

JAMES T. MOORE — *Indian and Jesuit: A Seventeenth-Century Encounter*. n.p.: Loyola University Press, 1982. Pp. xii, 267.

The Jesuit missions to the natives of North America continue to motivate study of mission theory and practice and to inspire publication. Unfortunately, one often gets the impression that little in the way of deeper insights or critical appreciation is the result of most such studies since the time when Francis Parkman, imbued with the nineteenth-century Protestant prejudices one would have expected of a Boston brahmin, praised the heroism of the Jesuits while despising Catholicism generally. Professor Moore admires more than the Jesuits' heroism — he lauds their missionary techniques and objectives and, unlike Parkman, shares many of the unstated doctrinal positions. His thesis is that the disciples of Loyola labouring in New France demonstrated a sensitivity and understanding of native cultures unique in the seventeenth century. He defines their approach as one of cultural relativism, without stating so explicitly, by arguing that they sought to bring Catholicism to the Amerindians without altering radically the social and cultural features of native societies. In other words, they consciously set about to implant the kernel of Catholicism in an Amerindian cultural complex. It was they themselves who were required to make the greatest cultural adjustments in compliance with the apostolic injunction to become all things to all men. This, it is argued, they were intellectually and spiritually willing to undertake because they believed that "good already existed in native cultures and provided the foundation upon which native Christianity would be built" (pp. 58, 198).

Moore emphasizes that they were willing to adapt to native ways in a strange new environment (as did soldiers and fur traders too without any religious inspiration for so doing), and they attempted, on the basis of European scientific knowledge of the time, to relate the natural world of America and the "invisible, eternal order". This observation reminds one of Frederick Turner's thesis that it was the progressive decay of Christianity, from a living mythology in Apostolic times into an historically oriented state religion of the late Roman Empire and the Middle Ages, that created a spiritual vacuum in Western Europe which in turn resulted in a terrible restlessness and energy that eventually manifested themselves in the push for conquest and conversion. But Moore, of course, gives the political motivations and implications of French Jesuit missions a wide berth, although this facet might have shed some light on their missionary practices.

What Moore does not tell us is perhaps more important than what he does recount, because his generally skilful selection of texts and quotations from the voluminous *Jesuit Relations* which support his central thesis seems convincing on the surface. That the Jesuits often adopted a relativist position in the mission field is by no means a new insight, as the vast literature on mission theory and on the "Chinese rites" controversy in particular attests. Ignatius Loyola did insist that his disciples pay attention to the circumstances of place, language, different mentalities and personal temperaments and he did order the superiors to impose penances on those members of the order who did not learn the local languages. But the order as a whole, like the *Propaganda Fide*, did not adopt a rigorous practice of establishing distinctive indigenous churches reflecting local culture and belief systems. Rather, the Jesuits used a knowledge of native languages, mores and beliefs to convert natives and introduce them to a basically Euro-Catholic culture. Moore argues, quite correctly, that the Jesuits realized the impossibility of francizing natives before state officials acknowledged the futility of such a policy of immediate assimilation. Yet, their long-range goals remained the same, as a careful reading of the *Jesuit Relations* reveals. Jesuits had no desire to destroy all non-European cultures, to be sure, but neither had the Franciscan Recollets who preceded them in the Huron mission. That by the eighteenth century they should come under attack by Rome itself for their cultural concessions merely indicates a greater predisposition on their part to start evangelization and the long process of "true conversion" with whatever seemed to be the "residual good" in non-Christian cultures (p. 198). It may also simply be a result of their superior intellectual qualities as a religious institute.

Moore does not elaborate on "the corruption that plagued European society". The *Jesuit Relations* were written for European consumption by and large, not for the missionaries in the field. Hence the praises heaped on certain features of Amerindian life were in good measure a politically

safe means of castigating French society. Could it be that the degree to which they exposed what Moore calls "the divine image in a pagan people" (p. 44) may have been a literary device to attack religious neglect, residual paganism and a nascent deism in Old France? On the other hand, it may have been the kind of intellectual exercise and rationalization that Father Lafitau accepted when he concluded that these good qualities, according to a figurist hypothesis, were elements of a degenerated original revelation of God to primitive man.

Many readers will be dismayed to find there is little said, in fact, about the Indians. Their side of the equation as proposed in the title is largely subjective, passive, background and responsive. This study does not attempt to bring their belief systems, their traditional views and practices, onto centre stage. Thus, there is no discussion of counter-innovative techniques, of categories of "conversion", of understandings of spiritual concepts, and the like. It is almost assumed that an enlightened evangelistic methodology resulted in widespread and permanent acceptance of Christianity.

Moore has little to say, in fact, about actual results of missionary activity in New France or about the eventual fate of the cultural relativist approach. The Jesuits who tried unsuccessfully to impose their will and European practices on the "domiciled savages" on the reserves at Lorette and Caughnawaga certainly did not measure up to the ideals the author admires so unreservedly. He assumes success because the approach seems so "modern" and enlightened to a twentieth-century church historian. But the results were neither as positive nor as enduring as many have imagined. For example, he asserts that their "pedagogical approach was based on the principle of cultural compatibility" (p. 161). Perhaps he means their catechetical method. But schooling in general produced very discouraging results. Scarcely one student was able to endure the European-imposed curriculum for as much as a year, and none ever attained a minimum of elementary schooling throughout the entire French regime.

The same seems true of much evangelization. Apart from the Hurons who were refugees in Quebec, and therefore constitute a special and atypical case, the Micmacs were the people seemingly most completely and consistently (even under British rule and often without clergy) attached to Catholicism — and their missionaries were not Jesuits for the most part! Moore has discovered the passages supportive of his thesis, but seems to have ignored numerous accounts of failure and resistance in mission work which illustrate the wide cultural gap between Jesuit and Amerindian and the efforts of the Jesuits to Europeanize their hearers. Perhaps he has fallen into the trap which has claimed so many historians — namely, interpreting the history of New France on the basis of the early "heroic age", which for the Jesuits ended by 1650 with the collapse of their Huron experiment. In other words, *Indian and Jesuit* suffers from a lack of historical perspective. It is narrow-based and written without much attention being given to the colonial setting or the evolution of missionary work and religious life in New France.

There would be much to say about both factual and interpretive details, but suffice it to warn the reader that the basic weakness of this slim study is its demonstrated lack of familiarity with the relevant historical literature. The many excellent ethnohistorical studies which incorporate the Native perspective, both books and articles which have appeared in the last decade, are conspicuously absent from the bibliography and from the conceptual and interpretive framework, and consequently absent from the author's historical understanding. It may be an inspiring book for seminarians, but a scholarly historical treatise it is not.

Yet, I have read it with interest and involvement. Moore is to be commended for the style and conviction with which he has made his argument. How many historical works of great scholarly merit are devoid of the skills Moore has demonstrated and are therefore neither stimulating nor conducive to debate!

It is perhaps heartening to some Jesuit apologists that in the late twentieth century an Episcopalian scholar admires their early seventeenth-century missionary methods. Perhaps some would still like to see only the sacrifices and sufferings of these pioneers of the cross in North America and ignore the social dislocation and disorganization and the factionalism that missions introduced into

native societies. Perhaps some would like to believe there was a single Jesuit approach, one which was very much in tune with some modern accommodationist theories. But if the author will have another look at his main sources, hold his light at a slightly different angle, he may perceive another perspective and read his sources with a more critical eye. He may even find that the view of the glorious martyrdom of some Jesuits is not quite consistent with the assertion of one contemporary missionary that the Amerindians never put anyone to death for their religious beliefs. Indeed pagan Hurons suffered, side by side with Jesuits and converts, a cruel death which for some, but not for all, led to canonization. These are the reactions, obviously, of a social historian and not of a theologian. But when one ventures to write history one must be prepared to abide by the canons of the profession and to face the criticism of the practitioners.

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FRANÇOIS ROUSSEAU — *L'œuvre de chère en Nouvelle-France. Le régime des malades à l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec*, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983, 447 p.

L'histoire de l'alimentation possède une tradition déjà longue dans laquelle l'alimentation des collectivités se taille la part du lion. C'est dans cette ligne que se situe l'ouvrage de François Rousseau. Et d'emblée, le lecteur est impressionné. Par la présentation matérielle du livre d'abord, et l'important appareil critique, statistique et graphique qui accompagne l'étude. En effet, sans céder à la tentation d'une bibliographie surabondante, l'auteur dresse un répertoire de tous les travaux importants dans le domaine qu'il étudie. Les trente tableaux et les vingt graphiques se signalent par leur parfaite lisibilité — même si l'axe chronologique est parfois estompé (graphique 17) — et la justesse de leur choix. La note météorologique des pages 493 à 496 est un complément indispensable, trop souvent négligé ailleurs. Quant aux 18 pages d'index, elles ajoutent encore à la maniabilité de l'ensemble.

Passant à la méthode d'exposition, l'impression de rigueur n'est pas moins forte. L'auteur divise son exposé en trois parties, intitulées respectivement « La bourse ou la vie », « Le corps des images » et « Le pain quotidien », soit d'une part « les principales déterminations économiques du comportement de consommation des malades », d'autre part « la liste-type des goûts moyens de la société, avec ses produits préférés ou tolérés et ceux que l'on ne consomme guère, enfin « la ration proprement dite, aspect le moins conscient du comportement alimentaire » (p. 18).

Les quatre chapitres de la première partie traitent d'abord de la population hospitalière en établissant le volume théorique, le volume réel, la composition sociale et l'évolution de ces trois données au cours des quelques décennies qui vont du 1er juin 1689 au 12 juillet 1759. Ils examinent ensuite les dépenses de l'hôpital en analysant le niveau et la structure des budgets successifs, y relevant la prépondérance des dépenses de bouche et leur caractère « incompressible ». Ce sont alors les revenus qui sont soumis à semblable dissection. Et le quatrième chapitre clôture cette première partie en mettant population, dépenses et revenus en perspective, redonnant vie à la gestion de la dépositaire des pauvres, responsable de la bonne marche financière de l'Hôtel-Dieu. D'une certaine manière, c'est la demande et ses caractéristiques qui se trouvent ainsi mises en lumière, et tout particulièrement, comme presque toujours, le caractère hors du commun, atypique, de la consommation saisie malgré la représentativité sociale réelle du groupe analysé, et l'importance de l'auto-consommation, comme de juste difficilement mesurable. En effet, la consommation dont parle l'auteur est celle qui apparaît au travers des comptes de l'hôpital; elle se distingue donc de la consommation totale qui comprend également l'utilisation des différentes productions naturelles des biens des pauvres, comme en témoignent d'autres sources. Ces productions directes des biens des pauvres n'apparaissant ni en dépenses ni en recettes (p. 130); la mesure de leur impact est pratiquement impossible. Ce qui fait des