

LOST IN TRANSLATION? ORTHODOXY AND ONTOLOGY IN THE
TRANSATLANTIC WORLD OF THE JESUITS

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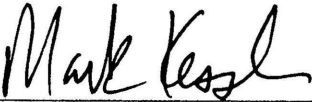
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Gregory A. Michna entitled "Lost in Translation? Orthodoxy and Ontology in the Transatlantic World of the Jesuits." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in History.


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ABSTRACT

GREGORY A. MICHNA

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This thesis is an examination of the attempts of the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, to maintain orthodoxy in practices during their early missionary activity in New France. Close study is given to the founding documents of the order and the influence of the principal founder, Ignatius of Loyola, as well as the framework of Jesuit education found in the *Ratio Studiorum*. Jesuit education was fundamental in the development of ontological perceptions of sin and human nature, which the Jesuits imported to New France as missionaries. Once they arrived in the New World, Jesuits faced the daunting challenge of communicating inherently abstract concepts in Catholic practices such as the nature of the Trinity, Baptism, and the Eucharist across linguistic and ontological barriers, and recorded these struggles in the form of *Relations* that were published in Europe. Through these records Jesuit cultural sensitivity can be identified.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Life among the native tribes in New France posed great challenges for the Jesuits who made the transatlantic crossing to live as missionaries. Jesuit ontologies were shaped by the experience as issues of orthodoxy and cross cultural communication arose. Thus, Old World religious concepts were transmitted based on interaction with native inhabitants. Founded by Ignatius of Loyola, the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, viewed missionary activity as the core purpose for the religious order, and formed educational institutions to equip future priests for this daunting task. As they engaged in religious dialogue with natives in New France, the Jesuits struggled to translate Christian concepts that were incompatible with native ontology while remaining orthodox in practice. Rigorous schooling in the Old World inundated Jesuits with revised humanistic philosophy and religious instruction, which led to cultural connections in the New World through the study of linguistics and interaction with native peoples. These Old World ontologies served as an impetus for changes and adaptation in the New.

The first chapter of this thesis examines the roots of orthodoxy in the founding of the Society of Jesus, along with orthodox conceptions of the Trinity, Eucharist, and baptism as expressed by the *Decrees of the Council of Trent* and the *Catechism of Trent*, the two preeminent documents on Catholic orthodoxy during this time. This thesis also

examines the Jesuit understanding of the Trinity, Eucharist, and baptism as was taught in Jesuit universities that followed the command and teachings of the order, put forth in the *Ratio Studiorum*, a Jesuit text that served as a guidebook for curriculum and instruction at the universities. The second chapter examines the pedagogical tools that Jesuits acquired through the Jesuit university program, specifically those related to language-learning. The second chapter also examines the philosophical schools of thought that shaped Jesuit understandings of the divine workings of the world to form their unique ontology. The third chapter examines Jesuit efforts to maintain orthodox practices in the New World. It also examines the methods of adaptation that developed in New France as a result of interactions with the natives, utilizing the missionary journals kept by the Jesuits and published as *The Jesuit Relations*. Using the subjects of language, culture, and religion as a meeting-place for the dialogue and exchange of religious ideas that occurred, this thesis will demonstrate how Jesuits adapted in the struggle to translate abstract European concepts such as the Trinity, Eucharist, and baptism into concrete, understandable topics that potential converts could comprehend. In this way, the third chapter explores the measure of success obtained by the Jesuits through their translational skills.

This interplay of faiths through the medium of language and communication corrects the argument made by Bruce G. Trigger's 1985 book *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*, in which Trigger argues that religiosity played no role in Amerindian decision-making regarding Europeans and that interaction for both parties ultimately was mediated by three main categories: economics, politics, and

warfare.¹ Though some ideas were “lost in translation,” the Jesuits were able to communicate with varied effectiveness the ideas of Catholicism, and improved in their delivery as linguistic skill increased and they became more familiar with the particulars of native culture. The adaptation of delivery and message over time is irrefutable proof of Jesuit cultural sensitivity and comprehension in this regard.

The arguments of this thesis are situated within the discord of a vibrant historiography that pulls from a variety of texts dealing with both philosophy and linguistics. In a 1958 article entitled “The French Jesuits and the Idea of the Noble Savage,” George R. Healy examined the tendency of the Jesuits to ennoble the Amerindians that they encountered in reports found within the *Relations*. Healy examines the philosophical framework of the Jesuits, noting the contrast between the Augustinian resurgence, which was generally more “stern” than the “system of Aquinas, which placed high value upon human reason, posited no inherently serious conflict between the truths of faith and the evidence of the earthbound senses, and in its moral teaching emphasized the importance of getting along in a world of demanding imperfections.”² Healy’s text excels in examining the beliefs that Jesuits brought from France on their transatlantic crossing. The greatest shortcoming lies in the fact that it does not address how Jesuit philosophical framework was challenged and changed upon arriving in the New World,

¹ Bruce G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada’s “Heroic Age” Reconsidered* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1985), 254.

² George R. Healy, “The French Jesuits and the Idea of the Noble Savage,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 15 (1958): 146-147.

implying a static ontology rather than a malleable, experience-based ontology that was influenced by the humanist movement of the Renaissance, as taught in Jesuit colleges.

By far the most influential works since 1970 examining the relationship between Huron and the Jesuits are *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* and *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered*, both by historian and ethnographer Bruce G. Trigger. Trigger's excellent analysis of Huron culture portrayed the Jesuits as culturally and religiously subversive and the primary cause for the dispersal of the Huron in 1649. In *Natives and Newcomers*, Trigger takes his premises a step further by subjecting the Jesuits to even greater criticism. He states that "[for the Huron] the principle inducements for seeking baptism were economic, political, and military," without any regard to the ability of the Jesuits to communicate their religious message and the understanding of native culture needed to effectively do so.³ Trigger also assumes that when natives substituted traditional practices with Jesuit equivalents they gave no regard to the differences between the two religions. This position also ignores the linguistic skill of the Jesuits and omits entries from the *Jesuit Relations* that explain the difficulty and care that priests such as Jean de Brébeuf underwent in translating essential Catholic concepts into examples that the Huron could comprehend from their cultural perspective.

Neal Salisbury has examined the disruptive nature of religious exchange in New France in a 1992 article entitled "Religious Encounters in a Colonial Context: New

³ Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*, 254.

England and New France in the Seventeenth Century,” stating that “spiritual warfare in colonial North America did not simply involve missionaries and those Indians they had targeted for conversion. It suggests that there was an ideological and even spiritual dimension in at least some of the warfare that erupted *among* [sic] Indians in connection with European expansion.”⁴ Salisbury recognizes that the epidemics of the 1630s provided important motivation for natives to seek baptism after they recognized that the Jesuits were spared the brunt of diseases, but that numerical success only came during the 1640s “as the epidemics receded and the missionaries concentrated on repairing their reputation and gaining more long-term converts.”⁵ Salisbury’s overall outlook on the Jesuits is very similar to Trigger’s, in that he compares Jesuits to New England Puritans, linking both to intolerance, while ignoring the instances in the *Jesuit Relations* in which priests demonstrated an understanding of native culture and a willingness to permit “corrected” practices that were originally native in nature.

In 1992 John Steckley published an article entitled “The Warrior and the Lineage: Jesuit Use of Iroquoian Images to Communicate Christianity,” in which he examines two previously underutilized texts by scholars of New France to draw out the metaphors that Jesuits used to share the message of Catholicism with the Iroquois, beginning in the 1650s. Steckley uses *De Religione*, a sermonic text composed in Huron, and *Instructions d’un infidel moribund*, a conversation recorded between a missionary and a dying Huron

⁴ Neal Salisbury, “Religious Encounters in a colonial Context: New England and New France in the Seventeenth Century,” *American Indian Quarterly* 16 (1992): 507.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 505.

used for teaching the duties of the Christian.⁶ His excellent analysis of imagery is a fascinating look at the metaphors that Jesuits chose to employ in later efforts to convert natives. The primary question left unanswered by his work is whether or not these decisions were made as a result of a Jesuit ontology that had evolved to be more multicultural and inclusive of the native perspective.

Margaret J. Leahey examines the difficulty that the Jesuits faced in learning native languages in New France, especially during the initial period of missionary work when they “tried to fit the data of the native language into Latin-based categories,” in a 1995 article entitled “‘Comment peut un muet prescher l’évangile?’ Jesuit Missionaries and the Native Languages of New France.”⁷ Leahey notes the variety in Jesuit experience with acculturation and learning native languages, comparing Biard and Le Jeune to Brébeuf by noting that the former “seemed to blame the native people for every hardship” while the latter “seems to have gone out of his way to diminish the distance between the Jesuits and the Hurons, focusing on what they had in common, rather than on their differences.”⁸ Overall, Leahey’s article is helpful in exploring the nature of language-learning and the Jesuit cultural experience, which can be interpreted through the philosophical framework established by Healy to form a decent reconstruction of general patterns of Jesuit thought and expression. She does not condemn the Jesuits as do Trigger

⁶ John Steckley, “The Warrior and the Lineage: Jesuit Use of Iroquoian Images to Communicate Christianity,” *Ethnohistory* 39 (1997): 481-2.

⁷ Margaret J. Leahey, “‘Comment peut un muet prescher l’évangile?’ Jesuit Missionaries and the Native Languages of New France,” *French Historical Studies* 19 (1995): 108.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

and Salisbury, though her text primarily lacks regard to the role and importance of Jesuit philosophical influences on language-learning and optimism while in the mission field.

In a 1998 article entitled “Converting the ‘Sauvage’: Jesuit and Montagnais in Seventeenth-Century New France,” Peter A. Goddard examines Jesuit practices in converting the Montagnais and further illuminates the Augustinian pessimism “concerning the prospects of ‘natural man’ [that] maintained that only a completely new way of life could offer hope of salvation.”⁹ Goddard asserts that the Jesuits intended to completely subvert traditional ways of life and demanded “absolute expressions of the faith... despite an advanced understanding of native culture they showed little patience in allowing the gradual transformation of these pagans,” which aligns with previous historiography established by Trigger and Salisbury.¹⁰ His text provides an excellent initial evaluation of some Jesuit beliefs and practices in the New World, but does not account for experiences among the Huron and Iroquois. In these situations the Jesuits showed greater cultural sensitivity and understanding of native belief. According to Goddard, this “demanding model of conversion” contributed to the systematic elimination of native practices and cultures in the Montagnais case study, though it must again be stated that this argument lacks a broader understanding of Jesuit interaction among tribes other than the Montagnais.¹¹

⁹ Peter A. Goddard, “Converting the ‘Sauvage’: Jesuit and Montagnais in Seventeenth-Century New France,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 84 (1998): 221.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

In “Going to School with Savages: Authorship and Authority among the Jesuits of New France,” Peter A. Dorsey examines in detail the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, which Healy previously established as a prime philosophical foundation for Jesuits, as a factor that enabled Jesuits to learn from the natives that they encountered and act “less by formal rules and more according to values internalized during their extensive academic and spiritual formation.”¹² In this 1998 article Dorsey notes that the Jesuits “usually spoke positively of the Indians’ frequent metaphors, extensive compounds, and complex inflections,” demonstrating a better understanding of culture and language than has been previously asserted in texts that negatively stigmatize Jesuits.¹³ Dorsey further asserts that the complexity of native language led them to the assumption that God must have been the author, and that “finding grace in the Indians’ languages was consistent with the Jesuits’ larger pattern of discovering spiritual meaning in native traditions worldwide.”¹⁴ Dorsey’s examination concludes that Jesuits found favorable aspects of native culture but posited themselves as spiritual authorities due to ability of Europeans to transmit ideas through the written word, which they deemed more incorruptible than native oral tradition. As with other historiographic sources that focus on the philosophical nature of ontology, Dorsey does not examine how Jesuit belief itself changed and focuses instead on accommodation through rituals that were prescribed to native proselytes.

¹² Peter A. Dorsey, “Going to School with Savages: Authorship and Authority among the Jesuits of New France.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55 (1998): 403.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 407.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 412.

In many ways this thesis is an extension of ideas found in Jon Butler's 2008 text *New World Faiths: Religion in Colonial America* and Russell Bourne's 2002 monograph *Gods of War, Gods of Peace: How the Meeting of Native and Colonial Religions Shaped Early America*. Both authors view religion as a prime place of meeting and exchange between Europeans who settled in the British American colonies and the Amerindians that they encountered. Butler's account of the Jesuits is also generally more favorable than that of Trigger, noting that they were "superb logicians whose understanding of the Indian way of life made them better able to refute Indian objections to Christianity."¹⁵ Bourne also recognized that during interactions between Europeans and native peoples in North America religious ideas were exchanged in the "meeting ground between people in historic contact – with results both accommodational and otherwise."¹⁶ The essence of both works can also be found in the interactions between Jesuits and the Huron and Montagnais in New France, and the inclusion of these themes broadens the historiographic understanding of religious exchange and ties New France to ubiquitous transatlantic experiences.

A variety of sources have been utilized throughout the process of composing this thesis to establish the extent of Jesuit orthodoxy, the nature of Jesuit education, and their conduct in the New World. Examples of prescriptive religious practice in the Old World

¹⁵ Jon Butler. *New World Faiths: Religion in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 96

¹⁶ Russell Bourne. *Gods of War, Gods of Peace: How the Meeting of Native and Colonial Religions Shaped Early America* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002), 6.

can be found in primary documents relevant to the Society of Jesus. One such work, the *Ratio Studiorum*, was published in 1599 as a blueprint for the philosophy and instruction carried out in Jesuit colleges and universities throughout France. The Jesuits who came to the New World were products of these universities, and the curricula found within the Jesuit educational program shaped ontology. Thus, the *Ratio* is an important window into the ontological foundation of the Jesuits prior to native contact. Another such work is the *Spiritual Exercises*, composed by Jesuit founder Ignatius of Loyola, in which Jesuits are taught to practice meditation and prayer through a series of retreats overseen by a spiritual director. The *Exercises* served as a foundational aspect of initiation into the order once the Jesuits had become an established arm of the Catholic Church. The philosophical elements in Loyola's writings merit examination, as does the implication found in spiritual self-reflection and confession, which contributed to Jesuit autonomy and decision-making in the New World.

This thesis is heavily dependent on primary records kept by the Jesuits, the most famous of which were collected, translated, and edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites as *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. The pitfall of such a source lies in the biases and intent of the Jesuits themselves, as they wrote for a European audience to generate financial support for their work and often composed *Relations* that consisted more of hagiography than impartial cultural analysis. The benefits of the *Jesuit Relations* lie in the regularity of publication and the glimpse that they provide of the Jesuit perspective as it changed over time. Another invaluable source is the collected writings of Jean de

Brébeuf, one of the more famous priests in the narrative of New France, along with commentary by René Latourelle, as these letters were part of his personal correspondence and not intended for commercial publication. Finally, a translation by John L. Steckley of *De Religione*, the previously mentioned text composed in Huron to use in proselytizing among the Iroquois, is particularly helpful in demonstrating the Jesuit linguistic ability and the illustrations that they chose to communicate the message of Catholicism to Amerindians. This source yields an understanding of how Jesuit ontology changed over a period of almost fifty years and how priests perceived Catholic tradition and ritual in native terms.

The primary intent of this thesis is to unite strands of historical inquiry that often seem oppositional in an examination of Jesuit ontological beliefs throughout the stages of contact with native tribes. Jesuits arrived in the New World with preconceived notions of sin, human nature, and language. This existing framework of belief was challenged and often changed through experience and cultural connections with native tribesmen and women. As Jesuit knowledge of native culture and language increased, the order adapted its delivery of Christian concepts such as the Trinity, baptism, and Eucharist to better fit native cosmology and ontological understanding. These adaptations and appropriations of native symbolism were also carefully constructed to maintain Catholic orthodoxy despite the cultural barrier that they were faced with. The result of such a study demonstrates the cultural sensitivity of the Jesuits and refutes historiography that portrays the Jesuits as insensitive in this regard. It also establishes religious dialogue as an important means of

exchange between Jesuits and natives in New France. In the end, the Jesuits had as much to learn from the natives that they encountered as they had to teach.

CHAPTER II

CONCEIVED IN ORTHODOXY: THE FOUNDING OF THE JESUITS AND THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

Before any systematic examination of Jesuit ontology can possibly be achieved, it is first necessary to examine two key aspects of the Society of Jesus to determine the orthodoxy of the order and the Jesuits who were later sent to New France as missionaries. First, the founding documents of the Society must be examined, along with the writings and experiences of Ignatius of Loyola, to determine whether or not the order was conceived in orthodoxy. To achieve this aim an examination of Loyola's *Autobiography* and *Spiritual Exercises*, as well as the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Loyola's principal document that harmonized the order with the 1540 papal bull, *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae*, and the 1550 bull, *Exposcit debitum*, is needed to determine the Jesuit stance regarding orthodoxy and the manner in which the Society should function.

It is also important to include an examination key moments of Loyola's own spiritual journey. Loyola had an intensely serious personality and his role as the driving force for the Society should not be overlooked. It is clear that from the outset Loyola held education in high regard, and he designed aspects of the Society with this in mind. Loyola desired to include humanist works that influenced his own spiritual development at the University of Paris while remaining aligned with proper Catholic orthodoxy. For

future Jesuits the university experience would be crucially important in molding their ontological conception of the world and its inhabitants, so it is necessary to examine the philosophical and theological bedrock of these schools.

This in turn begets the second, larger question of “what was Catholic orthodoxy in the sixteenth century?” Though a complete answer of this question is far beyond the scope of this research, a thorough study of sixteenth century Catholic concepts of the Trinity, baptism, and the Eucharist must be undertaken to determine whether or not Jesuits were orthodox in these core aspects of belief prior to their transatlantic journeys. This can be achieved by examining the *Decrees of Trent* and the *Catechism of Trent*: two crucial products of the Catholic Reformation and the principal papal documents of the sixteenth century. The Tridentine decrees greatly influenced Jesuit schools, as they worked to incorporate and express the official doctrine of the church in a manner that included secular classical works that had been glorified by the Renaissance in the spirit of humanism, as the *Constitutions* show. These goals became even more closely aligned with the decrees of Trent with the 1599 publication of the *Ratio Studiorum*, a comprehensive document outlining the Jesuit plan for education.

In order to reach an appropriate answer to these questions we must first examine the foundations of the Jesuits within the larger climate and spirit of European religious reform, which influenced the writings and decisions of Ignatius of Loyola. This will enable us to contextually determine the core principles of the Society and whether or not the Jesuits were orthodox in inception. It is appropriate to then study the decrees of Trent

and the Tridentine catechism to determine proper orthodoxy regarding the Trinity, Baptism, and the Eucharist. This will reveal whether or not the Jesuits were orthodox in practice, which becomes particularly important when Jesuits traveled far from the authority of Rome to the hinterland of New France as missionaries. To conclude, we will examine the influence of the Council of Trent on Jesuit education as a whole and reach the realization that Jesuits teachers were in fact highly orthodox in the way that they instructed their students.

The Spiritual Foundations of the Society of Jesus

The spirit of competition among rival denominations within Christendom during the Reformation prompted the founding of new religious orders within Catholicism. The most famous and infamous of these sixteenth century orders was the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. Founded in 1534 by Ignatius of Loyola, a child of nobility and ex-soldier, the Jesuits became one of the principal religious organizations devoted to advancing the goals and purposes of the Catholic Church during the Protestant crisis. Loyola lived in a time of factional strife created by regional, cultural, and religious differences that were amplified by historical conflict. By spending most of his early life in Spain where Catholicism remained strong, circumstances ensured that Loyola's devotion to God coincided with dedication to the Catholic church. To further illustrate this point in a contextual sense, it should also be mentioned out that Ignatius's conversion and dedication of his life to Catholicism occurred in 1521 at Loyola, the very year the Luther

was excommunicated.¹ Thus, Loyola's introduction to religious life and formative spiritual growth occurred during a period when the church was greatly concerned with orthodoxy and responding to the challenges of Protestantism. Loyola's personal devotion to the God of Catholicism found its upwelling in a desire to serve the mother church at great personal sacrifice.

When Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus he intended to create a new order that broke from the monastic traditions popularized by the Franciscans and Dominicans, namely through active involvement in the larger world rather than cloistering. From the outset Loyola was deeply concerned with the spiritual state of people who had heard the message of Catholicism and denied it, as well as those in distant lands who had never heard the message of Christianity. Thus, the proper instruction of the laity and the advancement of missionary work within Europe and abroad were the two primary concerns of the Society. In the *Constitutions* Loyola explicitly stated: "The end of this Society is to devote itself with God's grace not only to the salvation and perfection of the members' own souls, but also with that same grace to labor strenuously in giving aid toward the salvation and perfection of the souls of their

¹ George E. Ganss, ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 10. The introduction to Ganss's translation of Loyola's writings is especially helpful in tracing the spiritual and intellectual development that Loyola underwent prior to and during the founding of the Jesuits. While Ganss himself is a member of the Society of Jesus and his writing is occasionally borderline hagiographic, the introduction still offers historians a thoughtful overview of Loyola's life and situates Loyola's writings within this development. His introduction is also useful in cross-referencing the variety of canonical texts that Loyola was likely to have read in the course of his studies and spiritual life, such as Aquinas, Augustine, and Lombard.

neighbors.”² Thus, he clearly made the distinction that the Society was founded to be an active participant in the larger world rather than a secluded, hermitical order confined chiefly to monasteries. Loyola’s primary motivation for founding the Jesuit order is forever encapsulated in the Jesuit motto, *ad maiorem dei gloriam*, “for the greater glory of God.” This belief prompted many Jesuits to travel throughout the world as missionaries. Jesuits actively labored in Europe to bring wayward Catholics back within the fold of “proper” Christianity as well, which has led to the incorrect stigma of the Society as the “shock troops” of the papacy.³ This view, expressed by Jesuit contemporaries and later historians, is incorrect precisely due to the spiritual revelation experienced by Loyola and his years of independence from Rome. Even after the Jesuits were officially instated through papal bull they operated with great autonomy and free control of their affairs, which eventually led to their dissolution in 1773.

Jesuits were to be active within their own communities, ministering to the needs of the laity, and willing to be sent wherever the Society deemed necessary, as Part VII of the *Constitutions* states that “To be able to meet the spiritual needs of souls in many regions with greater facility and with greater security for those who go among them for this purpose, the superiors of the Society... will have the authority to send any of the Society’s members whomsoever to whatsoever place these superiors think it more

² Ibid., 275, 284.

³ A. Lynn Martin, “The Jesuit Mystique.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 4 (1973): 32. Martin’s essay is primarily concerned with refuting the negative stigmas traditionally leveled against the Jesuits, insisting that the order was not nearly as monolithic as contemporaries and later historians have made it out to be. That being said, the Ignatian vision for education was flexible enough to be adapted to circumstances and individuals. Individual decision and independent actions of Jesuits feature heavily in the third chapter.

expedient to send them...”⁴ From this statement it can also be noted that a spirit of obedience to one’s superiors and the greater callings of the society was to be inculcated in initiates and priests within the order. This idea was previously iterated in Part III of the *Constitutions*, which state that “to make progress, it is very expedient and highly necessary that all should devote themselves to complete obedience, by recognizing the superior, whoever he is, as being in the place of Christ our Lord and by maintaining interior reverence and love for him. They should obey entirely and promptly... with becoming energy and humility.”⁵ During Loyola’s studies in Paris he embraced the philosophy that “When the master [university prefect] orders me, I will think that Christ orders me; when another orders me, I will think that St. Peter orders me.”⁶ While this is certainly a high ideal, it is yet another example of the tightly-ordered nature of the Society expressed previously in this chapter.

The principle argument levied against the Jesuits during their missionary activity in China and India was that they were doctrinally lax, prompting this examination of orthodoxy in Jesuit practices to refute claims that could be made of Jesuits in New France. Detractors quickly noted this core belief in loyalty to one’s superiors and used it as an example of Jesuit militarism, feeding the “shock troop” mentality. Jesuit activity in the greater world ensured that they encountered controversy and enmity from other mendicant orders within Catholicism as well as secular leaders. This is aptly shown in

⁴ Ganss, *Loyola*, 307.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁶ Ganss, *Loyola*, 100.

two examples: a number of French Jesuits actively supported the Catholic League during the French Wars of Religion, while another group supported Spanish political and military actions under Philip II.⁷ The exponential growth of the order and the connections that they sought with political powers ensured that they developed a reputation for being manipulative and aggressive in their dealings with religious and secular leaders. The stigma in Europe, promulgated by their enemies and carried through the historiography, was that the Jesuits used their influence on political leaders as confessors and advisers to manipulate events throughout the region. These polemical accusations continue to color the historiography of the Jesuits to this day, prompting an extended discussion by A. Lynn Martin of the Jesuit “mystique” that can even be found in English definitions of the word “Jesuit” that include “a ‘crafty, intriguing, or equivocating person,’” as well as the German “*verschlagener Eiferer*, a ‘cunning zealot.’”⁸ To better understand the context of these claims, it is important to examine the life of Loyola and the founding documents of the Society to determine the importance of orthodoxy to the Society’s leaders.

In the opening pages of the *Autobiography*, dictated by Loyola between the years 1553-1555, Loyola declared that “he was a man given to the vanities of the world; and what he enjoyed most was warlike sport, with a great and foolish desire to win fame,” yet a war injury and near-death experience caused him to dedicate his life to following God.⁹ Apparently Loyola was a contemplative individual who read “a life of Christ and a book

⁷ Martin, “The Jesuit Mystique,” 32.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

of the lives of the saints” as he recovered.¹⁰ The product of this period of incapacitation, reading, and thinking was the first draft of the *Spiritual Exercises*, a text that promoted individual piety and embodied Loyola’s contemplations. Loyola composed this work as a layman before the call for church-wide reform had gained credence and momentum within Catholicism, though the *Exercises* fit within the larger spirit of the later Catholic reform, showing that Loyola was in tune with the concerns voiced by other Catholics.¹¹

As a layman Loyola was not immune to investigation from inquisitors regarding his *Exercises*, early itinerant preaching, and activity as a confessor. Europe during the sixteenth century could best be described as socially tumultuous or riven with religious debate and disagreement. For nations that remained loyal to Catholicism the threat of an inquisition was omnipresent among the laity as the church began a massive program that dissolved the traditional latitude given to lay beliefs. Religious leaders had always been historically wary of lay members usurping their mediatory religious role, and Loyola’s early activity caught their attention in a few notable circumstances. The *Autobiography* mentions at least three instances in which Loyola and his companions went before inquisitors to determine the depths of their theological understanding and to examine the *Exercises*. The first inquisition and imprisonment at Salamanca prompted Loyola to pursue education in Paris because the authorities demanded that he cease preaching until

¹⁰ Ibid., 70.

¹¹ Robert E. McNally. “The Council of Trent, the Spiritual Exercises and the Catholic Reform.” *Church History* 34 (1965): 37-38. McNally’s analysis of the *Exercises* within the larger movement of the Catholic Reform is particularly useful for those who would like more information than what is presented here.

he received formal theological training. Loyola expressed frustration with this sentence, yet he submitted to the authority of the inquisitors. These anecdotes elucidate two key points regarding Loyola's orthodoxy. First, Loyola adhered to the orders of those in position of spiritual authority – a core belief that is expressed in the Jesuit *Constitutions* as well. Second, it is also important to note that in all of these cases the inquisitors found the *Exercises* theologically sound, though they often could not believe that this was the work of a lay member, and many actually requested copies of the devotional text.¹² In his final run-in with religious authorities in Rome Loyola demanded that a sentence be granted, establishing whether or not he was guilty, and spoke to Pope Paul III, who ordered the inquisitors to pass sentence in his favor. Loyola had been officially absolved of any rumored misdeeds and was allowed to continue giving the *Exercises* with the consent of the pope.¹³

When the Society was officially sanctioned by papal bull in 1540, the *Exercises* became one of the principal components of initiation, reflecting the core ideals of the Society. Initiates into the Society of Jesus were required to complete a month-long period of retreat, meditation, prayer, and confession modeled on Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. Loyola composed the *Exercises* as a flexible guidebook to meditation and drawing into a closer relationship with God that could be used by anybody, whether a member of the clergy or laity. The Society quickly adopted the *Exercises* as a principal

¹² Ganss, *Loyola*, 97, 105, 110-111.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 110.

starting point for novitiates due to the spiritual preparedness that they fostered. The introductory principles of the first week state that “Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of this to save their souls,” which reflects the positive outlook of the Society regarding the greater world.¹⁴ This period of self-reflection enabled potential Jesuits to thoroughly search themselves to determine whether or not they truly belonged in the order. Loyola modeled the *Exercises* on his own spiritual diary and mystic experiences, and constructed an open-ended series of meditations that could be adapted to the needs of the practitioner. Each week of the retreat program consisted of a series of topics for meditation and prayer, including the history of sin, the Sermon on the Mount, Palm Sunday, and the Passion. The *Exercises* then culminated with the resurrection of Christ.¹⁵ Historian Robert E. McNally offers an excellent overview of the spiritual doctrine embodied in the *Exercises*: “It is optimistic in the sense that it rests on the conviction that the world is good, man is good, and God is good. It allows precious little room for an eschatology structured on a dark pessimism of flight from the world. The humanism appears in the consideration that all ‘things on the face of the earth were created for man’s sake.’”¹⁶ The *Constitutions* stated that “after

¹⁴ Ibid., 130.

¹⁵ Ibid., 20.

¹⁶ McNally, “The Council of Trent,” 40. McNally’s quotation at the end of the sentence is taken from the introduction of Loyola’s *Exercises*. To better place this quotation in perspective, two other statements from the introduction to the *Exercises* are of great importance. First: “Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord” Second: “I ought to desire and elect only the thing which is more conducive to the end for which I am created.” Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 130. Though Loyola held a positive view of creation he was strictly focused on pointing the individual to the glorification of God, so his application of humanism was revised in this sense, making it more utilitarian than indulgent.

they [Jesuits] have had experience of the Spiritual Exercises in their own selves, they should acquire experience in giving them to others.”¹⁷ From this quotation it is clear that the Jesuit practice of teaching was established early on in the preparation for the priesthood.

Jesuits who had already completed the *Exercises* typically gave them to new initiates and acted as their spiritual confessors and guides throughout the retreat. The Presupposition of the *Exercises* begins with the admonition that the giver should seek to understand the confessions of the recipient in light of doctrinal orthodoxy, and that when the recipient is in error they should be corrected gently. Specifically it states that the confessor should:

“Be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it. Further, if one cannot interpret it favorably, one should ask how the other means it. If that meaning is wrong, one should correct the person with love; and if this is not enough, one should search out every appropriate means through with, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved.”¹⁸

This attitude seeks to balance the potentially heretical nature of mysticism with the guiding supervision of a superior more well-versed in theology. The oversight of this practice also reflects the concerns voiced at Trent and the insistence in the 1566 *Catechism of the Council of Trent* that proper teaching be conducted to combat heresy and Protestant teachings. In the section of rules for the confessor giving the *Exercises* it

¹⁷ Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 296.

¹⁸ Ibid., 129. The notion that they should use every appropriate means to salvage a statement will have greater implication in the chapter related to the Jesuit experiences in New France. The ontology of the Jesuits enabled flexibility in understanding and an overall emphasis on the greater good of the “sauvage,” prompting many to look for these noble qualities in the native communities that they encountered.

states that “To keep ourselves right in all things we ought to hold fast to this principle: What I see as white, I will believe to be black if the hierarchical Church thus determines it.”¹⁹ These statements are reflective of Loyola’s hierarchical view of society and spiritual authority and their centrality within the Society’s rules and guidelines. As these examples show, the Society of Jesus and its founders were magnetically aligned towards Rome and papal authority. To determine Jesuit orthodoxy in the New World, it is important to then look at official Catholic doctrine regarding the Trinity, Baptism, and the Eucharist, since the Jesuits closely adhered to Catholic orthodoxy.

Catholic Doctrine Reaffirmed at Trent

The religious schism wrought by the Reformations of the sixteenth century initially created a grave crisis for the Roman Catholic Church. Rogue monks like Martin Luther offered substantial challenges to Catholic doctrine and canon law, targeting the practices of bishops and parish pastors that ran counter to pious behavior for leaders of the church. No longer was the church a unified body; Catholic priests no longer held a monopoly on the spiritual lives and salvation of parishioners. Protestants offered a competing avenue to salvation. In response to these challenges, the Catholic Church convened a series of ecumenical councils throughout the years 1545-1563 in the city of Trent to address the accusations of the newly-formed Protestant denominations. By refining and reaffirming the beliefs of Catholicism and offering a unified vision of Catholic theology, Trent

¹⁹ Ibid., 213.

enabled the Catholic Church to emerge from this crisis as a stronger and more vibrant entity than it had previously been.

When the Council of Trent first convened in December 1545, the members decreed that the intent of the gathering was “for the advance and exaltation of the Christian faith and religion, for the extirpation of heresies, for the peace and unity of the Church, [and] for the reform of the clergy and the Christian people...”²⁰ The third session, held in February 1546, affirmed the Apostle’s Creed, which declared the triune nature of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The April session of 1546 stated that that the church maintained “the traditions, whether they relate to faith or to morals, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession.”²¹ Clearly the council did not intend to institute widespread change in doctrine at every level of Catholicism. Rather, its intention was to institute uniform practices among the clergy and put an end to questionable practices among the laity with “a decidedly new attitude to old legislation.”²²

²⁰ H. J. Schroeder, trans. *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. (Charlotte: Tan Books, 1978), 11. The decrees of Trent were not initially well-received by some in France because of the fear that papal supremacy would diminish the power of the French monarchy. For a more detailed study of this issue consult Thomas I. Crimando. “Two French Views of the Council of Trent.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19 (1988): 169-186.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 15, 17.

²² John Bossy. “The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe.” *Past & Present* 47 (1970): 53. Bossy makes an interesting argument regarding the final outcome of the Counter Reformation among the laity, namely that the clergy’s fulfillment of Trent by instituting uniform practices and removing many of the folk traditions associated with feasts and village life led to some of the failings of the post-Reformation church. By removing the familial elements of lay involvement and the role of kin within the church, the clergy offered no reasonable substitute to “the channels and organs of autonomous participation which the medieval Church had fostered in such profusion.” (68) Thus, instituting orthodoxy made the Catholic Church less approachable for most of the laity by transferring much of the religious responsibility

Within the decrees of Trent, the Catholic position on key doctrines such as the nature of the Trinity and the sacraments of both Baptism and the Eucharist is clearly defined. The hegemony of Catholicism is also reasserted, though Protestants naturally ignored these claims to religious primacy. The council also spoke to the type and nature of books that Catholics were to avoid reading. This decision further defined the church's official position against certain humanist works, influencing the curriculum employed in Jesuit colleges. An examination of these key aspects of Trent elucidates the definition of proper orthodoxy in Catholicism during this period as well as the impact of Trent on the education of Jesuits.

The seventh session of the Council of Trent, convened in March 1547, focused primarily on the nature of the sacraments as practiced by the Catholic Church. The Council affirmed the importance of all seven sacraments and their collective role in justification of the sinner, clearly and unequivocally stating in the first canon that "if anyone says that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, or that there are more or less than seven, namely, baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, order and matrimony, or that any one of these seven is not truly and intrinsically a sacrament, let him be anathema."²³ The eighth canon

and practice to the clergy. Other authors such as Mary Laven assert that the changes wrought by the Counter-Reformation were a dialectic in which the laity and clergy were forced to compromise on issues such as folk remedies and talismans. Laven notes that Jesuit missionaries distributed sacramental objects such as holy water, relics, or crosses, claiming that they derived their power from God as conveyed through the liturgy and priesthood. For further reading on this topic see: Mary Laven, "Encountering the Counter-Reformation," *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006): 706-720.

²³ Bossy, "The Counter-Reformation," 51.

further declares that “If anyone says that by the sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred *ex opera operato*, but that faith alone in the divine promise is sufficient to obtain grace, let him be anathema,” and the tenth canon states that “If anyone says that all Christians have the power to administer the word and all the sacraments, let him be anathema.”²⁴ These firm responses to the challenges of Protestantism are of great importance in the future development of the Tridentine church because they reaffirmed the divine power inherent in the sacraments themselves and clearly defined the position of priests as distributors of their salvific benefits.

The seventh session also contained the Council’s official position regarding baptism and its necessity in the salvation of the individual. While there were no significant changes to the Church’s historical beliefs, the Council clearly stated that baptism must be made with “true and natural water” and that the baptized were “debtors... to the observance of the whole law of Christ” and the precepts of the church.²⁵ The canons also declared that those who sinned frequently and acted in disbelief could potentially lose their salvation and that it was a heresy to believe that “all sins committed after baptism are either remitted or made venial.”²⁶ Though baptism was a necessary component to salvation, the Council declared that it had not the efficacy that Protestants claimed in forgiving all sins past and future and that moral behavior and dedication to the teachings and commands of the Church was also the responsibility of the baptized.

²⁴ Ibid., 52.

²⁵ Ibid., 53-54.

²⁶ Ibid., 54.

In October 1551 a thirteenth session was convened to discuss the sacrament of the Eucharist. The opening decree “forbids all the faithful of Christ to presume henceforth to believe, teach, or preach with regard to the most Holy Eucharist otherwise than is explained and defined in this present decree.”²⁷ In this session the council reaffirmed the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation by stating that “after the consecration of bread and wine, Our Lord Jesus Christ... is truly, really and substantially contained in the august sacrament of the Holy Eucharist under the appearance of those sensible things [bread and wine].”²⁸ The council also affirmed that the elements were changed immediately upon consecration and that Christ was present equally in both the bread and the wine, no matter how small of a piece. The elements were also declared to be equal parts of one sacrament, with neither superseding the other in importance or efficacy.²⁹ The council further declared that the Eucharist was the “most holy” of sacraments due to the “excellent and peculiar characteristic” setting it above the others, since “the other sacraments then first have the power of sanctifying when one uses them, while in the Eucharist there is the Author Himself of sanctity before it is used.”³⁰

By retaining the doctrine of transubstantiation and maintaining that Christ was present in the sacrament, the Council placed special importance on the Eucharist and declared that “this sublime and venerable sacrament be celebrated with special veneration

²⁷ Ibid., 72.

²⁸ Ibid., 73.

²⁹ Ibid., 75, 79.

³⁰ Ibid., 74.

and solemnity every year” at Eastertide.³¹ This veneration of the Eucharist prompted the council to issue a firm warning regarding the preparation of those who chose to receive the sacrament:

If it is unbecoming for anyone to approach any of the sacred functions except in a spirit of piety, assuredly, the more the holiness and divinity of this heavenly sacrament are understood by a Christian, the more diligently ought he to give heed lest he receive it without great reverence and holiness, especially when we read those terrifying words of the Apostle: *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.*³²

This statement reinforced the requirement that communicants attend confessional before partaking of the Eucharist, and that they be educated regarding the spiritual weight associated with the sacrament. It is clear from the *Proceedings* that the Eucharist was considered the most important of all sacraments and that priests were advised to take special care in ensuring that the hearts of the communicants were in an acceptable state of contrition before receiving the body and blood of Christ and that they fully understood the theological significance of the Eucharist. “Death and condemnation” awaited the laity who chose not to follow these commands, and excommunication was to be the punishment for priests who taught, preached, or publicly disputed the declarations of the council.³³

The council was greatly concerned with the permeation of heretical literature within clerical circles, which is reflected through the many statements regarding the texts

³¹ Ibid., 76, 80.

³² Ibid., 77.

³³ Ibid., 80.

to be used and avoided by Catholic clerics and the laity within the decrees. Earlier sessions affirmed the authenticity of the Vulgate and the writings of ancient church fathers, admonishing clerics to teach only the official stance of the church contained in the proceedings of Trent.³⁴ In an effort to both curtail the influence of humanism and to prevent clerics from reading heretical works by Protestants, the council declared in 1562 that “it has thought it proper that the Fathers chosen for this inquiry should consider carefully what ought to be done with regard to censures and books,” the product of which was a list of banned literature and a set of ten rules concerning the banned texts.³⁵ The desire to leave the interpretive role of scripture to the priesthood led the Council to reject overtures to allow the laity to read the Scriptures in the vernacular, stating that “there will be reason of the boldness of men arise therefrom more harm than good... [unless] they will derive from such reading no harm but rather an increase of faith and piety, which permission they must have in writing,” making it illegal to possess vernacular translations disseminated by Protestants unless in certain cases.³⁶ The council mandated a greater level of oversight over the clergy to ensure that heretical teachings would not be promulgated within Catholicism, yet they were willing to tolerate the growing influence of humanism within the church.

³⁴ Ibid., 19.

³⁵ Ibid., 126, 278.

³⁶ Ibid., 279. For a more complete study of the struggle between the humanist faction at Trent and canonists over the interpretive role of the laity see Louis B. Pascoe, “The Council of Trent and Bible Study: Humanism and Scripture.” *The Catholic Historical Review* 52 (1966): 18-38.

The council was also greatly concerned with the nature and circulation of suspect texts. Humanist influences were curtailed so that works would only be included in the libraries of priests if they were of a spiritually edifying nature. This concern subsequently appears in the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum*, which outlined acceptable texts in accordance with the decrees of Trent and serves as yet another example of Jesuit orthodoxy. The well-educated clergy were to exert a watchful eye over the laity and correct any errors of belief that arose among the general population. To better aid the clergy in this job the council commissioned a catechism for parish priests that would aid them in properly following the decrees of Trent.

Catechism of Trent: The Trinity, Eucharist, and Baptism

One of the most important products of the Council of Trent was not the decrees, which largely reaffirmed the traditional stance of the Catholic Church in a redefined context that dealt with the accusations and umbrages of Protestantism, but the 1566 *Roman Catechism*, or the *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*. As stated earlier, the *Catechism* was the definitive guidebook for priests to apply the council's declarations and ensure that the priesthood was following correct doctrine in areas where they interacted with the laity. The 1570 papal bull *Quo Primum* declared that the authors "carefully collated all their work with the ancient codices in Our Vatican Library and with reliable, preserved or emended codices from elsewhere...thus they have restored the

Missal itself to the original form and rite of the Holy Fathers.”³⁷ Triumphant the successes of Trent, the bull also ordered that the catechism should “be printed and published as soon as possible, so that all might enjoy the fruits of this labor; and thus, priests would know which prayers to use and which rites and ceremonies they were required to observe from now on in the celebration of Masses.”³⁸

Thus, the *Catechism* was published and circulated to Catholic priests, not as a compendium for the entire doctrine of the church, but as a guidebook with “the knowledge of those things that belong most particularly to the pastoral office” to “assist the pious zeal of pastors... should they not be very familiar with the more difficult disputations concerning divine matters.”³⁹ In the introduction, the *Catechism* states that it should be used “to deliver some fixed form and manner of instructing the Christian people from the very rudiments of the faith; which [form] should be followed in all churches, by those who have to discharge the duty of a lawful pastor and teacher.”⁴⁰ As an extension of the decrees of Trent that is situated in practicality, the *Catechism* is a useful source that clarifies aspects of the decrees that lack clarity.

The *Catechism* speaks in greater detail and length about the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity than the proceedings of the Council of Trent to ensure that the laity would be properly instructed concerning the mystic nature of the Godhead. The first section of the

³⁷ Pope Pius V, *Quo Primum* 1570: 1. accessed October 3, 2011, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pious05/p5quopri.htm>

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁹ J. Donovan, trans. *Catechism of the Council of Trent*. (London: Baronius Press, 2006), 7

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

Catechism is itself a lengthy exposition on the Apostle's Creed, which was reaffirmed by the Council of Trent in the second session. The *Catechism* notes the difficulty in understanding the nature of a triune God, stating that "the divine oracles begin to disclose to us that which is more abstruse, and more deeply hidden in the inaccessible light in which God dwells, that which human reason and research not only could not attain, but even conjecture to exist."⁴¹ It continues, stating that "in the one essence of the Godhead is proposed to our belief, not one Person only, but a distinction of Persons; for in one Godhead there are three Persons: the Father, who is begotten of none; the Son, who is begotten of the Father before all ages; the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from the Father and Son likewise from eternity... in the Trinity of one substance."⁴² The *Catechism* also carefully notes that the individual members of the Godhead are not to be elevated above one or the other, and that the parish priest should "let the faithful know that unity belongs to the essence and distinction to the Persons."⁴³ Parish priests were expected to teach the laity the significance of each part of the Godhead while explaining the equal yet distinct nature of the Trinity.

The *Catechism* affirms the necessity of Christ in the salvation of souls, stating that "having thus fallen... our race could by no means be thence uplifted and replaced... the infinite power of the Son of God, having assumed the weakness of our flesh, should remove the infinite weight of sin, and reconcile us to God in his blood," and "the belief

⁴¹ Ibid., 20.

⁴² Ibid., 20-21.

⁴³ Ibid., 21.

and confession of this our redemption... are now, and always were, necessary to the attainment of salvation.”⁴⁴ The third article concerns itself with the qualities of the Holy Ghost and its role in the hypostatic union of Christ. Parish priests were admonished to expound frequently on the mystical nature of Christ’s divinity and the ways in which he humbled himself by assuming the form of man, so that “they may make some return of thanks to God” and “to place before their eyes, for imitation, this unparalleled and singular example of humility.”⁴⁵ This imitation of Christ found particular resonance in Loyola and the fundamental precepts of the Jesuits, promoting a spirit of tireless service and particular reverence and “great devotion” to the Trinity.⁴⁶

The second part of the *Catechism* is exclusively devoted to the sacraments of the Catholic Church because the writers deemed it necessary that priests fully instruct the laity regarding proper sacramental beliefs. The *Catechism* states that by the “accurate and frequent perception” of the sacraments, through education provided by the clergy, the laity “may become such as that they may be admitted to the worthy and salutary participation of these most excellent and most holy institutions.”⁴⁷ Thus, proper instruction regarding the sacraments was of great importance in the reformed Catholic Church, and the *Catechism* further reaffirmed the centrality of the priesthood in their administration.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁶ Ganss, *Loyola*, 79-80.

⁴⁷ Donovan, trans. *Catechism*, 129.

The *Catechism* placed great importance on the necessity of proper instruction regarding the sacrament of baptism due to the counter-claims raised by Protestants, stating that “if any one will read the Apostle attentively, he will without hesitation conclude, that a perfect knowledge of baptism is imperatively demanded of the faithful,” and that priests should “never think that they have bestowed sufficient labour and study in treating this sacrament.”⁴⁸ Priests were commanded to give the sacrament of baptism special exposition during Holy Saturday and the Vigil of Pentecost, and in sermons throughout the liturgical year in one or two points so that the laity might “contemplate, with pious and attentive mind, the doctrine of those things, which they receive with their ears.”⁴⁹ The *Catechism* also clearly states that priests must properly instruct the laity to believe that the baptismal water or font have no inherent sacramental power, but become a sacrament only through the joining of the priests’ words with the element in the baptismal ceremony. The *Catechism* also expounds on the necessity of godparents or “sponsors” in the observance of a baptism, as this was “an office common to almost all the laity,” and the subsequent role that these sponsors filled through the “aid and assistance” they provided the baptized “in learning and useful knowledge,” was important to their spiritual development.⁵⁰ Both the *Catechism* and the decrees of Trent affirmed the church practice of infant baptism as both necessary and expedient because “they receive the mysterious gifts of faith” through the sacrament, which was their only means of

⁴⁸ Ibid., 148.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 149.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 161-162.

attaining salvation.⁵¹ Children were to be baptized at the earliest possible occasion because Catholic doctrine held that they had “contracted original guilt” from the moment of conception, and infant mortality was anything but uncommon in this age. After baptism, children were to be brought up in a godly environment “to be formed to true piety by the precepts of the Christian religion.”⁵²

Unbaptized adults were to “be admonished not to defer the sacrament of baptism” if they had made a statement of conversion, and should be taught “that perfect conversion consists in regeneration by baptism,” which “adorns [them] with divine grace, by the aid and help of which [they] are enabled to avoid sin also for the future, and to preserve righteousness and innocence.”⁵³ That being said, the *Catechism* instructed priests to delay the baptism of adults, because “great care must be taken by the Church that no one approach this sacrament with dissimulation and hypocrisy, the intentions of such as seek baptism are better examined and ascertained,” and priests were to be sure that “they are better instructed in the doctrine of the faith which they ought to profess, and in the practices of a Christian life.”⁵⁴ The *Catechism* also made allowances regarding the delay of baptism for adults who were on their deathbed, stating that “when danger to life seems imminent, and particularly if persons are to be baptized who are already fully instructed in the mysteries of the faith.”⁵⁵ Thus, it is clear that instruction in the faith was a

⁵¹ Ibid., 165-166.

⁵² Ibid., 165.

⁵³ Ibid., 167.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 167.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 168.

necessary precursor to baptism for adults and any person who had not heard the message of Christianity. The only exception to this rule was made for those who were faced with imminent death. The salvific component to baptism in Catholicism ensured that anybody facing death could receive baptism and have their sins forgiven, but the church counseled that it would ease the conscience of the priest if those persons had a fair amount of religious instruction prior to receiving the rites.

The *Catechism*'s exposition on the Eucharist largely mirrors the statements issued in the decrees of Trent, with the addition of minor details such as the preference for unleavened bread in the sacrament. Much of the *Catechism* is concerned with the proper phrasing and ideas behind the words used in the administration of the Eucharist. The chief area of elaboration on this sacrament is in the preparation that both the clergy and laity should undergo before approaching the Eucharist, dividing this preparation into matters of the body and soul. The *Catechism* states that the faithful should be able to distinguish "this sacred table from other profane tables" and "this heavenly bread from common bread."⁵⁶ Thus, a proper understanding of transubstantiation was to be taught at the parish level. Communicants were also to approach the table with a preparation of the body by "fasting, not having at all eaten or drunk, at least from the preceding midnight up to the very moment in which [they] receive the holy Eucharist."⁵⁷ The *Catechism* reiterated the once-a-year requirement of the Eucharist, but encouraged the faithful to

⁵⁶ Ibid., 232.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 233.

“judge that communion ought to be more frequent, but whether it be more expedient that it should be monthly, weekly, or daily, can be decided by no fixed universal rule.”⁵⁸ From these examples the emphasis on education, both for the clergy and the laity, is clear yet again.

Through their course of studies, the Jesuits became familiar with the *Catechism* as well as other texts composed by the Society for the purpose of catechesis, though the *Catechism of Trent* retained primacy according to papal decree. Adherence to orthodoxy demanded that the Jesuits utilize this text as the official parish catechism. It was also a useful pedagogical tool in that it contained the official manner by which to administer the seven sacraments and a concise exposition of essential church doctrine that pastors were to teach the laity of their parish. The teaching tools contained in the *Catechism* were also useful for Jesuit missionaries that traveled to distant parts of the world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A New Education: Jesuit Universities and the Council of Trent

The influence of Ignatius of Loyola is found throughout the Jesuit university system, which quickly became the hallmark of the Society. To achieve the goals of Trent the council ordered the reform of colleges “where instructions so profitable and of all the most necessary have not thus far been instituted, let them be introduced by the piety and charity of the most religious princes and governments for the defense and increase of the Catholic faith and the preservation and propagation of wholesome doctrine, and where

⁵⁸ Ibid., 234.

once instituted and neglected, let them be restored.”⁵⁹ The emphasis on educating the clergy so that they could better instruct and correct the laity in proper religious practices fit particularly well with Loyola’s vision for the Society of Jesus and the growing role that education played on its members. After his first inquisition and imprisonment, Loyola traveled to Paris to obtain formal education in theology and “found himself very deficient in fundamentals,” or basic Latin grammar.⁶⁰ Though he never completed his degree due to a persistent stomachache and left France to preserve his health, Loyola left with a new appreciation for education. This kindled the desire to incorporate rigorous schooling as a key aspect of his religious order. To determine the influence that the University of Paris had on Loyola and the future educational foundation of the Society, it is necessary to first examine changes that had been occurring in Renaissance universities during the previous decades.

The university tradition in Europe dates to centuries before both the Reformation and Renaissance, with twenty-nine known universities in operation by the year 1400. The period of intellectual rediscovery led to the addition of many more universities and brought the total to seventy-three operating by the year 1625.⁶¹ The influence of the Renaissance on the upper class in European society led universities to develop programs of study that fit the desires of wealthy patrons who, according to Paul F. Grendler,

⁵⁹ Schroeder, trans. *Canons and Decrees*, 25-26.

⁶⁰ Ganss, *Loyola*, 99.

⁶¹ Paul F. Grendler. “The Universities of the Renaissance and Reformation.” *Renaissance Quarterly* 57 (Spring, 2004): 2.

“believed that scholarly expertise and analysis were needed to resolve difficulties, to create solutions, and to attain desired goals. Humanism was essential to this attitude; its critical perspective and habit of seeking knowledge and inspiration from the ancient world honored and supported scholarly investigation.”⁶² Most public universities during the early decades of the sixteenth century focused primarily on specific groupings of courses such as law and medicine, or arts and theology, with few full-time faculty members who specialized in theological studies. Many students in these colleges were the children of noblemen and women who wanted their soon-to-be-educated progeny to continue and extend their legacy with the tools that they acquired over the course of study.⁶³

The addition of humanistic courses to university curriculum ensured that students in the arts learned as much, if not more from Cicero, Aristotle, and Vergil as they did from traditional church fathers, and the linguistic challenge in reading and interpreting texts in their original language opened the door to new interpretive outlooks on Scripture.⁶⁴ According to historian Paul F. Grendler, Italian universities scarcely focused on theology as a course of study, and when they did it was primarily concentrated in canon law, with less than ten percent in a theological program. Most students traveled to local monasteries run by medieval orders such as the Dominicans and Franciscans to

⁶² Ibid., 2.

⁶³ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 12. Grendler makes an excellent statement that “the critical spirit of humanism, its tendency to challenge old views, was even more important than philological skills.” He also notes that humanism changed universities through an indirect process, as professors used the methods and approaches of humanism to modify their courses and produce newer, better Latin translations from the original texts.

receive theological training. By contrast, German schools held theological studies in great prominence, with most professors living on the university campus, though the number of students in such a program was usually similar to Italian universities.⁶⁵ As a result, education at Renaissance universities was primarily concerned with training students with the practical skills necessary for secular careers. Religious instruction was left to the monasteries and monastic orders, who focused primarily on educating their own.

Historians need not be reminded that Martin Luther was affiliated with the College of Wittenberg and that his ninety-five theses were originally composed as a point of theological and university discussion and debate. This vibrant university system was in part responsible for the Lutheran split due to the humanist inspiration to return to the original sources as the authoritative voice on a subject. Universities in the north that had deepened in scope and focus due to the humanist influence of the Renaissance helped sustain the Reformation through its infancy into the first hundred years.⁶⁶ The decisions at Trent were of great importance to the religious universities founded by the Jesuits, as they emphasized theology much more prominently than traditional Italian universities and sought to train priests with firm backgrounds in Catholic canonical works, Scripture, and classical logic and rhetoric to combat Protestants intellectually. The Tridentine

⁶⁵ Ibid., 8. Grendler continues to note yet another important difference between Italian and German institutions, namely that Italian schools conferred primarily graduate and professional degrees while German universities dealt primarily with bachelor's students. Grendler is astute in noting the difference in career paths that this implied: Italian students sought positions as "lawyers, judges, and administrators in civil and ecclesiastical chanceries, especially the Roman curia" (9). Northern universities, on the other hand, primarily trained teachers for Latin schools in local communities both large and small. According to Grendler, students in the north who did seek a doctorate often pursued theological studies (9).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 14.

council was determined to harness the same theological energy from the north for its own purposes.

During the Renaissance universities deepened their curriculum by adding secular works that were deemed useful for instruction in the spirit of humanism. This addition of classical works from the Greeks and Romans, as well as the desire to read texts in their original languages, added to the sophistication and secularization of university courses of study. The fact that Loyola obtained his education during this period influenced his decision to include similar works within the curriculum of Jesuit universities. Though education was not the primary motivation Loyola had in founding the Jesuits, it quickly became one of the order's primary areas of service, as the Jesuits founded 245 schools by 1600 and over 700 by 1700.⁶⁷ The education that the Jesuits received equipped them with the tools needed to function as missionaries and parish priests, as they left the schools with a firm understanding of Catholic doctrine and theology that was enriched by linguistic studies and an emphasis on classical works in philosophy and oratory. As the decrees of Trent circulated among the priesthood, the Jesuits were already in the process of establishing guidelines to ensure that the priesthood and laity would be better-educated in Catholic doctrine than in the past, through the creation of Jesuit-run universities that provided free or affordable education in most instances.

⁶⁷ Christopher Carlsmith, "Struggling toward Success: Jesuit Education in Italy, 1540-1600." *History of Education Quarterly* 42 (2002): 218.

The *Constitutions* also clearly state that the Jesuits were concerned with combating the heretical teachings of Protestantism and training priests who had solid doctrinal foundations, as “the purpose of the Constitutions is to aid the body of the Society as a whole and also its individual members toward their preservation and development for the divine glory and the good of the universal Church.”⁶⁸ The importance that Loyola placed on education is clearly shown in Part IV of the *Constitutions*, entitled “The Instruction of Those Who Are Retained in the Society, in Learning and in Other Means of Helping Their Neighbor,” which briefly outlines the course of study for later Jesuit schools and states that “it will be necessary to provide for the edifice of their [the novitiate’s] learning and the manner of employing it, that these may be aids toward better knowledge and service of God.”⁶⁹ This manifesto of intent is harmonized with the decisions made during the Council of Trent in calling for well-educated clergy who held proper understandings of theology and church doctrine as well as the moral behavior that was becoming of the priesthood. Loyola clearly placed great importance on education as a means of achieving success as a religious order and as an important tool for members of the Society.

University coursework for future Jesuits, as laid out by Part IV of the *Constitutions*, was to consist of “the humane letters of different languages, logic, natural and moral philosophy, metaphysics, scholastic and positive theology, and Sacred

⁶⁸ Ganss, Loyola, 288.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 293.

Scripture, these are the branches which those who are sent to the colleges should study.”⁷⁰ In the *Constitutions* it is also possible to see the orderly manner in which students were to progress through their studies that would later be codified and elaborated on in the *Ratio Studiorum*. In one excerpt Loyola stated: “scholastics should acquire a good foundation in Latin before they attend lectures on the arts; and in the arts before they pass on to scholastic theology; and in it before they study positive theology. Scripture may be studied either concomitantly or later on.”⁷¹ Loyola also called for, in the spirit of Trent and the Catholic Reformation, “diligent treatment by highly capable professors... to what pertains to scholastic doctrine and Sacred Scripture, and also to the part of positive theology which is conducive to the aforementioned end,” as well as “capable professors of these languages [Latin, Greek, and Hebrew], and that in sufficient number.”⁷² Humanist curriculum at the University of Paris influenced Loyola’s own education, so he noted in the *Constitutions* that “since the arts or natural sciences dispose the intellectual powers for theology, and are useful for the perfect understanding of it... they should be treated with fitting diligence and by learned professors.”⁷³ From these two passages Loyola’s intent for future universities run by the Jesuits is clear: professors were to be capable and knowledgeable in their fields. Universities were to be adequately staffed with teachers, and the curriculum was to be varied enough to embrace some of the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 294.

⁷¹ Ibid., 295.

⁷² Ibid., 297.

⁷³ Ibid., 297.

desirable tenants of humanism while ultimately pointing back to a strong understanding of Catholic theology that would benefit Jesuit students in their future roles as priests and laity within the greater Catholic world.

Initiates into the Society were to be introspective, having completed the *Spiritual Exercises* with the oversight of a Jesuit confessor. These exercises prepared the potential Jesuit through a deep examination of the heart to ensure that the novitiate was in the correct spiritual state before fully committing to the order. The *Constitutions* speak clearly of the ideal candidate: “the greater the number of natural and infused gifts someone has from God our Lord which are useful for what the Society aims at in his divine service, and the more experience the candidate has in the use of these gifts, the more suitable will he be for reception into the Society.”⁷⁴ Novitiates were to be instructed on the “intention of the first men who bound themselves together in this Society” as well as the “bulls and Constitutions and all the rest which pertain to the Society’s Institute, in the beginning and afterward every six months.”⁷⁵

The *Constitutions* further stipulated that novitiates undergo a two-year period of probation and prove to be “always obedient and edifying in his association with others and in various tests, and has with great humility performed the penances which will be imposed on him for his errors and negligences or defects” before they could be

⁷⁴ Ibid., 289.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 285.

considered eligible to join the Society.⁷⁶ Jesuits were also to be rigorously educated in universities created and maintained by the Society. The curriculum of these universities was greatly influenced by humanist ideals that reached mainstream acceptance by the early quarter of the sixteenth century, but this acceptance of secular works was strictly curtailed to focus on the spiritual and theological betterment of students. These elements of the Society, as well as Loyola's intense desire for the advancement of Christ led to "a systematic spirituality rooted in Incarnationalism, humanism, and optimism, and practical to its very core. It was a spirituality leading the Church to victory through the personal reform and renewal of her members."⁷⁷ Thus, the Jesuit university system first outlined in the *Constitutions* would have a profound impact on all future members of the Order.

Conclusion

By examining the spiritual foundations of the Society of Jesus through Loyola's experiences in the *Autobiography* and the *Spiritual Exercises*, it is clear that the Jesuits were founded with the intention of orthodox adherence to the authority of the papacy. To establish the context for Jesuit orthodoxy in the New World, this chapter has examined the decrees of the Council of Trent as the official papal document regarding the doctrines of the Trinity, baptism, and the Eucharist. This chapter has also established that the decrees of Trent greatly influenced the Jesuit conception of education, initially laid out by Loyola in the *Constitutions*, and that the Jesuits remained orthodox in their conception of

⁷⁶ Ibid., 286.

⁷⁷ McNally, "The Council of Trent," 41.

a religious university that still embraced aspects of the humanist movement that had affected much of Europe. Loyola's own experience at the University of Paris greatly influenced his ideas regarding education by impressing on him an interest in classical works that were read in their language of composition as well as the scholastic theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. These aims and foundational beliefs were unequivocally pressed on Society members through the formal process of Jesuit education, which is the subject of the following chapter. Though Loyola was initially prompted to found the Society as a missionary organization within Catholicism, the superb quality of the initial Jesuit schools prompted a restructuring of the Society to focus on religious education as its principal directive.

CHAPTER III

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE: ABILITY AND ONTOLOGY DEVELOPED IN JESUIT EDUCATION

In the previous chapter we have established that education was a concern given great primacy in Loyola's conception of a religious order like the Society of Jesus. Members were to be well-educated to properly achieve the missionary and serving aims of the Society. This emphasis on education also harmonized with the decrees of Trent and the Tridentine catechism that the clergy be intelligent and orthodox. Thus, the beginnings of the Society were deeply rooted in orthodoxy and a desire to serve God through the Catholic Church. While the previous chapter established Loyola's foundational ideas of education by examining the Jesuit *Constitutions*, this chapter will examine the specific substance of the educational system as it was practiced. This will be accomplished by examining the 1599 *Ratio Studiorum*, the principal Jesuit charter for their educational system. By 1599 Jesuit universities had been in operation for fifty years, making the *Ratio* a culmination of their pedagogical and administrative efforts in the early years. Therefore, the *Ratio* explains how a Jesuit university is to function based on Jesuit conceptions of the best teaching practices. It is also important to study the *Ratio* because French Jesuits such as Jean de Brébeuf settled with the Huron tribe beginning in 1634,

decades after the official organization of Jesuit education under the *Ratio*, making it an influential component to the education that they received in France.¹

This chapter will examine a few principal aspects of the refined Jesuit system of education to determine the ways in which the Society molded young initiates. It begins with a brief overview of the progression of courses, ages of enrollment, and pedagogical tools employed by the Jesuits to determine the type of student typically enrolled in Jesuit coursework and subsequently the impact that this system of education had on novitiates. Second, it examines the practical skills that students learned in the areas of linguistic ability and rhetoric based on the methodology of the courses. Third, the culmination of this study is the creation of Jesuit ontology and their philosophical outlook on the world, or the ways in which a Jesuit was trained to think and interpret after proceeding through Jesuit coursework and full initiation into the Society. Finally, we will examine the overall emphasis instilled on novitiates: hardworking dedication to God, the Catholic church, and the Society. The central question for this chapter is best expressed by asking: “What did Jesuits-in-training learn at universities operated by the Society and what role did this education play in shaping their worldview, or ontology?” By examining the pedagogical structure of early Jesuit education it is possible to determine what Jesuit students were taught, and in what ways. The guiding purpose of such an exercise aids in establishing the theological and philosophical framework that contributed to the construction of the

¹ Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 71 vols. (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959), IV: 3.

Jesuit ontology during this period. By examining Jesuit ontology it is possible to determine the mindset and influences of Jesuits who traveled overseas as missionaries during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is important to establish because the doctrinal correctness impressed upon students carried over into the New World and defined their missionary strategies, as the final chapter will explain.

The *Ratio Studiorum*: Jesuit Education Refined

The speed at which the Jesuits began to labor in the arena of education can be seen through a brief chronology: The order was given official papal sanction through the 1540 bull and the first university was founded at Messina, Sicily in 1548 for the instruction of the laity; in the last seven years of Loyola's life he saw the addition of thirty-five universities to the Jesuit university system, including the Roman College (the present-day Gregorian University).² The founding Jesuit documents, along with current historical scholarship have established that the Jesuits did not initially intend to become a teaching order.³ Loyola's vision of education was intimately tied to the order's inception, as the previous examination of the *Constitutions* has shown. The writings of Ignatius of Loyola serve as the foundational core of the Jesuits, and later works of the order such as

² John E. Wise, "Jesuit School Beginnings." *History of Education Quarterly* 1 (1961): 28. Wise's brief essay also highlights future members of the order who played important roles in the educational foundations of the Jesuits, including Jerome Nadal, James Ledesma, and Claude Aquaviva. These three in particular worked hard to fulfill Loyola's vision and contributed to the 1599 *Ratio Studiorum*.

³ John W. O'Malley, "How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education," in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives*, Vincent J. Duminuco, ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 62-63. O'Malley notes that the original Jesuits, as well as Loyola, wanted primarily to "be a help to others," and that the members originally intended for new initiates to be sent "to already established universities." (62-63)

the 1599 *Ratio Studiorum* established unified curriculum and plans of study for Jesuit universities in Europe, to a degree of organization and cohesion that had never been previously established. The focus on missionary activity was Loyola's prime objective and the education of Jesuits was seen as a means to that end. Loyola's experiences at the University of Paris, the premier educational institute at the time, fundamentally shaped the organization and pedagogy of future Jesuit universities. The methodology of Paris was "the best in their view, synonymous with an active pedagogy that engaged all of the capacities of the student, a plan of studies that was well-founded and organized."⁴ Having experienced educational environments that were disorganized by comparison, Loyola naturally selected the methods of Paris based on his own judgment of their effectiveness and tightly organized structure.⁵

The Jesuit vow of poverty presented a fundamental challenge to the goals of the society, as it piously prevented members of the Society from seeking personal gain and wealth while at the same time making it difficult to fund Jesuit projects. In order to fund and promote the education of new Jesuits, the first Jesuit universities opened as secondary schools designed to serve the laity and quickly expanded throughout Europe.⁶ Missionary activity remained an important part of the order, as later missions to Asia and the New World attest to, but the order itself underwent a fundamental shift in intent

⁴ Gabriel Codina, "The "Modus Parisensis," in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives*, Vincent J. Duminuco, ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 48.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 33, 38.

⁶ O'Malley, "How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education," 64-65.

during the first fifty years of its existence that resulted in a greater emphasis on teaching. Later missionaries would use their reading and writing skills to pen a number of *Jesuit Relations*: stories of their triumphs and struggles in the New World that were reprinted in Europe for fundraising purposes. While Jesuits personally lived in poverty, the Society actively sought funding throughout Europe utilizing a variety of methods. Teaching and operating universities that were open to students of any social class were instrumental in Jesuit funding and training.

The Jesuits' organizational and managerial skill enabled the Society to found a new type of educational institution that focused primarily on religious instruction and offered a competing program of study when compared to traditional universities. Though Jesuit universities were steeped in religiosity they also offered practical skills for the children of Europe's elite, which ensured that enrollment swelled and new universities kept opening throughout Europe. As the Jesuit system of schooling expanded rapidly after the Society's founding, leaders worked to establish a uniform order of instruction and pedagogy to ensure that Society members were equally equipped for service regardless of their geographic location. The swift expansion of enrollment is testament to the overall quality and success of Jesuit education: at least 3,100 were enrolled in the largest French universities by 1586; at least 4,800 students were enrolled in Portugal by the same time; Italy boasted an official roster of at least 2,500 by 1594. Smaller towns

averaged somewhere between 500 and 800 students.⁷ The Society's leaders sought the best possible methods of managing these burgeoning universities by passing a number of encyclicals to unify educational methods and content across Europe, including the 1583 *Praxis et ordo Studiorum* and the 1586 *Ratio Studiorum*.⁸

The culmination and revision of educational documents throughout the decades of early Jesuit education resulted in the 1599 *Ratio Studiorum*. This document is instrumental because it outlined the overarching pattern for Jesuit instruction. The introduction to the *Ratio* states that the 1599 document “is to supersede all previous experimental editions and is to be followed faithfully by all members of the Society. It is therefore incumbent on all our teachers to carry out all its provisions.”⁹ It also states that it is the “principal ministry of the Society of Jesus to educate youth in every branch of knowledge... the aim of our educational program is to lead men to the knowledge and love of our creator and Redeemer,” reflecting the reorientation of the Society's directives.¹⁰ Students could expect to emerge from the Jesuit program with proficiency in mathematics, science, linguistics, and the classics, which was desirable for upper-class families enamored with education, but all of these studies were inundated with religious

⁷ Allan P. Farrell, trans. *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum of 1599*, 1970, iv.

⁸ John W. Padberg, “Development of the *Ratio Studiorum*,” in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives*, Vincent J. Duminuco, ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 88. These early versions of the *Ratio Studiorum* are unfortunately incredibly difficult to locate due to their limited circulation and the order of Claudio Aquaviva, Father General of the Society at this time, to burn all previous drafts. The 1586 version of the *Ratio* would be particularly interesting to examine because it focuses primarily on how classes were to be specifically taught, which the 1599 version does not describe.

⁹ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

overtones. Wording in the *Ratio* allowed for flexibility in the ways in which teachers carried out the Jesuit system of education, yet it was also explicit in many requirements to ensure uniformity of quality and alignment with the Society's vision. Thus, the influence and importance of the 1599 *Ratio* was far-reaching and firm. By requiring rigorous and voluminous exercises in language and mastery of subjects following the methods of the University of Paris, with many opportunities to teach and demonstrate skill, Jesuits created universities that set a new standard for religious instruction that contributed to the decline of the traditional university system in many regions, including France.¹¹ The following section examines how Jesuit universities were specifically ordered and the actual methodology of the program of studies. This will illumine the ideals that were impressed on young Jesuit novitiates who later served the Society in a variety of capacities.

Structure and Pedagogy: What Jesuits Studied

Education in Jesuit universities was by far the most formative experience for initiates both young and old, and the system had a profound effect on their world outlook and disposition. Much of the Jesuit structure relied heavily on the system established by the University of Paris. Despite the fact that the University of Paris was Loyola's primary institution of study, it also held a reputation for being the most forward-thinking and

¹¹ L.W.B. Brockliss, "Patterns of Attendance at the University of Paris, 1400-1800," *The Historical Journal* 21 (1978): 517. This article offers a useful quantitative analysis of attendance at the University of Paris over a four hundred year period that is contextualized by historical events. Brockliss also concludes that the decline in attendance at the University of Paris was due in part to the fact that the university charged tuition and inflation drove prices higher, while students seeking vocational degrees sought them from the alternative institutions, such as Jesuit colleges, that arose during the Reformation. (532).

prestigious university of early modern Europe prior to the institution of Jesuit universities. Other early Society leaders also progressed through the coursework of Paris and entertained similar feelings regarding the quality of instruction and methodology. Attributes present in the *Exercises*, such as “self-activity, adaptation to the individual, and the goal of mastery as contrasted to superficiality in learning” are all found in the Jesuit system of education.¹² Though it is important to remember that Jesuits operated universities for the laity as well as potential members of the Society, this chapter strictly focuses on the influence of education on the initiates. A brief examination of the structure and progression of courses found in the *Ratio* is necessary to establish the exact nature of coursework studied by initiates.

A study of Jesuit university structure is of the utmost importance because students typically entered Jesuit universities at the impressionable age of ten, and were usually ordained as full members of the Society anywhere from anywhere between the ages twenty-one to twenty-three, after earning a Doctorate of Theology.¹³ To put this in perspective, almost half their lives were spent in intensive study. For this very reason there is no possible way that education can be ignored as a deciding factor of influence on these individuals. A systematic overview of the entire Jesuit system of education is beyond the scope of this work. Rather, an examination of select aspects of the *Ratio*

¹² Ibid., 29.

¹³ Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 298. Ganss’s chart is particularly helpful in establishing a chronology for the Jesuit course of study and the approximate age of students at each level. Ganss adapted this chart from the *Ratio Studiorum*, organizing it in a manner that is most helpful for a general overview of coursework.

Studiorum illuminate the rigor and substance of Jesuit universities and the Ignatian perspective on education put into practice. This will lay the groundwork in determining how this system of education affected students and molded their ontology.

To summarize the progression through the Jesuit system of education, adapted from Ganss's excellent chart in his collection of the written works of Loyola, students typically entered the Jesuit universities with a rudimentary knowledge of Latin obtained through grammar schools that may or may not have been operated by Jesuits.¹⁴ Before beginning coursework students were given entrance exams to determine their level of competency in grammar and their placement within the program. Loyola underwent a similar system of entrance examinations at the University of Paris and was forced to take grammar courses with young students due to his lack of knowledge in the fundamentals, though in humility he noted the necessity of such methodology.¹⁵ Once admitted to the program, two years were then spent studying the "humane letters," with a focus on Latin and Greek, followed by two years of rhetoric, poetry, and history designed to hone the public speaking skills of the student and prepare them intellectually for the study of philosophy and the higher arts. These two years of lower-level courses served as a period of probation by which novices who were not fit for the priesthood were to be sorted out from those who showed greater capability for success.¹⁶ Externs who attended Jesuit

¹⁴ See Appendix. Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 298.

¹⁵ Codina, "Modus," 34.

¹⁶ A. Lynn Martin, "Vocational Crises and the Crisis of Vocation among Jesuits in France during the Sixteenth Century." *The Catholic Historical Review* 72 (1986): 205. Martin attempts to analyze the reasons behind the departure of students before their final commitment to the Society. Through an examination of

universities but did not ever intend to enter the Society typically ended their course of studies at this level and were to be separated from Jesuit students in each class.¹⁷ Jesuit superiors were concerned that externs would encourage worldliness in novitiates, hence the rule that “When they [novitiates] have permission to speak with extern students, their conversation should be only about studies and spiritual matters.”¹⁸

Higher education typically began at the age of fourteen, with coursework in philosophy, metaphysics, logic, physics, moral science, and mathematics for three years before a Bachelor of Arts was conferred. Most students at this level of study sought either membership in the Society or another clerical role. Students who continued beyond the Bachelor of Arts spent the next four years studying scholastic theology, positive theology, canon law, and scripture, before seeking ordination in the Jesuit order after obtaining a Master of Arts. This longer secondary period of probation, built into the fourth level of education, was also helpful for students to determine if making a full commitment to the Society was the proper choice, as the average amount of time before initial entry to final vows was a period of about fifteen years.¹⁹ Students who sought a degree as a Doctor of Theology typically spent two more years of study beyond

their ages, Martin makes two points that are important for the second chapter of this work. First, Jesuits who completed the entirety of their coursework typically did not leave the Society once they were full initiated, suggesting a wholehearted commitment to the order. Second, Jesuits who began college coursework at an older age typically had lower percentages of abdication. These two points are important in defining the character of French Jesuits, like Jean de Brébeuf, who journeyed to New France as missionaries.

¹⁷ Farrell, trans. *Ratio Studiorum*, 55.

¹⁸ Ibid., 97.

¹⁹ Martin, “Vocational Crises,” 209.

ordination and the Master of Arts.²⁰ The length of time built into this course of study ensured that Jesuits slowly honed their skills and built on knowledge and abilities established in lower classes before progressing to higher education. Students were also grouped into classes according to ability to ensure that classes would progress uniformly.

One area in which the *Ratio* is more than explicit in its requirements is the insistence that students display excellence in their study and coursework before being allowed to progress to the next class. In the initial rules for the provincials whose vocation was overseeing the operation of the universities, the *Ratio* states that “Where it is customary to confer degrees publicly, the *Constitutions* are to be strictly adhered to. No one shall be promoted unless he has defended questions taken not only from theology but also from important parts of Sacred Scriptures.”²¹ The document continues, stating that during the philosophical coursework students “are to be thoroughly examined toward the end of each year by appointed examiners” with the rector and provincial present, and that “no one is to be advanced from the first to the second year, nor from the second to the third, unless he has shown moderate ability in understanding the subject matter of the lectures and is able to demonstrate this understanding by proofs.”²² Promotion from the coursework in philosophy to theology required a demonstration of near-mastery, with the student “being able to defend his knowledge against objections.”²³

²⁰ Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 298.

²¹ Farrell, trans. *Ratio Studiorum*, 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Rare cases in which a student was particularly gifted in administration or preaching but did not show mastery in the traditional sense allowed for an exception in this regard and a promotion to the next level of coursework. This accommodation was only made for students who superiors deemed essential “for governing or for preaching,” and the *Ratio* insists that “the provincial has no authority to make an exception for any other reason.”²⁴ The Society also made allowances for particularly exceptional students, allowing them to receive an early promotion in the study of languages based on merit and previous knowledge, but the *Ratio* admits that “promotion from the highest grammar class to humanities or from humanities to rhetoric is hardly feasible” due to the difficulty of the coursework.²⁵ Students that were promoted, perhaps unwarrantedly, who did not succeed at the higher level were to “be sent back to the lower class and [their names] stricken from the roll of the higher class,” and particularly inept students were to be dismissed.²⁶ The overarching emphasis of this particular aspect of Jesuit education is mastery and aptitude through rigorous examination and demonstration of ability and a strict emphasis on quality of education at every level of instruction.

The Jesuit system of education, as laid out in the *Ratio*, also envisioned competition and camaraderie between students as a means to excellence in studies, public performances, and demonstrations of skill. The *Ratio* mandates that “students of rhetoric [should] occasionally write and deliver at dinner or in the university auditorium Latin or

²⁴ Ibid., 6.

²⁵ Ibid., 51.

²⁶ Ibid., 54.

Greek orations or verses on some subject which will be of spiritual benefit and inspiration to students of the college and to externs.”²⁷ Students had opportunity to demonstrate skill in competitions, to which public prizes and “other small tokens or symbols of victory” were awarded if excellence was shown, and were encouraged to develop healthy rivalries among themselves.²⁸ Competitions in rhetoric consisted of detecting mistakes in a rival’s theme or presentation, as well as “reciting from memory or varying the phrases given them by the teacher in the prelection, reciting or applying the rules of letter writing and of rhetoric, determining the quantity of syllables and giving the rule form memory or an example from poetry,” among other methods of memorization and interpretive challenges.²⁹ Teachers were encouraged to use competitions to fill instructional gaps in class time and to frequently assess the progress of students throughout their courses. All major fields of study within the Jesuit educational system stressed competition as a useful tool for instruction. These competitions emphasized “honorable rivalry,” or “*honest aemulatio*” to help students develop their creativity and passion in studies, which would in turn help them develop a passion and zeal for the mission of the Society as well as a dependency on their brethren.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid., 16.

²⁸ Ibid., 17, 55.

²⁹ Ibid., 83.

³⁰ Ibid., 130. The pedagogical usefulness of games as a method of learning cannot be overstated as an important method of education even today.

Language and Rhetoric: What Jesuits Learned

Language-learning was a core component in the curriculum of Jesuit universities and had a great impact on novitiates that completed the program and were sent overseas to the New World as missionaries. The purpose of this section is to focus primarily on the skills that students in the Jesuit universities acquired in the fields of language-learning and rhetoric in order to establish their importance in overseas missions and contribution to the success of the Society. Even a cursory examination of the *Ratio* will reveal the extensive linguistic training that Jesuit students received during their course of study at the universities of the Society. Historian Francesco C. Cesareo aptly notes that students in Jesuit universities followed a method of “repetition, constant review, memorization, disputation, and composition exercises” to learn and develop fluency in the myriad languages used in the university coursework.³¹

Throughout their course of study Latin was the prominent language of instruction, forcing students to learn this language in addition to the vernacular through five years of grammar.³² Usually this was accomplished at a rudimentary level prior to admittance to the Jesuit universities, but students still took classes to hone their grammar, composition, and speaking skills. Jesuit entrance exams determined the initial level of entry for students. The prefect was to question students as to their level of studies, write a

³¹ Francesco C. Cesareo, “The Collegium Germanicum and the Ignatian Vision of Education,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 24 (1993): 834.

³² Jean Dietz Moss, “The Rhetoric Course at the Collegio Romano In the Latter Half of the Sixteenth Century,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 4 (1986): 138.

composition on an assigned topic, and translate a few Latin phrases or passages.³³ Latin grammar courses consisted of exercises like translating vernacular sentences into Latin as well as interpretation of Latin passages. The vernacular was expressly forbidden in classes unless a student was learning Latin, and demerits were to be given to students who broke this rule. To keep this rule, “the teacher must always speak Latin.”³⁴

To study biblical texts, canonical works, and Greek and Roman classics, Jesuits in training were to learn Greek and Hebrew. The *Ratio* further stipulates that the instructor of the Hebrew class should “be proficient in Greek, because it is the language of the New Testament and of the Septuagint. Similarly he should have command of the Caldaic [sic] and Syriac languages because of their importance in the exegesis of many passages in the Canonical Books.”³⁵ This outpouring of humanist influence ensured that Jesuits-in-training enriched their studies by examining original texts along with commentary from historic church fathers. Thus, coursework in Greek was to include “only the ancient classics: Demosthenes, Plato, Thucydides, Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, and others of similar rank (provided they be expurgated), and with these, in their own right, Saints Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, and Chrysostom.”³⁶ Students learned Greek at three levels of coursework. The first dealt with “the elements and [included] the substantive verb and the simple verbs, while the second level dealt with “the contract nouns, circumflex verbs, the

³³ Farrell, trans. *Ratio Studiorum*, 50.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

verbs in *mi*, and the easier constructions. The highest class dealt with “the remaining parts of speech or whatever goes under the name of rudiments, except dialects and the more difficult exceptions.”³⁷ Humanities courses finished the study of Greek syntax, and rhetoric courses taught students how to compose Greek verses. Students studying Greek completed a composition once a week, prose exercises five days of the week, and poetry exercises twice a week. Greek courses differed from Latin in that the *Ratio* made accommodations for the difficulty of the Greek language, noting that “it seems helpful to add vernacular equivalents... and for the most part to explain everything in the vernacular.”³⁸ Greek courses were also filled with their rhythmic exercises of translation, composition, speaking, and correcting, as with the Latin classes.

The influence of the University of Paris is found in the constant reinforcement that students received through practice and repetition in the area of linguistics. During recreational times, students were to practice Hebrew and Greek with study groups (“academies”) two or three times a week.³⁹ While studying philosophy and theology, students were to compose verses and give public recitations in the competitions described earlier, both in Latin and Greek.⁴⁰ Throughout their studies students were to apply their linguistic skills through constant translation, taking excerpts from Greek and Roman texts and translating them into the vernacular as well as Latin, or practicing their writing in

³⁷ Ibid., 65.

³⁸ Ibid., 91.

³⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 15, 16, 51, 59, 65.

Greek through this method.⁴¹ When students wrote to other students and to friends, the *Ratio* stipulates that such letters be composed in Latin.⁴² Competition entered the pedagogy in this realm as well, as students competed regularly for small prizes given in rhetoric class for the best compositions of Latin prose and verse as well as Greek prose and verse.⁴³ These competitions were spread out over several days, with a day for each competition. Written compositions were to be composed in Latin, Greek, and the vernacular to hone students' skills at translation. Students were admonished "to turn a Greek speech into Latin or a Latin speech into Greek, to turn Latin or Greek verse into prose, to compose epigrams, inscriptions, epitaphs, to cull phrases from good orators or poets, both Latin and Greek."⁴⁴

The *Ratio* also stated that instructors should employ languages interchangeable in the higher courses, using secondary texts and commentaries to elucidate Greek or Roman classics. For higher education, the *Ratio* gives the impression that instruction constantly lapsed between languages to form a trilingual atmosphere of learning. Loyola's insistence on excellence in theology and classical studies ensured that students who completed their schooling and entered into the Society would be thoroughly versed in language-learning and translation, though fluency and skill naturally differed at an individual level. Though the pedagogical tools involved in learning languages were important to later Jesuits who

⁴¹ Ibid., 89.

⁴² Ibid., 17.

⁴³ Ibid., 60.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 76.

traveled to New France as missionaries, the coursework itself is most illuminating in determining the skills acquired by Jesuits. Language learning was a necessity for the humanist approach that Jesuit instructors were to take in teaching courses in philosophy, rhetoric, and theology.

After basic studies and initial courses in Latin and Greek, students continued their education by adding classes on philosophy and rhetoric to their schedule. Rhetoric preceded courses in philosophy, and a solid foundation in the languages of antiquity was also necessary for success due to the linguistic skill required to read and translate the original texts. Students learned the rules of rhetoric from *De Arte Rhetorica* by Cyprian Soares and studied the speeches of Cicero along with the poetry of Virgil and Horace.⁴⁵ The primary goal of rhetoric courses was to develop skill in emotionally stirring and convincing an audience.⁴⁶ Students in rhetoric courses were to give regular dispensations for the other students in Latin and Greek on “some subject which will be of spiritual benefit and inspiration to students of the college and to externs.”⁴⁷ Students also gave theatrical public performances of tragedy and comedy in Latin. The *Ratio* states in one passage that “at times the teacher can assign the writing of some short dramatic episode

⁴⁵ Ibid., 80.

⁴⁶ Christopher Carlsmith, “Struggling toward Success: Jesuit Education in Italy, 1540-1600.” *History of Education Quarterly* 42 (2002): 222. Carlsmith’s article adequately examines the enmity created by the Jesuit schools among Protestant critics and traditional medieval colleges. Carlsmith also aptly notes that the standardization of coursework and selective integration of humanism contributed to the success of the Society’s colleges.

⁴⁷ Farrell, trans. *Ratio Studiorum*, 16.

instead of the usual topic, for example, an eclogue, a scene, or a dialogue, so that the best may afterwards be performed in class, with the roles portioned out to different pupils.”⁴⁸

The Jesuits who traveled to New France were the product of such a rigorous system of study in linguistics and rhetoric. Though some Jesuits were more capable in linguistic studies, all students went through a process of language-learning that stressed repetition and constant exercises to unlock meaning and understanding. The Jesuit oversight contained in yearly examinations ensured that the majority of students were not promoted unless they displayed competence. These same techniques would be employed by Jesuit missionaries around the world in their study of languages previously unknown by Europeans. Jesuits were also taught the importance of proper grammar, composition, and speaking through rhetoric classes, competitions, and dramatic performance. The glorification of eloquence in speaking was also instilled in Jesuit students.

Philosophy and Theology: Constructing the Jesuit Ontology

It is clear from the examples in the previous section that language-learning was an important component to the Jesuit educational system, though it did not hold the position of primacy reserved for philosophy and theology, the culmination of Jesuit studies. The *Ratio* is explicit in mandating that the best possible teachers staff the Jesuit universities, though excellence naturally could not always be found. That being said, there were many other Jesuit professors, such as Jacques Sirmond, who used the subjects that they taught as loci in which rhetoric, language, history, mythology, social custom, and religion met to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 80.

form exciting and fantastic courses.⁴⁹ The *Ratio* is also clear in stating the approved theological philosophies of the Society as well, namely that the Jesuit universities should teach specifically under the influence of St. Thomas Aquinas. The primary goal of the Jesuit universities was to train competent priests to serve the Catholic church in the outside world in any capacity, so an examination of the Jesuit course of studies in theology and philosophy is crucial for a robust portrait of the influences that shaped the worldviews of Jesuit students.

These philosophy courses took a minimum of three years to complete and included works by classical authors from Aristotle to Cicero as well as the church fathers. The *Ratio* further curtails the influence of humanism in this regard by stipulating that professors “who show themselves too inclined toward new doctrines or too liberal in their views should certainly be removed from teaching.”⁵⁰ To advance to the next year of studies in both theology and philosophy students underwent a series of examinations to determine aptitude and were judged by a panel of examiners who recorded their observations in secret and cast a written ballot either for or against the proposed advancement.⁵¹ A mediocre score on the final exam in philosophy or any annual exam in theology prevented promotion unless “the student [possessed] special qualifications for governing or for preaching.”⁵² Thus, the greater needs of the Society allowed for the

⁴⁹ Kristine Louise Haugen, “A French Jesuit’s Lectures on Vergil, 1582-1583: Jacques Sirmond between Literature, History, and Myth.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 30 (1999): 971.

⁵⁰ Farrell, trans. *Ratio Studiorum*, 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 6.

advancement of less-than-competent students if they showed promise in other areas of aptitude, as has been stated previously. Coursework in philosophy relied chiefly on selections from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Physics*, as well as *On Interpretation* and *Prior Analytics*, beginning with an introduction to basic logical reasoning, analogies, and the "general concept of universal ideas."⁵³ To demonstrate their mastery of course material, students took part in monthly disputations to hone their skills in the realms of logic and philosophical argument. Coursework in moral philosophy derived primarily from the ten books of Aristotle's *Ethics* and was not to "digress into theological questions."⁵⁴ The Jesuits intended that courses progress through a logical sequence and not contain too much overlap, as they envisioned each stage laying the groundwork for the following level of education.

The four-year coursework in theology was the last phase of a Jesuit's education before taking final vows and admission as a full member of the Society. This final sequence of study relied heavily on the foundational coursework in philosophy and linguistics. Two years of theology were spent studying the "Sacred Scripture" in daily lectures of forty-five minutes or longer along with general and advanced classes in Hebrew depending on the aptitude of the individual student.⁵⁵ The *Ratio* clearly states that the provincial should exercise great care in selecting professors of theology, disqualifying anyone "who is not well disposed to the teaching of St. Thomas [Aquinas].

⁵³ Ibid., 41-42.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2, 3.

Those who do not approve of his doctrine or take little interest in it, should not be allowed to teach theology.”⁵⁶ It further stipulates that the teachings of Aquinas were the preferred perspective of the society and that professors “should consider him their own teacher,” though departure from his teachings was permissible on minor points, as “members of the Society therefore should not be more strictly bound to him than the Thomists themselves,” especially in situations where Aquinas was “ambiguous or not even expressed.”⁵⁷ It also declares that students in philosophy and theology should not have access to “books of any and every nature,” but rather those recommended by the Jesuit professors, specifically the “*Summa* of St. Thomas, the philosophers Aristotle, and in addition some selected commentary which they may consult in their private study. All theologians should have the decrees of the Council of Trent and the Bible, and they should become familiar with them.”⁵⁸ The overall aim and method of study for the courses in theology are perhaps best expressed by this quotation:

They should then study the principal treatises of the whole of theology, such as those on the vision of God, the divine knowledge, predestination, the Trinity, from the first part of St. Thomas’ *Summa*. They should cover other parts of the *Summa* in the same way. In this study they should carefully weigh what others have written and should make their own digest of the chief divisions and fundamental theses of theology which have a bearing on many important disputed questions. They must keep firmly in mind, however, what the Society has decreed in regard to following the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 33, 34.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 97.

Throughout their studies students were to compose “certain theses, with their postulates, conclusions, and answers to objections, employing the scholastic method, as if they were to lecture on them before a class” and were to submit them to the professor monthly for guidance and instruction in the development of their theological reasoning.⁶⁰

The *Ratio* also stipulates that Jesuit students undergo a rigorous study of the sacraments during their coursework in theology. The third year of theology was to cover “baptism and the eucharist [sic] and if possible orders, confirmation, and extreme unction; during the fourth year he should take up penance and matrimony.”⁶¹ Students also interacted with the Eucharist and Eucharistic delivery and understandings by receiving the sacrament “frequently and fervently.”⁶² Reverence for the sacraments was to be stressed, according to Catholic orthodoxy, as was virtue and noble action. Understandings of the Trinity were to be taken “from the first part of St. Thomas’ *Summa*,” as were “the principal treatises of the whole of theology, such as those on the vision of God, the divine knowledge, [and] predestination.”⁶³ Thus, Thomistic theology and philosophical understandings colored the Jesuit teaching on key ecclesiastical beliefs, utilizing the *Prima Secundae*, *Secunda Secundae*, and *Tertia* of Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid., 97-98.

⁶¹ Ibid., 36.

⁶² Ibid., 26.

⁶³ Ibid., 98.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 36.

The decision to align the Jesuit *Ratio* with the theological positions of Thomas Aquinas had as much to do with the early educational experiences of the first Jesuits as with the climate of reform in Europe and the perceived threat of Lutheranism, since Thomism was favored by the church.⁶⁵ Thomism was also appropriated by the Jesuits because it synthesized theological doctrine with the natural reasoning of Aristotle.⁶⁶ Thomism offered a generally positive outlook on the world and harmonized humanist appeals to reason with spiritualism, as the concept of natural theology asserted that reason and experience could reveal aspects of God and Christian as a preamble to faith.⁶⁷ Thomists could utilize natural theology and experiences to reveal false thinking in a person, believer or unbeliever, by using aspects of the natural world as a proof for spiritual matters.⁶⁸ The metaphysical model established by Aquinas' works also accounted for aspects of God that extend beyond human reason and must be accepted as doctrine, which extends beyond the limits of natural theology.⁶⁹ Thomistic theology also addressed the nature of evil, emphasizing that humans are vulnerable to sin's corruption, and the corrosive effect of Edenic original sin on the larger world.⁷⁰ The fact that God

⁶⁵ John W. Padburg, "Development of the *Ratio Studiorum*." In *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum: 400th Anniversary Perspectives*, edited by Vincent J. Duminuco, (Fordham University Press: New York, 2000): 84-85.

⁶⁶ Edward Craig, ed. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 vols. (London: Routledge), VII: 381.

⁶⁷ Joseph M. Magee, "Thomistic Natural Theology," last modified August 27, 1999, <http://www.aquinasonline.com/Topics/nattheol.html>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Joseph M. Magee, "Knowing the Transcendence/Immanence of God," last modified August 27, 1999, <http://www.aquinasonline.com/Topics/godtalk.html>.

⁷⁰ Joseph M. Magee, "Aquinas and the Necessity of Natural Evils," last modified August 27, 1999, <http://www.aquinasonline.com/Topics/probevil.html>.

allowed sin to exist and taint creation meant, for Aquinas, that the inherent goodness in the creation pointed to a future when the corruption would be purged. Natural theology was a core component to Aquinas' Fifth Way, a teleological proof for God's existence, which held that "there exists an intelligent Being, by whom all natural things are directed to an end."⁷¹ Aquinas also expressed the belief that "when many things with different and even contrary qualities co-operate towards the realisation of one order, this must proceed from an intelligent Cause or Providence" in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, which Copleston claims emphasizes "the one world order or harmony" under God.⁷² The Thomist view of Creation also held, according to Copleston, that since God created every creature there exists "a real relation to God as the principle of the creature's being. Every creature, by the very fact that it is created, has a real relation to God as Creator."⁷³ Thus, evil and sin are responses to the corruption of the world rather than the corruption of the individual, an inversion of claims stressed by Augustine.⁷⁴ This endemic goodness encouraged Jesuits to seek the best possible explanation for actions and motives, which proved to be of great importance for Jesuits traveling to New France in an attempt to convert native tribes in the New World.

The advent of Thomist theology quickly led to its acceptance by the Catholic church as official doctrine, and orthodoxy has been shown thus far to be a chief

⁷¹ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, Volume II: Medieval Philosophy*, (New York: Doubleday, 1993): 344.

⁷² Ibid., 344.

⁷³ Ibid., 363.

⁷⁴ Peter A. Goddard, "Augustine and the Amerindian in Seventeenth-Century New France." *Church History* 67 (Dec., 1998): 221.

consideration in the Jesuit system of education. Orthodoxy in the courses on theology was a point of the utmost importance to the Jesuits due to the divisive climate of the Reformations. In the rules for the professor of theology the *Ratio* further states that the professor is to “explain the Sacred Scriptures reverently, learnedly, and seriously, according to their genuine and exact sense” according to Catholic teachings because “Chief among his objectives in teaching Holy Writ will be to defend the version approved by the Church.”⁷⁵ Students were taught the method of biblical exegesis by comparing “the passage he is reading not only with that which precedes and follows but also with other passages where the same phrase will have sometimes the same, sometimes a different meaning.” To ensure that the professor and students were interpreting scripture correctly, they were to “cite pertinent examples from the Hebrew and Greek versions... briefly and only when some discrepancy between them and the Vulgate must be harmonized.”⁷⁶ The professor was also to “not omit any evidence that strongly supports the Vulgate and the mysteries of the faith, especially when such evidence is found in the Septuagint, which must always be spoken of with deference.”⁷⁷ Jesuit teachers of theology were to be closely aligned with orthodoxy, as the *Ratio* declares that the teacher should follow the “canons of Popes or Councils, notably the General Councils” and if “the Popes or Councils explicitly adduce any text to establish a dogma of faith, he should

⁷⁵ Farrell, trans. *Ratio Studiorum*, 30.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

teach that sense, whether literal or mystical, as certain.”⁷⁸ The *Ratio* immediately follows with the ruling that the teacher should “reverently follow in the footsteps of the Fathers of the Church,” and “should not differ from them.” In the event of a disagreement between church fathers “he should choose from their different interpretations the one which the Church has for many years and by general consent favored most.”⁷⁹ The rules continue with a strict emphasis on orthodoxy and harmonizing Jesuit teaching with the official stance of the Church and the councils. The rules for the teacher of Hebrew also state that “among his objectives in teaching the Hebrew language will be the defense of the version of Scripture approved by the Church,” and should “consider it of the first importance to interpret with complete accuracy the original words of Holy Writ,” further stressing the role of orthodoxy in Jesuit teaching.⁸⁰

The culmination of this intensive period of study of was an understanding of the world colored by the perspective of St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle. Aquinas gave Jesuits a generally positive outlook in regards to the natural state of humankind and the possibility of redemption.⁸¹ This was further reinforced through their studies of the decrees of Trent and the *Catechism*, which stressed the salvific nature of the seven sacraments. Theology students were to “have a certain time each day for the careful reading of the Holy Scriptures, the decrees of the Councils, theological controversies, and

⁷⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 32-33.

⁸¹ Peter A. Dorsey, “Going to School with Savages: Authorship and Authority among the Jesuits of New France.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55 (1998): 399, 400.

canon law. They should take systematic notes on whatever appears important.”⁸²

Historians have noted the failure of Jesuit rectors to fully suppress competing strands of philosophy, such as that of St. Augustine of Hippo, from surfacing and influencing Jesuits in the universities with a pessimistic view of man’s natural state.⁸³ That being said, the heavy reliance on the *Summa Theologica* as the principal text in theology ensured that Jesuit students were unable to escape an overwhelmingly Thomistic influence even if professors chose to offer competing perspectives. Jesuits who completed the four year coursework on theology in addition to the three years spent on philosophy emerged from the Society’s university system with a firm grasp on the Church’s acceptable views on theology. A background in rhetoric also gave students the skill to express their beliefs and arguments in a manner that conformed to classical European logic. The integration of the decrees of Trent further ensured that students were enmeshed in the educational culture of the emerging Counter-Reformation and were grounded in correct practices and beliefs. These abilities and the successfulness of Jesuit universities in general were later put to the test through the experiences of French Jesuits who journeyed to the New World to proselytize among the native people that they encountered.

⁸² Farrell, trans. *Ratio Studiorum*, 100.

⁸³ Peter A. Goddard, “Augustine and the Amerindian in Seventeenth-Century New France.” *Church History* 67 (1998): 674.

Conclusion: Promoting Excellence

From this examination of the founding documents of the Society of Jesus and the spiritual and philosophical intent of Ignatius of Loyola, the influences of Jesuit education regarding language-learning and philosophy are outlined. The Jesuit educational system profoundly shaped the worldview of those initiated into the Jesuit order during the sixteenth. To be a full member of the Society was to commit to rigorous schooling. Through Jesuit universities initiates received a structured and varied education that drew on classical works and the spirit of humanism to develop a mature theology and a variety of linguistic and oratory skills. The pedagogical practices of the Jesuits, including games, competitions, and constant linguistic translations equipped Jesuits with useful skills for service in the larger world, by which the Society contrasts greatly with medieval monastic orders. This was in keeping with the mandates issued at Trent and through the subsequent *Catechism* that the clergy receive a better education in order to refute Protestant accusations and reform folk practices within the laity. Though Loyola initially developed the Society to better serve the Catholic church without the issues of Protestantism in mind, the Society became a crucial instrument in the Catholic Reformation as its members were prepared for an active and energetic life ministering to the people of Europe and the New World.

Attempts to present the Jesuit system of education as monolithic, with a propensity toward brainwashing, would certainly be poor scholarship. It is true that the individual Jesuit experience varied from person to person, as did skills, abilities, and

beliefs. That being said, the systematic nature of Jesuit instruction ensured that a basic framework of ontology was developed through the university coursework. The influence of Thomas Aquinas as the principal philosopher and theologian in Jesuit education also ensured that Jesuits received a distinctly Thomist perspective throughout their studies. Thus, Thomism broadly influenced Jesuit ontological interpretation of the world.⁸⁴ This proved to be of great importance when missionaries traveled to the New World because Thomism expressed a generally positive outlook on humankind. Thomism taught that man was inherently good, though capable of committing sin, and that human reason and understanding could assist divine revelation in leading to knowledge of God. Jesuits left Europe with a wealth of humanist and theological material to draw from and recall when faced with vocational challenges. This positive ontology profoundly shaped interactions between French Jesuits and natives in New France, which is the subject of the following chapter.

The quality of Jesuit students sent to New France can also be found in the role that education played in their development. Jesuit superiors required that students demonstrate substantial skill in their studies to advance to the next level of coursework, which is important in determining the overall skill of the Jesuits who were sent to New

⁸⁴ Other scholars, namely Peter A. Goddard, have argued that Augustinian pessimism defined Jesuit ontology. I contend instead that cultural differences between the Jesuits and natives of New France led to the more pessimistic writings found in the *Jesuit Relations* rather than the broad, covert acceptance of an Augustinian ontology. The following chapter stresses the patience of the Jesuit in maintaining orthodox practices and shows that Thomism was indeed prevalent in Jesuit interactions. For more on Goddard's perspective, see: Goddard, "Augustine and the Amerindian."

France to establish the first mission in 1611.⁸⁵ The desire of the Society to excel in service to the Church also ensured that Jesuit superiors sought the best candidates for positions and jobs within the order. While the Jesuits stressed obedience to ones superiors and the Society proper, flexibility and adaptability were also highly sought after skills. The philosophy of Aquinas ensured that Jesuits approached the world around them with a flexibility and positive outlook, both on life and circumstance. A great emphasis on alignment with Catholic orthodoxy can also be found in the coursework on theology, which was the culmination of classes for future Jesuits and the most important in equipping them for their roles as priests. These points are crucial in establishing an understanding of the nature of the Society as a whole, as well as the character and educational background of the Jesuits who were sent to New France to convert the Huron and Montagnais, which is the initial context for the following chapter.

⁸⁵ Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 71 vols. (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959), I: vii.

CHAPTER V

STRUGGLING TO BE HEARD: THE EARLY JESUIT MISSIONS AMONG THE HURON AND MONTAGNAIS, 1610-1640

This chapter serves as a bridge between Jesuit ontology and education, examined in the previous chapter, and the practical application of Jesuit belief and schooling during the formative era of French colonization in the New World, specifically the years 1610-1640. A study such as this must limit the examination to the early years when Jesuits worked the hardest to master native languages and learn their customs. This also limits the narrative to the few central figures that composed the *Jesuit Relations*, as well as those commented on by their superiors, namely Paul Le Jeune and Jean de Brébeuf. Le Jeune was the Jesuit superior who penned the majority of the early *Jesuit Relations* and Brébeuf was arguably one of the best French linguists in the New World. The Jesuits set out with the fervent desire to convert native souls to Christianity in the spirit of the Counter Reformation and the tenants set forth by Ignatius of Loyola, as was discussed in the first chapter. In many ways they were the most qualified candidates for the mandate due to the skills acquired at Jesuit colleges, including translation, language-learning, and rhetoric. That being said, theological schooling was not always well-applied when faced with remote conditions and bizarre cultural clashes. Also, ingrained cultural biases and personal beliefs were not easily shunned.

It is important to examine a number of components related to the French Jesuit experience in the New World, specifically regarding the application of Jesuit skills and belief as they related to the Huron. In the hinterlands of New France the Jesuits faced on of their greatest tests in the application of their philosophical and theological education. Of great importance is the question of whether or not the Jesuits maintained Catholic orthodoxy in their practices, which many of their contemporary detractors scrutinized and declaimed along with subsequent historians.¹ Commentary in the *Relations* show that the Jesuits were indeed concerned with maintaining proper Catholic practices and teachings in the New World. Of equal importance is an examination of the strategies used by the Jesuits and an analysis of the length and breadth of their adaptation to determine whether or not the Jesuits were culturally sensitive. Thus, an examination of key Catholic teachings and practices such as their presentation of the Trinity, Eucharist, and baptism to a native audience is required. Historians such as Bruce G. Trigger portray the Jesuits negatively by overly focusing on the damage done to the culture of native communities, while ignoring the European perspective. Finally, an examination of early native responses to the Jesuits is necessary to determine the effectiveness of Jesuit linguistic

¹ Henry Nash Smith, Review of *Jesuit and Savage in New France*, by J. H. Kennedy. *The William and Mary Quarterly* 8 (1951): 130. Smith wrote that Kennedy's 1950 text is an extension of the 1911 work of Gilbert Chinard, and that both generally agree that the Jesuits of New France were opportunistic with "a quite different attitude toward Christian orthodoxy." Peter A. Goddard also notes the historiographic precedent to perceive of Jesuits as doctrinally lax, citing James Axtell's *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America*, along with Axtell's belief that they were willing to "adopt a culturally relative stance toward their prospective converts." Peter A. Goddard, "Converting the 'Sauvage': Jesuit and Montagnais in Seventeenth-Century New France," *The Catholic Historical Review* 84 (1998): 222.

skill and the extent to which natives understood the Jesuit message as filtered by native ontology. Cross-cultural communication and dialogue occurred between the two groups in this area of religious study, which has been neglected in previous historiography.

The Jesuit Relations as a Primary Source

The potential for large-scale conversion that the New World offered proved irresistible for many Jesuits, who felt that it was their Catholic duty to cross the Atlantic to serve in this capacity. Earlier Jesuits like Mateo Ricci and Roberto di Nobili traveled to China and India during the sixteenth century and were successful in many of their efforts thanks to their rigorous study of the language and culture of the native people and their efforts to adapt doctrine and ritual to create a greater appeal in their message, a practice that Jesuits would also follow during the seventeenth century in New France.² Ricci and Nobili also set the precedent for correspondence with their superiors and the European world, sending back tales of success and struggle in the form of letters that they called “relations.” When Jesuits from France targeted the New World in 1610, it was common practice to send updates to their superiors back in the Old World, leaving historians with a rich collection of primary documents. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* is the definitive compilation of Jesuit correspondence, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites from 1896 to 1901. The *Relations* have remained the traditional sources for students of New France’s religious history, and linguists and ethnohistorians have recently begun to utilize

² Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), 5.

them as a valuable source on native languages and cultures that have since become extinct.³ Another valuable source for the purpose of this study is *De Religione*, a text composed in Huron for the purpose of missionary activity among the Iroquois after the destruction of the Huron tribes. This is a useful source because it represents maturation in Jesuit understanding of the Huron dialect and their ability to fully express themselves and Christian ideas.

In many ways the *Relations* are an imperfect source, as they were penned by Jesuits who viewed natives through their own cultural lenses. When witnessing acts of “ferocity, brutality, treachery, and occasional cannibalism,” Jesuits naturally saw them not as “noble savages”, but as people “devoid of civility.”⁴ This inherent bias of superiority distorts the primary record, though it is an excellent source for demonstrating how Jesuit theology and philosophy often fell short of an explanation for the indescribable harshness in the remote wilderness of New France and the cultural differences between the French and natives. In commenting on the reliability of the *Relations*, historian Erik R. Seeman noted:

The missionaries did not want to seem too successful, or readers might think contributions were unnecessary. Nor did the Jesuits want to seem like abject failures, lest potential donors resist throwing good money after bad. Ultimately it seems that the Jesuits had an incentive to portray their efforts relatively realistically, narrating both triumphs and disappointments.⁵

³ Peter Bakker, “American Languages in New France: Extracts from The Jesuit Relations (Salvucci, ed.),” *International Journal of American Linguistics* 70 (2004): 323.

⁴ Cornelius Jaenen, “Les Sauvages Amérindiens” Persistence into the 18th Century of Traditional French Concepts and Constructs for Comprehending Amerindians,” *Ethnohistory* 29 (1982): 46.

⁵ Erik R. Seeman, *The Huron-Wendat Feast of the Dead: Indian-European Encounters in Early North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 4.

The *Relations* will be particularly useful in determining the extent to which Jesuits struggled to make their message appealing to natives as well as the subsequent results of these efforts. A common feature of many *Relations* is the transmission of information to European Jesuits of practical advice and strategy.

A Contrast of Belief: Ontology, Philosophy, and the “Noble Savage”

From the previous two chapters we have established that the rigor and breadth of Jesuit instruction prepared the French missionaries for their work in New France, though opposing currents of philosophical thought on Augustine and Aquinas created a strange juxtaposition of two key issues: the need for penitence in a sinful world and the concept of the “noble savage” who simply needed to be corrected from doctrinal error. This uneasiness produced a perception of natives that vacillated between admiration and disgust. Some Jesuits believed in the Augustinian notion of “natural man,” who was born into sin and could only be saved through a complete change in lifestyle. According to Peter A Goddard this placed the native in an insurmountable position because he or she was “a thoroughly corrupt individual whose natural virtues were eclipsed by both universal and particular sin and whose isolation from the Word impeded even grace from reaching him or her.”⁶ Goddard also notes that both Le Jeune and Brébeuf were students of Louise Lallemant, a major proponent of the Augustinian belief who taught at the Jesuit

⁶ Goddard, “Converting the ‘Sauvage’,” 221.

university at Rouen, and that Augustinian thought offered a way to understand the moral behavior of natives.⁷

On the opposite spectrum, Jesuits were strongly rooted in the traditions of Aquinas through their educational background, emphasizing human reason, natural evidence for God's grace, and "getting along in a world of demanding imperfections."⁸ This ontological framework was designed to be accommodating in many regards, downplaying the native's "savagery" in favor of a belief that he had become corrupted over time and simply needed correction from error. Ignatius of Loyola also charged his followers "to tolerate selectively unfamiliar peoples and their ways" and to accept "native customs that did not directly contradict church teaching, to introduce changes gradually and by popular means," and to follow the charge of Paul in the New Testament: to become "all things to all men in order to win all to Jesus Christ."⁹ The theoretical approach to missionary activity in New France was shaped by this worldview. Due to the cultural barriers they faced, many of the experiences of the Jesuits confronted and challenged the beliefs brought with them from Europe. Jesuits were trained to be slow in speech, quick in observation, and dogged in their attempts to convert the native populations. The emphasis on Aquinas as the principle theologian in the Jesuit schools ensured that most Jesuits acquired a positive view on the greater world, though education

⁷ Peter A. Goddard, "Augustine and the Amerindian in Seventeenth-Century New France," *Church History* 67 (1998): 667, 679.

⁸ George R. Healy, "The French Jesuits and the Idea of the Noble Savage," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 15 (1958): 147.

⁹ Peter A. Dorsey, "Going to School with Savages: Authorship and Authority among the Jesuits of New France," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55 (1998): 399.

could be superseded by emotive responses to harsh situations in the native communities of New France.

An example of this duality in thought and action can be found in the writings of Jean de Brébeuf, one of the principle Jesuit linguists in New France. Brébeuf was universally considered the most amiable Jesuit by his contemporaries, but pessimism and negativity show in his *Relations*. In commenting on native languages, he says “they [the Hurons] have hardly any virtue or religion... they have consequently no individual words suitable for signifying these things. Hence it is that we are at a loss in explaining to them many important matters.”¹⁰ Brébeuf takes his most patronizing tone when writing about Huron religion and rituals. He states that “it is astonishing to see so much blindness in regard to the things of Heaven, in a people who do not lack judgment and knowledge in reference to those of earth. This is what their vices and brutality have merited from God.”¹¹ He continues in his discussion: “since they were unwilling to acknowledge God in their habits and actions, they have lost the thought of him and have become worse than beasts in his sight for the lack of respect they display.”¹² Here it is possible to see the diametric philosophy of Augustine and Aquinas at work. Brébeuf acknowledges the concept of natural signs that God had once revealed His truth to the natives, but Augustinian pessimism prevails in dragging the natives down to a classification that is

¹⁰ Allan Greer, ed, *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 39.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹² *Ibid.*, 41-42.

less than human. He also acknowledges their intelligence but is unable to see past practices that do not fit his Eurocentric mindset, noting in an unpublished letter to Mutius Vitelleschi, the Father General from 1615-1645, stating that “they are by no means completely *primitive*; the majority are endowed with much common sense and natural good, judgment.”¹³

It is difficult to justify the position that Brébeuf was a forerunner to modern missionaries and that he respected native beliefs for what they were simply because his commentary, while attempting to strike a positive note, is clearly loaded with pessimism and cultural bias. Gloom and the emphasis on sin also led Brébeuf to make comments like “such is indeed the kingdom which the Devil has usurped over these poor blind beings.”¹⁴ That being said, all comments in the *Relations* were not negative and many expressed admiration or a deeper understanding of native culture than had been expressed previously. Paul Le Jeune wrote of the Montagnais that “they have neither political organization, nor offices, nor dignities, nor any authority, for they only obey their Chief through good will toward him,” which displays a distinct inability to comprehend their egalitarian society, the opposite of the French monarchy.¹⁵ Over time the Jesuits came to realize that this initial perception was incorrect, as Brébeuf wrote in 1636 that “they [the

¹³ René Latourelle, *Jean de Brébeuf's Writings: A Study* (Ontario: Bellarmin, 1993), 177.

¹⁴ Greer, ed. *The Jesuit Relations*, 49.

¹⁵ Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, 71 vols. (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959), VI: 231.

Huron] are not without laws. They punish murderers, thieves, traitors, and Sorcerers.”¹⁶ Thus, the Jesuits were capable of understanding the nuances of their surroundings and adjusting to a better understanding of the culture with which they interacted as time progressed.

Jesuits were conflicted in their dealings with the native populations of New France, as they wrote disapprovingly of “vices of the flesh,” and the tendency of Montagnais men to “marry several women, and will leave them when [they please], and take others,” though they also noted that one Montagnais engaged in incest by taking his daughter as a wife, incurring the indignation of his fellow tribesmen, which they undoubtedly saw as an element of common culture.¹⁷ The Jesuits also praised the fact that the Montagnais and Huron placed little value on personal, private property, which they certainly related to as a Catholic order that renounced earthly possessions, writing in 1634 that “[the Montagnais] are very generous among themselves and even make a show of not loving anything, of not being attached to the riches of the earth, so that they may not grieve if they lose them.”¹⁸ They were similarly impressed with the order and deference given to members of the tribe while speaking, writing that “they do not all talk at once, but one after the other, listening patiently. A Sagamore, or Captain [French term

¹⁶ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 215. Brébeuf also notes that the Huron do not prosecute murderers as the Europeans do, but that that “their procedure is scarcely less efficacious than is the punishment of death elsewhere,” since the murderer is forced to atone publicly for his or her wrongdoing and to make peace with society as a whole though the giving of gifts. This is yet another example in which group harmony is preferred in Huron society to individual vendettas or grief.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 199

¹⁸ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VI: 237.

for a chief], dining in our room one day, wished to say something; and, not finding an opportunity, because they were all talking at the same time, at last prayed the company to give him a little time to talk in his turn, and all alone, as he did.”¹⁹ Restraint and communal values infused village life, prompting the Jesuits to write:

If so many families were together in our France, there would be nothing but disputes, quarrels, and revilings. The mothers do not get impatient with their children, they do not know what it is to swear, their only oath consisting of this one word *taponé*, “in truth;” there is no jealousy among them; they aid and relieve each other very generously, because they expect a return of the favor. If this expectation fail, they respect the person no longer, whoever he may be.²⁰

While clearly offering a didactic lesson to readers in Europe, the Jesuits astutely observed the importance of reciprocity in Montagnais and Huron villages, as well as the more egalitarian elements of society, though they tended to look down on certain elements, such as the absence of physical punishment for children, as examples of native naivety. Other observations show a distinct bias for “civilized” behavior versus “uncivilized” native practices. On one occasion when a Montagnais named Brehault stayed the night with the Jesuits he was so famished after the day’s hunt that he “threw aside the pewter spoon that had been given to him, and took the great pot-ladle to eat with; and, as his dish was not big enough, he dipped into the saucepan, and even used it as a ladle, observing no other law of politeness than what his great appetite suggested to him... this is all the manners they have.”²¹ This anecdote is but one brief example in which European cultural

¹⁹ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, V: 25-27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 99-101.

norms and “manners,” such as the use of a pewter spoon to eat, were imposed unfairly by the Jesuits on their hosts, though native behavior began to change, most likely out of politeness, as Le Jeune wrote: “those who know us do not now indulge in such gross incivilities in our presence.”²²

Brébeuf acknowledges this juxtaposition of philosophy and preference for European civil practices in a revealing excerpt of a charge to future Jesuits that planned to come to New France, written in 1637:

This is a lesson which is easy enough to learn, but very difficult to put into practice; for, leaving a highly civilized community, you fall into the hands of barbarous people who care but little for your Philosophy or your Theology. All the fine qualities which might make you loved and respected in France are like pearls trampled under the feet of swine, or rather of mules, which utterly despise you when they see that you are not as good pack animals as they are.²³

Earlier statements encourage Jesuits coming from France to “exercise careful foresight in regard to all the hardships, annoyances, and perils” of making the journey, and to “have sincere affection for the Savages.”²⁴ While Brébeuf is encouraging future Jesuits and giving them strategies and ideas that have helped him, on the other hand his comments seem very bitter and give the idea that he frequently felt that he would have been more appreciated had he stayed in France. Brébeuf also admits that the practical application of Jesuit theology was often hard to accomplish, though one could argue that the conflicting

²² Ibid., 101.

²³ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, XII: 123.

²⁴ Ibid., 117.

nature of Augustine and Aquinas made it paradoxically so, especially regarding Jesuit perceptions of native culture and practices.

Jesuit Linguistics and Early Missionary Strategies

Linguistics proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of the early mission to New France, primarily because the Jesuits thought, erroneously, that all languages in the world stemmed from one root language in antiquity. The Jesuits were adept linguists themselves, having studied Latin, Greek, and Hebrew while at the Jesuit colleges in France.²⁵ The prominence given to Jesuit linguistic study and the refusal to baptize potential converts until the Jesuits were certain they understood Catholic tenants also give greater strength to the argument that early conversions, though small in number, were in fact sincere as far as the Jesuits could determine.

While serving in New France, Jean de Brébeuf urged future missionaries to apply the same effort put forth in Jesuit schooling to the learning of native languages. He said “the Huron language will be your saint Thomas and your Aristotle,” which again shows the prominence given to Aquinas within Jesuit teaching as well as the revised humanist education that the Jesuits received.²⁶ Most accounts from the Jesuits are relatively positive about native languages, though they often give way to frustration and the feeling that the priests are overwhelmed by the sheer glut of dialects in New France.²⁷ Le Jeune wrote in a 1616 *Relation* that “the language of the country was absolutely necessary,” and

²⁵ Ibid., 408.

²⁶ Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations*, VI: 101.

²⁷ Dorsey, “Going to School with Savages,” 407.

that two of his priests “resolved to apply themselves to it with all diligence,” though this was a difficult task because “they had neither interpreter nor teacher” and could only speak on matters of trade instead of religion.²⁸ Frustration arose when translators were found to have “often ridiculed, instead of teaching [them], and sometimes palmed off on [them] indecent words, which [they] went about innocently preaching for beautiful sentences of the Gospels.”²⁹ Charles Lallemant, in a 1625 letter to Father Mutio Vitelleschi in Rome, notes that the priests spent the entire year almost solely devoted to “learning the dialect of the savages, excepting a month or two spent in cultivating the soil, in order to obtain such slight means of subsistence.”³⁰ Attempting to keep an optimistic tone but showing his and other priests’ frustration, Lallemant stresses that the interpreters were “unwilling to communicate their knowledge” and that he and the other priests had only learned the “rudiments of two languages” while “many more remain.”³¹

It is in the *Relations* of 1616-1629 that Jean de Brébeuf makes his first appearance in the writings of the Jesuit superiors. Brébeuf spent most of his life in remote Huron settlements from 1626 to 1629, when the French missionary efforts were disrupted by English occupation, and again from 1634 to his death in 1649.³² From the beginning, Brébeuf had a natural talent for language and an attitude that embodied the philosophical tenants of Aquinas and the commission of Ignatius of Loyola. Lallemant called him a

²⁸ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, III: 193.

²⁹ Ibid., 197.

³⁰ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, IV: 177.

³¹ Ibid., 179.

³² Greer, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, 37.

“pious and prudent man,” with a “robust constitution,” who acquired a decent understanding of the Huron language by wintering with them.³³ In a 1633 *Relation* Le Jeune comments that Brébeuf could “jargon as well as I can in Savage” and later states that Brébeuf “will teach [our Fathers] every day, evening, and morning, the language of the Hurons.”³⁴ Littered throughout the *Jesuit Relations* are comments that Brébeuf held an excellent attitude, was embraced by natives with high regard, and that he was one of the most fluent speakers of native tongues, so his usefulness for a study such as this cannot be overstated.

The Jesuits tended to view the complexity of native languages as proof of their divine origin, which could help downplay cultural differences and make communication more effective. Different Jesuits had their own unique encounters with languages and responded in ways unique to their personalities, as frustration and hardship took its toll. Some attained the near-fluency of Brébeuf while others barely managed a few short, halting sentences after years of study. Some held Brébeuf’s uncanny optimism and jovial spirit while others became bitter and retreated from native society, further exacerbating relations with the village. In another unpublished letter to Vitelleschi, Brébeuf suggested that the Jesuits “cut down the number of those who, because of their ineptitude at languages, have nothing to do most of the time... they are taking the place of several young men who might be able to learn the language more quickly and become excellent

³³ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, IV: 178-9.

³⁴ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, V: 21.

workers.”³⁵ The core belief in a universal language provided the greatest setback in Jesuit linguistics because it forced them to approach native languages from a European perspective of learning. Le Jeune writes with a puzzled tone in 1634 that “they [the Montagnais] have some Verbs which I call absolute, to which neither the Greeks, nor Latins, nor we ourselves, nor any language of Europe with which I am familiar, have anything similar.”³⁶ He also states that “Father Brébeuf tells me that the Hurons have no M, at which I am astonished, for this letter seems to me almost natural, so extensively is it used.”³⁷ Towards the conclusion of his *Relation*, Le Jeune states that “if... Your Reverence asks me if I made much progress in the knowledge of this language during the winter I spent with these Barbarians, I answer frankly, ‘no.’”³⁸ Pessimism and frustration give way to comments a year later, such as “one who knew the language perfectly, so that he could crush their reasons and promptly refute their absurdities, would be very powerful among them,” which shows the private heavy-handedness that the Jesuits were reticent to display in their public lives.³⁹ The fact that Le Jeune followed the same strategy as Brébeuf in wintering with the natives to learn their language but failed in this

³⁵ Latourelle, *Jean de Brébeuf*, 216. Brébeuf also requested that the Superior in New France have greater authority in disciplining wayward or lazy Jesuits who apparently were not taking their duties as seriously as he wished. This is an important point to take note of because it refutes the idea that the Society of Jesus was monolithic in outlook and that all Jesuits were equally fervent in their desire to fulfill the mission of the Society. Frustration in the New World clearly gave rise to despondency and defeat for many Jesuits who did not master their linguistic studies in the Old World.

³⁶ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VII: 23.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁹ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VIII: 37.

regard must be pointed out, because this leads to interesting ideas on linguistic theory as applied by the Jesuits.

Margaret J. Leahey explains many key aspects of linguistics as they relate to the Jesuits in an article entitled “‘Comment peut un muet prescher l’évangile?’ Jesuit Missionaries and the Native Languages of New France.” She presents two approaches to language-learning: learning language primarily as a tool and learning to become a member of the target language community.⁴⁰ She also notes three types of disorientation when a person is immersed in another culture: language shock, culture shock, and culture stress.⁴¹ Language shock is described as feelings of inadequacy or shame when the learner cannot speak the language well; culture shock is the fear, anxiety, or depression that come when the learner’s strategies do not work in the new culture; culture stress can continue for years, even after mastery, and deals with the issue of identity and a lingering perception of being “the other” within the target society.⁴² Though these are modern names for issues with learning a language and interacting with foreign cultures, it is safe to say that the approaches and disorientations are universal and were experienced by the Jesuits in New France long before the terms were coined. In his writings, Le Jeune seems to regard language as a tool for missionary efforts, as in his quote that fluency in native languages equated to great power, so perhaps this could explain his failure to become

⁴⁰ Margaret J. Leahey, “‘Comment peut un muet prescher l’évangile?’ Jesuit Missionaries and the Native Languages of New France,” *French Historical Studies* 19 (1995): 113.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 114.

fluent while wintering with them in 1634. Brébeuf, on the other hand, is noted for his fluency. His statements on etiquette and native ritual show that he seems to have made it his goal to become a member of the villages that he lived with, which could also explain fact that the Hurons gave him the name “Echon.” He was a member of the community, to some degree. The *Jesuit Relations* show the signs of disorientation in many ways, as priests dealt with feelings of uselessness within native societies, insecurity in their inability to speak on topics of religion and importance, and long-term depression that they were not making headway in their mission.

Jesuit language-learning was accomplished in many ways by an implementation of strategies devised and practiced in their European universities. To facilitate language-learning and to work collaboratively at learning native languages, the Jesuits paid natives to act as translators and teachers and worked to compose catechisms, or grammar primers, in native languages.⁴³ The *Relation* of 1632-1633 states that the Jesuits had begun to “compose something in the way of a Catechism... on the principles of the faith” in the Montagnais tongue to instruct the native children, having them say “the *Pater*, the *Ave*, and the *Credo*.”⁴⁴ The *Relation* of 1633-1634 specifically notes by this point the Jesuits had further refined their rudimentary catechism and were engaging in limited conversations with their translators in native tongues. This was in keeping with the translation exercises practiced in Jesuit universities in Europe, in which students

⁴³ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, IV: 89.

⁴⁴ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, V: 187.

translated numerous texts between the vernacular, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. They also utilized Jesuits who became fluent in native languages, such as Brébeuf, to act as teachers for newly arrived Jesuits.

The earliest overarching Jesuit strategy centered on building seminaries similar to the schools in Europe, and teaching native children so that they would convert their parents with their greater bilingual skills.⁴⁵ This would be a strategy pursued throughout their missionary involvement in New France. They also planned for a more rigorous system of indoctrination that would send a child each year to France for two years of rigorous study, so that “he will return with a knowledge of the language, and having already been accustomed to [the ways of the Jesuits], he will not leave [them] and will retain his little countrymen.”⁴⁶ The Jesuits believed that the parents of native children were a bad influence on them, causing them to lapse into “pagan” practices and offering a religious alternative to their children.⁴⁷ Since their fluency in Montagnais and Huron was a slow process, the Jesuits realized the importance of their actions and wrote in 1635:

To convert the Savages, not so much knowledge is necessary as goodness and sound virtue. The four Elements of an Apostolic man in New France are Affability, Humility, Patience, and a generous charity. Too ardent zeal scorches more than it warms, and ruins everything; great magnanimity and compliance are necessary to attract gradually these Savages. They do not comprehend our Theology well, but they comprehend perfectly our humility and our friendliness, and allow themselves to be won.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁶ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VI: 85.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 83-85.

⁴⁸ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VIII: 179.

This statement is telling because Le Jeune admits that their ability to explain Christian doctrine is lacking and most natives do not understand the more complicated aspects of Christianity. That being said, he recognizes the importance of actions and points out four qualities that one would certainly find in Huron or Montagnais culture, which shows how the Jesuits began to absorb some of the character traits of the natives that they lived with. Also hidden in this quote is the heavy reliance on interpreters that persisted even when the Jesuits had attained near-fluency and a greater understanding of Huron grammar and syntax. Thus, their actions and the importance of interpreters heavily shaped their interactions with the native populations. Following this mentality, the Jesuits achieved relative success in gathering native children for catechism and religious instruction due to the recognition that gift-giving was important in Huron and Montagnais society. It was common practice to give “presents of knives, iron arrow-points, rings, awls, and needles” when supplies permitted, for the parents of these children “took great pleasure in these exercises...when they saw the honor that was shown to their children.”⁴⁹ It is also

⁴⁹ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, XI: 227. A more cynical interpretation of this practice holds that the only reason that parents sent their children for religious instruction with the Jesuits was to obtain these gifts. Given the volume of trade at the time and the lack of importance given to private property in Huron society I have some difficulty in accepting this as the primary motivating factor for parents sending their children when they could have easily obtained these items elsewhere. On the same page of this *Relation* Brébeuf includes the remarks of a Huron father who told his children “listen to the Father, what he says is true; you are young, you can remember it better than we who are old.” Though this certainly could have been said out of politeness, it also could be taken as a sign that some Huron recognized the power of the Jesuits, and in turn their religion, and looked to the future generation to better integrate this new faith with traditional beliefs than they could.

interesting to note that this was an adaptation of the European tradition of giving “the little agnus Dei and other images [of saints]” to students in religious classes.⁵⁰

When the Jesuits came to the realization that children held little sway in the day-to-day interactions of Huron life and would not serve as anything more than interpreters in converting other natives, they began to focus on the older men in the village, who they perceived to be the tribal leaders, stating that “they are the ones who determine and decide all matters, and everything is ordered by their advice.”⁵¹ This statement is important because it betrays the gendered bias that shaped Jesuit interactions in that they failed to recognize, at this point in 1636, the influence of the matrilineal system and the power that native wives held within the community proper. It is with some despondency that Brébeuf admits that the pace of Huron village life kept the priests from gathering the men of the village together for an hour each day or even daily. Even though the men expressed a desire to learn the catechism, likely out of politeness to their guests, “their occupations and amusements [did] not permit [them to do so],” according to Brébeuf.⁵²

Though it is clear that the Jesuits struggled to comprehend and master native languages, they persevered utilizing the language-learning tools that they obtained in the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 227.

⁵¹ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 15, 19.

⁵² Ibid., 19 and XI: 9. The Huron were surprisingly polite in tolerating the Jesuits, which certainly was trying at times when the Fathers explained to them, in broken Huron, that their religious beliefs were incorrect. Brébeuf commented in a 1636 letter that the Huron did not “mock or scorn” their teachings. Rather, “they wonder, praise, and approve, though without keeping [the teachings] long before their lives. They all have but once answer – ‘Such is not our custom; your world is different from ours; the God who created yours... did not create ours’,” which is a wonderful recognition of the differences between the two cultures as well as a desire to respect, but not necessarily embrace, the Jesuits’ beliefs.

colleges of Europe. By practicing daily, keeping conversations brief and simple, remaining patient, and working collaboratively to create grammar books and catechisms, the French Jesuits eventually became more fluent in native tongues. Looking towards the future, Brébeuf noted that “This vineyard will produce its fruits but only by hard work, prayers, trials and patience... the harvest will come later.”⁵³ The formative years were frustrating for many Jesuits because they were spent primarily mastering Huron and Montagnais, though they were also crucial as a period of cultural observation and learning for the Jesuits, influencing their presentation of Catholic doctrine.

Accommodation and Sensitivity to Native Practices and Culture

The difficulties associated with language-learning ensured that the Jesuits in New France spent the majority of their initial years in the colony observing the natives that they planned to convert to Catholicism, taking note of their cultural practices in the *Jesuit Relations*. From a number of these writings it is clear that many Jesuits sought empirical validation for the philosophical and religious education that they received while in Europe. The Jesuits were clearly excited to find links between native beliefs and Christianity, as they did with the Montagnais, which confirmed what had been taught at the Jesuit colleges in France – the natives had once known the truth of Christianity, but they had fallen into sin and corruption over the millennia. This belief followed the theological teachings of Aquinas, and was generally more optimistic than the Augustinian interpretation of total depravity. Writing in 1634, Paul Le Jeune documents the

⁵³ Latourelle, *Jean de Brébeuf*, 192.

Montagnais creation story, which had both a creator of the world, *Atachocam*, and *Messou*, a being who restored it from a “great universal deluge” by sending a raven and other animals such as the muskrat to find dry land on which to rebuild the earth. Also interesting for the Jesuits was the Edenic notion of paradise lost within this creation narrative, as the Montagnais who related the story to Jean Brébeuf told him that “a certain Savage had received from Messou the gift of immortality in a little package, with a strict injunction not to open it; while he kept it closed he was immortal, but his wife, being curious and incredulous, wished to see what was inside this present; and having opened it, it all flew away, and since then the Savages have been subject to death.”⁵⁴ Such a story served as further confirmation to many of the Jesuits, especially those who shared the optimism of Aquinas, proving that the Montagnais simply needed to be corrected from the error of their beliefs, though such hubris often blinded the Jesuits to the distinct differences in the two religions.

The Huron creation story also held similarities that the Jesuits observed and used as confirmation that they were dealing with a group of people blinded by apostasy, as Brébeuf wrote: “there are some indications that they had formerly some more than natural knowledge of God, as may be remarked in some particulars of their fables... they have lost the thought of him [God] and have become worse than beasts in his sight, and as regards the respect they have for him.”⁵⁵ One Huron creation account begins with a

⁵⁴ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VI: 157.

⁵⁵ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 125.

pregnant woman named *Aataentsic* who lived in the heavens and threw herself down a deep hole after her dog pursued a bear and fell before her. She did not die from the fall, instead landing in the waters, which dried up and formed the earth. In another story *Aataentsic*'s sick husband had a dream that he must cut down a certain tree, the one providing food for those in heaven, and eat its fruit to become healed. *Aataentsic* hears of the dream and intends to cut down the tree herself, but after taking her ax to the trunk the ground opened up and the tree fell to earth. *Aataentsic* then tells her husband and jumps down the hole after the tree. Down below, Turtle sees *Aataentsic* falling and gathers the other creatures of the sea together to bring up earth from the ocean floor to cushion her fall. The pregnant *Aataentsic* then gives birth to two sons, *Tawiscaron* and *Iouskeha*, who quarreled with each other and had a fight to the death, similar to the biblical story of Cain and Abel.⁵⁶ Once again, it was impossible for the Jesuits to hear these stories without drawing the obvious biblical allusions and assuming that they were dealing with a native culture that had once known Christian truisms but had fallen into sin and apostasy.⁵⁷

Though similarities between Christianity and native religious were apparent, distinct differences also existed, to the consternation of the Jesuits. The penultimate

⁵⁶ Ibid., 125-129. See also Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 77-79 for a more detailed description of the Huron creation myth than the brief one described in this essay. Trigger also notes the interesting role-reversal between the way that Huron men commit physical violence in their daily lives through warfare, hunting, and clearing the forest, while it is *Aataentsic* in the creation story who is violent and seeks to undo the work of her son *Iouskeha*. Trigger believes that the creation story psychologically helped justify and confirm the sexual division of labor that shaped Huron village and tribal life.

⁵⁷ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 125. While recounting the Huron creation story, Brébeuf prefaces the narrative with two important statements: "There are some indications that they had formerly some more than natural knowledge of the true God, as may be remarked in some particulars of their fables," and "For not having been willing to acknowledge God in their habits and actions, they have lost the thought of him."

aspect of religious life for natives in New France rested on the efficacy and power of dreams, which, according to the Jesuits, “surpasses all belief,” for “they look upon their dreams as ordinances and irrevocable decrees, the execution of which it is not permitted without crime to delay.”⁵⁸ Dreams, and their meanings, often dictated the rhythm of feasting, dancing, hunting, and interaction between tribesmen and women.⁵⁹ Brébeuf commented that “the dream is the oracle that all these poor Peoples consult and listen to, the Prophet which predicts to them future events, the Cassandra which warns them of misfortunes that threaten them, the usual Physician in their sickness, the Esculapius and Galen of the whole Country, - the most absolute master they have.”⁶⁰ Initially the Jesuits believed that these dreams, and the occasional prescient predictions that came from them, were powers granted by the Devil, though they assumed that God would ultimately triumph and aid in converting the Huron and Montagnais.⁶¹ The Huron were surprised when the Jesuits ridiculed their belief in dreams, asking what the Jesuits believed in if they did not follow their dreams as a spiritual guide, which shows the reverence and importance of dreaming in native religious society.⁶² Popularity and influence within village life played a role in the receptiveness of the greater society to a dreamer, as the Jesuits observed that poorer people received less attention when they spoke of a dream,

⁵⁸ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 169.

⁵⁹ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VIII: 121. Brébeuf continues to say that “almost their whole life turns upon this pivot [dreams].”

⁶⁰ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 169. It is interesting to note that Brébeuf recognized the power of dreams superseded that of village chiefs, yet failed to recognize that the chieftainship itself was not the same as European kingships or monarchies.

⁶¹ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, IV: 217-219.

⁶² Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VI: 183.

and that accuracy over a period of time played a role in the reception of these dream visions. Complicated dreams, especially those that seemed impossible or untimely, that were not easily interpreted, required the examination and interpretation of tribal shamans, whose mystic attachment with the forces that animated Huron spiritual life made them the proper participants in this regard.⁶³ Jesuit disbelief and antagonism against dreaming and dream-following naturally stirred up resentment and controversy with the religious leaders of Huron and Montagnais communities. This is particularly interesting because the Jesuits themselves placed great importance on the mystic experiences undergone during Loyola's "Exercises."

As the Jesuits learned more about native religious beliefs, they also found differences between tribes and villages. The Jesuits also found that what they learned about one, such as the Huron, did not often signal a universal pattern of behavior, as Father Paul Le Jeune wrote in 1633:

I have observed that, after having seen two or three Savages do the same thing, it is at once reported to be a custom of the whole Tribe. The argument drawn from the enumeration of parts is faulty, if it does not comprehend all or the greater part. Add to this that there are many tribes in these countries who agree in a number of things, and differ in many others; so that, when it is said that certain practices are common to the Savages, it may be true of one tribe and not true of another.⁶⁴

During the earliest days of the Jesuit missions the difficulty in relating to the natives prompted Charles Lallemant to write in 1626: "I would request those who are interested in this country not to be disappointed if they do not promptly receive news of the hoped-

⁶³ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 171.

⁶⁴ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VI: 27.

for converts. The conversion of the Savages takes time. The first six or seven years will appear sterile to some; and, if I should say ten or twelve, I would possibly not be far from the truth,” which demonstrates to some degree perceptiveness and acknowledgement of the cultural and linguistic barriers that separated the French Jesuits from their potential converts.⁶⁵ A mere decade later the Jesuits could only boast of a few baptisms among the Montagnais, namely amongst the sick and dying, and they had only just reentered Huron country to establish permanent missions among the tribes of the confederacy. Many of these early *Relations* contain similar admonitions to those in Europe to remain faithful in the ability of the Jesuits to succeed despite lackluster results to that point. Certainly language proved to be one of the most daunting challenges in explaining the very foreign concepts of Christianity to the natives that the Jesuits encountered.

Though differences between the native tribes of New France and the Jesuits pervaded, the optimism of Aquinas enabled many Jesuits to focus on the positive connections between the two cultures rather than their stark dissimilarities. Despite discouragement and difficulty in establishing the early missions, the desire to convert the Huron and Montagnais enabled many of the Jesuits to overlook or at the very least tolerate their differences, though their private writings often betrayed their true feelings. Despite these aspects of accommodation the Jesuits were ultimately confined by their Eurocentric ontology, leading to descriptions of native culture and religion as “evil

⁶⁵ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, IV: 223.

practices” or “superstitions.”⁶⁶ That being said, Brébeuf astutely noted that “gentleness and patience are of the utmost importance... we can never hope to win [this country] over either by force or by authority.”⁶⁷ Thus, Jesuits were encouraged to be tolerant despite the inherent difficulty created by an ontology that pitted them against native culture.

Sacraments and Orthodoxy among the Huron and Montagnais

Numerous examples from the *Jesuit Relations* elucidate a deep concern among the Jesuits in ensuring that they were practicing and teaching proper Catholic theology. The general concern and pattern by which many Jesuits engaged in administering the sacraments is best expressed in the following quotation by Le Jeune:

I freely admit that great care must be taken not to baptize those who are in health, without having tried them and kept them for some time in the rank of Catechumens... Christian discretion ought to limit the term... There are Savages to whom I would not confide our mysteries after six years of instruction; there are others... who will mature sooner, and to whom one cannot, without injustice, deny what belongs to them as much as to us. It is the condition of the postulant or Neophyte which ought to determine the time of his baptism, or of the reception of our adorable Sacrament at the altar, and not a rule which is general and common to all.⁶⁸

From 1610 to 1640 the Jesuits made a conscientious effort to baptize only those who showed understanding and an acceptance of their faith, frequently denying baptism until they were convinced of the convert’s sincerity. In 1635 Le Jeune noted that “twenty-two savages have been baptized this year. If we were acquainted with the languages, I believe

⁶⁶ Latourelle, *Jean de Brebeuf*, 178.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 181.

⁶⁸ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, XI: 139-141.

the faith would be widely extended.”⁶⁹ He also states that “we dare not yet trust baptism to any except those whom we see in danger of death, or to children who are assured to us; for, not yet being able to fully instruct these Barbarians, they would soon show a contempt for our holy Mysteries...”⁷⁰

There exists herein a conundrum for early Jesuits in New France: though they burned with zeal to convert natives they were unable to communicate even the simplest truths of Christianity. Their adherence to orthodoxy also prevented them from freely distributing the sacrament of baptism except among the sick and dying, which was common Catholic practice in the Old World. As natives succumbed to diseases brought by the French, it was certainly frustrating to see their potential converts dying. This led Jesuits to baptize natives that they believed faced imminent death, which natives eventually came to equate as the cause of death, further straining the relationship between Jesuits and natives. Thus, conversions were relatively isolated events during the early years. Brébeuf expresses his hesitation to baptize a native in 1634, telling two dying natives that “[he] would [himself] be lost, if [he] baptized an infidel and a poorly-taught unbeliever,” and baptized only one when he had been fully convinced that the native’s faith was sincere.⁷¹ The hesitance to baptize natives and claim converts contrasts greatly with practices in New Spain, so it is reasonable to assume that many if not all of the

⁶⁹ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VII: 275.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁷¹ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VI: 111-113.

healthy converts were sincere, since the Jesuits were so hesitant to bestow the sacrament of baptism.

The importance of religious belief in the interactions of the Jesuits and natives of New France cannot be stressed enough. The Jesuits believed in the religious efficacy of baptism – that it held the power to save souls and heal physical bodies – and used it as a tool in their missionary arsenal. Many believed it was the will of God himself that these converts quickly pass from this world to the next. They were self-assured that the dying baptized would achieve sanctification because they would have no time to commit the terrible sin of apostasy, or rejecting their new faith. Writing in 1635, Le Jeune stated that “the joy that one feels when he has baptized a Savage who dies soon afterwards, and flies directly to Heaven to become an Angel, certainly is a joy that surpasses anything that can be imagined; one no longer remembers the sea, nor seasickness, nor the horror of past tempests; but one would like to have a suffering of ten thousand tempests that he might help save one soul, since Jesus Christ for one soul would have willingly shed all his precious blood.”⁷² It is important to note the key aspect of this passage: the Jesuits believed or at least hoped that baptized natives were pure of soul and could now enter into heaven. Thus, baptism was a catalyst for salvation and it must be remembered that “every gravely ill Indian was, to a Jesuit, the prize in a contest with the highest possible

⁷² Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VIII: 169-171.

stakes; either [they] would die outside the church and suffer eternal torment, or [they] would confess [their] sins, enter the fold, and live forever in perfect happiness.”⁷³

This belief explains the strategy of baptizing the sick and dying natives they encountered – to the Jesuits this was perhaps their only option as missionaries. The purpose of baptism was not communicated without difficulty, as Brébeuf noted that the Huron initially believed that it was a curing ritual or “an aid to health,” and that the Jesuits tried to make a careful distinction that it was a cure for the soul rather than the body. That being said, Brébeuf further claimed that “they have the opinion so deeply rooted that the baptized, especially the children, are no longer sickly, that soon they will have spread it abroad and published it everywhere.”⁷⁴ When a particularly brutal epidemic swept through the Huron communities in 1636 Brébeuf recognized that many of the Huron that came requesting baptism were hoping to be cured of the sickness or protected, so he insisted that they “[rest] all their hope in the Lord” to receive baptism after their faith was “sufficiently proved.”⁷⁵ Another example of the difficulty found in translating the meaning and purpose of baptism is found in a brief account in which Brébeuf traveled to the nearby village of Wenrio and was forced to “[dispel] the fear of a

⁷³ Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6. Greer continues his description of Jesuit baptismal practices to highlight the importance of baptizing children because they were less likely to have sinned and more certainly ensured entrance into the heavenly realm.

⁷⁴ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 13.

⁷⁵ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, XI: 15-17.

poor sick woman that Baptism would shorten her life,” a reasonable assumption given the propensity to baptize natives who were on their deathbeds.⁷⁶

The Jesuits intended that potential converts who were not sick or dying express a solid understanding of Christian doctrine, thus, they maintained a relatively small number of converts during these formative years. Baptizing the dying was a safe way to ensure, in their minds, that converts would not have the chance to lapse into traditional practices and reject their new faith. In 1636 Brébeuf notes that, among the Huron, only a mere one hundred had been baptized in the previous two years and ten had died in that same span.⁷⁷ Amidst disease that broke out in 1639 Brébeuf recorded that about 300 had been baptized, but “out of this number only 100 are openly professing their faith and receiving the sacraments. The others, in fact, were baptized during the epidemic and in danger of death, and have died and gone to Heaven, or on recovering their health, they did not acknowledge the blessings of faith and the healing God had granted them.”⁷⁸ When sick Natives who had been baptized recovered, the Jesuits had to deal with the greater difficulty of ensuring that these new “Christians” would keep their faith and not return to traditional Huron ways.

The Jesuits also found great difficulty in accurately conveying the Christian concept of the Trinity, or God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Le Jeune

⁷⁶ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 67.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁸ Latourelle, *Jean de Brébeuf*, 199-200. In an earlier letter Brébeuf records that the Jesuits baptized their first healthy adult, a man of about fifty years, who was “carefully instructed in the Faith and tested for a long time.” This is yet another example of Jesuit caution and instructional rigor (193-194).

wrote of his progress with the Montagnais during 1632-1633, stating that he explained “very crudely, the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and of the Incarnation.”⁷⁹ In his work with the Huron language, Brébeuf found that “a relative noun with them includes always the meaning of one of the three persons of the possessive pronoun, so that they can not say simply, Father, Son... but are obliged to say one of the three, my father, thy father, his father.”⁸⁰ Brébeuf further notes the difficulty found in translating a crucial part of the traditional Christian blessing, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost,” suggesting to his superiors that they substitute the phrase with “In the name of our Father, and of his Son, and of their holy Ghost,” which certainly did not dilute the meaning and took into account the relational aspect of the Huron language while expressing a desire to maintain orthodoxy in practice.⁸¹ Brébeuf’s initial construction of the Trinity did not recognize that the Huron language was based primarily on verbs, which led to changes in expression once Jesuits gained a better understanding of linguistics. In *De Religione* the Jesuits express the Trinity as “[Father] he has them (indefinite) as children,” “[Son] they (masculine plural) have him as child,” and “[Holy Ghost] he is a spirit, the very, he is a true one.”⁸² Though this conception of the Trinity might sound strange from a Western perspective, it shows that the Jesuits made efforts to comprehend native linguistic construction and communicate effectively within that

⁷⁹ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, V: 187.

⁸⁰ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 119.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁸² Steckley, ed. *De Religione*, 13, 26.

medium. An excerpt from *De Religione* states that “it is as if he [God] is one in body, and they are one life-provider and one mind. They all have the same mind and power. They were all together as they made with skill the sky, the earth, and all kinds of things.”⁸³ From this example we are able to see teaching on the Trinity that is doctrinally correct and formed with proper Huron grammar.

In his early linguistic work Brébeuf also found that speaking of God as a father in Heaven tended to offend many natives, for “to speak to them of the dead whom they have loved, is to insult them.” He continued to note that “a woman, whose mother had died a short time before, almost lost her desire to be baptized because the command, *Thou shalt honor thy Father and thy Mother*, had been inadvertently quoted to her.”⁸⁴ Thus, we are reminded that native encounters with Christianity were shaped in this case by preexisting beliefs regarding the dead and social propriety. The Huron found speaking of the dead particularly offensive because they believed that once death had occurred the soul lingered in the village cemetery by day, where bodies were interred until the Feast of the Dead, and would wander the villages and cabins by night to take part in feasts and ceremonies. Only after the Feast of the Dead, which occurred roughly every twelve years, would the souls of the deceased travel in the direction of the setting sun to the great village of their people.⁸⁵ It then becomes abundantly clear that, by choosing to use the

⁸³ Ibid., 49.

⁸⁴ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X, 121.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 143, 275-281. Alternatively, the same account can be found, with a slight variation in translation, in the section entitled “Of the Solemn Feast of the Dead” in Allan Greer’s edited volume *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America* (Boston: Bedford/St.

fear of separation from the recently deceased and one's ancestors to try to convert natives, the Jesuits were committing a major cultural faux pas that offended many Huron. It is also worth noting that through their intensive study of native culture the Jesuits were able to recognize these practices and beliefs, adjusting their message to sensitively address this issue. In referring to the Holy Spirit or the soul in *De Religione* the Jesuits use the verb *-aki-*, which translates to "guardian spirits," replacing "Brébeuf's *esken* 'to be dead', in reference to the Holy Ghost, with the verb root *-aki-* as well."⁸⁶

The early *Jesuit Relations* are relatively mute regarding Jesuit teachings on the sacrament of the Eucharist due primarily to the fact that they worried about their ability to properly instruct natives in the meaning behind the sacrament, though there are frequent occasions when it is mentioned that the Jesuits administered it among themselves. The Jesuits believed in the efficacy of the Eucharist as the most holy of the sacraments, noting that "As often as we present to the God of Heaven the adorable sacrifice of the Altar, in some new place, it seems to us that we banish therefrom the demons, and that we take possession of these lands in the name of Jesus Christ our sovereign Lord and Master, whom we wish to see reigning fully in the hearts of our French and in the belief of our Savages."⁸⁷ Historian Erik R. Seeman correctly notes that

Martin's, 2000), 61-69. From an ethnographic standpoint, Trigger points out in *The Children of Aataentsic* (85-90) that it was common practice during the Feast to mingle the bones of the dead from all the surrounding villages together in a single ossuary, which is yet another symbolic representation that the unity of the tribe, or clan, was stressed over individualism, which was culturally unique in comparison to European societal norms.

⁸⁶ Steckley, ed. *De Religione*, 33.

⁸⁷ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, IX: 147-149.

the Jesuits were worried that natives would perceive the ritual as a parallel to cannibalistic practices in Huron culture, “which the Jesuits dearly hoped to stamp out.”⁸⁸ Brebeuf’s early translation for the word *Eucharist* is the Huron *atonesta*, which means “one gives recognition, thanks by such a means”: a doctrinally bland translation that explains nothing of the Catholic beliefs present in the sacrament.⁸⁹ Thus, initial caution prevailed in discussion and communication regarding the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Huron suspicions were fueled when the Jesuits carried out the ritual of the Eucharist within the confines of their residences during the cover of night, which added to the cultural misconception that the Eucharist was a bewitching ritual. In 1636 Brebeuf recorded in his *Relation* that he had been informed by natives that “We have with us a body, which serves us with black magic; to kill their children,” and that the general consensus among the Jesuits was to withhold teachings on the Eucharist until their linguistic skills had improved and their subjects had been properly instructed.⁹⁰ To conclude, instruction regarding the sacrament of the Eucharist was deferred during the early missionary period due to the Jesuits understanding of their inability to properly communicate the confusing theological significance of transubstantiation and the representative meaning of the bread and wine. A proper understanding of native culture

⁸⁸ Seeman, *Feast of the Dead*, 84.

⁸⁹ Steckley, ed. *De Religione*, 11.

⁹⁰ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, XII: 237, and Seeman, *Feast of the Dead*, 84-85. See also Trigger, “Plagues and Preachers” in *Natives and Newcomers: Canada’s Heroic Age Reconsidered* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1985):226-297, for an extensive examination of the Jesuit presence among the Huron from the Amerindian perspective.

and the role of ritual cannibalism prompted the Jesuits to act with reservation in this regard, conducting the ritual amongst themselves in private.

Religious Dialogue: How the Huron Interpreted the Jesuits' Message

Given the linguistic skill of the Jesuits and the ability of native religion to incorporate multiple sources of religious belief, it would be foolish to suggest that natives completely misunderstood the Jesuits or that their efforts did not evoke religious responses. With this in mind, it is also certain that the natives of New France encountered Jesuit teaching as they understood it, mediating this new information with a preexisting ontology. Confronted with epidemics that Europeans were seemingly immune to and the failure of traditional medicine to protect against this foreign threat led many natives to turn to the Jesuits for assistance and spiritual protection. When baptism often failed to protect them from European epidemics, the Huron were just as quick to blame the Jesuits for their predicament with the provocation and leadership of native shamans, who did not take lightly to the Jesuit usurpation of spiritual mediation.

The early failure of the Jesuits to realize the depth that native religion permeated everyday activities and the ability of this belief structure to synthesize and adopt religious practices of other groups within a porous and malleable ontological framework led many of the Jesuits to label “converts” who displayed impious behavior as apostates.

Conventional historians hold that the Huron and other tribes interpreted the Jesuit message as simply another medicine society, and baptism as yet another healing rite without a larger understanding of Roman Catholicism, which is simplistic and fails to

give credit to Jesuit linguistic skill. These skills, honed in Europe through Jesuit colleges, certainly influenced their ability to transmit Christianity into terms that natives could understand.⁹¹ This is often obscured by pessimistic accounts from the Fathers in the *Jesuit Relations* that note the behavior of natives who rejected the rigid standards of Christianity required after baptism. Historians typically attribute this as a failure of the Jesuits to communicate the message of Christianity rather than a failure in understanding the syncretic nature of native beliefs.

The success of the early missions must be evaluated, after examining the Jesuit approach to linguistics and the theological orthodoxy, in part by the responses of the natives that they encountered. In many regards the Jesuits were sensitive to native culture and tailored their missionary approach to the practices and beliefs of the natives that they interacted with in New France, yet in many other ways their actions displayed gross insensitivity as well. The Jesuits intended to restructure native populations into a sedentary lifestyle that modeled traditional European villages and townships, which conflicted greatly with the societal structure of the Huron and Montagnais. In many ways female opposition to the teachings of the Jesuits certainly stemmed from this decrease in their power and role within the community.⁹² Women were often the most vociferous critics of the Jesuits, declining conversion and “stressing the importance of older rituals

⁹¹ Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 505.

⁹² Carol Devens, “Separate Confrontations: Gender as a Factor in Indian Adaptation to European Colonization in New France.” *American Quarterly* 38 (1986): 464.

and practices” more often than men.⁹³ Casting men in the occupation of farming invaded the traditional woman’s sphere and would have humiliated Huron and Montagnais men. It also robbed men of the religious strength derived from the rituals associated with the hunt. That being said, some men certainly took relish in changes that gave them more power, though it came at the expense of their wives and tribeswomen.

Though the thoughts and opinions of natives are often overshadowed by the religious overtones of the Jesuits’ writing, it is possible in some occasions to obtain an idea of the aspects of Christianity that the Huron and Montagnais found appealing and integrated into their own personal faith. It has been common practice in Christian proselytization to utilize the dualistic imagery of Heaven and Hell to elicit fear of eternal punishment as a means of conversion. Brébeuf commented that “fear is the forerunner of faith in these barbarous minds” in a lengthier explanation on the use of drawings and paintings of souls being tortured in Hell to show the necessity of Christian conversion to the Huron.⁹⁴ In the same account he admitted that it was difficult to distinguish the tortured from the torturers in the scenes, so the images were often confusing in that regard and needed to be more clearly illustrated. As the traditional faith of the Huron did not speak of eternal punishment in a place like Hell, it was not a concept that they readily embraced. In one instance a group of Huron told the Jesuits:

Half of thy discourse [on Heaven and Hell] is good, the rest is worth nothing. Do not speak to us of those fires, for that disgusts us; speak to us of the blessings of

⁹³ Ibid., 465-466.

⁹⁴ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, XI: 87-89.

Heaven, - of living a long time here below, of living at our ease, of the pleasures we will experience after our death, - for it is thus men are won; when thou speakest to us of those blessings, we think in our hearts that that is good, and that we surely desire to enjoy it; if thou speakest thus, all the Savages will listen to thee very readily; but those threatening words thou usest do not serve at all to that end.⁹⁵

Though it could be argued that this was an isolated exchange, there is another account that helps illuminate the Huron apprehension to subjects like sin and Hell and the mediation of the Jesuits' message by native responses.

One of the best interpreters frequently mentioned in the *Relations* is the native called "Louys," (or Louis) by the Jesuits, who was "well acquainted with [their] mysteries, and [explained] them with enthusiasm," and Brébeuf noted that when translating their message "[Louis's] way of saying a thing gives it an entirely different meaning" and that he "showed that he had understood them and made them his own."⁹⁶ Specifically, when Brébeuf and Louis attempted to explain the message of Christianity to Louis's family, Brébeuf "brought forward the burning of the five wicked cities, and the preservation of Lot and his family, to show how God chastises severely even in this life the wicked and vile, and how he saves the good," whereas "[Louis] drew the conclusion

⁹⁵ Ibid., 207. Brébeuf goes on to say that it "would be wicked" if he did not speak of Hell and properly warn them, which seemed to satisfy them in that regard. This response from the Huron, though interpreted through the Jesuits, shows that the ideas of sin and punishment did not suit them well. There is no way to tell how this interaction played out, so there is always the possibility that the Huron realized it would be a moot point to press the issue.

⁹⁶ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 63-65.

from it for his relatives that, if they served God faithfully, their Cabin would not be burned even if all the village were afire.”⁹⁷

The most obvious and overt confrontations that the Jesuits faced centered on their relationships with village shamans, the traditional spiritual leaders who recognized the spiritual attack that the Jesuits were conducting. For the Jesuits, the practitioners of traditional faith were the most obvious hindrance to their message and anti-Christian in their practices of “consulting their Manitou, or talking to the devil.”⁹⁸ In Jesuit accounts of native healing practices they ridiculed a shaman as a “charlatan,” scoffing at his methodology for curing a fever, and told him that it would not work.⁹⁹ This, and other interactions in which the Jesuits belittled native religious practices, antagonized the shamans that they encountered, leading them to frequently comment: “In truth, this black robe has no sense.”¹⁰⁰ Often, the Jesuits found themselves in direct confrontation over the spiritual efficacy and corporeal power of these competing belief systems. The Jesuits did not believe that their practices gave them divine power, though they did believe that their god interceded through the use of drought, disease, and warfare to confirm or deny

⁹⁷ Ibid., 63-65. There are certainly two ways of looking at this statement, one being that serving God faithfully was important, and the other being the physical protection that such devotion brought. In the same account, Brébeuf comments that Louis’s father had difficulty learning the “sign of the Cross, the *Pater*, the *Ave*, and the Apostles’ Creed” though he was an intelligent and important trader who traveled among the “various Nations.” Though it is not clear, it is likely that Brébeuf was unable to sufficiently translate the meanings behind these Catholic practices, while Louis obviously communicated what he saw as important with ease.

⁹⁸ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, V: 219.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 235-239.

¹⁰⁰ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VI: 173. According to Le Jeune and Brébeuf, this is the most frequent comment that the shamans made when the Jesuits tried to attack their religious beliefs by asking pointed questions directed at bringing out the impossibilities of religion. It is interesting to note that on occasion the Huron do the same to the Jesuits, critically evaluating this new religion.

requests and to display his power over native beliefs.¹⁰¹ When severe epidemics struck in 1636 and 1637 this brought greater conflict against the Jesuits, as they were viewed by many Huron as witches who were cursing the natives as punishment for not listening to them as they intended.¹⁰²

In one such confrontation in 1636 a drought caused the village shaman to claim that “he was hindered from making it rain by a Cross which is before our [the Jesuits’] door, and that the house of the French was a house of demons, or of ill-disposed people who had come into their Country in order to make them die,” which is a very strong statement against the Jesuits and the reception that they received from the shamans, especially as time wore on.¹⁰³ On this occasion, the village leaders told the Jesuits that they must take down their cross to appease the shaman, and that “if the crops should not mature, they might beat [them] to death as they do the Sorcerers,” which prompted the Jesuits to make the counter-claim that the people’s sinfulness was causing the drought and that the Fathers would pray for their god’s intercession in this matter. When rain came shortly thereafter in abundance it resulted in many Huron in the village visiting the Jesuits “to tell [them] that God was in truth good, and that we also were good; and that in

¹⁰¹ Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 503. Trigger also reminds us that the Jesuits “believed in the power of Satan and his attendant devils,” which naturally colored their perception of the shamans, creating the perception that their missionary activity was “a valiant struggle to liberate them [the Amerindians] from thralldom to these supernatural enemies.” That being said, the Jesuits disagreed whether or not these devils could physically manifest themselves or if they were embodied in the mentality of the shamans and their most devoted followers.

¹⁰² Ibid., 534.

¹⁰³ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 37.

the future they would serve God, adding a thousand abusive words in reference to all their *Arendiowane*, or soothsayers.”¹⁰⁴

Another brief account taken from the *Relations* involved the attempts to convert a “Captain,” or village chief, who was afraid of one of the local shamans. The chief was afraid that the shaman would kill his wife by “charms.” Brébeuf, records that he “gave him to understand that he should not fear, - that, if he believed in God, his faith would serve as a shield against all charms. To demonstrate the truth of this, [he] provoked the Sorcerer, attacking him so severely that he either feared the punishments of God, or else thought [Brébeuf] was a greater sorcerer than he was.” In the end the shaman made peace with the chief and Brébeuf noted that he feared the “charms more potent than his own” and the possibility that Brébeuf would bring about his death through a curse.¹⁰⁵ This is just one of many instances in which the Jesuits boldly challenged the shamans to some sort of religious test, though this particular account does not give the specifics of what that test was, and through luck were able to “prove” that their god was the more potent spiritual force. The Jesuits also misunderstood the private nature of conflict in Huron society and their tendency to downplay public disagreements for the sake of communal harmony.

The Jesuits also freely admit that they were willing to use technology and the advantage of European scientific discoveries to shame the shamans by attributing solar

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 37-43.

¹⁰⁵ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, XI: 181.

and lunar eclipses to the power of their deity. In yet another instance, the Jesuits were involved in a long public disagreement with a shaman, who conceded to speaking privately with the Jesuits and “tried to win [them] by gentle means” in keeping with the Huron desire to minimize group conflict.¹⁰⁶ The Jesuits immediately returned to the subject of disagreement, prompting the shaman to pull Brébeuf’s gown and beg that he drop the subject. In order to awe the shaman, Brébeuf tricked him and his companions by making them hold a sheet of paper at each corner in the air while he placed a few needles in the center. He then hid a “little lodestone [magnet]” between his fingers and passed his hand over the sheet, making the needles dance and move seemingly on their own, which shocked the shaman and his companions.¹⁰⁷ Brébeuf is unclear exactly what he means when he states that he explained that the trick was “a natural phenomenon, that [he] did not avail [himself] of the devil, in order to do it, and that it was a wicked thing to use his help.”¹⁰⁸ If he was forthcoming in showing the shaman the magnet and demonstrating how it reacted to metal then it is likely that he was attempting to make some point regarding natural phenomenon and the way that scientific knowledge can dispel superstition and attribution to religious causation. If he did not do this, then it is likely he used deception to show the shaman that he was the more powerful sorcerer in an attempt to dissuade him from practicing native beliefs. Either way, this prompted a much more

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 259.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 261.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 261.

amicable exchange of private conversations, of which Brébeuf records the major points of discussion, between him and the shaman. Brébeuf writes proudly:

This man, - having seen that we are holding our Town against him, that we often defied him to exercise his charms upon us; that we even ridiculed the Manitou, whom they fear as they do death; that we were saying boldly that the Sorcerers had no power outside of that which the God of the Christians grants them, and that all those who believe in him ought not to fear, - began, I imagine, to consider us more powerful Sorcerers than himself.¹⁰⁹

The fact that the Jesuits took pride in creating this discord in subjugating native religions once again betrays the fact that they were not modern in a presentist sense but sought to undermine native religions and willingly divided the communities in which they were active to achieve their aims. In one private meeting the shaman asks Brébeuf if he must give up his feasting, singing, curing, and charms, while in another he explains the power of dreams and is told by Brébeuf that he must give up this practice.¹¹⁰ These private conversations brought about peace between the shaman and Makheabichtichiou, the chief who feared that he was being cursed. The shaman also became better acquainted with the doctrine of the Jesuits, asking “various questions regarding the future life, hell, and the resurrection of the body, and showed himself so attentive that I [Brébeuf] was astonished.” In the end, he promised Brébeuf that he would “pray to God in secret” and that he would “no longer consult the Demons, and that he would refrain from other things I [Brébeuf] had prohibited.” According to Brébeuf he kept his promise as long as they were neighbors but his lack of religious instruction, as well as the nature of his faith,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 263.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 263.

which is “the faith of fear and servility,” caused him to “forget his promises,” which certainly means that he also continued to participate in village ceremonies and fulfill his curing role in society.¹¹¹

When given the choice between an eternity of torture in Hell and eternal pleasure in Heaven, many Huron naturally wanted to ensure that they would pass on to the correct place when they died. In November 1634, Brébeuf baptized a dying old man who, when instructed, said to his wife “My wife, is it not indeed better to go to Heaven? I am afraid of those horrible fires of hell.”¹¹² It is likely that the Huron made strong connections between the fires of hell and their own Iroquoian methods of prisoner torture, so avoiding an eternity of such punishment would have been a strong motivation to obtain any assurance that they would not end up in that final resting place. As the Jesuits learned of the warrior culture inherent in Huron culture and their regard for warriors who could withstand intense torture, they tailored their descriptions of Hell to compensate for this potential hindrance to their message. They write in *De Religione* that Hell is “inside the earth, where it burns, not being extinguished. It is not such a fire there inside the earth as the fire with which you cover prisoners.”¹¹³ The strong bond to family was also a decision-making factor for many natives, who wanted to enjoy the afterlife with their loved ones. One woman the Jesuits baptized in the same year told them that she was unsure whether she wanted to go to Heaven or Hell, which could have had something to

¹¹¹ Ibid., 267.

¹¹² Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VIII: 139.

¹¹³ Steckley, ed. *De Religione*, 77.

do with the Jesuit ability to translate those subjects, but that she wanted to go where her son wished.¹¹⁴ When the Jesuits told this woman that her father, “the late Joachim *Tsindacaiedoua*, had gone to Heaven, she said, ‘Then I wish to go there!’”¹¹⁵ Thus, family connections served as a great impetus for conversion, or at least an acceptance of articles of Christian faith that left natives assured that they would not be separated from their loved ones after death.

The Jesuits had greater difficulty in instructing adults and other natives who were not dying, for, in their minds, the potential for apostasy was much greater. In 1636 Brébeuf recorded that he had instructed an older man who “died in his unbelief” though “it seems that our Lord had communicated to him, a year ago, several good impulses.”¹¹⁶ Though this man had attended the Jesuit preaching willingly and listened with good intentions, he became to them an apostate because even though he was “the first to make the sign of the Cross... he tried to blend our creed with their superstitions... and said that he wished to go with his ancestors.”¹¹⁷ The relationship between this village elder and the Jesuits then became complicated, as he became sick and had a farewell feast because he knew he was dying. He called on the Jesuits to sing hymns over him and asked for baptism, yet the Fathers refused because they were unsure that he was fully committed to the Catholic faith. When he expired later that day Brébeuf wrote that “God did not permit

¹¹⁴ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, VIII: 141.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹¹⁶ Thwaites, ed. *Jesuit Relations*, X: 59-61.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

that what he had scorned during life should be granted him at death.”¹¹⁸ We are able to see through this example the vast distance between what the Jesuits believed to be good practices of faith, which usually entailed a near-complete rejection of Huron or Montagnais customs, and the native belief that both were not mutually exclusive. Brébeuf was clearly angry that this elder continued to practice traditional beliefs while courting the Jesuits, while it is important to also note that the elder persisted in his pursuit of instruction from them even though they must have clearly expressed their displeasure in his actions.

From these examples of early missionary communication and interaction with natives in New France a few key points become increasingly clear. Jesuit linguistic skill ensured that aspects of their message were communicated with a certain degree of effectiveness, either by the Jesuits themselves or through native translators who were more familiar with the message of Catholicism than the average native tribesman or woman. Natives approached these foreign concepts of religion and culture on their own terms, accepting that which they felt most comfortable with and rejecting ideas that did not readily mesh with their own ontology and culture, much to the consternation of the Jesuits. This conflict between native and European cultures led to antagonism and conflict between the Jesuits and the religious leaders of native villages. The very fact that natives reacted in these ways ensured that they understood the Jesuit message well enough to form negative or positive opinions at the individual level, incorporating that

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 61.

which they thought might protect or aid them. This was particularly infuriating for the Jesuits, who perceived these activities as a rejection of Catholicism.

Conclusion

By studying the formative years of the Jesuit missions from the perspective of ontology, linguistics, and orthodoxy a number of points become increasingly clear within the current historiography. Jesuit philosophical and theological coursework at European universities proved to be both a blessing and a hindrance, as it enabled many Jesuits to embrace the cultural differences of the natives that they interacted with when following a Thomistic outlook on life and the nature of man, in other situations Augustinian pessimism kept Jesuits from taking steps to be culturally accommodating. Often these dual philosophies created conflict within the very same Jesuit, as they apparently did with Brébeuf. European education also equipped Jesuits with the skills necessary for linguistic success in the New World, though flawed conceptions of the divine nature of language initially created difficulties that Jesuits surmounted through rigorous linguistic study, aid from native translators, and grammar exercises and catechisms. During these formative years the Jesuits record many of the cultural faux pas that they committed to help future Jesuits better instruct the Huron and Montagnais without similar offenses occurring, which shows their cultural sensitivity and desire to understand native practices. The Jesuit adherence to patience in their missionary outlook and linguistic studies also ensured that orthodox teachings were delivered to the natives that they encountered. Brébeuf's commentary on the nature of expressing the Trinity in Huron shows that

Jesuits worried about proper instruction in native tongues. While many passionate Jesuits obviously stammered out admonitions to the best of their abilities during these formative years, the *Relations* show that they followed a strict pattern of catechesis and instruction before allowing healthy natives to receive the sacraments.

Baptism of the sick and dying proved to be the only way to create converts according to Catholic orthodoxy, as the short lifespan of the new believers prevented them from impious acts that would condemn them in the eyes of the Jesuits. There were also clearly cases of the Jesuit message being “lost in translation” during these formative years, as they responded harshly to attempts by natives who had been baptized to also carry out their traditional practices. While some natives were clearly interested in aspects of Catholicism, many rejected the Jesuit message either out of disinterest, ties to traditional culture, or misunderstanding. The propensity of natives to carry out traditional practices even after rigorous instruction from the Jesuits appears to suggest that the Jesuit message was either incomplete at this time or natives accepted aspects of Catholicism that they found useful, in keeping with the syncretic nature of the Huron religious practices of the time, mediating the message through their own understanding and ontology.

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APPENDIX

“THE ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK IN 1556”

I have reproduced and adapted this chart from a similar table found in George E. Ganss's *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*.¹¹⁹

The Organizational Framework in 1556

Approximate age of pupil		
5	}	<i>Elementary Education</i> : begun (but ordinarily not in Jesuit schools). Elementary education comprised: how to converse in Latin, how to read it, and how to write it. Generally there was no formal instruction in or about the vernacular
6		
7		
8		
9	}	The <i>University</i> is entered at about the age of ten.
10	}	Humane letters begun, in the <i>Faculty of Languages</i> , especially of Latin and Greek For able pupils, about six months each in four classes of grammar. They studied the grammar of Latin, which they previously knew how to speak. The highest class of grammar was often completed by the age of twelve. Next came two years of rhetoric, poetry, and history. In them, the objective was complete facility in the art of speaking, reading, and writing Latin, with elegance when possible, before beginning the study of philosophy and the other arts (for which Latin was still an indispensable tool).
11		
12		
13		
14	}	Philosophy and the other arts begun, in the <i>Faculty of Arts</i> . <i>Chairs of logic, physics, metaphysics, moral science, and mathematics.</i> After three years was conferred the degree of Bachelor of Arts; and on many, after six months more, of Master of Arts.
15		
16		
17		
18	}	Theology begun, in the <i>Faculty of Theology</i> , or entry to <i>Faculty of Law</i> , or, to <i>Faculty of Medicine</i> <i>Theology was the most important subject; was open to externs.</i> <i>Chairs of scholastic theology, positive theology, canon law, scripture.</i> There was a four-year cycle of the fundamental courses, after which the ordinary course of theology was completed. Ordination might occur at about the age of twenty-one. There were two years more of acts and exercises for those who desired the Degree of Doctor of Theology.
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		

Chart 1. Schematic Outline:
A University as Conceived by St. Ignatius

¹¹⁹ George E. Ganss, *Ignatius of Loyola: Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1991): 298.