

Dan Mathis

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"Les robes noires et les pères récollets: Jesuit and Franciscan Missionary

Competition in Early New France"

## **Introduction**

In 1615, four Récollet friars embarked from the French port of Honfleur in high spirits for their journey to New France. Their ambitious goal, as their Spanish Franciscan brothers had done before them, was to be the first to carry the word of God and plant the cross of the Catholic Church in the New World colonies of their patron kingdom. France was a country still recovering from the fires of religious war that engulfed the 16th century, and the Récollet's reformed order emerged as one of several groups determined to spread and solidify the authority and influence of Catholicism, even in an era of relative toleration after the Edict of Nantes. The prospective missionaries had this duty in mind as they boarded the *St. Etienne*.

On May 25, 1615, Joseph Le Caron, Jean Dolbeau, Denis Jamet, and Pacifique du Plessis landed at the trading post of Tadoussac to begin their missionary work with all the "zeal and charity as great as the universe."<sup>1</sup> They had the support of Samuel de Champlain. They had enjoyed the close royal support and patronage of Henri IV and the successive regency under Marie de Medici. They had been given express papal permission to spread French Catholicism to the Native Americans. They established their missionary work with every sense of optimism and with seemingly every political advantage. If that were not enough, even more providential was the fact that May 25 was a feast day for St. Francis of Assisi. Yet, in a matter of fifteen years,

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<sup>1</sup> Chrestien Le Clercq, *Premier établissement de la foy dans la Nouvelle-France*. 2 vols. (Paris: Amable Auroy, 1691). 85

they would lose virtually all benefits and privileges to another prominent order of religious reform - the Jesuits. How did this happen?

Both the Jesuits and the Franciscan Récollets were orders established during the reform era of the Counter-Reformation (In fact, the name *Récollet* applied to the order instead of *Réformé*, which was a French designation for Protestants).<sup>2</sup> Franciscans and Jesuits were both orders known for their missionary work around the world, and some accounts of their interactions in New France indicated a somewhat collaborative effort. However, there existed a real element of competition and conflict between the two Catholic groups. The Récollets seemed to have advantages in their close relationship with the French crown and the Gallican Church, as they were a uniquely French religious order.<sup>3</sup> In addition, their goals of Francification and the assimilation of the Native American peoples were in line with the state interest. Alternatively, the French were often suspicious of the perceived ultramontanism of the Jesuits, and their controversial policies of cultural relativism. However, it was the unlikely Jesuits who earned the eventual missionary monopoly of New France in 1632.

In order to explain this development, I will examine the Jesuit missionary efforts in early Acadia, with a focus on their developing policy of cultural relativism and isolation with the Native Americans, as well as their antagonism towards other secular missionary efforts. The focus will then shift to the rise and fall of the Récollets in New France, and the arrival of the Jesuits. This culminated with a brief disruption of missionary efforts due to the French war with England in 1628, which then created the opportunity for the Jesuits to secure their position. This

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<sup>2</sup> Odoric Joue, *Dictionnaire biographique des Récollets missionnaires en Nouvelle-France*, (Quebec: éditions Bellarmin, 1996), xv.

<sup>3</sup> "Gallicanism" refers to the popular French ideology of the time, which was a belief that the Catholic Church in France was best operated with semi-autonomy. It emphasized the influence of local bishops and the temporal ruler in the king, rather than direct control from Rome. This was opposed to ultramontanism, which literally meant "over the mountains," in reference to papal authority in the Vatican.

paper argues that the Jesuits gained the advantage over the Franciscans due to several factors: first, they were not a mendicant order like the Récollets; therefore, they took no vows of poverty and could finance their own efforts. Second, they were more politically savvy and published regular reports of their efforts. Third, Jesuit notions of cultural relativism, spiritual detachment, and the "search for God in all things" often gave them practical advantages when dealing with and living among the Native Americans.

### Historiography

There has not been an incredible amount of material written by historians regarding Jesuit and Récollet competition during this period. The historical discussion focused on Jesuit missionary efforts in Canada has been extensive and plentiful. The voluminous number of works goes as far back to Francis Parkman in the 19th century.<sup>4</sup> Historian J.H. Kennedy was one of the first to look in-depth at Jesuit motivations and cultural reactions to the Native Americans. He asserts that Jesuit interactions with Native Americans framed intellectual thinking during the Age of Reason concerning the questions of man as a moral being, and the natural state of man.<sup>5</sup> This was an interesting work that tied the missionary work to influences in Europe, and it did begin to touch on themes of cultural relativism that would be refined later.

Work on the Récollets has been remarkably more limited. The most comprehensive look at the early missionary efforts of the Récollets is still *Dictionnaire Biographique de Récollets missionnaires en Nouvelle-France* by Odoric Jouve, which was most recently edited and

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<sup>4</sup> See: Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1867). It was the first major study to go into the primary sources of the Jesuits, particularly the *Jesuit Relations*. This is a very problematic work, but its importance in the field of study of the Jesuits in North America is immense, as later historians have also often looked to and cited his work as the first empirical look at the *Jesuit Relations*. "Spanish civilization crushed the Indian; English civilization scorned and neglected him; French civilization embraced and cherished him."

<sup>5</sup> J.H. Kennedy, *Jesuit and Savage in New France*, (Hamden: Yale, 1950). 55-56.

supplemented with historical articles by Hervé Blais and René Bacon. The information provided on the Récollets is extensive and written in a good narrative, yet, it does not discuss in detail the question of competition with the Jesuits.<sup>6</sup> Timothy Pearson, in his work *Becoming Holy in Early Canada*, and historian Carlo Krieger both write in good detail of the Récollets, yet their work mostly concentrates on the later missionary efforts in the late 17th and early 18th century.<sup>7</sup>

Any comparison of Jesuit and Récollet work or competition did not really emerge until Bruce Trigger beginning in the 1970s. Marcel Trudel discussed it briefly in *The Beginnings of New France, 1524-1663*, where he mentioned that dwindling resources were the main reason for Récollet failure and Jesuit invitation, but he does not go into ideological or strategic differences.<sup>8</sup> Trigger's most important work is a larger history of New France, entitled *Natives and Newcomers*. In it, he emphasizes Jesuit cultural relativism as a primary factor. His discussion of the Récollets, while not as extensive, concludes that their steadfast desire for Francification caused many of their problems with Native Americans. He was the first major historian to state that the divide between the two missionary groups should be defined in the context of the cultural absolutism of the Récollets and the cultural relativism of the Jesuits.<sup>9</sup>

When addressing any Récollet and Jesuit difference, more recent scholarship has tended to echo Trigger's argument. For example, Carole Blackburn writes primarily on the nature of Jesuit cultural relativism, asserting that it was not a message of tolerance but rather one of

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<sup>6</sup> see Odoric-Marie Jouve, *Dictionnaire biographique des Récollets missionnaires en Nouvelle-France, 1615-1645, 1670-1849*, (Quebec: Bellarmin, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> see Carlo Krieger, "Culture Change in the Making: Some Examples of How a Catholic Missionary Changed Micmac Religion," *American Studies International*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (June 2002): 37-56; Timothy G. Pearson, *Becoming Holy in Early Canada*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Marcel Trudel, *The Beginnings of New France, 1524-1663*, trans. by Patricia Claxton, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973) 123-125.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1986), 200-202.

European imperialism and the extension of cultural conquest.<sup>10</sup> In addition, she provides insight into the methods used by Jesuits, which sometimes were in direct conflict with French state policy, especially regarding assimilation. She reinforced the argument that while Jesuit cultural relativism was flawed, the Récollets failed because of their absolutism.<sup>11</sup> Takao Abé provides one of the more interesting analyses in *The Jesuit mission to New France: a New Interpretation in the Light of the Earlier Jesuit Experience in Japan*. He argues that their relationship should not be defined in the strict terms of relativism and absolutism, as Trigger had. For Abé, the Jesuits began with the policy of assimilation, and it was simply realities on the ground, such as funding or numbers, that both hindered Récollet efforts and allowed Jesuit strategies to evolve.<sup>12</sup>

While Abé does include important political context in his argument, he does not frame the competition within any context of political rivalry or previous experience in Europe. Nor does he explore Récollet ideology. This essay aims to look at the specific early years of missionary efforts and explore the rivalry between the two groups within the larger context of ideological differences within the Counter-Reformation and political stature, as well as argue that Jesuit political maneuvers and evolving relativism gave them the advantage over the Récollets.

## **Emergence in Counter-Reformation France**

The Counter-Reformation was a long-term effort to reform the Catholic Church in order to sufficiently combat the rise of Protestantism and try to encourage a renewal of Catholic influence and doctrine. One of the more important doctrinal assertions of the movement relied on

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<sup>10</sup> Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: the Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 2000), 104; 126.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 130-131.

<sup>12</sup> Takao Abé, *The Jesuit mission to New France: a New Interpretation in the Light of the Earlier Jesuit Experience in Japan*, (Boston: Brill, 2011), 103-105.

the belief in salvation through faith and works, rather than the Protestant notion of faith alone. This would develop into a larger goal of finding the truth of God to serve the Lord in all things, solidified with the Council of Trent.<sup>13</sup> This distinction is quite important, as the Council should be seen as the defining moment. However, the common failing arises when using it to define the entirety of the Counter-Reformation as a movement. Even in the most active regions of Catholic reform, such as Iberia and Italy, homogeneity was not as prominent a characteristic of reform thinking.

In fact, historians often disagree as to when the reform movement known as the Counter-Reformation actually began. For example, John C. Olin traces the roots of concentrated church reform to decades before the Council of Trent. Looking at the efforts of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola in Italy at the end of the 15th century, Olin argues that, while his efforts were ultimately crushed by the papacy, his attempts to reform within the Church denoted the beginnings of a larger movement. He targeted various abuses which later fueled the Protestant Reformation, and which would later be addressed by the Tridentine efforts.<sup>14</sup> It is important to understand the nuances involved in reform efforts that stretched over a century, rather than the specific years of the council. With this in mind, one can understand that consensus was elusive, especially within the reform efforts of the regular religious orders of clergy.

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<sup>13</sup> William V. Bangert. *A History of the Society of Jesus*, (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972). 48; Cushner. 19. The Council of Trent was a pivotal movement of the Counter-Reformation spanning several years. Little changed in actual Church dogma, yet much was changed in the presentation of the church, as well as the influence of intellectual movements, religious orders, and education. See also: *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests, Issued by Order of Pope Pius V*. Trans. Theodore Alois Buckley, London: Routledge, 1852.

<sup>14</sup> John C. Olin *The Catholic Reformation: Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola: Reform in the Church, 1495-1540*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1969). 25. See also: John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era*, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2002).

## Reformers

In the early 16th century, many within the Franciscan monastic orders in Europe began to call for reform within their ranks. They believed that the adherence to the original rules and doctrines of St. Francis had developed into lax behavior and a more liberal interpretation. Some historians argue that they should not even be considered reformers, as they advocated a stricter interpretation of the rules already in place.<sup>15</sup> One of these groups, the Capuchins, eventually broke away from the Franciscan Order and founded their own. The Récollets in France, however, were one of the groups that did not break formal ties with the larger order, yet still developed their own semi-autonomous reform efforts.

The Récollets' main influences traced back to the Spanish Franciscan Peter of Alcantara in the early half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He advocated a return to strict Franciscan doctrine, including more austere notions of mendicant poverty, an emphasis on internal reflection and inward spirituality, in addition to a focus on charitable work and eventual missionary work. His writing, most notably from his *Treatise on Prayer and Meditation*, indicated a longing to return to a more primitive notion of Franciscan ideology.<sup>16</sup> In it, he advocated for the importance of spiritual isolation and devotion, saying:

"Devotion is nothing else than a certain readiness and aptitude for doing good." For this takes away from our mind all that difficulty and dullness, and makes us quick and ready for all good. It is a spiritual refectation, a refreshment, like the dew of Heaven, a breath and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, a supernatural affection. It so orders, strengthens, and transforms a man's heart, that it imparts a new taste and inspiration for spiritual things, a new distaste and abhorrence for sensible things.<sup>17</sup>

The treatise is also plentiful in references to humility and a separation from worldly pursuits and desires. He also condemned any pursuit of non-spiritual gain, as it was the great

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<sup>15</sup> Jouve, xv.

<sup>16</sup> Peter of Alcantara, "Treatise on Prayer and Meditation," from the English Translation, *A Golden Treatise on Mental Prayer*, edited by G. S. Hollings, S.S.J.E., (reedited by the Franciscan Archive), (Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1904), available at <http://www.ourladywarriors.org/prayer/mntlpryr.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, Chapter 1.

enemy of devotion.<sup>18</sup> He saw the life of the religious as a spiritual process of conversion within the individual, which was at constant struggle with outside influences and the inherent evil of original sin. The practice of participating in any worldly enterprise or profit, even as means to a spiritual end - for example, participating in a fur trade to help fund missionary efforts - was considered to be a corrupting influence. Meditation and reflection were important to all Franciscans, but the work of Peter of Alcantara and his followers indicated that all should return to strict adherence. The Récollets in France carried this spirit of reform as they began to establish themselves in the late 16th century.

The Jesuits who would arrive in the colonies of the French Atlantic efforts were firmly rooted in the principles and ideas that would promulgate during the Counter-Reformation of the 16th century in Europe and the founding of the Jesuit order. The origins of Jesuit reform offer contrast to those of the Franciscan orders. Their founder, Ignatius of Loyola, established most of the original Jesuit theology in the 16th century. His *Spiritual Exercises* became a guide for members of the society. Some of the main concepts were those of "spiritual detachment," and "finding God in all things." Where Franciscan doctrine emphasized poverty and spiritual simplicity and dependency, Ignatius believed that a Jesuit should be able to fulfill his role as a "soldier for Christ" in any environment - from the most wealthy and comfortable surroundings to the poorest and most dangerous.<sup>19</sup>

For the Jesuits, outward surroundings should not make a difference in the spiritual realm within a person. As primary actors in the promulgation and education of Counter Reformation doctrine, this meant that one could see the possibility for salvation in every aspect of life, and in every human being. This moved away from the largely Augustinian beliefs in the inescapable

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, Chapter 2.

<sup>19</sup>John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1993).



corruption of original sin, to those ideas embracing the natural state of man as receptive of salvation, which could partly be attributed to Aquinas and the influence of humanism in Catholic doctrine.<sup>20</sup> This would later guide the Jesuits in their interactions with the Native Americans.

### France After the Wars of Religion

The situation in France during the late 16th century was one of violence and uncertainty. The Wars of Religion had caused great suffering and destruction, and it was indicative of the larger European crisis of stability, which was endemic during the era of the Counter Reformation and religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants.<sup>21</sup> The king of France, Henri IV, was a former Huguenot and a Catholic convert. The religious merits of his conversion have been doubted, and his reign was partly defined by his ability to use religion as a formidable political tool. While Henri's Edict of Nantes strove to end religious tensions by calling for a relative toleration of French Protestants, the uneasy threat of religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants would remain ever-present in France.

As mentioned in the introduction, one cannot overlook the political realities of France after the Wars of Religion and the ascension of Henri IV. The Récollets themselves emerged exclusively in France, and this aspect of a uniquely French order would aid them in their popular support and political movements. They gained considerable ground with the populace, as they seemed to worry less about supporting political factions during the Wars of Religion and rather focused on aiding the everyday poor and sick in France who were suffering, caught in the middle of terrible sectarian violence.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the aftermath of the destruction left many of France's religious houses and institutions in ruins, and it was the Récollets who were one of the main

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<sup>20</sup> J.H. Kennedy. *Jesuit and Savage in New France*. (Hamden: Yale, 1950).10-11.

<sup>21</sup> Theodore K. Rabb, *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe*. (New York: Oxford, 1975). 30.

<sup>22</sup> Jouve, xviii.

groups encouraging a rebuilding process; they worked toward a rejuvenation of Catholic spirit after the decades of sectarian warfare in a country that was exhausted.<sup>23</sup> Fortune smiled on the order when the Bishop of Nevers attempted to install Italian *Riformati* (a similar Franciscan reform branch) in the region. When the French population rejected the foreign friars, the Récollets moved in and established themselves with the convent of Nevers. When Henri IV learned of the desires of Pope Clement VIII, ever the champion of the *Riformati*, to increase reformed presence in France, he gave the royal sanction to the Récollets, in the hopes that a French order could help against foreign influence.<sup>24</sup>

By disassociating themselves from the different factions involved in the wars, the Récollets ended up gaining later influence and political courtesy. Many religious orders had been staunch supporters of the Catholic League - the hard-line papist faction who supported the Duke de Guise and who were enemies of Henri IV - and this included several Jesuits.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the Capuchins were the monastic order who had previously enjoyed a close relationship with the French Crown, but their association with the League alienated them from court when Henri ascended the throne. Therefore, the Récollets were conveniently able to ingratiate themselves with the new Bourbon dynasty in the same manner the Capuchins had with the Valois.<sup>26</sup>

The Jesuits, on the other hand, had a particularly shaky relationship with secular authority in France, as many perceived them as papist agitators against the crown. This opinion was not without merit, as the founding principles of the religious order called for strict adherence to apostolic hierarchy. As Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, wrote, "If we wish to proceed securely in all things, we must hold fast to the following principle: What seems to me white, I

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<sup>23</sup> Jouve xviii.

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

<sup>25</sup> J.H.M. Salmon, *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century*, (London: Methuen, 1975), 237.

<sup>26</sup> Jouve. xxv.

will believe black if the hierarchical Church so defines."<sup>27</sup> Many saw them as staunch supporters of the ultramontane Catholic League. Ultramontanism (literally meaning "over the mountains," in reference to the papacy in Rome) in France was often at odds with Gallicanism. Gallicanism was a particularly French notion of quasi-autonomy of the French Catholic Church, which emphasized the local influence of Bishops and the temporal ruler in the king rather than the direct control of the Pope. This would result in continuous political conflict between the Jesuit efforts and the French state, and their position at the turn of the 17th century was not as advantageous as that of the much more Gallican Récollets. Even so, the practical needs of missionary endeavors, as well as the political situation, demanded occasional cooperation. Henri IV saw the potential for missionary efforts to spread the influence of the French church and French culture to the Native Americans to secure political and economic alliances in the region and counter English and Dutch interests. Thus, the Jesuits were allowed to begin missionary work in the French colony of Acadia.

### **Jesuit Efforts in Acadia**

The Récollets in 1615 were the first French missionaries to establish any consistent effort among the Native Americans of Québec. However, they were preceded by a few years by the Jesuits in the French colony of Acadia, in what is now Nova Scotia. These initial and short-lived efforts offer a glimpse into the Jesuits' ideology and implementation of certain strategies, some of which were the same that hindered the Récollet efforts. However, one can also see the beginnings of those methods and concepts that would help secure the Jesuit missionary monopoly in 1632. This first, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to Christianize the newly

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<sup>27</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, "Rules for Thinking Within the Church," in *The Catholic Reformation: Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola: Reform in the Church, 1495-1540*, by John C. Olin (New York: Harper and Row, 1969). 210.

sought-after French colonial interests provides an excellent insight into Jesuit motivations. Not only does it offer a look at the initial goals of the missionary efforts themselves, but also the goals of the French state authorities in relation to the Jesuits. In addition, it demonstrates the first instance of Jesuit antagonism towards other missionary efforts in Canada.

The first Acadian experiment could not have happened without the efforts of Father Pierre Coton. As was indicated earlier in the paper, the Jesuit political position in France at the turn of the 17th century was not as advantageous as that of the Récollets. The Jesuits' position had suffered because of their perceived alliance with the ultramontane enemies of Henry IV, the Catholic League. However, Henry eventually allowed the Jesuits to return to Paris, as he likely knew they were too important politically to keep at a distance.<sup>28</sup> It was during this time that Pierre Coton was able to ingratiate himself with the Crown. Many Jesuit critics accused him of convincing the king to allow the return of the order, and by 1608, his political maneuvers eventually saw him rise to the position of confessor to the young Dauphin Louis, a post he would retain until 1617. With his newfound political advantage, Coton saw an opportunity to increase the influence of the Jesuits by calling for Jesuit missionary efforts in the new colonies of France.<sup>29</sup>

Coton first had to receive papal approval of any missionary effort. In 1608, he began vigorous correspondence with Claudio Acquaviva, the Superior General of the Jesuit Order in Rome, in order to facilitate both a sanction from the order as well as the Vatican. Acquaviva was well aware of the precarious political position of the Jesuits in France. For example, as the Superior General, he had spoken out against and silenced certain Jesuits, such as Juan de Mariana, whose writings infamously advocated the moral imperative of tyrannicide in the event

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<sup>28</sup> Lucien Campeau, *La première mission d'Acadie (1602-1616)*, (Rome: Monumenta Hist. Soc. Iesu, 1967), 25.

<sup>29</sup> Kennedy, 18-19.

of a protestant king.<sup>30</sup> This was embraced by the Catholic League during the Wars of Religion, and it obviously alienated the supporters of Henri's reign against the Jesuits; therefore, Acquaviva made political steps to distance the Jesuit Order from the Catholic League. Coton corresponded with Acquaviva frequently in his venture to secure a Jesuit missionary expedition, and they often spoke of the goals of the would-be missionary work. As expected, they spoke of the common mandate of spreading Catholicism, yet they also discussed political aims as well. For example, a letter from Acquaviva to Coton in February of 1608 discussed how the presence of Catholic missionaries was necessary to combat the influence of the "heretic" Pierre de Gua, sieur de Monts, who was a prominent Huguenot with trading interests in Canada.<sup>31</sup> The presence of protestants within the trading companies of the early 1600s would be of continuing interest to the Catholic missionaries in Canada, both Jesuits and Récollets. Coton succeeded in obtaining papal support from Rome, as well as royal sanction from both Henri IV and the regency under Marie de Medici after the king's untimely assassination in 1610. Also, he secured third party endorsement and funding from Jean de Biencourt de Poutrincourt, who was appointed the governor of the colony of Port Royal in Acadia. In 1608, Coton called upon the prominent Jesuit Pierre Biard to leave his post in Lyon and lead the new missionary effort.

The Jesuits first arrived in Canada in 1611. The French settlement at Port Royal in Acadia had previously been established in 1608, yet it was a struggling colonial venture at the time. In May of 1611, the *Grâce de Dieu* reached the destination of Port Royal and brought with her two Jesuit passengers, Pierre Biard and Ennémond Massé, along with a great sigh of relief

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<sup>30</sup> Campeau, 660.

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Coton, "Le P. Pierre Coton au P. Claude Acquaviva, Gen., Paris, 18 août 1607," in *La première mission d'Acadie (1602-1616)*, by Lucien Campeau, (Rome: Monumenta Hist. Soc. Iesu, 1967). 17.

and among the weary colonists.<sup>32</sup> Father Biard led the expedition to establish a small preliminary mission at the colonial settlement, and he would go on to be the driving force behind this initial wave of missionary efforts, which would endure for the next few years.

One of the first things one notices of the initial records of the mission is that they did not shy from criticizing other efforts to evangelize to the Native Americans. The Jesuits were not the first Catholic clergy in Port Royal, as they were preceded by a secular priest by the name of Jessé Fléché. Sparse information is available concerning the priest or his efforts, yet we do know that he made the first attempts to baptize some of the local native people.<sup>33</sup> Pierre Biard's writings indicated that the Jesuits were highly critical of his efforts, saying that they were insufficient and insincere. He wrote:

"Now follows the third of the topics proposed in the beginning—the setting forth, namely, of the condition in which we found the Christian religion in this country. Certainly before this time scarcely any attention has ever been given by the French to converting the souls of the natives to Christ. There have been many obstacles. For the French only wandered through these regions, but did not remain here, and those who wished to remain were harassed by so many calamities that they assuredly could not give much thought to this matter. Some natives, it is true, were occasionally baptized... but these not being sufficiently instructed, and finding themselves without shepherds, immediately resumed their former habits and traditions."<sup>34</sup>

This indicates, at least from the perspective provided by Biard, that the Jesuits would be an order that would aggressively assert their supremacy and proficiency compared to any other missionary effort. This dismissal of rival missionary work was not an aberration, as they would later be critical of the Récollets. For the Jesuits, Fléché was the antithesis of proper missionary

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<sup>32</sup> Pierre Biard, "Lettre au R. P. Christophe Baltazar, Provincial de France, à Paris," in *the Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, ed. Reuben G. Thwaites (73 vols., Cleveland, 1896-1901) [puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations](http://puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations). Vol. I, 144-152. All documents from the Thwaites series will be cited hereafter as *the Jesuit Relations*. The *Relations* are comprised of 73 volumes of letters and journal entries chronicling the Jesuit experience in New France. They were not necessarily meant as personal correspondence, as the Jesuits firmly decided that they would be published. This was in an effort to show Europe the promise of their missionary efforts, as well as to secure political favor to fund continued efforts. This is in stark contrast to other religious orders in the region. The Franciscan Récollets, for example, kept very few records in comparison to the Jesuits.

<sup>33</sup> Trudel, 108.

<sup>34</sup> Pierre Biard, "Letter From Father Biard, to Reverend Father Christopher Baltazar, Provincial of France, at Paris," in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. III, 159

work, as he never sincerely tried to learn the language of the native people; therefore, he could not possibly find elements within the native culture from which to cultivate a proper understanding of Catholic theology.<sup>35</sup>

The Jesuits in Acadia did not limit their harsh criticisms to Fléché; they encountered further conflict against secular fiduciary interests in the colony as well. In his writings, Father Biard consistently referred to the aims of the Acadia missions as purely religious undertakings of a "harvest of souls" for Christendom, and that "[the Jesuits] cast some seeds in this New World, with the hope of one day having a plentiful harvest, sole object of our voyage."<sup>36</sup> These sentiments appear ubiquitous in both religious documents and state decrees, as the royal mandate was to expand Catholicism to the Native Americans and the New World. However, they saw the influence of the French settlers and traders as a real encumbrance against their efforts. Father Biard desired to distance the missionary efforts from the secular interests of the fledgling colony, as he wrote of his fears of the degenerative influence of the French settlers in January of 1612:

"...in truth it would be much better if we were more earnest workers here for Our Lord, since sailors, who form the greater part of our parishioners are ordinarily quite deficient in any spiritual feeling, having no sign of religion except in their oaths and blasphemies, nor any knowledge of God beyond the simplest conceptions which they bring with them from France, clouded with licentiousness and the cavilings and revilings of heretics...The first things the poor Savages learn are oaths and vile and insulting words; and you will often hear the women Savages (who otherwise are very timid and modest), hurl vulgar, vile, and shameless epithets at our people, in the French language; not that they know the meaning of them, but only because they see that when such words are used there is [47] generally a great deal of laughter and amusement. And that remedy can there be for this evil in men Whose abandonment to evil-speaking (or cursing) is as great as or greater than their insolence in showing their contempt?"<sup>37</sup>

Of course, this passage introduces the feelings of a particular and largely representative Jesuit leader towards the Native Americans of the area, primarily the Mi'kmaq people, but it also

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<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, 18.

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Biard, "To the King," in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. III, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Biard, "Lettre du P. Biard au R. P. Provincial à Paris Port Royal, Janvier 31, 1612" in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. II, 6-7.

demonstrates an inherent desire to distance the missions from degenerative influences of French traders. This was a problem encountered both by the Jesuits in Acadia as well as the later Récollets in New France. The Jesuit response typically involved a criticism of contemporary French culture and the eventual policy of isolation with a desire to separate missionary efforts from the harmful and sometimes heretical influence of the vulgar settlers. In contrast, the later Récollets would instead demand to the French authorities that they should send better-behaved and more exemplary Catholic settlers.<sup>38</sup> This desire to create a haven from secular interests was not unique to the Jesuit experience in Acadia or in New France, as it was seen in other parts of the Atlantic World as well. For example, the later mission attempts among the Huron peoples are often compared to the Jesuit Reductions in Paraguay among the Guarani.<sup>39</sup> A policy of isolation created less incentive to force French culture on the native peoples. The Jesuits later began to believe that a cultivation of pure Christian evangelism and conversion could work better, as they began to acknowledge that certain values found among Native Americans offer a better option compared to the example set by Europe.<sup>40</sup>

The goal was to convert the Indians to Catholicism and teach them French culture, including an emphasis on settled agriculture rather than nomadic traditions. The Jesuit concepts of cultural relativism in the later missions in New France created ideological conflict, yet in Acadia, it seems that the goal of the Jesuits began as a policy of assimilation. Still, the Jesuits, as products of the Counter-Reformation and Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, embraced the belief that

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<sup>38</sup> Trudel, 124.

<sup>39</sup> Nicholas P. Cushner. *Why Have You Come Here?: the Jesuits and the First Evangelization of Native America* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006). 151.

<sup>40</sup> Paul Ragueneau, "Of the Mission of the Holy Cross at Tadoussac" in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. XXXVII, 190-191.



God's grace was available to all humans, and that one must search for the spirit of God in the natural world. These ideas guided Jesuit interactions with Native Americans.<sup>41</sup>

Biard's writings during the Acadian missions in 1616 reflect these sentiments. "The nature of our Savages is in itself generous and not malicious. They have rather a happy disposition, and a fair capacity for judging and valuing material and common things, deducing their reasons with great nicety, and always seasoning them with some pretty comparison."<sup>42</sup> In addition, he continues the concept of the potential converts as a "harvest of souls," and that all that remains necessary is the proper cultivation in Christianity.<sup>43</sup> Biard's attitudes were still full of condemnation for the "barbarism" of what he saw, and there is a familiar European attitude of paternalism and cultural superiority. In January 1612, Biard wrote to the Father Provincial in Paris, informing him of the potential for conversion and civilization, while also emphasizing that the Native peoples' way of life was something from which they should be saved:

"...It comforts us to see these little Savages, though not yet Christians, yet willingly, when they are here, carrying the candles, bells, holy water and other things, marching in good order in the processions and funerals which occur here. Thus they become accustomed to act as Christians, to become so in reality in his time... As for me, truly I have good reason to severely reproach myself; and all those who are imbued with earnest charity ought to be deeply touched in their hearts...Particularly I beg Your Reverence and all our Reverend Fathers and Brothers to be pleased to remember in your most earnest devotions both us and these poor souls, miserable slaves under the tyranny of Satan. May it please this benign Savior of the world, whose grace is denied to no one, and whose bounty is ever beyond our merits, may it please him, I say, to look down with a pitying eye upon these poor tribes, and to gather them soon into his family, in the happy freedom of the favored children of God. Amen!"<sup>44</sup>

It is evident from the *Relations* that the initial missions in Acadia were extensions of a larger effort to "civilize" and assimilate the Native American populations through the spread of

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<sup>41</sup> Blackburn, 24. Kennedy's work even goes so far as to argue that the ideas the Jesuits developed when dealing with Native Americans were conveyed in their writings back in Europe, and the image of the "savage" helped to fuel concepts of the natural state of man, leading to the Age of Reason.

<sup>42</sup> Pierre Biard, "On the Character, Dress, Dwellings, and Food of the Savages" in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. III, 73.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 109.

<sup>44</sup> Pierre Biard, "Lettre du P. Biard au R. P. Provincial à Paris Port Royal, Janvier 31, 1612" in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. II, 52-53.

Christianity. The French crown saw the Jesuit missions as an opportunity for "Francification" as well as Christianization. Due to the economic realities of the colony, French royal authority, as well as Samuel de Champlain, desired to assimilate the Native Americans into a French Catholic culture in the colony in order to increase the demographic and economic strength of the colonial endeavor.<sup>45</sup>

While this evidence demonstrates that the strategy of the Acadia mission was guided by the overall goal of assimilation, it also reveals hints of unique Jesuit ideology, and what would later develop into a more refined sense of cultural relativism. The Jesuits in Acadia desired to learn native language and culture in order to find a way to make Christianity resonate with potential converts.<sup>46</sup> They often believed that God's grace was available to all and able to be received by all people, and that there was likely existed an inherent natural spirituality that only required the proper teaching and cultivation of Catholic religion

While some progress was made, the Acadian mission was short-lived. In 1613, as the Jesuits Biard and Massé had just finished formally establishing the mission of St-Saveur, English forces under Samuel Argall arrived from Virginia, in reaction to French incursion into the region. He asserted, with cannons, the territorial rights of the English crown over the region, and the settlement at Port Royal was destroyed.<sup>47</sup> Biard himself was taken prisoner and eventually returned to France, and the Jesuits were driven from Acadia and did not return to the region for several years. This was a major setback to Jesuit missionary efforts, and it was seen by the Jesuits as a palpable manifestation of the dangers posed by the heretical Protestants.<sup>48</sup> The

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<sup>45</sup> Kennedy. 34-35.

<sup>46</sup> Trigger, 202.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Lahaise, *Nouvelle-France English Colonies: L'impossible coexistence, 1606-1713*, (Quebec: Septentrion, 2006), 26-27.

<sup>48</sup> <sup>48</sup> Pierre Biard, "Lettre du P. Biard au R. P. Provincial à Paris Port Royal, Janvier 31, 1612" in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. II, 6-7.

experiment itself, however, provides insight into the similar sorts of obstacles that would begin to plague the Récollet missionaries in New France just two years later.

### **The Rise and Fall of the Récollets in New France**

For the Récollets to secure a missionary position in New France, the effort seemed to involve less overt and aggressive political maneuverings, in comparison to the Jesuits. As mentioned previously, they found themselves in the advantageous position after gaining the royal support of Henri IV. After the establishment of the Récollets in Nevers, the next growth of their influence occurred in Montargis, where they remained established for several years. At the time, Samuel de Champlain knew that he needed his venture to be accompanied by missionaries in order to satisfy royal mandates, as well as secure the blessing of the regent Marie de Medici, a devout Catholic.<sup>49</sup> He turned to his partner, Louis Houel, who had known of the Récollets in Montargis for some years, and he advised that the popular French order would be valuable missionaries. Other candidates for missionary work seemed unlikely, especially the Jesuits. The Jesuits had recently become quite unpopular due to the growing controversy and suspicion of their involvement with the regicide of Henri in 1610. So, it was Champlain who personally requested that his voyage be accompanied by Récollets from the Province of Saint-Denis.<sup>50</sup> This is in contrast to the previous efforts of the Coton and the Jesuits, who were forced to masterfully negotiate third party funding and patronage on their own.

The first Récollet missionaries arrived in Québec in May of 1615, under the leadership of Denis Jamet. Their main goals were to evangelize to the Montagnais people near Québec and Tadoussac, as well as establish missions with the Huron further inland and upriver, as they were

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<sup>49</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008), 288.

<sup>50</sup> Jouve, xxxv-xxxvi.

seen as extremely valuable trading allies for the French. As mentioned before, their spirit was one of immense hope and appeared indomitable, given their various political advantages. Quickly, however, setbacks began almost immediately, and the Récollets encountered struggles that would plague their work for its entire operation. From 1615 to 1627, there were never more than four priests at any given time in the whole of New France, and only one remained during the winter of 1616-1617.<sup>51</sup> Dwindling numbers, a perennial lack of funds and resources, conflict with secular trading interests, and a failure to establish a sustained numbers of Indian converts, especially among the Huron, foretold the eventual collapse of their efforts.

In the first year of missionary efforts, nothing of substance was accomplished. Therefore, in July of 1616, the Récollets conducted a study session on religious matters in Québec in order to develop a set plan and strategy for missionary work. There it was decided that the Indians must first be civilized before they could be converted, and that the French would have to mix with them and then accustom them to life among the French. They proposed a threefold policy: a policy of settlement and assimilation, a policy of missionary recruitment and the establishment of a seminary, and an information policy.<sup>52</sup> The first and third initiatives created many of the problems they encountered.

With the new initiative, the Récollets confirmed that assimilation was the goal of the missions. They believed that true conversion to Christianity could not take place unless the native people were first "civilized" and converted to French-styled society and settlement into sedentary agricultural communities. This created difficult hurdles for the missionaries. They did make efforts to study and learn the languages of the Montagnais and the Huron; however, it was not with the goal of communication and understanding of native culture, as the Jesuits would

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<sup>51</sup> Trudel, 123.

<sup>52</sup> Trudel, 124.

later demonstrate, but rather to make it easier to teach them French.<sup>53</sup> The Récollets often refused any attempt to live within native communities, and they were determined to construct their own French-style accommodations on the outskirts.<sup>54</sup> As a Franciscan monastic order, outer environment was an important aspect of inward spirituality. A typical Récollet friar saw living within uncivilized pagan communities as a corrupting influence. There were very practical drawbacks to this sort of strategy. First, it impeded any direct trade benefits, as it made it more difficult for the missionaries to obtain food and supplies. In addition, their austere mendicant notions of poverty discouraged active participation in any proprietary business interest like the fur trade in order to fund their efforts. Instead, they had to rely on their own capacity to produce food or supplies as well as the good graces of outside charity.

The Récollet encouragement of the Native Americans to settle down also engendered some animosity and conflict with the secular trading interests of the colony. While the French royal authorities and Champlain encouraged the assimilation program of the Récollets, many within the established trading company did not want to see large groups of Native Americans settle into agricultural communities abandoning their largely nomadic lifestyle. They worried that it would disrupt the fur trade network that had been established, and the Native American hunters and trading allies throughout New France were vital to their interests.<sup>55</sup> Like the Jesuits in Acadia, the Récollets saw serious problems and conflicts with the settlers and traders. They saw them as a degenerative influence on the native people, not exhibiting the proper Christian moral character. Récollet Father Chrétien Le Clercq wrote that:

"Although they were all well qualified... the others who wished to distinguish themselves for uprightness, equity, fidelity, and zeal for the advancement of the common good (qualities then utterly incompatible with the

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<sup>53</sup> Trigger, 320.

<sup>54</sup> Charles L'Allemant, "Letter from Father Charles L'Allemant, Superior of the Mission of Canada, of the Society of Jesus, to Father Jerome l'Allemant, his Brother." in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. IV.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 198.

intentions and interest of the main) had the misfortune to sustain continual persecutions from the very men who should have done most to uphold their good intentions... Such is the national character of the French, especially in foreign countries beyond the reach of laws, to live in perpetual movement and agitation, to labor little for their own repose and the real common good, to wish to rule one another, to sacrifice to individual advantage the national good, and, over-greedy of gain and profit, wishing to reap as soon as they sow."<sup>56</sup>

Where the Jesuit response became a policy of isolation and separateness of mission, the Récollet response to such problems was to petition the French authorities to send better and exemplary settlers. Father Denis Jamet even travelled back to France with Champlain in 1616 in order to petition a reorganization of the trading company. Problems persisted, which involved both the fear of corrupting influence of ill-behaved or heretic settlers, as well as the need to continue the policy of assimilation. Gabriel Sagard, during his expedition to the Huron, commented that, "the evil life of some Frenchmen is a pernicious example before them, and in all these countries the nations, although barbarous, reproach us with it, saying that we teach them things contrary to what our French practice."<sup>57</sup> In 1621, Jamet and Champlain sent Father Georges Le Baillif to personally deliver a *cahier des doléances* to the Royal Council in Paris that outlined the most pressing needs for the settlement and the missionary efforts.<sup>58</sup>

"As regards religion that all your Majesty's subjects professing the [protestant] religion be forbidden to settle or maintain there any persons of any nation whatever of said [protestant] religion, under such penalties as shall be judged reasonable; that it may please your Majesty to found, for six years only, a seminary for fifty Indian children, after which time they can be supported, in consequence of the increased return of the lands which will by that time be cultivated..."<sup>59</sup>

The requests of the Récollets indicate that they wanted to see the French populace of the colony to be purged of impure souls and other trading interests, such as any Huguenots. "It is

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<sup>56</sup> Le Clercq, Part II, 14-15.

<sup>57</sup> Gabriel Sagard, *Le grand voyage du pays des Hurons*. Paris: Denys Moreau, 1632. Reprint, Project Gutenberg, [www.gutenberg.org/files/23828/23828-h/23828-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/23828/23828-h/23828-h.htm), (2007), Chapitre III.

<sup>58</sup> Jouve, 550-551. On a side note, in August of 1621, Father Georges Le Baillif in Québec administered the wedding between Guillemette Hébert and Guillaume Couillard. They are often credited as being the first Europeans to be married in North America, and are ancestors of this author.

<sup>59</sup> Le Clercq, Part I, 171-172.

highly necessary that his Majesty allow justice to be exercised with so much the more power as the beginning of settlements is more important... not to permit that under his Majesty's authority there be committed thefts, murders, assassinations, pillage, blasphemy, and other crimes, already too familiar among some settlers in that country."<sup>60</sup> A more pious and Catholic group of French settlers could set a better example of French culture to the Native Americans. Also, the explicit need for the establishment of a seminary reveals two things. First, the Récollets were fully committed to the assimilation policy, where instruction in Catholicism would coincide with the indoctrination of French culture and settled agricultural lifestyle. Second, it indicates that they were having difficulty funding their efforts, as this was far from the first time they had extended their hand for outside charity in these few years.

By the 1620s, it was becoming apparent to the Récollets that the missionary work in New France was faltering. Their efforts at assimilation were far from fruitful, they struggled to fund and maintain their work, and their numbers dwindled. They were further hindered when, in their attempts to connect with the Huron, they lost Father Nicolas Viel and a young French novice when they were drowned, most likely at the hands of the Huron themselves.<sup>61</sup> In 1625, realizing they needed help, they made, in hindsight, one of their most fateful blunders: they petitioned France and invited the Jesuits to join them and bolster their efforts.

### Jesuit Arrival

The arrival of the Jesuits in New France was a watershed moment that marked the beginning of the end for the Récollets. Charles L'Allemant, Jean de Brébeuf, and Enémond Massé came to Québec in June of 1625. Their presence initially marked the beginning of a

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 172.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 244-245.

collaborative effort, as the Récollets offered accommodation and advice to their new allies. However, just as they had directed criticism and animosity to Father Jessé Fléché in Acadia, the Jesuits made sure they demonstrated that their arrival was a godsend of capable missionaries to alleviate the brave, but beleaguered and incompetent, Récollets.

This can be attributed to two important letters written by Charles L'Allemant. The first was written in July of 1625, and it was a simple, but profuse expression of appreciation to the Récollets. Addressed to the Provincial Father of the Récollet order, L'Allemant wrote, "it would be altogether too ungrateful not to write to your Reverence to thank you... for the kindness which we have received from these Fathers, who have placed us under everlasting obligations to them... As to me, I write to our Superiors that I am so grateful for this that I shall lose no opportunity to show my appreciation of it... to express the same gratitude to all your holy Order."<sup>62</sup>

The second letter, however, expressed somewhat different ideas. A year later, L'Allemant wrote to his brother, Jerome, who would also later become a prominent missionary. In this letter, L'Allemant seemed to demonstrate praise for Récollet hospitality and cooperation, but at the same time, the letter is full of criticism toward the Récollet missionary efforts of the previous ten years. He criticized their insufficient knowledge of native languages. He noted that they rarely lived among the people they were meant to convert, remaining determined to live in French style dwellings on the periphery. L'Allemant emphasized how little they accomplished in ten years.<sup>63</sup> Not only did he criticize the Récollets on these points, but he also demonstrated how better suited the Jesuits were in each of these areas. In all, he asserted that the picture was bleak due to the failings of the Récollets, writing that the situation was tenuous and threatened:

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<sup>62</sup> Charles L'Allemant, "Letter from the Reverend Father Charles L'Allemant, Superior of the Missions of Canada, to the Reverend Father Provincial of the Reverend Recollect Fathers." in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. IV

<sup>63</sup> Charles L'Allemant, "Letter from Father Charles L'Allemant, Superior of the Mission of Canada, of the Society of Jesus, to Father Jerome l'Allemant, his Brother." in *the Jesuit Relations*. Vol. IV.



"Do not forget the prayers for our souls, and make them from time to time. In any case when you remember us in your holy sacrifices, offer them up for such and such a one, living or dead. The help which has reached us from France is a good beginning for this Mission, but things are not yet in such a condition that God can be faithfully served here. The heretic holds as complete dominion here as ever..."<sup>64</sup>

Jesuit attitudes toward the Native Americans and Native American culture changed in the 17th century. The missions among the Huron in the 1630s and 1640s would demonstrate a shift to a more culturally - although not religiously - tolerant view toward the Native peoples. The concept of cultural relativism became much more pronounced and developed. L'Allemant, in the letter, demonstrated that while the Récollets were struggling with the previously mentioned issues, the Jesuits were seemingly already outperforming them. He emphasized that they were willing to adopt certain Indian customs and dress out of necessity, such as the use of snowshoes "in imitation of the savages."<sup>65</sup> He also mentioned that the Jesuits were willing to live anywhere, even within the Indian communities, while the Récollets were living on the outside.<sup>66</sup> They clearly wanted to immerse themselves in the native culture and language in order to understand it, and then they would use that knowledge to cultivate Catholic faith built on any previous native cultural concepts that worked. This very strategy was abhorrent to the Récollets. Chrétien Le Clercq later criticized the work of the Jesuits, saying:

"...while now none are seen living among French Europeans, but only in neighboring villages, cut off from intercourse, living in the Indian way, incompatible with real Christianity, giving no signs of religion but the chant of hymns and prayers, or some exterior and very equivocal ceremonies."<sup>67</sup>

Another strategy the Jesuits employed was participation in the fur trade. The trade interest cannot be ignored. In fact, many historians have argued that the Jesuits were just as

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 218.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 221-223.

<sup>67</sup> Le Clercq, Part I 256

active in pursuing and securing the economic benefits of trade, and thus used their positions as missionaries to fuel that effort.<sup>68</sup> To a degree, the Jesuits did act as emissaries of sorts, and they did help to secure trading relationships with the Native Americans. However, it was most likely out of necessity for the continuation of their missionary efforts and evangelization, rather than a primary motive for profit, that they did partake in the fur trade.<sup>69</sup> This set them apart from the Récollets, whose mendicant notions of poverty prevented them from accessing the trade as a source of revenue.

### Jesuit Monopoly

By this time, the Jesuits were able to overcome political disadvantage and emerge as the dominant missionary group. By 1632, Louis XIII was on the throne, and the political mechanisms of the French state were largely in the control of Armand-Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu. Richelieu was famous for his assertion of strict centralized state-power, as well as his unique brand of realpolitik. A proponent of the Gallican Liberties, Richelieu had an extremely shaky relationship with the perceived ultramontanism of the Jesuits. Gallicanism was still a prominent force in French religion and politics, and in fact, it seems that the Jesuits would be the last choice of Richelieu when determining which religious authorities would be granted a missionary monopoly in New France.<sup>70</sup> However, the political needs demanded a large concerted effort, and no other group appeared to be up to the task.

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<sup>68</sup> Nicholas P. Cushner. *Why Have You Come Here?: the Jesuits and the First Evangelization of Native America* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006). 151;153-154.

<sup>69</sup> Bruce G. Trigger. "The Jesuits and the Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1965) 30-53. 51. Historian Bruce Trigger echoes this sentiment. His goal is to reframe the argument of Jesuit economic participation in direct contrast to the arguments put forth by Parkman, and later by George T. Hunt in *The Wars of the Iroquois*. Both authors cast the Jesuits as insularly motivated participants, driven by papist ambition and desire to profit from the fur trade. Trigger offers a nuanced look at the economic trade relationships of New France, and particularly the Jesuit missions to the Huron, and concludes that the Jesuits were active in the fur trade, but more so out of convenience and necessity.

<sup>70</sup> Kennedy. 38.

Richelieu saw a direct correlation between missionary efforts with the Native Americans and the larger political and economic stability of a New France under constant perceived threat from the rival English. By including the Native population through Christianization, assimilation, and cooperation, the French authority could bolster the struggling population levels in order to compete economically with the English. This need became even more demanding when a military campaign against the Huguenots of La Rochelle escalated into a quasi-war with England, which resulted in the temporary loss of Quebec in 1629. The return of French control in 1632 provided the motivation to act. The Jesuits were then able to convince Richelieu, with the urging of Champlain's trading company, to secure for them the monopoly for missionary activities in the colony in 1632.<sup>71</sup> The Récollets were shut out, and they did not return to New France until 1670.

### Récollet Reaction

The reaction felt by many within the Récollets can easily be seen as one of betrayal. They had extended their hand in missionary fellowship in order to bolster struggling efforts in New France. They provided shelter, accommodations, previous background and knowledge of native language, and good feelings toward the newly arrived Jesuits in the 1620s, when no others would take them in.<sup>72</sup> In turn, the Jesuits, somewhat surreptitiously, criticized their efforts in order to make their own order look more competent, and they then secured a monopoly on missionary work to the exclusion of the Récollets. Father Chrétien Le Clercq became one of the more vocal supporters of this point of view. He lamented that, "they were offered and accepted the half of our convent, garden, and cleared enclosure, which they chose, and they remained there for the

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<sup>71</sup> Blackburn. 30.

<sup>72</sup> Le Clercq, Part I, 238-239.

space of two years, living and laboring in perfect harmony with our Fathers, while their affairs were advancing and settling in France and in the country itself for a perfect establishment."<sup>73</sup>

One of the primary grievances put forth by Le Clercq was that the Jesuits manipulated information in their published *Relations* in order to make their missionary efforts seem more fruitful and exalted. This was perhaps one of the most masterful political maneuvers of the Jesuits, as they knew that missionary success largely depended on the flow of information back to France. This strategy was employed in previous mission endeavors in Asia, and was directly influenced by the work of Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier, who emphasized the necessity in publishing regular letters and reports.<sup>74</sup> One of Le Clercq's more overt and damning accusations came when he wrote:

"This is all that can be said without overstepping the bounds in this matter by vain and chimerical fictions of spurious facts, and without abusing the easy credit given to certain relations from distant countries ; for it seems now that to please the reader a writer is forced to recur to extraordinary deeds and surprising adventures, to studied exaggerations... We pardon such rodomontades and such fictions when found in a profane subject, but they become intolerable in a sacred one; they rather weaken credit in true historical passages. When we hear men canonize persons of ordinary piety, set forth visions, apparitions, revelations, ravishments and ecstasies, extraordinary operations of the Spirit of God, miracles and prodigies... I must be pardoned if in all that I sacrifice complaisance to the truth and fidelity of the historian."<sup>75</sup>

He consistently defended his order against the suppositions and inferences made in the Jesuit sources. For example, he countered the Jesuit assertion that they were the first to compile a Huron dictionary. He wrote that, "Undoubtedly these reverend Fathers, who are very skilful in teaching languages, have since greatly contributed in putting a finishing hand to the dictionaries which they drew up on our notes and on more ample knowledge. But this justice is due to our first labors, to Christian simplicity, to the candor of our Fathers, to the sincerity of their

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 239.

<sup>74</sup> Allan Greer, *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America*, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2000), 5.

<sup>75</sup> Le Clercq, Part II, 24-25.

intentions and their great charity, which had not nor has any secret for those illustrious missionaries."<sup>76</sup>

Le Clercq was writing at a time when the Récollets were finally returning to areas in New France after 1670. His order had gained support from the then governor of New France, Louis de Buade de Frontenac. Frontenac harbored great antagonism against the Jesuits, as he worried that their secluded missions operated too independently from French authority, and that they served their own interests in the fur trade.<sup>77</sup> He petitioned for the arrival of Récollets for the precise reason to counter Jesuit influence. Both Le Clercq and Frontenac both harbored resentment against the Jesuit policies of cultural relativism, which had become widespread.<sup>78</sup> Frontenac urged the necessity of assimilation for the security of the colony, while Le Clercq continued the Récollet ideology regarding the necessity of Frenchification for conversion. As the second wave of Récollet missionary work began, the competition between Jesuits and Récollets became overt and political, and if the sentiments of Le Clercq are genuine and representative, then it has its roots in the early missionary work and the Jesuit monopoly.

## **Conclusion**

It is interesting that, while Récollet sources indicated a real disapproval, or even detestation, of Jesuit strategies, their own strategies in the later years began to show Jesuit influence. Since the beginning, the Récollets expressed the urgent and practical need of a policy of assimilation with the Native Americans. They persisted in these efforts through the early years, the lean and struggling times of their mission in the 1620s. On the eve of their resurgence in the 1670s, they stood in solidarity with French state officials in their continued devotion to the

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<sup>76</sup> Le Clercq, Part I, 251.

<sup>77</sup> Jean Delanglez, *Frontenac and the Jesuits*, (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit History, 1939),53-54.

<sup>78</sup> See n. 67.

concept. However, Le Clercq's own later work in Mi'kmaq country showed a spark of something different. Working in the Gaspé Peninsula, he struggled to convey Catholic principles and scripture through his linguistic skills. He then noticed that the Mi'kmaq people used a rudimentary form of hieroglyphic writing to help their memory. With that information, he worked to standardize a form of hieroglyphic writing in the Mi'kmaq language, and he thus began to teach Catholicism exclusively in the Mi'kmaq language rather than through a French context or connotation.<sup>79</sup> This writing system proliferated in the lands of the Mi'kmaq (Maritime Provinces) in the late 17th and into the 18th century through an exchange of missionaries, and it became one of the defining characteristics of a defiantly Mi'kmaq brand of Catholicism. In fact, the Mi'kmaq today are primarily Catholic, and Le Clercq's hieroglyphs are still used in prayers.

The Récollets delivered harsh criticism of the Jesuits and their use of the *Relations* and their widespread use of publication as a tool of political maneuvering. However, the second wave of Récollet missionary work after 1670 saw much more writing, correspondence, and relation. Le Clercq disparages the *Relations* in his *Premier établissement de la foy*, yet his purposes in writing it and other works were the same that gave Jesuits the advantage decades earlier. It is obvious that the Récollets learned from some of their earlier failings.

Récollet and Jesuit competition in early New France can be attributed to the significant ideological differences between the two orders. This reinforces the notion that the Counter-Reformation or the Council of Trent did not produce homogeneous reform efforts within the Catholic Church. This was evident in Europe, as it was evident in the missions of New France. While embracing the Aquinian themes of the movement, the Récollets largely looked backwards in their reform efforts, while the Jesuits tended to embrace humanism and the worldly and

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<sup>79</sup> Chrétien Le Clercq, *New Relations of Gasparasia*, ed. W.F. Ganong, (New York: Greenwood, 1968), 126;131; David Schmidt and Murdena Marshall, *Mi'kmaq Hieroglyphic Prayers*, (Halifax: Nimbus, 1995), 4-7.

practical operation of the order's affairs. Their policies allowed them to overcome difficult political situations, while the Récollets struggled when given every advantage. It may very well be true that the *Relations* exaggerated Jesuit success among the Native Americans, yet the reality was that they were gaining the political advantages and the funding, both through others and their own efforts. At the time, the Récollets were not well suited to navigating the political realities of the early colony.

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