

DISCERNING DREAMS IN NEW FRANCE:
JESUIT RESPONSES TO NATIVE AMERICAN DREAMS
IN THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Recent scholarship on the seventeenth-century Jesuit-Amerindian encounter in New France has emphasized the cultural disruptiveness and loss of the various native groups as a result of the missionary project. Crucial to understanding this loss of traditional Amerindian culture, however, is a parallel understanding of the cultural and intellectual forces coming from Europe which shaped and often restricted the Jesuits' attitudes toward native customs. Examining the first fifty years of the cross-cultural encounter through the lens of dream interpretation, this paper argues that the Jesuits made several adjustments to their initial assumptions and responses toward native dreams. Although the Jesuits originally denounced all native dreams as superstitious, the advent of native convert dreams forced the Jesuits to recognize the placement of at least some native dreams within traditional Christian categories of visions and miracles, even though some of these dreams retained characteristics which they condemned in traditional native dreams. Over time, however, the Jesuits' accommodating policy drew criticisms from competing missionaries. Because the dispute centered on events in China rather than Canada, the acceptability of convert dreams was resolved first by a silence on the issue in public records and later by a retraction of the papal condemnation of the Chinese Rites ruling and certain accommodationist practices. Ultimately, the issue of dreams reveals the deep tensions faced by the Jesuits in evaluating and accepting practices, even in part, that

did not fit precisely into orthodox categories during a period when the Catholic Church, an institution that, like many other European centers of power, strove to buttress their institutional authority and to reduce the varieties of acceptable worship and belief in the face of enormous expansion in intellectual ideas and varieties of cultural practices around the world.

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INTRODUCTION

As any scholar of colonial New France or the Jesuit missions of New France well knows, the European missionaries who encountered the people of the northeastern woodlands were horrified by many native customs and spiritual practices, denouncing their superstitions and wild pagan rites. However the story of Jesuits reactions to dreams is more complex than such a simple rejection implies, and the Jesuits themselves struggled to fit native dreaming beliefs into their carefully constructed European categories. Because both Catholic Jesuits and the various Amerindian tribes of the St. Lawrence valley held firm beliefs about the active and spiritual power—for good and evil—of spirits in nature, dreams provided a unique cultural bridge as well as cultural barrier to cross-cultural interaction.

When they first arrived, the missionaries rejected all native dreaming practices, but as several of their converts began to have dreams or visions, they began cautiously to accept a few extraordinary native Christian dreams, attempting to fit them within the sacred tradition of mystical encounters. However, about the time that the Jesuit Fathers began their guarded approval of certain convert dreams, they stopped reporting on dreams altogether. For nearly a decade the Jesuits maintained a public silence on their spiritual direction of native converts until, in the 1650s, they once again reported on the miraculous wonders God was working in their midst. Although they continued to maintain their rejection of traditional native dreaming practices, the Jesuits' final

acceptance of convert dreams incorporated a far broader inclusion of the very night dreams and visionary messengers than their earlier attitudes would suggest. In the beginning the priests had been careful to circumvent in their first converts, but gradually they demonstrated a greater readiness, almost excitement, to see miraculous significance in their converts' dreams. How do we account for the tortuous journey of their policy on dreams? It is difficult to explain their shifting judgments solely as a function of their goal to convert the Canadian tribes or even because of the social and political crises multiplying in New France. While many changes in the practice of evangelism and spiritual development can be mapped along with the growth of knowledge of the geography and ethnography of the new world the Jesuits found themselves inhabiting, other changes are more difficult to explain. At least part of the motivation and direction of the missionaries' dream strategy can be explained by the social and religious developments in France, Catholic Europe and other international Jesuit missions, particularly the Chinese mission, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the end, the story of Jesuit dream interpretation among their native audiences is a lesson, perhaps slowly and poorly learned, that native forms of spirituality even among converts fit awkwardly into the categories developed locally in Europe through centuries of practice and debate.

Before turning to the evidence, however, it is necessary first to paint the backdrop and present the actors of this drama. Since this project is primarily an investigation of the Jesuit mentality in New France, shifting in reaction to circumstances and needs, it is essential to understand both the drive of the Jesuits and the particular spiritual and intellectual focus they brought to bear on colonial forms of hybridized spirituality.

Because they attracted a wide variety of zealous members from many nationalities and with diverse ideological and spiritual backgrounds, the Jesuit order sought very early in its institution to establish uniformity in goals, training, and spiritual disciplines. The great *Spiritual Exercises* of the founder Ignatius of Loyola of course formed the bedrock for Jesuit spirituality, but the interpretation of the *Exercises* was officially more intellectual than emotional and emphasized the mental practices of meditation more often than the affective practices of contemplation. While tongues of fire appeared to have descended upon zealous mystics in Spain and enflamed the passions and interest of thousands, the Jesuits tended toward a more Augustinian, less Franciscan approach to divine adoration. They were not merely contemplatives who prayed and read spiritual texts as they communed with God in a monastic cell. They were *active* contemplatives, attempting to serve the Church in the secular¹ sphere while maintaining the devotion and piety of their monastic counterparts.

This order, founded at the height of sixteenth century Catholic efforts to stem the tide of the Reformation, aimed its secular activities toward renewal within the Church and evangelism without. Two of the Jesuits' key undertakings, education and missions, emphasized these goals. Jesuit education sought to strengthen the Catholic worldview of Europe's youth through a scholastic curriculum steeped in the theology of Aquinas and Augustine and the natural philosophy of Aristotle. Both education and missions served to

¹ The term 'secular' does not refer here to a non-religious sphere, but to the ecclesiastical designation of the sphere or influence or occupations of religious—clerics of regular or monastic orders. Secular status allowed members access to or interaction with the world rather than requiring them to withdraw into the walls of a monastery like regular orders who followed the example of the rules of St. Benedict. Along with the Jesuits, the Franciscans, Dominicans and Carmelites are all orders with secular branches or associations.

weaken the defenses of heretical doctrine within Catholic and many Protestant regions at home and also the pagan belief systems abroad. The Jesuit practice of seeking allies and converts among the wealthy and powerful earned them distrust even among devout Catholics. Their optional fourth vow of obedience to any special task the Pope might assign to them also generated uneasiness and suspicion. Within France where the Gallican Church preferred to distance itself from the absolute authority of the Pope and Roman hierarchy, these anxieties only grew with Jesuit involvement, real or perceived, in the late sixteenth-century wars of religion and in the assassination attempts on Henry IV. As the new rigorous and intellectually challenging schools of the Jesuits became popular and their missionary enterprises expanded, the Jesuits found themselves in direct competition with other powerful missionary orders and Catholic intellectuals in Europe. Tied now to colonial enterprises through their missions, to governments as confessors and advisors, and to the public through preaching and education, the Jesuits exerted enormous influence even as they drew considerable criticism.²

The Canadian mission and the French colonial endeavor that enabled it both began as ideas, hatched in the turmoil and passion of the sixteenth century and unable to find permanent success until the seventeenth century. Concrete plans for a joint mercantile-missionary venture began under Henry IV and finally came to fruition in 1611 when two Jesuits arrived in the small French outpost along the St. Lawrence River valley.

² For general information on the Jesuits, see also John W. O'Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993) and "How the First Jesuits Became Involved in Education" in *The Jesuit Ratio Studiorum : 400th anniversary perspectives* edited by Vincent J. Duminuco (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 56-74; Lynn A. Martin, *The Jesuit Mind: The Mentality of an Elite in Early Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Jonathan Wright, *God's Soldiers: A History of the Jesuits* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); and Eric Nelson, *The Jesuits and the Monarchy: Catholic Reform and Political Authority in France (1590-1615)* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 11-55, 77, 243.

The failure of the mission after only two years due to colonial raids from Virginian ships would overshadow the Jesuits' next venture too, and the mission reestablished in 1625 quickly came under attack and fell in 1629 to English forces. The slow and erratic beginnings of the Jesuit mission to New France did not meet with lasting success until 1632. By this time, the Jesuit Fathers had recognized the benefit of removing or gaining authority over their rivals, the Franciscan Recollet friars. But they also recognized the need for a deeper familiarity with the native customs and language of the peoples they met and sought to convert. After an internal dispute disrupted the Franciscan mission in New France, primary jurisdictional control was granted through the maneuvering of Cardinal Richelieu and paired the Jesuits with the colonial *Compagnie des Cent-Associés* under the leadership of devout colonial administrators.³

The new direction of the Jesuit mission toward cross-cultural education was developed by early missionary giants Charles Lalemant, Paul Le Jeune and Jean de Brébeuf. They saw that by living among the Montagnais and Huron villages and learning to understand their alien customs, the Jesuits might also better understand how to explain their own complex and foreign thoughts to native peoples. Working with Brébeuf among the sedentary Huron tribes were Paul Ragueneau, François Le Mercier, Isaac Jogues, Gabriel Lalemant (brother of Charles), Simon Le Moyne, Antoine Daniel, and Charles Garnier. Le Jeune and Charles Lalemant worked among the nomadic Algonkian tribes further east and were joined by Charles' distinguished uncle Jérôme Lalemant, Jaques Buteux and Jean De Quen. Of the Jesuits listed above, Brébeuf, Jogues, Daniel, Garnier

³ Luca Codignola, "Competing Networks: The Roman Catholic Clergy in French North America, 1610-58" *Canadian Historical Review* 80 (1999): 540-84.

and Gabriel Lalemant would all be martyred in the colonial warfare and Amerindian rivalries. Certainly the Jesuits' strategy worked, although their baptisms were more often of children and elderly and never so numerous as in many of the other notable Jesuit missions.⁴ Over the following decades they attempted to go further and learn more than had anyone before them, all in the pursuit of their mission. And while they succeeded far more than many of their contemporaries, where once these great leaders and martyrs of the "Heroic Age" were celebrated for their cultural achievement, recent scholarship has shown us just how short the Jesuits fell from their goal in comprehending the reasoning behind and value of the native customs about which they reported.

The target audiences of the Jesuits fell into two broad cultural groups, the Algonquian and Iroquoian linguistic families,⁵ which nevertheless shared many similar spiritual concepts and practices. The similarities between these groups made it possible for the Jesuits to speak about native dreaming practices in a general sense and to make judgments about them for all the groups they encountered, although they did recognize

⁴ The classic studies of the French Jesuit missions are Francis Parkman's *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century: France and England in North America* (Boston, MA : Little, Brown, and Co., 1886) from an English Protestant perspective and Camille de Rochemonteix's *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle France au XVIIe siècle d'après beaucoup des documents inédits* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1895) from a French Jesuit perspective. Some of the more recent influential studies include Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660* (Kinston, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987) and James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁵ The Iroquoian language group includes the Five Nations of allied Iroquois—the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and the Seneca—as well as the four clans of the Huron-Wendat, the Neutrals, the Tuscarora and the Nottoway. The Algonquian language groups spread much further north, south and west than the Iroquoian groups, but the tribes in this language group that the Jesuits encountered in their first decades of activity included the Montagnais or Naskapi (Innu), Micmac, Algonkin, Beothuk, and Ojibwe. The Algonquian language group also included the Mohegan, Pequot, and Narragansett in New England, the Ottawa, Pottawatomi and various Cree groups in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, Blackfoot, Arapaho and Cheyenne in the Great Plains, Shawnee, Kickapoo, Miami, Sac and Fox in the Midwest, and Powhatan, Lenape, Nanticoke, Mahican and others in the Southeast.

several differences between the various tribes, particularly in the associations of dreams with ritual and shamanism. Being nomadic, Algonquian tribes in the northeast interpreted dreams with greater individual significance, since family organization preceded tribal or band organization in importance. Dreaming was a practice of aligning one's own thoughts meditatively or through singing and dancing in order to see the knowledge and desires communicated to them through their own soul, which was a window into the spirit world by being connected to the "Great Man." Those who cultivated a superior degree of communication and spiritual discernment might gain reputations as spiritual leaders or shamans—"mystery men" or sometimes "dreamers." These respected individuals were spiritual ambassadors of a sort. Their communities believed they could at times predict the future, know the causes of disease and control the movements of animals through the power and charisma of their personal spirits and their familiarity with the spirits and spirit world. The process of acquiring a personal spirit aide generally began as a culturally defined and monitored vision quest, a rite aided by fasting and isolation from the community and often initiated and advised by the adolescent's elderly relatives. There were variations between the practices of each tribe and band which depended in part on tradition and the cultural expectations placed on spiritual leaders within each group, but also on the degree of skill achieved by each practitioner, so that the level of "professionality" was greatly influenced by the individual tribe and by circumstances.⁶

⁶ John James Collins, *Amerindian Religions: A Geographical Survey*, v. 1 (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991, 269-282.

The Huron and Iroquois tribes, as well as many of the Algonquian speaking groups which surrounded them in the St. Lawrence River valley, Great Lakes region and further south shared a similar belief about the importance of dreams as a means of contact with a protective spirit world. Although personal vision fasts and guiding spirits were less prominent, a community's social and political activities interconnected with most religious practices, so that even individual dreams representing a person's spiritual sickness could potentially infect or disrupt the safety of the entire community, requiring significant dreams to be dealt with by the entire group. Furthermore, spiritual groups and their rituals tended to be more hierarchical and structured, and were associated more precisely with medical confraternities or with feast ceremonies. Spiritual leaders were more professional than their Algonkian counterparts and were accorded rank by exceptional skill in using or interpreting dreams or sometimes by membership in family groups among whom dream skills appeared more frequently than in others. For example, the Iroquois False-Face confraternity limited membership to those who had proven their skill in dreaming.⁷ In short, the Jesuits quickly learned to associate native dreaming practices with animism and ritual worship of beings that, if they existed, could only be demonic.

For Amerindian groups of the northeastern woodlands and Great Lakes region, specific dreaming practices depended on the tribe and band and might be interpreted to have value whether commonplace and accidental or professionalized and skillfully directed. Dreaming practices encompassed a variety of dreams, visions, and meditative practices, some more ritualized than others. Unlike Europeans, there was no linearly

⁷ Ibid., 269-282.

structured hierarchy for the value of dreams or dreaming methods or states. Rather, an individual of any rank might lay claim to a significant dream and the individual, family or community would then decide how to evaluate the dream or vision and its consequences. Dreaming was a common practice among both lay and 'professional' members of a tribe and ideally served for the common benefit of the whole tribe. Although the dream as a spiritual communication theoretically could be used to bring harm or injury on others (for natives, a form of witchcraft), social customs governing the dreamers and their communal sharing of dreams at feasts or at need were designed to discourage such abuse and to bring benefits to the entire tribe, either through healing or through war and hunt prophecies. Community members might benefit not only from the dreamers' insights but also from taking social responsibility to maintain the health and prosperity of their tribe and the spirit world protecting them. To give up dream practices meant to abandon the welfare of the whole tribe, and the Jesuits' stance on dreaming met with reactions of surprise, dismay and anger among many native groups. Dreaming was essential to individual as well as tribal identity.

Often, significant dreams of community members were discussed during feast rituals in ceremonial fashion, and when the dreams indicated an ailment or disorder for any individual, all the members of the community attempted to interpret the dreamer's needs and thereby cure the dreamer's soul. More difficult medical illnesses, when this soul-appeasement and herbal remedies failed to heal, were placed in the care of shamans who would attempt to divine the nature of and then defeat the source of the illness, often of spiritual origin, by communications with the spirit world. Contemporaneous events and anxieties often determined the significance of a dream, whether a lay dream or a

shaman's dream, and if problems of individual health or community distress persisted—an epidemic, perhaps, or an overlong winter—dreams might be reinterpreted and dreams of any individual, as opposed to socially significant individuals, might take on greater communal importance.⁸

It is clear that both Amerindians and Europeans distinguished between a “dream” and a ‘vision.’ By comparison, natives valued both dreams and visions to a greater degree than the spiritual guardians in Europe who valued visions more than dreams of any sort, even truly prophetic or spiritually significant dreams. For example, Huron linguist John Steckley's Huron-English lexicon, which is itself based on studies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jesuit linguistic efforts, records the Huron word for ‘vision’ or ‘to have a vision’ as the infix *-atieronnon-*, and is related to the term *-nnon8aniend-* for ‘vision guessing.’ The Huron term for ‘daydream’ or ‘deep in thought’ (perhaps meditate?) is in contrast *-asta'riën-*. There are separate terms for ‘a dream’ (presumably a night dream), *-řach[r]-*, ‘to dream,’ *-atrasχ8a't*, and ‘to divine’ or ‘act as shaman,’ *atoχ8-*.⁹ Undoubtedly these terms mask a greater complexity in cultural understanding, given the significance of dreams in Huron community practices. However, this should suffice to show that, as in European languages, definite linguistic boundaries existed to designate different types of seeing, particularly spiritual seeing. The Jesuits, who relied upon their linguistic activities to understand the culture and communicate with the natives

⁸ Ibid., 300-324. See also Elisabeth Tooker, *Native North American Spirituality of the Eastern Woodlands: Sacred Myths, Dreams, Visions, Speeches, Healing Formulas, Rituals, and Ceremonials* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 69-103; Lucien Campeau, *The Jesuit Mission Among the Hurons, 1634-1650* (Bridgetown, N.S., Canada: Gontran Trottier, 2000), 71-84; Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*, 76-77, 79-83, 709-712.

⁹ John Steckley, *A Huron-English/English-Huron Dictionary (Listing Both Words and Noun and Verb Roots)* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 50, 53, 60, 333, 334, 386.

they encountered, would have been aware of these linguistic distinctions, though some or much of the cultural complexity eluded them. Nevertheless, because natives believed that spirits or an individual's soul communicated through all of these channels, the French priests still tended to refer to native dreams as a single and non-respectable type of practice. The reports sent back to Europe by the Jesuits tell their own story about how the Jesuits recognized, named and distinguished between native 'dreams' and 'visions' which will become relevant in later sections. The Jesuits, in evaluating native dreams, saw a greater distinction between dreams, which occur at night, and between visions or apparitions of spirits. By using the term 'dream' to designate most or all of native visionary experiences, they probably relegated many waking visions or meditative experiences to the category of 'dreams,' which for them meant more generally, 'night dreams' and were the result of physiological, not spiritual, influences. In order to mediate between these two competing value systems, I will use the terms 'dreaming practices' and 'dream' to refer to all kinds of native visions and dreams which the Jesuits discounted or were unwilling to declare with certainty as 'visions.' When the Jesuits judge the dreaming event to be a 'vision,' this will be noted in the text.

The Jesuits' use of language becomes particularly significant when considering that the primary documents recorded on this native-European spiritual encounter were not merely journals of the Jesuits written for posterity's sake, although this Order-wide requisite practice was in fact the origin of Jesuit documentation in general. In the early 1630s, two decades after the first attempt to begin a mission and several attempts later, the Jesuits in France realized the utility and advertising capabilities readily available if only they would edit and publish these missionary notes within France. The first few

years of Charles Lalemant's journals were written without expectation that they would be read outside of the Jesuits Order, but the subsequent relations were written and edited with a French public readership in mind. The Jesuits hoped that their intended audience would be edified by the news of the mission and so invested in the material needs of the spiritual enterprise.¹⁰ However, the nature of the published documents and several comments within the *Jesuit Relations* themselves suggest that the missionaries tailored their reports not only to what their readers might be most interested in but also away from matters that might cause problems.

Scholars have considered various possible biases of the *Relations*, primarily tendencies that would paint the mission or the Jesuit activities in a better light than was actually the case. While this probably occurred with some frequency, it seems highly unlikely that the Jesuits would have lied outright about much, if any, of the material they included. As the Jesuits were well aware, there were a sufficient number of hostile or skeptical observers of Jesuit activities who would be inclined to report blatant deception, eventualities that they might expect to do far more damage to the mission than would brutal honesty. It seems justifiable to question the nature of some aspects of the reports more than others, as have many recent scholars, particularly concerning suspiciously positive accounts, like the joy with which certain tribes apparently embraced the missionaries on first contact. However, most of their reports about dreams, being negative, did not need to be altered for their audience whose Christian conceptualizations would generally uphold the Jesuits' own evaluations. It seems far more likely that

¹⁰ On the general background of the publication of the *Relations*, see the article by archivist Lawrence Wroth, "The Jesuit Relations from New France." *Bibliographical Society of America, Papers* 30 (1936): 110-49.

damaging or problematic information would have been either absent or excised from the published reports. For example, the missionaries seem to have carefully avoided comments concerning local governors and tensions with colonial administrative policies, even on the occasions when they criticized control of alcohol sales and other detrimental practices of French colonists.¹¹

As to the accuracy of the words they retell, the Jesuits assured readers whose skepticism was made known to them that the natives did indeed speak as intelligently as the *Relations* depicted, and that the words they quoted from native speech were the words of the native speakers as closely translated as the Fathers could manage. In 1653, Francesco Bressani argued concerning the detailed and beautiful native dialogs they had reported that, “In France, people have believed that [native] speeches and addresses, which we reported in our relations were fictitious; but I can assert that most of these, when translated into another language, are much less powerful than in their own.”¹² In general I will take what the Jesuits reported as honestly as they must have intended it, since this is an examination of Jesuit perceptions and behaviors, and will emphasize instead the caution of the Jesuits to publicize information in their reports that might be considered troublesome.

¹¹ Cornelius Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976). Camille de Rochemonteix, the Jesuit scholar who first undertook an examination of the missions to New France using both the published *Relations* and the extensive and unpublished archival material then accessible to only a few, commented that only material that was edifying to the mission was published. He argues that Jesuit discussions of scandals and problems would have simply been food for scandal. See Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*, xvi.

¹² Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: travels and explorations of the Jesuit missionaries in New France, 1610-1791* (Cleveland: Burrows Bros. Co., 1896-1901), 38: 261-3. Hereafter this source will be referred to as *Jesuit Relations*.

REJECTING THE NATURAL

Recent scholarship has tended to criticize the Jesuit missionaries, sometimes harshly and other times gently, for their colonial attitudes, particularly their cultural myopia, intellectual snobbery and racist practices.¹³ While there is little doubt that these qualities existed in abundance during the missions, it is difficult to imagine how the Jesuits might have acted differently, given their own cultural background with its strictures on religious practice and almost obsessive focus on dissection and categorization of ideas and nature.

Such a predictably harsh stance from the Jesuits certainly existed on the issue of dreams. Given post-Reformation fears about unorthodox beliefs and disunifying sources of spiritual authority, Jesuits' negative reactions seem remarkably predictable. Missionary efforts to preach Catholicism led them to mock native dreaming practices as a means of denying the spiritual content of "natural" dreams and to attack the spiritual authority of shamans whose dreams and rituals provided a competing route to spiritual enlightenment. The Jesuits, steeped in scholastic theology and Aristotelian natural philosophy, used rational and natural arguments to demystify native beliefs about nature

¹³ Some major works with critical perspectives include Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650* (Kinston, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Bruce Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic*; James Axtell, *The Invasion Within*; Kenneth M. Morrison, *The Solidarity of Kin: Ethnohistory, Religious Studies, and the Algonkian-French Religious Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); Morrison, "Discourse and the Accommodation of Values: Toward a Revision of Mission History" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 (1985): 365-82; and Allan Greer, "Colonial Saints: Gender, Race, and Hagiography in New France" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (2000): 323-48.

and to justify the superiority of European methods of knowledge production and preservation.¹⁴ When natives stubbornly adhered to traditional beliefs, even those who appeared to consider conversion, the Jesuits blamed their attachment on the deceptive machination of the Devil. Even dreams directing natives to follow or reverence Jesuit teaching or objects came under fire. Given these overwhelmingly negative attitudes toward native dreams, the missionaries began requiring converts to abandon all traditional spiritual and ritual associations with dreams.

Pierre Biard, in one of the first reports from New France, described what he felt was the superstition and primitive nature of the religion of the Algonkian tribes he had encountered along the mouth of the St. Lawrence. He wrote back to France that,

Their whole religion consists of certain incantations, dances and sorcery, which they have recourse to, it seems, either to procure the necessities of life or to get rid of their enemies... To make these complete they even have faith in dreams; if they happen to awake from a pleasing and auspicious dream, they rise even in the middle of the night and hail the omen with songs and dances. They have no temples, sacred edifices, rites, ceremonies or religious teaching, just as they have no laws, arts or government, save certain customs and traditions of which they are very tenacious....¹⁵

Biard added afterwards that “They believe also in dreams, that no kind of nonsense may be wanting to them. Furthermore, they say that the Magic of the Pilotoy often calls forth spirits and optical illusions to those who believe them...and several other Magical deeds

¹⁴ Peter Goddard has made a case for the rational and scientific skepticism of the Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century, their use of natural philosophy in their mission, and the gradual replacement of their references to the Devil as an active being with reference to him as a powerful force. Although I find Goddard’s arguments concerning the Jesuit’s reliance on the authority of natural philosophy to be a welcome addition to a scholarly field that too often overlooks this essential aspect of the Jesuits’ missionary mindset, I think that his arguments concerning the Devil are more complex, as I hope to show here. See also Peter Goddard, “Science and Skepticism in the Early Mission to New France” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 6 (1995): 43-58; and “The Devil in New France: Jesuit Demonology in the Early Missions, 1611-1650” *Canadian Historical Review* 78 (1997): 40-62.

¹⁵ *Jesuit Relations*, 2: 75.

of the same kind. But I never happened to be present at any of these spectacles.”¹⁶ These reports of native customs and spirituality circulated for nearly a decade after their publication in the early 1610s, providing the basis of Jesuit and non-Jesuit conceptions of the Amerindians of New France. Attempts to resume the missions in the 1620s met with several obstacles and the successful establishment of a long-term mission occurred only in the early 1630s. As a result of the vicissitudes of the first two decades of Jesuit missions in New France, the reports about native customs in general and native dreams in particular remained vague. In part this was due to language obstacles, since the Jesuits often relied on intermediaries in the early decades. However ignorance in the languages only magnified the Jesuits’ ignorance of native culture and customs. Charles Lalemant repeated Biard’s basic criticism in 1626, that “they attach great faith to their dreams,” and could only add from hearsay that some “are reputed among them to have intercourse with the Devil [and] their conversion will give us no little trouble.”¹⁷ He added, as would others after him, that personal safety was always at risk, since if a dream did not come true in the natural course of time, the native felt obligated to perform the dreamed deed, even if it meant murder.¹⁸ To the Jesuits, the dreams, whatever else they meant, posed a physical and cultural threat, if not a more serious spiritual threat to the missionary aim.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3: 131-5.

¹⁷ Ibid., 4: 217-9

¹⁸ It is not clear whether anyone, native or European, was ever deliberately killed in this fashion. The Huron, at least, held public councils to discuss dreams that demanded extremely valuable items, death, or any action that might affect the community as a whole, including war. In general, Jesuit reports suggest that the community often found symbolic substitutes for dreams that seemed to require dangerous actions, or reinterpreted them in a way that ameliorated the difficulty. However, the Jesuits also reported being warned to protect their lives from certain natives who appeared to have great animosity for them, and if the victim was among the “enemy” the killing did not carry the same weight as murder.

Such reports likely discouraged newcomers and those preparing to join the mission in New France. Although the danger of death in the pursuit of spiritual glory might excite would-be martyrs, the cultural and spiritual distance described in these early accounts posed a knotty problem. Twenty years after Biard first published the results of his first evangelical efforts, the missions had few if any lasting converts and only a marginally deeper knowledge of native customs. By the late 1620s and early 1630s, it had become clear that to understand the truth behind these mysterious practices and to effectively communicate their own spiritual beliefs, the Jesuits would have to live among the natives and practice their languages daily. Although this proximity, initiated by Le Jeune among the Montagnais and Algonkins and Brébeuf among the Huron in 1632, did begin to increase Jesuit familiarity with native customs, their general attitude continued to reflect earlier disparaging attitudes. Casting doubt on the dream of an old man who “had dreamed, or rather seen” an Iroquois war party, Paul Le Jeune dismissed any alleged prophetic value by noting that it “passed away in smoke.”¹⁹ The missionaries began to emphasize aspects of the bizarre, ridiculous, or dangerous in native dreams, condemning in particular the obedience with which natives responded to night dreams which for them had no spiritual origin and held no real authority. Instead, they pitted their natural and spiritual philosophy against the natives’ cosmologies. In 1633 Le Jeune related an incident in which he devalued the prophetic authority of physiological night dreams as an apologetic means of exalting true spiritual authority of God:

They have, besides, great faith in their dreams, imagining that what they have seen in their sleep must happen, and that they must execute whatever they have

¹⁹ Ibid., 5: 133-5.

thus imagined. ...Our Savages ask almost every morning, 'Hast thou not seen any Beavers or Moose, while sleeping?' And when they see that I make sport of their dreams, they are astonished and ask me, 'What does thou believe then, if thou dost not believe in thy dream? I believe in him who has made all things, and who can do all things.' 'Thou hast no sense, how canst thou believe in him, if thou hast not seen him?' It would take too long to relate all their silly ideas upon these subjects; let us return to their superstitions, which are numberless.²⁰

According to Le Jeune, such logic was lost on the native audience, proving to his European audience not only the great reliance upon physical sight and credibility which the Jesuits faced in their mission, but also the cultural stubbornness that hindered the Jesuits' progress.

Le Jeune's labeling of native dreams as "superstitions" ought to recall Protestant and post-Tridentine Catholic efforts to purge Christianity of erroneous beliefs and practices that had been insinuated into Christianity during the Middle Ages. The justification for eliminating many so-called spiritual cures and wonders came from natural philosophy and a demystification of natural wonders. In New France it meant that the Jesuits tried to explain the physiological and psychological causes for night dreams and purported visions in order to distinguish such commonplace events from true miracles and prophetic or divine visions. Arguing that the content of night dreams was nothing more than random images appearing by chance, Le Jeune pitted a dream of his own against that of a native, asking whose was more likely to come true if they each dreamed contradictory messages. He explained that "dreams were nothing but lies, that I placed no dependence upon them."²¹ Another time, when a native man came to request some tobacco as a dream cure for his son, Le Jeune refused, telling the man "that I did

²⁰ Ibid., 6: 181-3.

²¹ Ibid., 7: 169-171.

not give anything on account of dreams; that they were only folly, and that, when I knew his language, I would explain to him how they originated.”²² Communicating this distinction between orders of physiological and divine dreams failed often; while trying to persuade a native to believe in a God that could not be seen, Le Jeune argued that, “We have two kinds of sight, the sight of the eyes of the body, and the sight of the eyes of the soul. What thou seest with the eyes of the soul may be just as true as what thou seest with the eyes of the body.” The listener rejected such a separation between the physical and spiritual realms, answering, “I see nothing except with the eyes of the body, save in sleeping, and thou dost not approve our dreams.”²³ Unfortunately for the Canadian missionaries, their attempts to “demystify” Amerindian dreams often met with frank and often clever rejections of the European cosmological assumptions about the character and hierarchy of the natural and supernatural worlds.

The Jesuits attacked these “superstitious” dreams on the grounds of superior medical knowledge as well as a superior spiritual knowledge. Many Amerindian dreaming practices incorporated to a greater or lesser extent the belief that certain objects seen in dreams represented either a present or, if untreated, a future sickness of the soul. Individuals, friends and families, and if the situation merited it, whole communities would seek out a cure for these maladies by locating the dreamed object or a close or equitable substitute and presenting the object to the dreamer as a gift. Sicknesses which could not be cured through herbal remedies appeared to be spiritual ailments which had gone untreated. Failure to obtain the object might lead not only to an individual’s death

²² Ibid., 5: 159.

²³ Ibid., 7: 101

or suffering, but sometimes the harm of an entire family or community. The missionaries mocked these dream cures and dream ceremonies on both spiritual and medical grounds. In 1636 Jean de Brébeuf commented on the Huron, “They think fasting renders their vision wonderfully piercing, and gives them eyes capable of seeing things absent and far removed. Is not this to overthrow the belief of all that School, who, if I am not mistaken, hold that nothing so much weakens the sight as excessive fasting?” He concluded that the dreamer “had not yet fasted enough, for his sight deceived him very thoroughly, and did not help increase his reputation as a Prophet.”²⁴ That same year Le Jeune reported an incident faced by Jacques Buteux, the Jesuit priest working at Trois-Rivières with the Algonkin, Montagnais and Huron traders:

I have already mentioned how the Charlatans, or jugglers and Sorcerers are obeyed here; sometimes more than he who has made all, as we say in these Countries, is obeyed by those who acknowledge him. One of these new Physicians one day ordered a patient to get a pair of stockings like those of the Black robes, the name they give us. When Father Buteux visited this poor man, his relatives declared that the patient’s recovery depended only upon him. The Father asking what they meant, they replied, ‘Give him thy black stockings, and thou wilt soon see him upon his feet, for thus the Manitou has told him.’ The Father answered them that these dreams were but nonsense; and, to prove it to them, that he would give him what he wanted, on condition that after he had worn them four days, more or less, if he did not recover he would abandon these idle fancies and believe in God. They replied that he must give them without any condition, and that the sick man must even wear them into the other world if he died. What talk! Is not that a good medicine which is to benefit both in this world and in the other, and which being sure of curing its patient, does not fail, nevertheless, to provide that he does not have cold feet after death, in case it carries him off?²⁵

Aspects of paramount importance within the native community—whether or not Buteux

²⁴ Ibid., 10: 206.

²⁵ Ibid., 9: 111-3.

relinquished his stockings or if they saved the sick dreamer or even if Buteux managed to get his hands on his stockings once more, a taboo in the realm of dream gift-cures—fall by the roadside in the *Relation*.

Brébeuf's condemnations could be equally sarcastic. Not only did he deny the possibility that these cures could have any medical value, he also interpreted the social behavior of the dreaming as stemming from a malevolent source:

If therefore it happens that some one of some consideration falls sick, the Captain goes to inquire so often, on behalf of the Old Men, what he has dreamed, that at last he draws from him what he desires for his health, and then they all put themselves to trouble to find it for him; if it does not exist, it must be found.... The [Huron Dream Feast] is for the sake of mad persons... They must go through the Cabins to tell what they have dreamed. Then, as soon as it is evening, [they cry] in a loud voice, 'We have dreamed,' without saying what [they dreamed]. Those of the Cabin guess what it is, and present it to the band, who refuse nothing until the right thing is guessed. ...When they have found what they sought, they thank him who has given it to them; and, after having received further additions to this mysterious present...they go away in a body to the woods, and there, outside the Village, cast out, they say, their madness; and the sick man begins to get better. Why not? He has what he was seeking for, or what the Devil pretended.²⁶

For these missionaries, the source of the dream and the interpretive framework of the dreamer were flawed, a double failure that enabled dream guesser to mask the motives in receiving gifts.

Although medical and spiritual matters tended toward separate professional spheres within Europe, dreams provided a link between the natural and supernatural aspects connecting both spheres, and also between the medical and clerical practitioners under whose jurisdiction these two spheres lay. Both the spiritual and medical rejections recorded by the missionaries were founded on the writings of Aristotle, whose

²⁶ Ibid., 10: 175-7.

authoritative voice reverberated through medieval philosophies on God and nature, and provided an essential foundation for teachings on natural philosophy in Jesuit curricula. For Aristotle, dreams were experiences of residual visual or auditory memories produced by the imagination during sleep. Although many perceived their dreams to be as real as the objects and voices they heard during waking moments, such dreamers were tricked into a false perception both by the stirring of their emotions in response to sensory input and by the lack of the intellect or rational faculties of the mind to regulate and analyze the sensory data to determine its authenticity.

Dream prophecies or divination, if they ever came true, did so largely by coincidence of unrelated circumstance. Chance might be aided, every now and then, by the dreamers themselves. After all, the dreamer's thoughts or actions were probably already aligned by habit toward the ends desired and therefore dreamed, or else because the dreamer, remembering the dream and believing it to be significant, set about to fulfill the ends of the dream through ordinary means. The very fact that ordinary people received dreams, thought Aristotle, was the best proof that dreams were not sent by God and contained no special messages; only the wise received divine revelations, and then only while they were awake, when all the faculties worked together to rationally interpret sensory data and appropriately interpret the divine message.²⁷

Galen, the influential medical authority of Roman and medieval Europe, also believed that dreams, in general, arose from the images and sounds of daily activity, but also from the imbalance of bodily humors or fluids and other disorders of the body. Poor

²⁷ Richard McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 618-30.

diet, therefore, or overindulgence, physical ailments or predisposed imbalances might lead to dreams and fantasies, and physicians ought to know the symptoms leading to hallucinations, phantasms, waking dreams and the like. Galen, however, was far more open to the possibility of prophetic dreams and visions among a wider audience, having personal and professional associations with dream prophecies and with the mystery cult of Asclepios where dreaming was induced to gain access to the healing power of a beneficent god.²⁸

The influence of these men on European thought, profound as it was, does not clearly define a common or acceptable standard for beliefs or practices about dreams in Europe. As Richard Kagan has pointed out, various texts on dream interpretation, theological discernment between true and false spirits or true and false phenomena abounded during the late medieval and early modern periods. Oneirocritica or dream interpretation manuals enjoyed a huge popularity during the Renaissance, though priests often struggled between the belief that such divination of the future through dreams was immoral and the conviction that prophetic dreams could exist, as the texts of the Bible clearly demonstrated.²⁹ The Jesuits in New France adhered to a very conservative, Aristotelian conception about the improbability of night dreams having supernatural visionary content. The development of the mystical tradition in Europe elevated true visionary experiences to the realm of saints and mystics who encountered the divine only in deep spiritual meditative or contemplative states which required skill and exemplary

²⁸ Nancy G. Siraisi, *The Clock and the Mirror: Girolamo Cardano and Renaissance Medicine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 174-92.

²⁹ Richard L. Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams: Politics and Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 35-42.

spiritual character to practice—experience, as it were, of moving up the divine scale or ladder of nature toward higher things until they reached a spiritual union with God.³⁰

Between the poles of the clearly physical and clearly spiritual lay a dangerous middle ground of seemingly miraculous dreaming events which were manipulated by the Devil, a creature by tradition whose ancient knowledge of the physical world enabled him to trick mere mortals into believing their natural dreams and hallucinations held prophetic import or spiritual significance.³¹ The superstitious nature of native prophetic dreams and native dream cures rested on the tendency to inappropriately read spiritual meaning

³⁰ There are several versions of mystical ladders which gained popularity at one time or another, though the works of Dionysius, like *The Cloud of Unknowing*, appear to have had wider appeal and influence in Early Modern Europe. However, the concept of a progression toward more perfect things can be found before Christianity in the writings of Plato, who, through the words of the prophetess Diotima, argues that pursuit and contemplation of earthly beauties can lead one step-by-step closer to the true objects of Love and eventually to absolute Beauty. On the origins in Plato and the multiple mystical ladders, see Caroline Frances Eleanor Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English Literature* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1913), 16-7, 124-6.

³¹ For a thorough theoretical analysis of the scientific and religious framework, see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, 161-250, 470-506. See particularly the discussion of the medical emphasis during and after the *crise pyrrhonienne* on page 265. Clark, in his discussions of witchcraft, also discusses the proximity of the natural and supernatural realms and complications of evaluating scientific and religious beliefs and practices of magic and witchcraft that might fall on either side. There is quite a large body of scholarly literature on mysticism, science and dreams. Some of the more recent literature includes Guy G. Stroumsa, "Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse," in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. David Shulman and Guy G. Stroumsa, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 189-212; Jean-Claude Schmitt, "The Liminality and Centrality of Dreams in the Medieval West," in *Dream Cultures*, 274-287; Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Dyan Elliot, *Proving Women: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Lisa M. Bitel, "'In Visu Noctis': Dreams in European Hagiography and Histories, 450-900," *History of Religions* 31 (1991): 44-59; and Richard L. Kagan, *Lucretia's Dreams*. Jean Gerson's fifteenth-century tracts *De Probatione Spirituum* and *De Distinctione Verarum Visionum A Falsis* aimed specifically at instructing spiritual directors in skeptically handling the purported dreams, visions and mystical experience of female Religious under their care. See also the translation of Gerson's two discernment treatises in Paschal Boland, *The Concept of Discretio Spirituum in John Gerson's "De Probatione Spirituum" and "De Distinctione Verarum Visionum A Falsis,"* (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1959); and Nancy Caciola's discussion of Gerson in *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 284-317. Another theory concerning the rise in mystical phenomena during the late medieval and early modern periods concerns poor diets among lower classes—see Camporesi, Piero, *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

into natural events. Native dreaming practices failed, then, not only on spiritual grounds, but also on physiological grounds, and such gross physiological errors suggested more than simple intellectual error but also deep spiritual corruption through demonic deception.

Accustomed to denying spiritual relevance to commonplace dreams and wary of admitting anyone to the status of a true seer, Jesuit denunciations of native dreams demonstrate the reactions of spiritual authorities with a heightened sense of responsibility to uphold and clarify appropriate spiritual and physical boundaries. When confronted with a mentality that seriously violated many of the basic principles of Christian thought and practice as it had come to be defined, the Fathers perceived the foreign beliefs and practices as a dangerous mixing of physiological experiences with spiritual interpretations. However, the Jesuits did not only use their knowledge in natural philosophy to attack native practices. They felt that knowledge of all things could be useful in their Christian apologies and as in Jesuit missions elsewhere, used natural philosophy both to disprove native beliefs as well as to prove the superiority of their entire system of knowledge.

Although the missions of southeast and east Asia have recently become more widely recognized for the use of science and technology to build both earn the trust and admiration of intellectuals and the support and cooperation of political elites, natural philosophy and technology were tools the Jesuits used with a fair degree of skill in New France as well. Although the Canadian missionaries preferred, it seems, the ascetic and theological tasks over the more scholarly pursuits of their Asian counterparts, the mandates of the Jesuit order on education and missions urged all members, missionaries

most particularly, to gain skill in general matters of natural philosophy as a means to further their missionary goals.³² Although the French missionaries preparing to go to New France had little expectation of finding an elaborate culture and therefore a great need to use natural philosophy in their mission in the same way that Jesuits did in China, India and Vietnam, the Canadian mission did begin quickly to build a library that incorporated the early botanical texts of the Iberian Jesuits in Brazil and Peru and to continually add medical, botanical and occasionally other mechanical or technological texts that might be useful in a mission in natural wilderness.³³ Armed with their

³² Training in natural philosophy was part of the lower curriculum through which all students went in Jesuit schools, including future missionaries who were required to excel in the higher curriculum of theology as well. However, some Jesuits training for missions even hired private tutors to strengthen their understanding of astronomy and natural philosophy in order to be in top form for their overseas activity, particularly those who aimed to work in southeast or east Asia. By the time the Jesuit schools were gaining acclaim and popularity in the late 16th century, there were already missionary reports from India, Japan, China and Vietnam discussing the intellectual culture of other peoples and the potential use of science in overseas missions. From Japan, Francis Xavier emphasized the need for well-educated missionaries who could answer the questions of the learned individuals the missionaries would attempt to convert. This policy was extended by Alexandre de Rhodes in Vietnam as a way to interest foreign political leaders in theology through gadgets and astronomical observations and to inform European audiences of more specific geographic and botanical details of his region. Likewise, Matteo Ricci wrote that “whoever may think that ethics, physics and mathematics are not important in the work of the Church, is unacquainted with the taste of the Chinese, who are slow to take a salutary spiritual potion, unless it be seasoned with an intellectual flavoring.” See Barbara Widenor Maggs, “Science, Mathematics, and Reason: The Missionary Methods of the Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes in Seventeenth Century Vietnam” *Renaissance Studies* (September, 2003): 439-458, quotation from 440. This issue of *Renaissance Studies* offers several case studies of early modern travel and the issue of science, trade and the influence of the humanist tradition in European exploration. See also J. F. Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in Sixteenth-Century Japan* (London: Routledge, 1993); Chikara Sasaki, *Descartes’s Mathematical Thought* (Dordrecht; Boston : Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003). Sasaki points out that missionaries were generally required to have advanced knowledge of mathematics, astronomy and geography beyond the level required for non-theology, non-missionary candidates, since the level of scientific sophistication was so high in areas like Japan and China.

³³ For the library and the Séminaire de Québec where many of the works on natural philosophy were housed, see Antonio Drolet, “La bibliothèque du Collège des Jésuites” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 14 (1961): 487-544. Some of these works covered venereal diseases, fevers, cancers, purgatives and alimentary aids as well as more general pharmacopeias or botanical encyclopedias and treatises on recent developments in medical theory and practice. In my cursory examination of titles, 113 of the 665 works collected by 1745 concerned various medical topics (excluding works on chemistry or other sciences not specifically medical or botanical). The records for the library are dated as major cataloguing was undertaken and not as the works actually arrived, and probably more than 75% of the cataloging work was done in 1745, making it difficult to discern when many of the works were acquired. Only one work in

Aristotelian notions of the world, these priests set out to disabuse potential converts of their misconceptions about dreams and the natural world, at once undermining native cosmologies and lending credence to their own superior knowledge of all things.

One Father argued the impossibility of the great country of dead souls by arguing that Europeans had “navigated the whole world” and that “no one had ever found this great village [of dead souls], that all that was nothing but nonsense.” Dismissing the spiritual conceptualization of nature he wrote, “They call the milky way, *Tchipai meskenau*, the path of souls, because they think that the souls raise themselves through this way in going to that great village.”³⁴ In short, the natives had an insufficient knowledge of the natural world, which seemed to make natural impossibilities credible to them. Several years later, Le Jeune attempted to argue that European access to astronomical and geographical truths implied that Europeans also had greater access to and understanding of spiritual truths:

I said to them...that I was a child, and that children made their fathers laugh with their stammering; but in a few years I would become large, and then, when I knew their language, I would make them see that they themselves were children in many things, ignorant of the great truths of which I would speak to them. Suddenly I asked them if the Moon was located as high as the Stars, if it was in the same Sky; where the Sun went when it left us; what was the form of the earth. (If I knew their language perfectly I would always propose some natural truth, before speaking to them of the points of our belief; for I have observed that these curious things make them more attentive.)³⁵

Drolet's list is catalogued after 1745. Many of these medical works were of course brought and used for the use of Jesuit lay brothers and others associated with the Hospital, but there seems to have been a rather open borrowing policy among Jesuits, elite and other French inhabitants in the area.

³⁴ *Jesuit Relations*, 5: 181.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 23: 93.

When one among his audience, admitting ignorance in such matter, asked how the missionary was able to know these things, “since we do not know them,” Le Jeune took a compass from his pocket and said:

‘We are now in the darkness of night, the Sun no longer shines for us; tell me now, while you look at what I have given you, in what part of the world it is; show me the place where it must rise to-morrow, where it will set, where it will be at noon; point out the places in the Sky where it will never be.’ My man answered with his eyes, staring at me without saying a word. I took the compass and explained to him with a few words all that I had just asked about, adding, ‘Well, how is it that I can know these things and you do not know them? I have still other greater truths to tell you when I can talk.’³⁶

By explaining the proper order and nature of the physical world from a European worldview, the Jesuits hoped to correct the “improper” native beliefs not only in dreams but in all of their superstitious and confused socio-political customs.³⁷

If the Jesuits required proof of the dangerous spiritual errors which these superstitious dreaming practices might produce, they soon found it in the respect natives maintained for shamans. Shamans not only had superior skills in prophetic dreaming, but also in seeking out spirits in visions, in interpreting and healing the “spiritual” sicknesses diagnosed through night dreams, and in communicating with or manipulating the spirit world through skills with charms or through feasts, dances, singing and other native spiritual rituals. As the Jesuits noted sarcastically, natives feared the spiritual craft of shamans in part because their control over the spirit world was ambiguous; shamans who

³⁶ Ibid., 23:95.

³⁷ The assumption of a proper social or political framework was founded on the medieval understanding of an ordered creation. When every person and object was in its proper place fulfilling its proper function, the entire world moved harmoniously to the glory of its supernatural designer. When governments failed to mirror the divine hierarchy and established order of creation, the result was chaos and destruction, tools of the devil that could only serve to further the ends of the devil.

used their knowledge and influence over spirits to do harm, inflict curses or diseases of the soul were classified as witches among native groups. For the Jesuits, it was the shamans' access to *any* spiritual power outside God that made them witches. So far as the natives believed, at least, dreams provided a direct means of accessing an authoritative and powerful spiritual world, and shamans as skilled leaders, represented spiritual competitors to the French priests who also had powerful access to healing knowledge and spiritual powers of providence and occasionally even prophecy. In practice as well as theory, shamans and Jesuits both set themselves up in opposition to each other in order to demonstrate their knowledge or power to native audiences. For the Jesuits, these cultural contests employed the foundation of rational argumentation already set up by their attacks on the ignorance of native superstitions.

Le Jeune, who had had several encounters with an Algonkin shaman named Pigarouich, found himself in a dispute over various unacceptable native customs. After a well-respected native declared his intention of giving up many of his traditional beliefs and customs, the shaman replied that there were customs which natives would never give up. Le Jeune replied that, "As for dreams, I asked him if he would kill his Father, in case he dreamed that he was to do it. 'The devil meddles with your imaginations in the night; and if you obey him, he will make you the most wicked people in the world.'"³⁸ At one point Le Jeune remonstrated to his audience, "that dreams were only dreams,—that is,

³⁸ Ibid., 11: 251.

deceit and falsehood,—‘For, if thou dreamest that no one will be converted, we will dream that you all will be converted; which of the two will tell the truth?’”³⁹ Brébeuf publicized the errors of a Huron shaman’s dream:

There are here some Soothsayers, whom they call also Arendiouane and who undertake to cause the rain to fall or to cease, and to predict future events. The Devil reveals to them some secrets, but with so much obscurity that one is unable to accuse them of falsehood; witness one of the village of Scanonaenrat who, a little while before the burning of the villages before mentioned, had seen in a dream three flames falling from the Sky on those villages. But the Devil had not declared to him the meaning of this enigma; for, having obtained from the village a white dog, to make a feast with it and to seek information by it, he remained as ignorant afterward as before. ...It is thus...that the Devil amuses this poor people, substituting his impieties and superstitions in place of the compliance they ought to have with the providence of God, and the worship they ought to render him.⁴⁰

In pitting their own spiritual and natural knowledge against that of the shamans, the Jesuits set themselves up as witches and diviners in the eyes of many natives, and if the Fathers failed to live up to a trust in their ability to bring auspicious weather or hunting conditions, they might be criticized:

We must live in daily expectation of dying by their hand, should the fancy take them, should a dream suggest it to them, or should we fail to open or close the Heavens to them at discretion, giving them rain or fine weather at command. Do they not make us responsible for the state of the weather? And if God does not inspire us, or if we cannot work miracles by faith, are we not continually in danger, as they have threatened us, of seeing them fall upon those who have done no wrong?⁴¹

Such anxiety may have been warranted. When the epidemics of the 1630s and 1640s reached their peak and the military campaigns against the Iroquois seemed to fail continually, Jesuits were accused and in some cases put to death for witchcraft. The

³⁹ Ibid., 11: 203.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 8: 123-5.

⁴¹ Ibid., 10: 109.

Jesuits considered such deaths martyrdoms, since they were killed for their faith. Given their outright criticisms of native spiritual practices and their public verbal contests with shamans, it is easy to see why natives saw the Jesuits as diviners and shamans of another powerful and potentially harmful deity or group of spirits.⁴²

This rivalry of worldviews and the Jesuit-shaman debates did not merely stir up curiosity and resentment among natives. The natives encountered difficulties distinguishing between the natural and spiritual knowledge of the Jesuits, and the missionaries in turn had problems clearly separating the social customs of natives from spiritual practices. The more spiritually dangerous native social and personal practices appeared, the more antagonistically and condemnatory did the Jesuits react. Furthermore, this cultural estrangement only widened the gulf between native and Christian practices, making it harder for natives to successfully convert. For the Jesuits, such a strategy preserved the unique and superior aspects of their own belief system, but for converts the policy required them to give up nearly every activity associated with their previous lives. The Jesuits particularly obligated natives to give up their dreaming practices, or more particularly, since night dreams at least are a common occurrence, to give up their *obedience* to dream messages and cures and their participation in dream feasts and ceremonies. By this the Jesuits not only eliminated the competing authority of shamans or real or imagined spirits who communicated through dreams, but they also ensured that natives had not simply professed Christianity nominally. They required social adherence to general structures of European life as a shibboleth for native Christianity.

⁴² For more on the issue of witchcraft accusations against the Jesuits, see Bruce Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 407, 502-596, 689-715, 723.

In spite of this hard line the Jesuits maintained between native and Christian beliefs, they willingly accepted that native customs, dangerous though they might be, could also be tools used by God to push a native toward the truth. The practices, then, could be unacceptable, but the outcomes might be favorable. For instance, shortly after his installation with the Huron, Brébeuf rejoiced that:

Another good old man, having fallen sick, did not wish to hear of going to Heaven, saying he desired to go where his ancestors were. Some days afterwards, he came to me and told me a pleasant story: 'Rejoice,' he said, 'for I have returned from the country of souls, and I have found none there any longer; they have all gone to Heaven.' There is nothing which does not serve for salvation when God pleases, not even dreams.⁴³

Nevertheless, the distance between reverence of Christianity and true conversion was justified by occasional incidents of apostasy and requests for Jesuits' charms. Only two years later Brébeuf noted that such good promptings might just as easily lead to apostasy:

On the twentieth of October, an old man of ours died in his unbelief; his end frightened some, and awakened in them good resolutions to become converted. It seems that our Lord had communicated to him a year ago several good impulses. He was willingly present at all our Assemblies, listening to our instructions; he was the first to make the sign of the Cross; but afterwards he tried to blend our creed with their superstitions and nonsense, and said that he wished to go with his Ancestors. Some dream seemed to have inclined him to good; but as he liked to live well, and to have his say, God punished him. Being sick for the last time, he made his Athataion or farewell feast... We went to see him, and he again sought our good offices,—threatening that, if we did not satisfy him by singing in our way, he would overturn everything in our Cabin after his death, and even carry it away. One day he asked us for Baptism; but, as he seemed to be recovering, we distrusted his mood. When we returned in the evening, he was sleeping. Scarcely were we outside his Cabin, when he expired; and God did not permit that what he had scorned during life should be granted him at death.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid., 8: 147.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 10: 59-61.

Le Jeune likewise noted that natives might reverence the images or objects of Christianity without fully understanding the boundaries in ideology and practice which they hoped to keep distinct, particularly the use of images or objects as charms for health, special knowledge or special powers:

[The Shaman] told me that during their epidemic three or four years ago, he, being almost in the agony of death, like the others, had seen in a dream a House made like ours, in which were some Images like those he saw in our house; and that after this dream he recovered; and, since then, whenever he has been sick, if he could have the same dream, he quickly recovered his health. 'Now then,' he said to me, 'is that not a good thing?' I took pains to show him the vanity of their dreams.⁴⁵

That same year Le Jeune reported the desire of this shaman to learn the songs of the Jesuits in the hopes of acquiring the same power to heal and communicate with spirits which he had discovered in a song he had learned in a dream:

I have already said several times that these Charlatans sing and beat their drums to cure the sick, to kill their enemies in war, and to capture animals in the hunt. Pigarouich, the Sorcerer of whom I have spoken above, sang to us once the song he uses when he intends to go hunting. He uttered only these words, *Iagoua mou itoutaoui ne e-é*, which he repeated several times in different tones, grave and heavy, although pleasant enough to the ear. We asked him why he sang this to capture animals. 'I learned,' said he, 'this song in a dream; and that is why I have preserved and used it since.' He requested us earnestly to teach him what must be sung to cure the sick, and to have a good chase, promising us to observe it exactly.⁴⁶

Because of the murky division which existed between the two spiritualities in spite of the Jesuits' efforts to distinguish it, converts expected or were instructed to give up their traditional rituals and beliefs in order to be baptized. One native, speaking with Le Jeune concerning the existence of special stones which were used as charms and

⁴⁵ Ibid., 11: 263-5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 12: 9-11.

generally given to natives by a powerful or personal spirit in a dream, commented that, 'In this way thou wilt know whether a Savage really desires to believe in God, if, having one of these stones, he gives it to thee.'⁴⁷ Similarly, when a Montagnais chief declared his rejection of native spiritual practices in the manner required by the Jesuits and his wish to be baptized, Le Jeune tested him to ascertain his true convictions. In this test, dreams providing one of the key elements which even the native man recognized to be critical in distinguishing a true Christian from a pagan:

When [Makheabichtichiou] told me that he would know whether or not we loved him from one thing, namely, if we baptized him before long, I replied to him that we would prove his steadfastness before doing so, representing to him also the obligations he would assume in Baptism. 'Very well,' said he, 'It is right that you should put me on trial. Give me a Frenchman who will stay with me when I withdraw into the woods to hunt; he will teach me how to pray to God morning and evening; he will spy upon all my actions, and will report to you if I take part in the eat-all feasts, if I still believe in dreams, if I obey our Sorcerers; in short you will know through him if I have violated the prohibitions you have made.'⁴⁸

Increasing the practical boundaries as well as the belief requirements of native converts seems to have served the Jesuits' intended purpose. In 1637, during an epidemic at the Huron village of Ossossané, a chief of the village agreed to have a Jesuit chapel built and invited Le Jeune, who was visiting the village as Superior of the missions in New France, to attend the village council or order to find a way of assuaging the ravages of disease there. Le Jeune insisted that God could not be happy with the erection of the chapel but that:

the principal thing was to believe in him, and to be firmly resolved to keep his commandments, touching especially upon some of their customs and superstitions which they must renounce if they purposed to serve him...that, since they were

⁴⁷ Ibid., 12: 15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11: 167-171.

thus inclined, they should henceforth give up their belief in their dreams; second, that their marriages should be binding and for life, and that they should observe conjugal chastity; third, ...to understand that God forbade vomiting feasts; fourth, those shameless assemblies of men and women (I would blush to speak more clearly); fifth, eating human flesh; sixth, those feasts they call Aoutaeroi, — which they make, they say, to appease a certain little demon to whom they give this name.⁴⁹

The response of the natives was general astonishment and dismay, as they began to see that the Jesuit required them to give up many of their customs and way of life. The chief, Onaconchiaronk, replied respectfully, “My nephew, we have been greatly deceived; we thought God was to be satisfied with a Chapel, but according to what I see he asks a great deal more.” Another of the chiefs voiced his opinion still more openly:

Captain Aënon, going still farther, said, ‘Echon, I must speak to you frankly. I believe that your proposition is impossible. The people of Ihonatiria said last year that they believed, in order to get tobacco; but all that did not please me. For my part, I cannot dissemble, I express my sentiments frankly; I consider that what you propose will prove to be only a stumbling-block. Besides, we have our own ways of doing things, and you yours, as well as other nations. When you speak to us about obeying and acknowledging as our master him whom you say has made Heaven and earth, I imagine you are talking of overthrowing the country. Your ancestors assembled in earlier times, and held a council, where they resolved to take as their God him whom you honor, and ordained all the ceremonies that you observe; as for us, we have learned others from our own Fathers.’⁵⁰

Although the village publicly declared their intention of following God, even having their pronouncement made throughout the village by a shaman, they did so to ameliorate the epidemic. However the following year, when the disease continued, the village turned to two shamans for cures from the demons causing the disease. Le Jeune replied that, “they were deceiving themselves in thinking to make these demons afraid, and to drive away the disease with some wisps of straw; ...that if there was anything in

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13: 169-171.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 13: 171-3.

the world capable of inspiring the demons with terror it was the cross.” The Jesuits then elevated another cross above their cabin as a public symbol of the source of their own power, their own God, and set up the cross in opposition to the representations of evil spirits placed around the village by the natives. They hoped that all who saw it “should understand that it is in the cross that we put all our trust, and that in virtue of this sign we had no fear of demons, and hoped that God would preserve our little house from this contagious malady.”⁵¹ Although the cross did not cure the inhabitants of the village any more than the efforts of the shamans, the Jesuits mocked the first shaman for having promised that the epidemic would disappear in only eight days. The second shaman “saw into his affairs a little more clearly,” remarked the Jesuit, since he promised recovery at a later date. In the end, the Jesuits voiced their frustration over the superstitions that compelled the natives to persist in cures that could not work and to trust shamans whose spiritual claims masked impotence and probably avarice.

Although Ossossané remained a significant outpost and in time many of its inhabitants would convert, the superior’s requisites for the village demonstrate how far the Jesuits had come in only five years of deep cross-cultural relations, from expecting an easy conversion of New France as the natives were “educated” to seeing how deeply connected were many of the spiritual and social customs. As the native leaders themselves recognized, there was little middle ground upon which a native might accept both aspects of a traditional lifestyle and Christianity, and the process of “conversion” was not as clear as it once had seemed. The 1637 declaration of Ossossané to follow

⁵¹ Ibid., 13: 227-35.

Christianity, at least outwardly, represented one of the high points of the early Huron missions as an entire village declared their spiritual obedience to the Christian God through the voice of a pagan shaman. For dreams, too, this period represents the most complete rejection of all traditional native dreaming practices. In the following decade this rigid condemnation would create a curious problem for the Jesuits whose converts dreamed dreams and had visions that so closely resembled Christian mystical practices that new perspectives on native dreaming had to be found.

REEVALUATING THE SPIRITUAL

Although all of the Jesuits evaluated the spiritual and social dilemmas they faced in their own region of the missions, the bulk of the comments concerning the status of dreams fell to Le Jeune as Superior of the mission and one of Fathers who read and edited most of the missionary journal before publication. Early after his appointment as Superior in 1631, Le Jeune began receiving missionary accounts and began to hear from natives with whom he worked that dreams accessed a real spiritual world for native practitioners. At first rejecting the reality of this alleged spiritual realm and the authenticity of the spirits who communicated through dreams, Le Jeune began to question his initial evaluation in 1637. Very likely, the timing of this reevaluation is not accidental; this period coincided with both the Jesuit's increasing familiarity with native customs and a period ripe for producing converts. The Jesuits began to judge that not only was the power of the Devil greater in New France than they had previously believed, but so also was the power of God. Their task, then, was to carefully monitor the native Church and weed out every dangerous outcropping of pagan belief or practice. Le Jeune and others after him therefore reassessed the alleged reality of the spirits communicating through dreams and, fitting them into a Christian worldview, assigned the power to either demonic or divine agents. For converts, however, the "testing of spirits" became more complicated. Although the Jesuits continued to require converts to give up the rituals and obedience indicative of pagan dreaming practices, on a few occasions they tentatively

accepted the miraculous nature of certain spiritual visitations. Both the Jesuits and native converts in these cases altered their language in order to fit native dreams into the mold of elevated spiritual visions.

In one of his first descriptions of dreams, Le Jeune recorded an incident in which a prophetic dream concerning the death of a Frenchman came true. The reference to the matter was not large, and Le Jeune's only comment was that "either...the Devil had given them this sentiment, or ...among all their dreams there is now and then one that happens perchance to be true."⁵² Like many of the other Fathers, Le Jeune remained deeply skeptical about the nature of pagan dreaming practices, dream divination, and ritual dream cures. When in 1633 he encountered a particularly well-respected and apparently powerful shaman, he wrote the following appraisal in his journal to his French superiors:

Now if this man is really a Magician, I leave you to decide; for my part, I consider that he is neither Sorcerer nor Magician, but that he would like very much to be one. All that he does, according to my opinion, is nothing but nonsense to amuse the Savages. He would like to have communication with the Devil or Manitou, but I do not think that he has. Yet I am persuaded that there has been some Sorcerer or Magician here, if what they tell me is true about diseases and cures which they describe to me; it is a strange thing, in my opinion, that the Devil, who is visible to the South Americans, and who so beats and torments them that they would like to get rid of such a guest, does not communicate himself visibly and sensibly to our Savages. I know that there are persons of contrary opinion, who believe in the reports of these Barbarians; but, when I urge them, they all admit that they have seen nothing of that of which they speak, but that they have only heard it related by others.⁵³

By 1637, Le Jeune appears to have been deeply divided over the issue he once clearly considered to be lunacy. After more than five years the missions had failed to

⁵² Ibid., 5:213-5

⁵³ Ibid., 6:199-201

produce significant numbers of lasting conversions, and diseases were wreaking havoc in native villages, in turn giving rise to antagonism against the Jesuits and accusation of Christian witchcraft among their native audiences. Within native communities, dream feasts, dream cures and shamanic visions probably reached new heights as the unknown and virulent waves of sickness repeatedly washed over villages, and spiritual cures were sought as remedies to ills unresolved by ointments or other organic curatives. As the disease and colonial wars with the British and Huron escalated, such dream responses no doubt would have been a constant source of frustration for the missionaries.

Within the space of a year, Le Jeune suddenly began recording claims and reports from both natives and his fellow missionaries of the possibly dark reality that shrouded natives in ignorance and damnation. In a section of his *Relation* devoted to the possible reality of this demonic influence, Le Jeune recorded a conversation with a shaman who, having promised to give up his practices, explained the mystery of his occult powers:

One of these Sorcerers or jugglers told me that occasionally the devil speaks to some Savage, who hears only his voice, without seeing any one. He will say to him, for example, 'Thou wilt find a stone upon the snow, or in such a place, or in the heart, or the shoulder, or some other part of an Elk, or of another animal; take this stone, and thou wilt be lucky in the chase.' He assured me that he had found one of these stones in the heart of an Elk, and that he had given it to a Frenchman. 'Hence I shall kill nothing more,' said he. He also said that the Devil made himself known through dreams. A Moose will present itself to a man in his sleep, and will say to him, 'Come to me.' The Savage, upon awaking, goes in search of the Moose he has seen. Having found it, if he hurls or launches his javelin upon it, the beast falls stonedead. Opening it, he occasionally finds some hair or a stone in its body, which he takes and keeps with great care, that he may be fortunate in finding and killing many animals. Moreover, he added that the Demons taught them to make ointments from toads and snakes, to cause the death of those whom they hate.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ibid., 12: 13-5.

Rather than dismissing the story as superstition, Le Jeune reflected, “If he tells the truth, there is no doubt they have communication with the Devil.”⁵⁵ Shortly thereafter Le Jeune included the words of one of the most promising catechumens, a Montagnais chief named Makheabichtichiou. The native, giving an account of his previous life, wished to persuade the Jesuits in the spiritual power of traditional rituals:

Makheabichtichiou has related to me that once, when he was still a young lad, and was hunting all alone in the woods, he saw coming toward him a Genie of light; he was dressed and adorned like an Hiroquois, and was borne through the air. ‘I halted,’ said he, ‘filled with fear. He stopped also, at a little distance from me, and all the earth around him seemed to tremble. He told me that I should not fear; that I would not die so soon, but that it would not be the same with my people. At last I saw him rise into the air, and disappear before my eyes. I returned to the Cabin, thoroughly frightened, and related to my countrymen what I had seen; they took it as a bad sign, and said that some one of them would be killed by their enemies. Immediately after this, some one came to tell them that one of their fasters, being separated from the others, had been surprised and murdered by the Hiroquois.’⁵⁶

Again, Le Jeune cautiously responded that, “if fear, which makes the imagination see what is not there, did not trouble this man’s fancy, then doubtless the Devil appeared to him, although he is not a Sorcerer.”⁵⁷

Saving the most convincing evidence for last, Le Jeune wrote:

If what I am about to tell is true, there is no doubt that the Demons sometimes manifest themselves to them; but I have believed until now that in reality the devil deluded them, filling their understandings with error and their wills with malice, though I persuaded myself that he did not reveal himself visibly, and that all the things their Sorcerers did were only Deceptions they contrived, in order to derive therefrom some profit. I am now beginning to doubt, even to incline to the other side...⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibid., 12: 15.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 12: 15-17

⁵⁷ Ibid., 12: 17.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 12: 17.

After this introduction, Le Jeune proceeded to list several reports and eyewitness accounts from natives concerning the impossibility of manipulating the “shaking tent” ceremony in which a shaman would call several spirits into a tent in order to divine the best time and place for the Autumn hunts, the certainty that shamans could be possessed and transported by spirits, and the ability of shamans to set fire to special rocks without natural aids in order to divine by pyromancy. Le Jeune ended his account by admitting that “all these arguments show that it is probable that the Devil sometimes has visible communication.” Before mailing his annual account back to France, Le Jeune inserted an account from that same year reported among the Huron of a shaman, attempting to cure a sick person, ran through the cabin with a burning coal in his mouth. To demonstrate the wonder of the incident, that the shaman had not been burned by the rock even after holding it in his mouth for so long, the Fathers brought the stone back to Le Jeune who sent it to his superiors so that they could see the object “still marked with the Sorcerer's teeth.”⁵⁹ The following year he sent a stick in the shape of a snake that had been used by a relative as a charm in an attempt to heal a sick catechumen.⁶⁰

While the evidence did not conclusively prove that native shamans or dreamers had any direct or deliberate contact with demonic spirits, it was clear that the machinations of the Devil were greater than the Jesuits had anticipated. In response, the missionaries looked more hopefully to divine graces for spiritual intervention, both in their own lives and in the lives of the natives they wished to convert. The hagiography of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 12: 21-3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 14: 167-9.

the Canadian missions is relatively well-known. The spiritual journals of the Jesuit martyrs Jean de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, published after their deaths, recounted many spiritual visions and even prophetic dreams which encouraged or guided them in their mission and comforted them during their torture and death.

Although neither priest died until the late 1640s, their mystical activities had begun earlier and prompted the record-keeping of their spiritual encounters. In August of 1637, Brébeuf had a vision of demons attempting to devour him and for the next three years experienced alternating visions of demons and the cross.⁶¹ On the Day of Ascension in May of 1638, Isaac Jogues had an experience he defined as an “overflowing” of “Divine Love.” Again in 1642, after the tragic death of the *donné* or Jesuit aide⁶² (René Goupil) who was his companion, Jogues experienced another vision that gave him great comfort during the chaos and bloodshed of the times. Finally, in 1643, three years before his death, he had had two divine dreams of paradise, one in the midst of intense suffering:

God communicated to him in his sleep, as he did of old to those old Patriarchs, what I am about to relate. He himself has set it down in writing, with his own hand... ‘I had gone forth from our village in my usual manner, in order to groan more freely before you, O my God; in order to offer to you my prayer, and to lift

⁶¹ François Roustang, *Jesuit Missionaries to North America: Spiritual Writings and Biographical Sketches*, Translated by Sister M. Renelle (St. Louis, Ignatius Press, 2006), 132-5, 163-75.

⁶² A *donné* was the designated term of those who served the Jesuits in a variety of ways, though the office was considered a spiritual succor rather than a simple position for hire. They performed various functions, including farming and keeping house, especially for Jesuits living in the wilderness. In this way they helped remove a stigma the Jesuits had earned early in their mission by doing ‘women’s work.’ More importantly for the Jesuits, when the colonial and inter-tribal warfare escalated, the *donnés* carried weapons and could protect the Jesuits since the Jesuits could not carry weapons or engage in warfare.

the sluice, in your presence, of my distresses and my complaints. At my return, I found all things new: those great stakes which surrounded our village appeared to me changed into towers, bulwarks, and walls of an illustrious beauty.⁶³

In his dream, the Iroquois village he inhabited became a divine space in which the natives were “praising the name of the lamb, [and in] in their distresses and tribulations were striving to imitate the gentleness of [Christ].” Moving further into the village he is brought before a great “Judge” and “Captain” to be punished for his temerity in approaching a royal palace. After meekly suffering a beating with a rod, the judge embraced him, imparting a “consolation wholly divine.” In response, Jogues wrote, “Overflowing with that celestial joy, I kissed the hand which had struck me; and, feeling myself fall as it were into an ecstasy, I exclaimed: ... ‘Your rod, O my Lord and my King, and your staff have comforted me.’”⁶⁴

Jogues believed the dream to be divine, “not only because of the connection which these things had among themselves, but especially because of the great fire of love which my Judge had kindled in the depth of my heart, the remembrance of which alone, several months later, drew from me tears of the sweetest consolation.” Jogues’ colleagues agreed with his assessment and interpreted the dream not only as communicating heavenly inclinations, but also as a prophecy of his death. At the end of Jogues’ account, his biographer added, “All this is taken, almost word for word, from the memoir of that good Father,—who, at the time, did not understand that those blows

⁶³ Francis Talbot, *Saint Among Savages: The Life of Saint Isaac Jogues* (San Francisco : Ignatius Press, 2002), 118-9, 256-7; Roustang, *Jesuit Missionaries*, 212-9. Excerpts from the spiritual journals of Isaac Jogues and Jean de Brébeuf were included in the published *Relations* for 1637 (31:61-79) and 1649 (34:139-57). Further information can be found in François Roustang’s compilation of the spiritual writings of the Canadian missionaries, *An Autobiography of Martyrdom : Spiritual Writings of the Jesuits in New France*, Translated by Sister M. Renelle (St. Louis: Herder, 1964).

⁶⁴ Talbot, *Saint Among Savages*, 118-9, 256-7; Roustang, *Jesuits Missionaries*, 212-9.

which were dealt on his head by his Judge denoted his return into that country, where he was to find the entrance to the Holy Zion by a blow from a hatchet, which has lodged him with his dear companion [René Goupil].”⁶⁵

The Jesuit missionaries recognized other mystical giants of the New France missions included the Ursuline nuns, Marie de l’Incarnation (Marie Guyart) and Marie de St. Joseph (Marie de Savonnières de la Troche). Both of these remarkable women kept spiritual journals of their mystical experiences from their time in France and their time in New France. As was the case with Brébeuf and Jogues, excerpts of their spiritual journals were circulated among their order on both sides of the Atlantic. Both women arrived in the late 1630s and had a variety of mystical experiences which included dreams. In fact, Marie de l’Incarnation’s dream of a land she believed to be Canada led her to doggedly pursue a missionary calling in New France.⁶⁶ Her eulogy for Marie de St. Joseph, delivered to the sending convent at Tours, came into Le Jeune’s hands, and he included in the 1653 *Relation* the small booklet which listed several mystical experiences which include a significant night dream:

[God] caused her to see in her sleep a ladder like that of Jacob; with one end it touched the heavens, and with the other it rested on the earth. Many people were climbing this ladder, aided by their good Angels, who gently wiped away the sweat which the toil and exertion called forth from their foreheads and their entire faces. Some of them she saw who fell backward at the first step, or at the first round of the ladder; others tumbled headlong from the middle; and a small number, surmounting the difficulties of a road so straight and so steep, arrived at

⁶⁵ *Jesuit Relations*, 31: 63-9.

⁶⁶ For information on Marie de l’Incarnation, see Marie-Florine Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confront the New World: Marie de l’Incarnation (1599-1672) and Madame Guyon (1648-1717)* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998); Anya Mali, *Mystic in the New World: Marie de l’Incarnation (1599-1672)* (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1996); and Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995). See also *Jesuit Relations*, 56: 243-89; and for accounts of Marie de St. Joseph’s visions and piety, *ibid.*, 38:87-165

last at the top, and gained the victory. The effect of this vision made it evident that it was not a simple dream forged in the workshop of her imagination, but a remedy for her ill, applied by the hands of her good Angel. It needed no questioning of Œdipus for the explanation of this enigma; the Spirit of God was its interpreter.⁶⁷

As was often the case, the dreamer and very probably the spiritual directors of this nun tested the dreams' content, the physical and spiritual aftermath of the experience, and the general piety of the dreamer in order to verify whether or not the dream was divine or a demonic deception. They concluded that it was not "a simple dream forged in the workshop of her imagination" but a dream that healed her, that increased her devotion, and that corresponded to the forms accepted within the Catholic mystical tradition as well as the general spiritual aims of the missionary Church.⁶⁸

These encounters, judged among the highest quality of divine communications, can be juxtaposed with many of the convert dreams which the Jesuits began reporting during the late 1630s in order to examine the dilemma the priests felt in either dismissing or fully accepting the native mysticism. The content of acceptable dreams was expected to conform to patterns of Christian imagery and orthodox theology. The message of mystical dreams tended toward emotional exhortation rather than direct commands, a distinction which the Jesuits at least would clarify for natives whom they feared were altogether too willing to obey dream instructions. The end spiritual result, as would be the case with many convert dreams, was a lasting sentiment and lifestyle of devotion.

In all probability, the Jesuits expected the divine mystical graces then in vogue in France to be imparted to at least some of their number. However, the appearance of

⁶⁷ *Jesuit Relations*, 38: 89-91.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 89-95.

mystical convert dreams seemed to catch them off guard. In 1638, a Montagnais headman surnamed Nenaskoumat related “with altogether naive simplicity” a dream, or perhaps a vision, which he had had on his sickbed:

‘Yesterday, towards evening,’ he said to me, ‘while thinking of God, I saw myself surrounded by a great light; I saw the beauties of Heaven, of which thou tellest us; I saw the house of that great Captain who has made all. I was in a state of delight which can not be expressed. This suddenly disappearing, I lowered my eyes toward the earth, and saw a frightful gulf which paralyzed me with fear. It seemed to me some one was saying to me, “Do not go there!” I had no wish to approach it, for I was trembling like the leaf upon the tree shaken by the wind. This feeling of horror vanished, as well as the beauty and light which had surrounded me. I was left quite distracted with a desire to believe and to obey God all my life; assure our Captain of this, that I believe from the bottom of my heart.’⁶⁹

The Jesuits, cautious priests as they were, introduced this experience not as a ‘dream’ or even as a ‘vision’ but as “a great communication he had had with God.” Immediately following the story, Le Jeune, who learned of the story when visiting the sick man’s bedside a week after the event, added:

Now I can assure Your Reverence that we did all we could to discover whether this were an imposture or a dream. We had sounded him several times and on different occasions, until, believing that he had his soul upon his lips, we reminded him of this vision, threatening him with severe punishment if he lied in a matter of so much importance. This poor frightened man, trying to raise himself to a sitting posture, said to us with a steadfast eye, ‘I assure you in all truth that the thing is as I have described it to you. I have not lied to you in life; I will not lie to you at my death.’⁷⁰

The entire account was introduced and ended with a lengthy account of the native man’s spiritual devotion and theological insights.

Some degree of Le Jeune’s own astonishment that a native who had yet to be baptized and accepted into the Church as a believer might receive a divine vision can be

⁶⁹ Ibid., 14: 133-143.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 14: 140.

seen in his brief commentary on the extraordinary episode. “Regarding this,” he wrote, “what can one say except that the God of Paradise bestows his blessings upon the Barbarians as well as upon the Greeks. ...To be born a Barbarian, and to speak in these terms, is to publish the goodness of the God of the Scythians and of the Christians.”⁷¹ In short, it seemed, the mystical graces which God bestowed regularly on European Christians had now been granted to the barbarian peoples formerly outside God’s protection. Such an account, together with the recently pious behavior of the native, persuaded the Jesuits of the miraculous nature of the vision and the Christian inclination of his heart. If more proof was needed, Nenaskoumat made a miraculous recovery shortly after being baptized and christened François Xavier. However, such a remarkable and unexpected incident could hardly be left alone; the following year when Xavier again become ill and would soon die, Le Jeune returned to his sickbed to press him and determine if he had been truthful:

After he had said his prayers, I asked him if he remembered well the glorious vision of Paradise and of Hell that he had had shortly after his Baptism, over a year ago. I advised him above all to be careful not to tell a falsehood, with his soul hovering on his lips, and our Lord still present in his heart. “Nikanis,” he said to me, “it may be that I did not tell the truth when I told thee that I had seen the dwelling of the great Captain of Heaven. I do not know whether it was his house; but what I saw was so beautiful and so ravishing that I thought it was his house. There is nothing like it on earth. That beauty is still so impressed upon my mind that I do not think I shall ever lose the recollection of it.” Finally, we administered Extreme Unction, which he received with deep feelings of regret for having offended God.⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid., 14: 139-141.

⁷² Ibid., 16: 105-7.

The second account of this vision of Paradise, of “the dwelling of the great Captain of Heaven,” suggests two things. First, the native convert himself interpreted the dream in Christian fashion, either recognizing or choosing to identify the elements of his vision with Christian imagery. Second, Le Jeune considered the matter of such great importance that he interrogated the dying man before administering the Sacraments. The veracity of Xavier’s testimony must have been of the utmost importance to the Jesuits missionaries. Evidence of God’s miraculous graces would give the missionaries great hope and gain respect and financial support among their European readers, but a false report would confirm their worst fears regarding the deceptions of evil spirits and the susceptibility of natives to spiritual folly. Xavier’s “deep feelings of regret,” rather than reflecting a reversal of Jesuit opinion on the nature of the experience, more probably were included to display the pious humility and fear of even a hint of falsehood which typically accompanied an individual whose heart was most receptive to such divine revelations. Overall, the account corroborated the pious sentiment of the original experience in such a way that even the discrepancies lent authenticity to the story.

In 1638, the same year that François Xavier first received his “great communication,” another dying native had a similar experience:

Our Father Superior [of the Huron mission], during his last visit to the council, was informed that a poor woman, of a rather good disposition, wished to speak to him. He had no sooner entered the cabin than this poor sick woman said to him quite loudly, ‘Oh, Echon, what a beautiful dream I had last night! It seemed to me that I saw a young man clothed in a robe as white as snow, and as beautiful as a Frenchman, who was going about baptizing all our village; I took great delight in looking at him; and now I pray thee to baptize me.’ The Father [Brébeuf] instructed her as to the nature of dreams, and explained to her the Catechism, with much consolation on the part of both. The knowledge she had of the pains of Hell, and of the joys of Paradise, made her desire and ask for Holy Baptism with more insistence. There was nothing urgent as far as the symptoms of her disease were

concerned, but the Father, feeling himself strongly inspired, granted her request. Two days did not pass ere she went to receive in Heaven the recompense of her Faith.⁷³

This time the story revolved around a Huron woman. Unlike François Xavier, her untimely death precluded any possibility of a post-baptismal demonstration of her Christian piety. This evidentiary element notwithstanding, her story matched many traditional images and aspects of a mystical encounter. Likely influenced by the images the Jesuits preferred to use in the evangelical efforts, the visitor in the dream looks French, has robes “white as snow,” appeared beautiful, and was engaged in baptizing the village—to the native, an entirely Christian spiritual exercise. Furthermore, her “delight” in observing the man would seem to mirror the emotional ecstasy a mystic would feel as a result of a divine encounter. Her insistent wish to be baptized confirmed the character of the event as good and elevating. As with François Xavier’s dream, however, the Jesuit father reporting the incident, François-Joseph le Mercier, indicates a hesitation by both himself and Brébeuf to accept the experience at face value. That Brébeuf, at least, connected this vision with typical native dreaming practices is indicated by his efforts to instruct the woman “as to the nature of dreams” and to explain the Catechism in order to assure himself that the woman fully understood the implications of her baptismal demand. Both Brébeuf and Le Mercier appear to accept the incident in the end by their willingness to baptize the woman and the closing comment concerning the “the recompense of her Faith.”

⁷³ Ibid., 15: 73.

In his Relation for 1640 and 1641, Paul Le Jeune regaled his readers with the remarkable story of a devout convert whom God had “touched mightily.” He likened the native man, Charles Meiachkawat, to Nathaniel, a young disciple whom Jesus had once indicated as a “true Israelite” signifying the new spiritual status he was assigning to the convert.⁷⁴ Then he gave the following account of how this Abenaki man had come to place himself under the spiritual care of the Jesuits:

He related to us that, being one day in the woods, he saw a man clothed like us, and he heard a voice which said to him: “Forsake thine old ways; lend an ear to these people, and do as they do; and, when thou shalt be instructed, teach thy Countrymen.” “I do not know,” said he, “if it were the voice of the great Captain of heaven, but I saw and conceived great things.” In the beginning, I took all this talk for the reverie of a Savage; and I passed more than a year without giving any other thought to it than that which I would have given to a dream. But, at length,—seeing that this artless man exerted himself to imitate us, as nearly as was possible for him according to his nature, and seeing his ardor in espousing and proclaiming the faith, whatever it might be, of that vision or dream,—I believed that these good effects could only proceed from the grace of Jesus Christ. As soon as he had heard that voice, he abandoned of his own accord—without speaking to us, for he was far distant from us—all the follies of his Nation...⁷⁵

In telling Charles Meiachkawat’s story, Le Jeune carefully included not only his own evaluation but also his history with Meiachkawat and Meiachkawat’s own words. Although he introduces the anecdote with a declaration that God’s hand in the affair is manifest, he is hesitant in his assessment of the nature of the “vision or dream” or

⁷⁴ The biblical reference is from John 1:47 where Jesus points out Nathaniel and says, “Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” NRSV. This verse might figuratively be translated, “Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no Jacob,” referencing the dual meaning of the name of the Hebrew patriarch Jacob, or Israel, who was chosen by God. His early history was filled with deceptions but his rechristening Israel, or “one who wrestles with God,” noted a new identity and relationship with God. The significance that Le Jeune seems to be making here by relating this native believer to Jacob is similarly to assign him a new identity with God as a true Christian, one whose true character was published by God himself rather than by the Jesuits or anyone else.

⁷⁵ *Jesuit Relations*, 20:185-87.

“whatever it might be.” Similar to the process of legitimizing a mystic’s contemplative encounter with the divine, Le Jeune sought to justify the dream and its resulting conversion through reporting the excellent character of Meiachkawat and by vouching for the virtuous outcome of the ostensibly divine encounter. For over thirteen pages⁷⁶ Le Jeune spells out the holiness of this man’s repentance, declaring that, although he had “not yet been instructed,” he zealously gave up his “superstitious” customs and even “began to preach to his own people,” that he sought out a Jesuit for clarification on any action he thought might be sinful, and that his humility in keeping much of this holy fruits to himself rather than parading them before the French contributed to the difficulty in recording such stories.⁷⁷ He concluded that, “Human nature does not go so far as this; these fruits are gathered only in the garden of grace, in the midst of which is planted the tree of the holy Cross, upon which Jesus Christ prayed for his enemies.”⁷⁸

Le Jeune’s eagerness to legitimize this convert’s experience reflects his uncertainty about the source. For more than a year, Le Jeune denied the spiritual validity of Charles Meiachkawat’s conversion dream, a dream which pointedly commanded Meiachkawat to go and learn a new culture for himself and his people from the black robes. But when it became apparent that the dream was producing fruits of Christian

⁷⁶ This number corresponds to Le Jeune’s original publication for 1641-1642—an octavo volume of about one hundred pages—and not the numbering of Thwaites compilation.

⁷⁷ Such humility was expected of mystics in Europe; those who claimed to be mystics but advertised their holiness came under suspicion of deceitfulness.

⁷⁸ *Jesuit Relations* 20: 185-205. Compare these to the qualities most desired or required in the various treatises on discerning between spirits and false prophets by D’Ailly, Langenstein and Gerson during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when certain abuses related to the ‘new sanctity’ and the politics associated with certain proclaimed mystics were examined at the Council of Constance. See also Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 274-297.

devotion, he exerted great effort to track down the original circumstances, to examine the veracity and character of the dreamer, and to relate the story in terms that indicated the probability of divine activity without claiming any certainty that it was a divine revelation.

In spite of these encouraging responses to seemingly divine convert dreams, the Jesuits did not always accept such spiritually beneficial dreams as true miracles. Although they had noted that even traditional native dreams might lead a pagan to the faith, they also noted that these same impulses could backfire and lead to apostasy. Le Mercier complained of one girl whom they were instructing who dreamed in the night that if she were baptized she would die. Believing the dream, she refused to go through with the ritual. After the Father assured the girl that “the devil was the author of this dream, and that he desired nothing else than to see her forever miserable in the flames of hell,—and that, on the contrary, God, who wished—nothing so much as to see her blest in heaven through all eternity, was inviting her to receive Holy Baptism” the girl consented once more to be baptized, which the Jesuits did without further delay.⁷⁹ Even so, the incident revealed the continued danger among native converts and catechumens of obedience to dreams not divine. A short time later, Jérôme Lalemant passed on a cautionary tale of an old Huron chief who, taking ill, was prompted “by some sort of vision that he had” to turn to the Jesuits for instruction and baptism. Upon his immediate and almost miraculous recovery “to the astonishment of all those who had a little while before despaired of his life,” and to “all other persons who came to see him from all parts

⁷⁹ Ibid., 13: 225-7.

of the country, he never wearied recounting what had occurred, and that he owed his life entirely to the baptism he had received.” After one or two masses, however, the chief was lulled by his previous customs back into the pagan rituals which he had lately given up. The pressure within the native community to continue the responsibilities placed on him for the good of the tribe would have been tremendous. But the Jesuit assessment offered less sympathy to such apostates, even—or perhaps especially—since they rejected Christianity in spite of witnessing such extraordinary proofs:

I could produce some other like examples of the wonders it has pleased God to perform in like cases, —which, if they are not miracles, are not far from them. But this is not our object. Let that alone be said, in order to show that apparently it is not to a lack of miracles that we should attribute the delay in the general conversion of these tribes.⁸⁰

As beneficial as such wonders or miracles seemed, they could not always preserve the faith of the native Church and could not be accepted merely for the potential good they denoted among converts.

Most of the dreams reported between 1637 and 1645 fell somewhere in between the miraculous and frustratingly erroneous. Le Jeune, reporting in 1639 on the piety of several young men at the Seminary, told of a young Christian at the Seminary named Paul Ateiachias. In his dreams, it seems, this young convert turned his thoughts to God: “I have often heard him repeating during the night what I had taught him during the day. He felt so much affection for our Lord, that most of his dreams were about him alone, — seeking even in his sleep some means of pleasing him.”⁸¹ Unlike the previous cases, the Jesuits made no attempt to extract the details of his dreams or judge the edifying nature of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 17: 137-9.

⁸¹ Ibid., 16: 175.

his thoughts as indications of divine communication. Neither, however, did Le Jeune refer to these dreams as divine; he appears to have considered such dreams the natural continuation of pious thoughts present in the youth's thoughts during his waking hours and significant of the comprehensive focus of his thoughts on heavenly things.

In 1640, Le Jeune reported a sickbed vision by a woman whom the Jesuits had been teaching for more than a year. Although she had requested baptism, the Jesuits hesitated to admit her into the Church too quickly. Shortly before her death, however, she “perceives at her side a company, with unknown faces of a rare beauty; these beings offer her very handsome cloth, with which to cover her.” Being surprised, she turned to her grandmother and told her to leave the room, saying, “What a vision I see! You hinder me.” When she died shortly thereafter, the Jesuits heard the story and interpreted the incident as a real vision. “As we believe, she finds herself clothed in the robe of glory whereof she had such assured pledges, —having received [from the beings], shortly beforehand, the grace of baptism.” In spite of the Jesuits delay, this good woman was “happy to find at death what she has not obtained during her life,” in other words, a baptism.⁸² Having been absent and, apparently, unable to see the woman before her death, the priests had been unable either to determine the sincerity of her desire for baptism or to complete her sacramental induction to the faith. However, the character of the woman and the elements of the “perceived” event sufficed to confirm that the vision was genuine and angelic, and that the woman had received rather a spiritual baptism.

⁸² Ibid., 19: 195.

In 1644, Jérôme Lalemant reported another suggestive but inconclusive incident involving the dream of a pious convert named René Sondihwannen (Tsondihwane). While hunting with his son one autumn, Tsondihwane had a dream of a fierce storm which terrified him. In the midst a person, “whose face was unknown, but full of majesty, mingled with love and gentleness — came down from Heaven, and drawing near him, said: ‘Take thy rosary, and pray to God.’” In his dream, Tsondihwane found himself in the middle of the storm, and upon praying, the storm dissipated. When on the following day he found himself in the middle of a storm similar to that which he had seen in his dream, Tsondihwane turned to his son and exhorted him to pray. As in the dream, the storm passed away, but several hours later reappeared. The two men again prayed through the rosary and almost immediately, the clouds again disappeared. However, just as the clouds began to reappear and the two men began again to pray, just as the dream had shown him, Tsondihwane “reflected that he was obeying his dream.”

‘I have sinned,’ he said to his son, ‘but without thinking of it. Let us not say that prayer now, for otherwise I should fulfill my dream. Let us only pray to God in our hearts. If he wishes to preserve us from this storm, he is not attached to one prayer more than another.’

Lalemant concluded that he did not know “whether there is anything extraordinary in this, but the cloud parted and discharged itself on either side near the spot where they were. Not a drop of rain fell on them, and they thanked our Lord for having protected them.” The correspondence between the apparition and reality seemed remarkably, almost miraculously providential. And the message, to pray for deliverance from a storm, had both literal and symbolic spiritual value within a Christian interpretation. Still, the dreaming event seemed to present a spiritually ambiguous message and to

advocate obedience in the same way the Jesuits found intolerable. Tsondihwane's caution in finally rejecting the dream in the end and his choice not to pray the rosary but to pray any other prayer suggest that the natives themselves wrestled with the ambiguity of differing Jesuit responses to dreams and vision, if not in their spiritual direction then at least in their descriptions of true faith. Lalemant concluded his report saying, "Very often many things happen to these good people which are, without doubt, rather remarkable; but, owing to their simplicity,⁸³ they reflect on it only for the moment, and content themselves with thanking God when they have derived any benefit from it. This one I only heard by accident, when the good man, long afterward, asked us whether he had committed a grievous sin in obeying his dream at first, and how he should have behaved on that occasion, according to God's will."⁸⁴ Without explaining to his readers how he in fact answered Tsondihwane's anxiety over the matter, Lalemant acknowledge both the pious attitudes found among native converts and the spiritual benefits possible regardless of the source of the dreaming event.

Charles Lalemant related a similarly prophetic but spiritually ambiguous night dream by a very well-respected native Christian and community leader, Joseph Chihwatenhwa, which was corroborated by René Tsondihwane:

René, a short time after his baptism, was fishing with our late Christian Joseph Chihwatenhwa, and the latter happened to dream all that really befell him about fourteen months afterward, —namely, that three or four Iroquois attacked him; that, having defended himself, he was thrown to the ground; that they took off his scalp, and gave him a blow with a hatchet on the head from which they had

⁸³ Lalemant refers here, I believe, to a "simple, child-like" and faith, humble and pure as most honored in the gospels and New Testament epistles, and not, as it might appear to a modern reader, to a simplicity of mind borne of ignorance, barbarity or mental or cultural incapacity.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 26: 251-3.

removed it. The late Christian awaking after this dream, spoke to René, his companion. “Ah, my comrade,” said he, “it is now, if we were not Christians, that we should be obliged to have recourse to our songs and feasts, in order to efface the calamity of my dream. But it is not that which is the master of our lives, —it is he of whom they have taught us, and in whom we believe, who alone disposes of it according to his good pleasure.” And thereupon he related to him the dream that I have just stated.⁸⁵

Lalemant commented that he and his colleagues had “reason to think that this same dream returned to him several times afterward; for members of his family declared that often in the morning they heard him speak on awaking, and say, Art thou the master of it? No, no, it is only God who shall dispose of it.” This particular dream, as with René’s dream of praying away the storm, seemed remarkable yet spiritually ambiguous. After all, little in the content suggested a Christian revelation except for the remarkable clarity and repetition of the dream and the sense of significance felt by the dreamer. Unlike the Jesuit discomfort with Tsondihwane’s dream command earlier, the Jesuit recording this incident was inclined to think that Chihwatenhwa’s dream presented more danger than spiritual edification. Because his relatives knew of the dream, and soon did the whole community and region, and because Joseph Chihwatenhwa refused to perform any dream cure to turn aside the ominous fate predicted, even after repeated insistence, the Christians earned the animosity of the dead man’s relatives and friends. Lalemant replied that, given the repeated urging of his family, the incident “was very likely to revive in the mind of the poor René, as well as those of the other good Christians, the general belief and deference that all these Tribes render to a dream, as to the master of life and of

⁸⁵ Ibid., 21: 163.

death.” Instead, “it pleased God to deliver him from this temptation, and to strengthen thoroughly his spirit and his courage. He was the first to solve the difficulties which are therein presented, and which are not trifling.”⁸⁶

Many dream reports fell more clearly on the side of demonic or superstitious pagan practices and the Jesuit reacted with greater confidence in naming such manifestations demonic or superstitious. In spite of the growing evidence, as it seemed, of converts having valid mystical experiences, the Jesuits continued to require their converts to give up dreams. In fact, given the evidence also of demonic dealing in native spiritual rites, the increased exhortation of the missionaries against dreams makes sense. In 1637, Le Jeune recorded a sickbed vision of a young Seminary boy baptized Robert Satouta, the grandson of a Huron chief named Tsondechaouanouan:

He was afflicted by I know not what dream or evil vision. ‘What do I see,’ said he, ‘who are those people there? What are they counseling me?’ ‘Dost thou not recognize them?’ asked the Father. ‘No,’ said he, ‘I do not know who they are.’ Then the Father cheered him, and explained to him that the devils, enraged because he had been made a child of God by Baptism, were trying to make him renounce the faith that he had embraced, and therefore he should hold fast, and God would not abandon him. Thereupon, addressing his words to the Demons, ‘Go, evil ones,’ he said to them, ‘go away from me, I hold you in horror. I do not know any other Master than he who has made heaven and earth, and who has taken me for his child. Oh my God, do not leave me, I will never leave you. My Captain, you have paid for me, I am yours; you have bought heaven for me, give it to me.’⁸⁷

The dialogue between the Jesuit and the boy demonstrates the cautious attitude of the priest in interpreting the experience, but it is clear that he did not know its true nature. Although he might have read the dream as angelic rather than demonic, and the boy

⁸⁶ Ibid., 21: 159-65.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 12: 55-7.

might have responded differently, the dream or vision itself offered few clues as to the true spiritual nature of its source or content. It is likely that the Jesuit took the default position, which was to associate native dreams with demonic activity. However, it is possible that in saying Satouta was “afflicted” by a vision, the Jesuit believed the boy’s negative reaction implied a dangerous or evil cause. In either case, the “counsels” the unknown visitors offered could not be immediately recognized as Christian, and to listen to or follow such counsels, again, came far too close to the dream obedience Jesuits deplored.

The spiritual danger of such convert dreams suggested there were deeper similarities between convert dreams and their pagan counterparts. The attitude of the Jesuits concerning these similarities could be felt among their flock as well, and stories of dreams which caused their converts anxiety appeared frequently. In their confusion about how to deal with the dreams, native believers often consulted the Jesuits on the appropriate action to take. Maintaining their previous stance, the missionaries discouraged the dreams while encouraging the dreamer to fear neither their dreams nor any involuntary reaction while sleeping. In 1640, Le Jeune informed his readers,

Some of the Savages have proposed to us these ‘cases of conscience, which are very easy to solve, —for example, if it be a great sin to dream something wrong at night, although even in dreaming one should resist it? ‘If the devil incline us to believe our dreams, if we reject them,’ they ask, ‘is the thought we had, of believing them, a great sin?’ I have been troubled sometimes in asking Savages about certain sins, lest I might cause them to infer that baptized persons could commit these.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Ibid., 18: 145.

One Christian woman sought out the Jesuits saying that she had seen the devil in a dream the previous night. “‘I almost came in the night,’ said she; ‘the wicked manitou came to see me, and wished to give me something to eat, but I refused him. I was so frightened when I recalled what you have taught me,—that this evil one desired to ruin us,—that, waking with a start, I wished to run to your house, lest he should beguile me.’” The Jesuits assured her that the Devil could not harm her if she persevered in her faith, “especially if she no longer believed in her dreams.”⁸⁹

Another convert whose native companion insisted that he aid him in fulfilling a dream obligation replied that “he would ask the Father who was his director whether the action were permitted, —in which case, he would perform it; otherwise he would not.” Being forbidden to participate, the convert “obeyed without hesitation, and without a reply,” commented Le Jeune. “Behold how grace operates in a heart that is called barbarian, —or rather, let us say, in God’s children, since they are rendered such by Baptism.”⁹⁰ In 1642 Jérôme Lalemant reported a similar incident of a pagan who befriended a convert family, giving them gifts, in order to trick them into participating in a feast undertaken as a dream cure. The good Christians returned the gifts before nightfall, saying, “Thou knowest well that ours is a Christian Cabin; this friendship that thou wishest to contract with us has no other author than the Devil, who has commanded it to thee in a dream; and we would sin, were we to obey him in this.” The Jesuit commented on, “I do not know whether the Casuists would have been so strict on this occasion. In any case, it was not an easy thing to do. But there is no bond of friendship

⁸⁹ Ibid., 18: 165-7.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 16: 199.

that Faith will not sever, rather than see us separated from GOD.”⁹¹ Native converts, like this couple, might often far exceed even the strictures placed on convert behavior by the Jesuits.

Le Mercier reported the words of a Huron convert who “when he happened to dream at night, the next morning he addressed God and said to him, ‘My God, I have dreamed; but, since you do not wish us to depend upon our dreams, I shall not trouble myself about them.’”⁹² Another Huron man desirous of converting pledged to “give up his dreams, dances, and superstitious feasts. Since then he has often come to see us, determined to become a Christian with all his family.”⁹³ A frustrated husband dreamed one night that he ought to divorce his unconverted wife. Rather than encourage this behavior, the priests sought to educate the woman who, upon learning of the resolve of her husband, was “receiving instruction quite willingly.”⁹⁴

The converts faced additional pressure from their former friends and relatives to participate in the dreaming rituals which were so essential to communal well-being. Having denied converts such participation, the Jesuits added their praise for the resolve of their converts and reported the cases in order to show the depth of Christian adherence in the Canadian mission. In 1639, Jérôme Lalemant reported a praiseworthy incident in which Joseph Chihwatenhwa had refused to participate in a dream cure:

⁹¹ Ibid., 23: 125.

⁹² Ibid., 13: 253.

⁹³ Ibid., 15: 133.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 22: 75-7.

This good man was raising in his cabin a Brenesche, which is a sort of wild goose, and which has already been, I know not how many times, the Ondinonc, or dream, of many persons, and for which, consequently, to obtain it from him, I do not know what they have not offered him. That which has given him the most trouble, however, is not to refuse those who have presented themselves to barter for it, but, far more, to refuse his friends, who have demanded this from him until he is vexed. 'But,' said his wife, 'even if they should demand it from us without saying that it was the Ondinonc,—but, you would say, they desired it expressly for that purpose,—they would get nothing!'⁹⁵

Conversely, the Jesuits criticized natives for their willing participation in traditional dreaming rituals. One convert, whose dream cure failed, declaimed any complicity in the ritual, as Le Jeune wrote:

After these fine Physicians had left, he sent for one of our Fathers, who had begun to instruct him; he asked him for Baptism. The Father intended to chide and repulse him, upon seeing this foolish superstition; but the poor patient said to him, 'It was not I who called them; my mother dreamed that I would recover if a solemn game were played; this is why she has caused me all this difficulty without my having anything to say about it.'⁹⁶

In 1642, Barthelemy Vimont reported the continued attacks of the Devil through dreams.

God tried [Emery Tchames] by means of an illness that gave him occasion to fortify himself in the Faith. The Devil chose his own time; he wished to attack him in his sleep. He saw, in a dream, a person who said to him. 'Prepare an eat-all feast; if thou wilt be cured, put Eagles' feathers on thy body, in the manner that I shall tell thee; thou art a dead man if thou dost not obey. Above all, pray no more; it is prayer that has made thee ill.' The good man was greatly astonished when he awoke. The Savages have no stronger belief than dreams; they are their Oracles, which they obey as a sovereign Divinity. He related to his wife what he had seen. 'No matter if I have to die,' he said; 'I will never return to what I have abandoned. It is the Devil who seeks to deceive me. I will find out whether he has any power over me. Even if I saw death before my eyes, I would never do what he has commanded me; I will be faithful to God, in life and unto death.' In France, a dream is only a dream; but here it is a point of Theology, or an article of Faith, — it requires great grace to set it at naught.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid., 17: 191-3.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 16, 97-99.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 22: 225-7.

Such attacks of the Devil through temptations or threats in dreams popped up in other *Relations* as well.⁹⁸ Some attacks spilled out into daily life and even threatened the converts' lives. In 1644, Jérôme Lalemant reported the physical abuse of one of his converts, a man named Charles Tsondatsaa. Three natives invited him to a sweat bath and insisted he speak three praises of one of the other's familiar spirit in order to prevent a dreamed misfortune. Refusing, the men compelled him to stay in the bath, cursing his stubbornness and urging him to fulfill their request without informing the Jesuits. The persecution stopped only when the men realized that the convert had passed out from the heat.⁹⁹

The native converts, internalizing the prohibitions of the Jesuits, also policed the behavior of the convert community. One Father commented that "They have such an abhorrence for their former sorceries that, when a Christian who was sick began to sing in his dreams during the night, the others who heard him awoke him at once, telling him that he did wrong to obey the Devil."¹⁰⁰ Zealous converts also were known to oppose the aggressive anti-Jesuit behaviors cropping up more and more frequently among native communities during these dark periods. Paul Ragueneau reported the incident of a native convert who stood in front of someone intent on tearing down the bell of a Jesuit chapel

⁹⁸ Ibid, 23: 159-61; 23: 169-71; 26: 21-7; 29: 161-7; 32: 45-7; 32: 207.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 26: 243-9.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 26: 99.

in response to a dream directive. The native rushed at the convert with a hatchet, but when the convert made no attempt to move or defend himself, the other man ceased his attack with surprise.¹⁰¹

The dangers facing these converts paralleled the abuse and trials that the Jesuits faced and believed to be spiritually purifying. Theoretically, convert dreams might be conduits of divine discourse in the same way as the missionaries mystical experiences, providing evidence of divine grace during periods of extraordinary apostolic hardship. Natives' lack of training and experience, however, left them in danger of falling into grave spiritual error, and the heightened activity of the Devil in New France magnified those dangers.

By the mid-1640s, the Jesuits seem to have become more accepting of convert dreams and developed a strategy by which they could discern legitimate miracles on the basis of the dreamer's reputation, the validity of the dream message, and the appropriateness of the dreamer's response to the message. Two cases the Jesuits felt to be truly miraculous also shows that by the 1640s natives actively participated not only in policing the boundaries laid down by the priests, but also in redefining and managing the affairs within those boundaries. Turning specifically to Etienne Totiri as an exemplar of spiritual fruitfulness, Lalemant wrote:

I have wondered whether I should relate here a vision, or if you will, a dream that this man had. Whatever be the name by which it is called, here is the account he himself has given of it. "I saw," he said, "a cross in the Sky, all red with blood; and our Lord stretched thereon, with his head to the East and his feet to the West. I saw a crowd of people advancing from the West, whom our Lord attracted by his loving looks, and who did not dare to approach his sacred head, but remained

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 34:107-9.

respectfully at his feet. Remaining silent and quite astounded in the midst of that company, I heard a voice commanding me to pray. I did so, in holy awe, and felt in my soul emotions of fear and of love that surpass all my thoughts.”

He had the same vision on three different occasions; but I would have paid no more heed to it than to a dream, were it not that the impressions that it has left in his heart are supernatural. These peoples of the West must come to adore the cross of Jesus Christ. We shall see in due time how he went last winter to the neutral nation, and how he preached the Faith. Meanwhile, I will content myself with saying that he neither wishes nor hardly is able to speak of anything else.¹⁰²

As with the previous cases of convert dreams, Lalemant suggested rather than affirmed the truly mystical nature of this ‘vision’ or ‘dream.’ Since there does not seem to be anything unorthodox about the theological or visual content of the dream, it is reasonable to assume that Lalemant’s hesitation arose from the Jesuits’ general discouragement of native dreams.

Like most other reported convert dreams, this was probably a night dream and, though Lalemant confers upon it the provisional status of “vision,” this dream probably resembled many other dreams reported by native converts. He justifies his categorization by the resulting actions and beliefs of the covert and his adoration of God. Furthermore, he takes Totiri’s dream message and clarifies the central exhortation for his audience—that “these peoples of the West must come to adore the cross of Jesus Christ.” Lalemant appears not only to accept the message of the dream but also to be willing to account its source as divine, allowing Totiri to stand both as an exceptional Christian as well as a divinely appointed vessel of spiritually revealed truth. More significant is that Lalemant’s interpretation that “These peoples of the West must come to adore the cross of Jesus Christ” comes from Totiri himself. The supernatural impressions left from the

¹⁰² Ibid., 26: 263.

episode that signify to the Jesuits a supernatural occurrence included Totiri leaving his own community to go to the Neutral nation to preach the gospel and his inability to speak about anything but the conversion of native souls to the Catholic faith. It seems that Totiri informed the Jesuits of his 'supernatural' dream and, in spite of their skepticism, obeyed his own interpretation of the dream command to go west and preach the message of crucifixion and salvation to others. The autonomous role of Totiri is both a benefit and potential danger for the Jesuits: not only does the account suggest that Totiri confidently responded to a dream as a divine message without the clear approbation of his spiritual advisors, he also directly obeyed his own interpretation of a dream command, the very thing which the Jesuits most despised in pagan native dreams.

While this dreaming experience demonstrated the spiritual advancement of Totiri, it is the account of his mother's dream which makes Totiri's place unique among these early reports of convert dreams and highlights the willingness of the Jesuits to at least occasionally allow their converts the freedom to name and interpret the spiritual significance of their own mystical experiences. A few pages after recoding the previous incident, Lalemant describes a vision by Christine Tsorihia. Since her conversion, the mother of the "excellent" Etienne Totiri, had "always progressed in the practice of the highest virtues of Christianity," especially in "a love for the sufferings and afflictions of this life." At her death, she had an experience that, like previous convert dreaming experiences, hovered between the categories of "dream" and "vision." Lalemant reported it in the following terms:

She received the Sacraments with sentiments of a piety full of affection. Among other things, she had a very tender devotion to the blessed Virgin. I have no doubt that in Heaven she will enjoy forever the fruits of that devotion; but I know not

whether, even before death, she did not feel the sweetness thereof. At least, this is what happened to her some hours before her death. When her agony approached, she had already lost the use and sense of her sight. She suddenly exclaimed, as if astonished and ravished with admiration: “O my son, seest thou not the rare beauty of that great Lady, all brilliant with light, who stands at my side? Seest thou not that beautiful book that she carries open in her hands? Hearest thou not those words of love? Oh, how much better she speaks to me than our brothers, the French! How her words penetrate deep into my heart! How amiable she is, and how beautiful it is to see her!”

The good woman spoke to one of her sons an excellent Christian named Paul Okatakwan. “My mother, you are dreaming,” said the young man to her; “I see nothing, and how can you see what you say you do, since your eyes are closed?” “No, no my son,” replied the mother; “I am not at all mistaken, nor do I wish to deceive thee. See on the other side those young Frenchmen who accompany her; they are the handsomest I have ever seen. What rich clothes they wear! But listen rather to what that Lady says to me! Oh, how beautiful it is to see her.” Thereupon she passed away in death.¹⁰³

This was the story that Lalemant himself had received from Etienne Totiri, who heard it from his brother Paul Okatakwan after their mother’s death. Totiri did not immediately tell the Jesuits about his mother’s dreaming experience until several months after the event:

We were more than eight months without knowing these particulars of her death; for her son Paul did not pay more heed to that vision than if it had been a dream, thinking that there could be no other sight but that of the eyes. One day, by accident, he related the whole story to his elder brother, Estienne Totiri, who finally told it to us some days ago, as he was about to leave for the war, saying that, as for him, he believed that those young Frenchmen of such rare beauty were Angels from Heaven, who accompanied the most blessed Virgin, for whom his mother always had such a tender devotion.

Totiri and Okatakwan’s delays in discussing or reporting the incident and their differing interpretations of the type of dreaming experience their mother related illustrate the reluctance of converts to either report or classify traditional dreams as spiritually

¹⁰³ Ibid., 289-91.

significant. Even Totiri's mother, though she appears convinced that she really saw something exceptional, made no claim that these beautiful French people were the Virgin and a host of angels. The multiple opinions demonstrated in the incident attest to the deep divisions within communities about how to understand and reconcile the teaching of the Jesuits with their own practical experiences.

For Totiri, however, it seems possible to read his initial hesitation to claim his mother's vision as genuine or that it represented a spiritual encounter as a lack of certainty or spiritual autonomy. However, Totiri's decision in the end to validate her experience and to interpret the seemingly familiar characters as divine personages suggests that native converts maintained some independence in the explanation of their dreams, even when they relied heavily on Jesuit interpretations to justify or qualify their own opinions. Did Lalemant agree with Totiri's assessment? Interestingly, Lalemant never gives a clear pronouncement on the matter. However, it is Totiri's version, not his brother's more skeptical analysis, that Lalemant relates, and although the Jesuit admits his own uncertainty about the nature of the experience, his report on Totiri and his mother, their exemplary Christian behavior, and the "precious" nature of the woman's death all suggest that Lalemant was inclined to agree with Totiri's summation.

Totiri's confidence in the divinity of his mother's dream and his lack of interest in reporting the dream suggest that he felt himself competent to discern its true spiritual nature. Lalemant's deferral to Totiri's opinion also implies that the priest was willing to leave the decision for such a difficult spiritual analysis in the hands of the convert. Totiri, however, like many of the previous converts who reported Catholic or French symbols in their dreams, would have had the training and, by this time, adequate comprehension of

European customs and Christianity to tailor the language of the dream report as an argument for its validity. Totiri's manner of relating his dreams as well as the other accounts of convert dreams between 1637 and 1645 suggest that converts had become familiar with the reasons the Jesuits despised their traditional practices and sought to avoid them, policing their own communities for such unacceptable behaviors smacking of traditional spirituality, particularly any ritualized aspect or any action resembling obedience to a dream, and appropriating the spiritual language of the Jesuits to reframe their Christianized dreaming practices. Native dreams appear to be far more widespread and culturally significant than dreams seem to have been within Europe and to hover on the margin of orthodoxy. Native converts, in a way, persisted in their attachment to dreams even though the Jesuits had made every attempt to eliminate such habits without also discounting *a priori* true mystical experiences. After 1637, it seems, either convert dreams increased with frequency or else the Jesuits' willingness to legitimize certain dreams made converts more likely to report dreams or Jesuits more likely to distinguish and report them. This expansive mood would not always prevail, however.

After Totiri, the Jesuits reported only two more cases of potentially miraculous dreams. A 1645 account consisted of a sick Christian who "was seized with I know not what enthusiasm, in the deepest silence of the night." The individual claimed to have visited Heaven and was returning to point out the many errors and negligence in native converts' Christian practice. The Jesuit commented only that "However it may be as regards this vision,—whether it be true or whether it be only imagination,—it is nevertheless a fact that it produced a good effect upon the minds of all who heard it

related.”¹⁰⁴ The second occurred in early in 1646. Paul Ragueneau, recently named Superior of the Huron mission, reported that a dying Christian, shortly before death, had asked him who the beautiful young men were standing nearby. After seeing no one and saying so, the young convert admonished Ragueneau, “I have lost neither eyes nor judgment: I see him quite near thee. He accompanies thee; and I know by his face that he comes to help me to die well; do both of you have a care for my soul.” Ragueneau concluded, “We know nothing more of this, but we are not ignorant that the Guardian Angels of these good Neophytes labor, much more than we, to guide their souls to Heaven.”¹⁰⁵

It is no coincidence that the Jesuit Fathers began to believe in a greater degree of demonic power and native complicity in demonic activity at the same time that they began to accept the divine nature of certain native dreams. These two readings of native spiritual practices form two sides of the same coin. If the Jesuits were fighting something more than mere ignorance and superstitious worship of natural phenomena, if they were fighting the direct and not simply the indirect attacks of the Devil, then the power of God became, if possible, more necessary to detach natives from their pagan spiritual practices. Their caution in reading pagan dreams and even many convert dreams as physiological in origin rather than divine also stemmed directly from a scholastic understanding of the boundaries between the natural and supernatural realms. Eager as the Jesuits might have

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 27: 185-9.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 30: 103-5.

been to advertise the blessing of miracles within their apostolic mission, it was imperative that they maintain a distinction between the divine dreams of converts and the demonic or superstitious pagan dreams still rooted in the customs of the land.

However closely these convert dreams resembled their much-criticized pagan counterparts, they also broached the hallowed ground of the miraculous, of the mystical events well beyond the horizon of ordinary physical experiences. Even by European standards, these native convert dreams indicated the probability of a communion of souls with the spirit world. And therein lay the problem for the Jesuit missionaries: the native cosmological framework that placed dreams as the gateway between the natural and supernatural realms, between humans and spirits, a framework that the Jesuits rejected on grounds of a faulty understanding of natural philosophy, would likewise gain an elevated spiritual status. If the Jesuits legitimized the dreaming practices of their converts and approved the spiritual access possible in night dreams and visitations from spiritual guides commanding or urging the native dreamer to obedience of the Jesuits or of Christian doctrine, they therefore also would implicitly acknowledge a style of spiritual activity that blurred their carefully erected boundaries between Christian and traditional native forms of spiritual communication. Such a perspective held implications not only for natives observing the Jesuits but also the Jesuits themselves. In beginning to reexamine the divine communications of their converts, it is perhaps no surprise that the Jesuits simultaneously began to reexamine the possibility that native shamans and spiritual leaders directly communicated with the Devil and to adjust their references to “demonic” thralldom from being accidentally deceptive to actively participatory. Such

an analysis of traditional practices recognized the parallel elevation of convert and pagan spiritual practices among natives while attempting to accentuate once more the distance between traditional native and orthodox Catholic practices.

Accepting convert dreams carried its own dangers as well. The caution demonstrated in these anecdotal accounts of convert mystical experiences evinces more than the customary modesty associated with testimonies and hagiographies of Christian mystics. The great blossoming of mystical practices in the late medieval and later mid sixteenth-century periods, accompanied as they were by controversy both within the Catholic Church and later from outside by Protestant critics, gave rise to the natural skepticism of mystical claims and ‘enthusiasm’ and produced an extensive literature on the ‘discernment of spirits,’ both within the Church and among a concerned Christian public.¹⁰⁶ This task of spiritual discernment belonged not only to clerics, but also to lawyers, medical practitioners, and natural philosophers who in their professional capacity were required to navigate the claims of magical and miraculous phenomena and accusations of heresy and witchcraft.¹⁰⁷ Much of the recent scholarship on mysticism has underscored both the great social interest in these occult matters and also the political concerns arising over the inherent power and therefore danger in mystical claims in

¹⁰⁶ The most prominent authors in the late medieval period were D’Ailly, Langenstein and Gerson. Their influence on the discussion of mystical behaviors at the Council of Constance largely set the tone for later sixteenth and seventeenth century commentators. See also Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 274-97.

¹⁰⁷ The clearest scholarly intersection of the fields of science, witchcraft, occultism and magic, and mysticism may be found in Stuart Clark’s massive and meticulously researched tome *Thinking With Demons*. One of the greatest advantages to his comprehensive intellectual approach is an analysis that explores not only the issues relevant among each of these professional groups, but also the interaction and disagreement between and among them.

particular.¹⁰⁸ Richard Kagan's microhistory, *Lucrecia's Dreams*, on the Spanish mystic Lucrecia de León, provides one of the clearest cases of the political implications disturbing Spain in the sixteenth century. Because this female religious began interpreting her dreams as divine, the piety of the Spanish monarch, Phillip II, and his subjects were called into question. As Lucrecia's spiritual advisor and local admirers began to give credence to her spiritual revelations, the state and Inquisition felt pressed to curb the influence of her messages by undermining her credibility. These dreams along with the claims and criticisms of many other mystics made their way into public debate and displayed the dangers of mystical practices. In the end, these contentious claims produced a growing ambition among laity as well as those within religious institutions to monitor and clarify the boundaries of mystical orthodoxy.

Such dogmatic anxiety concerning legitimate mystical practices and teachings affected not only the Jesuit Order as a whole but also the specific missionaries working to create a holy community among the natives of New France. Although the Jesuits are more widely recognized for their contributions in education and missions, scholars in the twentieth century have uncovered a treasure trove of information on early Jesuit associations with mysticism—an association that passed for some time out of the general history and recognition of the Order. The fruit of this scholarship lies in exposing the mystical origins not only of Ignatius Loyola's vision and enlightened acquisition of the *Spiritual Exercises*, but also the periods of disquietude elicited by Jesuits practicing more affective forms of spiritual devotion. Loyola himself was called before the Spanish

¹⁰⁸ On the issues of social and political disorder and larger theological and social concerns, see Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Dyan Elliot, *Proving Woman*; and Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*.

Inquisition on the grounds of his public discourse on his *Exercises* and the resemblance between his loyal followers and the heretical mystics, the *Alumbrados* (or *Illuminati*). Though Loyola and his teachings were found faultless, as they would again be later by the Pope before publication and circulation, Loyola was admonished to get an education in theology to acquire the proper authority to teach on spiritual matters and avoid error.¹⁰⁹

The *Exercises* themselves are rather ambiguous about mystical practices and although the process of completing the sequence urges various images and spiritual truths for meditation as well as the more mystical contemplation and interior prayer, they do not require or necessarily support mystical practices of any kind. The spiritual climate of the late sixteenth century, however, easily fit mystical tendencies within the *Exercises* and by the 1570s and 1580s, an internal debate had arisen in the Jesuit Order about the proper way to give the *Exercises*. The debate was preceded by reports from Spain concerning the mystical teachings of Balthasar Alvarez, one-time spiritual director to Teresa of Ávila, and others. Questions about the errors of mystics and the threat of Illuminist errors led the Jesuit General, the Order's highest official, to require a cessation in the public and private teachings of Alvarez and his "strange" style of passive prayer. The issue sparked a larger debate in part, it seems, because the accused and reprimanded parties in Spain argued that they had been told in private that there was nothing wrong with their teaching by respected Jesuit leaders. In the mid-1570s, General Everard

¹⁰⁹ R. Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26-7. See also Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice: A Historical Study*, trans. William J. Young, S.J., ed. George E. Ganss, S.J. (Chicago: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1964). De Guibert's work was picked up by scholars like Karl Rahner and his student, Harvey Egan who were interested in spiritual formation and gladly openly sought to emphasize the mystical aspects. See in particular, Egan's book *Ignatius Loyola the Mystic* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1987).

Mercurian initiated the first undertaking to gather directions or spiritual manuals used in giving the *Exercises* in order to create, approve, and disseminate an official directory for standard practice. Reports came in from all over and demonstrate the variety of Jesuit opinions on how much mystical activity should or should not be urged during the program. Jesuits scholar Philip Endean has argued persuasively that Mercurian did not wish to suck the mystical life out of the Order, but to steer their members clear of the dangers of Illuminism. Likewise, the official directory was intended to train the rapidly expanding younger generation of Jesuits in proper spiritual behaviors without requiring mystical revelations; there does not seem to have been any intention to eliminate from the *Exercises* all mystical revelations, supernatural graces or irrational devotions. The selection of compiled commentaries on the *Exercises* that made up the official Directory of 1599 however, presented the Jesuits' teaching on mystical behaviors in a vague and ambiguous manner.¹¹⁰

It should come as small surprise, then, that when the mystical fervor so popular (and so controversial) in Spain in the sixteenth century spread into France and Germany, the burgeoning of mystical and ascetic devotion in France should also earn the scrutiny

¹¹⁰ Philip Endean, "The Strange Style of Prayer': Mercurian, Cordeses, and Álvarez" *The Mercurian Project: Forming a Jesuit Culture, 1573-1580*, ed. Thomas M. McCoog, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 351-97; See also Paul Dudon, "Les leçons d'oraison du P. Balthazar Alvarez, 1573-1578" *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 2 (1921): 37-51 ; Scott Lewis, "Balthasar Alvarez and the Prayer of Silence" *Spirituality Today* 41 (1989):112-32. Translations with brief commentary and footnotes of these directories can be found in *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, trans. ed. Martin E. Palmer, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996). See in particular documents 31, 32, 33, which include the directories of Dávila, Cordeses, and the official 1599 Directory, document 20 by Juan Alfonso de Polanco whose version seems to have been used to the greatest extent in the official directory, document 18, presumed to be that of Everard Mercurian himself, and its references on how to handle the mental prayer habits of those outside the Jesuit Order and also on the Illuminative exercises, and document 16 by Antonio Valentino and his descriptions on affective concentration and the use of "jaculatory prayers" to attain "unitive wisdom." See also document 14 by Jerónimo Domènech on the danger of restricting meditative methods to a certain kind, presumably requiring forms like interior, rapturous prayers that might do more harm than good.

and eventual chastisement of the Jesuit hierarchy. Two other Jesuit scholars of mysticism in France, Henri Bremond and Michel de Certeau, have demonstrated the widespread teaching of mysticism among Jesuits in France. Their mystical movement relied on the same mystical texts that produced the mystical fire during Spain's golden age and, what is more, included the testimonies and writings of its giants, Teresa of Ávila and her chastised Jesuit advisor Balthasar Álvarez among them. When an investigation begun in 1625 into the "novel" and "foreign" spirit of the extraordinary devotions of two or three "petits prophètes" led to their teacher and avid mystic Father Louis Lallemant, the situation became more difficult. While the General was shocked that such an influential teacher could be a complete mystic (*totus mysticus*), Lallemant's superior and many of his colleagues defended his character and teaching with the utmost respect. The inquiry and reprimand of several mystical hotspots took its toll on Lallemant's health between 1625 and 1632. Moreover, the upset at the school in Rouen where Lallemant directed advanced young Jesuits reflected the heat of the controversy, and its residents seem to have become divided in opinions on the affair.¹¹¹ These troubles must have been close to the hearts and memories of many of the Jesuit missionaries in Canada whose fervent desire to till the spiritual soil of the New World grew from the very mystical and ascetical movement receiving criticism in France. Moreover, many of the early Jesuits who were visionaries and martyrs in their own right and who directed the early mission

¹¹¹ Henri Bremond *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris : Librairie Bloud et Gay, 1924-1933), vols 2, 5 ; Michel de Certeau, "Crise sociale et réformisme spirituel au début du XVIIe siècle : Une « nouvelle spiritualité » chez les Jésuites françaises" *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 41 (1965): 339-86. Certeau's work offers more detail than perhaps Bremond's was able to given Bremond's stance on a contemporary matter of Catholic doctrine on the Modernist dispute in the early twentieth century.

organization and strategies, including Paul Le Jeune, Jean de Brébeuf, Paul Ragueneau, Isaac Jogues and Antoine Daniel were students of Louis Lallemant or had been at Rouen in the late 1620s during the investigation.¹¹² Although these passionate young missionaries showed no indication of giving up the mystical and ascetic beliefs and practices, they may very well have learned to be cautious in accepting mystical forms from their converts that were even more “novel” and dangerous to the colonial mission than were the spiritual doctrines that circulated among controversy across the Atlantic. The guarded response of the French Jesuits, both to call such dreams ‘visions’ or mystical encounters as well as to wholeheartedly celebrate their appearance in their church, came from more than a vague understanding of the propriety of mystical events and very likely represent a recognition among the missionaries of the dangers of navigating official and unofficial spiritualities.

¹¹² Bottreau, Georges, “Lallemant, Louis” in Viller, Marcel, Charles Baumgartner, and André Rayez, eds., *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité: Ascétique et Mystique, Doctrine et Histoire*. (Paris: G. Beauchesne et ses fils, 1932), IX: 125-35, 126, 133.

A MYSTERIOUS SILENCE

The last of the initial accounts of convert dreams ended around the middle of the 1640s and were followed by a period of silence which lasted until the mid-1650s. During this silence, the only published accounts of dreams concerned denunciations of pagan dreams and a continuation of their Christian counterparts in which Jesuits refused or condemned dreaming behaviors in the religious practices of converts.¹¹³ When accounts of convert dreams began appearing several years later, a few noteworthy changes had taken place in the Jesuit manner of reporting such episodes. Not only did the Jesuits become more inclusive of the behaviors they permitted converts to observe, they also ceased their condemnations of the convert dreams resembling traditional practices. Scholars of New France have assumed that the new openness in Jesuit policies stemmed from either from a need to quickly increase the number of converts in the mission to maintain support in France or from a growing, if temporary, preoccupation with colonial warfare and politics. However, the timing and nature of these suppositions cannot completely account for the silence of this period. If local colonial preoccupations prove insufficient, it seems reasonable to look back to Europe where the religious politics of the seventeenth century had begun to generate a rift over the acceptability of incorporating or permitting indigenous practices with pagan spiritual associations of any sort. The Jesuit

¹¹³ Anecdotes on convert restrictions may be found in 31: 265; 32: 45-7; 207; 34: 107-9; the accounts of pagan denunciation may be found in *Jesuit Relations*, 38: 191-3.

organization and administration made it possible to manage each mission in unique ways in every geographic location, but the interest of the Jesuits in their colleagues' missions around the world and their reliance upon central administration and authority suggests that Jesuit missionary practices around the world also shifted partially in response to internal Catholic politics.

One of the simplest explanations of the period of silence on convert dreams between the mid-1640s and mid-1650s is that the published *Relations*, as an edited journal and thus an internal report, do not represent the entirety of Jesuit discussion on native dreaming practices. The Jesuits may have continued to record convert dreams in their journals, but those reports failed to make it through the multiple editing cuts and into the published pamphlets. If this is the case and the original manuscripts are later discovered among the miles of Vatican archival shelves, then perhaps the question of Jesuits attitudes toward native dreams may be reevaluated some time in the future. There still remains the curious absence of the inclusion of these reports in the published *Relations*. If miraculous or potentially miraculous convert experiences continued to arise, and if they still seemed to hold the possibility of confirming the spiritual presence of God in the New World, why would the Jesuits excise them from their public record?

The Jesuits certainly continue to record accounts of miraculous healings or escapes among the converts. But the only miraculous experience they report in this period of silence that resembles a positive mystical revelation is the account in the 1648-1649 *Relation* of a young female catechumen whose experience led to a miraculous escape. While working in a field of the tribe who held her captive, she thrice heard angelic singing that gave her courage to run away:

One day, when this poor afflicted one was in a field of Indian corn, which she was planting for those whose slave she was, she heard voices from Heaven which were singing a ravishing music in the air, from the chant of our Vespers, which she had formerly heard. She looks about her, supposing that some Frenchmen would accost her; but she sees nothing else. She kneels down, and prays to God with all her heart; and she conceives a hope of seeing herself delivered from her captivity, though she sees neither means nor any probability of this. Some days afterward, the same thing happens to her; she kneels again, with the same sentiments. Finally, having for the third time heard these same voices from Heaven,—and feeling her confidence increased, and her courage more animated,—she prays to God and hastens into a road which she did not know, in order to return to these countries, without victuals, without provisions, without escort, but not without the guidance of him alone who had inspired her, and who gave her sufficient strength to arrive here, having traveled more than eighty leagues without any evil encounter.¹¹⁴

Here the Jesuits offer no judgment as to the real divine nature of the miracle, though they believe the success of the escape and the zeal of the girl speak for themselves. When she ran to them, rather than her parents, and arrived at their doorstep begging for baptism, however, the Jesuits reasoned that, “seeing the hand of God over her with so much love, we could not put her off.”¹¹⁵ Her Christian ardor afterwards bolstered the seeming miraculous nature of her escape.

Although this sequence of a divine revelation and spiritual awakening resemble many of the dream visions the Jesuits had recorded earlier, it is significant that the auditory experiences of the girl revelation fit far more easily within the mystical framework than did the night dreams the Jesuits had stopped reporting. Furthermore, the angelic singing generated hope, even miraculous hope, rather than giving the girl a divine message that she was to obey. One of the chief worries of the Jesuits in accepting any dream or visionary revelation was message given and the recipient’s attitude toward

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 34: 117-9.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 119.

whether or not they were obliged to follow the message as a dream command. In light of their fears about dreams, it is perhaps significant that this period of silence also records two dreams in which natives reported demonic influences in their dreams and asked the Jesuits for advice or assurance that they had rightfully fought against these spiritual visitors. In the first case, a native, visited by a demon in his sleep who mocked him, remained steadfast and rebuked the spirit and its urging to put his faith in it rather than God. The young man, however, “doubted whether I had behaved well, for how do I know; what must be done in these encounters?” and the priest “assured him that he had fought very well, and sent him back, filled with gladness, into his cabin.”¹¹⁶ Whether the dream visitation was real or not, the priest praised the attitude of the convert. Since the author adds no more details on this demonic visit, it seems sufficient to presume that for such non-angelic or divine experiences, the reality of the dream content mattered very little. Likewise, in response to a woman who desired entrance to the Ursuline school in the hopes of curing herself of demonic torment, the priest replied that “I merely relate what happened” without giving credence to the woman’s fear or the demonic presence in her dream.¹¹⁷ During this period, then, miraculous events could be easily related, even if they indicated a mystical grace, but the issue of dreams remained obscure and were reported only in stories where they were denounced by the native recipient.

It is also possible, even probable, that many converts continued their dreaming practices and interpreted dreams they felt to be angelic or divine in silence, never reporting their independent initiative to the missionaries. Since the Jesuits denounced

¹¹⁶ Ibidl, 31: 157-9.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 32: 233.

native dreaming practices so harshly, many, Totiri included, may have been disinclined to report their dreams or visions whether they believed them to be true visions or not. It seems likely, however, that as long as there were any converts trained to think about and monitor their dreams from childhood, their dreams and their Christian interpretations of them would also continue. And as the previous decade showed, even when the Jesuits repeatedly denounced anything resembling traditional pagan dreaming practices, still their converts conversed with them about dreams they believed to be from godly spirits. If native converts stopped reporting their dreams to the Jesuits, there is little to explain why they began once again to do so after the 1650s.

Another possible explanation of the Jesuits' silence on convert dreams that points to local colonial politics as a factor concerns the increasing warfare in New France. The Jesuits, as well as their French readership, had a vested interest in close observations of the fur trade and the military incursions sparked by trade rivalries. Since the print space for publication was fairly small, the Jesuits may have placed a greater emphasis during this period on their more pressing concerns with colonial politics.¹¹⁸ However, while it is true that these politics remained extremely influential to the Jesuit mission, to their colonial backers, and to the wider reading audience of the *Relations*, the publications always maintained their primary spiritual focus and read the wars and colonial tensions into their explanations of missionary trials, and the extraordinary and more rare and extraordinary nature of miraculous dreams would have been more likely to be included

¹¹⁸ Bruce Trigger mentions that during the late 1640s, the "rapidly developing political crisis" lead the Jesuits to change their emphasis from "detailed descriptions of the behavior of individual converts" to more urgent matters. While this is true in general, spiritual accounts were not absent, for either the Huron or Algonkian *Relations* of the period. *Children of Aataentsic*, 738.

where many other anecdotes of convert spirituality may have been passed over. Furthermore, the wars raging at this time had escalated several years before and would continue after the renewal of dream reports in the 1650s and beyond. Given the frequency of these dreams on either side of this period of silence and the association of such miraculous experiences with increased zeal during spiritual hardships, it seems probable that such reports of allegedly miraculous visions and dreams would actually increase among converts, following the increased visions of the Jesuit missionaries martyred during this period. If the Jesuits quickly published accounts of the visions of their own martyrs to their readers as proof of God's extraordinary blessing during extraordinary adversity, reports of their converts' visions should have likewise provided proof of God's continued favor in their mission and the victories of the advancing gospel in spite of the defeats of their dwindling political allies. If the wars were a factor in the Jesuits' silence, there must have been other reasons as well.

Bruce Trigger has put forward a theory which incorporates both the colonial perspective and the missionary focus of the *Relations*. He argues that with the wars and epidemics of the late 1640s and the decimation of many native groups, especially the Huron, the Jesuits found themselves in a stronger position of influence and eased their once harsh restrictions on the practice of traditional customs in order to encourage even resentful traditionalists to more readily accept conversion. There is certainly some justification to this argument. As Trigger notes, in 1648, Ragueneau, then head of the Huron mission, stated not only that he had thoroughly examined native dreams for demonic activity and found them to be nothing but natural phenomena that by chance were prophetic but also that the Jesuits had been too severe in requiring their converts to

give up many of their traditional practices. “It is easy,” he said, “to call irreligion what is merely stupidity, and to take for diabolical working something that is nothing more than human” and suggested that native errors might be “abolished more gently” through training their catechumens and converts to see the folly in their previous beliefs.¹¹⁹

Francesco Bressani, reiterated Ragueneau’s sentiments in his 1653 *Relation*. After providing some background and anecdotes concerning Amerindian dreaming practices, Bressani states:

It is easy to condemn, on the ground of superstition, many frivolities, and to prohibit them as such; but it is not easy to recant, or to avoid contempt from the most sensible, who knew the secret. We were somewhat severe on this point, and obliged our first Christians, —who found superstition everywhere, to deny themselves not only lawful recreations, but also intercourse with others, and more than half of the social life, —until time, examination, and experience assured us of the contrary.¹²⁰

Indeed, the Jesuits do seem to have relented on the vehemence of many of their denunciations, and after 1648, the Jesuit’s requirements that their converts give up dreaming disappear. In 1652 and then in 1654, two general comments by Gabriel Druillettes and Simon Le Moyne suggest that converts continued to dream and that the Jesuits, though hesitating to interpret them as divine, understood these dreams as evidence that native dreams of God and guardian angels indicated the thoroughness of their conversion and the replacement of traditional concepts with Christian concepts.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ *Jesuit Relations*: 33: 145, 197; Trigger, *Children of Aataentsic*, 737-9.

¹²⁰ *Jesuit Relations*, 39: 29.

¹²¹ These two accounts are discussed in greater detail below under the section “From Silence to Celebration.” On the Jesuits’ willingness to incorporate convert dreams into their mission, see Dominique Deslandres, *Croire et faire croire: Les missions françaises au XVIIe siècle (1600-1650)* (Paris: Fayard, 2003). Deslandres makes a distinction between the Jesuits’ reactions toward traditional pagan dreams and between the dreams of native converts, but she does not discuss the difficulties the Jesuits faced in

However, the relaxing of standards for conversion and convert practices seems to have applied outwardly, as it were, to behaviors meant eventually to be given up, rather than to behaviors now allowed to be incorporated into Christian orthodoxy in a syncretic fashion. And if the missionaries relaxed their standards on certain dreaming practice in 1648, why did they not report the details of their anecdotes until well into the 1650s? Even if the Jesuits spared less time and energy on recording the daily spiritual developments of their church, it seems hard to believe that if miraculous dreams and mystical events were occurring in their communities and the Jesuits now felt free to rejoice in them, that they would wait more than five years to report dreams that used to occur annually. This explanation seems unable to explain the silence by itself.

In fact, there was a very good reason for remaining silent on just such an issue of the grey area created in mission fields between syncretisms of indigenous and Catholic belief systems. On the far side of the world, a particularly bitter quarrel had been growing for decades between the Jesuits missionaries in China and the Franciscan and Dominican missionaries in East Asia competing against them. The rivalry, called the Chinese Rites Controversy, developed in part because the missionary orders held differing views on evangelical practices and in part because of the colonial politics and power dynamics in the Asian Pacific world. However, the specific form that the missionary competition assumed centered on practices developed by Matteo Ricci, the first Jesuit to enter China who made conversion easier by accommodating certain social and cultural practices which hovered on the border of acceptability. In particular, the

recognizing convert dreams within orthodox practice or mystical categories nor the period of silence in the 1640s and 1650s.

Jesuits were accused of borrowing linguistic terms for ‘Heaven,’ ‘God’ and other Christian concepts which originated in pagan Chinese religious cults. Furthermore, the Jesuits had seen fit to allow their Chinese converts to continue performing annual Confucian rituals which were part of the duties of any Chinese government official.

Over China’s long history, the entire education system and therefore the means of acquiring high-level jobs of any sort depended on a thorough knowledge of classical Confucian philosophies. The Chinese, in their government and cultural system not only respected but were inextricably woven into an ancient moral system. Because the Jesuits targeted wealthy and influential people as part of the missionary strategy, and because in China these officials participated at least nominally in certain Confucian rituals, an inherent difficulty arose for Chinese converts who wished both to keep their jobs and observe Catholic practices. The Jesuits felt that working among Chinese demanded a leniency in regards to Confucian rituals overseen by government officials. They justified this leniency on the grounds that neo-Confucian rituals were a hollow and secularized shell of a much older *moral* system, rather than *religious* system. From the critical perspective of the other missionary orders, however, the Jesuit accommodation of these questionable practices compromised the purity of Christian theology and praxis.¹²²

Although the origins of the Rites Controversy can be traced back to the early 1630s, no official judgment was forthcoming under Pope Urban VIII. The Jesuits and

¹²² Some of the classic English texts on the Chinese Rites Controversy are Arnold H. Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942); D. E. Mungello, ed., *The Chinese Rites Controversy: Its History and Meaning* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994); George H. Dunne, S.J., *Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962); and George Minamiki, S.J., *The Chinese Rites Controversy from Its Beginnings to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985).

their Dominican and Franciscan detractors had sent several delegates and/or letters to Rome in order to argue their case and urge the Propaganda and Pope to declare a resolution as early as 1638, but the problem remained unaddressed. However, the death of Urban VIII in 1644 followed by the death of the Jesuit General Mutio Vitelleschi in early 1645 provided a window of opportunity not only for the competing missionary orders to exert their influence on the Rites decision, but also for the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, the nominal agency of authority in all Catholic missions, to attempt to turn their titular authority into a practical supremacy over all missionary activities.

While the Propaganda held technical control of all Catholic missions outside of Catholic countries, reality illustrated that many of the larger established religious orders maintained their own missionary agendas and practices and consulted or obeyed the Propaganda's authority as little as possible. In East Asia the problem was particularly problematic; the great missionary orders failed to send annual mission reports to the Propaganda, obstructed efforts to ordain indigenous clergy, and their royal European patrons and colonial supervisors hindered passage of competing missionary orders to their colonial territories and occasionally persecuted unofficial European missionaries as criminals. Francesco Ingoli, the first Secretary of the Propaganda Fide and its chief strategist and operational head until his death in 1649, worked hard both in his evaluations of missions and efforts to exert Propaganda control to lessen the colonial territorialism of Iberian countries in particular and to encourage the education and creation of apostolic offices filled by indigenous Christians. He hoped that the creation of colonial bishoprics under the direct control of the Propaganda and the training of

indigenous clerics at the *Collegium Urbanum* would increase the control of the Propaganda and Catholic hierarchy in mission fields and put to rest the “fratricidal disputes” between various religious orders that threatened the function and growth of the apostolic Church.¹²³ Ingoli had, in fact, already tried in 1641 to send his candidate for bishop to Canada to observe the Jesuits, since, “in these far away places, in order to make conversion easier, regular priests allow to use theology and to preach the Gospel in a way that this Holy See has not approved, as we know it happened in Japan.”¹²⁴

In September of 1645, Innocent condemned the Chinese rites, giving the Jesuits little room either to continue their current practices of accommodation or find alternatives outside of a strict orthodoxy and the usage of Latin terms for untranslatable or problematic concepts. The Propaganda published a long and detailed description of the acceptable and unacceptable methods of dealing with the Chinese converts, their political and social rules, and their superstitions.¹²⁵ The Jesuits scrambled formally and meticulously to explain the reasoning behind their practice and appeal the decision in Rome. But although the Pope issued an addendum to the Propaganda’s decree obliging each and every missionary in China, even the Jesuits (*etiam Societatis Iesu*), to obey the

¹²³ Richard Gray. “Ingoli, Francesco” in Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999) 318-9; Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe: A Century of Advance*. Vol. 3, Bk 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 224-30, 239-41; and for the situation in New France, Luca Codignola, “Competing Networks”, and “The Holy See and the Conversion of the Indians in French and British North America, 1486-1760,” in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 195-242. As the Lach and Van Kley volume points out, the political position of the French in the colonial enterprise and the spiritual position of the Jesuit Order in the missionary enterprise in East Asia faced particular danger in the 1640s and 1650s.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Luca Codignola, “The Holy See and the Conversion of the Indians in French and British North America, 1486-1760,” in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 195-242, 203.

¹²⁵ Catholic Church. *Collectanea S. Congregationis de propaganda fide, seu Decreta, instructiones, rescripta pro apostolicis missionibus* (Rome: Typographia polyglotta, 1907), 1: 33-5, doc. 114.

injunctions on pain of excommunication (*sub poena excommunicationis*), rumors circulated in the east that the ruling was only the opinion of certain Cardinals. In 1652 Innocent X had to reaffirm Urban VIII's order that the decrees of the Propaganda carried the weight of Apostolic Constitutions and were to be obeyed.¹²⁶

The issue of spiritual authority and the dangerous blurring of boundaries between secular and spiritual practices of the Rites had broad repercussions for the Jesuit Order. The power of the Jesuits in Asia as well as elsewhere, their questionable practice of spiritual discernment in the matter of Chinese cultural rituals, and the need to reiterate that the Jesuits comply with the writs of the Holy See drew increased scrutiny into the hierarchy of the Jesuit Order, their relationship to the rest of the Church's hierarchy, and their use or abuse of their spiritual authority. Shortly after entering office, criticism of the Jesuits reached the Pope concerning the overweening power of the Jesuits and the problems associated arising from their involvement in secular matters.¹²⁷ The new Pope already had had ample opportunity to observe the truth of this criticism during his time at the French court and his own rocky history with Cardinal Mazarin which only increased during and after his election. In response, as the general congregation of the Society of Jesus met to elect a new head in the autumn of 1645, Innocent issued a surprising and unprecedented directive requiring the congregation first to answer eighteen questions

¹²⁶ "...valorem habeant Constitutionis Apostolicae, ac ab omnibus et singulis inviolabiliter servantur." For the decree, see *Collectanea S. Congregationis*, 1: 35-6, doc. 119. For a brief discussion, see Minamiki, *Chinese Rites Controversy*, 29-30.

¹²⁷ Robert Bireley, *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War: Kings, Courts, and Confessors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Bireley comments that the source of the criticisms are generally unclear, but that one Viennese Jesuit, at least, wrote letters to the Pope criticizing the "monarchy" of Vitelleschi and questioning the life term of the superior general. Carafa "severely disciplined" him in 1648 (229, fn 103).

concerning the life term of the superior general, the regularity and frequency of meetings of the general congregation, the process for selecting provincials and local superiors, and the rules in place for Jesuit involvement in secular affairs.

The response of the Jesuits was to discuss the matter internally and then submit a formal reply to the Pope “humbly” asking him to provide specific offenses by Jesuits, explaining the difficulty in separating certain political matters from the spiritual direction of princes, and refuting the need for further injunctions against spiritual officers participating in secular activities since they already had rules in place that might be more rigidly observed.¹²⁸ Although the Pope did not directly legislate against Jesuit activities in spiritual matters, he issued a brief limiting the term of office for all Jesuit superiors to three years, from the General down to local superiors excepting only masters of novices, and requiring the general congregation of the Jesuits to meet every nine years.¹²⁹ Shortly thereafter the Jesuits elected a vicar general in the person of Vincenzo Carafa, well-known for his piety, and immediately the Jesuits in Rome devoted themselves to the changes advised by Innocent. Carafa then issued a circular letter to all Jesuits entitled “On the Means of Conserving the Society’s Primitive Spirit” that warned against involvement in worldly and temporal matters.¹³⁰

The criticism and decree concerning term limits appears to stem from more than intra-European politics, extending to the practical power held by Jesuit superiors and the

¹²⁸ Birely, *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War*, 229-32.

¹²⁹ Pastor, Ludwig, Frederick Ignatius Antrobus, Ralph Francis Kerr, Ernest Graf, and E. F. Peeler. 1923. *The History of the Popes: From the Close of the Middle Ages* (St. Louis: Herder, 1923-1969), 30: 178. The brief begins “Prospero feliciue statui” and was issued 1 Jan 1646.

¹³⁰ Bireley, *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War*, 232.

difficulty in keeping the Jesuit Order in line. The Chinese Rites controversy, recently ruled upon, provided a case in point. Limiting the duration of a superior in office and requiring more frequent meetings of the general ruling body in Rome might limit the ambitions of certain Jesuits and increase the power of the Holy See. Certainly the act of requiring the Jesuits to deal first with Innocent's inquiries even before electing a new leader and the issuing of the January brief served to demonstrate the power of the pontiff and put the Jesuits on the defensive. The weight of the criticism of secular contamination and the efforts of the Jesuits to comply with the reforming expectations of the new Pope, following so quickly on the heels of the disruptive and unexpected ruling of the Pope against various accommodationist practices in the East Asian missions, demonstrates the charged atmosphere within the Church over issues of use and abuse of authority and the circumspection of the Jesuits who attempted to defend their position reasonably and without hostility.

At the same time that this ruling was taking the Jesuits by surprise and eastern missionaries scrambled to redeem their accommodationist practices, the Propaganda had found yet another means of attacking the configuration and power flow of the Society of Jesus which would more directly influence the administration of the Canadian missions. In the summer of 1645, the Propaganda proposed to the new Pope a rule forbidding Jesuit Generals to send any missionary to a mission field without obtaining specific "reformed faculties" issued for any individual Jesuit by the office of the Propaganda Fide. The General Congregation of the Jesuits, meeting in the autumn of 1645 to discuss the election of a new General, appealed this decision as too restrictive and contradictory to the original formulation of their order's statutes. Aware of the need to observe the

Propaganda's authority, however, they offered a compromise to the Propaganda's demand. In February of 1646, a month after electing their new General, the Jesuits responded directly to the Secretary of the Propaganda Fide arguing the invalidity of the Propaganda's proposed changes to the issuance of faculties on the grounds that the Pope was the source of the ecclesiastical rights of the Jesuit Order and only the General could be the intermediary between the Pope and the individual Jesuits who were agents not of the Propaganda but of the Pontiff himself. Although the general decree of the Propaganda was upheld, the Propaganda settled on a compromise after several months of negotiations which clearly placed the Jesuit Order under its jurisdiction but which granted an exception for issuing faculties to Jesuit missionaries and acknowledged the continued authority of the General over the individual missionary members of the Order. Eight months later, François Ingoli, Secretary to the Propaganda since its institution and staunch advocate of their need to gain absolute authority over missionary orders, attempted to expand the Propaganda's authority by reinterpreting the language of the concessions on faculties to the Jesuits. However, the Cardinal Prefect in charge of the Propaganda's session reaffirmed the original concessions and, just over a year later, the requested faculties were granted to the Superior of New France and those subordinate to him in the Canadian missions.¹³¹

The issue of faculties had immediate and lasting repercussions for the Canadian missionaries. Originally, the Propaganda had drawn up general faculties for the Spanish

¹³¹ See Campeau, *Monumenta Novae Franciae: Recherche de la paix (1644-1646)*, (Institutum Hist. Soc. Iesu, Rome and Editions Bellarmin, Montréal, 1992), VI: 321-3, 438, 442, 517-8 (documents 74, 78, 83, 123, and 135); and Campuea, *Monumenta Novae Franciae : Le témoignage du sang (1647-1650)*, (Montréal: Editions Bellarmin, 1994): 230-1 (documents 43).

and Portuguese Indies in 1637, but New France was only generally and not explicitly included under this jurisdiction. Furthermore, because these faculties were granted only temporarily, the General Vitelleschi had attempted to have them renewed at the last minute in order to avoid recourse to renewal through the Propaganda. At his death when the Propaganda attempted to restructure the granting of faculties to increase its missionary oversight, the faculties for New France expired. Because the dispute over all Jesuit faculties continued until 1648, the ordinary jurisdiction of the missions and ecclesiastical institutions fell under the archbishopric of Rouen. As Canadian Jesuit historian Lucien Campeau has pointed out, the difficulties presented by this lapse of authority and the common issues of administration probably initiated plans for the creation of a bishopric over the Canadian colony.¹³²

Such a bishopric, it should be remembered, was the expressed desire of members of the Propaganda as a means of redirecting ecclesiastical authority over apostolic missions to their own office and away from the individual missionary orders. As for Canada, the creation of a bishopric was indeed discussed shortly after the hierarchical upsets of 1645. In a letter dated May 1646, newly appointed General Carafa wrote to Charles Lalemant, then in Paris but soon to return to New France, to say that although a Jesuit might be preferred for this office, the rules of the Order prevented a Jesuit from accepting it.¹³³ In France also, the king was anticipating the creation of a bishopric and

¹³² Campeau comments that the solution to the problems of jurisdiction “aurait été la création d’un évêché au Canada.” See Campeau’s introduction to document 74 – “Représentation de la Congrégation Générale au Pape Innocent X” in Campeau, *Monumenta Novae Franciae*, VI: 321.

¹³³ Carafa ended his letter with the brief statement, “De episcopo ex Nostris canadensi non est nostrum plane cogitare.” Campeau comments that the General, because of the Constitutions of their Order, “était obligé de s’opposer à toute tentative de ce genre.” Campeau, *Monumenta Novae Franciae* VI: 477. The

in 1647 constituted an Upper Council of “the Governor of Quebec, the Governor of Montreal and the Superior of the Jesuits, until there should be a bishop.”¹³⁴ In France, at least, there seems to have been some expectation that the structure of ecclesiastical powers would soon undergo reordering. Once the Propaganda granted their concession of missionary faculties to the Jesuits, however, the matter of a bishopric in New France disappeared for a decade. The Jesuits once again held control of the practical ecclesiastical powers in New France. However, some question as to the nature of their powers remained, and in 1649, General Carafa had to explain that the superiors of the various Canadian missions held only *directional* and not *jurisdictional* powers.¹³⁵ Until 1659, New France existed as a diocese under the jurisdictional powers of the bishopric of Rouen.¹³⁶ Although neither the Jesuits nor the Propaganda obtained all they hoped for, the aftermath of the ecclesiastical powers matter influenced far more than the Jesuit missions in China.

Jesuit historian T. J. Campbell wrote in his biography of Charles Lalemant that, “When there was a question of appointing the first Bishop of Quebec, his candidacy was urged.” Presumably, the date of a discussion of his candidacy corresponds to this discussion with Carafa on the matter. Campbell did not cite references to his article nor give any more detail on the matter. See “Lalemant, Charles” in Charles George Herbermann, et. al., eds., *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1913), 752. A parallel effort existed in the late 1640s when the well-known and influential Jesuit missionary to East Asia Alexander de Rhodes suggested the creation of bishoprics as a fail-safe for apostolic churches in the event that indigenous rulers expelled the missionary Order (a real threat under the newly formed Qing dynasty). The Pope first asked Rhodes to fill the position but was turned down on the same regulatory grounds as Lalemant and Le Jeune. See Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 30: 192-3.

¹³⁴ Adrien Leblond De Brumath, *Makers of Canada: Bishop Laval* (Toronto: Morang & Co., 1906), 25. Brumath comments that in 1656, Anne of Austria offered “the mitre” to Le Jeune who was, however, unable to accept the office because of the rules of the Jesuit Order.

¹³⁵ Campeau, *Monumenta Noviae Franciae*, VII: 457, doc. 83.

¹³⁶ The control of Rouen was amenable neither to the Jesuits nor Rome since the Gallican clergy utilized this link to pursue their own agendas in the colony. For that reason, the Jesuits pushed for a bishopric for New France and put forward their own candidate, François de Laval, in the late 1650s. The issue of jurisdiction continued after the bishopric was created and Laval was appointed by consensus of the Jesuits,

These events, although far from the Jesuit missions across the Atlantic, help in part to explain several aspects of the Jesuit responses to native dreams both during and after the period of silence. Although Pope Innocent X had issued his ruling on the Chinese Rites controversy and on the Jesuit subjection to the Propaganda Fide in 1645, news of these rulings and the subsequent judgment on the term limits to Jesuit offices could not have reached New France until the spring of 1646 at the earliest. The last account of a convert dream was penned in the spring of 1646, and the whole *Relation* for that year was closed and dated on May 1646. The first letter of the *Relation* for 1647 was, in fact, a letter from Charles Garnier responding to the third directive of the Pope, requesting the means of extending Father Ragueneau's term of office over the Huron mission in order not to disrupt the mission already short of laborers.¹³⁷ In this vein, Jérôme Lalemant wrote to Vincent Carafa in August of 1646 before the final vessels sailed for France, in order to inquire on the status of the "new bull" of the Pope regarding term limits and what was to be done about the Huron mission, given the difficulty of placing more people in so small an outlying mission.¹³⁸ In the aftermath of the Papal ruling on Jesuit term limits, general assemblies and the Propaganda's ruling on Chinese rites and faculties, the Jesuits attempted obediently to comply with demands, to submit any and all documents required by the Pope, and negotiate with the Propaganda Fide on

the Pope, and the French regent. The appointment, however generated years of friction between the pro-Jesuit Papal-appointed bishop Laval and the popular Rouen-appointed curé (and Gallican Assembly nominee to the bishopric), the Sulpician Abbé Gabriel de Queylus, so that the issue of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in New France remained unclear, even in Rome, until the 1660s. See also Robert Choquette, *Canada's Religions: An Historical Introduction* (Ottawa : University of Ottawa Press, 2004), 106-9; and William Kingsford, *The History of Canada*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Roswell & Hutchinson, 1887), 1: 271-81.

¹³⁷ *Jesuit Relations*, 30: 147-51.

¹³⁸ Campeau, *Monumenta Novae Franciae*, VI: 508-10.

the details of reordering their missions. Likewise, the Canadian missionaries faced paperwork and correspondence tasks necessary to maintain their organization, a task made more difficult by a jurisdictional shift in France.¹³⁹

Beyond strictly hierarchical or jurisdictional concerns which might have caused the Canadian missionaries to feel the pinch of Roman power politics across the Atlantic, the missionaries' policies, in spite of their good faith efforts to the contrary, strayed dangerously close to similar linguistic and worship issues condemned in China. As with the Chinese missionaries who faced criticisms for using Confucian terms for Christian terms like "Lord" and "heaven," the Jesuits in New France relied upon native spiritual terms to refer to Christian ideas. In New France as in China, many native terms already carried spiritual connotations molded to fit traditional native cosmologies, though the Jesuits did their best to distinguish the metaphysics of a European Catholic worldview in their descriptive use of these indigenous terms. For example, a Jesuit handbook for the conversion in the Huron language referred to God as "the Great Voice," the soul as "medicine," heaven as "the sky" or "sky-country," and demons as "earth-dwelling spirits" since hell is "in the earth." Although several references exist to God as *di8*, a transliteration of the French term *dieu* into Huron, the vast majority of references use the alternative Huron term.¹⁴⁰ The usage of "medicine" for soul is particularly significant since the Jesuits also allowed plants and animals to have "medicine" as well, signifying a

¹³⁹ Campeau, *Monumenta Novae Franciae*, VI: 321-3, 517-8, 537-8, 542. Campuea, *Monumenta Novae Franciae*, VII: 231-7.

¹⁴⁰ Steckley, *De Religione: Telling the Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Story in Huron to the Iroquois* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 192, fn 3. The letter 8 in Huron-Wendat language represents the diphthong *ou* and is simply a stacking of vowels, though the pronunciation shifted between an aspirated diphthong and an unaspirated diphthong depending on whether it was followed by a consonant or vowel.

general life force. In regard to familiar demons, the matter became more complex because obedience to the authority of these spirits, as with dreams, was condemned by the Jesuits but since the Huron meaning of the term *oki* or *aki* designated both good and evil spirits. In their catechizing manual in Huron, the convert is told not to copy or imitate a familiar demon (i.e., to take as a life model or obey, the tradition spiritual response to dream or vision spirits), and demons are referred to as *aki* who penetrate the body (or posses it). Attempts are made to distance the terms for guardian angels and the Holy Spirit from the *aki* which were demons adding descriptive adjectives, referring to them as *aki* who are “true” or “certain” or sky *aki*.¹⁴¹

The inherent difficulty of communicating theology in a familiar way to native audiences becomes clearly apparent, even when the Jesuits took pains to explain a Christian and European cultural meaning to a Huron word or phrase. As the linguist John Steckley points out in his translation of this native-language missionary manual, the thoughts and understanding of the Huron listeners to the missionary modifications and appropriation of their language can only be a matter of speculation. But the expressions listed above and the many attempts and difficulties to find precise and unproblematic terminology clearly demonstrate the reliance of the Jesuits on native words already imbued with spiritual meaning and cultural association, words which posed a problem for the missionaries in distinguishing appropriate convert relationships to and understanding of the spirit world with those of their pagan counterparts. What the Chinese Rites ruling

¹⁴¹ See John Steckley, *De Religione*, especially the discussion on various attempts made to translate religious terms in the introduction, pages 24-45. The bulk of this book is Steckley’s translations of the manuscript prepared, he thinks, in the late 17th century by the Belgian Jesuit Pierre Potier, but which very likely was constructed from or incorporated earlier linguistic manuals and texts in Huron. See his introduction on pages 3-8.

and the explanation of the Propaganda on the appropriate use of Christian terminology demonstrated in 1645 was a broader cultural danger that theology would be lost in translation, and orthodoxy lost in accommodation. Again, the Canadian situation differed from China in the absence of missionary rivalries among the Dominican and Franciscan Orders. The dictionaries and linguistic texts of the Canadian Jesuits remained relatively local and did not receive the wider attention of Chinese writing and texts. Possibly they would never have earned the scrutiny of Jesuit critics, particularly when the situation in China was drawing so much fire. Nevertheless, the difficulty of the Canadian missionaries paralleled those of the Chinese Jesuits who faced censure and stricter regulations on both the language and spiritual practices they allowed their indigenous Christians. If the Jesuits in one mission faced restrictions on their manner of evangelism, it behooved all Jesuit missionaries to follow at least the spirit of the laws set down. The tensions of 1645 produced caution and circumspection among Jesuits in Rome and in China, and very likely in New France as well as the other Jesuit missions across the globe.

FROM SILENCE TO CELEBRATION

The first hint of convert dreaming resurfaces in the *Relations* only in 1652 when the Rites Controversy matters were beginning to die down. The comment stated little and amounted only to a general comment which the Canadian superior added to his summary of the year's events from Gabriel Druillette's memoir. Druillette recorded the spiritual fervor of those among whom he had worked a sign that the natives were transferring their traditional spiritual frameworks into a Christian framework: "Many of these good people have assured me that their children, dying immediately after Baptism, had appeared to come down to them from Heaven, to encourage them to embrace the truths of Christianity."¹⁴² Since the *Relation* published Druillette's comment shortly after his death and since the comment alludes to multiple native reports of angelic messengers, it seems justifiable to assume that native dreaming, in fact, still continued through the late 1640s and early 1650s, although the Jesuits had not been reporting it. Without wholeheartedly designating native dreams as spiritual visions, Druillette nevertheless indicated that the Jesuits had continued to make the most of the spiritual benefits that such mixed mystical dreaming practices offered their converts. In 1654, Simon Le Moyne who was working among the Iroquois reiterated this sentiment, saying, "Formerly their dreams were the God of their hearts, but now God is in their dreams; for the greater

¹⁴² Ibid., 38: 25.

number dream only of God, Paradise, or Hell, and of the Angels, who in their sleep invite them to come to them in heaven.” He then recounted a story of a young convert who had seen “a child of rare beauty” who inspired him spiritually and, as the native believed, healed him by making the sign of the cross over his body. Le Moyne commented, “He thought then, and still thinks, that it was his guardian Angel. We know nothing more about it; but we do know that the Angels make no distinction between the Souls of the Savages and our own.”¹⁴³ He added the following account of “some vision or other” that one of the sick converts under his care named Paul Tessouehat had experienced “in his sleep”:

He found himself at the foot of a high mountain whose summit was lost to sight, and heard a voice saying to him repeatedly: ‘Climb this mountain; it is the road that thou must take.’ ‘At the sound of that voice,’ said he, ‘I was seized with a great fright, and my strength was insufficient to climb a mountain which appeared to me beset with precipices. Thus depressed, I perceived a high ladder, and at my side a Father, who, taking me by the hand, made me ascend without much difficulty.’ That vision gave him great comfort and a strong hope of attaining Heaven through Jesus Christ, who is that Mountain.¹⁴⁴

Careful to avoid calling this night experience a dream, Le Moyne was yet unwilling to positively declare it a vision. After recounting what he had been told, he added only that this experience brought spiritual strength to the dreamer, suggesting the origin to be good rather than evil, and interpreting the image of the mountain in the dream as Christ. The caution of Le Moyne’s retelling resembled many of the earlier accounts of the late 1630s and early 1640s in which the Jesuit’s reported with hope rather than confidence the seemingly miraculous nature of certain convert experiences.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 41: 143.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 41: 181.

By 1656, however, another Pope had taken Innocent X's place and, much to the Jesuit's relief, the 1645 decision on the Chinese Rites controversy was overturned. In New France also, the Jesuits appear to have been much relieved and not only ended their relative silence on convert dreaming, but relaxed their former cautions so far as to welcome convert dreams wholeheartedly. After the two tentative assessments of convert dreams from early in the 1650s, the Jesuits began to call the convert experiences they related 'visions' or to indicate, in one way or another, that they had a divine or mystical quality of the experiences. Far more rarely did they demonstrate deep skepticism or anxiety about the spiritual origins of dream messages or fear that their converts' dreams might simply be a revival of their old dream obedience and spiritual charms. In 1657 Jean De Quen openly celebrated accommodationist missions by declaring that God took the limited pagan worship and spiritual rituals of natives and sanctified them by shifting their focus away from animistic elements of Nature toward God himself. As the Apostle Paul had done proclaiming Christ in Athens when he pointed to an altar "to an unknown god," and inserted Christ, so the Jesuits were authorized to insert God into the pagan practices of the natives.¹⁴⁵ De Quen brushed aside with newfound confidence the hesitation that Le Jeune, Brébeuf, Le Mercier and Lalemant had felt in doing this very thing with the convert dreams most resembling mystical experiences. Over the next few years a Jesuit missionaries reported several miraculous accounts in detail. In 1659 a Father reported the post-mortem appearance of a wife to her husband who happened to be away fishing. The amazed man reported this 'vision' not only to his companion but also to the Jesuits who

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 43: 285.

were convinced that something “very extraordinary” had occurred, since the incident marked a great increase in the man’s Christian devotion.¹⁴⁶ The following year Jérôme Lalemant added the story of a ‘vision’ from a pagan man who, seeing himself violently attacked by demons, found a physical anchor in a nearby cross, and subsequently felt inclined to value the faith, if not in a wholly Christian way, at least in a practical way that generated hope among the Jesuits.¹⁴⁷ Rather than observing that such awe in the spiritual power of an object resembled nothing so much as pagan confidence in charms, Lalemant passed over the incident without discussion.

Another incident recorded at that time chronicled the miraculous exodus of a young Huron who, during his captivity among the Iroquois, had a series of visions that consoled him and gave him courage to escape. At first the young man reported that he “seemed to see a horrible phantom in the form of a hideous serpent, and in other shapes.” Suddenly feeling his head enveloped in a mysterious and malevolent cloud and threatening to faint, he believed that he was, “transported to the Chapel of the black gowns at Québec, where I distinctly saw all the pictures and observed all the pieces of sculpture.” After this ‘vision’ he redoubled his prayers and found a means of escape.¹⁴⁸ Again, Lalemant’s lack of inquiry into the native’s reaction seems anomalous. Not only does the native see demons in the form of snakes, a bad omen in Huron as well as Christian cultures, he also finds strength from observing the *substance* rather than the *symbolism* of the artwork in the Jesuit chapel of his vision. Like the magical cross that

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 45: 53-5.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 45: 63-5.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 46: 35-52.

strengthened the demon-harassed man above, the emphasis of this native tended to include mannerisms of his native spiritual beliefs which had once been objectionable to the missionaries.

The shift in the nomenclature from ‘dream’ to ‘vision’ designates only one of the changes between Jesuit responses before and after the period of silence. Further altering their previous mode of reporting convert dreaming, the missionaries no longer included accounts in which they denounced or reprimanded native converts who maintained traditional forms of native dreaming. Neither did the missionaries report converts criticizing each other for slipping into these old habits. Although natives still policed the spiritual practices of their Christian enclaves, either they stopped denouncing the dreams of their fellow converts or the Jesuits no longer felt such fervor to be a useful sign of the strength of their flock’s faith. Presumably the hybrid dreaming practices of native converts now fit entirely within the category of acceptable dreams, and the missionaries reported them as true visions, demonstrating the spiritual competence of their young Church.

Le Jeune, Lalemant and others continued to report case after case of native prophetic dreams of natural disasters, visitations by relatives or loved ones, revelations of heaven and hell, and even the appearance of a “handsome young man” who appeared to a young boy to teach him a prayer chant.¹⁴⁹ In every case the dreaming event was called a ‘vision.’ Although they included elements from Christian mysticism and the teaching or practice of the Jesuits, they also tended to incorporate aspects of pagan customs as well.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 47: 53-7; 48: 53-57, 187-91; 52: 31-7, 209, 57: 195-7; 61: 39-41; 62: 235-7.

The *Relation* of 1659 blurred the line between traditional and Christian spiritual mixing even further. The Jesuit designated as a ‘vision’ the experience of a native unbeliever who saw, as he thought, demons tormenting him in his dreams, though the priest observed that the divine torment proved insufficient to induce conversion. His comrades, seeking to help this man who was “greatly attached to his Superstitions” even tried to use Christian images and objects, including images and rosaries, as healing charms.¹⁵⁰ What the Jesuit interpreted as superstitious appropriation of Christian objects in a pagan setting might be interpreted as an orthodox application of Christian doctrine or praxis in the case of a convert. The account of the convert who was taught a chant by a dream messenger illustrates this dual interpretive framework—one Christian for converts and one pagan for traditional dreaming practices—and the difficulty in reading the mixing of traditional native dreaming practices with Christian mysticism. The spiritual experience of a young Huron boy named Ignace Tokakion who is taught an extraordinary song by an angelic guide, closely resembles the type of traditional dreams which native youths were expected to have as a blessing for their later lives. In many traditional native beliefs, a familiar spirit would provide an object or special song for communicating with the spirit world which would guide the dreamer through life, directing him or blessing him in various ways. In this account from the 1670s, however, only the piety of the boy is mentioned, and after being told the story, the priest speculated that the man who appeared to the boy was his guardian angel.¹⁵¹ The Jesuits, as in this case, appear to have interpreted their converts’ dreams within the framework of acceptable Christian mystical

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 45: 63-5.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 51: 39-41.

practices without the rigors of “testing the spirit” or origin of the message or messenger as they had before 1645. When the Jesuits did enquire into the veracity of a dream, often the *Relation* indicated only that an inquiry was made, as if for posterity sake, and no longer emphasized the care of the questioning or how the answers justified a favorable interpretation. Such was the case, at least for the prophetic visions reported by several pious women shortly before a massive earthquake hit the region in the 1663. The priest comments only that one of the girls was frightened that her dream was unreal, and that the Jesuits questioned several of the girls who had had visions.¹⁵² Overall, these later accounts tended to pass over problematic elements and emphasize the miraculous or pious aspects which would win universal approval.

These later excerpts of convert dreams—now seemingly welcomed and celebrated where they were once scrutinized and questioned—show the Jesuits accepting dreams and visions of all kinds. Their approbation extended even to night dream, previously the most suspicious and problematic of the convert dreams. Although the Jesuits continued to denounce pagan dreams, their criticisms for blending native and Christian practices which had occupied so much of the priests’ time and concerns in the first two decades of the mission all but disappear. During the decade following 1637 when Le Jeune first began to reevaluate the spiritual and demonic activity among the native populations, the missionaries reported an account of a divine convert dream or possible candidates for divine status almost every year. After 1659, accounts of convert dreams occurred with a similar frequency, almost every year or year and a half. During these early and later

¹⁵² Ibid., 48; 53-7, 187-91.

periods, convert dreams indicated to one degree or another the authenticity of native conversion and the spiritual value of the missionary enterprise in New France, the once dismally barren mission field which lagged behind the great conversion epochs of South American and East Asian missions. Many early accounts reported dreams of sick and dying natives who no doubt succumbed to the ravages of epidemic; many of the later accounts continue this trend and added tales of dreamers oppressed by torture and war as well, spurred on to courageous suffering in the same way that the visions of the Jesuit martyrs had been spurred on before them.

CONCLUSION

Of all of the spiritual practices and beliefs practiced by natives of Great Lakes region and northeastern woodlands, dreams represented one of the few traditions that could be acceptable both within indigenous and European Christian cultures. The Jesuits, coming from a region recently fraught with controversy over orthodoxy and authority, faced a missionary task that urged them toward both strict rejections of pagan practices and relaxed accommodation of native customs. As they grew familiar with native customs, the tension grew also; the missionaries at once grew more cognizant of the dangers presented by the superstitious adherence to night dreams and other vision commands or desires and also more willing to interpret the hybrid native-Christian dreams of their converts as an extension of mystical graces in the New World. Curiously, however, the very similarities between Catholic and native mystical beliefs served also to emphasize the minute differences, and therefore dangers, of encouraging native Christian dreaming. Had native dreams held little or no spiritual significance or had the Christian tradition not had such a long and much-disputed and defined tradition of dreams and mysticism already in place, such a cross-cultural bridge may have been easier to cross. In the cross-cultural evaluation of the Jesuits, their published accounts served not only to transmit opinions back to Europe but also to reflect tensions current in Europe back into the policies and decisions within New France.

It is easy to see, therefore, the potential impact that a disagreement like that over Chinese customs and language among converts might have around the world in New France. During the critical period that the Jesuits began to see both the potential good and evil of accepting dreaming practices, they observed that that traditional native dreaming practices and dream obedience too closely resembled many of the dream revelations of catechumens and recent converts. Blurring the boundaries already erected posed a clear danger to converts and Jesuits alike and added a new and complex twist to an established practice of “discerning” between spirits. A spirit or divine being might urge or command the dreamer to become a Christian, to learn from the Jesuits, or to reform their lives, but the source of the message or messenger could never be clear, and the natives’ interpretations might just as likely lead to apostasy as to sanctification. The initial rejection and later careful examination of every allegedly miraculous convert dream indicate the Jesuits’ own misgivings concerning the questionable nature of an accommodating policy of such dreaming practices. The irony is, of course, that the criticism of accommodationist practices in China seems to have motivated the Jesuits in New France to more openly accept convert dreams when the decisions of the Holy See swung in their favor in the 1650s. It is even possible that the controversy and rulings played a part in encouraging Jesuit missionaries to establish more willingly and prove the efficacy of accommodationist practices that by the 1640s were beginning to seem necessary for the success and growth of a Canadian Church. Because convert dreams often did not fully correspond to European expectations for safe or legitimate mysticism, and severe critics of either the Jesuits or their missionary policies might argue that the conversion behaviors of some natives too closely resembled their pagan pasts, the Jesuits were

compelled to navigate a dangerous road between spiritual discernment and spiritual accommodation, between a tendency to exclude ‘bad’ dreams from ‘good’ and a willingness to include a variety of dreams into acceptable practice. Fears of future criticism might also account for the Jesuit missionaries distancing their terms for pagan dream practices from the visionary habits of their converts. Further solidifying their changing practice and minimizing the potential for criticisms, the Jesuits placed convert dreaming practices within the category of ‘visions’ rather than ‘dreams.’

Between 1645 and 1656, the changes initiated by Pope Innocent X and the Propaganda Fide not only disrupted the Jesuits’ missionary organization, but also their sense of autonomy and authority over their missionary practices. It is unsurprising, then, that the missionaries in New France hesitated to publish accounts of native dreaming activities that might also come under review and criticism among a European audience. If the Chinese Rites Controversy ruling and the administrative and political maneuverings in Rome following Innocent X’s 1645 rulings did in fact influence the course of the Jesuit missionary practices in New France, then the changes that reverberated in French North America very likely were felt in other Jesuits missions as well. Dreams, although relatively insignificant in the political and even religious sphere of the Canadian Jesuit mission, in this case at least, provide a gauge by which we might look back and observe the influence of greater political and social patterns on cross-cultural activity.

Apart from the broader international implications of the Chinese Rites controversy, scholarly understanding of Jesuits’ local missionary responses to native customs also bears reexamination. If the Jesuits were initially reluctant to allow native converts autonomy in the interpretation of their own dreams and slow to accept the

categorical shift of such experiences from ‘dreams’ to ‘visions,’ they may be excused, at least to some degree, on the grounds of their own immense cultural pressures and the complicated, long-developed European heritage that produced such a rigid and analytical religious framework for communicating with the divine.¹⁵³ Allan Greer, respected scholar of Jesuit-Amerindian relations in colonial New France, has recently suggested that the comparative paucity of hagiographical material on native saints relative to the plethora of documents on the Jesuit martyrs and missionary heroes points to a deeper cultural and racial distinction made between European and Amerindian peoples.¹⁵⁴ Without denying the possibility of such an attitude among the Jesuits or their European audience, I would like to propose another possible and perhaps parallel factor in the absence of such hagiographies. The evidence presented here suggests that a fundamental difficulty existed in recording the godliness of native “saints” using the standard tropes and spiritual formulas common to European hagiographic literature, especially since native spirituality already raised cautionary flags and questions of inappropriate spiritual adaptation of Christian ideas. Even when, as the progression of reports and Jesuit responses attests, the natives themselves began appropriating the language and concepts taught to them to justify the legitimacy of their Christian adaptations, the Jesuits had good reason to hesitate to draw attention to what might be considered novelties in their colonial spiritual management. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the readiness

¹⁵³ In this sense, at least, the categories of “colonizer” and “colonized” represent a dichotomy of power relations that obscures or flattens out the many various pressure points and autonomous reactions to or negotiations with established lines of authority.

¹⁵⁴ Allan Greer, “Colonial Saints: Gender, Race, and Hagiography in New France” *William and Mary Quarterly* 57 (2000): 323-48.

of European audiences to accept any alleged mystical or saintly behavior was rapidly diminishing and the tide of public opinion would soon turn against enthusiasts and quietists who once fell into the category of mystics and saints.¹⁵⁵

The issue of cultural accommodation and the freedom of the Jesuits to either morally or legally choose to allow syncretic, adaptive or parallel forms of Christian practice also shaped the status of native Christians in the schools and communities of New France. If such creative blending was viewed sympathetically, the native Christian or native convert communities gained a social reputation among their companions that could be understood from both a European and traditionalist cosmological framework. If such behaviors were viewed more critically, the status and spiritual capacity accorded to native converts also diminished. In 1648 when Ragueneau announced the willingness of

¹⁵⁵ Even when Bressani wished to publish the accounts of the heroic deeds of the martyrs Brébeuf and Jogues and others in 1656 to his Italian countrymen, he had to print a carefully worded caution regarding the publication of hagiographical material and the labeling of 'saints' without proper authorization and canonization from the proper Catholic authorities. Although this prohibition came from the Index earlier in the seventeenth century and was more rigorously enforced in Italy where the censorial arm of the Church had greater influence, the Church was becoming increasingly conservative about publication of theological or spiritual writings that might cause controversy. After 1650 the Church issued several, more complete or extended, versions of Index-prohibited materials and authors to be advertised, and by 1672 would rule against any missionary publication within Europe which did not first gain the privilege of the Propaganda Fide's imprimatur, effectively ending the *Relations* publication tenure in France. See also Camille de Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites*. On the issue of enthusiasm and the decline of mysticism, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (New York:) 1971; Marie-Florine Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confront the Modern World: Marie de l'Incarnation (1599-1672) and Madam Guyon (1648-1717)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion: With Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950); Ryan J. Stark, "From Mysticism to Skepticism: Stylistic Reform in Seventeenth-Century British Philosophy and Rhetoric" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 34 (2001): 322-34; Lawrence Stone, *The Past and the Present* (1981): 154-74; Michael Heyd, "The Reaction to Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth Century: Towards an Integrative Approach," *Journal of Modern History*, 53 (1981): 258-80, and "The Reaction to Enthusiasm in the 17th Century: From Antistructure to Structure," *Religion*, 15 (1985): 279-89, and *Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," in *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion across the Disciplines*, ed. James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson, and Harry Harootunian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 243-74; also Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998).

the Jesuits to more openly accept native customs as a means of making the transition of Christianity easier, he noted that the goal was not to accept native innovations into Christianity, but to weed such mistakes out over time, through ridicule and better education. The Jesuits' acceptance of dreams of all sorts as visions after this point suggests that the missionaries praised the zeal of their flock more than their comprehension, and accepted the practice more easily while valuing the spiritual insight of the dream content less. The spiritual direction they gave natives does not seem to have been intended to go beyond what was needed to attain salvation and ordinary sanctification and no native spiritual leader held power beyond the respect they earned locally. Such a ceiling on the expectations and spiritual autonomy of native converts may have been the result of the European mission under any circumstances.

In contrast, it seems interesting that Le Jeune, when he first realized that the convert dream he had heard might be a miracle and a sign of mystical communication in New France, his role in evaluating the story was no more oppressive or skeptical than were the inquiries made into alleged mystical affairs in France. Although the dangers were perhaps greater, given the errors natives were susceptible of making, understanding as little as they did about Christianity, the role of these earlier dreamers when the mission was still young and the Jesuits relied upon them more heavily to advocate Christ to their neighbors, the value of the dreams seems to have diminished and with it, the status of the native dreamers. The Jesuits were certainly more open and less restrictive in their changes, but their authority over their flock was cemented in a new and more culturally oppressive way. The glory that the early dreams represented and the divine favor bestowed upon those zealous individual now merely showed how complete was the

cultural and mental conversion of peoples who once stood so far from European Christianity.

The story of dreams in the missionary saga therefore represents a complex meeting of cultures and ideologies that produced both fruit and thorns. The Jesuits and natives, whether they chose or felt compelled to convert or not, all partook in the turmoil of the cultural encounter, learning as they went. The values brought with the Jesuits restricted their habits and leadership of evangelism and of native Christians, so that while the force and direction of their goals remained intact, the more minute and unexpected events and cultural background of these particular missionaries directed the missionary strategies in unforeseen ways.

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