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THE JESUITS AND THE FUR TRADE*

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In the past hundred years two major studies of the Jesuit Missions in Huronia have attracted widespread attention. The first is Francis Parkman's The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century. Parkman viewed these missions as a keystone in the Jesuits' effort to win North America for the Roman Catholic faith, an effort doomed by Divine Providence to failure as the ancient and bloody wars among the tribes of eastern North America were intensified with the arrival of European traders and European guns. In these wars the Huron were destroyed by their fierce and implacable neighbors, the Iroquois. The second book, George T. Hunt's The Wars of the Iroquois interprets the events of these years in a very different fashion. To him the Indian wars of the 17th century were not the climax of an ancient struggle, but instead a competition for furs that arose between the tribes that traded with the Europeans on the St. Lawrence and those that traded with them on the Hudson. While admitting the religious motives of the Jesuits, Hunt's

*This paper was read January 30, 1965, at the Huron Symposium held in Orillia, Ontario, as part of the Huronia Exhibition organized by the local Chamber of Commerce to mark the 350th anniversary of Champlain's visit to the region. It is an attempt to draw together certain lines of my research on the Huron and to focus on issues I have not emphasized before. It is part of a projected study of French-Huron relations in the first half of the 17th century which it is hoped will culminate in a book length report.

book stresses their role as "clerks of the fur trade" and as agents of French interests. It was they who in Huronia spied out the Huron trading networks and sought to influence Huron policies that were favorable to the Quebec fur trade. "The priests knew," he says, "that the most effective way to serve the missions was to serve the trade" (Hunt 1940: 70).

Each generation of scholars tends to interpret the past in the light of new experience. The economic determinism of the 1930's is different from the historical teleology of the 19th century. Each of these books, while an important contribution to the study of the Jesuit missions betrays serious weaknesses. Parkman's careful use of historical sources is highly admirable, but his lack of understanding of Indian ways and his contempt for the Catholic sentiments which motivated many of the settlers and missionaries in New France are major shortcomings. Hunt's book is marred by minor errors in his interpretation of his sources (see Trigger 1960: 15; Tooker 1963: 122) and in his attempt to explain everything in terms of economics he seems to lose sight of the broader network of factors that were at work. Because of this and because archaeological findings have greatly changed our conception of Iroquoian prehistory, I think that the time has come to begin re-examining the historical data concerning the Jesuit Missions to the Huron Country. A reevaluation of these data requires not only adherence to a model of the social forces that were at work but also a more humanistic attempt to understand the manner in which individuals and groups perceived the situation in which they found themselves and responded to it. These two approaches to history are not, and should not be considered, mutually exclusive or opposed to one another, but rather as complementary. Every age is dominated by forces that are not of one man's making and may well be beyond the control or understanding of

individuals or even nations. In spite of this, the events which make up history are the results of actions not of men who are the mindless instruments of these forces, but of individuals with different backgrounds, abilities, and convictions. The pressure for conformity is great and men often may prefer to yield to it rather than to defend what they believe is right. In spite of this, the freedom which reason gives us to assess the results of our actions, however limited the choice of action may be, requires that a balanced historical explanation deal not merely with the actions of particular groups or individuals, as Parkman tended to do, or with abstract social and economic trends, as Hunt has done. Instead it must attempt to make meaningful a web of relationships that includes individuals, social processes, and the beliefs and ideas that animate men's lives.

My purpose in writing this paper is not to discourse on the charges of venality that were made against the Jesuits. These charges were made in France during the period of the Huron missions and in 1672 Louis de Buades, Comte de Frontenac, Governor of New France, asserted that the Jesuits were more interested in converting beaver than souls (Lanctot Vol. 2:63). It is true that the Jesuits used furs as a means of exchange, as did all the colonists, and that they bought supplies from the Company of New France, some of them with furs they obtained from the Indians. They were also required, however, to give away much trade goods to the Indians as presents and in return for favors. It is unlikely that even in years when their relations with the Indians were good they broke even on this trade. Moreover, many of the lay workers who were attached to the mission and who were licensed to trade appear to have used their profits to support the priests. The Jesuits were neither partners nor rivals of the fur company. Parkman, who was

never one to gloss over the Jesuits' shortcomings is certainly correct when he concludes that "to impute mercenary motives [to these men] is manifestly idle" (Parkman 1927: 466).

Nevertheless close relations did exist between the Jesuits and the Company of New France. My aim here is to examine the history of the tripartite relationship between priests, fur traders, and Indians which constituted the foundation for the Huron missions. To begin with, we must say something about the fur trade between the Europeans and the Indians in general.¹ This trade began considerably earlier than is generally realized. Early in the 16th century Western European fishermen began to penetrate the coasts of the Maritime Provinces and the north shore of the lower St. Lawrence. Those who landed to dry their fish soon began to trade for furs with the Indians and gradually this trade grew. The original trade was in skins of all varieties. During the 16th century, however, an old process for felting beaver hair began to revive and beaver pelts rapidly outstripped all other kinds of fur in popularity. There is relatively little definite information about the beginnings of trade on the eastern seaboard, but when the French navigator and explorer, Jaques Cartier first visited the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1534 his arrival caused no stir among the Indians there, who were already accustomed to trading with the Europeans. Neither did his visit to the Laurentian Iroquois settlements near Quebec City, since many people from these villages spent their summers fishing and hunting seals farther east where Europeans were already trading.

The beads, cloth, and metal implements of the Europeans were very popular among the Indians. In particular the Indians soon came to recognize the superiority of European tools and weapons over their native ones. While such goods were scarce they were in great demand as novelties, but soon many tribes

grew used to having these tools and became dependent on them.

The tribes that first had access to trade goods were the ones living along the lower St. Lawrence. As tribes living farther away came to want trade goods these tribes along the lower St. Lawrence strove to acquire a monopoly over the passage of goods back and forth through their territory. Such a practice may even have been a characteristic of native trade prior to this time. Each tribe that enjoyed a position as a middleman in such an arrangement could profit from trading furs it did not have to trap for European goods it did not have to manufacture. The concern of such a tribe was to prevent direct contact between the French and the tribes living in its hinterland. Already in 1535 the Indians at Quebec City tried very hard to discourage Cartier from going further upriver to Hochelaga, located at the site of the present city of Montreal. The hostility of the Indians in this area kept Europeans from traveling upriver again until 1581 and it seems to have been motivated only in part by the cruel treatment they received at the hands of Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval, who was in command of the third expedition made by Cartier. As the tribes living farther inland were attracted by the profits of this trade and became increasingly dependent on trade goods they would attempt, if they were strong enough, to seize control of the monopoly held by the tribes downriver. This resulted, as Hunt has indicated, in a new form of tribal warfare, economically motivated and more deadly than it had been prior to the fur trade when it was a small scale business concerned with blood revenge, individual prestige, and obtaining prisoners for human sacrifice.

Although the details remain unknown, it is more than likely that quarrels over access to trading spots along the St. Lawrence

played an important part in the disappearance of the Laurentian Iroquois and perhaps may have strengthened or even brought into being the Five Nations confederacy of the Iroquois. Trade goods began arriving among the Iroquois in the second half of the 16th century, but they were prevented from having direct contact with the traders at Tadoussac, located at the mouth of the Saguenay River, first by the Laurentian Indians and later by the Algonkians who took control of the St. Lawrence.

By the time the Europeans had arrived on the upper St. Lawrence in 1603 the tribes living along the Saguenay, St. Maurice, Ottawa, and Richelieu rivers were already drawn into fur trading and embroiled in conflicts over direct access to the European traders. Until this time most of the trade took place at Tadoussac; with the arrival of the French explorer Samuel de Champlain it was soon to spread upriver to Quebec, Three Rivers, and Montreal.

Although trade goods probably reached Huronia earlier, by way of the Algonkians, there is no reason to doubt the Huron claim that they first made contact with the French when some of them visited the Ottawa River early in the 17th century.² Trading, however, was already playing an important role in the economy of Huronia. From 1615 onward French references indicate that the Huron were trading corn, tobacco, Indian hemp, and squirrel skins with the Algonkians in return for dried fish, meat, skins, native copper, clothing, and charms. Algonkians and Nipissings wintered in the Huron country, living outside their villages and trading fish for corn. The Hurons had elaborate rules governing trade with other tribes, and actions which imperiled good relations with these tribes were punished more severely than they would have been if the incident involved only Huron. It seems unlikely that these patterns could have evolved in a few short years, and I have argued

elsewhere (Trigger 1962b) that the Huron were engaged in trade with the northern hunting peoples prior to the start of the fur trade. Huronia has rich, easily worked soil and it borders on the Canadian Shield where corn agriculture could not support the indigenous population. Moreover, Huronia stood at the southern end of an along-shore canoe trail that penetrated far to the north. It was thus an ideal spot for trade between an agricultural population and a hunting and gathering one. Through time, as the Huron confederacy grew, more and more of the Iroquoian population of central and eastern Ontario appears to have settled in this region.

As the fur trade penetrated west, the sheer size of the Huron confederacy made it apparent that it, and not the Algonkian tribes of the Ottawa Valley, would dominate this trade. The Huron had only to expand and intensify existing patterns and to add French trade goods to their line. The corn which they grew in abundance was already in high demand among the northern peoples, who often went hungry in winter. In this manner, the Huron were able to capture a major portion of the fur market in Northern Ontario and become the major trading partners with the French. The French, Algonkian, and Huron cooperated in the early years of the 17th century in clearing the Mohawk raiders from the St. Lawrence valley (Innis 1930: 20), but the Huron "wars" with the other Iroquois tribes were still of the traditional type, as Champlain discovered to his dismay. The Mohawks were probably happy to have extra furs to trade with the Dutch, who had arrived on the Hudson, and hence profited from looting Huron and Algonkian boats on the Ottawa. The Iroquois were still able to hunt beaver inside their tribal territory, however, and it was not until 1640 that the depletion of beaver made outside sources a vital necessity (Hunt 1940: 33-35).

It appears that when Indians of different tribes in this area traded with each other, often they exchanged children as

guarantees of friendship.³ Champlain conformed to this practice and in 1609 several French boys were sent inland to live with the Algonkian and the Huron. Champlain's visit to Huronia in 1615 served to strengthen alliances with a number of Huron chiefs who had already indicated their willingness for such alliances by sending gifts downriver. From Champlain's time onward there were young Frenchmen living in Huronia, traveling with the Huron and much in demand as "relatives" and go-betweens in the fur trade. The most famous of these first coureurs de bois was Etienne Brule, who traveled with Huron parties all the way between Lake Superior and the Susquehannah country. The religious historians of this period largely ignore the activities of these men, but many appear to have led a rough and ready life among the Huron, often living with Indian women and in many ways resembling the traders of the Northwest Company in later times. Their role in organizing the fur trade remains a subject to be investigated. Although they gathered furs on their own, their main importance to the company must have been in encouraging trade in general and building up confidence and good will among the Indians. The Huron determination to maintain a monopoly of trade with surrounding regions is shown by their behavior when a French mission was sent to the Neutral Country in 1623. When Father de la Roche Daillon, who led the mission, was adopted by the Neutral Indians and the French suggested leading them to trade, the Huron cleverly frightened off these potential rivals by spreading malicious rumors concerning the diabolical nature of the French.

While the early coureurs de bois were respected as hunters and fighters and became participating members of Huron society, the missionaries who came to Huronia were quite different. Although sometimes respected as powerful and important men, they neither took to the Huron way of life nor were they accepted

as part of it. French prayers were sought to supplement Huron ones much as shadow pictures gained a reputation for bringing good luck in fishing. But while both Recollets and Jesuits continued to work in Huronia and Father Jean de Brebeuf became personally popular, Father Nicolas Viel was murdered by the Huron and there is little evidence of success in proseletizing.

Although the Huron admired French trade goods their respect for the French themselves was far from universal. The inability of many of them to master the Huron language and their awkwardness in their new surroundings were subjects of ridicule and their readiness to overlook serious Indian offenses, for fear of injuring trade, gave rise to the quip that Frenchmen could be killed cheaply. While wanting French goods, the Huron saw no reason for altering their way of life. Their contacts with the traders provided desirable new implements and luxury goods but were no challenge to their way of life. The missionaries, on the other hand, provided nothing the Huron wanted and yet criticized their behavior and challenged their most cherished beliefs. They were tolerated only because the Huron wished to preserve good relations with the traders.

During this period the trading company gave little support to the missionaries since the Recollets' policy of persuading migratory Indians to settle down and adopt French ways conflicted with its own interest in furs. In this period neither the Indian nor the trader needed or welcomed missionary activity. Champlain's interest in missionary work was exceptional and in part related to the ambitious plans he had for developing the infant colony of New France. The suggestion that later the French traders needed the missionaries as their agents is clearly disproved by the situation that existed during these years. The coureurs de bois were adequate to this task, and unlike the priests they were welcomed by the Huron.

When Quebec was returned to the French in 1632 after a brief period of British occupation, considerable changes were made in the nature of missionary work. The Recollets were not allowed to return and this left the Jesuits free to develop a coordinated plan. Cooperation on the part of the fur company was essential if any progress was to be made. Huguenot interests had been strong in the Quebec fur trade prior to that time, but the new trading company, formed just before the British occupation, was owned by zealous Catholics who were more than sympathetic to missionary work.

In 1633 three Jesuits attempted unsuccessfully to reach the Huron country. The Huron refused to take them, giving as their reason threats made against the priests' lives by the Algonkians along the St. Lawrence. Since they objected again the next year it seems more likely that the French defeat at the hands of the English made the Huron bold enough to object to taking persona non grata with them. They were eventually won over, however, by gifts and by Champlain's insistence that to accept the missionaries and treat them well was an integral part of their friendship with the French (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 10:27). Once the decision was made to accept the missionaries the Rock and Bear tribes vied to get the missionaries to return with them.

The policy that the Jesuits worked out in their dealings with the Huron seems in retrospect to have been a wise one.⁴ In general they did not seek to alter the Huron way of life more than was necessary to allow them to live as Christians. Frontenac was later to denounce the Jesuits for not trying to make the Indians adopt the dress and manners of the French, for keeping them isolated, and teaching them in their own language. The desire to convert an Indian nation, rather than to turn Indians into Frenchmen was foremost in their minds. One of the first steps taken by the Jesuits was to prevent coureurs de bois

from living in Huronia, since their moral behavior was felt to be prejudicial to the success of the mission (Parkman 1927: 465, 466). In their place the Jesuits accepted lay helpers who were maintained by the mission and were allowed to trade with the Indians. The lay assistants who were accepted appear to have been men who shared the zeal and high principles of their employers.

During their first year in the Huron country the Jesuits remained popular and their presence was sought after by different families and villages. They were invited to the war councils as representatives of the French and their favor was sought in connection with the fur trade. French food and trinkets were given to the Indians in return for their services and religious instruction was welcome since it was accompanied by liberal dispensations of tobacco.

The period between 1634 and 1640 was a bad one for the Huron. In 1634 an unidentified disease, either measles or smallpox, which was then raging in Quebec followed them up-river. This was the start of a series of epidemics of unusual proportions which persisted over the next six years and culminated in the smallpox epidemic of 1638 to 1640. During these years over half the population of Huronia died out; about 10,000 survived.⁵

The Huron accurately noted that the disease had come from Quebec, and following their own beliefs, they began to accuse the priests of practicing witchcraft or seeking to avenge the death of the coureur de bois Brule, whom they had murdered. Since the Jesuits attempted to baptize as many dying children as possible, baptism came to be viewed as a form of murder by witchcraft. Councils debated whether the Jesuits should be killed or expelled from the country and some villages refused to let them come near. Sinister stories about the black robes,

which were said to have been told the Indians by Protestants trading on the Hudson, were passed on to the Huron by the Wenro Indians when they fled to Huronia from New York State about 1638. These and similar stories served to fan Huron resentment. Trade was growing, however, and the Huron desire to murder the Jesuits was held in check by their desire to continue trading with the French. The Jesuits noted that their persecution diminished before the Huron made their annual trading expedition to Quebec and when the trade had been successful. It is an important comment on the importance of French trade goods among the Huron that only one village went so far as to reject the use of French goods during this period of crisis (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 15:21). One Huron said that if they should remain two years without going to Quebec they would be very badly off.

When the Jesuit Fathers Brebeuf and Joseph Marie Chau-
monot visited the Neutral Country in 1640-1641 the Huron attempted to bribe these Indians to kill the missionaries. By doing so, they hoped to have the Jesuits killed without hurting the fur trade and probably at the same time to put the Neutrals in a bad light. The older chiefs seem to have seen through the offer, however, and prevented the deed from being carried out. In any case the men of the Neutral confederacy, who did not have trading relations to worry about, treated the missionaries with much less respect than did the Huron.

At home, the Huron did not hesitate to harrass the Jesuits in the hope they would leave. Children were set on them, their food supply was threatened, and their religious objects were befouled. One of their few converts, a man of outstanding ability, was killed, possibly by the Huron themselves (Trigger, n.d.) after he had led the Jesuits on a trip to the Petun country.

By 1637 the Jesuits had given up making special efforts to convert children and to provide intensive training for some of them in Quebec. From now on they sought to baptize older men and the heads of families. Many of their converts were traders who had been to Quebec and who wanted preferred treatment in their trade there. The French in Quebec appear to have gone so far as to intimate that the Huron had only four years to become Christians or the trade might be cut off (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 17:171). The Jesuits did not capitalize on such pressures to make mass conversions, but would baptize only those candidates who had demonstrated their ability to lead a Christian life. There were only about 60 professing Christians among the Huron at the end of this period.

By 1640 many changes had taken place in Huronia. Half of the population had died in the preceding six years. Many of these were children and this probably means that during the final years of the Iroquois attacks the number of young men was small, relative to the size of the population. Many of the old people died too, and with them many of the best leaders and craftsmen were lost. The Jesuits note that a good deal of the mythology and religious lore of the Huron had been the property of the aged and that it had perished at this time (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 19:123, 127; 8:145-147). The political organization also appears to have suffered from the loss of many of the traditional leaders. Non-hereditary chiefs who survived the epidemic appear to have played a more active role in the councils than they had previously (Parkman 1927: 209). It also appears that the fur trade may have been producing increased status differentiation and the development of a nouveau riche.⁶ With the loss of old skills, and a possible weakening of traditional leadership, the Huron dependence on the French increased.

By 1640 the Iroquois had exhausted the supplies of furs in their own country and began to look around for sources elsewhere.

By this time they were also obtaining guns from the various European colonies to the south. The Huron, on the other hand, could trade only with the French, who preferred to send French soldiers to protect their Indian allies rather than to sell them guns. It is also possible that the epidemics among the Iroquois were not as severe as they had been among the Huron. In 1642 an Iroquois war party burned the Huron village of Contarea and the Mohawk ambushed the Huron fleet on its way to Quebec.⁷ The growing weakness of the Huron and the increasing desire of the Iroquois to capture the Huron fur trade or at least to force the Huron to share it with them increased Huronia's dependence on the French. It is little wonder then that when in 1640, which was also a year of health and good harvests, Charles Jacques Hault de Montmagny, the Governor of New France at this time, took action against the Huron to punish them for the bad treatment the missionaries had received, the persecution of the Jesuits ceased. At the same time he offered to reaffirm the French alliance with the Huron and stressed the importance that he placed on the Jesuits remaining in their country (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 21:143).

In 1639 the Jesuits founded a permanent center for missionary activity near the mouth of the Wye River. The new headquarters, named Ste. Marie, was designed to offer shelter to the Jesuits and their assistants and to permit the construction of buildings that were more permanent than was feasible in the shifting Huron towns. The center was to have a hospital, a retreat for Indians, and a place where Christians could assemble on feast days. By 1649 it was the headquarters for over 60 Europeans, including 23 priests. Pigs, cows, and fowl had been brought up from Quebec and European crops were grown in the fields nearby.

In the years that followed 1640, the Jesuits were no longer persecuted and Christianity was more popular than it had been

before. Three important chiefs were baptized in 1642 and 1643 and this won more converts. The number of Christians in Ossassane, where the Jesuits had done much of their early work, was growing and the Jesuits had as an immediate goal the conversion of an entire village. Christian Indians now wore their rosaries in public and some of them went on a lay mission to convert the Neutral. It may be that the Indians undertook this mission themselves because the Huron as a whole were not encouraging French contact with the Neutral Indians at this time.

The Huron gave a variety of reasons for becoming Christians. An admiration for the missionaries was not the least of these. Others were converted because relatives were Christian and they did not want to be separated from them after death. At least some of the conversions were prompted by economic considerations. It is significant, for example, that in 1648, when about 10 percent of the population was Christian, half of the Indians in the Huron fleet were either converts or in the process of being converted. Some Indians hoped for preferential treatment in Quebec, while others hoped to avoid having to give away their property at pagan feasts.⁸ This latter reason also suggests an acquisitiveness that was new to Huron culture.

Despite Jesuit desires to missionize the Huron country without destroying those Huron institutions that were compatible with Christianity, many difficulties presented themselves. The Jesuit missionary Jerome Lalemant observed that "to be a chief and a Christian is to combine water and fire," for the business of chiefs is to preside over pagan ceremonies (Parkman 1927: 452). Christians were no longer expelled from the village councils, but Christian warriors refused to take part in the pagan divinations associated with war and fought in separate units. It was said that the bonds of Christianity should be

stronger than the bonds of kinship and some Christians refused to be buried beside the pagan members of their tribe.

Because of the increasing rate at which Hurons were being converted, the pagans were becoming fearful for their old ways of life and probably for their power. While the Jesuits were left alone, converts were taunted, expelled from their houses by their families, and threatened with torture or death. Pagan women attempted to seduce Christian men and in one village the Jesuits had to reprimand their followers for offering the pagan leaders a bribe to stop trying to seduce Christians. New pagan cults arose in 1645 and 1646 which attempted to marshal opposition to Christianity. One was the cult of a forest spirit; another was based on the alleged revelation of a Christian woman whose ghost had returned from the dead to report that Huron Christians who went to heaven were tortured there by the French. Often, however, the Christians were reproved more gently, being told that they should not attack the ways of their forefathers so openly. As time went on important men ceased to give up their offices when they became Christian, but transferred their pagan religious functions to a subordinate deputy (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 28:89). Occasionally pagan chiefs would tell Christians not to attend a feast that involved pagan rites.

These events were taking place against a background of deepening concern. In 1642 and 1643 the Mohawk raided Huron boats along the Ottawa River and in 1644 they blockaded the waterway. That year a band of 20 French soldiers was sent to Huronia to protect the region. In 1645 a peace was patched up between the French, their Indian allies, and the Iroquois which the latter expected would cause the Huron and Algonkian to come to them to trade (Hunt 1940: 76-82). The Huron were not inclined to become satellites of the Iroquois, however, or to endanger their alliance with the French. In 1645 over 60 and in

1646 over 80 boat loads of furs arrived in Montreal. The latter shipment amounted to over 32,000 pounds of beaver pelts.

Mohawk anger increased and in the fall of that year Father Isaac Jogues was accused of spreading disease and corn worm among the Iroquois and killed by a faction of this easternmost tribe. At this point the Iroquois began to develop their master plan to eliminate the Huron as rivals in the fur trade. The leaders in this were the Mohawk, the chief fur dealers with the Dutch, and the Seneca, who lived closest to the borders of Ontario. The Onondaga, who resented the Mohawk attempts to dominate the League, were the least anxious to participate. The Iroquois raids and the growing power of the confederacy began to frighten the Huron. After 1640 over 200 of them left Huronia to settle under French protection near Quebec. In 1645 more began to retreat into remote areas along the southern edge of the Canadian Shield. In 1647, when the Iroquois were blockading the St. Lawrence, the Rock Tribe, which lived in the eastern part of Huronia abandoned its villages and moved nearer to Ste. Marie. Nevertheless the Huron were still not despondent. In 1647 they solicited help from the Susquehannah in an attempt to divide the League of the Iroquois. As a result of their first efforts 300 Onondaga, who were planning to join a Seneca expedition, were persuaded to turn back. In January 1648 the Mohawk slew a party of Huron on their way to negotiate with the Onondaga and this brought the negotiations to an end.

Events now began to move more swiftly. St. Ignace suffered heavy losses in March, 1648, and the survivors withdrew to a location just east of Ste. Marie, where the Jesuits helped them to establish a new village. On July 4 the Iroquois attacked St. Joseph where Father Antoine Daniel was celebrating the mass, killing or capturing over 700 people. The village of St. Michael, which the Hurons had deserted, was also burned.

With the growing insecurity many of the Huron began to turn to the Jesuits for help and leadership. Thirteen hundred conversions are recorded between 1646 and the spring of 1648, and 2700 between July, 1648, and March, 1649. In the year 1647-1648 over 3000 Indians visited Ste. Marie and 9000 meals were dispensed. A dispute over policy between the Bear Tribe, which was relatively sheltered and preferred war, and the Rock Tribe, which had suffered heavy losses and preferred to negotiate with the Iroquois, must have helped to increase this uncertainty.

The growing number of converts and the prestige of the Jesuits had by now thoroughly alarmed some of the more extreme members of the pagan faction. We may never know what, if any, connection there was between this pagan group and the elements that favored peace with the Iroquois, but it may be significant that the Bear Tribe, which was the one most opposed to peace with the Iroquois, was also the most Christian of the tribes. The pagan party was not only anti-Christian but also anti-French. Perhaps their real aim, which has been left unrecorded, was to break the Huron alliance with the French and to make peace with the Iroquois by agreeing to trade their furs with them. In April, 1648, six chiefs from three villages got together and decided to provoke an incident involving the French. They did this by murdering a lay helper of the Jesuits, Jacques Douart. When the Christians of the area rallied outside Ste. Marie the conspirators made no secret of their involvement, but demanded that all Christians be banished from the country. After several days of debate the French faction among the Indians prevailed and the Jesuits were persuaded to settle for the payment of a heavy indemnity, the traditional Huron penalty for murder (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 33:229-249). The Christian faction had won a major victory.

By this time the town of Ossossane was largely Christian. That winter the Christian majority refused to allow the performance of pagan rituals in the village and the advice of the priests was sought on issues involving moral considerations. The Jesuit dream of a Christian Huronia was being realized, but so far only in one village.

In spite of the increasing danger, the fur trade recovered after the summer of 1647. In 1648, 250 Huron set out for Quebec in 50 to 60 canoes. A few French soldiers were sent to Huronia to garrison Ste. Marie and to assure trade the next spring. The trading was more than successful and Ste. Marie was stocked with enough provisions to last three years.

The last year of the Jesuit Mission is well known. In March, 1649, about 1000 Seneca and Mohawk warriors fell on the villages of St. Ignace and St. Louis capturing Father Brebeuf and Father Lalemant, who had refused to flee. The death of these priests, at once horrible and triumphant, needs no retelling. An Iroquois advance on Ste. Marie was halted by 300 Christian warriors from Ossossane, many of whom fought to the death. The Iroquois, impressed by their own heavy losses, left Huronia taking their prisoners and plunder with them. The Huron, while suffering rather small loss of life, had lost five villages to the Iroquois in a short space of time. The Iroquois were well armed, and the prospect of a secure life in Huronia, or even of being able to grow crops there, seemed remote indeed. As a result of this last raid the Huron were obliged to concede defeat. Soon after this they burned 15 of their villages and scattered among their neighbors, the Petun and Neutral Indians, or fled to the forests and islands of Georgian Bay. By May, 1639, over 300 families were living on Christian Island not far from the mainland. Some of the leaders of the Christians still living in the area asked the Jesuits to settle there.

The Jesuits had wished to direct the refugees to Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron where they hoped to be able to reorganize the Huron communities and to preserve the fur trade (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 34:205). They agreed, however, to destroy Ste. Marie and follow the Huron to Christian Island.

They built a fort there and together with the Huron tried to clear new fields and plant corn. The last fur convoy went down to Quebec as usual. The tiny population of New France, itself threatened by the Iroquois and having bad harvests, sent back no aid. By winter 6000 Indians are said to have crowded onto the island, and their numbers were increased by refugees from the Petun, whom the Iroquois attacked that winter. The Jesuits made heroic efforts to deal with the situation, even buying up stores of acorn from the Algonkian. The bulk of the population on the island was now Christian, nominally or in fact, and masses and religious instruction were well attended. Soon, however, the food supplies began to run out and disease and starvation took a gruesome toll. In late winter the Huron were reduced to cannibalism to survive. Hunger drove many of them from the island, where they died crossing on the thin ice or were killed by roving bands of Iroquois. By spring 300 Indians were left on the island. These asked to be taken to Quebec and the Jesuits consented. There they continued to be harrassed by the Iroquois but some have remained at Lorette down to the present day.

Not all the Huron went to Christian Island. Many remained scattered for a time in the vicinity of Georgian Bay and among these were Indians who blamed the ruin of their country on the French and were bitterly anti-Christian (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 25:175-177). Others fled to the Petun and together they survived to form the Wyandot tribe. Still others went farther afield to the Neutral and Erie only to suffer a second dispersal at the hands of the

Iroquois within a few years. The villages of St. Jean Baptiste and St. Michael surrendered to the Iroquois and settled in a body among the Seneca. Disease and hunger had of course killed many more Huron than had Iroquois bullets.

I have been able to present only a brief outline of the Jesuit missions to the Huron country. While I have not been able to discuss personalities, I have been able to sketch certain general trends. In conclusion I would like to draw together a few observations concerning the nature of the Huron missions. As I noted at the outset there has been a tendency in the literature to hint at certain dark purposes as playing a leading role in the work of the Jesuits. According to some they were busy among these tribes as political agents; according to others they kept their mission going by acting, first and foremost, as agents of the fur trade. Such interpretations are the product of a secular society. Indeed, it is curious that scholars who are trained to take great pains to understand the thoughts and motives of non-western peoples are often the least willing to understand people of their own culture who happen to hold views different from their own. There is, and can be, no doubt that the primary aim of the Jesuits was to convert the Huron to Roman Catholicism. In the spirit of their order they saw a chance to make good in the New World the losses which their church had suffered in Europe as a result of the Reformation. The Jesuits sought to promote close relations between the Huron and the French, not simply because they themselves were French but because France was the only Catholic power that had established a colony in eastern North America. There is no evidence that the Jesuits sought to undermine the political institutions of the Huron or to manipulate their leaders as instruments of French policy. Indeed they appear to have feared that unguarded contact with the French might be prejudicial to

the development of the Christian state at which they were aiming. As Frontenac said, they kept the Indians apart and taught them in their own language; in short, they did not try to turn them into Frenchmen. Their aims in this respect seem to resemble closely those of their colleagues in Paraguay. If the Jesuits failed the Huron in any particular, it was in not persuading the officials in Quebec that they needed guns in greater quantities than they were able to obtain them.

Nor were the Jesuits agents of the trading company. Unwanted by the Huron, their only way to live and preach among them was for the trading company to persuade the Huron to accept them as part of the terms of trade. In Huronia they replaced the coureurs de bois, whom they felt set a bad moral example for the Indians, with their own lay assistants. Any commitment to the fur trade that was involved in this action can be seen as taken for religious, not monetary ends. In short, whatever activities the Jesuits may have performed on behalf of the government or fur trade of New France was action taken because it made the Jesuits' work in Huronia possible and did not conflict with their principles. There can be no question that religious motives, combined with a rare sense of responsibility for the welfare of a primitive people, were the considerations that were uppermost in their minds.

Notes

1. References for statements made in this section and further details may be found in Trigger 1962a. There are additional notes on the Laurentian Iroquois in Tooker, 1964: 3, 4.
2. Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 16: 229. For additional documentation and discussion of prehistoric Huron trade and settlement see Trigger 1962b.

3. See Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 20:59; 27:25. Further citations concerning the role of friendships and alliances in trade are given in Trigger 1960: 23. This same paper gives citations for many of the statements made below.

4. It may also be noted that it conformed to Jesuit policy elsewhere. This general policy is discussed in Duignan 1958. For the Frontenac reference see Le Clercq 1881: 256.

5. The population of Huronia prior to the epidemics was estimated by various people to be between 30,000 and 40,000 people, but little basis is given for these calculations and they may be wide of the mark. The population survey of 1639 no doubt gives fairly accurate figures for that year.

6. Brebeuf's comments on the behavior of chiefs at the Feast of the Dead might support the assumption of increased status differentiation (Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 10:303-305). New attitudes toward property are noted in Thwaites 1896-1901 Vol. 17:111; Vol. 23:129.

7. For a discussion of the Iroquois defeat of the Huron see Tooker 1963.

8. See the last part of note 6.

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