Christianity. Axtell writes that a dogique was "a man or woman responsible for leading prayers and hymns, counseling families, catechizing children, initiating newcomers, enforcing morality, and occasionally baptizing the dying in the priests absence." Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 125. See also, JR, 27:67-69; 35:249.

¹³⁷ JR, 23:189.

hope that they will not die, and that they will recover their health.”¹³⁸ Yet even this transgression of etiquette was a secondary cause of traditionalist alarm in comparison to the other Jesuit violations of Huronia’s stability. It appeared that the Blackrobes were slowly fraying the cords that bound the nations of the Huron confederacy to each other and to the ancestors. The demographic impact of the 1639 smallpox epidemic became clear just as growing numbers of Hurons joined the Blackrobes in their rituals. Consequently, traditionalists gave voice to a growing number of rumors that Blackrobe sorcery was the direct cause of epidemic disease.¹³⁹ One story held that Iouskeha appeared to a man and revealed his identity as the one the Christians mistakenly called Jesus. He ordered the Hurons to drive the Jesuits away and to perform a ceremony combining the *ononharoia* or “turning the brain upside down” ceremony with baptism. These actions, he promised, would win health for the Huron confederacy.¹⁴⁰

Despite the hesitancy of the nation to act on this rumor, the shamans actively promoted similar tales, reflecting the direct challenge that the Jesuits’ all-encompassing religious program posed to them.¹⁴¹ The missionaries frequently aimed their attacks on Huron religion at the shamans since these figures emerged as the most public defenders of Huron traditions.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ JR, 13:127; See also 10:121.

¹³⁹ JR, 13:209; 17:15; 18:41; 19:97, 129, 167, 193; 20:27-31; 21:133; 23:153-55; Jaenen, *Friend or Foe*, 63.

¹⁴⁰ JR, 20:27-29.

¹⁴¹ JR, 10:39; 13:105; 19:179-81; 33:221.

¹⁴² JR, 10:197.

Furthermore, the Blackrobes banned their converts from participation in those community-based rituals through which the shamans exercised their powers to cure people or to cause rain. The extent of this division tore at the villages during the famine of 1642. That year's *Relation* noted a shaman's order

That no one should go to gather hemp . . . And the wretch added that, if they failed to obey therein his Demon, all the grain would be lost. This command was at once proclaimed by the Captains; but the Christians would not offer sacrifices to the Devil, being resolved to die of hunger rather than do so. Two sisters, who had agreed together to go out on the following day to gather hemp, thought that they could not without sin break this agreement; they went with bowed heads, and returned in the sight of the Infidels. Complaints were made to the Captains, who proclaimed through the Village that a good harvest could not be expected, that the Christians would be the cause of famine, and that it was quite true that the Faith was the ruin of the Country . . . we were witnesses that most of the corn did not ripen.¹⁴³

Traditionalists launched similar accusations against converts to explain the failure of curing rituals, and one man consequently pleaded with the Jesuits to allow the Christians to participate for just one day in order to relieve his community's suffering.¹⁴⁴

Yet the Blackrobes refused and the entire village was therefore left to suffer the punishments of what seemed to be an avoidable fate.

Two years earlier, similar concerns resulted in a confederacy-wide meeting to discuss whether or not the Jesuits should be permitted to live. It was widely accepted that "when [the missionaries] lodged in a certain village where everyone was well, as soon as they established themselves there, everyone

¹⁴³ JR, 23:55.

¹⁴⁴ JR, 23:49; 26:175, 309-11.

died except for three or four persons. They changed location and the same thing happened."¹⁴⁵ Consequently, the disaffected submitted that if the Blackrobes were not promptly put to death, they would complete the ruin of the nation. Such action, though, required "the consent of the whole Country, so that whoever takes them in the act has full right to cleave their skulls and rid the world of them, without the fear of being called to account, or obliged to give any satisfaction for it."¹⁴⁶ For an entire night, the Hurons strongly considered executing this option, but ultimately could not form consensus. The dissension stemmed from the varying degrees to which the confederated nations and the clans that encompassed them suffered from epidemic disease, accepted the Jesuit teachings, or were willing to gamble with the maintenance of French trading relations.¹⁴⁷ Self-interest ruled the day, and without the agreement of all the other Huron nations on the issue of killing the Jesuits, any individual clan or tribe whose member participated in such a venture would be held responsible for the repercussion deriving from that action. As the Huron confederacy attributed tremendous importance to the French trade, no single group invited such a burden.

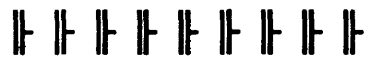
Other factors contributed to the Huron confederacy's inaction against the Blackrobes. First, it was unwise to alienate the French as a military power and

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Jaenen, *Friend or Foe*, 63. See also JR, 19:177.

¹⁴⁶ JR, 10:223.

¹⁴⁷ JR, 10:201. The Jesuits reported that "several families have their own private trades, and he is considered Master of one line of trade who was first to discover it." JR, 10:223-25.

ally in a period of increasing hostilities with the Five Nations Iroquois.¹⁴⁸ Careful diplomacy had to be maintained in order to keep these forces from joining in a military and commercial alliance that would invite the destruction of the Hurons. Violence against the Jesuits also risked an increase in the diseases with which their touted, omnipotent God punished the nation. Rumor held that the Blackrobes made a man insane when he opposed them.¹⁴⁹ Rather than invoke a similar response by antagonizing the missionaries, many Hurons sought to neutralize the hostile powers of their universe. The potential always existed that conditions could get worse and therefore the Jesuits found themselves shielded from organized violence. Despite numerous threats of persecution, only one relatively minor attack against Brébeuf ever took place.¹⁵⁰



“The more we advance in the faith the more do we walk among crosses,” read the Jesuit Relation of 1642. “It seems as if everything were about to perish--at the very moment, perhaps, when God intends to save everything.¹⁵¹ By the mid-1640s, Huron society existed in a constant state of agony as it reeled from multiple epidemics and warfare. For perhaps the only time in memory,

¹⁴⁸ JR, 27:89. The French demonstrated their value as military allies by dispatching soldiers to Huronia in response to proliferating Iroquois attacks.

¹⁴⁹ JR, 10:201.

¹⁵⁰ JR, 19:167, 193; 23:189.

¹⁵¹ JR, 22:273.

however, village communities proved unable to rally the whole of their populations to those rituals that customarily defended the Hurons against the world's horrors. From 1634 on, the Jesuits strove to undermine the basic premises that grounded the Indians in their mythic universe and that allowed them to participate in the process of nature that affected their lives. As the missionaries developed their interpretive and organizational skills to meet the obstacle of Huron cosmology, they became a considerable threat to the Huron community: when cosmological assurance was most essential, they provided doubt; when the need for community leadership arose, they stepped forward as rivals; when only social coherence offered protection, they bred divisiveness. To the Hurons who continued to believe in the ways of the ancestors, the Jesuits were the most horrid of sorcerers.

Yet for those who found themselves persuaded by the skillful presentation of Christianity's tenets, the Blackrobes were a source of consolation during a period in which the logical construction of Huron cause-and-effect imploded. Not only did the Jesuits facilitate a profitable trading relationship with the French, but they peddled a belief system that allowed its Indian followers to retain important aspects of their traditional religious system while discovering a newfound potency in weakness, consolation in fear, and order in insanity. A new reciprocal exchange, understandable through Huron cosmology, called upon converts to fulfill God's desires in order to win the gift of his eternal protections. Despite the pains of disinheriting the mythic past--the history of the Huron

people--the ways of Catholicism appeared as the only means of protection in a time of holocaust. The scourges of God might thrash the nation into numbness, but the converts began to comprehend a purpose in it all.

CHAPTER III

To Become All Things to All Men

LYING ACROSS LAKE ONTARIO from the Hurons and among New York's Finger Lakes, another Indian confederacy -- the Iroquois -- faced crises wrought by the complexities of cultural contact.¹ Daniel K. Richter argues that "the Iroquois conceptualized the process of population maintenance in terms of spiritual power. When a person died, the power of his or her lineage, clan, and nation was diminished in proportion to his or her individual spiritual strength."² Consequently, survivors conducted "re-quickening" ceremonies that passed the name as well as the social duties of the deceased to another person. The Iroquois believed that this ritual regenerated communal power and promoted generational continuity that stretched to the ancients. However, from 1633 through the 1640s, cycles of European 'childhood' diseases ran deadly courses through more than half of the Iroquois populace, thereby rendering the successors incapable of filling every vacant place in the social structure.³ This vacuum posed an immediate threat to communal subsistence patterns, political

¹ Five nations made up the Iroquois league in the mid-sixteenth century: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca.

² Richter, "War & Culture," 539.

³ The first recorded European-source epidemics reached Iroquoia in 1633 and surfaced again in 1640-41. See Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1992), 56-59, and Trigger, "The Ontario Epidemics of 1634-1640," 19-38. See also Alfred W. Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXXIII (1976): 289-299.

stability, and the continuity of corporately-held ritual knowledge, but the Iroquois believed that such disorder was a symptom of their weakened spirituality. Another sign of the supernatural crisis was the dramatic and often violent actions of mourners whose temporary madness stemmed from their deeply felt losses. Until the roles of their deceased relatives were filled, these irrational persons threatened to increase the distress of their society.

The solution was to look outward. At the latest, in the autumn of 1646, the Five Nations launched a series of direct attacks on Huronia designed to produce war captives. The captured who were identified as adequate replacements for dead Iroquois were adopted as full members of the community; those who were not so fortunate suffered long hours of ultimately fatal tortures.⁴ In the latter case, the use of prisoners served to ameliorate the Five Nations' burgeoning rage, while in the former it facilitated the requickening of Iroquoia.

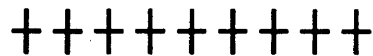
These goals fueled warfare on a technological and organizational scale previously unknown in the Great Lakes region. Unlike the Hurons, the Iroquois possessed hundreds of Dutch firearms that provided greater long-range accuracy, destruction, and psychological terror than did the use of arrows.⁵ Furthermore, and more important, unprecedented co-operation between the warriors of the Five Nations allowed them to concentrate their efforts against their less united enemies.⁶ Iroquois efficiency was devastating: by the summer of 1648, the Hurons had not traded with the French for over a year; women refused to tend their unprotected fields; over one-tenth of the Huron population

⁴ Daniel Richter develops this groundbreaking interpretation of the 'mourning wars' and describes the Iroquois adoption ritual in *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 32-38, 49, 54-55, 57-58. For accounts of Iroquois raids against the Hurons, consult JR, 21:21-25, 65; 22:251-79, 307; 23:35; 24:273-95; 26:35-39; 28:45, 121-3; 39:183. Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 617-664, surveys and contributes to the dense historiography that interprets the St. Lawrence attacks. See also William J. Eccles, "The Fur Trade and Eighteenth-Century Imperialism," *Essays on New France* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 79-95.

⁵ Richter, "War & Culture," 538

⁶ Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 57; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 725-737.

had been lost in a single battle; stretches of valuable acreage lay destroyed; and the Arendarhonons as well as the Attigneenonahacs were refugees among the other Huron tribes. To continue this destruction, the reeling Huron population endured the beginning stages of a famine produced by the accumulating disasters.⁷ If the Jesuits' descriptions of Hell were not convincing enough for some doubtful listeners, the horror produced by the "mourning wars" would suffice as a worldly example.⁸



"I may say that this country has never been in such deep affliction as we see it now," wrote Father Paul Ragueneau of Huronia in 1647, "and that never has the Faith appeared to greater advantage. The Hiroquois, the enemies of these people, continue to wage a bloody war against them that destroys our frontier villages and causes the others to dread a similar misfortune. At the same time, God peoples these poor desolate Tribes with excellent Christians; and he is pleased to establish his holy name in the midst of their ruins. Since our last relation we have baptized nearly thirteen hundred persons."⁹ The Iroquois wars reaffirmed a correlation between Huron misfortune and conversion to Christianity that had previously emerged during the epidemics of the late 1630s. However, the military crisis of the mid-1640s took place when Huronia grappled with a considerably stronger missionary program. By that time, the objectification of Huron tradition, the skillful presentation of Christian tenets, the growing number of missionary centers, and the obvious material benefits of adhering to Jesuit proscriptions had produced an expanding number of converts.

⁷ JR, 32:259; 33:99; 34:89; Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, 61; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 753

⁸ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 725-737.

⁹ JR, 33:69; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 690-93.

Furthermore, many of these Hurons joined the effort to broaden their ranks by actively proselytizing within their own families.¹⁰ While conservatives assuredly outnumbered Christians in 1646, the eve of the Iroquois invasion, such gains placed the Blackrobes in a position to benefit from an increased challenge to conventional Huron authority. The scourges of war effectually completed the formula.

More than ten years after the beginning of the Huron mission, the Jesuits continued to encounter difficulty translating their concepts of the afterlife and the Resurrection, but they nevertheless defended their ability to produce Christians - - "albeit barbarians" -- who "indeed understand religion, and that profoundly."¹¹ An outburst of "virtue, piety, and remarkable holiness" when the future of Huronia was uncertain supported this claim.¹² Typical of many other converts was Ignace Saonaaretsi, who caught the approving eye of the Blackrobes with his intensive and constant praying as well as his regular attendance at morning Mass.¹³ This man believed that his pious actions bore material rewards, for when he killed a deer "he would at once bend both knees to the ground, to thank god for it."¹⁴ In the life of Saonaaretsi, the Christian Lord replaced the Huron spirit beings by providing for practical needs.

Yet this man explained that his worship also prepared him for impending death at the hands of the Iroquois or through the deprivations that they created.¹⁵ In this search for mental security, he exemplifies those converts who found in Christianity an alternative system of logic and ritual that addressed their immediate concerns. Traditional Huron ways had failed to control the mental

¹⁰ JR, 28: 275; 29:277-79; 30:21.

¹¹ JR, 30:73; See also JR, 33:253.

¹² JR, 30:73.

¹³ JR, 33:85.

¹⁴ Ibid. See also JR, 33:167, 181, for similar accounts.

¹⁵ JR, 33:85.

and physical universe of such persons.¹⁶ In contrast, Christianity enabled many of its converts to transcend or at least to find meaning in the multiplying disasters of their country.¹⁷ Father Ragueneau explained that "all those whom I have seen who have fallen into the hands of the enemy, and have afterward escaped have admitted that, at the height of their misfortunes, they felt more Christian courage and sweeter consolation, and had more complete recourse to God, than at any time in the whole of their past lives."¹⁸ One of the ways converts achieved such mental stamina was to accept their misfortune as the act of a benevolent God. A man named Ignace Onakonchiaronk lost his son, five nephews, and a niece to Iroquois attacks, but was reportedly convinced that "[God] knows well what should be done, and sees more clearly than we do . . . think that god provides for everything, --that he loves us and knows very well what we need."¹⁹

While Christianity met the intellectual requirements of many Hurons, another developing appeal was its inclusion of certain familiar traditions. Ragueneau took over as director of the Huron mission in 1645 and began to emphasize the virtues of increased cultural tolerance. He advised the Blackrobes:

One must be very careful before condemning a thousand things among their customs, which greatly offends minds brought up and nourished in another world. It is easy to call irreligion what is merely stupidity, and to take for diabolical working something that is nothing more than human; and then, one thinks he is obliged to forbid as impious certain things that are done in all innocence, or, at most, are silly, but not criminal customs. They could be abolished more gently, and I say more efficaciously, by inducing the Savages themselves gradually to find out their absurdity, to

¹⁶ For a discussion of the need for an orderly universe in American Indian as well as Pacific islander societies, consult Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*. See also Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 16.

¹⁷ James Axtell develops this argument in "Were Indian Conversions Bona Fide," 100-21.

¹⁸ JR, 33:97.

¹⁹ JR, 33:167-69. For an account of these battles, see Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 743-44, 762-66.

laugh at them, and to abandon them, -not through motives of conscience as if they were crimes, but through their own judgment and knowledge, as follies.²⁰

With this direction, the Jesuits accepted a greater degree of syncretism within their converted ranks. Young Christian men burnt their bodies with coals to focus their attention away from this world and towards the heavenly goal, yet this practice traditionally prepared males to endure the pains of hunting, travel, war, and torture.²¹ A similar mixture of Christian and Huron meaning infused the *athataion*, or "death feast," in which the ailing customarily sang their personal chants and partook of their favorite foods. With the consent of the Jesuits, dying converts used the event as an opportunity to proclaim the strength of their belief.²² It is likely that such persons also replaced their usual protection songs with Christian hymns or similar self-worded tunes, for when Huron traditionalists injured Laurent Tandoutsont, he broke out singing "I shall go to-day into heaven; I shall die in the company of my brothers; Jesus will have pity on me."²³

Despite the intensifying relationship between Christian and Huron ritual, the greater part of converted behavior perplexed conservatives. Native neophytes regularly staged meetings to discuss purging themselves of sin, a concept previously alien to Hurons.²⁴ Men wept openly and seemed to reject the traditional goal of maintaining "imperturbable tranquillity" at all times.²⁵ Especially bewildering was the refusal of Christian adolescents to participate in sexual relations before marriage. The Jesuits wrote of one young man who rolled in the snow to stifle his urges and of a woman who publicly renounced sexual discussion and activity altogether.²⁶ From the perspective of those who

²⁰ JR, 33:145-47. See also 33:197, 217-18; 39:29.

²¹ JR, 30:39; 38:259.

²² JR, 34:113.

²³ JR, 30:65.

²⁴ JR, 30:77-79.

²⁵ JR, 30:73; 38:267.

²⁶ JR, 23:71-73, 99; 30:39.

considered premarital relations a normal and even desirable means of choosing a spouse, such restraint indicated that the converts desired to alienate themselves from the rest of Huron society.²⁷

Another disturbing break with Huron tradition extended to the Christian method of childrearing, for a converted woman won missionary approbation when she beat her 'misbehaving' four-year-old son.²⁸ Custom labeled such reprimands inappropriate and potentially dangerous. Bruce Trigger describes the Huron belief that "a child was an individual with his or her own needs and rights rather than something amorphous that must be molded into shape. The Huron[s]," he continues, "feared that a child who was unduly humiliated, like an adult, might be driven to commit suicide."²⁹ That a convert would consciously dismiss these concerns indicated the growing distance between the ways of traditionalist and Christian.

Yet the conservatives did not interpret their nation's social tension as the simple by-product of dissenting religious belief and practice, but rather as the manifestation of overtly discordant Christian behavior. By the mid-1640s, Huron neophytes were carving crosses into trees, praying out loud in public, and regularly avoiding public ceremonies despite the pleading by their countrymen that their absence was ruining Huronia.³⁰ Furthermore, a number of Christians expressed their desire to overturn Huron ritual altogether. In 1646, the Huron elders gathered to elect "a very celebrated Captain" and to tell the ancestral myths. Each participant took his turn reciting one of the narratives until a

²⁷ Huron sexuality during the initial stage of European contact is discussed in Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 49.

²⁸ In a rather unsubstantiated work, Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot: The Subjugation of Women in Seventeenth-Century New France* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), blames Jesuit influence for what she perceives as a growing Huron movement towards domestic violence and the systematic disempowerment of women.

²⁹ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 47.

³⁰ JR, 23:67; 28:273; 30:23.

Christian man stood up and recounted a biblical tale. Protest immediately ensued, but the convert declared that the Huron stories were untrue because they changed according to the fallible memories of men. In contrast, he submitted the accounts "of the Sacred books, wherein the word of god himself is written, without permission to any one to alter it the least in the word." Finally, he turned to a shaman who claimed to control the seasons and insulted him.³¹

While similar events regularly inflamed Huron traditionalists, perhaps no action was so antagonistic as the benevolent Christian treatment of Iroquois captives. In the first decade of the mission, the Blackrobes regularly clashed with their hosts over attempts to baptize prisoners of war, but these efforts rarely won any outward support from the converted.³² However, in 1645 the Five Nations captured and mutilated Father Francesco Bressani, an event that Paul Ragueneau believed "served more than all our tongues to give a better conception than ever to our Huron Christians, of the truths of our faith."³³ That same year, a convert named Totiri publicly denounced the torture of a prisoner and warned that such a fate awaited non-Christians in hell.³⁴ The traditionalists called Totiri mad, but his protest launched a series of similar acts by other Hurons. Ragueneau explained that this Christian dissent raised "unparalleled contests and resistance . . . from the infidel Hurons, who hardly permit us to procure eternal happiness for those whom they look upon solely with the eye of an enemy."³⁵ The Iroquois bore responsibility for the torture and death of thousands of Hurons; to demonstrate sympathy for these people sent a clear message to traditionalists that the Christians no longer aligned themselves with

³¹ JR, 30:61-65. For accounts of similar encounters see JR 28:273; 35:101-05. The Jesuits frequently promoted the efficacy of the 'written word versus oral memory' argument. Consult JR, 39:147. See also Axtell, "The Power of Print in the Eastern Woodlands," in *After Columbus*, 86-99.

³² JR, 21:169; 23:33-35; 29:269-71.

³³ JR, 30:69.

³⁴ JR, 29:263-69.

³⁵ JR, 33:103-115.

their ancestors or their non-Christian tribesmen. The enemy, it seemed, also lay within Huronia.

With the exception of their meeting in 1640 to discuss killing the Jesuits, the traditionalists had refrained from organizing centralized resistance to Christian advances. Instead, their responses took the form of small-scale, reactionary measures. In 1645, Huron children threw feces and stones at the cross during a Christian procession in the Attigneenonahac village of St. Joseph.³⁶ That same year, Ignace Onakonchiaronk converted and quickly "saw the affections of his whole Village changed against him." "Opportunities were sought for beating him to death," Ragueneau explained, "and --these attacks not being successful, --that they might get rid of him with more impunity, he was vigorously accused of being in the number of those secret Sorcerers whom every one is permitted to slay as a public victim."³⁷ Two years later, missionaries lamented the frequent attempts of traditionalist women to seduce the baptized.³⁸ Another popular anti-Christian measure was to spread rumors that contradicted Jesuit teachings. One of the circulating tales claimed that there was nothing in Heaven but fire and that all who rejected the Blackrobes' teachings would surely go to the Land of the Dead. "All this was an article of faith for all the infidels and even some of the Christians half believed it."³⁹

However, like so many other attacks against the missionary presence, this rumor's success was decidedly short lived and the Jesuits quickly restored the effective operation of their growing flock. Popular spontaneous measures simply were not exerting consistent anti-Christian pressure. Consequently, as the 1648

³⁶ JR, 28:275.

³⁷ JR, 30:19-21.

³⁸ JR, 30:33-35.

³⁹ JR, 30:29-31. For a discussion of how rumors dictated and reflected the Huron response to Christianity, consult Jill E. Frank, "Rivals of the Word: Rumors Between Seventeenth-Century Hurons and Jesuits" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, College of William and Mary, 1992).

Iroquois raids reached farther into Huronia and as the number of converts increased by one thousand over the course of that year, the traditionalists decided that it was finally time to oust the Blackrobes.⁴⁰ Trade with Kébec had ceased in 1647 because of Iroquois attacks along the St. Lawrence. To initiate a move that might lead to a more complete break, six headmen from three communities sponsored the murder of a French *donné* named Jacques Douart.⁴¹ When two men committed the deed on April 28, 1648, confederacy leaders quickly gathered, whereupon the traditionalists demanded that the Jesuits leave Huronia and the converts return to their customary religion. But the council had to consider the worth of French military and material support during the military crisis. Kébec supplied its missions with soldiers, cannons, and supplies as well as its Christian allies with firearms.⁴² Furthermore, between April 1647 and 1648, when villages repeatedly fell to Iroquois assaults and refugees scattered throughout the country, the Jesuits harbored over 3,000 Hurons at Ste. Marie.⁴³ The desire to sustain and increase such aid, in addition to the growing political influence of the Christian faction, led to the decision that the Blackrobes would stay as well as receive compensation for Douart's death. Although this method of justice ran contrary to French customs, the missionaries accepted the council's judgment and further agreed to participate in an elaborate traditional ceremony to heal the metaphorical wounds of the Huron/Blackrobe relationship.⁴⁴ Yet both the Jesuits and their hosts realized that the future balance of power in this association was forever altered. When the Hurons presented their reparations, they declared that the confederacy was now "but a dried skeleton without flesh, without veins, without sinews, without arteries, --like

⁴⁰ JR, 35:199.

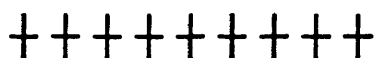
⁴¹ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 746.

⁴² JR, 32:70; 33:253.

⁴³ JR, 33:75.

⁴⁴ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 748-49.

bones that hold together only by a very delicate thread." A strand in that thread, the council decided, was the presence of the French missionaries, for a representative publicly announced to Father Ragueneau, "It is thou who hast strengthened this country by residing in it."⁴⁵ The traditionalists observed this exchange without protest; organized opposition to the Christians was effectively over.



In the months following the anti-Jesuit movement, it became abundantly clear that the nation's greatest challenge was survival rather than identity. The Iroquois entered Huronia's southeastern frontier in July 1648 and targeted the well-fortified town of Teanostaiaé, but rumor of the imminent battle reached the village before the enemy army. Ragueneau wrote that "amid all those alarms, the Christians, the Catechumens, and even many infidels hastened to the Church, --some to receive absolution, others to hasten their Baptism; all feared Hell more than Death . . . the Father, found himself, fortunately, compelled to grant their requests."⁴⁶ Suddenly cast in the role of Teanaostaiaé's spiritual leader and relishing the opportunity to win salvation for such multitudes, Father Antoine Daniel dipped his handkerchief into holy water and sprayed the throngs around him.⁴⁷ Moments later, the Iroquois controlled the town and proceeded to burn the longhouses of their soon-to-be captives. The Blackrobe courageously sought out the aged and the sick amidst this chaos to offer them their last rites or first sacrament, but the Iroquois fell upon him when he returned to the church. Riddled with arrows and bullets, Daniel achieved the Jesuit dream of martyrdom.

⁴⁵ JR, 32:61.

⁴⁶ JR, 33:99.

⁴⁷ JR, 33:259, 34:89.

The day was less glorious for the Hurons. While most of Teanostaiaé escaped the Iroquois, about 700 persons were killed or captured in the battle, a number that represents approximately 10% of Huronia's 1648 population.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the loss prompted the Arendarhonons as well as the Attigneenonahacs to abandon their southernmost villages.⁴⁹ With thousands of refugees disrupting the agricultural cycle and stretching the food reserves of their countrymen's villages, the Hurons endured a famine during the winter of 1648/1649.⁵⁰ Yet the suffering would not end with the coming spring. In March, the Iroquois launched another campaign and the subsequent destruction of the villages of Taenhatentaron and St. Louis ushered in a horrific, but ultimately, unavoidable conclusion: the Hurons had to abandon their territory.

The impending dissolution of the Huron confederacy exacerbated the crushing despondency of its population. Converts, however, experienced decidedly less mental suffering than the traditionalists. Father Ragueneau submitted that "the hopes of Paradise which the Faith furnishes to the Christians are the only consolation which sustains them at this critical time, and which makes them more than ever esteem the advantages of the blessing which they possess, which cannot be snatched from them, either by the cruelties of the Iroquois or by the protraction of a famine that continually pursues them in their flight."⁵¹ Observing the relative peace of these Christians over the course of their country's destruction, thousands of Hurons began to petition the Jesuits for instruction and baptism. Between 1645 and 1646, the missionaries had christened only 164 persons, but with the outbreak of war three years later, they baptized 1,300 Hurons in the span of eight months. In 1649/50, that number of

⁴⁸ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 753.

⁴⁹ JR, 33:81.

⁵⁰ JR, 34:203; 40:45.

⁵¹ JR, 34:199.

new converts increased by 1,400, with an addition of 1,700 more twelve months later.⁵² By the winter of 1648/1649, this growing population enabled three council members in the town of Ossossané to declare resident Father Chaumonot a principal headman. Furthermore, they announced that dream fulfillment, performance of the *andacwander*, or any other activity contrary to Christian practice would no longer be tolerated.⁵³ Such Christian victories easily justified the horrors of the Iroquois invasion to the Jesuits. Father Ragueneau explained that the Hurons "would have been lost if they had not been ruined; that the greater part of those who came in quest for baptism in affliction, would never have found it in prosperity; and that those who have found Paradise in the Hell of their torments, would have found the true Hell in their earthly paradise."⁵⁴

Yet a number of Hurons continued to demonstrate violent resentment towards the missionaries. Father Ragueneau accused Huron adoptees among the Iroquois of being among the most enthusiastic participants in the torture of Fathers Brébeuf and Gabriel Lalemant, captured in 1649. These same adoptees, his report continued, commonly spread stories about the Blackrobes' sorcery and their destructive efforts to abolish traditional ways.⁵⁵ This pattern repeated itself as a number of Huron traditionalists abandoned their homeland to spread among northern trading partners as well as the Neutral and Tionontaté tribes to the south.⁵⁶ For these refugees, what remained in Huronia no longer resembled the nation of the ancestors.

Due to the spread of famine in the summer of 1649, a small number of refugees fled from the mainland to Gahoendoe or Christian Island in Georgian

⁵² JR, 28:233; 33:253; 35:199, 227.

⁵³ JR, 34:107; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 761.

⁵⁴ JR, 38:45.

⁵⁵ JR, 30:27; 34:27-29, 141-49. See also 47:197.

⁵⁶ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 779

Bay.⁵⁷ They were joined over the next six months by numbers of their war-plagued countrymen, and soon the island's human population grew beyond its food-producing capacity.⁵⁸ Consequently, the Gahoendoe Hurons were forced to subsist on roots, acorns, moss, bark, or fungus; a few even turned to the traditionally abhorred practice of eating the dead. With their parents unable to gather food safely on the mainland, undernourished and underclothed children regularly perished from starvation or plague.⁵⁹ The survivors could not muster the strength to bury them; corpses lay in the open as daily reminders of Huronia's demise.⁶⁰

Since the Jesuits offered the only comfort in the midst of this macabre setting, their followers began to call them "the *fathers* of the Huron people" -- a significant change from the previously used term of "brother."⁶¹ From their island mission of Sainte Marie, the Blackrobes distributed small amounts of fish, eggs, game, pork, milk, and acorns.⁶² However, they were careful to keep plenty for themselves, being those "who must devote ourselves to the cultivation of faith, and to secure the salvation of souls."⁶³ In addition to the nutritional aid, the missionaries supplied the Hurons with an able-bodied work force. French servants built a stone fort on Gahoendoe to serve as protection against Iroquois attacks and, with the fathers, helped to bury the Hurons' dead.⁶⁴ Soldiers from New France were a token military force, but they brought valued goods from

⁵⁷ JR, 34:197-203.

⁵⁸ JR, 34:223; 35:85-87.

⁵⁹ JR, 35:19, 183.

⁶⁰ JR, 35:19.

⁶¹ JR, 35:87 (*my emphasis*).

⁶² JR, 33:253; 34:27; 35:99.

⁶³ JR, 34:27.

⁶⁴ JR, 35:95. In 1650, there were 13 Jesuits at Sainte Marie along with "four coadjutors, twenty-two donnés, eleven other domestics (to whom alone are paid very modest wages), six soldiers, and four boys, sixty souls in all." See JR 35:23.

Kébec to an otherwise isolated population.⁶⁵ By 1650, Ragueneau could assert that "there is hardly one among the living who does not live by our aid; hardly one of those that died who did not acknowledge that he owed more to our charity than to any other human being."⁶⁶

Perhaps such persons referred to the Blackrobes' spiritual as well as material relief, for Ragueneau rejoiced that the Hurons' "hearts had become so tractable to the faith that we effected in them, by a single word, more than we had ever been able to accomplish in entire years."⁶⁷ The Jesuits and their converts instituted a strict religious society on Gahoendoe that sought to infuse the tattered population with some semblance of order. At daylight, the converted gathered and began a 'call-and-response' mass designed to help those who were previously baptized in haste.⁶⁸ Later, the priests offered a brief instruction on the Catholic mysteries as well as how to fill the agonizing days with spiritual meaning. Typically, this entailed "urging [the Hurons] to offer God their labors, their pains and their sufferings; or by giving them some ejaculatory Prayer that should be their support, and the life of all their work; or by teaching them the means of resisting temptation, and how, if through misfortune they had yielded to it, they should betake themselves to God, and ask his pardon."⁶⁹ The missionaries repeated these lessons ten or twelve times a day because of the overwhelming demand for their services. When they completed this task, they listened to confessions, made cabin visits, led public prayers, and quizzed neophytes to determine if the aspiring Christians spent the day in a pious

⁶⁵ In 1649, two soldiers returning from Huronia brought 747 pounds of beaver skins with them. See JR, 34:61; Trigger, *Children of Aataensic*, 760.

⁶⁶ JR, 35:23.

⁶⁷ JR, 35:87.

⁶⁸ See JR, 30:99-101 for an example of a convert who received most of his Christian training after baptism.

⁶⁹ JR, 35:101.

manner.⁷⁰ The Society of Jesus anticipated that their French reading public would question whether the Huron interest in Christianity did not spring from their stomachs. However, Ragueneau quickly labeled this incentive secondary to the Hurons' intellectual needs. Of the former traditionalists he wrote:

It needed . . . that God, if he would save them, should bring down their pride. Now they flocked to him like sheep, and entreated for holy baptism, --not in the expectation of any relief they could hope for from a man, who as they saw, was famished like themselves, but because they admired him, seeing that his courage was not abated by it; and because he was their consolation, in the prospect that he then gave them of an eternal happiness free from all these miseries.⁷¹

The sustained practice of Christianity by Hurons among the Iroquois supports Ragueneau's assertion.⁷² During this period, these adoptees did not have frequent contact with Jesuit missionaries or a marked economic interest that would justify their maintenance of the imported religion. Rather, they appear to have accepted the missionaries' challenge to their traditional world view. The Blackrobes railed about the fate of non-Christians for many years before the military disaster, and subsequent events seemed to justify their predictions. Furthermore, their persistent proselytization while suffering alongside the Hurons validated their advertised intentions. Finally, the Blackrobes offered their material and intellectual stability as a sign of their spiritual well-being, a claim supported by traditional Huron belief.⁷³ This condition stood in stark contrast to the traditionalists who seemed to have exhausted the powers of customary Huron practice. For Huron Christians among the Iroquois and on

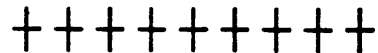
⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ JR, 35:173.

⁷² JR, 47:57; 50:115; 51:187-91. See also John Demos *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 30-32, 123-25.

⁷³ Axtell, *Invasion Within*, 16.

Gahoendoe, conversion had emerged as a logical step towards empowerment in the new Huron universe.



Huron Christianity outlived the Iroquois crisis and, indeed, Huronia itself. In the spring of 1650, rumor of two encroaching Iroquois armies reached the second Sainte Marie mission, and while the Hurons had bravely endured the devastation of war, hunger, cannibalism, and plague, this anticipated confrontation broke their collective desire to cling on to the remnants of their traditional territory.⁷⁴ Many of them headed north to lodge with other tribes, while others reached a once unfathomable decision that they would voluntarily join their captured relatives among the Iroquois. For the Gahoendoe traditionalists who had witnessed the denigration of their ancestors' customs, this must have seemed a more tolerable option than continued submission to Jesuit leadership.

Yet most of the converts clearly believed that their best chance for spiritual and worldly survival lay with the Blackrobes. Two headmen informed Paul Ragueneau of their intention to leave Gahoendoe, but they added the unexpected request that he lead their people to K bec. After balancing economic concerns against religious opportunity, the Jesuit leader agreed, and on June 10, 1650 he escorted 300 families east towards what the Indians must have perceived as an alien, Christian town. The remaining Gahoendoe Hurons

⁷⁴ JR, 35:189-91.

followed soon after and were welcomed with French material aid, but K bec's forces were unable to deter the Iroquois from extending their raids to the new Huron encampments along the St. Lawrence.⁷⁵ Hostilities continued over the next three years with intermittent overtures by the Five Nations to the Hurons that they should join their adopted countrymen in Iroquoia. The invitation was enticing. Franois le Mercier wrote in 1652 of an occasion when the Hurons, "being eager to learn news of their relatives and friends who had formerly been taken in war, and had become Iroquois --quietly approached the enemy in order to speak to them. When they had recognized one another, confidence spread little by little, on one side and the other, to such an extent that in a short time there was nothing to be seen but conferences and interviews between Hiroquois and Hurons; and this continued for several days, so that one would have said there had never been any war between them."⁷⁶ The desire to exercise their independence from French authority, in addition to the anticipation of re-uniting with loved ones, led a number of Arendarhonons to join the Onondaga and Attignawantans to become Mohawks.⁷⁷

In the mid-1640s, the Huron population had avoided the outbreak of traditionalist/Christian violence, but with members of the confederacy allied with both the French and the Iroquois, former countrymen found themselves engaged in periodic wars against one another. The violence also extended to Hurons among the other Iroquoian- and Algonkian-speakers of the Great Lakes region, for the Five Nations expanded their "mourning wars" in the late-seventeenth century.⁷⁸ Despite these conflicts, the French-Hurons continued to speak of their impending revitalization and return to Huronia as late as 1665, hopes that would

⁷⁵ JR, 35:199; 36:123, 189-91; 38:49-61, 169-95; 40:113.

⁷⁶ JR, 38:55.

⁷⁷ Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 811-12.

⁷⁸ See Richter, "War & Culture," 528-59.

forever remain unfulfilled. In 1668, New France authorities began a pattern of relocating the Hurons about the K bec area, until 1697 when they finally settled them near the falls of the St. Charles River at a place called Lorette. Here the Hurons moved to establish themselves by adopting French agricultural methods as well as by participating more intensively in K bec's economy. And they persisted as Christians, as they do today.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ For a summary of Lorette's establishment, consult Christian Morissoneau, "Huron of Lorette," *The Handbook of North American Indians, Northeast 15*, vol. ed. Bruce G. Trigger, gen. ed. Wilcomb Sturtevant (Washington D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 389-90.

EPILOGUE

I Am Weary of Relenting

"A young woman went to church. When she was given the [holy] bread to eat, she really did not swallow it, but simply concealed it in her glove. And, as she was going back home, she passed by a pond near the broad road. She cast the bread therein and proceeded on her way to the home of her parents who were wealthy people.

It was not long before she was taken ill. Her parents then hired, in turn, several white man's doctors to attend her. They could not, however, find out what was the matter with her. After a time she became so ill that she seemed to be on the point of dying. The doctors failed as ever to bring relief to her. The old man [her father,] therefore, made up his mind to call an Indian [doctor]. His only wish was to get someone to cure her. Going to the place where the Indians were living, he inquired about their customs as to hiring Indian medicine-men. They explained it all to him. So he went to see the medicine-men and informed them of his purpose, saying, "Are you not able to cure [my daughter]? If you bring her back to health, all my money is yours." An Indian doctor then agreed to the bargain. "I will try and see," said he; "and after I have spent all the day to-morrow [in the woods,] I shall tell you whether I can cure her."

The medicine-man withdrew into the woods, lay down, and fasted. Now then, an uki who was able to discover things came to him and advised him as to what he should do to cure the young woman. When it was over, the Indian doctor went to see his patient. "Did you not once keep the bread when you went to worship?" This is what the medicine man asked the sick young woman. She answered, "Yes! Quite some time ago I kept the bread and cast it into the pond. This I remember." So he said, "Your people must find the bread; for you shall recover only when you eat it. The chief of the frogs is the one that now has the bread." Some people then drained the water from the pond. As soon as it was dried up, they looked for the leader of the frogs and discovered him. He, the big frog, really had the bread in his clasped hands. They took it away from him and gave it to the sick girl. She ate it and was cured. For two whole years she had been ill.

The Indian doctor was the one who had, indeed, found out the cause of the young woman's trouble. So the white people praised him highly for his ability to discover and tell the cause of the illness. The girl now was as well as ever.¹

¹ Barbeau, "The Medicine Men and the White Man's Doctor," in *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, 263-64.

Like her Huron cousins in Lorette, Québec, the Wyandot woman who told this story to Marius Barbeau recalled the power that Christianity transmitted in the historic times of her people.² Most of Oklahoma's Wyandot community was either Protestant or Catholic in 1911: these people understood Christianity and they could explain why the ancestors had passed the faith on to them. As the traditional narratives indicated, the Christian God--through his human and material representatives--could expel monsters from human communities as well as cure and invoke sickness. Since these talents were indicative of great spiritual potency, it was best to adhere to His precepts.

The Lorette and Wyandot oral histories emphasize the message left by seventeenth-century eyewitnesses in the form of written documents and archaeological materials. In time, Christianity resonated with Hurons whose biological, economic, political, and spiritual lives were challenged by interaction with Europeans. Frederick Turner writes:

Even in times of considerable stress a culture usually has traditional means to meet the challenges - emergency structures or plans more or less adequate to the task. It is only when a culture is faced with massive and rapid changes that render even the most severe emergency measures potentially inadequate that a strategy of a radically different nature may be tried. And even in such a deep crisis a culture may struggle to maintain its integrity without having to make major concessions to the stresses that beset it. [Anthropologist A.F.C.] Wallace calls this the "principle of the conservation of cognitive structures" and struggles that neither a culture nor an individual will give up a deeply held conviction of the

² For a discussion of the Christian missions to the Wyandot descendants of the Hurons, see Martin W. Walsh, "The 'Heathen Party,' Methodist Observation of the Ohio Wyandot," *American Indian Quarterly* 16 (Spring 1992): 189-211.

way the world is until convinced that an adequate and congenial replacement is at hand.³

For the Hurons of the mid-seventeenth century, that replacement was the Roman Catholicism promoted by the Society of Jesus. Had the Hurons been left to their own devices, it is likely that they would have adapted their own traditions to meet the challenges of the era, just as they did in the transition from a hunter-gatherer to a primarily agricultural economy. However, the Blackrobes did not allow this process to occur. Instead, as James Axtell argues, they offered an immediate religious substitution that dealt more efficiently with the vacuums of leadership, logic, and even material items than did the Hurons' indigenous methods. Since the surrogate faith not only conformed to the general and familiar philosophy of the reciprocal exchange but allowed its members to retain a number of their effective traditions, it was reasonable for the Hurons to adopt it as their own.⁴

Contrary to the arguments of Bruce Trigger, the coexisting economic benefits of this decision do not indicate that Huron converts engaged in a masquerade designed to produce plentiful amounts of European goods. When they embraced Christianity and made it an Indian religion, the neophytes knowingly invited the wrath of their closest relatives and countrymen, thereby violating strong Huron cultural restraints against social unrest; they abandoned cosmological precepts and religious rituals that they had previously trusted to

³ Frederick Turner, *Beyond Geography*, 55-56. See also Axtell, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions," 49.

⁴ See Homer G. Barnett, "Invention and Cultural Change," *American Anthropologist* 44 (January-March, 1942): 14-30, for an analysis of this strategy's efficacy.

maintain order in a potentially dangerous world; and they made an overwhelming demonstration of faith, placing their destinies in the hands of the culturally alien Jesuits. Conversion was not a materialistic venture. It was a desperate response to a profound intellectual and social crisis.

Ethnohistorians will undoubtedly continue to debate whether such an interpretation is supported by the seventy-three volumes of *Jesuit Relations*, the archaeological materials of the seventeenth-century, and the continued existence of Catholicism among modern Hurons.⁵ While the only one who might be able to solve the historical puzzle is a monster snake whistling below the surface of Lake Saint John, perhaps scholars should consider the words of the Huron descendants, including John Kayrahoo: "Here is what I think: there are two kinds of things, the old customs and the modern ways. Everybody in this land has to follow one or the other. I have picked up just a little of these new things, that is, only in so far as it seemed useful to me. So it has happened; and, in this manner, we have become mixed, in the country where we are now living. . . . Could one live after the customs of long ago? No, that is not possible. That time is gone."⁶

⁵ Olive P. Dickinson, Review of Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial America*, in *Ethnohistory* 36 (Winter 1989): 90.

⁶ Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, 35-36.

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