This thesis examines the evolution of Father Pierre Biard’s Jesuit missionary ideals and the legacy of his experience. Biard’s encounter with native people demonstrated that the Jesuits had to adequately catechize the Indians before baptism. This required them to understand the Indians, their customs, and their languages. His desire to engage with Indians marked a break in traditional patterns of interpretation, despite the conventional discursive understanding Biard brought with him from France. Furthermore, his tense relationship with secular interests at Port Royal degenerated into a war of accusations about Biard’s involvement in the 1613 destruction of the colony. In defending himself from these allegations, Biard publically verbalized his clear recommendations for how future Jesuits should run their missions. Both his interactions with Indians and his relationship with traders helped him define a unique missionary strategy that left a lasting legacy for future Jesuit missionaries.
“VERY ADVANTAGEOUS BEGINNINGS”: JESUIT CONVERSION, SECULAR INTERESTS, AND THE LEGACY OF PORT ROYAL, 1608–1620

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Introduction

Whoever shall carefully examine these and other like acts which have been performed in the sight of the Savages, greatly to their astonishment, and no less to their benefit, will justly conclude that the Mission of New France has been commenced under very advantageous beginnings.

--Pierre Biard

On May 22, 1611, the Catholic feast of Pentecost, two Jesuits arrived on the shores of a fledgling colony in New France. Father Pierre Biard, S.J., a 34 year old theology professor in Lyons, and Father Enemond Massé, S.J., the confessor to the Marquise de Guercheville, sought to “make [the natives] susceptible of receiving the doctrines of the faith and of the christian and catholic religion.” Financed by the Marquise de Guercheville, the Jesuits made their goals explicit: they wanted to bring Christ to all people and felt that they would only succeed in this endeavor after proper religious instruction had instilled the Christian religion into indigenous America. They arrived at Port Royal, Acadia, a small Canadian trading outpost facilitated by Jean de Poutrincourt and his son Charles de Biencourt, with whom the Marquise de Guercheville had orchestrated a partnership. They assumed they would be free to carry out their mission of religious instruction.

They did not anticipate the problems that their arrival would cause, nor did they know that their ambitions directly conflicted with the secular goals of the colony. Poutrincourt, a determined entrepreneur, had fought to obtain rights to Port Royal after its original proprietor turned his attention to Quebec. Poutrincourt and Biencourt, hoping to make names for themselves, set out to obtain a monopoly over the fur trade, an extractive industry that began to take off in the early seventeenth century. Poutrincourt planned on using missionaries as a means


3 Ibid, 139–59.
to an end: he assumed that his endeavor would find greater success if he used evangelization
among the natives as a lucrative fundraiser.4

The Jesuits and the secular authorities at Port Royal gradually developed a tense
relationship because their visions of Port Royal’s purpose conflicted. Poutrincourt emphasized
the secular trading aspect of Port Royal while the Jesuits insisted that a properly run religious
mission was necessary for the settlement to succeed in a new world dominated by Indians.5
Between 1611 and 1613, the working relationship between the Jesuits and the traders
disintegrated, and the Jesuits finally left to establish their own mission.6 In that year, English
Virginians, pushing northwards to explore fishing opportunities, discovered and destroyed the
new enterprise and continued along to Acadia, where they ransacked Port Royal in 1613.7

After Port Royal’s destruction, both religious and secular interests blamed each other for
the disaster. Poutrincourt and his friend and historian Marc Lescarbot accused Biard of
colluding with the English Protestants. They described a complicated conspiracy in which the
Jesuit order was covertly working with the two Iberian nations to achieve greater power in
Europe.8 Biard responded, defending himself and outlining ways in which the Jesuits had to
operate in North America if they wanted to succeed in bringing Christ to the Indians.9 Despite
the exaggerated accusations made after 1613, it was the pressure of competing interests that
carved Port Royal’s collapse.

The struggles between secular and religious interests that played out in Acadia from 1611
to 1613 helped Biard formulate a unique French Jesuit strategy for conducting religious missions
among the Indians of New France. Despite failure, he saw his mission as having planted
“advantageous beginnings.” Biard brought preconceived judgments about the Indians to New
France, but unlike many missionaries, he hoped to bring a complete understanding of the
Catholic faith to indigenous America. In order to do so, he approached his situation as an

4 Huia Rydey, “Beincourt de Poutrincourt et de Saint-Juste, Jean de,” in The Dictionary of Canadian
34184.
5 Biard, “Relation of New France, of its Lands, Nature of the Country, and of its inhabitants, also, of the
Voyage of the First Jesuit Fathers to said Country, and of their work there up the time of their Capture by the
English,” in Jesuit Relations, 4:81.
7 Biard, “Letter of Father Pierre Biard, to the Very Reverend Father Claude Aquaviva, General of the
8 Marc Lescarbot, The History of New France, translated by W. L. Grant (Toronto: Champlain Society,
interaction between two peoples. He knew that if he expected the Indians to fully comprehend him and his faith, he had to attempt to understand them in return. In doing so, Biard became an early ethnographer, meticulously recording the behavior of the Indians he encountered for future generations. Later Jesuit missionaries in New France largely followed Biard’s ethnographic example, attempting to understand the Indians they sought to convert. Furthermore, they realized that they could not operate amidst secular interests. Located farther from major French outposts, later missions would have greater leeway to function without influence from traders, who had to operate in that setting on the resident Jesuits’ terms. Moreover, by living among their converts, they could learn more about native America in order to properly Christianize its inhabitants.

This thesis examines the evolution of Biard’s unique Jesuit missionary ideals by analyzing his interactions with two important groups. First, Biard’s encounter with native people demonstrated to him that the Jesuits had to adequately catechize the Indians they converted. In order to do so, they would have to get to know the Indians, their customs, and their languages. This desire to engage with Indians marked a break in traditional patterns many Europeans followed in interpreting native America, despite the conventional discursive understanding Biard brought with him from France. Second, the tense relationship between the Jesuits and secular interests at Port Royal degenerated into a war of accusations about Biard’s involvement in the 1613 destruction of Port Royal. In forcing Biard to defend himself from these allegations, Poutrincourt allowed him to verbalize clearly and publically his recommendations for how future Jesuits should run their missions. Both his interactions with Indians and his relationship with traders helped Biard define an approach for future missionaries.

To demonstrate the evolution of Biard’s perceptions, I analyze three aspects of Port Royal’s history: the colony as a mission among the Indians, the events that unfolded between Biard and his secular enemies, and the Relation of 1616 that contained Biard’s defense of his actions. In the first chapter, I will describe Port Royal’s religious mission and explore how Biard’s observations and opinions evolved over time. Biard was responsible for converting indigenous Americans to the Catholic faith, and despite his struggles with Biencourt, he did minister to the Indians. In many ways, Biard’s early conception of the Indians followed a standard interpretive pattern typical of seventeenth-century colonial encounters. Although he came to New France with many of the same prejudices as other Europeans, he left with a unique
vision of how to interact with Indians based on his position on proper Christian baptism. The second chapter will detail Port Royal’s history more closely. In doing so, it will illustrate the specific tensions that arose between Poutrincourt, Biencourt, and Biard throughout Biard’s short tenure in Canada. Chapter three analyzes the Relation of 1616, using sources written after the fall of Port Royal in 1613 to demonstrate how Poutrincourt and Lescarbot turned an isolated struggle over competing interests at Port Royal into a larger imperial conspiracy in an attempt to defame Biard and his order and to blame him for Poutrincourt’s loss. In light of these accusations, this chapter will reassess the way historians have used Biard’s writings to understand native people without considering his experience in the context of his conflicts with Poutrincourt.

It is the copious notes, letters, and official relations recorded in the Jesuit Relations that comprise the foundation of this study. The Reuben Gold Thwaites translation, first published in 1901, includes the writings of both Biard and Marc Lescarbot, who was an early Acadian colonist. Their reports are essential in analyzing the missionizing process. Chapter three makes abundant use of these letters to assess the perceptions of the settlers. The Jesuit Relations also contain Biard’s official relation, written in 1616. Three years after he left Canada, Biard’s rhetoric was more defensive than it had been in 1611 and 1612. Furthermore, it is in this document that Biard outlines his recommendations for future missionary activity. The Jesuit Relations also contain Marc Lescarbot’s final description of his experiences and an interpretation of the mission produced by Jesuit Joseph Jouvency, S.J. in 1710.

The Jesuit Relations have some limitations. First of all, they do not include the writings of colonial officials like Charles de Biencourt, who became a chief opponent of Biard. For these documents, I turned to Lucien Campeau’s comprehensive La Premiere Mission d’Acadie, 1606 - 1612, which contains a much wider collection of documents from the Port Royal mission. I also employed the 1618 update of Marc Lescarbot’s influential The History of New France, which includes his second-hand account. Fortunately, the Port Royal Relations were not fundraising propaganda. Later missionaries wrote annual Relations to prove to French Catholics that they were making progress, but Port Royal’s Relations were not intended to raise money. Yet bias remains; Lescarbot, for example, wrote his initial history of native conversion to prove that the colony did not need Jesuit intervention. The bias that exists in written accounts is central to understanding the complexities of the Acadian mission.
A firm knowledge of the major characters that appear in the Jesuit Relations is essential to appreciate Acadian politics at the opening of the seventeenth century. I am indebted to the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, a scholarly collection produced by the University of Toronto and Université Laval in 1966. This collection provided an important starting point and background information about the participants who appear in many of Biard’s writings. In addition, Campeau’s La Premiere Mission d’Acadie not only filled in more background information, but it provides the best example of how historians have used Biard’s writings.

The works of important theorists influenced the way I assessed the perceptions of colonists and Jesuits in Acadia. Recent historians have focused on putting Indian voices back into the story. Native perspectives are monumentally important, but as Allan Greer’s Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits demonstrated, the Jesuit perspective is still essential to understanding such a complicated situation. Scholars like Tzvetan Todorov, Anthony Pagden, and Stephen Greenblatt argued that Europeans in colonial encounters understood native people within their own discourse. Because they did not see Indians on their own terms, Europeans did not fully understand their encounters. In this way, as Edmund O’Gorman argued, “America” was an invention, not a discovery. I will argue that similar misperceptions existed early on at Port Royal. I will also trace the ways in which Biard eventually broke with this model by attempting to encounter Indians on their own terms, and examine how his perceptions changed over time.

In order to understand the later Jesuit experience among the Indians of New France, we must return to what Joseph Jouveney, S.J. referred to as “the natal days.” At the end of his Relation of 1616, Biard outlined his vision of what a Jesuit mission in New France should look like. He based his recommendations on the foundation he already set among the natives he encountered, his interpretation of the Indians themselves, and on the conflict he had with secular interests. To grasp Biard’s vision, we must examine each of these, keeping in mind the motives that drove each of Port Royal’s participants.

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10 Joseph Jouveney, S.J., “An Account of the Canadian Mission from the year 1611 until the year 1613, with the condition of the same Mission in the years 1703 and 1710,” in Jesuit Relations, 1:219-25.
In 1616, Father Pierre Biard, S.J., reflected on his missionary involvement in New France. Located along the Bay of Fundy at present day Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, the settlement at Port Royal was one of the first trading posts established by the French in Northeast America and later became Canada’s first Jesuit mission when Fathers Biard and Énemond Massé arrived in 1611. In 1613, their mission collapsed and English Virginians exploring the North American coast destroyed Port Royal. Biard ended his monumental *Relation of 1616* with an assessment of the missionary project in New France as a whole. Considering the failure of his mission, Biard posed a rhetorical question to his audience:

Now some one, having heard all our story, with good reason, will say: “Come now, here is a great deal of labor you have told us about, several laudable enterprises, and various rough and violent accidents, but is this all the profit there is in the advancement of the worship of God? Have you run, only to thus weary yourselves? Expended, only for the sake of consuming? Endured suffering, only to be abused for it in France? For if Canada does not furnish any other revenue, we can tell you that no one, unless he be a fool, works simply for the sake of suffering, or expends only to exhaust himself. But very truly says the holy apostle, *That he who planteth hopeth to gather fruit.* What fruit then do you bring us from your labors?”

In answering this question, Biard outlined a model that future Jesuits needed to follow in order to succeed in New France. In doing so, he hoped that his opinion would shape future Jesuit missions in Canada. He likened his ostensible failure to that of an architect, who may revise his plan five or six times, but “does not think, for all that, that he has not accomplished anything in his first and second trials.” In retrospect, Biard did find a certain level of success in his seemingly failed mission, and used what he learned at Port Royal to advise future Jesuits.

Although he arrived in New France with many common seventeenth century prejudices, the debates that took place at Port Royal over proper methods of Christianization influenced Biard’s opinions of native people and helped create a unique French Jesuit model for missionary conversion. He began his tenure by exhibiting behavior typical to sixteenth and seventeenth

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13 Ibid, 83.
century colonial encounters: he understood natives as a lesser evolved culture of Devil worshippers who lacked specific linguistic and intellectual capabilities. While these prejudices were nearly uniform among colonists and missionaries, Biard eventually shed them by approaching his mission as an encounter between people. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he believed that only proper catechism and a complete understanding of the Catholic faith could bring Christ to North America. He also realized that in order for indigenous Americans to understand him and his faith, he had to understand the Indians as well.

Biard formulated his Jesuit ideal of evangelization in contrast to rival models. Marc Lescarbot, who had helped establish Port Royal in 1604, outlined his own strategies and beliefs in his letters and his famous *History of New France*. Secular Father Jesse Fléché employed Lescarbot’s favored methods among Acadia’s native population in the year before Biard arrived.\(^{14}\) Though Biard and Lescarbot disagreed about certain procedural issues, they were still merely at opposite ends of the same discourse. As a result, they often found common ground when interpreting native peoples, even as they formulated different strategies for bringing Indians to Christ.

Despite his more tolerant approach, Biard could not entirely escape the discursive prejudices that profoundly shaped European thinking about colonial contact situations. In his seminal work *The Invention of America*, Edmundo O’Gorman argued that “the historical appearance of America lay in considering the event a result of an inspired invention of Western thought.” The “discovery” of lands beyond the Atlantic challenged the European world system in 1492. For centuries, navigators, explorers, philosophers, and theologians slowly came to terms with the idea that something existed outside of their cultural frame of reference. Suddenly, two unpleasant realities faced Europeans: either they dispense with and reconstruct their world system or find a way to insert their “discovery” into a pre-existing foundation. In order to preserve their cosmological order, “a ‘New World’ had now to be incorporated into their cosmographical, geographical and, ultimately, anthropological understanding.” Most Europeans opted for the latter. In doing so, they often fit their experiences into pre-existing explanations of the world.\(^{15}\)

\(^{14}\) Lescarbot, “The Conversion of the Savages who were Baptized in New France during this Year, 1610. With a Brief Narrative of the Voyage of Sieur de Poutrincourt,” in *Jesuit Relations*, 1:59–113.

\(^{15}\) Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 5-6; Edmundo O’Gorman, *The Invention of America: an Inquiry into the*
Biard and Lescarbot, like many seventeenth-century Europeans, understood human society as a binary, either “primitive” or “civilized.” Because the French saw only what made sense within their own discourse, it became easy for them to fit native North America into preconceived ideas about stages of development ultimately arriving at a European-style civilization. When describing native nomadic hunting practices, Lescarbot reminded readers that “our old Gallic ancestors did the same thing.” Though Indians did not make European style bread, “they pound their corn in a kind of mortar, and make a paste of it as best they can, and bake it between two stones heated at the fire.” Roasting corn over the fire, “as did the old Romans,” again implied that the natives simply occupied an earlier developmental stage. The French viewed Indians who cultivated land “just as the Germans in the time of Tacitus.” The Iroquois had even developed what the French considered to be a rudimentary European hierarchical structure within their society, a relationship thought to make them especially susceptible to Christian conversion. By making connections between European ancestors and contemporary natives, the French again assumed that the Indians operated within the same discourse, but were merely less advanced. This understanding of the natives was key to their mission, because many felt that Christian conversion could spark the movement toward civilization.\(^{16}\)

Missionaries endeavored to spread the word of Christ, but they also worked to eradicate behavior that contradicted European notions of civilization. Biard and Lescarbot both subscribed to the notion that a “natural” progression would be launched once the French provided the spark of Christianity. They often viewed nature as “a state of potentiality,” and believed that “to transform nature … is a crucial part of what it is to be a man.” They therefore categorized the world into a dichotomy of “civilized” and “savage,” neglecting the thought that perhaps other cultures were relating to nature in their own ways. In establishing strict “empirical others,” Europeans created both desirable and undesirable behaviors. In this way, the French were really self-fashioning, which they achieved “in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile.”\(^{17}\) Once they invented this threatening “otherness,” they had to destroy it by transforming those they deemed as “other.” Since their own discourse was superior, most

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\(^16\) Lescarbot, “Conversion of the Savages,” 83-89.

Europeans assumed its attractions and those of the lifestyle they associated with it would be self evident. Therefore, many Europeans agreed with Lescarbot, who wrote that “…there are assemblages of Savages, whom time must lead to the Christian Religion…For to think of living as the Savages do seems to me out of all reason.” Unlike Lescarbot, however, Biard eventually decided that the Indians needed to fully understand the Catholic faith.\(^\text{18}\)

Indigenous Americans had their own religions before contact with Europe, of course, but European ideas about civilization led French colonists like Lescarbot and Biard to understand native cosmology in terms of Christianity alone. Biard’s devout faith prevented him from seeing alternative discourses, and this blindness towards this “empirical other” shaped how he understood the Indians and their cosmology. The Indians had their own beliefs and understandings of the world that developed outside of the European Christian discourse.\(^\text{19}\) But the differences ran deeper than simply alternative belief systems. The fundamental perceptions of European and Indian existences were inherently unlike. Instead of recognizing Indian cosmologies as constituting “religion,” Biard and Lescarbot considered any system of beliefs other than adherence to Christ as “Devil worship”—a Christian concept. Biard’s world was a dichotomy between followers of Christ and followers of Satan—a constant theme in his writings.\(^\text{20}\)

Biard’s initial perception was that the natives are “servants of Satan.” After conversion, explaining the perceived “problems” with the Indians in New France was the most important task facing Biard. Like many Frenchmen, he did not understand why the natives would oppose European ideas or prefer their own customs to those brought from France. The most natural scapegoat was Satan. He described native faith in dreams, dance, and incantations as “the whole of their religion.” The Jesuits perceived the natives as beholden to medicine men who made arbitrary predictions and then made sure they came true. “Of one supreme God,” says Biard, “they have a slender notion, but they are so perverted by false ideas and custom, that, as I have said, they really worship the Devil.”\(^\text{21}\) This accusation not only fit naturally into Biard’s


\(^{21}\) Biard, “Canadian Mission,” 75.
schematic framework but also intensified his zeal. His mission to Christianize the natives became a quest to eradicate Satan from the New World and native religions consequently became analogous to the Devil’s work.

Because Europeans thought un-baptized Indians were Devil worshippers, they often labeled seemingly Christian traits as negative. When describing the “happiness of the savages,” Marc Lescarbot assessed the “poor” Indians as being free from envy and religious hypocrisy, unlikely to blaspheme God and less apt to corrupt chastity. “There are no poor nor beggars among them,” claimed Lescarbot. “All are rich, because all labor and live. But among us it is very different, for more than half of us live from the labors of the others, having no trades which serve to the support of human life.” Despite praising the Indians, he perpetuated a dichotomy between the French and the Indians, reinforcing the native as “Other” by contrasting their traits with those of Europeans. Moreover, since they were led by the Devil, these traits were not necessarily Christ-like; rather, they only indicated that the Indians were a simpler people.22

The idea that Satan caused the Indians to behave differently than Europeans was a common contact conclusion. The Devil became an important means of “othering.” Marc Lescarbot quickly equated the Other with Satan, claiming that “the Devil, who never sleeps, has shown the jealousy which he felt at the salvation of” early converts by sending “a wicked Frenchman, not a Frenchman but a Turk, not a Turk but an Atheist, to divert from the path of righteousness several Savages who had been Christians in their hearts and souls three years.” In this story, Lescarbot used familiar Others like “Turk” and “atheist” to describe this unnamed Frenchman. He associated Otherness with wickedness and demonstrated how Satan and atheism help to create the Other. Once Indian behavior became associated with the Devil, it became more difficult for anyone, including Biard, to understand Indians outside of a Christian discourse.23

Though he made an honest effort to understand the native people he encountered, these dichotomies largely dictated how Biard perceived events at Port Royal. Biard constantly demonstrated his genuine adherence to European missionary aims. He described one instance where Jean de Poutrincourt and Henri Membertou, a local native leader, set out to return to Port Royal. In Biard’s version of the tale, Poutrincourt took off in the wrong direction. Membertou

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22 Ibid, 93.
recognized his error, but decided to let him go. Membertou then returned to Port Royal with news that Poutrincourt was lost at sea. Poutrincourt eventually found his way back to Port Royal, and although the European colonists suspected foul play by Membertou, Biard noted that Poutrincourt “did not lessen his liberality toward the Savages, fearing to alienate them from the Christian faith.” Biard clearly understood that Christianization was paramount and that Poutrincourt’s chief concern as administrator of the settlement should be maintaining a friendly relationship with potential converts. In another instance, two Indians, excited to greet the French supply ship carrying the Jesuits, rushed out to the ship in a canoe. Their canoe tipped off balance, and they fell in. Those on shore saw the accident but were too far from the ship to call out, so the Jesuits “fell upon our knees, this being our only alternative; and God had pity on us;” the two men swam to safety. Biard’s version of the story neglects the possibility that native ingenuity or skill might have influenced the outcome. Instead, God’s intervention saved the two Indians. In a European discourse, prayers to God saved lives, and Biard easily fit this event into that framework.

These interpretations were most blatant when it came to native cosmology. Biard described one of the predominant death rituals in his region. According to Biard, when an older Indian became sick, the community ritually hastened the death process by withholding food, throwing water, and singing death songs. When Membertou became sick, the native community began these rites. Biard stopped them, insisting on reliance upon Christian prayer. When Membertou recovered, Biard praised God for saving him. In so doing, he confirmed in his own mind the inferiority of native practices: obviously incorrect native beliefs accelerated death while Catholic prayer healed the body. His harsh interpretation was not completely wrong—the rite did hasten death—but, as it fell out of his interpretive framework, Biard failed to understand the ritual’s spiritual or religious elements.

Interpreting native America within his own hermeneutic, Biard explicitly stated the problems facing the Jesuits at Port Royal. The first was environmental: New France, being “only a forest,” offered none of the “conveniences of life than those which will be brought from France.” Biard did not consider North America a hospitable place because it did not fit into his concept of “comfort.” He did not allow himself to see how ideas of comfort might have been

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26 Ibid, 169.
different in alternative contexts. Furthermore, the people inhabiting the land were “savage, wandering and full of bad habits … haunting the woods, ignorant, lawless, and rude.” He fit their behaviors into familiar negative European categories: the natives are “extremely lazy, gluttonous, profane, treacherous, cruel in their revenge, and given up to all kinds of lewdness.” More importantly, they were “wanderers, with nothing to attach them to a place.” Without a relationship to a particular place, Biard concluded that they must not have “possessions nor love of country.” Property ownership and sedentary practices were necessary to function in a European society, so Biard’s “negative” native character traits became the central problem that the Jesuits saw.

Because he perceived Indian practices negatively, Biard was upset by native resistance. “They are exceedingly vainglorious,” Biard said, “they think they are better, more valiant, and more ingenious than the French; and, what is difficult to believe, richer than we are.” The European definition of wealth was the only standard against which Biard measured the worth of native culture, making their claims of prosperity “difficult to believe.” The native assessment of the French horrified him. He paraphrased the native accusations: “You are always fighting and quarreling among yourselves; we live peaceably. You are envious and are all the time sla[ndering each other; you are thieves and deceivers; you are covetous, and are neither generous not kind; as for us, if we have a morsel of bread we share it with our neighbor.” To men like Biard, it was both incomprehensible and offensive that the Indians thought this way. Instead, Biard insisted that “they all have much greater vices” than the French,” claiming, “It is self-love that blinds them, and the evil one who leads them on.” Since they did not think the same way as the Jesuits, Biard assumed that the devil must have led them astray. Despite Biard’s simplistic explanation, his recognition of their opinions of the French demonstrates his initial level of engagement with the natives.

Once Biard and Lescarbot thought they understood their Micmac neighbors, they implemented two very different strategies for conversion. Lescarbot, who had been a part of the original voyage to Port Royal in 1604 but did not return in 1610, believed the French should actively civilize the Indians. Unlike Biard, he felt that changing the seasonal migratory habits of the natives by teaching them sedentary agriculture was more important than teaching them the

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28 Ibid, 171-79.
Catholic catechism. Furthermore, Lescarbot subscribed to the idea that Christ could not return to earth as some Christians hoped he would until Christianity had reached all corners of the globe. In order to achieve this long awaited event as soon as possible, Lescarbot favored immediate baptism. On two occasions he wrote long, detailed praises of the work of Father Jessé Fléché, the priest who preceded Biard at Port Royal. Fléché baptized every native who came through Port Royal, and kept a long baptismal roll that eventually numbered over one hundred and forty souls. Lescarbot lauded this effort, praising the efforts of Jean de Poutrincourt, the administrator of Port Royal, for supporting Fléché.29

Fléché’s baptisms established an unrealistic interpretation of native political organization. Upon baptizing each Indian, Fléché gave them a Christian name. The names given to the converts corresponded to the names of the French Royal family, and each name correlated by rank. Membertou, the local Sagamore, became Henri Membertou, his son Louis Membertou, and so on. In doing this, the French seemingly reorganized natives using a European structure. These new names reconstructed native kinship relationships in the eyes of Europeans. Settlers encountering these baptized Indians could more easily, though inaccurately, infer the native’s status simply by hearing his or her name. Although the Indians might not have understood this re-classification, it helped the French further understand Indians within a European framework. This opened the door for future misunderstandings as French settlers attempted to deal with a figure whose status they misconstrued.30

Biard’s strategy starkly contrasted with that of his predecessors. Between the spring of 1611 and the fall of 1613, Biard counted only “about twenty” baptisms, “and these were little children, except three, who were baptized in the last extremity of sickness.”31 Upon arriving in New France, Biard immediately saw the ramifications of Fléché’s method. Most Indians, Biard observed, could proclaim that they were Christian, but had no idea what their Christianity meant. He concluded that Fléché’s converts understood Christianity so little that they were “no more than the heathen.”32 In the first narrative he sent back to his superiors only weeks after his arrival, he explained the state of Christianity among the Indians. “The trouble is,” wrote Biard,

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“[Fléché] has not been able to instruct them as he would have wished, because he did not know the language, and had nothing with which to support them; for he who would minister to their souls, must at the same time resolve to nourish their bodies.” Biard argued that baptism could only follow proper catechism, which could only occur once missionaries mastered indigenous languages. Lescarbot never acknowledged wisdom in Biard’s method, writing that “a greater harvest could be reaped by those who could go farther beyond; but we must be willing to do what we can, and pray God that he may consent to do the rest, since men look upon this enterprise with so much contempt.”

The positions that Biard and Lescarbot took in this debate divided other missionaries as well. When the Spanish first evangelized in the Americas, they aimed to convert large numbers of Indians. Spanish friars had fought the Moors for centuries, because they believed that Christ could not return to Earth until the Christians conquered the world in his name. As early as Cortés’s conquest of Tenochtitlan, the Franciscans actively engaged in a massive evangelizing project. Because there was a sense of urgency about bringing all of mankind into the Christian fold, they constructed images of Indians that helped fit indigenous Mesoamericans into a Christian past. Rather than instructing them in the faith, they baptized them quickly, happy to expand Christ’s world of followers. Later, the Spanish would question the wisdom of their approach, as Biard did. Lescarbot, however, believed in the initial Spanish approach.

English Protestants would reject the Spanish method as well. In the seventeenth century, Protestant missionaries like John Eliot focused on thoroughly catechizing those Indians who had experienced “spiritual regeneration” by the grace of God. Instead of massively baptizing Indians without instruction, English missionaries instructed those few who God had chosen, who in turn, were expected to spread the message of Christ throughout their communities. These same Protestants strongly opposed the Jesuits for “their alleged propensity for baptizing natives sunk in pagan ignorance on their deathbeds.” Biard and Lescarbot’s differences were surely not theirs alone.

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36 Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 222-23, 271.
Biard’s opinions on baptism forced him to become an early ethnographer. In doing so, he deviated from the standard pattern of interpretation and treated the event as a true encounter between people. He developed his own conversion strategy, which helped him set aside some of the prejudices he brought to New France. Biard saw the practical problem with his baptismal method: he did not know indigenous languages. Furthermore, he realized that in order to demonstrate both the beliefs and virtues of Catholicism, he had to meet the Indians halfway. Therefore, he did not emphasize total cultural conversion, and attempted to learn more about native languages and culture. In his papers, he recorded copious pages of thoughts and observations about the Indians, their cosmology, and their culture. He often interpreted what he saw in terms of in terms of preconceived prejudice, but his decision to attempt to “know” the Indians marked a break with the traditional model of colonial discourse. Although he never freed himself from his own discourse and often misunderstood his observations, Biard approached his situation as both a cultural encounter and a learning experience. Later Jesuits would follow his ethnographic model.

He understood that his own language fluency was necessary for conversion. In 1612, he related the language difficulty associated with his mission to the Jesuit Provincial in Paris. One of his duties as priest in the Port Royal colony was to say Mass. According to Biard, several natives attended these services. But Catholic Mass was in Latin, and religious instruction was in French. As a result, he did not consider their attendance worthwhile for “they are but little trained in the principles of the faith.” Without a proper command of native language, thorough religious instruction was impossible. In assessing Fléché’s work, Biard saw little difference between the baptized and un-baptized. Fléché had not properly catechized the baptized natives, and Biard resolved to cease baptisms until proper catechesis could precede them. Biard realized the consequences of this decision when he told the Provincial that “in order to catechize we must first know the language.” Although this position would lead to a bitter feud between Biard and Charles de Biencourt, Biard held firm in his belief that natives had to be properly instructed in their own languages to fully understand the meaning of their baptism.

In the early seventeenth century, learning native languages was the most difficult task facing the French. It is clear from some of their writings that they did not fundamentally understand the nature of native tongues. Lescarbot explained his understanding of the Hebrew

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origins of the native word “sagamore” as further proof that the Indians were merely less
developed Europeans. His definition of the word, meaning “Great Prince,” tied native religious
development to the Christian civilization process. Of course, native languages developed
separately from Hebrew, but making these kinds of connections helped prove that natives were
simply farther back on the same developmental progression as Europeans. 38

Even with greater fluency, the languages did not translate perfectly, leading to
misunderstandings by native people. Europeans based much of the language of Christianity on
European cultural references. These references did not make sense in native cultures. For
example, Biard cited Membertou, who Fléché converted, as complaining that he did not
understand the phrase “give us this day our daily bread.” According to Biard, Membertou wittily
retorted “if I did not ask him for anything but bread, I would be without moose-meat or fish.”
Bread was a staple food in the early Church and throughout early modern Western Europe. In
native cultures, corn fulfilled the role of staple food and European “bread” did not exist. To the
Indians, the reference made little sense—why would a native person pray for bread when he or
she subsists on fish and meat? 39

Biard’s understanding of the difficult language barrier he faced was profound. By 1612,
the French understood parts of the native language. But Biard perceived translation to be
especially difficult because he viewed native cultures as inherently different than European
cultures. “The savages have no definite religion, magistry or government, liberal or mechanical
arts, commercial or civil life,” wrote Biard, who continued, “they have consequently no words to
describe things which they have never seen or even conceived.” These perceived differences
explained why Biencourt, who understood the language better than anyone else in the colony,
could not relate Christian beliefs to the natives. Biard wrote that “as soon as he begins to talk
about God he feels as Moses did, his mind is bewildered, his throat dry, his tongue tied.”40 Since
native culture was different, many European cultural concepts were not translatable.

As a result of this difficulty, Biard described indigenous languages as lacking abstract
ideas. He perceived natives as focused on tangible, material ideas. To him, their words readily
described objects and actions, but they had no ability to discuss generic abstractions. The Jesuits
probably deduced this because of the difficulty in conveying complex ideas such as “wisdom,

38 Lescarbot, “Conversion of the Savages,” 73-75.
fidelity, justice, mercy.” Since the Jesuits could not relay these terms, they decided the natives must not be able to comprehend the meaning of the words. It did not occur to them that perhaps they were simply poor translators of difficulty concepts. The attempt to decode abstract words must have been quite difficult for the Jesuit translators.41

The language difficulty is readily apparent in the Relations. Biard described the process through which the Jesuits translated words. In order to relate certain concepts, the Jesuits were “compelled to make a thousand gesticulations and signs” to express their ideas, “and thus to draw from them the names of some of the things which cannot be pointed out.” He described the difficulty of acting out particularly abstract words like think, forget, remember, and doubt. It could take an entire afternoon of “playing the clown” to communicate a definition—a less than ideal environment for teaching. Mistranslation probably had a great deal of influence on how the Jesuits perceived native language capabilities.42

Biard’s analysis of the language barrier still often correlated with his initial perceptions of the natives. He found their traits uncivilized, and their supposed inability to master abstractions demonstrated that they “will always remain in perpetual infancy as to language and reason.” After all, according to Biard, one could only reason through complex language skills. If the natives were not capable of understanding abstract ideas, they would never be able to compete with European reasoning. As a result, Biard concluded that the natives were perfectly happy to remain in their state of ignorance. This perceived ignorance led Biard to conclude that “they are children.”43

As the mission proceeded, the Jesuits began looking for “proof” of Indian salvation, and they seemingly found it through their interpretations of some native behavior. When Poutrincourt and the colonists returned from hiatus in 1610, the natives, “anxious about their old friends, they asked how they were all getting along, calling each individual by his name, and asking why such and such a one had not come back.” Lescarbot interpreted this as demonstrative of “the great amiability of these people, who, having seen in us only the most humane qualities, never flee from us, as they do from the Spaniard in this whole new world … it is easy to make them pliant to all our wishes, and especially so in regard to Religion, of which we left them some good impressions when we were there; and they seemed to wish for nothing

42 Ibid, 11.
better than to enroll themselves under the banner of Jesus Christ.” He described Membertou’s baptism as demonstrating “as much enthusiasm, fervor, and zeal for Religion as would have been evinced by a person who had been instructed in it for three or four years.”

Lescarbot described Chkoudun, an Indian who attended Catholic services in the early years of the mission. Chkoudun was “a man of great influence” who “loved the French” and “admired our civilization more than their ignorance.” To Lescarbot’s delight, Chkoudun regularly attended Sunday services at Port Royal. “He listened attentively,” said Lescarbot, “although he did not understand a word; and moreover wore the sign of the Cross upon his bosom.” Chkoudun left no record of his intentions, but Lescarbot clearly thought him driven by pious devotion to the Christian religion. This is unlikely, considering that Chkoudun understood neither French nor Latin. Chkoudon may have understood the ritual to contain sacred power, or perhaps he was interested in allying himself with the French, but he certainly did not understand Catholic Mass the way Lescarbot or Biard did.

Sometimes, evidence of the missionaries’ success was even more convincing. Biard quoted Membertou as describing a religious experience “with a great deal of feeling.” Membertou and his family were having difficulty finding food. “Then he remembered that he was a Christian,” Biard explained. He prayed to God, and when he returned to the river, “he found all the smelts he wanted.” Episodes like this provided confirmation of what Biard considered the possibility of legitimate conversion. Though some indigenous Americans embraced Christianity and considered the Jesuits to hold sacred power within their own cosmology, as Membertou did, they did not grasp the religion on its own terms. Biard, seeing elements of success in his work, knew that they could not achieve a complete victory unless he thoroughly catechized natives, a process that required total control of indigenous languages.

Drawing on the few successes he found in his Canadian mission, Biard strongly encouraged the Jesuits to return to New France. Although he never mastered the native tongue, Biard claimed to have “composed our Catechism in the Savage language, and had begun to be able to talk some kind of jargon with our Catechumens.” He had “done, then, a part of what we intended to do … we have experimented, we know what is necessary and what is harmful, and wherein lies the principal part of the work.” Perhaps more importantly, he had “won the

confidence and friendliness of the Savages.” He ended his Relation of 1616 by admiring the strong faith he saw in the children he baptized, commenting especially on their participation in ritual. To Biard, Canada was “another France and another Spain to be cultivated.” Although he subscribed to many common interpretations, his desire actually to know and interact with Indians marked the first break with traditional perceptions of Native Americans by the Jesuits. The result of his Relation was that subsequent Jesuit missionaries, agreeing with Biard’s observations, would follow his advice when organizing their missions and strategies for conversion.

Although the Port Royal case appears to present a simple example of cultural encounter, a closer reading of its tumultuous history demonstrates that there were far more complicated forces at work. Biard and Lescarbot’s descriptions of the native people illustrate cultural contact between indigenous Americans and Europeans. Their assessments of Indians adhere to the ways that Europe often understood America, and on the surface, make this encounter seem like many others that would follow. In that respect, the evangelizing appears to be the focal point of Port Royal’s history, yet the narrative of Port Royal reveals other tensions. At the end of his Relation of 1616, Biard made it clear that the Jesuits needed to continue their mission while doing “nothing to prevent [secular interests] from doing theirs.” The work he referred to was the trading endeavor that co-existed uneasily with the first Jesuit mission. Biard continued, “We must not expect to have any share in [the profit].” Port Royal was a trading outpost. When the Jesuits arrived, their missionary vision constantly conflicted with the aspirations of Jean de Poutrincourt and his son, Charles de Biencourt. Biard, Lescarbot, Poutrincourt, and Biencourt had different reasons for going to Port Royal. Their conflicting goals shaped the ways they approached religious conversion, which all attested was important. Although his cultural encounter with the Micmac and Abenaki certainly played a role, Biard’s battles with the traders at Port Royal also affected his vision of what a Canadian Jesuit mission should look like.

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48 Ibid, 113.
II

This Enterprise with so Much Contempt

In 1610, Marc Lescarbot sent a letter to Marie de Medici, Queen Regent of France, detailing the successful conversion of the Canadian Indians that had taken place under Father Jessé Fléché. In it, he grossly overstated the conditions of the colony and applauded the prosperity of the outpost at Port Royal. According to his embellished account, the settlers were happy, the trade was successful, and the Indians were finding their way to Christ. As evidenced by the baptismal rolls he included in his letter, Port Royal supposedly flourished spiritually under its able administrator, Jean de Poutrincourt. Therefore, Lescarbot concluded, there was no need to change what had already proven successful; he requested that the young King and the Queen Regent support Poutrincourt’s actions. Continuity alone was needed to reap the benefits of this promising beginning. Yet when Pierre Biard and Énemond Massé reached the Acadian shores several months later, they found the French outpost in dire straits and its colonists starving to death. Lescarbot’s account was clearly false.

A careful reading of Port Royal’s history demonstrates why accounts of its history often widely varied. In reality, Lescarbot conveyed his inaccurate portrait of Port Royal in a carefully constructed letter he wrote to persuade the Queen Regent to allow his friend Poutrincourt freedom in his new enterprise. Aware of the late King Henri IV’s 1608 mandate to give Jesuits a monopoly over spiritual affairs in New France, Lescarbot acted to prevent Marie from implementing the policy for fear it would interfere with Poutrincourt’s trading ambitions. His constructed history of Port Royal exemplifies the difficulty of writing a history of the failed mission, but a careful reading of accounts from both sides reveals a basic outline of events that occurred between 1610 and 1613.

Through two tumultuous years, the economic ambitions of Poutrincourt and his son, Charles Biencourt, impeded Jesuit missionary activity among native Micmac and Abenaki. The Jesuits stubbornly insisted that Poutrincourt give them total freedom to act without regard for the well being of the trading outpost. Biard had concluded that the best strategy for conversion was

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50 Lescarbot, “Conversion of the Savages.”
to get to know the Indians and then meticulously teach them the doctrines of Catholic faith, but secular authorities preferred large scale conversions to aid in fundraising from France. In this way, the conflict between secular interests and the Jesuit missionaries shaped Biard’s vision of how the Jesuits must run a Catholic mission. The history of Port Royal from 1611 to 1613 illustrates the tensions that existed between trade and religion in the seventeenth century, and more importantly, the way it influenced the future of Jesuit Missions in North America.

French adventurers originally founded Port Royal as part of a decade-long increase in exploration of New France intended to give the French a permanent foothold in North America. At the dawn of the seventeenth century, a band of adventurers working for the French king scouted the eastern reaches of present-day Canada for the ideal location to build a settlement. In 1603, Henri IV granted a trade monopoly to one of his former Calvinist allies. Pierre du Gua de Monts fought alongside Henri during the French wars of religion until Henri’s coronation and Catholic conversion in 1589. Along with the trade monopoly came a lieutenant-governorship over large tracts of the Canadian coastland. De Monts was in New France to reap great profits from trade, but part of his commission required that he assist in the conversion of Indians to Christianity.53

Seeking adventure and profit in the New World, Poutrincourt petitioned the King for permission to accompany his friend de Monts in 1603. Poutrincourt left France for Port Royal in March of 1604. Eventually, de Monts abandoned Port Royal to pursue a new venture in Quebec with his lieutenant, Samuel de Champlain. He promised Port Royal to his friend Poutrincourt, demanding that in exchange, Poutrincourt make the colony a permanent agricultural settlement.54 After proving capable of sustaining himself in the New World, Poutrincourt obtained exclusive fishing and fur trading rights from Henri IV to accompany his new position of lieutenant governor of Acadia. Throughout Poutrincourt’s early tenure at Port Royal, prominent ladies of the court in France complained that the colony was insufficiently dedicated to Catholic missionary work. This accusation followed Poutrincourt’s failed attempt to introduce Catholic priests to his colony in 1607. At the same time, fishing profits did not meet expectations and a difficult winter forced Poutrincourt to abandon the colony in 1608.55

55 Rydey, “Biencourt de Poutrincourt et de Saint-Juste, Jean de.”
Poutrincourt had one major goal when he and his son returned to New France in 1610: secure a monopoly over the fur trade. Poutrincourt had good reason to seek control as supplying beaver furs became increasingly profitable. Shortly after their return to Acadia with a handful of settlers, his son Biencourt sailed to France to sign contracts with local hatters. Touting the trade monopoly he thought the Crown was about to bestow upon Port Royal, he succeeded in finding clients. He was shocked when the Crown denied Port Royal the privileges that would have made it the center of the fur trade in America. The hatters withdrew their contracts, and when Biencourt returned to Port Royal with the Jesuits in 1611, he arrived empty handed. Suddenly, Port Royal’s prospects looked grim, and Poutrincourt and Biencourt knew that they had to prove themselves to be effective traders and administrators to reverse their fortunes.\(^{56}\)

Establishing effective trading posts in the New World was an important part of developing later settlements in North America. In his 1982 *Manitou and Providence, Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643*, ethnohistorian Neal Salisbury suggested that colonization of Northeastern America occurred in two phases. Most Americans are more familiar with the second wave, when hundreds and then thousands of settlers established towns and permanent colonies along the Atlantic Coast. But in order for settlement to occur, Salisbury claimed that a first wave in which fishermen and entrepreneurs in the North Atlantic established complex networks of trade with Indians was a prerequisite to settlement. Europeans established trade throughout the sixteenth century, and Salisbury argued that the Indians had become dependant on these networks by 1610, when Poutrincourt returned to Port Royal.\(^{57}\)

In Salisbury’s study, Port Royal was an essential settlement in the development of trade. De Monts, Poutrincourt, Lescarbot, and Champlain established complicated trade alliances in New France intended to boost their political stature. Salisbury argued that this early trade with Europeans also resulted in native dependency on foreign goods. These early colonial promoters viewed religious conversion as a means to an end, hoping to forge alliances through Christianity while using missionary success to raise funds in France. Salisbury quoted Biard’s description of Fléché’s conversions, demonstrating how Fléché’s converts “accepted baptism as a sort of sacred

pledge of friendship and alliance with the French.” Salisbury argued that “it was the political meaning that was important to the Indians, who saw baptism as a ritual sealing of their bond with the French.” While Salisbury emphasized the ramifications of Port Royal’s economic colonialism, he argued that “the potential impact of the missionaries as colonial agents . . . went largely unrealized.” He attributed the missionary failure to the tense relationship between Biard and Poutrincourt and the subsequent destruction of Port Royal by the English. More importantly, the breakdown of relationships at Port Royal ended “the political and religious—but not the economic—presence of the French in Acadia” for nearly two decades.58

Traders like Poutrincourt, much to the frustration of Jesuit missionaries, sought to use religion as a means of bolstering their economic advantages. In order to solidify his chances for obtaining a trade monopoly, before his third voyage Poutrincourt set out to answer complaints about the lack of Catholic missionaries. He believed that if Port Royal proved itself to be devoutly Catholic and served the purpose of converting Indians to Christianity, he would be better able to attract monetary support. With more financial backers, Poutrincourt hoped that the King would deem his settlement successful and bestow a trade monopoly. Though he had unsuccessfully petitioned the King to bring a Catholic priest with him during previous voyages, Poutrincourt vowed to bring his own missionary when he returned to Acadia. He received the Pope’s blessing to bring Father Jessé Fléché to Port Royal in 1610. But the Jesuits yearned for the opportunity to initiate missionary work in New France. They petitioned the King through his Jesuit confessor, and Henri IV declared that two Jesuits would accompany Poutrincourt to Port Royal. But the enterprising Poutrincourt and his son, Biencourt, paranoid that the Jesuits were searching for commercial profit, managed to set sail with only their secular priest in 1610.59

By the early seventeenth century, the Society of Jesus held a tenuous position in France. St Ignatius, a Spaniard, first created the Jesuits in Paris in the 1530s. Although the order had its start in France, many French people suspected it of having strong ties to Spain and distrusted Ignatius and his followers. Although Henri II supported the new order, the Parlement of Paris and the secular clergy refused to recognize them. Throughout the sixteenth century, the wars of religion and opposition from Catholics suspecting an Iberian conspiracy prevented the Jesuits from establishing their order’s legitimacy. After the ascension of Henry IV in 1589, the Jesuits

58 Salisbury, Manitou and Providence, 72-76.
59 Ibid.
encountered opposition from Galician Catholics who wanted to suppress the Pope’s authority in favor of the King’s divine temporal power. The Jesuits, who responded directly to their Superior General and the Pope in Rome, fell out of favor with the rising Galician forces. As a result, the Jesuits were expelled from France in 1594. In 1603, the same year du Monts secured his land rights in Acadia, Henry IV reintroduced the Jesuits to France. He hoped to use the Jesuits as a means of consolidating his power, and over the next several years, they became the primary religious advisors of the King. Many Frenchmen, including Lescarbot, were immediately suspicious of them and still thought of Jesuit priests as servants of Spain or Rome. As hostilities between Catholics and Protestants wound down in the early decades of the seventeenth century, the Jesuits would become key reformers in the Catholic Reformation, but in 1610, they still found opposition throughout Catholic France.  

Amid these anti-Jesuit sentiments, the Port Royal priests faced fierce animosity from the start. The King’s confessor appointed two Jesuits, Pierre Biard and Énemond Massé, to administer the spiritual affairs of settlers and evangelize to the Indians of Port Royal. Biard had been a Jesuit priest for eleven years when the King commissioned him as a missionary to Port Royal. The theology professor at Touron College in Lyon had never been a missionary, nor had he ever been to the New World. Nonetheless, he and Massé, a Jesuit employed by the Marquise de Guercheville, arrived at the French Port of Dieppe prepared for their voyage to New France. What the two Jesuits encountered at Dieppe in many ways foreshadowed their entire experience in New France. Biard and Massé arrived on October 24, 1610 expecting to set sail for Port Royal shortly thereafter. Instead, they spent the next three months in a bitter feud with the ship’s Protestant proprietors, who refused to carry the Jesuits as passengers. Henri IV’s recent assassination had exacerbated existing anti-Jesuit sentiments; many Protestants and even some Catholics believed that the Jesuits, who had become close to the King, were directly involved in the murder. Biard and Massé appealed to the Queen Regent for assistance. Marie de Medici, aware of Henri IV’s decree that the Jesuits were to Christianize New France, ordered the


Governor of Dieppe to force compliance with the late King’s wishes. The Protestant merchants held firm.  

Antoinette de Pons, the Marquise de Guercheville, finally broke the deadlock. A devout supporter of both the Jesuits and the Queen Regent, de Guercheville asked for “a contribution from all the greatest Princes and Grandees of the Court,” eventually raising 4,000 livres. This money was enough to buy out the Protestant share of the ship. Using the money she raised, the Marquise purchased a majority share in the vessel. She anticipated a one hundred percent return on her investment, which she used to establish a fund for Jesuit missionaries in New France. This fund allowed Biard and Massé to act independently at Port Royal. She negotiated a deal with Biencourt to reinvest the returns for the maintenance of Port Royal, under the condition that the Jesuits became partners in the enterprise.  

On the eve of their departure, Biard sent a detailed account of this incident to his superior, triumphantly declaring that “at first we only asked a little corner in this vessel at their price. Now we are masters of it.” The deadlock at Dieppe ended by giving the Jesuits considerable power, but it also established a suspicious relationship between the colonial administrators and their new partners, who were already paranoid about the Jesuits’ aims.  

While the Jesuits politicked in Dieppe, Father Jessé Flèché, Poutrincourt’s secular Catholic missionary, began his work in New France. In a matter of months, Flèché, without knowledge of native languages, baptized hundreds of natives. He baptized several local leaders, including an Indian known to the French as Henri Membertou. By grossly overstating Membertou’s rank and influence, Lescarbot made the Sagamore a poster-child for Catholic conversion in New France; his campaign suggested that even the greatest “of all the savages” could become overwhelmingly devout. Poutrincourt and Lescarbot publicized their missionary successes by sending wonderful descriptions of Membertou’s pious devotion to the Christian religion back to France. The quick conversion of such massive numbers of people reflected well on the colony. Lescarbot and settler M. Bertrand sent letters touting their success to French officials and the Queen Regent in an attempt to prove that Port Royal was successful enough to warrant a trade monopoly. Moreover, they hoped to demonstrate that Jesuits were not necessary

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63 Ibid.  
64 Ibid, 137.
at Port Royal. Fléché’s method of missionizing was advantageous for the entrepreneurial yet devout Poutrincourt and Biencourt, but the descriptions of his success only confirmed in the Queen Regent’s mind the potential for success on the part of the Jesuit missionaries. The Marquise de Guercheville detected the true purpose behind the tales of speedy baptism, claiming that Lescarbot’s vivid descriptions of Fléché’s successes were simply a tool meant to foil the Jesuits. Fléché left New France shortly after the Jesuits arrived in 1611. His missionary legacy exacerbated rifts between the Poutrincourts and the Jesuits which would last throughout subsequent years.65

Although Fléché’s rapid conversions, the confrontation at Dieppe, and the general disapproval of the Jesuits established an explosive foundation for the Jesuits’ presence, when they arrived at Port Royal on Pentecost Sunday, 1611, the initial meeting was pleasant. During the winter of 1610 and 1611, Poutrincourt and his colonists had been “reduced to sore straits.” To begin, Poutrincourt had been lost along the coast for many weeks during the fall of 1610. Those with him nearly mutinied, and those at the settlement believed him to be dead. There was little cause to rejoice when he returned to the colony. The ship carrying Biencourt, the Jesuits, and the essential supplies to Port Royal did not arrive as expected. The supplies were stuck at Dieppe, of course, but word of this had not reached Poutrincourt, who believed that essential provisions had been lost at sea and therefore would never arrive. Poutrincourt, fearing he might otherwise turn the local Micmacs against him, reduced settler’s rations further in order to continue his liberality towards the Indians. Reduced to subsisting on roots, the colonists were overjoyed to see Biencourt and the Jesuits in late spring. The newcomers were equally pleased to arrive; their journey had been difficult and several times they feared that they would not survive to reach Acadia.66

The debate over the proper time to baptize the Indians quickly became a central point of contention that led to two different visions of Port Royal’s purpose. As noted earlier, the issue superficially appeared to be a strictly religious matter, but Biencourt’s opposition to Biard’s methods revealed a more practical problem. Upon arrival, the first issue Biard faced was correcting theological errors he saw in the work of Jessé Fléché. But Fléché’s conversions had

advanced the economic goals of Port Royal because donors in France were more likely to support a colony with a mission that appeared successful. Biencourt hoped that increased fundraising would help him finally secure the trade monopoly he had failed to attain in 1610. But Biard quickly became concerned about the theological ramifications of Fléché’s methods, and he vowed to withhold baptism until he could properly catechize the Indians. Biencourt increasingly became irritated by Biard’s refusal to baptize vast numbers of natives. After Poutrincourt’s early departure for France in July of 1611 and the subsequent installation of Biencourt as colonial administrator, the debate over baptism alienated the Jesuits from colonial officials. To Biencourt, baptizing natives was an effective method of bolstering Port Royal’s stature back in France. To Biard, bringing Christianity to the Indians was the most important goal of Port Royal. The debate over baptism brought these opposing objectives to the forefront; once both men made their purposes clear, it became impossible for them to work together.67

Biard and Biencourt found themselves at odds often during Biard’s tenure at Port Royal. Although the debate over baptism was central to the problem, Biencourt was suspicious of the Jesuits long before Biard had arrived. There were several times that he found his suspicions confirmed by Biard’s behavior, especially in 1611, Biard accompanied Biencourt on many of his adventures. Biard wanted to maximize his contact with networks of native peoples while serving as the chaplain of each journey. Poutrincourt and Biencourt came to greatly distrust Biard after one journey tested his motives. Robert Gravé du Pont, a naval captain who had sailed with Poutrincourt’s original 1606 voyage, was causing trouble at the St. John’s River. He had become a shrewd trader in that area, reaping profits from the local Abenaki Indians. In 1610, the Abenaki complained to Poutrincourt that du Pont had abducted one of their women. In addition, Poutrincourt was concerned that du Pont, who was living among the Indians, portrayed European morals and values negatively. Poutrincourt, who decided that du Pont was working to turn the Indians against the French, was appalled when the newly arrived Biard suggested pardoning du Pont. After Biard successfully obtained the pardon, Poutrincourt voiced his displeasure at Biard’s intervention in administrative affairs.

Although du Pont had been pardoned and had sworn allegiance to New France, Biencourt later caught him in a new plot to overthrow the Biencourts at Port Royal. Biencourt organized a small contingent that travelled to St. John’s to arrest du Pont. Biard, who accompanied the

expedition, went with a different agenda. Since he found communicating the Catholic catechism so difficult, he thought du Pont could potentially provide a gold mine of knowledge about the Indians. He had lived with them, better understood their customs, and most importantly, could speak their language better than even Biencourt, who was the most able translator at Port Royal. When the party did not find du Pont at St. John’s, Biard promised to locate and return him on the condition that Biencourt would pardon him. Although Biencourt agreed, Biard’s request aroused his suspicions and he came to question Biard’s allegiance to Biencourt and Port Royal. After all, Biencourt argued that he could just as ably translate local languages. Biencourt perceived Biard, by pursuing a relationship with du Pont, as conspiring against Port Royal’s authority.68

Biencourt and Biard already distrusted each other by 1612, when de Guercheville asserted her power, further complicating the relationship between the Jesuits and the administration. Poutrincourt, who had left Port Royal in July of 1611 to obtain more food and supplies for his struggling colony, had become desperate for funds by that winter. When Poutrincourt arrived in France, de Guercheville reminded him of their partnership, but Poutrincourt claimed to have documented rights over Port Royal. When he could not produce proof of exclusive rights, the Marquise pushed the issue. Finally, she contacted de Monts, and procured rights to all land claims in New France that Henry IV had deeded to him. Louis XIII, now reigning monarch of France, secured for her rights to “all land, ports, and harbors of New France,”69 with the exception of Port Royal. Suspicious of the Biencourts, she sent Jesuit Brother Gilbert du Thet to handle her financial obligations at Port Royal. Poutrincourt, wary of the Marquise and the Jesuits, sent Simon Imbert to New France as his own liaison.70

Though tensions and suspicions had been brewing since Jesuits first arrived at the colony, Biard formally acknowledged the “beginning of the disputes between Sieur de Biencourt and the Jesuits” when the representatives of de Guercheville and Poutrincourt arrived in Acadia.71

During the voyage, Imbert allegedly cheated du Thet out of a share of the money he was handling. Upon arrival, du Thet confronted Biencourt about Imbert’s mismanagement of de Guercheville’s funds. Claiming that Imbert kept no record of the Marquise’s finances, du Thet

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70 Ibid, 231-37.
71 Ibid, 239.
implied that Imbert tried to spite the Marquise for reasserting her partnership. Biencourt, already fuming over de Guercheville’s intervention, privately consulted Imbert rather than launch a formal investigation. Imbert claimed that the partnership “was a means invented by the Jesuits to drive him [Biencourt] out of his bread Seigneuries of Canada.” 72 Far more damningly, Imbert claimed that du Thet had confided to him that the Jesuits had played a part in Henri IV’s regicide. 73 The Jesuits, appalled at the accusation, countered by charging Imbert with drunkenness. Imbert’s accusation regarding the regicide was quickly proven false. 74

These charges and the ensuing counter-accusations effectively destroyed any remnants of a working relationship between the colony and the Jesuits. Though Biard claims that “a reconciliation was effected afterward, and everything calmed down,” 75 both sides considered the other an enemy. Biencourt held Biard responsible for his loss of power, and refused to allow Biard and Massé to leave Port Royal for France or any other place, officially citing Henri IV’s original orders for them to stay as missionaries in the colony. After less than a year, their role as missionaries had ended, and they were de facto prisoners at Port Royal. But all was not lost. Their fortunes turned again when du Thet escaped on a fishing boat, returned to France, and informed the Marquise of the rapidly deteriorating situation at Port Royal. 76

The Marquise swiftly responded. When du Thet returned, she was in the midst of renewing her deal with Poutrincourt, who had run out of funds for his colony. Hearing du Thet’s report about the fate of the Jesuits in New France, she immediately cut ties with Poutrincourt. Instead, she put her agent René le Coq de la Saussaye in command of a new enterprise intended to remove the Jesuits from Port Royal and establish a new colony within the large tract of land she obtained from de Monts. Fearing Biard and Massé dead, de Guercheville sent du Thet and Father Jaquès Quentin with Saussaye, instructing them to return immediately if they found their Jesuit brethren alive and well. Du Thet and Quentin did find Biard and Massé alive but alone, subsisting on roots after a difficult winter that forced Biencourt and his men into the wilderness in search of food. 77

73 Campeau, “Biard, Pierre.”
75 Ibid, 245.
76 Campeau, “Biard, Pierre.”
77 Ibid.
In May of 1613, two years after their initial arrival in New France, Biard and Massé left Port Royal to establish a new Jesuit mission. They traveled far to the south, towards the banks of the Kennebec River. Hoping to form an alliance with the French, a group of Abenaki Indians located in present-day Maine persuaded Biard to build his mission among their people. Immediately, construction at a place the Jesuits designated Saint Sauveur found itself at a standstill, the result of another disagreement. La Saussaye demanded that the colonists first cultivate the land so the mission could sustain itself. The Jesuits argued that it was necessary to construct buildings and fortifications first. Once again, arguments between the Jesuits and lay officials threatened their mission.\footnote{Biard, “A Relation of New France,” in Jesuit Relations, 3:267-73.}

The Jesuits, it appears, were right. Though they would not have been able to finish construction in time, a fortification might have allowed them to put up a fight when Virginian Samuel Argall’s ship entered Saint Sauveur on that foggy, rainy summer day a few months later. The English, who had been fishing the Atlantic coast, had not realized how close to New France they had sailed. Biard claimed that Indians had inadvertently given away their location, mistaking the English for Frenchmen. Although the same natives, realizing their error, gave the Jesuits advance warning, they were unable to mount an effective resistance. During the short, violent, battle, the English killed du Thet and two others. The English, who were not at war with the French in 1613, demanded to see a commission from the King of France. La Saussaye was unable to produce any evidence of Louis XIII’s commission. Argall, Biard later alleged, removed it from La Saussaye’s trunk during the plundering of his ship. Without proof of a royal commission to colonize Saint Sauveur, Argall could deem the French pirates, providing a convenient excuse for the attack. He quickly took their ship and made its crew his prisoners.

The English decided to take advantage of the opportunity by destroying St. Croix and Port Royal as well. The moon shone bright as Lieutenant William Turnel’s English vessel sailed into Port Royal in late October of 1613. It was eerie as the ship slowly crept into the port by the soft glow of the moon, attempting to avoid detection by the French. Samuel Argall’s lieutenant remained in port until just before noon the next morning, hoping to catch the French by surprise. Instead, Turnel faced a ghostly autumn silence. To his delight, Port Royal’s colonists had
deserted their post. The English met no resistance, finding only meager booty. Afterwards, the English burned Port Royal to the ground.\(^79\)

By May 1614, after allegedly evading execution at the hands of the English on several occasions, Biard was returned to France.\(^80\) The destruction of Port Royal proved to Poutrincourt what he had suspected all along. In 1614, Poutrincourt brought formal charges against Biard and Massé for conspiring against the French by aiding the English in his *Factum du Procès entre Jean de Biencourt chevalier Sieur de Poutrincourt Baron de S. Just apppellant d’une part et Pierre Biard, Énemond Massé et Consorts soy disans Prestres de le Société de Jéses, intimez.* Although Poutrincourt never followed through on the suit, in 1616 Biard responded with his own version of the story. His *Relation of 1616* contained his account of what happened at Port Royal, most notably in the summer of 1613. In it, he described the various tribulations he encountered among the English in great detail. Biard did not have the last word: in 1618, Marc Lescarbot, using letters and personal interviews with Poutrincourt and Biencourt, updated his *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* to include the tumultuous Port Royal. In this 1618 update, he countered Biard’s story.

An outside power arrived to destroy the fledgling colony, ironically after years of internal turmoil tore its foundation apart. After the attack on Port Royal, Charles Biencourt, the colonial administrator, accused Biard, who had been a prisoner on board Turnel’s ship, of leading the English to the fort. Biard claimed that he refused to do so, and that the English instead captured a native to serve as their guide. For the remainder of the decade, Poutrincourt and Lescarbot continually questioned Biard’s loyalty to France and the Catholic Church. In doing so, they expanded the scope of the tensions. Instead of discussing Port Royal as a simple conflict of interests, they turned the loss into an extension of seventeenth-century warfare between competing European powers as well as between Catholics and Protestants. In the course of defending himself, Biard concluded that the Jesuits should not get tangled up in secular affairs if they wanted to convert Indians to Christ effectively.\(^81\)

\(^{79}\) The assault on Port Royal appears in several of Biard’s writings; the most descriptive account comes from his *Relation of 1616*. There is also a vivid account in “Relatio Rerum Gestarum.” These documents are in *Jesuit Relations*, 3 & 4.


III

Factionists and Slanderers

The English safely restored Biard to France after a tumultuous journey across the Atlantic. But soon after his arrival, Biard found himself under attack from a new foe: Jean de Poutrincourt. Biard responded to Poutrincourt’s accusations of wavering loyalties to France and to the Church in his Relation of 1616, a monolithic piece detailing his ethnographic observations of native people and recounting his version of the series of events that led to his ultimate break with Port Royal in 1613. Biard originally wrote the document as a defense of himself and his actions. In so doing, however, he produced an implicit advertisement of his own missionary strategies that developed in response to his interactions with native people and his adversarial relationship with Poutrincourt and Biencourt. In this way, the Relation of 1616 is a complicated document written for a particular circumstance. At the same time, it provides an important historic sketch of seventeenth century Acadian Indians while demonstrating the evolution of a unique Jesuit missionary project in New France. By studying the historical circumstances under which Biard wrote his Relation, the historian can clearly see how Biard’s specific experience influenced the French missionary project as a whole.

When the English destroyed Port Royal in 1613, everyone’s enterprise failed. Poutrincourt lost his hope of obtaining a trade monopoly and becoming the central figure in the North American fur trade after investing a great deal of money and time in Canada. When he returned to Port Royal in 1614, he found it in ruins. Poutrincourt, who fled into the woods during the attack, lived for several years in the Canadian wilderness and died in 1623 or 1624. Biencourt, who fled into the woods during the attack, lived for several years in the Canadian wilderness and died in 1623 or 1624. Biard, though he tried hard to remain optimistic about the foundation he had set, had never managed to catechize Indians and had only baptized a handful of children. He never returned to New France, though his colleague, Énemond Massé, did. The traders at Port Royal blamed the Jesuits for colluding with the English and leading them to Port Royal. Lescarbot situated Biard within a larger Jesuit conspiracy to become the most powerful religious group in the world. Biard

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82 Ryder, “Biencourt, de Poutrincourt et de Saint-Juste, Jean de.”
83 Ibid.
became an easy scapegoat. Poutrincourt fumed over the loss of his business venture, but instead directed his anger at Biard, whom he perceived as working against him from the start. It was easy for him to believe that Biard worked with English enemies to destroy Poutrincourt when Biencourt and Simon Imbert reported that Biard was scheming to take control of the settlement. To Poutrincourt, who felt personally betrayed by the Jesuits, it appeared that Biard was a Protestant sympathizer who collaborated with France’s rival powers. In accusing Biard, Poutrincourt and Lescarbot turned a dispute over the relationship between religion and trade into a larger global conflict between rival European powers.

Although the debates that followed the destruction of Port Royal in the fall of 1613 seem to be merely an extension of the same narrative, they actually influenced Biard’s vision of a Jesuit mission in a new way. The tense relationship between trade and religion that Biard sought to avoid during his tenure at Port Royal led him privately to conclude that future missionaries had to work independently. But when Poutrincourt and Lescarbot accused Biard of being anti-French and anti-Catholic after Biard’s return to France in 1613, the entire Jesuit enterprise in New France could have easily come under fire. Because they accused Biard of crimes many would have considered especially heinous, Biard had to respond with a vigorous defense. In so doing, he publically re-asserted the credibility of the Jesuit order in North America and officially outlined his vision of how future Jesuit missions should operate. Although he had no direct influence over later Jesuit policy, the actions and decisions of many subsequent Jesuits fell in line with Biard’s suggestions. By forcing Biard to defend himself, Poutrincourt and Lescarbot helped the Jesuit to formulate explicit recommendations of strategies for future missionaries.

Poutrincourt instigated the vicious feud in his *Factum du Procès entre Jean de Biencourt chevalier Sieur de Poutrincourt Baron de S. Just appellant d’une part et Pierre Biard, Énemond Massé et Consorts soy disans Prestres de le Société de Jéses, intimez*, in which he explained how the Jesuits ruined his colony. While purchasing supplies in France in 1611, the Marquise de Guercheville reasserted her power in her partnership with Poutrincourt and eventually obtained a massive land claim from de Monts. After Brother du Thet reported on the state of the Jesuits in Acadia in 1612, she cut ties with Poutrincourt completely. To Poutrincourt, all of these losses were the fault of the Jesuits. Of course, he was not powerful enough to challenge the Marquise,

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so the Jesuits became a logical target for his frustrations. In 1614, Poutrincourt submitted charges against Biard and Massé to the court. He continually derided the Jesuits, accusing them of “tormenting” non-Catholics, “scandalizing” the crew, and causing general dissension. Finally, he detailed the breakdown of relations, the refusal of the Jesuits to cooperate with Biencourt, and Biard’s dramatic excommunication of his son from the Church. As evidence, Poutrincourt included various letters, including one in which Biencourt asserted that “the Jesuit Fathers are very haughty men who want to subject us under their yoke.” Although Poutrincourt submitted the suit, there is no evidence that he ever actually took official legal action. Legally, Biard was seemingly off the hook.

In order to protect himself and his order, Biard wrote the Relation of 1616 as a direct response to these charges. He divided the Relation into two parts: the first details his perceptions of the native peoples, their customs, and the geography of New France, of which he, like other European settlers, wrongly considered the Indians a part. The second part outlines his account of how events unfolded at Port Royal. It is not until Chapter XII that Biard admitted his real purpose in writing his Relation. “Now inasmuch as this slanderer and factionist, beginning with the embarkation of the Jesuits, pursues them … everywhere spying them out,” wrote Biard. He concluded that “we must of necessity go back upon our route, to defend the innocent and to give a true account of their actions and conduct.” After revealing his political agenda, Biard outlined the implications of his objective: what “the wise Reader will derive from this, is that the experiences, actions, journeys, and accidents which we shall relate to him” will help him or her “understand much better what these countries are, their nature, the means of helping them, and the vicissitudes of such expeditions and enterprises.” At the same time, Biard argued, the reader’s “discretion will be thus greatly strengthened … through experience with these particular circumstances and practices.” Biard acknowledged the bias in his work in outlining his real motivation in writing the Relation, and as an extension, the way that his interpretation of native people was inherently shaped by his quarrels with Biencourt. Nonetheless, historians have used this Relation as a major source in understanding native people.

Biard constantly defended his credentials in religious affairs. In so doing, he hoped to demonstrate that he should have had greater authority over those who ventured to New France as

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87 Campeau, Jesuit Mission to the Sourigouis in Acadia, 314-46.
entrepreneurs. “I am truly grieved to say it,” begins one of his defenses, “and would willingly be silent were it not necessity which constrains me, because either through malice or very gross ignorance, they accuse the Jesuits of things in which nevertheless they have seemed truly sincere and faithful servants of God.” Right away, he pointed out the way Biencourt attacked the Jesuits for insisting on proper Catechism before baptism. Biard indicted Biencourt while at the same time venting his frustrations toward Protestants, saying “we live in an age in which any one who knows how to read is, in his own opinion, a great Theologian; and whoever has the least care for his own soul, believes himself to be the most proper person to rule the Church of God.” He deplored the way the Jesuits were characterized as “squandering our Master’s inheritance” by the authors of the Factum. Despite the opposition, Biard described how he pressed on, trusting himself to God “among the dangers and changes of this life, such as will be often seen here,” continuing his mission “in which there is a great deal of work and very little honor.” He emphasized God’s role in his mission while carefully making himself look as if he was uninterested in consolidating power for Jesuit missionaries. Biard certainly thought his work more “honorable” than that of his trading partners, who were in New France purely for economic gain.89

Although he did not return to Port Royal in 1610, Marc Lescarbot responded to Biard in 1618, defending his close friend from the Jesuit counter-attack. Although he was the primary advocate of Poutrincourt’s actions, Lescarbot also hated the Jesuits and, like many Frenchmen in the sixteenth century, considered their order a part of a scheme for global power. In 1610, Catholic officials threw Lescarbot in prison for his anti-Jesuit writings. His general hatred for Jesuits guided his works and could very well have had an impact on the way his friends, including Poutrincourt, viewed the order.90

Using first-hand accounts from Poutrincourt, Lescarbot questioned Biard’s motives.91 Lescarbot’s final appraisal of the Jesuit motives was that “it is evident to one who can read between the lines that the Fathers after spying out the land wished to have their share of the cake and to reign under the borrowed name of a lady.” “Whether by zeal or greediness to see and know everything and to establish themselves,” accused Lescarbot, the Jesuits fought for their

89 Biard, “Relation of 1616,” in Jesuit Relations, 3:147, 151, 159, 163.
91 Biggar, 683.
right to evangelize Acadia’s natives. Furthermore, Jesuit motives could not be trusted; although the King’s assassin was still a mystery, “some too credulous English accused the Jesuits.” Lescarbot painstakingly demonstrated the Christian miracles that took place in New France before the arrival of the Jesuits, and wondered to his audience why the two men, if they were truly zealous, wanted to disrupt the successful mission that was already underway before their arrival. He also wondered why the Jesuits insisted on taking a share of the mission’s finances, claiming that “aid should first have been given to set up the State, without which the Church cannot exist.” “There was already ill-feeling between the Jesuits and their Captain [Poutrincourt],” argued Lescarbot, because the Jesuits “have a finger in too many pies.” Furthermore, according to Lescarbot’s *Histoire*, Biard pressed his own administrative role “even to excess and importunity,” despite Poutrincourt’s alleged reminder to Biard: “Show me the path to heaven: I will give you good guidance on earth.”\(^{92}\)

Lescarbot certainly did not trust the Jesuits’ motives, and he blamed the Jesuits for the colony’s failure. By 1611, Poutrincourt had “been tricked by all sorts and conditions of people” and “his estate was greatly exhausted.” Though unsubstantiated in other accounts and later discredited by Champlain, Lescarbot claimed that Biard supported numerous selfish projects including du Pont’s attempt to overthrow Biencourt. He also alleged that Biard sought to develop Jesuit authority over Poutrincourt, and, most interestingly, that Biard planned a subsequent escape to Spain. Finally, after the destruction of Saint Sauveur and Port Royal, Lescarbot concurred with Poutrincourt that Biard was in the employ of the English. “There is reason to believe that he was the guide of the English in this matter,” for Biard, “one of the clever fellows of his order, made a speech, trying to persuade [French settlers] to go off with the English, saying that they were good fellows.” Amid all of this, God served justice to the Jesuits in Lescarbot’s *Histoire*: “Here the first quarrels arose,” he began, “which were the advance-guard of their defeat and ruin. In this one may surely see the effect of the judgment of God, who could not approve of this enterprise after so many wrongs done to M. de Poutrincourt.”\(^{93}\)

More damningly, Lescarbot referenced a larger Iberian Jesuit conspiracy. In his 1618 account, he argued that Poutrincourt’s complaints against the Jesuits rang worldwide and that the Jesuits were the spies of the Portuguese. He quoted the complaints of Chinese elders living

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\(^{93}\) Ibid, 57, 61, 62, 67.
among Jesuit missionaries: “they (i.e. the Jesuits) may be the spies of others (i.e. the Portuguese), by means of whom they endeavour to spy out our secrets.” Lescarbot was clearly sympathetic to this theory, citing the Dieppe merchants’ concern that the French Jesuits were merely servants of Spain. Playing off of common late sixteenth century fears of a Jesuit – Iberian conspiracy, Lescarbot used Biard’s escape narrative to make his accusations. In Biard’s account, after destroying Port Royal, his captors sentenced him to execution in Virginia. A severe Atlantic storm blew their ship off course during their return voyage, and they never reached the Chesapeake. Instead, the ship drifted eastward until the English found themselves washed ashore on the Portuguese Azores. Suddenly, the English were the ones accused of piracy. To make matters worse, they knew that their taking of Jesuit prisoners would offend the Catholic Portuguese. The English asked Biard to remain hidden during their stay at the Azores. In exchange, they brought him to England, where officials permitted him to return to France.

Lescarbot certainly exaggerated his claims of a global Jesuit conspiracy. He hated Biard from the moment Henri IV assigned the Jesuits to Port Royal. It is no surprise, then, that in the same year that he was thrown in prison for writing about the Jesuits, he sent a letter to de Guercheville and Marie de Medici lauding the accomplishments of Fléché in an attempt to stop Biard and Massé’s assignment to Port Royal. It is certainly not shocking that he blamed the Jesuits for the destruction of Port Royal nor is it surprising that he easily fit them into his conspiracy theory. Because of his sentiments, many believed Lescarbot to be the true author of the Factum, though historians agree that it was actually Poutrincourt. Lescarbot’s malicious recounting of Port Royal’s history is as biased as Biard’s. Both wrote with conviction and for a particular purpose, describing the same events quite differently.

Biard remained actively engaged in missionary politics until his 1622 death in Avignon at the age of 46. He never returned to New France but instead travelled to southern France to evangelize among native Frenchmen. It is interesting to consider the way Jesuit Father Joseph Jouvency characterized Biard one hundred years later in his “Eulogy and Life of Father Peter Biard.” In his eulogy, he wrote little about Biard’s endeavours in Canada and instead focused on his sacrifices and services to his countrymen. “Biard divided among the most needy of them,” wrote Jouvency, “depriving himself of daily sustenance, that he might do a kindness to others.”

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94 Ibid, 59, 60, 72.
96 Biggar, 687, 691.
He went a step further by quoting a Biard biographer who characterized him as having endured hardship in New France, but “still experienced nothing more brutal than the Heretics,” upon whom “he took vengeance in a holy manner for the injury inflicted by the Heretics; during the rest of his life, he sought with the greatest enthusiasm to win to life those by whom he had been devoted to death.” But if Biard was so instrumental in constructing a foundation for French missionary work in North America, why did later Jesuits remember him as a martyr fighting in Europe against the brutality of “the Heretics”?97

A closer examination of the end of Biard’s life demonstrates why the man once accused of Protestant collusion became known for his opposition to “the pretend religion.” Although he served as a missionary in southern France, the King appointed Biard as a military chaplain when renewed hostilities between Protestants and Catholics broke out towards the end of Biard’s life. Perhaps Biard, who grew up during the height of the wars of religion in the late sixteenth century, simply understood it as his Catholic duty to suppress Protestantism. After all, Catholics in late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century France already hated Protestants, and Biard may have found military service in the name of Catholicism an appropriate position. The encounter with the Dieppe merchants constantly recurred throughout his writings, and he commonly spoke out against Protestants in his early letters. There is the possibility, however, that his experiences with Poutrincourt and Lescarbot increased his anti-Protestant zeal. Biard, finding himself accused of collaborating with English Protestants in 1614 and again in 1618, might have found military service against the Hugenots the most resounding defense of his loyalty. His remembrance as a fighter of heretics demonstrates how the wars of religion constantly laid in the background of Biard’s experiences in New France, further shaping his perceptions and missionary strategies.98

Amid his new duties as missionary in southern France and chaplain of the King’s army, Biard continued the contentious dialogue between himself, Poutrincourt, and Lescarbot in an “Apologie” meant to defend himself from Lescarbot’s recently updated Histoire. Unfortunately, he never published the “Apologie.” Although it would have shed light on how Biard’s experiences in military service against Protestants influenced his thinking, the document is no

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98 Thomas Campell verified Biard’s involvement as a military chaplain in 1907 in the Catholic Encyclopedia. In his article, he also claimed that despite the animosity, Lescarbot and Biard eventually set aside their differences and became friends toward the end of Biard’s life.
longer extant. 99 Perhaps it would have shown how the wars of religion and his service as missionary among French people further shaped his strategies, but some historians speculate the document might also have served as a reconciliation piece between Biard and Lescarbot, who historian Thomas Campell suggests later became friends. Despite our inability to learn more from its contents or tone, the very existence of the “Apologie” is still important; the fact that the debate continued into the 1620s demonstrates how contentious the charges were and how contested the history of Port Royal was to its participants. Since the “Apologie” has been lost, the Relation of 1616 stands as Biard’s last word, forcing the historian to construct a narrative based on a document that is a product of very specific circumstances.

The Relation of 1616 clearly stemmed from tumultuous circumstances, leaving any historian in a precarious position. On the one hand, it contains valuable ethnographic information about Indians recorded by Biard as well as a detailed history of Port Royal between 1610 and 1613. On the other hand, Biard filtered his observations of native people through his own European lens, and he intended for his descriptive narrative to defend himself against rather serious accusations made by Poutrincourt. Only a full understanding and acknowledgement that the Relation of 1616 is the product of a specific historical circumstance tempers its limitations, making it a bountiful source. Yet historians have most commonly lumped Biard in with other Jesuits when writing native histories without recognizing the significant difference between his mission and those of his successors nor the ways Biard’s mission influenced later Jesuit strategies.

The most notable history of Port Royal that utilizes the Relation of 1616 is Lucien Campeau’s 1967 Monumenta Novae Franciae, Vol 1: La Première Mission d’Acadie, 1602–1616. After scouring the Institut Historique de la Compagnie de Jésus in Rome, Campeau, a Jesuit himself, collected all written documents associated with the Port Royal mission from its original inception through the aftermath of Biard’s Relation of 1616. The 221 page introduction Campeau wrote for this massive volume comprises the only significant history dedicated solely to the Port Royal mission since 1710. At times, Campeau’s account shows flashes of scholarly sophistication in understanding the history of religions. But the foundation of his work was inherently paternalistic towards the Indians, stemming from a more literal interpretation of

99 Campeau, “Biard, Pierre.”

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Biard’s often biased ethnographic observations and a failure to understand Biard’s actions in the context of his struggle with Biencourt.

Campeau followed his analysis of early explorers in New France with several chapters describing the Micmacs, Indians whom Fr. Biard referred to as the “‘Souriquois.’” The chapters provide a surprisingly in-depth analysis of the customs and history of the native population in the region. After detailing native practices, Campeau delved into an assessment of native “religious psychology,” acknowledging that in 1967, his subject was “a field of investigation that has not as yet been explored to any great extent.” Yet Campeau, not having had “the special technical preparation required for this subject,” attempted to explain native religious psychology by employing the writings of Biard and others.100

Though he incorporated the observations of Cape Breton seigneur Nicolas Denys and Fr. Chrétien Le Clerq, Campeau defended his reliance on Biard’s Relation of 1616. “Biard was surely a methodical and careful observer,” Campeau wrote. Like Thwaites, Campeau believed that Biard, as a missionary, had “to understand the natives and to discern their natural qualities and their rather natural vices in order to find later the way into their minds and hearts.” Finally, Campeau considered Biard’s work essential because Biard knew the Micmacs before “significant European influences” permeated their society.101 Even this assertion is contentious; more recent historians have traced early trade between European fishermen and Indians to the early sixteenth century. Salisbury even claimed that before Biard arrived at Port Royal, the Indians “were no longer living the autonomous existence they had known before European fishermen began plying their shores.”102

Campeau’s study takes the Eurocentric biases found in the texts he studied quite literally. “The natives did not have any idea of an imperious or lucrative authority,”103 he claimed. He expressed his own disgust at native practices by concurring with the descriptions he found in his research: “they never washed their clothes,” and “their place of residence soon became a garbage dump.”104 Father Biard described native medical practices as hastening death and amplifying suffering; Campeau attested to their barbarity by denouncing them for not “seeing anything

101 Ibid, 21, 22.
102 Salisbury 51-56, 70.
103 Campeau, The Souriquois, 27.
104 Ibid, 53.
immoral in all of this.”\textsuperscript{105} After reading the accounts of Biard, Denys and le Clerq, Campeau concluded that “like the rest of their relatives in eastern Canada,” they were “essentially ‘children of the forest,’” but he expressed his paternalism by demonstrating how “no human type, perhaps, was ever better suited to its natural environment than the Souriquois.”\textsuperscript{106} In describing their religious psychology, Campeau argued that it was “under the influence of Christian conceptions” that abstract thought permeated a native language that originally had no analytic capability. But at the same time, Campeau does show some semblance of scholarly sophistication by attempting to reconcile the writings of Lescarbot, Champlain, Biard, Denys, and le Clerq with Micmac legends.\textsuperscript{107}

Campeau’s literal analysis of Biard’s letters did not consider Biard’s own self-fashioning through his understandings of native people, despite Campeau’s clear understanding of Port Royal’s history. At the end of his description of the Micmacs, Campeau revealed his purpose: “It is said, for example,” Campeau started, “that Christianity…left nothing but a great void and a great insecurity in their hearts. \textit{We immediately challenge these claims.}”\textsuperscript{108} It was the “evils of civilization,” not the Gospel, that “[have] a really catastrophic effect” on the Indians.\textsuperscript{109} Perhaps Campeau felt especially loyal to his own order because his conclusion is rather apologetic to the Jesuits. Instead of analyzing how Biard’s observations reflected European expectations of the ‘Other,’ Campeau solidified Biard’s biases in his history.

Lucien Campeau’s \textit{La Première Mission d’Acadie} is paradoxical because it overlooked the explosive political situation which informed Biard’s writing, a choice that undermines Campeau’s in-depth research and nuanced comprehension of Port Royal’s dynamic history. He ended his study with two chapters outlining the history of the mission in minute detail. He then collected and bound every letter, relation, history, and miscellaneous writing he could find pertaining to the mission, including the \textit{Factum}, the \textit{Relation of 1616}, and the writings of Lescarbot. Despite including an analysis of Biard’s encounter with the Indians and a comprehensive history of the mission, he failed to look at how the political circumstances informed Biard’s observations.

\textsuperscript{105} Campeau, \textit{The Souriquois}, 55.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, 59–60.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, 66–67.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, 92, emphasis mine.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, 93
Campeau’s study focused solely on Port Royal; other historians have used Biard to describe the Indian encounter without reconciling their interpretations with an understanding of the circumstances. Early historians, like Reuben Thwaites, who translated and edited the Jesuit Relations in 1901, still preferred the term “savages” to describe the Indians. Margaret J. Leahey’s 1995 study of native languages and Jesuits presented a reductionist interpretation of the Relation of 1616. Although she was correct in asserting that “[Biard’s] experiences with the language to a large extent simply confirmed what he already ‘knew,’”\(^{110}\) she does not mention the tension that existed over language and baptism between Biard and his interpreter, Biencourt. Nor does she acknowledge that Biard actively sought to replace Biencourt with his rival, du Pont. She described Biard’s anticipation that his European readers would be disappointed in the low number of converts in his Relation of 1616, but she attributed the low yield to a mere language barrier. This conclusion neglects other explanations that come to light by fully exploring the political situation: Biard defended the need to learn native languages before conversion in response to accusations from Poutrincourt that Biard’s conversion policy undermined Port Royal as a trading post. Biard did believe that future missionaries needed to learn the language of native peoples. The Relation of 1616, however, was a response to the accusations made in the Factum, and historians cannot ignore the political nature of Biard’s adamant defense. By grouping Biard with later Jesuits, Leahey removed him from his context and universalized his experience. Fortunately, this was a minor point in her work, and did not undermine her overall thesis as some historians, like James P. Ronda, have done.\(^{111}\)

In his 1972 “The European Indian: Jesuit Civilization Planning in New France,” Ronda reached an erroneous conclusion by interpreting Biard’s writings without an understanding of the mission’s history. “Biard evidently entertained serious doubts that people could ever become genuine converts,” he asserted. He claimed that Biard felt that “little or nothing could be done to Christianize and Europeanize Indians whose mental and social characteristics were those of animals.”\(^{112}\) In reality, Biard, who broke with tradition by treating his experience as a back-and-forth encounter, was not overly concerned with “Europeanizing” the Indians. Furthermore, Biard went to great lengths in his letters and Relation of 1616 to assure readers that he thought

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\(^{111}\) Ibid, 109–12, Pierre Biard, Relation of 1616.

the missionary endeavor in New France was both worthwhile and possible. Not only was “this country another France or Spain to be cultivated,” but Biard was adamant in conveying that “the attempts which we have already made so many times for a hundred and ten years, obliges us to continue.” “Let it be enough,” he continued, “to keep before our eyes the vision of these poor natives, these images of our God as we are, and as capable of enjoying him, these companions of our own species, and almost of the same quality as we.” Biard clearly did not advocate giving up; he attributed his missionary failure to his capture by the English. Without properly contextualizing the *Relation of 1616*, historians like Ronda will find it to be an extremely limiting source.

Despite its limitations, the *Relation of 1616* is a monumentally important work that demonstrates the development of a unique Jesuit missionary strategy. Because Poutrincourt and Lescarbot forced Biard to defend himself, he was able to write a detailed guide for later generations of priests. First, the *Relation* explicated the bitter relationship that existed between the Jesuits and secular authority that eventually deteriorated into wild claims of a global conspiracy. The arguments between Poutrincourt, Biencourt, Lescarbot, and Biard were certainly fresh in the minds of Jesuits returning to Canada in 1625. The *Relation* also clearly defined Biard’s personal advice about how Jesuit missions should be run: the missionaries had to know the Indians in order for the Indians to know God. To do this, the Jesuits had to move away from colonial centers and live among the Indians. Biard evidenced this with his own lengthy ethnographic observations, a tradition that existed throughout the tenure of the Jesuit missionary project in New France.

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Conclusion: The Natal Days

The conflicts at Port Royal were the product of quarrels over the purpose of the mission, but Poutrincourt, Biencourt, Lescarbot, and Biard turned Port Royal into something more. Instead of recognizing Port Royal as an epic power struggle between men with very different ideas about what New France should be, the participants turned Port Royal into an extension of the imperial wars and religious strife that plagued the European continent. By constructing their histories in this way, they made their newly-found conclusions real to their readers. It was easy for seventeenth-century French subjects to understand the mission in terms of a battle between different Christian churches or European powers. Despite these interpretations, Port Royal actually collapsed under the tension that existed between trade and religion.

In 1710, one hundred years after Biard and Massé arrived at Dieppe, Joseph Jouvency, S.J. published a new history of the failed mission. By the early eighteenth century, Jesuit missions had expanded throughout the Canadian wilderness. In Jouvency’s estimation, there were over thirty “prosperous and well-equipped Missions of our Society,” stretching south from Quebec into Iroquois country and as far west as the Mississippi River. Jouvency acknowledged that “the Canadian Mission itself, now flourishing with so many settlements … did not take shape until 1625.” But after a century, he marked Port Royal and the work of Biard and Massé as “the natal days, full of hardships and dangers,” emphasizing that Port Royal was truly influential in shaping the Jesuit missionary experience in New France.114

Biard’s experiences set a foundation for the future in several ways. European interpretations of each other and the breakdown of relations at Port Royal had a profound effect on the Indians there. Since both the Jesuits and the traders came to view each other in terms of the wars of religions and European power struggles, it became increasingly difficult for either side to understand Indians on their own terms. While struggling to maintain power over one another, the men at Port Royal created a power dynamic over Indians that placed them into a familiar European Christian discourse. Once Europeans placed indigenous Americans into Christian categories, it became impossible for missionaries to come to terms with native cosmology or to even consider that indigenous ways of life might constitute “religions.” Furthermore, debates over how to catechize properly and when to baptize Indians stemmed

directly from different visions of Port Royal’s purpose. Biard’s unwavering position that baptism could only follow proper catechesis was a direct response to Biencourt’s employment of mass baptisms for fundraising purposes. His opinions on baptism helped him break from the traditional predisposed discursive prejudices by attempting to understand the Indians through his unsuccessful efforts to learn their language and culture. More significantly, his attempt to get to know the Indians set a precedent for future generations of Jesuits to engage in ethnography similar to his own. Finally, Biard discovered that intertwining a religious mission with a secular project was a formula for disaster. Future missionaries would be better off establishing missions that treated religious conversion as their sole purpose.

In 1625, Father Charles Lalemant, S.J., arrived in New France to take the place of the Recollect missionaries already there. His arrival marked the beginning of a large-scale Jesuit missionary endeavor that continued in Canada until the Pope disbanded the Order at the end of the eighteenth century. Lalemant established a base of operations in Quebec but sent his Jesuit missionaries deep into the interior to build settlements among the tribes. This gave the Jesuits considerable freedom to execute their own strategies, which often echoed the recommendations of Biard. Lalemant certainly understood Biard’s arguments, and explained that “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.” More interestingly, Lalemant claimed that upon asking the Indians “whether they wanted to be instructed,” “they all answered that they did. They are waiting for us to build; and it is for us, in the meantime, to cultivate their affection and to learn their language.” After 1625, the Jesuit missions in New France held firm in their dedication to learning native languages and customs, devoting time to proper catechism, and sending its missionaries to dwell among indigenous people as ethnographers. By operating much like Biard would have liked to, they represented a clear break with sixteenth and seventeenth century missionary orthodoxy as proposed by Lescarbot decades earlier. Consequently, the Jesuits re-shaped the traditional way Europeans understood new people through their willingness to approach the Indians, at least in part, on their own terms.115

Although Biard died in 1622 and took no direct part in planning future activities in New France, his clearly left a lasting legacy. Among Lalemant’s companions were Énemond Massé,

who had spent two years with Biard at Port Royal, and Jean de Brébeuf, who became an important missionary among the Wendat in the 1630s. The presence of both Brébeuf and Massé in Quebec shows the direct lineage between the Acadian mission and the larger mission near the Great Lakes. The organization of future missions demonstrated that what had unfolded at Port Royal over twenty years earlier undoubtedly had some effect on the way these Jesuits understood their purpose in New France. Biard and Lescarbot’s writings together played a role in shaping that future. Biard’s mission might have ended in failure, but his vision of how a Jesuit mission must run lived on in New France, influencing the interpretations of later Jesuits and perpetuating a power structure that had all too real consequences for indigenous North Americans.  

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