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## **Mission Activity Among The Iroquois, 1642-1719**

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Spain, England, and France established colonies in America during a period of intense religious and political competition in Europe. The religious differences germinated by the Reformation led to international and civil war on an unprecedented scale. As a result the struggle to establish colonies was equally a struggle to proselytize native Americans. The Spanish conquistadores dismantled the sophisticated societies of Mesoamerica and the Andes. Through racial amalgamation the Spaniards changed even the social fabric of the Indian civilizations, creating a complex caste system that served the economic and military needs of the Spanish empire. The Church contributed to the establishment of the colonial order by converting and hispanizing the native population, and acting as an administrative arm of the king. English and French colonists, on the other hand, shunned all but minimal intermingling with the Indians. For the English, even trade and military alliances with the Indians were relatively limited. The French, however, depended to a great extent on the fur trade and consequently multiplied their contacts with the Indians. Also, unlike the populous English colonies, New France attracted few European settlers. As a result the French grip on their settlements grew more tenuous as the English colonies expanded in territory and numbers. To combat this

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advantage the French sought stronger alliances with the Indians. One means of drawing the Indians closer was to follow the example of Spain and encourage the Church to convert them.

The powerful Iroquois confederacy\* occupied a pivotal geographic position between New France and Protestant America settled by Dutch and English colonists. As a result they became the main object of French missionary activity in New York. To accomplish the task of converting the Iroquois, French kings called upon the Society of Jesus, a religious order founded in Spain during the Counter-Reformation to win back recent European converts to Protestantism. The early attempts by the French Jesuits to convert the Iroquois for God and country, and the corresponding endeavors on the part of the Dutch and English is the story of this article.

The first Jesuits to contact the Iroquois in New York were Fathers Isaac Jogues and Joseph Bressani. Jogues was captured by the Mohawks in August, 1642 while enroute to the Huron Missions of the Jesuits in the Niagara region. Bressani was captured while attempting to reach those same missions in April, 1644. Fortunately, the Dutch ransomed both men from their captors, each within a year of his first capture. Both men were given passage to Europe by the Dutch authorities, but in 1646 Jogues returned to the Mohawks as an envoy of the French Governor Montmagny. After a five month stay he was killed by the Mohawks who blamed him for a crop failure and plague they sustained.<sup>1</sup>

Later Jesuit contacts with the Iroquois were more productive. In 1654 Father Simon LeMoyne travelled to the villages of the Onondaga in the Finger Lakes region of New York. He came in response to the pleas of the Onondagas for missionaries to be sent to them as proof of the good faith of the French with whom peace had just been concluded. Well received and his work successful, LeMoyne requested that

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\*The Iroquois "five nations" were the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. The westernmost Senecas occupied the Genesee region. The sixth tribe of the Iroquois League, the Tuscaroras, joined the others in 1722.

two more Jesuits be sent to join him in the following year. These were Fathers Pierre Chaumonot and Claude Dablon. But even with the new arrivals the Indians requested additional priests and settlers. The latter were to serve the purpose of hostages and traders, while the priests were to instruct. The presence of the priests, especially LeMoyne, was also calculated by the Onondagas to impress the other tribes since LeMoyne had assumed great prestige in the eyes of the Five Nations. This high standing was a result of his impressive knowledge of their customs displayed at the peace negotiations between the Iroquois and the French.<sup>2</sup>

In response to the continued entreaties of the Onondagas five additional Jesuits were sent in 1656, accompanied by fifty Frenchmen and a host of Indians from several tribes. The initial success of this large enterprise encouraged the Jesuits to establish missions among the Cayuga and Seneca, both of which tribes petitioned LeMoyne and the other priests at the Onondaga Village, to visit them as well.<sup>3</sup>

In 1657 hostilities broke out between the Iroquois and the French in a number of places, forcing priests and laymen to leave the missions which they had just established. However, Father LeMoyne returned in July, 1661 to the Onondagas, and visited the Cayugas and Senecas, remaining until August, 1662. Mainly through his efforts these three tribes remained peaceful during the next two years.<sup>4</sup> Sporadic fighting ensued until 1666 when the Marquis de Tracy burned the main villages of the Mohawks; thereafter, the whole Iroquois nation sued for peace.<sup>5</sup> The following year saw the permanent re-establishment of missions among the Mohawks, Onondagas and Cayugas.

Between 1667 and 1683 eight Jesuits were sent to the Mohawks.<sup>6</sup> From 1668 to 1681 the Onondagas received four Jesuits, one of whom also served the Mohawks before going to the Onondagas.<sup>7</sup> There were also permanent missions established among the Cayugas over the same period of time. The Seneca and Oneida missions appear to have been semi-permanent and served by the same priests who staffed the permanent missions of the other tribes.<sup>8</sup> However, in the Seneca and Oneida missions each priest served for only a

short duration, often while enroute to another destination. During the short period of time the Jesuits spent in these missions, they contributed a great deal to the well-being and education of the Iroquois.

One of the first steps taken by the Jesuits in converting and educating the Indians was the mastery of the numerous tribal dialects. Pioneers in the field of Indian linguistics, they compiled the first Algonquin and Iroquois dictionaries and pictographies.<sup>9</sup> Paul LeJeune, the head of the first Jesuit company to arrive in New France for the specific purpose of converting the Indians, was the first to begin the formidable task of learning and recording the language and customs of the natives. Some of the more outstanding achievements in this endeavor were the dictionary of Sebastian Rale; the dictionary and grammar of Pierre Michel Laure; the dictionary and catechism of Jean Lalement; and James Bruyas' dictionary and grammar which was transcribed by Father Louis Hennepin, author of *A New Discovery of the Vast Country in America*.<sup>10</sup> In fact, so good was Bruyas' study of the Mohawk language that Cotton Mather, obtaining by chance a copy of the Mohawk catechism written by Bruyas, used it as a key for his studies in Indian linguistics, though he denounced the contents as "Popish idolatry."<sup>11</sup>

Despite the individual linguist accomplishments of many individual Jesuits, however, there was no formal training in the dialects of the tribes to which each missionary was assigned. There had been little contact with the Iroquois up until 1653 when the first overtures for peace were made. As a result, only limited experience gathered haphazardly from trading contacts and former captives could be called upon to guide the first missionaries.

Even men of considerable ability who made rapid strides in learning while teaching bemoaned the need for more time to fully master the language. Yet, many of the earlier problems the Jesuits had encountered among the western tribes did not reappear among the Iroquois. For Paul LeJeune in 1634 the necessity of learning the language of the Montagnais tribe entailed great humiliation (he was tricked into mouthing vulgarities by the Shaman). Compared to a child who gives mirth to his elders by his stammerings and

misunderstandings, LeJeune's prestige was daily shattered. Only his ability to foretell the movements of the planets ultimately demonstrated to his hosts that

in a few years I would be grown up, and then, when I knew their language, I would make them see that they themselves were children in many things, ignorant of the great truths of which I would speak to them.<sup>12</sup>

Among the Iroquois, French military prowess and his pictographic abilities gave Jean Pierron not only much needed prestige but an effective means of learning the language as well. Father Pierron writes in the 1668 *Relation* that without the added burden of painting pictures to teach the Iroquois the truths of his faith he would have become better versed in the language. But, he found

the effect of these paintings go great, that I deem a part of my time well spent . . . because by these pictures . . . our Savages see a graphic representation of what I teach them; by which they are powerfully moved.<sup>13</sup>

And, while he was pleased with this accomplishment, he had the added advantage that his pictures

act as Preachers in themselves; and that those who would not come to pray from devotion, do come at least from curiosity, and thus suffer themselves to be insensibly influenced by that attraction. Finally, I discovered the secret of teaching myself; for in hearing them describe our Mysteries, I learn much of the language . . . .<sup>14</sup>

Using such methods Pierron baptized fifty-three persons in the first eight months of his work among the Mohawks. But unfortunately this represented a very small gain. In the *Relation* of 1670 he writes that of these the "greater part were children who died immediately after receiving baptism."<sup>15</sup> He baptized few who were not in danger of dying, yet he was hopeful since there were only two persons in all of the seven villages he instructed who would not at least listen to him.

Unlike some of the mendicants which served in the populous Spanish possessions, Pierron and most other French Jesuits refused to administer mass baptisms. Instead,

instruction of individuals and groups and long periods of probation were prescribed lest their neophytes "fall into apostasy."<sup>16</sup> According to Pierron,

at present there are a tolerably large number who are asking for baptism, and who have been sufficiently instructed in . . . our Faith, yet I postpone granting them grace until I see them out of danger . . . of engaging in debaucheries and the superstitions of the country.<sup>17</sup>

But Pierron's contributions to Iroquois education were not limited to the thoroughness of his religious instruction. His paintings displayed the accomplishments of his nation. The Iroquois were impressed not only by the message conveyed but by the manner of men that conveyed them. Though they continued to distinguish the blackrobes from the other French, whom they continued to hate and mistrust, the Iroquois came to respect, and in a small way to understand the best of French culture and the worst.

In 1668 Pierron wrote to the English Governor Lovelace objecting to the sale of liquor to the Iroquois by New York colonists. In reply the governor declared that he had and would continue to restrain the sale of liquor, ending his letter with praise of the Jesuit achievements and the moral example they provided the Indians.<sup>18</sup> This reply from the chief rival of the French cannot have failed to impress the Mohawks with the powers of the blackrobes.

Though the liquor trade remained a hazard to the Iroquois, frequently leading to murder, divorce, and destruction,<sup>19</sup> the Jesuits continued their staunch opposition to it, obtaining individual acts of intervention from officials and governors, until finally in 1718 the French government took strong action.<sup>20</sup> Such relentless consistency had its effect upon the Indians, Iroquois and Algonquin alike. In 1683, Father Beschefer wrote to the Provincial that the Nipississings were "beginning to have a horror of the evil ways into which it cast them," and they had even "twice sent back two canoes loaded with brandy."<sup>21</sup> Concerning his Iroquois charges at Saulte St. Francois, Claude Chauchetiere commented that their courage was admirable. They had spilled and broken bottles of liquor brought them by French traders even at the risk of being clubbed and kicked by the traders.<sup>22</sup> Missions

at La Prairie, near Quebec, and St. Saulte, near Montreal, established for converts in 1667 and 1668, attracted considerable numbers of Iroquois who migrated to avoid the consequences of the frequent drunkenness which caused sporadic violence within the several Iroquois villages on the Finger Lakes.<sup>23</sup>

This type of migration, however, had mixed consequences for both the Iroquois and the Jesuits. While the migration served to fill the newly created missions in Canada with staunch defenders of the Jesuit policy of prohibition, at the same time it offered a haven to the many naturalized Iroquois (generally war captives) who were dissatisfied with their new tribal affiliation. This in turn tended to weaken tribal structure and cause resentment between Jesuit proselytes and those who remained faithful to Iroquois beliefs. It also stirred the resentment of some of the elders against the Jesuits.<sup>24</sup>

An unfortunate consequence of Jesuit mission activity was the general demeaning of Iroquois values and customs, even those which were cornerstones of the political and social institutions of the Indians.<sup>25</sup> In the 1669 *Relation* Father Jean Pierron complains of the actions of an Iroquois chieftain who tried to persuade him to withdraw from a ceremonial gathering of village elders who had assembled to tell stories and relate superstitious happenings pertaining to the dead. Pierron ridiculed the myths and the very purpose of the gathering. An Iroquois chief considered the priest's criticism of these customs an infringement upon the rules of hospitality. He felt that there were certain aspects of his society which might not be criticized even if they were contrary to Christian beliefs. Upon this the two men argued and the chieftain ordered the priest to leave.<sup>26</sup> Before withdrawing, Pierron expressed his indignity at being ordered to leave, intimating strongly that he felt insulted. To demonstrate his feelings he sought lodgings with another tribe of Iroquois gathered at the meeting place and was well received. The Mohawks, whose chief had given the priest offense, seeing this and hearing the rumors spread by Pierron that he was leaving for Quebec, grew uneasy with the fear that this would damage their relations with the French. The

offending chief was therefore forced to apologize to Pierron who used the opportunity in such a way that the chief, fearing he would not be able to reconcile himself to the priest, promised to convoke a new assembly at which Pierron could express his views at length.<sup>27</sup>

At the conference, following the suggestion of the chief who had given him offense, Pierron offered three gifts of procelain for which in turn the Iroquois were "to adore the true God, and to observe the Law; . . . to cease invoking the Demons for the cure of their sick [and] to do away with the superstition of the Dances . . . ." <sup>28</sup> To this the Indians agreed, as Pierron enthusiastically relates.

Another subtle evil introduced by the missionaries, and something which they themselves tried to combat when excessive, was the infliction of flagellation and other "penances" upon themselves by the Iroquois neophytes. Father Claude Chauchetiere writes that around 1676 some Iroquois girls learned of the iron gridles, hair shirts, and other penitential aberrations of the nuns who administered the hospitals and convents.<sup>29</sup> In a culture where women could gain high esteem, and in which courage was equated with physical endurance under torture, these practices intrigued a number of young Iroquois women, who had already begun religious instructions, to form a penitential association. Some of its extremes were characterized by whippings with willow shoots and then with thorns practiced weekly, sometimes daily, and in one case:

Two of them made a hole in the ice, in the depth of winter, and threw themselves into the water, where they remained during the time that it would take to say a Rosary slowly and sedately. One of the two, who feared she would be found out, did not venture to warm herself when she returned to her cabin, but lay down on her mat with lumps of ice adhering to her shoulders.<sup>30</sup>

When the men of the village heard of this, they engaged in similar practices in order not to be outdone by the women.

Another instance of unwitting harm done the Iroquois by the Jesuits was the part played by Father Jean de Lamberville in Governor Denonville's plot to subdue the Iroquois. The unfortunate priest was asked to call the Five Nations together



for peace negotiations in the spring of 1687. Taking the governor at his word Lamberville did so. At the meeting almost all who came were captured by French troops, later to be ransomed or sent to France as galley slaves, or die in prison.<sup>31</sup> Lamberville, who knew nothing of this plot, was appalled, especially since the French sacked and burned the Iroquois villages while the Indians were enroute with Lamberville to the conference. Saddened as he was for having led them into the trap, his misery was soon increased when he learned that in retaliation the Iroquois had captured his friend Father Millet.<sup>32</sup>

The harm done by Lamberville was somewhat mitigated by the efforts of Father Jacques Bruyas who negotiated a just peace between the Iroquois and the French in 1700 and again in 1701, much to the chagrin of the British who hoped to continue to use the Iroquois against the French.<sup>33</sup>

Despite the harmful effects of some of their behavior, Jesuits made significant contributions to the health practices and the diet of the Iroquois. The introduction of improved farming methods and a large variety of European vegetables, grains, and animals into the existing husbandry practiced by the Iroquois could only be deemed as beneficial. The Jesuits introduced minor surgery, stitching of wounds, disinfectants, balms, salves, and certain European medicinal herbs, stringents, and purgatives, as well as the need for rest and good diet in restoring health.<sup>34</sup>

To provide health care, the Jesuits set up a twenty bed hospital and clinic at Quebec, placing it under the care of Urselines.<sup>35</sup> On their newly established farms they introduced a host of legumes previously unknown to the Indians. They instituted methods of horsedrawn plowing and seeding heretofore unknown, and brought over cows, chickens, and goats which provided, in milk, butter, and eggs, the basics of calcium, nitrates, and Vitamin A. The introduction of garden peas, carrots, and spinach provided greater quantities of phosphorus and iron which helped prevent rickets and tooth decay, the latter a serious problem among woodland peoples.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the dietary factor was the economic benefit of producing crops attractive to European consumers.

However, the years the Jesuits spent among the Iroquois produced few lasting results. When compared to the Jesuit achievements in Paraguay, the accomplishments of the French Jesuits seem negligible. The difference lies in the sedentary, docile nature of the Guarani in the Spanish colonies, compared to the semi-sedentary, warlike nature of the Iroquois. While the Spanish Jesuits were able to build great self-sufficient farming communities for thousands of Indians,<sup>37</sup> the French Jesuits were limited to giving basic religious instruction to a few hundred Iroquois who were often fated to die soon after baptism or to face ostracism by their tribe. Had no other European nation been close enough to challenge the Jesuit teaching and the French presence or had the Iroquois had less well-established traditions and institutions, the Jesuits might have been more successful. Unfortunately for the Jesuits, Dutch and English influences were present.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the Iroquois possessed strong political institutions and considerable experience and ability in conducting diplomatic relations. These factors combined with a static French colonial policy limited the success of the Jesuits.<sup>39</sup>

The recounting of the methods used to educate and convert the Iroquois may provide an understanding of the difficulties that confronted these remarkable men and ultimately defeated them. Very typical of many of the *Relations* from the Iroquois missions over the years is the report of Father Jacques Fremin in 1669. Commenting that he was well received upon his arrival during a plague in 1668, he writes of his first few months among the Senecas “. . . I baptized more than six score persons, nearly all adults, of whom more than ninety died immediately after Baptism.”<sup>40</sup> Julien Garnier who had begun work among the Onondagas in the same year was already well along in the writing of an Onondaga dictionary and grammar which he hoped would be used by those who followed him. Yet, his conversations were few and restricted mainly to the dying. At great risk he ventured from his cabin. He was seized and almost murdered on several occasions,<sup>41</sup> and despite his courage was still not accepted by the Iroquois men partly because their “. . . absences and journeys . . . prevent us from laboring for their instruction . . . .”<sup>42</sup>

Commendable energy and genius was used by Jean Pierron who not only used paintings to illustrate his teachings, but used psychological persuasion through the themes he painted.<sup>43</sup> Also, using the penchant for gambling that existed among both men and women, he devised a game called “point to point” which incorporated all the Christian teachings necessary for conversion into its goals, rules, and mechanics. By playing the game, which soon became very popular among many of the Mohawks, the participant was being instructed in Christian doctrine through the most subtle means.<sup>44</sup>

But even with these and other methods the only lasting success achieved with the Iroquois occurred within the confines of the villages which the Jesuits established for the Iroquois near Montreal and Quebec. The *Relations* sent from the missions among the Iroquois villages on the Finger Lakes continue to record sparse growth and little lasting influence although they are always optimistic.<sup>45</sup> The only substantial gains are found in later *Relations* such as that of Claude Chauchetiere in 1682. He writes of the Sault Saint Francois Xavier mission located in Canada:

Our village grows larger every year, while the Lorette mission . . . steadily diminishes. That of the mountain does not decrease, neither does it increase . . . : But ours grows continually. We think that in two or three years all the aniez [Iroquois] will be in this Place. More than eighty have settled here recently. We have a chapel 25 feet wide, and nearly 60 feet long.<sup>46</sup>

Writing a year later the Superior of the Missions of New France, Father Thierry Beschefer, was pleased to report that within his three mission compounds, only one of which was populated with Iroquois, “. . . they have baptized in three years over 2000 persons . . .”<sup>47</sup>

Even in these optimistic reports one detects the seeds of impending and existing troubles. In Beschefer’s mission, only one-third, and probably less if we count “naturalized” members, of the baptized Indians were Iroquois. From the many previous reports it is safe to assume the same pattern of conversion persisted along with the usual high death rate. The baptisms in this light represent little accomplishment toward the preservation of Christianity and French influence among

the Iroquois. This seems especially true if one considers that in the Iroquois villages themselves the Jesuits were just able to preserve the religious status quo achieved in the first few years. Even this was jeopardized by the deterioration of the tenuous peace between the French and the Iroquois.<sup>48</sup> The ultimate failure of the missions among the Iroquois, however, does not diminish the effort or the educational and proselytizing achievement of the Jesuits.

The colonizing aims of the Dutch were largely commercial.<sup>49</sup> The Dutch West India Company was interested in the fur trade and anything incidental to it. Stable, hardworking and thrifty inhabitants were also necessary to keep the colony as self-sustaining as possible. Morality, therefore, was important and solid ecclesiastical foundation was sought by the Company. In their elaboration of the semi-feudal privileges and duties of the patroons, Dutch charters and deeds required the “. . . support [of] a minister and a schoolmaster . . .”<sup>50</sup> There is no mention of conversation of the Indians, only that they be “satisfied” for the land they cede to the patroons.

The charters of the patroons, in effect, anticipated the policy which was followed by the Dutch clergy during most of the existence of New Netherland. Their ministrations were mainly limited to the settlers. When contact did come it was pursued only by a few clerics and lacked consistency.<sup>51</sup> One of the first Dutch ministers to have lengthy contact with the Indians and record it, was Domine Johannes Megapolensis. He served near Fort Orange beginning in 1642. During his stay he became acquainted with the Mohawks and wrote a tract about their way of life. Not meant for publication, his discourse is a rather harsh judgement of the Mohawks and stands as a general indictment of Indians regardless of tribe.<sup>52</sup> Though he attempted to compile a dictionary and a grammar for the Mohawk tongue, he found it an exceedingly difficult language to learn, and thus lost the intellectual stimulus which might have sustained his interest and good will.<sup>53</sup>

In contrast to Megapolensis, a more tolerant view of the Indians was written by a contemporary layman, Adriaen Van

der Donck, who in his *Remonstrance of New Netherland* printed in 1650, reminded his readers of the debt owed the Indian. But the concept of repaying the Indian by sharing the brotherhood of Christianity apparently impressed the minds of few, even among the clergy. This may well have been owing to the worldliness of the Dutch, as Raesley states, or to a simple lack of clergy. In some cases, as with Megapolensis, just overcoming the cultural, physical, and linguistic barriers separating the Dutch from the Indians proved too difficult. The general Dutch view of the religious potential of the Indians at first provided little motivation for even a small scale policy of conversion.<sup>54</sup> In the view of Reverend Jonas Michaelius, the Indians were “. . . entirely savage and wild, strangers to all decency, yea uncivil and stupid as garden poles, proficient in all wickedness and godlessness; devilish men, who serve nobody but the devil.”<sup>55</sup>

Though some plans were made in 1637 by the Classis of Amsterdam to persuade Jonas Michaelius to engage in the conversion of the Indians, nothing came of them.<sup>56</sup> In 1650 complaints concerning the inactivity of the Company regarding Indian conversion were answered in a totally negative way, suggesting that the entire impetus for conversion had to rest with the ministry.<sup>57</sup> The ministry did not bestir itself, and as a result, nothing of consequence was accomplished under Dutch rule. A few children were adopted and raised as Christians,<sup>58</sup> but they returned to their “. . . Indian customs. . .” upon reaching adulthood and re-associating with other Indians.<sup>59</sup> The only adult Indian with whom progress was recorded eventually got drunk, pawned his Bible, and bought more liquor.<sup>60</sup>

After this record of sparse achievement the Dutch Reformed Church settled down under English rule in 1664. Perhaps the new foreign masters stimulated the Dutch church to greater missionary fervor through the spirit of competition which Anglican ministers introduced. At any rate, Reverend Dellius and Domine Tessachenmacher began more active efforts of instruction among the Indians in the 1680's and 1690's.<sup>61</sup> This may have been due to the example set by the Congregational minister Thomas James who in 1668 prepared a catechism for the Montauk Indians of Long Island.<sup>62</sup> Or,

perhaps some of the later impetus came as a result of the two copies of John Eliot's Indian Bible which Domine Selyns sent to the Classis of Amsterdam in 1689 and 1698.<sup>63</sup>

The final decade of the seventeenth century marked the beginning of an upsurge of missionary activity in the colony of New York. Increasingly aware of the part played in securing the boundaries of New France by the Jesuits, two New York agents, Brook and Nicolls, wrote a memorial to the Lords of Trade in January 1696 suggesting eight measures by which the Iroquois might be swayed from French influence. The first measure, which was apparently adopted and continued under the Board of Trade,<sup>64</sup> was an annual gift of ". . . cloths and other necessaries . . . to encourage the Five nations against the French."<sup>65</sup> This was followed by four military proposals and a fifth, "that some hardly Youths of good naturall parts and well understanding Grammar may be sent over to reside among the Indians and learn their language."<sup>66</sup> The sixth measure proposed "that some English Clergy may be encouraged to dwell for some time amongst those people to endeavor their conversion to the Protestant Religion."<sup>67</sup>

Impressed by these suggestions, the Lords of Trade responded eight months later. In a report to the Privy Council in September, 1686, they incorporated several of the ideas of Brook and Nicolls concerning the education and conversion of the Indians by both laymen and ministers. The French example had apparently struck home. The Lords of Trade found new religious fervor after careful consideration of the political advantages of Indian conversion.

These things relating to the Indians we think we may with the more confidence recommend, they being with great care and earnestness practised by the French for gaining and holding the Indians of Canada, where if they go on by these means to prevail on them as they have hitherto done tis to be apprehended, his Majesty's subjects shall not be long quiet and safe. . . .<sup>68</sup>

Within a year this project was given substantial encouragement by a request from the Onondagas that Protestant missionaries be sent to them.<sup>69</sup> This request was repeated in 1700 at a conference between the Onondagas and

the New York commissioner of Indian affairs, Robert Livingston.<sup>70</sup> So important was this request and the opportunity it offered to sway the Iroquois from their French alliances and Jesuit mentors, that Governor Bellomont himself met the representatives of the Iroquois in extended conferences held at Albany from August 26 to September 4, 1700.<sup>71</sup>

The conferences produced two important promises. Domine Vreeman would be stationed at Schenectady where the Iroquois came to trade, and he would “. . . take pains to teach you. He has promised me to apply himself with all diligence to learn your language, and doubts not to be able to preach to you therein in a years time.”<sup>72</sup> Another minister, Domine Lydius, would also be sent to “settle amongst” the Iroquois. Governor Bellomont then expressed hope that the difference between the sound doctrines of Vreeman and Lydius and that which the Jesuits “corruptly” called truth would soon be evident to the sachems. He also hoped the “truth of our religion” would return the Five Nations to their obedience to the King.<sup>73</sup>

Indian conversion had become something more than a religious duty. A struggle to solidify Indian alliances through the additional link of religion was taking place. Bellomont’s message to Frontenac, in which he threatened any Jesuit who returned to the Iroquois tribes in New York with death, indicates this turn of events.<sup>74</sup> Conscience was subordinated to the struggle for empire.

English missionary efforts among the Iroquois were further strengthened during the early eighteenth century. Already Indian bibles and catechisms had appeared and the fruits of some of the first labors were becoming manifest. In 1700 the Bishop of London, commenting on the state of Indian conversion in New York, praised the work of Domine Godfrey Dellius as had Dellius’ friend Cotton Mather.<sup>75</sup> Dellius had made several converts among the Mohawks and became adept in the Iroquois tongue. Unfortunately, the bishop commented, Dellius was removed from his position because of a feud with Governor Bellomont, and all his labors were jeopardized. Nevertheless, the Lords of Trade had written the Archbishop of Canterbury urging him to create a fund for the support of Indian missions.<sup>76</sup> In 1701 Robert

Livingston reiterated the value of Indian conversion and urged the Board of Trade to provide chaplains for British forts who could instruct the Indians as well as the soldiers.<sup>77</sup>

The Lords of Trade not only acted upon Livingston's suggestion that same year but went a step further in a letter to Governor Bellomont advising that the advantages of stationing ministers at the fort could be increased ". . . if such ministers had (besides other qualifications) a little skill also in physick and chirurgery. The French Missionaries have insinuated themselves and strengthened their interest among the Indians by those means, and we ought not to neglect them."<sup>78</sup>

The year 1701 was an auspicious one for English missionary work among the Indians. On June 16, 1701 the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was chartered by William III. Its main objects were to provide ". . . maintenance for an orthodox clergy in the plantations . . . and . . . such other provision as was necessary for the propagation of the Gospel . . ."<sup>79</sup> For the first time in the history of the colonies a large single fund for missionary work existed. Not only was every English parish solicited for funds, but greater pressure was put on established American parishes, and particularly upon the commercial community whose profits accrued from the Indian trade.<sup>80</sup> The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was seen as a means of organizing and financing English missions to compete with French missionaries whose zeal and resources had given them an early advantage. One of the main difficulties in attracting clergy for the missions was the expense of sending and maintaining them where there were no parishes.<sup>81</sup>

However, it was Bishop Gilbert Burnet who perhaps saw most clearly the problem of conversion faced not only in America, but in virtually every attempt of an advanced society to change a primitive one. Advocating a more introspective approach he wrote in 1704 that the Society

must begin in the instruction and reform of our own people, in opening schools, sending over books, and preparing labourers to go into that field. For the grown natives who do not speak English and are past their youth, it is not easy to say what to do with them but dealing [justly with them] might in time dispose them to think well of us and our religion and make them friends and allies.<sup>82</sup>



In this regard it would seem the Society did not succeed. Yet, its tangible results were many. After Bellomont's death, Dellius, who had made a sojourn in Europe, returned to his work among the Mohawks, and he and Reverend Johannis Lydius of Albany received aid from the Society. Lydius apparently obtained the promise of additional funds from the Society though he continued to be paid by the government. Dellius seems to have received similar assurances of financial aid as well as payment for his translation of religious tracts into Mohawk.<sup>83</sup>

In 1703 Robert Livingston wrote the Bishop of London of the need for six additional missionaries among the Mohawks. The Bishop, through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, found two men willing and able to undertake the work. Also, the Society provided £100 for each of them. However, since the establishment of each mission required cabins, utensils, medicines, gifts for the Indians and entailed a variety of expenses, £100 each was not sufficient and Livingston, on behalf of the Society, requested the Lords of Trade to seek a further subvention from the Queen. The fact that the Queen thereafter granted a subvention of £20 to each minister was in no small part due to the fact that the Society had at hand sufficient funds to underwrite the greatest part of the missionary cost.<sup>84</sup>

Two of the Society's members who had already arrived in New York and were experiencing both exultation and gloom over their efforts were Thoroughgood Moore and Elias Neau. Moore became discouraged with the Mohawks after a year spent at Schenectady and Albany, and withdrew in 1705 to take a parish in Burlington, New Jersey.<sup>85</sup> Neau was assigned to New York City as a catechist to Negroes as well as Indians.<sup>86</sup> He found his labors among the slaves far more efficacious than similar efforts on behalf of the Indians. Partly because he realized the difficulty of converting the numerous and scattered Indians and because he saw that united effort was still wanting, Neau attempted to found an American Society for Propagating the Gospel. His efforts were in vain, for he soon learned that the clergy was either too tradition bound to act without direction from London, or was uninterested.<sup>87</sup>

Much else that the Society and other individual ministers, whether Anglican or Dutch Reformed, tried to accomplish among the Iroquois in the first two decades of the 18th century is typified by the work of Reverend William Andrews. Andrews was assigned to the Mohawks in 1712. His religious labors proved more fruitful than those of any of his counterparts who endeavored to convert the Mohawks in the first half of the century.<sup>88</sup> Upon arrival among the Mohawks, Andrews spoke to them in a manner calculated to impress them as well as win their friendship. He said that the Great Queen of England had sent him to instruct and encourage the Mohawks in the pursuit of the Christian religion and to insure their souls' eternal salvation. In response to queries concerning his intentions to buy up large tracts of their land clandestinely, he impressed them with the generosity of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel which had paid him fully for the efforts he was about to expend upon the Mohawks.<sup>89</sup> The sachems were duly impressed.

One of the first things Andrews instituted at his mission was a grammar school. Although he found the Indians, especially the men, “. . . slothful and lazy,” and given to drink, he was able to report thirteen baptisms during the period of November 22, 1712 to March 9, 1713. His later report on the school was somewhat more optimistic. The Mohawks themselves had built a school 30 feet long and 20 feet wide. There were forty children in attendance, some of them sixteen and eighteen year olds. Mr. John Oliver, who knew Indian customs well, had agreed to continue as both teacher and interpreter.<sup>91</sup> However, if the school's beginning was auspicious, the next few months were foreboding. The pupils grew weary of the indoors and of the lessons. Attendance slackened. Still, Andrews' hope for a few of his brighter, steadier pupils had not waned, some of whom he even taught at his house.

The 1715 report saw interest flag yet more. The original forty had dropped to twenty and not all of these attended regularly. His principal ploy to keep them coming was to feed them. But in 1716 only five or six came. In desperation he promised to get them blankets and shirts but even this failed

to keep more than eight or nine in attendance.<sup>92</sup> Andrews' congregation lingered on longer but in 1717 he was forced to dismiss Oliver and in 1719 the entire mission was abandoned.

There was a brief renewal of interest in the Indian missions in the 1740's, and again in 1760's under the active encouragement of Sir William Johnson, but only a few members of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and some Dutch Reformed clergy in Schenectady and Albany continued working among the Indians. For many missionaries, it seemed impossible to sustain the interest of a non-literate people in a religion which required such considerable reading. The same problem affected Jesuit missions to a lesser degree, mainly because of Catholicism's greater concentration on prayer and ritual. Even the Jesuits, however, had encountered the difficulty of teaching men who for long periods of time were absent on the hunt or at war.

Long and arduous missionary contacts with the Iroquois up to 1719 produced limited results for the French and the English. Although neither power could extend the resources at the disposal of the Spanish to convert and civilize the Indians, yet their endeavors were fairly substantial. Some agricultural, medical, and technical knowledge was introduced to the Iroquois through missionary activity. However, to sway an independent nation of Indians from a religious heritage which was closely intertwined with their entire means of livelihood and survival as a nation was a task too great for a handful of missionaries to accomplish. The ineffectiveness of the missionary effort might best be seen in the thoughts of two men, one a contemporary, and the other an Iroquois who looked back on the long contact of the two races from the vantage point of the nineteenth century. Bishop Gilbert Burnet pointed out that the missionary offered the Iroquois an ideal that even the missionary's own society repudiated by its actions, and that this contradiction was apparent to the Iroquois. Chief Red Jacket, in 1805, explained:

We understand that your religion is written in a book, if it was intended for us why has not the Great Spirit given it . . . to our forefathers; . . . if there is but one religion, why do you white people . . . not all agree as you can all read the book? We also have a religion given to our forefathers . . . it teaches us . . . to love each other and to be united; we never quarrel about religion. We do not wish to destroy your religion; we only want to enjoy our own. The Great Spirit does right; he knows what is best for his children: we are satisfied. 93

Red Jacket asserted the independence of an unconquered, unassimilated people.

#### NOTES

1. Mary Doris Mulvey, **French Catholic Missionaries in the Present United States, 1604-1791** (Washington, D.C., 1936), pp. 21-24; "A Short Account of the Mohawk Indians" by Rev. Johannes Megapolensis, August 26, 1644 in **Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664**, ed. J. Franklin Jameson (New York, 1959), pp. 175, 248, 252.
2. Mulvey, **French Missionaries**, p. 24; John G. Shea, **History of the Catholic Missions Among the Indian Tribes of the United States, 1529-1854** (New York, n.d.) pp. 219-221.
3. T.J. Campbell, S.J., **Pioneer Laymen of North America** (New York, 1915), I, p. 259.
4. Mulvey, **French Missionaries**, p. 25; Shea, **History of the Missions**, pp. 244-248; **History of the Mohawk Valley**, ed. Nelson Green, (Chicago, 1925), I, pp. 275-286.
5. Cadwallader Colden, **The History of the Five Indian Nations** (Ithaca, New York, 1958), pp. 15-18.
6. Mulvey, **French Missionaries**, p. 28.
7. **Ibid.**, p. 29.
8. **Ibid.**, p. 29; Shea, **History of the Missions**, pp. 259-263, Chapter XV.
9. See Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., **The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents** (Cleveland, 1896-1907), LXXL, pp. 341, 350-358, for lists of dictionaries.
10. Louis Hennepin, **A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America**, ed. Reuben G. Thwaites (Chicago, 1903), 2 vols.
11. Cotton Mather, **Magnalia Christi Americana or The Ecclesiastical History of New England** (Reprint of 1852 edition, New York, 1967), 2 vols., I, p. 572 and also II, p. 440.
12. Paul Le Jeune, *Relation* of 1634, **Jesuit Relations**, VIII, p. 84.
13. Francois Le Mercier, *Relation* of 1668-1669, quoting Jean Pierron, **Ibid.**, LII, p. 119.
14. **Ibid.**
15. Jean Pierron, *Relation* of 1669-1679, **Ibid.**, LII, p. 163.
16. **Ibid.**, LIII, p. 203; See also *Relation* of 1668-1669, LLI, p. 145.

17. *Ibid.*, LIII, p. 203.
18. Francis Lovelace to Jean Pierron, 13 November, 1668, **Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York**, ed. E.B. O'Callaghan (New York, 1855), IX, p. 883.
19. *Ibid.*, IX, pp. 882; Also Jean de Lamberville, *Relation of 1681-1683* points out the terrible damage done to themselves by the Iroquois when drunk. They fought among themselves, breaking traditions and laws, and treated even more horribly the captives taken from other tribes, even those previously set aside to be adopted. LXII, pp. 67, 69-71, 85-93; See also Vincent Cigot, *Relation of 1679*, pp. 159-161, 169-173.
20. Unfortunately, neither Lovelace nor the French authorities succeeded in curtailing the harmful trade. Sir William Johnson, while on campaign in 1755, commented: "The Indians are perpetually Drunk, their insolence is scarce to be born at these times . . ." Johnson to James De Lancey, Sept. 4, 1775 in **Sir William Johnson Papers**, comp. James Sullivan (Albany, 1922), II, p. 7.
21. *Relation of 1683*, October 21, **Jesuit Relations**, LXIII, p. 203.
22. Chauchetiere, *Relation of 1682-1683*, **Jesuit Relations**, LXII, p. 183.
23. *Relation of 1667-1686*, **Jesuit Relations**, LXIII, pp. 151-157, esp. pp. 163-169.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-169; See the account of the conversion of Assendase, Vincent Bigot, *Relation of 1679*, LXI, pp. 175-179; and Claude Chauchetiere, *Narration of the Mission of the Sault, 1687*, LXIII, pp. 177-179.
25. Journal of Father Caluda Allouez's Voyage . . . 1666-1667, **Jesuit Relations LI, passim**; Chauchetiere to Superior, October 14, 1682, *Ibid.*, LXII, p. 189; Beschefer to the Provincial October 21, 1683, LXII, p. 199, although his views are also mixed with respect for their innocence and courage.
26. Jean Pierron, *Relation of 1669-1670*, *Ibid.*, LIII, pp. 312-317.
27. Jean Pierron on The Mission of the Martyrs in the Country of . . . the Lower Iroquois, 1669-1670, *Ibid.*, LIII, pp. 213-229.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
29. Claude Chauchetiere to Superior, October 14, 1682, **Jesuit Relations**, ed., Thwaites, LXII, pp. 175-179; see his narrative of 1685 in *Ibid.*, LXIII, pp. 217-219.
30. *Ibid.*, LXII, pp. 175-177.
31. Letter by Jean de Lamberville, January 23, 1695 in *Ibid.*, LXIV, pp. 243-249.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 243-245. See also Mulvey, **French Missionaries**, p. 33. Millet was held captive for five years.
33. Mulvey, **French Missionaries**, p. 34.
34. See List of Necessaries for the Quebec Hospital, *Relation of 1664-1665*, **Jesuit Relations**, ed., Edna Kenton (New York, 1954), pp. 169-170. (Kenton is not hereafter cited, **Jesuit Relations** pertains only to Thwaite's edition.)
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-163.

36. Claude Chauchetiere, Letter of October 14, 1682, *Jesuit Relations*, LXII, p. 169; Account Book of the Huron Mission of Detroit, Relation of 1740, LXIX, p. 249, a general inventory of farm goods is found in pages 245-269.
37. Charles H. Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America* (N.Y., 1963) pp. 182-187.
38. Count de Frontenac to the King, 6, November, 1697, IX, p. 129. "I have received divers advices from the Jesuit Fathers . . . that General Andros was soliciting the Iroquois, underhand, to break us . . ." Cotton Mather in his *Magnalia Christi*, I, p. 573 refers to his friend Mynheer Dellius "who has been . . . successful in his ministry among the Maquas," and in refuting the Jesuits. And, Governor Dongan in 1683 began pressuring the French, claiming their Jesuits could be replaced by English Jesuits, see Thomas Phelan, *Thomas Dongan, Governor of New York* (N.Y., 1933), pp. 64-67; and *Documents*, I, p. 106; Governor Bellomont to Count Frontenac, August 13, 1698, IV, pp. 367-368.
39. For French policy see J.H. Kennedy, *Jesuit and Savage in New France* (New Haven, 1950), pp. 51-53; Y.F. Zoltvaney, "Frontier Policy of Philippe Vaudrauil," *Canadian Historical Review*, XLVII, (Sept. 1967), pp. 227-250.
40. Jacques Fremin, *Relation* of 1669, LIV, p. 79.
41. *Ibid.*, LIV, pp. 117-123.
42. *Ibid.*, LIV, p. 119.
43. Francois Le Mercier, *Relation* of 1668-1669, LII p. 121. Disturbed by Iroquois women who put their fingers in their ears refusing to listen to his preaching, Pierron painted a blackrobe showing heaven to a woman with her fingers in her ears who was thereafter thrust into hell by demons.
44. Jean Pierron, *Relation* of 1669-1670, LIII, p. 209.
45. *Ibid.*, LIII, p. 163.
46. Claude Chauchetiere, Letter of 1682, LXII, pp. 168-171.
47. Thierry Beschefer, Letter of 1683, LXII, p. 191.
48. King William's, then Queen Anne's Wars came in quick succession after the opening of hostilities between the French and Iroquois. Between these two colonial wars the Jesuits resumed work in the missions but were soon forced to leave by the second impending war. See Mulvey, *French Missionaries*, p. 34.
49. Cf. Frederick Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland* (Rochester, 1910) pp. 266-267; and E.B. O'Callaghan, *History of New Netherland* (N.Y., 1845), pp. 30-31, 112-120.
50. William MacDonald, ed. *Select Charters* I, pp. 43-50. Also *New York Documents* II, pp. 553-557.
51. Zwierlein, *Religion*, pp. 269, 272-275, 276. And Report of Committee on the Remonstrance. Digest of . . . Neglect . . . Under West India Company January 27, 1650, No. 18. "The Directors have made no effort to convert either the Indians, or the Blacks . . ." And the Company's answer, "Every one conversant with the Indians . . . will

- be able to say, it is morally impossible to convert the adults . . . . Besides, 'tis a Minister's business to apply himself to that, and merely the Director's duty to assist . . . ." *Ecclesiastical Records*, I, pp. 266-267.
52. *Narratives of New Netherland*, ed. J. Franklin Jameson (N.Y., 1959), pp. 163-180.
  53. *Ibid.*, p. 172, and Ellis L. Raesley, *Portrait of New Netherland* (N.Y., 1945), p. 185.
  54. Raesley, *Portrait*, p. 183-187, 190; Rev. Jonas Michaelius to Rev. Adrian Smoutius, August 11, 1628, I, pp. 56-58, also, Acts of the Deputies, Classis of Amsterdam, Rev. Peter Wittenwongel, November 19, 1641, I, p. 142, and, Revs. Megapolensis and Drisius to Classis of Amsterdam, July 15, 1654, I, pp. 326-327 in *Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York*, ed. E.T. Corwin (Albany, 1901-1916).
  55. Michaelius to Smoutius, August 11, 1628, *Ecclesiastical Records*, I, p. 56.
  56. Acts of the Classis of Amsterdam, September 7, 1637; October 5, 1637. November 16, 1637; *Ibid.*, I, pp. 111-113.
  57. See note 51, *supra*.
  58. See footnote 54, Michaelius to Smoutius, p. 56, *supra*.
  59. Zwierlein, *Religion*, p. 273.
  60. Megapolensis to Classis of Amsterdam, July 25, 1654, and August 5, 1657 in *Ecclesiastical Records*, I, pp. 326-327, 398-399.
  61. Church of Albany to Classis of Amsterdam, July 31, 1690; Godfridus Dellius to Classis of Amsterdam, February 17, 1691; Propositions of the Christian Mohawks to Governor Slaughter, May 26, 1691 in *Ecclesiastical Records*, II, pp. 1003, 1010-1911, 1918.
  62. Governor Lovelace to Thomas James, November 19, 1668, *Ibid.*, I, pp. 598-600.
  63. Revs. Selyns and Varick to Classis of Amsterdam, November 20, 1693; Selyns to Classics of Amsterdam, December 15, 1698 in *Ibid.*, II, pp. 1089-1090; 1278.
  64. O.M. Dickerson, *American Colonial Government, 1696-1785*, "Indian Policy of the Board of Trade."
  65. Memorial of Messrs. Brook and Nicolls to the Lords of Trade, January 7, 1696, *New York Documents*, IV, pp. 254-255.
  66. *Ibid.*, p. 254.
  67. *Ibid.*
  68. Report of the Lords of Trade on the Northern Colonies in America September 30, 1696, *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 227-230.
  69. Governor Bellomont to County Frontenac, August 13, 1698, *Ibid.* IV, pp. 367-368.
  70. Propositions of the Sachems . . . to the Commissioners of Indian Affairs, June 28, 1700, *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 692-693.
  71. Conference of Governor Bellomont with the Indians August 26, 1700 to September 4, 1700, *Ibid.* IV, pp. 727-746.

72. First Day's Conference, August 26, 1700, *Ibid.*, pp. 727-728.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 728.
74. See note 69, *supra*. Also, Livingston to Lords of Trade, May 13, 1701 **New York Documents**, IV, p. 872, and other correspondence of Bellomont and Livingston, **New York Documents IV**, *passim*.
75. Bishop of London to Lords of Trade, November 1, 1700. **Ecclesiastical Records**, II, p. 1426; see note 38, *supra*.
76. Lords of Trade to Canterbury, October 25, 1700, *Ibid.*
77. Livingston to Lords of Trade, May 13, 1701, **New York Documents**, IV, p. 872.
78. Lords of Trade to Bellomont, February 11, 1701 *Ibid.*, IV, p. 844.
79. Extract of Charter of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel June 16, 1701, **Ecclesiastical Records**, III, p. 1468.
80. Frank J. Klingberg, **Anglican Humanitarianism in Colonial New York** (Philadelphia, 1946), p. 6 "... Shall we export nothing for the good of their Souls, while we import so much for the raising of our own Wealth from their Industry." Bishop Gilbert Burnet, Sermon 1704, cited p. 17.
81. Sermon, Richard Willis, 1702, *Ibid.*, pp. 16 17.
82. Sermon, Gilbert Burnet, 1704 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
83. Journal of the S.P.G., I, March 17, 1703, *Ibid.* p. 54 and Lydius Petition to Governor Cornbury December 30, 1703 **Ecclesiastical Records**, III, p. 1549.
84. Livingston to Lords of Trade, December 18, 1703, **New York Documents**, IV, pp. 1074-1075.
85. See note *Ibid.* IV, p. 1077.
86. Heathcote to S.P.G., November 9, 1705, **Documentary History of New York**, ed. E.B. O'Callaghan (Albany, 1850), III, p. 82.
87. Extract, Neau to S.P.G., June 22, 1704, **Ecclesiastical Records**, III, p. 1559.
88. Haeger to S.P.G., August 15, 1711 and July 12, 1712, **Ecclesiastical Records**, III, pp. 1896 and 1960-1962.
89. Meeting of the Commissioners for Indian Affairs, November 15, 1712, **Documentary History**, III, pp. 542-543.
90. Andrews to Taylor, March 9, 1713, cited in Klingburg, **Humanitarianism**, p. 66.
91. William Kemp, **Support of Schools in Colonial New York by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel** (New York, 1913), p. 210.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 210-211.
93. Samuel G. Drake, **Biography and History of the Indians of North America** (Boston, 1837), pp. 98-100, quoted in Anthony F.C. Wallace, **The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca** (New York, 1970), pp. 205-206.