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understanding their language. Furthermore, in their eat-all feasts it is very important to prevent the dogs from tasting even the least of it, but that is another subject. . . .

THE MONTAGNAIS DESCRIBED

The following passage is part of Paul Le Jeune's attempt to provide his readers with a systematic survey of Montagnais customs and culture. Normally, European writers of the time stuck to a single literary genre when they wrote about the natives of America: either an impersonal and "objective" ethnographic description or a first-person travel account. Le Jeune's Relation of 1634 *tends to blur the boundaries. The traveler's narrative featured on pages 23–26 contains paragraphs of ethnographic description, while the overview of Montagnais customs in this section keeps slipping into the personal narrative mode.*

PAUL LE JEUNE

On the Beliefs, Superstitions, and Errors of the Montagnais Indians

1634

I have already reported that the Indians believe that a certain being named Atahocam created the world and that one named Messou restored it. When I questioned the famous sorcerer and the old man with whom I passed the winter on this subject, they answered that they did not know who was the first creator of the world: that it was perhaps Atahocam, but that was not certain; that they only spoke of Atahocam as one speaks of a thing so far distant that nothing sure can be known about it; and, in fact, the word *Nitatachokan* in their language means "I relate a fable; I am telling an old story invented for amusement."

As to the Messou, they hold that he restored the world, which was destroyed in the Flood. Thus, it appears that they have some tradition of that great universal deluge which happened in the time of Noah, but they

JR 6:156–69, Paul Le Jeune, *Relation of 1634.*

have burdened this truth with a great many irrelevant fables. This Messou went hunting, and his lynxes, which he used instead of dogs, having gone into a great lake, were held there. The Messou, seeking them everywhere, was told by a bird that it had seen them in the midst of this lake. He went in to get them out, but the lake overflowed, covering the earth and swallowing up the world. The Messou, very much astonished, sent a raven in search of a little piece of ground with which to rebuild this element [the earth], but he could not find any. He made an otter descend into the abyss of waters, but it could not bring back any. At last he sent a muskrat, which brought back a little morsel, and the Messou used this to rebuild this earth which we inhabit. He shot arrows into the trunks of trees, which made themselves into branches. He performed a thousand other wonders, avenged himself upon those who had detained his lynxes, and married a muskrat, by whom he had children who have repopulated this world. This is the way in which the Messou restored all things. I touched upon this fable last year, but, desiring to recapitulate all I know about their beliefs, I have repeated many things. Our Indian related to Father Brébeuf [see chapter 2] that his people believe that a certain Indian had received from the Messou the gift of immortality in a little package, with a strict injunction not to open it. While he kept it closed, he was immortal, but his wife, being curious and incredulous, wished to see what was inside this present. When she opened it, it all flew away, and since then the Indians have been subject to death.

They also say that all animals, of every species, have an elder brother, who is, as it were, the source and origin of all individuals, and this elder brother is wonderfully great and powerful. The elder of the beavers, they tell me, is perhaps as large as our cabin, although his younger brothers (that is, the ordinary beavers) are not quite as large as our sheep. Now these elder brothers of all the animals are the younger brothers of the Messou. As elder brother to all the beasts, this worthy restorer of the universe can certainly claim a distinguished lineage! If, while sleeping, someone sees the elder brother or progenitor of an animal, he will have a successful hunt; if he sees the elder brother of the beavers, he will take beavers; if he sees the elder brother of the moose, he will take moose, possessing the younger brothers through the favor of their senior, whom he has seen in the dream. I asked them where these elder brothers were. "We are not sure," they answered me, "but we think the elder brothers of the birds are in the sky, and that the elder brothers of the other animals are in the water."

They recognize two progenitors of the seasons. One is called Nipinoukhe; it is this one that brings the spring and summer. This name

comes from *nipin,* which in their language means "springtime." The other is called Pipounoukhe, from the word *pipoun,* which means "winter"; it therefore brings the cold season. I asked them if this Nipinoukhe and Pipounoukhe were men or if they were animals of some other species, and in what place they usually dwelt. They replied that they did not know exactly what form they had, but they were quite sure they were living, for they heard them, they said, talking or rustling, especially at their coming, though they could not tell what they were saying. For their dwelling place they share the world between them, one keeping on one side, the other upon the other, and when the period of their stay at one end of the world has expired, each goes over to the locality of the other, reciprocally succeeding each other. Here we have, in part, the fable of Castor and Pollux.[1] When Nipinoukhe returns, he brings back with him the heat, the birds, the verdure, and restores life and beauty to the world; but Pipounoukhe lays everything to waste, being accompanied by the cold winds, ice, snows, and other phenomena of winter. They call this succession of one to the other Achitescatoueth, meaning that they exchange places.

Furthermore, they believe that there are certain spirits of light, or spirits of the air, which they call Khichikouai, from the word *khichikou,* which means "light" or "the air." The spirits, or Khichikouai, are acquainted with future events. They see very far ahead. This is why the Indians consult them, not all of them but certain shamans, who know better than the others how to impose upon and fool these people. I have chanced to be present when they consulted these fine oracles, and here is what I have observed.

Toward nightfall, two or three young men erected a tabernacle in the middle of our cabin. They stuck six poles deep into the ground in the form of a circle, and to hold them in place they fastened to the tops of these poles a large ring, which completely encircled them. This done, they enclosed this edifice with blankets, leaving the top of the tent open. It was all that a tall man could do to reach to the top of this round tower, capable of holding five or six men standing upright. Once this house was made, the fires of the cabin were entirely extinguished and the brands were thrown outside lest the flame frighten away the spirits, or Khichikouai, who were to enter this tent. A young shaman slipped in from below, turning back the covering which enveloped it, then replacing it when he had entered, for they must be very careful that there be no opening in

[1] Castor and Pollux are twin brothers of ancient Greek mythology.

this fine palace except from above. The shaman, having entered, began to moan softly as if complaining. He shook the tent gently at first; then, gradually becoming more animated, he began to whistle in a hollow tone as if from afar; then to talk as if speaking into a bottle; to cry like the owls of this country, which it seems to me have stronger voices than those of France; then to howl and sing, constantly varying the tones; ending by these syllables, *"ho ho, hi hi, gui gui, nioué,"* and other similar sounds, disguising his voice so that it seemed to me I was hearing puppets such as those that showmen use in France. Sometimes he spoke Montagnais, sometimes Algonquin, retaining always the Algonquin intonation, which is as vivacious as the Provençal dialect. At first, as I have said, he shook this edifice gently, but as he grew more animated, he fell into so violent an ecstasy that I thought he would break everything to pieces, shaking his house with so much force and violence that I was astonished at a man having so much strength. For, after he had once begun to shake it, he did not stop until the consultation was over, which lasted about three hours. Whenever he would change his voice, the Indians would at first cry out, *Moa, moa,* "Listen, listen," and then, as an invitation to these spirits, they said to them, *Pitoukhecou, pitoukhecou,* "Enter, enter." At other times, as if they were replying to the howls of the shaman, they drew this aspiration from the depths of their chests, *ho, ho.* I was seated like the others looking on at this wonderful mystery, and though forbidden to speak, I had not vowed obedience to them, and so I did not fail to intrude a little word into the proceedings. Sometimes I begged them to have pity on this poor shaman who was killing himself in this tent; at other times I told them they should cry louder, for the spirits had gone to sleep.

Some of these barbarians imagined that this shaman was not inside, that he had been carried away, without knowing where or how. Others said that his body was lying on the ground and that his soul was up above the tent, where it spoke at first, calling these spirits and throwing from time to time sparks of fire. Now to return to our consultation. The Indians, having heard a certain voice that the shaman counterfeited, uttered a cry of joy, saying that one of these spirits had entered; then addressing themselves to him, they cried out, *Tepouachi, tepouachi,* "Call, call"; that is, "Call your companions." Thereupon the shaman, pretending to be one of the spirits and, changing his tone and his voice, called them. In the meantime our sorcerer, who was present, took his drum and began to sing with the shaman who was in the tent, and the others answered. They made some of the young men dance, among others the Apostate, who did not wish to hear of it, but the sorcerer made him obey.

At last, after a thousand cries and howls, a thousand songs, and having danced and thoroughly shaken this fine edifice, the Indians believed that the spirits, or Khichikouai, had entered, and the sorcerer consulted them. He asked them about his health — for he was sick — and about that of his wife, who was also sick. These spirits, or rather the shaman who counterfeited them, answered that, as to his wife, she was already dead, that it was all over with her. I could have said as much myself, for one needed not be a prophet or a sorcerer to guess that, inasmuch as the poor creature was already visibly on death's door. In regard to the sorcerer, they said that he would live to see another spring. Now, knowing his disease — which was pain in the abdomen, or rather an infirmity resulting from his licentiousness and lewdness, for he is vile to the last degree — I said to him, seeing that he was otherwise healthy and that he drank and ate very heartily, that he would not only see the spring but also the summer, if some other accident did not overtake him. I was not mistaken.

After these interrogations, these fine oracles were asked if there would soon be snow, if there would be much of it, if there would be moose, and where they could be found. They answered — or rather the shaman, always disguising his voice — that they saw a little snow and some moose far away, without indicating the place, having the prudence not to commit themselves. . . .

PAUL LE JEUNE

On the Good Things Which Are Found among the Indians

1634

If we begin with physical advantages, I will say that they possess these in abundance. They are tall, erect, strong, well proportioned, agile; there is nothing effeminate in their appearance. Those little fops that are seen elsewhere are only painted images of men, compared with our Indians. I was once inclined to believe that pictures of the Roman emperors represented the ideal of the painters rather than men who had ever existed, so strong and powerful are their heads; but I see here upon the shoulders of these people the heads of Julius Caesar, of Pompey, of Augustus,

JR 6:228–35, Paul Le Jeune, *Relation of 1634.*

of Otto, and of others that I have seen in France, either drawn upon paper or in relief on medallions.

As to the mind of the Indian, it is of good quality. I believe that souls are all made from the same stock and that they do not differ substantially. Hence, the well-formed bodies and well-regulated and well-arranged organs of these barbarians suggest that their minds too ought to function well. Education and instruction alone are lacking. Their soul is a naturally fertile soil, but it is loaded down with all the evils that a land abandoned since the birth of the world can produce. I naturally compare our Indians with [European] villagers, because both are usually without education, although our peasants are slightly more advanced in this regard. Nevertheless, people who come to this country always confess and frankly admit that the Indians are more clever than our ordinary peasants.

Moreover, if it is a great blessing to be free from a great evil, our Indians should be considered fortunate. For there are two tyrants, ambition and avarice, who distress and torture so many of our Europeans but have no dominion over these great forests. Because the Indians have neither civil regulation, nor administrative offices, nor dignities, nor any positions of command — for they obey their chief only through goodwill toward him — they never kill one another to acquire these honors. Also, they are content with basic subsistence, and so not one of them gives himself to the Devil to acquire wealth.

They profess never to get angry, though not because of the beauty of this virtue, for which they have not even a name, but rather for their own contentment and happiness. In other words, they want only to free themselves from the bitterness caused by anger. The sorcerer said to me one day, speaking of one of our Frenchmen, "He has no sense, he gets angry; as for me, nothing can disturb me. Let hunger oppress us, let my nearest relations pass to the other life, let the Iroquois, our enemies, massacre our people; I never get angry." What he says cannot be taken as an article of faith, for as he is haughtier than any other Indian, so I have seen him annoyed more often than any of them. It is true also that he often restrains and governs himself by force, especially when I expose his foolishness. I have only heard one Indian pronounce this word, *Ninichcatihin,* "I am angry," and he said it only once. But I noticed that people were wary of him, for when these barbarians are angry, they are dangerous and unrestrained.

Whoever professes not to get angry ought also to make a profession of patience. The Indians surpass us to such an extent in this respect that we ought to be ashamed. I saw them, in their hardships and in their

the same thing. But today they are not as careful in the selection of their captains, and so they no longer give them that name, although they still call them *atiwarontas, atiwanens, ondakhienhai,* "big stones, the elders, the sedentary ones." Nevertheless, as I have said, the men who hold the first rank in the local affairs of the villages, as well as in those of the whole country, are still those who have the greatest merit and intelligence. Their relatives are like so many lieutenants and councillors.

They reach this degree of honor partly through succession and partly through election. Their children do not usually succeed them, but rather their nephews and grandsons. The latter do not inherit these petty royalties, like the dauphins of France or children inheriting from their fathers. Instead, they are accepted by the whole country only if they possess the proper personal qualifications and agree to accept the position. There are some men who refuse these honors, either because they lack aptitude in speaking or sufficient discretion or patience, or because they like a quiet life, for these positions entail service more than anything else. A captain must always be ready to heed the call of duty. If a council is held five or six leagues away for the affairs of the country, he must go, winter or summer, and whatever the weather. If there is an assembly in the village, it takes place in the captain's cabin, and if there is anything to be made public, he must announce it. The very limited authority he usually has over his subjects is not a powerful attraction to make him accept this position. These captains do not govern their subjects by means of command and absolute power, as they have no force at hand to compel them to their duty. Their government is only civil, and they merely represent what is to be done for the good of the village or of the whole country. Beyond that, everyone does as they please. There are, however, some who know well how to secure obedience, especially when they possess the affection of their subjects. Some, too, are kept from these positions because of the memory of ancestors who have served the country badly. Captains are accepted only by dint of presents that the elders accept in their assembly and put into the public coffers. Once a year, in the springtime, these resuscitations of captains take place, unless some special cases delay or hasten the matter. I should like here to ask those who have a low opinion of our Indians, what they think of this method of conducting affairs. . . .

JEAN DE BRÉBEUF

Of the Order the Hurons Observe in Their Councils

1636

. . . All having arrived, they take their seats, each in his own quarter of the cabin, those of the same village or of the same nation near one another in order to consult together. If it happens that someone is absent, the question is raised as to whether the assembly would still be legitimate, and sometimes the absence of one or two persons leads to the whole gathering being dissolved and adjourned to another time. But if all are gathered, or if, notwithstanding, they think it their duty to proceed, the council is opened. It is not always the chiefs of the council who do this, as they can be excused on grounds of difficulty in speaking, indisposition, or even their dignity.

After salutations, thanks for the trouble taken in coming, thanksgivings rendered (I know not to whom) that everyone has arrived without accident, that no one has been surprised by enemies, nor has fallen into any stream or river, nor has been injured — in brief, that everyone has arrived well — all are exhorted to deliberate maturely. Then the affair to be discussed is brought forward, and the distinguished councillors are asked to give their advice.

At this point, the deputies of each village or nation consult in a low tone as to what they will reply. Then, when they have consulted well together, they give their opinions in order and decide according to the plurality of opinions. In all this, some things are worthy of remark. The first is their manner of speaking, which is unlike common speech and has a special name: *acwentonch.* It is common to all Indians; they raise and quaver the voice, like the tones of a preacher in olden times, but slowly, decidedly, and distinctly. They even repeat the same argument several times. The second remarkable thing is that the persons giving their opinions summarize the issue, as well as all the previous arguments, before giving their own views.

An interpreter once told me that these nations had a private language in their councils, but I have learned by experience that this is not so. I know that they do have some special terms, as there are in all kinds of arts and sciences, and as there are in the palaces, the schools, and so on.

JR 10:254–61, Jean de Brébeuf, *Relation of 1636.*

It is true that their speeches are at first very difficult to understand, on account of an infinity of metaphors, circumlocutions, and other rhetorical devices. For example, speaking of the Nation of the Bear, they will say, "The bear has said such and such, or has done so and so, or the bear is cunning, is bad, or the hands of the bear are dangerous." When they speak of the man who arranges the Feast of the Dead, they say "he who eats souls," and when they speak of a nation, they often name only the principal captain. Thus, speaking of the Montagnais, they will say, "Atsirond says: . . . ," using the name of one of their captains. In short, it is in these ways that they elevate their style of language and try to speak well. Almost all of them have minds that are naturally sound; they reason very clearly and do not stumble in their speeches, and so they make a point of mocking those who trip over their tongues. Some of them seem to be born orators.

After someone has given his opinion, the head of the council repeats, or causes to be repeated, what he has said. Consequently, matters must be clearly understood, so often are they repeated. This was very fortunate for me, since, at the council [mentioned in another part of the *Relation*] where I made them a present to encourage them to take the road to Heaven, one of the captains repeated what I had said, and dilated upon it and amplified it better than I had done, and in better terms. In truth, owing to our limited knowledge of this language, we say not what we wish but what we can.

Each speaker ends his speech with these words: *Condayauendi ierhayde cha nonhwicwahachen,* which means, "That is my thought on the subject under discussion," and then the whole assembly responds with a very strong respiration drawn from the pit of the stomach, *haau.* I have noticed that when anyone has spoken to their liking, this *haau* is given forth with much more effort.

Another remarkable thing is their great prudence and moderation of speech. I would not dare to say they always practice self-restraint, for I know that sometimes they sting each other, yet you always remark a singular gentleness and discretion. I have not attended many of their councils, but every time I have been invited, I have come away astonished at this feature. . . .

THE HURON FEAST OF THE DEAD

The climax of the "Huron" Relation *comes with this splendid description of the great Feast of the Dead, a ceremony that united (in theory) all the Huron people approximately every twelve years. Brébeuf was privileged to witness a solemn Feast of the Dead in 1636, and his account of that event is written in the form of a first-person narrative, rather than in the more impersonal, encyclopedic style he maintains in other chapters. He makes no attempt to disguise the fact that he was impressed by the spectacle surrounding the mass interment in a central grave of the bones of deceased villagers brought from all corners of Huronia. In contrast with his accounts of other "pagan ceremonies," the editorial comments punctuating this one are almost all favorable. Brébeuf seemingly was swept away by the elaborately orchestrated pageantry of the ritual. His positive portrait also can be attributed to his Counter Reformation religious sensibility, with its weakness for images of skeletons, putrefying corpses and everything calculated to give Christians a vivid reminder of what the future had in store for their bodies. In this connection, he valued the Huron ceremony for the lessons it inadvertently provided for Christians. As far as the natives themselves were concerned and the prospects for conversion, Brébeuf found encouragement in every aspect of Huron mourning customs, for all the affection and care lavished on the remains of dead relatives constituted, in his mind, so many signs of belief in an afterlife. His expectation in 1636 was that people who recognized the immortality of the soul in general terms could not fail eventually to see the need for Christian salvation.*

JEAN DE BRÉBEUF

Of the Solemn Feast of the Dead

1636

The Feast of the Dead is the most renowned ceremony among the Hurons. They call it a feast because, as I shall now fully relate, when the bodies are taken from their cemeteries, each captain makes a feast for the souls in his village. The most considerable and most magnificent ceremony is that of the master of the feast, who is for that reason called, par excellence, the master of ceremonies.

JR 10:278–303, Jean de Brébeuf, *Relation of 1636.*

played to restore his health. He spoke to the captains, who immediately assembled the council, fixed the time, and chose the town to be invited for this purpose, and the choice fell on our town. An envoy from that place was sent here to make the overtures, the proposal was accepted, and preparations began on both sides.

This game of dish consists of tossing some wild plum stones in a wooden dish, each stone colored white on one side and black on the other. Victory or loss is determined [by the combination of whites and blacks], according to the rules of the game.

It is more than I can do to depict the diligence and activity of our barbarians in preparing themselves and in seeking all the means and omens to ensure good luck and success in their game. They gather together at night to practice shaking the dish to ascertain who has the best hand and to display their lucky charms and exhort them. At last, they lie down to sleep in the same cabin, having previously fasted and for some time abstained from their wives. All this is done in order to have some favorable dream so that in the morning they can relate what happened during the night.

Finally, they collect all the things that they have dreamed can bring good luck and fill carrying bags with them. In addition, they search everywhere for people who have talismans to bring luck in gambling, as well as those with *ascwandics,* or personal demons, and get them to accompany the person who holds the dish and remain close to him when he shakes it. Should there be some old men whose presence is regarded as helpful in strengthening the virtue of their talismans, they do not simply take the charms with them, but go so far as to load these men upon the shoulders of the young men and carry them to the place of the assembly. And inasmuch as we pass in the country for master sorcerers, they do not fail to urge us to pray and to perform all sorts of ceremonies in order to make them win.

As soon as they arrive at the appointed place, the two parties take their places on opposite sides of the cabin and fill it from top to bottom, above and below the *andichons* (sheets of bark that form a sort of bed canopy or roof). This runs parallel to a lower platform that rests on the ground and which they sleep upon at night. The *andichons* are placed upon horizontal poles which run the whole length of the cabin. The two players are in the middle, together with their assistants, who hold the talismans. Anyone in attendance wagers whatever he wishes with someone else, and so the game begins.

It is then that everyone begins to pray or mutter I know not what words, with gestures and eager motions of the hands, eyes, and the

whole face. All this to attract good luck and to urge their demons to take courage and not let themselves be tormented. Some are appointed to utter execrations and to make contrary gestures, with the aim of driving ill luck back to the other side and frightening the opponents' spirit.

This game was played several times this winter, all over the country. I do not know why, but the people of the towns where we have residences have been completely without luck. One town lost thirty wampums of a thousand beads each, which in this country would be equivalent to fifty thousand pearls or pistoles[1] in France. But it is worse than that, for, hoping always to win back what they have lost, they stake tobacco pouches, robes, shoes, and leggings — everything they have — so that, if they remain unlucky, which they did in this case, they return home as naked as the hand, having sometimes lost even their breechclouts.

They do not leave, however, until the patient has thanked them for the health he has recovered through their help, always professing himself cured at the end of all these fine ceremonies, although frequently he does not survive for long afterward.

The funny part is that, after suffering these losses and returning home, our barbarians come and reproach us, saying, "What is the use of believing?" It is plain to see, they say, that our sole intention is to ruin the places where we have made our abode, and thus gradually destroy the whole country. Since we have been with them and have spoken to them of God, they no longer dream, their talismans and *ascwandics* have no more power, they are unlucky in everything, in sum, there is no evil that does not accompany them. . . .

[1]The pistole was a coin in circulation in France at this time. Lalemant is not trying to establish an exact currency conversion but rather to convey a sense of the magnitude of the loss.

JÉRÔME LALEMANT

[Satisfying the Soul's Desires]

1639

For two years, an old man of this town named Taorhenche had a cancer on his arm, which, starting from his wrist, expanded to the shoulder and then began to enter his body. It was said that previously he had

JR 17:144–49, 152–59, Jérôme Lalemant, *Relation of 1639.*

neglected none of the ceremonies — or, rather, superstitions — practiced in the country to recover his health. Last winter, a little before his death, he gave the captains to understand that he desired something as consolation and as a final effort to cure him. The council was assembled, and some individuals were appointed to go and discover his wishes. These turned upon five or six points: a number of dogs of a certain shape and color with which to make a three-day feast, a quantity of flour for the same purpose, some dances and similar performances, but principally he wanted the ceremony of the *andacwander,* a coupling of men and girls, which occurs at the end of the feast. He specified that there should be twelve girls, plus a thirteenth for himself.

The answer being brought to the council, he was furnished immediately with what could be given at once, thanks to the liberality and voluntary contributions of individuals who happened to be present and therefore heard about the request. These peoples' glory, on such occasions, in despoiling themselves of their most precious possessions. Afterward, the captains went through the streets and public places, and into the cabins, announcing in a loud voice the desires of the sick man and exhorting people to satisfy them promptly.

They are not content to go on this errand once; instead they repeat it three or four times, speaking in such a way as to give the impression that the welfare of the whole country is at stake. Meanwhile, they take care to note the names of the girls and men who present themselves to carry out the principal desire of the patient. And when the feast assembles, their names are announced, after which follow the congratulations of all those present, and the choicest morsels are carried to the men and women appointed to appear in that wretched performance which is to finish the feast. After that come the thanks of the sick man for the health that has been restored to him, as he professes himself entirely cured by this remedy.

This wretched play continued for two days, and on the third it was not enacted, although it should have been, according to the original plan and intention of the patient. They tried to make us believe that it was we who had caused this breach by displaying the displeasure and pain that we felt. Be that as it may, the whole ceremony took place without the sick man feeling any better in consequence, and soon afterward he died. In his last feast before death, he said that he died willingly, having only one regret, that he would no longer be honored, as he had been all his life, with the delicious foods served at feasts. This soul was too much attached to the things of the flesh to enjoy those of the spirit. . . .

We learned that there are hardly any heads of family in these countries who do not have some dances, feasts, and other ceremonies for the cure of their illnesses and the success of their affairs, but all these were taught them by the demons, either in the manner that we shall presently describe or through appearing to them in dreams, sometimes in the form of a raven or some other bird, sometimes in the form of a serpent . . . or of some other animal, which speaks to them and reveals the secret of good fortune, to recover their health when they fall ill or to have success in their enterprises. And this secret is called *ondinonc,* which means a desire inspired by the demon. And, in fact, if you ask someone who has a desire of this sort the cause of that desire, he will simply reply, *Ondays ihatonc oki haendaerandic:* "The thing under the form of which my familiar demon appeared to me gave me this advice."[1]

These *ondinoncs* are always accompanied by feasts or dances. The ceremonies, and even the songs that are sung there, are mostly dictated by the demon, who gives all his instructions with warnings and threats that all will be lost if they are not carried out exactly, down to the smallest detail. Consequently, when the captains announce the desires of the sick or other persons who have dreamed, and when they say that it is the *ondinonc* of a certain person, everyone immediately goes to great lengths to satisfy the individual involved. This seems entirely confirmed by the formula observed by the captains when they take to the person the things called for at the first assembly: "Listen, [name of the recipient]," they cry, "and you, voice of 'demon' (that is, the being which inspired you), here is what such and such a person gives." And, as they say this, they toss the presents onto the patient.

This is the pattern followed in a ceremony that took place while I was writing the above. It was on behalf of a sick woman, and in fulfillment of one of her desires fifty persons performed a special dance lasting three hours. Three days were spent in preparation for this dance, and on the day it was to take place, the captains made no less than five public announcements: first to proclaim that it was time to begin washing their bodies, then to say they should grease them, later that they should adorn themselves with one piece of finery, then with another. You would have thought that the town was on fire and that everything was about to be consumed. The final announcement was made to urge all the people

[1]As explained earlier, the Jesuits used the term *demon* as a translation for the Huron word *oki* (spirit). In this sentence, Lalemant refers to a "familiar demon," which, shorn of the diabolical sense added by the missionary, might be translated as "personal guardian spirit."

to attend and to get there before the arrival of those who were to dance. Before the latter came a captain bearing the rest of the desires of the patient, who made his declaration in the form mentioned earlier. There followed, a little distance behind, the company of dancers, men and women, at whose head marched two masters of ceremonies, singing and playing continually on a turtle. This turtle is not a real turtle, but only a shell and skin so arranged as to make a sort of drum, in which certain stones or pits have been put to make an instrument like that which children in France play with. There is something mysterious about this semblance of a turtle, to which these people attribute their origin. We shall know in time what there is to it.

The masters of ceremony now place themselves at the head of the patient, who is in the middle of the cabin, and then move apart, one remaining at her head, the other going to her feet. All the others who dance form a sort of flock, wheeling round and round the patient, not ceasing while the masters of ceremony sing and play on the turtle. It seemed impossible to take greater care or create more mystery, or that anyone could play their part with more earnest attention, and yet the sick woman only complained that they had not observed all the forms and that she would not recover; and, in fact, she grew worse.

THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC OF 1637

In the fall of 1636, the Huron villages where Jesuits resided were struck with a "fever," most likely a strain of influenza originating in New England. The missionaries and their servants were inconvenienced for a time, but the Hurons were devastated. The disease spread slowly over the course of the winter, but with the return of spring, it flared up anew. Village after village succumbed, and the number of the dead multiplied. As the Hurons' desperation increased, they followed their shamans' urging to undertake extraordinary curative rituals. Quite reasonably, they believed that the unprecedented medical emergency had something to do with the presence of the French missionaries in their midst, and, accordingly, some Hurons approached the Jesuits to find out what the latter and their god required as the condition of ending the plague. Father Brébeuf set out the far-reaching changes the Indians would have to make to their way of life to satisfy the Christian deity, but as the headman Aënons indicated in his eloquent reply, compliance was impossible. Fear and perplexity then changed to anger, and plans were formulated (though never carried out) to kill all the Jesuits as hostile sorcerers.

We begin with the Jesuits' efforts to treat their own sick. Father François Le Mercier, and not the superior, Jean de Brébeuf, is the narrator.

FRANÇOIS LE MERCIER

The Malady with Which Our Little Household Has Been Afflicted

1637

. . . Father Jogues was no sooner out of danger than Father Chastellain fell ill. He was harassed by a burning fever, which made him very restless and which possessed him until the seventh of October. The father superior twice bled him very successfully, and he also bled Dominique [a lay employee], who was sick with a purple fever and who sank so low that we gave him extreme unction.[1] Father Garnier's fever was not so violent, and we did not consider it otherwise dangerous, except that it occasioned him great weakness. The father superior tried twice to bleed him, but the blood would not flow. This was God's way of guiding his hand in this time of need. Through all this, they endured a great deal, and we felt much compassion for them, for we could give them but slight relief. If a bed of feathers often seems hard to a sick person, I leave Your Reverence to imagine how comfortable they could be upon a bed made of nothing but a mat of rushes spread over some bark, with at most a blanket or a piece of skin thrown over it. In addition to this, one of the most annoying things, and one which it was almost impossible to remedy, was the continual noise, both within and outside the cabin. . . .

On the first day of October, I began to feel some symptoms; by evening I had a fever, and, like the others, I had to surrender to the illness. But I got off too cheaply, suffering only three attacks, though the second one was so violent that I condemned myself to a bleeding; my blood was obstinate, however. God reserved for me a more natural remedy, which appeared at the end of the third attack and enabled me to say the holy

[1] One of the Catholic last rites.

JR 13:98–105, François Le Mercier, *Relation of 1637.*

Mass the next day. However, I was of almost no use to our fathers for another six or seven days. The Indians wondered at the orderly way we cared for our sick and at the regimen we put them on. It was a curious thing to them, for they had never yet seen French people ill.

I have not told Your Reverence that Tonneraouanont, one of the famous sorcerers of the country, came to see us when he heard that we were sick. To hear him talk, he was a personage of merit and influence, although in appearance he was a very insignificant object: small, hunchbacked, extremely misshapen, and wearing a piece of a robe — some greasy and patched old beaver skins — over his shoulder. This is one of the oracles of the whole country, who had this winter made entire towns bend to his decrees. He had come at that time to blow upon some sick people of our village. . . . In order to make our mouths water and to better sell his remedy, he said, "I am not an ordinary man; I am like a demon, which is why I have never been sick. In the three or four times that the country has been afflicted with an epidemic, I did not trouble myself at all about it, and I never feared the disease, for I have remedies to preserve me. Hence, if you will give me something, I will undertake in a few days to get all your sick back on their feet."

The father superior, in order to prolong the jest, asked what he desired. "You must give me," said he, "ten cylindrical glass beads, and one extra for each patient." . . . He told us that he would teach us the roots that must be used, or if we wished to proceed more quickly, he could take care of the cures himself. He would pray and have a special sweat — in a word, perform all his usual charlatan's tricks — and in three days our sick would be cured. He made a very plausible speech.

The father satisfied him, or rather instructed him on this point. He gave the sorcerer to understand that we could not approve this sort of remedy, that the prayer he offered availed nothing and was only a compact with the Devil, for he had no knowledge of or belief in the true God, to whom alone it is permitted to address vows and prayers. However, as far as natural remedies were concerned, we would willingly employ them, and we would be grateful if he would teach us some of them. He did not insist further upon his sweat, but named us two roots that were, he said, very efficacious against fevers; and he showed us how to use them. . . .

FRANÇOIS LE MERCIER

The Help We Have Given to the Sick of Our Village

1637

On the twelfth, Father Pijart made a trip to Khinonascarant, three little hamlets two leagues from us. There he encountered a man who seemed about to die. He took the opportunity to instruct him and speak to him of baptism. The sick man listened to him willingly at first, and even indicated that he would be glad to be baptized. But his wife, coming unexpectedly, turned him from his purpose, telling him that it would not be proper for him to go to heaven, since none of his relatives were there. She told the father that he need not go to any further trouble, especially as the sick man was not in possession of his faculties and did not know what he was saying. And so matters went no further, though fortunately for him, his sickness was not fatal. It is a thing altogether worthy of compassion to see how some of them take the speeches we give them about heaven. On one occasion, an Indian told the father superior that they were not very well pleased when we asked the sick where they wished to go after death, to Heaven or to Hell. "That is not right," said he. "We ourselves do not ask such questions, for we always hope that they will not die and that they will recover their health." Another one said, "For my part, I have no desire to go to heaven; I know no one there, and the French who are there would not care to give me anything to eat." For the most part, they think of nothing but their stomachs and of the means for prolonging this miserable life. . . .

Meanwhile, the Devil was playing his pranks elsewhere and, speaking through the mouth of the sorcerer Tonneraouanont, was turning aside these peoples from applying to God. For some time, this little hunchback had been declaring that the whole country was sick, and he had prescribed a medicine, in the form of a game of lacrosse, for its recovery. This order had been announced through all the towns, the captains had set about having it executed, and the young people had not spared themselves. But it was all in vain: The disease continued to spread, gaining strength as it went. By the fifteenth of October we counted in our little village thirteen or fourteen sick. Our sorcerer did not yet feel ready to undertake the cure of the whole country, though he

JR 13:124–27, 130–33, François Le Mercier, *Relation of 1637.*

did make one rash promise to help his own village of Onnentisati. Not satisfied to give some hope that no one there would be sick, he absolutely guaranteed it, basing his assurance on the power that he, as a demon, claimed to have over the contagion. He was immediately given what he needed to make a feast. Word of this boast spread everywhere and was accepted as truth, and all the people of Onnentisati were then considered fortunate and out of danger. This constrained us to address ourselves to God, and to implore his divine goodness to confound the Devil in the person of this wretch, and to obtain glory for himself from this public affliction. And the next day, the fourteenth, we made a vow to say for this purpose thirty Masses in honor of the glorious patriarch, Saint Joseph. It was not long before we had something with which to close the mouths of those who boasted to us of their prowess, for this town was not spared any more than the others. There were a great many sick there, several of whom died and, as we hope, went to heaven.

On the same day, we baptized in our village an Indian named Onendouerha and his wife, both of whom were very ill. Some days before, they had asked for baptism with a great deal of fervor and thoroughly satisfied the father superior when it became necessary to instruct them individually. Yet both are still in good health. It is a source of grief to us that because we have not yet any wholly converted towns, we afterward get nothing but empty words from these new Christians, whom we baptized only when they appeared to be on death's door. [If they recover], the torrent of old customs and common superstitions bears them away. We are daily expecting that it will please God to take care of this, and we hope soon to be granted this favor from heaven. . . .

FRANÇOIS LE MERCIER

Ossossané Afflicted with the Contagion

1637

On the next day, the thirtieth [of October], we made a vow, we and our servants, both for the welfare of our whole village and for the preservation of our little household. The father superior pronounced it at the Mass, in the name of all, holding in his hand the holy Sacrament of the altar. We bound ourselves to say each three Masses, one in honor of our

JR 13:162–73, 234–43; *JR* 14:50–55, François Le Mercier, *Relation of 1637.*

Lord, another in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and a third in honor of Saint Joseph, and we resolved to renew the vow the next year on the day of the Immaculate Conception of the same Virgin. As for our domestics, they promised three special Communions and to say their beads twelve times. For our part, we now have every reason to praise God, who has granted to us all the favor of passing the winter in very good health, although the greater part of the time we have been among the sick and the dead, and although we have seen many fall sick and die, merely through the communication that they had with one another. The Indians were astonished at it, and are still astonished every day, saying in reference to us, "Those people are not men; they are demons." God will grant them, if it shall please Him, grace to recognize that someday. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."[1] It is through His mercy alone that we are not reduced to dust with the others and that Heaven ceaselessly pours out upon us its stream of favors and blessings. Our poor village continued to be afflicted until spring and is almost entirely ruined. We are not surprised at this, for the greater part of them showed that their belief consisted only in fine words, and that in their hearts they have no other God than the belly and anyone who will promise them absolutely to restore them to health in their illnesses.

On the fourth of December, having learned the news from Ossossané that the disease was spreading there and that some of its people had recently died, the father superior sent Father Charles Garnier and me there. We made this journey joyously and with all the more confidence in God, as I was convinced that my knowledge of the language was insufficient. On our arrival, we instructed and baptized a poor man who, it was believed, could not live through the night. We did not make a long sojourn there, as we had orders to be present at the Feast of the Conception of our Lady, and had it not been for that, we would not have readily left the sick, who were as many as fifty by actual count. We visited each of them individually, always giving them some little word of consolation. We were made very welcome, all greeting us with very kindly faces. The journey the father superior had made there having inclined to us the hearts and affections of all, most of them regarded us only as persons from whom they expected some consolation, and likewise something to relieve them in their sickness. A few raisins were very acceptable, and we were careful not to forget these. The few of them that we have are only for the Indians, and Your Reverence would not believe how readily they take these little sweets.

[1] Lam. 3:22; Latin in original.

I will say here in general that they have often given us admission to the sick, and if it happened that, while instructing them, they fell into a stupor, a little sugar or some good preserved fruit in a spoonful of warm water enabled us to revive them. I will even add that some little innocents were baptized in their last moments, unknown to and against the wishes of their parents, under the pretext of wishing to give them some of these sweets. We baptized eight people during this journey, four adults and four little children. It was a providence of God for us, who were still new in this profession, to find almost everywhere persons who favored our purpose and who aided us greatly in obtaining from the patients what we desired. Among others, one of the more influential men of the village served us as interpreter in instructing one of his daughters, doing so voluntarily and with great affection. He did even more than we wished; and when we would have been satisfied to draw a simple "yes" or "no" from the patient, he desired her to repeat, word for word, the instruction we gave her. Before departing, we saw the captain, Anenkhiondic, and some of the elders, and we told them of the vow that the people of our village had made in order to stop the progress of the disease. They manifested a great desire to do the same and charged us to report to the father superior that they were quite prepared to do all that he should judge proper on this occasion. Their love of life made them speak in this way, and, indeed, they will make the same promise the others did, and with even more ostentation, but when it comes to the execution of what they have promised, they will prove to be no better than the others.

Meantime, while we were at Ossossané, the father superior and our fathers at Ihonatiria were not idle. As if the sick there were not enough to keep them fully occupied, the inhabitants of Oenrio (a village one league distant from us), seeing themselves assailed by the malady, manifested a desire to have recourse to God. The father superior went to see them and sound them out. He baptized a little child on his arrival. At the same time, the captain had the council assemble and invited the father. Without preliminaries, he asked [the father superior] what they had to do that God might have pity on them. The father superior answered them that the principal thing was to believe in [God] 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.

Among other things, he proposed to them that henceforth, since they were thus inclined, they should give up their belief in their dreams, their marriages should be binding and for life, and they should observe conjugal chastity. They should also understand that God forbade vomiting

feasts; those shameless assemblies of men and women (I would blush to speak more clearly); eating human flesh; and those feasts they call *aoutaerohi,* which they make, they say, to appease a certain little demon to which this name is given. These are the points that the father especially recommended to them, and then he spoke to them about the vow our Indians of Ihonatiria had made, to build a little chapel next spring wherein to praise and thank God, if it pleased his divine goodness to deliver them from this malady.

The father was listened to by all with close attention, but these conditions astonished them greatly, and Onaconchiaronk, whom we call the old captain, spoke in reply. "My nephew," he said, "we have been greatly deceived. We thought God was to be satisfied with a chapel, but I see he demands much more." And the captain Aënons, going still farther, said, "*Echon,* I must speak to you frankly: I believe your proposition is impossible. The people of Ihonatiria said last year that they believed, but only so that they would be given tobacco. All that did not please me. For my part, I cannot dissemble; I express my sentiments frankly. I consider that what you propose will only prove to be a stumbling block. Besides, we have our own ways of doing things, and you have yours, and all the other nations have their own ways. When you speak to us about obeying and acknowledging as our master him whom you say made heaven and earth, I believe 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 the one whom you honor, and they ordained all the ceremonies that you observe. As for us, we have learned different ones from our own Fathers." . . .

[By January 1637, the epidemic was ravaging the large Huron town of Ossossané. Jean de Brébeuf hurried there to provide what relief he could and to combat "superstitious" remedies.]

On the 17th, the epidemic, continuing to rage at Ossossané, forced the father superior to resume the assistance we had been giving the sick there. He took with him Father Isaac Jogues and Mathurin, who performed some very successful bleedings. . . .

He arrived at Ossossané, where he found the demons at large and a poor people in deeper affliction than ever, giving their attention to the follies of a certain Tehorenhaegnon, who boasted of having a secret remedy for this kind of disease, which he had learned from the "demons" themselves, after twelve or thirteen days of fasting in a little cabin which he had made for this purpose on the shore of the lake. Accordingly, the

inhabitants of Ossossané, hearing of what he could do and seeing that presents were offered to him on all sides in order to gain his goodwill and to get from him some relief, sent to him some of their chief men to entreat him very humbly to have pity upon their misery and to proceed to their village to see the sick and to give them some remedies. Tehorenhaegnon evinced a willingness to comply with their request, but being unable (or rather not deigning) to go there in person, he sent an associate, named Saossarinon, to whom he communicated all his power and to whom he gave his bow and arrows to represent his person.

As soon as he arrived, one of the captains proclaimed in a loud voice, throughout the town, that all the sick should take heart, for Tehorenhaegnon promised to drive the disease away very soon, and that, not being able to come in person, he had sent Saossarinon with the power to give them all manner of satisfaction. He ordained that on three consecutive days three feasts should be made, promising that all those who attended and observed all the ceremonies should be protected from the disease.

Toward evening, the people assembled in the very cabin of our host, which is one of the largest in the town. Our fathers stayed there in order to observe all that might happen. The company was composed only of men — the women were to have their turn afterward — and all the families were represented. Before beginning the ceremony, one of the captains climbed to the top of the cabin and cried aloud to this effect: "Come now, see us here assembled. Listen, you demons whom Tehorenhaegnon invokes, behold us about to make a feast and have a dance in your honor. Come, let the contagion cease and leave this town. If you still have a desire to eat human flesh, repair to the country of our enemies. We now associate ourselves with you, to carry the sickness to them and to ruin them." This harangue ended, and they began to sing. Meanwhile, Saossarinon went to visit the sick and made the rounds of all the cabins. But the feast did not take place until daybreak; the entire night was passed in a continual uproar. Sometimes they sang, and at the same time they beat out a loud rhythm on pieces of bark, and sometimes they arose and began to dance, each one striving to dance well, as if his life depended upon it.

The substitute of Tehorenhaegnon was to have put in an appearance at this cabin, but he found so much to do in other cabins that daylight overtook him in his progress. Meanwhile, they awaited him with great impatience, and as they were singing, one after another, there was one of them who began speaking: "Come, great *Arendiowane,* come; behold

the day beginning to dawn." Not to keep them waiting longer, [Saossarinon] passed by some of the remaining cabins. At his arrival a profound silence prevailed. A captain walked before him, holding in one hand the bow of Tehorenhaegnon as a sign of the power possessed by this deputy, and in the other a kettle filled with a mysterious water with which he sprinkled the sick. As for [Saossarinon], he carried a turkey's wing, with which he fanned them gravely and at a distance after he gave them something to drink. He performed the same ceremonies for the sick of this cabin, then, having inspired the whole company with courage and hope, he withdrew. The feast took place, and afterward the men left the place to the women, who also came, singing and dancing in their turn. As for a feast, the women had none.

On the twentieth, Saossarinon himself made the second feast. There the aid of the demons was invoked in the same words as upon the preceding day, and after eating, someone said that the physician had already cured twelve people. This news caused great rejoicing among the company. The captain Andahiach thanked him and his master Tehorenhaegnon, as well as all the captains of the town of Andiataé, declaring that the whole town would be under obligation to them and begging them to continue their favors. The third feast did not take place for lack of fish.

On the twenty-first, Saossarinon returned to Andiataé, at his departure taking into partnership with himself and Tehorenhaegnon one Khioutenstia and one Iandatassa, to whom he taught the secrets of his art and communicated his power. As a token of the latter, he left them each a turkey's wing, adding that henceforth their dreams would prove true. He also asked them to send word, after a few days, on the success of their remedies. Four or five days later, all the cabins were visited to ascertain the number cured and the number sick, in order to inform Tehorenhaegnon. According to their calculations, there were twenty-five cured and twenty-five sick. Word was sent immediately to this personage at Andiataé. Tehorenhaegnon sent Saossarinon the next day to try to cure the rest, but Saossarinon would not take the trouble to go and visit the sick. Instead he gave orders that they should drag themselves, or that they should be carried, to him in the cabin of one Oonchiarré, where there were already a great many sick people. But this plan went very badly for him, and this second time no good effects were seen from his remedies, for some would not go there because they felt too weak. That very night a woman of the cabin died and the next morning another one, who had been carried there. The father superior instructed the latter

and baptized her with a great deal of satisfaction. Moreover, he did so well that those gentlemen, the substitutes of Tehorenhaegnon, were obliged to throw aside their turkey wings and renounce their office. . . .

[The epidemic was in its last stages by the summer of 1637, and, as Father Le Mercier's chronicle for the month of June reports, the Hurons were generally convinced that the Jesuits were using sorcery to destroy them.]

. . . Your Reverence can see that our poor Indians are not yet free from sickness. If God does not mercifully intervene, the great heat that prevails here at this season is not likely to dissipate this bad air. There are two villages that are especially afflicted, Andiataé and Onnentisati, where the two greatest sorcerers of the country, Sondacouané and Tehorenhaegnon, reside. During the winter they had already lost a great deal of their credit with the sick of other villages, and now they are more than ever discomfited, seeing that their sweats, feasts, potions, and prescriptions are of no avail with their countrymen. Recently, Sondacouané has taken it into his head to forbid to the sick the "French snow"— this is what they call sugar — and has persuaded some that it is a species of poison. It is easy to see who is the real source of this prohibition. The Devil knows well enough how much these little sweets have already aided us in wresting from his hands so many souls that he held captive. He has made every effort this winter to stop our mouths and prevent us from preaching to these barbarous people the grandeur and infinite mercy of the Master whom we serve. But because his designs did not succeed (for God granted us the favor of baptizing two hundred and thirty or forty persons), he has recently stirred up new tempests against us. They are still saying, almost as much as ever, that we are the cause of the malady. These reports are partly founded upon the fact that it is in this season much more fatal than it was during the severe cold of the winter, and consequently most of those we baptize die. Besides this, a certain Algonquin captain has now given our Hurons to understand that they were mistaken in thinking that the devils caused them to die, that they should blame only the French, and that he had seen a woman who appeared to be French and who was infecting the whole country with her breath and her exhalations. Our Indians imagine that it is the sister of the late Etienne Brulé,[2] who is avenging her brother's death. This sorcerer added that we ourselves meddle in witchcraft and that we use for

[2]Etienne Brulé was a young Frenchman who had gone to live among the natives and was killed, under rather mysterious circumstances, at a Huron village in 1632.

that purpose images of our saints. When the images are displayed, certain tainted influences issue forth and sink into the chests of those who look at them, which is why it is no surprise that they later fall ill with the disease. The prominent men and chiefs of the country do not appear to share this belief, but they fear that some fool will commit an act of violence that will cause them to blush. We are in God's hands, and all these dangers do not make us forfeit a moment of our joy. It would be too great an honor for us to lose our lives while employed in saving some poor soul. . . .

FRANÇOIS LE MERCIER

Of the Hurons Baptized This Year, 1638

1638

The greatest of our difficulties was to discover those who were sick, as this search was so distasteful to them. "You care for only the sick and the dead," they said to us. Indeed, we made the rounds of the cabins incessantly, for often someone was taken sick and carried away in less than two days. Our most common occupation was that of physician, with the object of increasingly discrediting their sorcerers and their imaginary treatments. And yet we had nothing to give them as medicine save a little piece of lemon peel — French squash, as they call it — or a few raisins in a little warm water, with a pinch of sugar. This little help, however, with the blessing of God added, accomplished wonders, and, according to them, it restored health to many. . . .

SMALLPOX AMONG THE HURONS, 1639

There was no mistaking the epidemic that entered the Huron lands late in the summer of 1639: The oozing red sores, lassitude, and fever were sure signs of smallpox. In Europe, smallpox was disfiguring and killing people by the thousands, but in the biological "virgin soil" of the Americas, it mowed down native populations with shocking efficiency. It seems clear that far more Hurons perished in 1639 than in the plague that struck them

JR 15:68–69, François Le Mercier, *Relation of 1638.*

thoughts are good. Remain united with them and accommodate yourselves to their customs. You will soon have news from us." The Indians replied with a noble salvo of musketry, and the fort fired a cannon shot. Thus ended their embassy. May God cause all this to succeed for his greater glory.

IROQUOIS ATTACKS ON THE ALGONQUINS, 1647

After a brief truce, war resumed in the spring of 1647. It began when a Huron-French diplomatic mission to the Mohawk country was accused of treachery and evil magic and the emissaries, including the Jesuit Isaac Jogues, were killed. The Mohawks then launched raids into the St. Lawrence and Ottawa valleys, easily taking several unsuspecting Algonquin bands. The raids followed the typical pattern of stealth and ambush. The objective was to kill some of the enemy's warriors and, above all, to capture prisoners. The latter would be conducted to the attackers' home village and then, in some cases, tortured and killed. Other prisoners — especially women and children — would be ritually adopted, accepted as new family members, and integrated into the captors' community. The following excerpt from the Relation of 1647 *tells of the adventures of some Algonquin captives taken in this way.*

JÉRÔME LALEMANT

Some Iroquois Surprised after Defeating the Algonquins; A Woman Kills an Iroquois and Escapes

1647

On the twenty-ninth of May [1647], a canoe paddled by three Indians of the Petite Nation of the Algonquins[1] arrived at Montreal. These poor people were much astonished upon learning of the defeat of the upper

[1]The Petite Nation was an Algonquin band whose territory lay on the Ottawa River, above Montreal.

JR 30:280–95, Jérôme Lalemant, *Relation of 1647.*

Algonquins, . . . even though they had had strong suspicions of the treachery of the Iroquois. "This winter, we noticed tracks of the enemy who had approached very close to us," they said. "What particularly surprised us was that one of them had encountered a bear trap which we had set, and, instead of awaiting us or seeking our trail, he dismantled the trap, scattering the pieces so that we could plainly see that no animal could have done this. Someone wished us to understand that we should be on our guard, for an enemy was not far away."

Such charity is not common among barbarians. They added that a certain disease had broken out among the caribou, which made them vomit blood from the mouth and remain quite still when pursued. They saw as many as five, six, or seven fall stone dead in a moment. This so terrified them that they resolved to leave their country in order to come and live with the French. From time to time, God draws people out from the remote interior, people who would otherwise be beyond our reach, in order to bring them to a knowledge of Him through proximity with those who are able to instruct them. These poor people, afraid of meeting the Iroquois on their return, begged Monsieur d'Ailleboust[2] to provide them with some weapons, for they were resolved to fight if they encountered any enemies. Monsieur d'Ailleboust believed that they ought not to be denied in a matter so important.

Being armed, they made a side trip to Three Rivers and from there set off for their own country, without finding any enemy. One of them, supposing that the river was quite free, embarked with his wife in order to journey as far as the island[3] and tell the Indians of that country that their relatives had been captured and massacred near Three Rivers, so that they should be on their guard. As he was proceeding along in his little bark gondola, he perceived an Iroquois canoe in the distance. Turning to his wife, who was steering the canoe, he asked: "Would you be brave enough to help me if I wished to go and attack that canoe?" There were perhaps seven or eight men in it and he was alone, but he was determined nevertheless. His wife answered him: "I would follow you anywhere, for I have no wish for life after your death." They plied their paddles, straining to overtake that little craft. Before being discovered, however, they saw that farther on there were four or five more canoes, all filled with men. That stopped them, for they could see that there was no need to fling themselves rashly against a waiting enemy.

[2]Louis d'Ailleboust de Coulonge et d'Argentenay was acting governor of Montreal from 1645 to 1647 and governor of New France from 1648 to 1651.

[3]Probably Allumette Island, an Algonquin meeting place on the upper Ottawa River.

What was this poor man to do? He was unwilling to flee, but he could not advance without dying. "I must find out what capture those people have made," said he to his wife, "for I can see by their bearing that they have been victorious. I am sure they have captured some of our compatriots." He put his wife ashore and then went to the other side of the river. Giving the impression that he had come from the country of the Iroquois, he fired a shot from his arquebus. The Iroquois, not seeing him clearly, and supposing perhaps that it was some troop of their own soldiers newly arrived in the area, gave forty shouts, drawing forty times this sound from the depths of their chests: *hee.* "That is sufficient," said that Algonquin. "I need nothing further to tell me what I wanted to know: Assuredly they hold forty of our people prisoners." He took his wife back on board, then made haste to paddle away in the direction of some men he had left behind. Relating to them what he had seen and heard, he called on them to go after the enemy. Seven young men volunteered. They got into two canoes and went quickly to the place where the enemy was.

There are no hunters so eager for game as the Indians are when hunting men; no cat could be more adroit in crouching, concealing itself, and then jumping upon a mouse than is an Indian in surprising and rushing upon his prey. They glide softly, track their enemies, and go reconnoitering as quietly as a wolf. In the darkness, they could see a cluster of five cabins. "Come," they said, "let us kill and die; let us sell our lives dearly." Each one of these cabins contained more warriors than all the attackers. The plan was that six of them should enter the three largest cabins, two into each, while the other two took the two smaller ones. There were two Christians in this little band, and they said their prayers, like persons going to their death. About midnight they went in, swords[4] in hand, and with amazing speed they ran through the unfortunate sleepers within. (They also accidentally killed a woman of their own nation recently captured by those barbarians.) In the end, they had taken the lives of ten Iroquois, wounded many others, and freed ten captives. The combat took place in strange confusion. "Who are you?" the Iroquois would say, only to be answered with the thrust of a sword. The darkness made this confusion all the more horrible. A tall Iroquois, pierced through by a sword, fell upon the man who had wounded him and broke the weapon in grappling with him. The Algonquin escaped from the other's grasp and pursued him with a volley of stones, but the Iroquois caught him

[4]The *Relation* uses the term *espée* (sword). It is possible that the Algonquins used this European weapon, but more likely they were armed with knives or spears.

once again and would have destroyed him had not his comrade arrived in time to strike the Iroquois a blow which felled him to the ground.

On being set free, the captive women cried to their liberators: "Flee! There are many Iroquois nearby; if daylight reveals you, you will be done for." At these words, they took the scalps from the dead and threw into the river great bundles of beaver skins taken from the Algonquins by those treacherous people. They could not carry away such a heavy burden, but they did not want their enemies to have the use of the pelts either. Finally, they took the persons they had delivered into their canoes and retired to a place of safety. It would not take many soldiers such as these to trouble the Iroquois greatly.

When they were entirely free of danger, the captives related how they were taken. "Many Indians of the upper countries," they said, "had come to the island, in order to join the Hurons who were to go down to the French. Thirty families had the intention of settling with those who teach the way to heaven. There was not an Indian who was not laden with pelts in order to buy his little necessaries at the stores of the country. A Huron who had been captured some years earlier by the Iroquois and who had been made a captain of these robbers led them to the place where we were, which was so much easier for him as he had a thorough knowledge of all those regions. Our people, who were not expecting them, were much astonished when they saw them, arms in hand. At first they offered some resistance, but seeing three of our men killed by arquebus shots at the outset, they took flight. Avarice prevented the Iroquois from pursuing them; their eyes were dazzled by the great number of beavers that we had, and they thought only of pillage. That saved the lives of many people, but those of us who had children were soon taken. This is how," they said, "our misfortune came to pass."

Besides these ten persons set at liberty by those eight Algonquins, one Amazon, who had been taken with the others, bravely escaped from the hands of those who held her captive. For ten days, the Iroquois had been dragging her along with the other prisoners. Though she was bound [at night] by the feet and the hands to four stakes, which held her in the shape of a Saint Andrew's cross, she nevertheless resolved to escape. Noticing that the bonds on one of her arms did not press her very tightly, she managed to free that arm. This free hand soon untied the cords which held the rest of her body. All the Iroquois were sleeping profoundly. She got to her feet and stepped over those great bodies still buried in sleep. Just as she was about to go out, she came across a hatchet. Seizing the weapon and impelled by some warlike fury, she brought it down with all her strength upon the head of an Iroquois lying

at the entrance of the cabin. As this man thrashed about, the others were awakened. A bark torch was lit, and they saw the wretched man bathed in his own blood. They looked for the perpetrator of this murder, and they found the woman's place empty and the man's hatchet covered with blood. Everyone rushed out. The young men ran hither and thither, but that good woman had hidden in a hollow stump that she had noticed the day before. From her hiding place, she listened to their commotion, in great fear of being discovered. Finally, seeing that her pursuers had all gone one way, she left her den and ran in the opposite direction as fast as she could. When daybreak came, those barbarians circled the area looking for her tracks. These they found and set off in pursuit, following her for two whole days, at the end of which this poor creature heard them moving all around the place where she was. She believed that her life was at an end. But, by good fortune, she came upon a pond formed by beavers. She plunged in, breathing only from time to time and so adroitly that she was not perceived. Finally, the searchers tired of the pursuit and, giving up hope of finding her, returned to their own people.

Finding herself free, she set forth on her journey. She passed thirty-five days in the woods without a robe or any other clothing, having only a little piece of bark from a tree with which to hide herself from her own eyes. She found no hostelries or refreshments other than currant bushes and some small wild fruits and roots. She swam across the smaller rivers, but when she came to the broad St. Lawrence, she gathered logs, attaching and binding them stoutly with the bark of a tree which the Indians use for making cords. Now that she was in a safer place, she walked along the banks of the great river without knowing exactly where she was headed, for never had she been near any of the French settlements, nor, in all likelihood, had she ever seen a Frenchman — she only knew that people came to see them by water, and so she had no other guide than the course of that great river. The insects — mosquitoes, flies, and wasps — were devouring her, and she could not defend herself from them on account of her nakedness. At last, having found an old hatchet, she built herself a bark canoe in order to travel along with the current and to better scan the banks for houses. I leave you to imagine her anxiety, for she had no knowledge of the place which she sought and no idea where the great stream was taking her. It is so broad in several places, it spreads into such great expanses of water, that it is difficult from the middle to see a house on the shore.

Finally, having traversed Lake St. Pierre, which is near Three Rivers, she perceived a canoe of Hurons who were going fishing. She straightway fled into the woods, unable to recognize whether they were friends

or enemies; in addition, modesty made her conceal herself; and so she proceeded on from there only by night. In fact, she resumed her journey about eight o'clock in the evening. She discovered the French fort, and at the same moment some Hurons noticed her. The latter advanced straight toward her, in order to find out who she was. Seeing them come, she left the shore of the river and retreated into the woods, shouting to them not to approach — that she was completely naked and that she had escaped from the hands of the enemy. One of those Hurons threw her a mantle and a sort of robe. Putting this on, she came out of the woods and accompanied them to the house of the French. Our fathers sent for her and questioned her about her journey. She related what I have just told, joyful as she was to see herself at liberty and wondering at the charity of those whom she had so long been searching for without knowing exactly where they dwelt. She arrived at Three Rivers on the twenty-sixth of July greatly exhausted and emaciated. O God, what sufferings! What a lover of life is man! If these crosses had been accepted for Jesus Christ, how precious they would be! She had no thought of suffering them for her God, for she had never heard of Him, since she had never been approached by those who distribute the bread of life to poor famished ones.

THE HURONS ANNIHILATED, 1649

While the Mohawks were raiding the canoe routes of the Ottawa and St. Lawrence rivers in the late 1640s, other Iroquois armies were stepping up attacks against the Huron country farther west. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Iroquois war aims shifted in a direction that boded ill for their enemies. Whereas traditionally they tried to inflict some damage while capturing booty and prisoners, they now seemed intent on destroying an entire people. Moreover, they were well equipped with guns purchased from the Dutch traders at Fort Orange (the French made only limited supplies of firearms available to their allies), and these weapons, together with the well-established military traditions of the Iroquois, terrified all their opponents.

Winter was just coming to an end in March 1649 when the Hurons were taken by surprise by a large Iroquois invasion months in advance of the summer season of travel, trade, and warfare. The attackers quickly destroyed two outlying villages, and although the heart of the Huron country

The passage reproduced here tells of Jogues's capture by a Mohawk raiding party in 1642, his harrowing journey to the town of Gandaouagué, the tortures he suffered there, and the many months he spent in captivity, never knowing when he might be executed. After the end of the period covered by this part of the text, the Jesuit did manage to escape to the Dutch settlements on the Hudson River, and, after further adventures, he made his way to Europe. Amazingly, he chose to return to New France. Not long after his return, a truce was concluded in the war between the Mohawks and the French (see chapter 4). Because of his knowledge of the Iroquois language, Jogues was dispatched on two successive diplomatic missions to the scene of his ordeal. On the second of these, in 1646, the war party in Gandaouagué accused the Jesuit of sorcery and killed him with a sudden blow.

Although the Relation *concentrates on Jogues, it also tells us something about how prisoners of war were treated in Iroquoian societies of the time. In addition, it sheds some light on the conflict of competing Mohawk factions — one favoring accommodation with the French, the other wishing to prosecute war. As a captive who had not been adopted into an Iroquois clan, Jogues's life depended on the relative strength of the two factions. When he was killed on his second return visit, it was because the anti-French (and anti-Algonquin) party had gained the upper hand; indeed his murder may have been deliberately planned to plunge the Mohawks back into war. The 1646 offensive against the Algonquins of the St. Lawrence Valley was the immediate result.*

All these diplomatic, political, and military events — important though they may be for modern researchers — appear as mere "background noise" in the pages of the Jesuit Relations *dedicated to Isaac Jogues. What matters here is the religious meaning of the priest's bodily suffering, spiritual anguish, and preordained death. The threads of these experiences are woven together to create a story patterned on the sacrifices of the early Christian martyrs and on the Passion of Jesus Christ.*

JÉRÔME LALEMANT

How Father Isaac Jogues Was Taken by the Iroquois, and What He Suffered on His First Entrance into Their Country

1647

Father Isaac Jogues was born to a worthy family of the city of Orléans. After he gave some evidence of his virtue in our society, he was sent to New France in the year 1636. In that very year, he went up to the Huron country, where he remained until the thirteenth of June in the year 1642, when he was sent to Quebec upon the affairs of that important and arduous mission.

From that time until his death, there occurred many remarkable things, of which one cannot without guilt deprive the public since they are honorable to God and full of consolation for souls who love to suffer for Jesus Christ. What has been said of his labors in the earlier *Relations* came, for the most part, from some Indians who had been companions in his sufferings. But what I am about to set down issued forth from his own pen and his own lips: It was necessary to use a superior's authority, along with gentle persuasion in our personal conversations, in order to discover that which the very low esteem in which he held himself kept concealed in a profound silence.

Sometime before his departure from the Hurons in order to come to Quebec, finding himself alone before the Blessed Sacrament, he prostrated himself to the ground, beseeching our Lord to grant him the favor and grace of suffering for His glory. This answer was engraved in the depth of his soul, with a certainty similar to that which faith gives us: *Exaudita est oratio tua; fiet tibi sicut à me petisti. Confortare et esto robustus,* "Thy prayer is heard; what thou hast asked of me is granted thee. Be courageous and steadfast." The effects which followed have shown that these words, which were always present for him in all his sufferings, were genuinely substantial, words which issued from the lips of Him for whom saying and doing are one and the same thing.

Reverend Father Jérôme Lalemant, at that time superior of the mission among the Hurons, knowing nothing of this, sent for him and proposed to him the journey to Quebec. This would be a frightful voyage on

JR 31:16–69, Jérôme Lalemant, *Relation of 1647.*

account of the difficulty of the route, and very dangerous because of the ambushes of the Iroquois, who every year massacred a considerable number of the Indians allied to the French. Let us hear him [Father Jogues] speak upon this subject and upon the outcome of his journey.

"Authority having made me a simple proposition, and not a command, to go down to Quebec, I offered myself with all my heart. I was all the more willing, since otherwise some of our fathers who were much better than I might have been exposed to the perils and hazards that we all anticipate. And so we set out, in danger from the moment of our departure. We were obliged to disembark forty times, and forty times to carry our boats and all our baggage amid the rapids and waterfalls that one encounters on this journey of about three hundred leagues. Although the Indians who were conducting us were very skillful, we nevertheless incurred some disasters, to the great peril of our lives and with some loss of our small baggage. At last, thirty-five days after our departure from the Huron country, we arrived much fatigued at Three Rivers, and from there we descended to Quebec. We blessed God throughout for His goodness in preserving us. Our business being finished in fifteen days, we observed the Feast of Saint Ignace, and the next day, the first of August of the same year, 1642, we left Three Rivers to return to the country whence we had come.

"The first day was favorable to us, but the second caused us to fall into the hands of the Iroquois. We were forty persons, distributed in several canoes. The one that kept the vanguard discovered on the banks of the great river some tracks of men, recently imprinted on the sand and clay, and gave us warning. We put to shore. Some said that these were enemy tracks; others were sure that they were footprints of the Algonquins, our allies. In the midst of this argument, Eustache Ahatsistari, to whom all the others deferred on account of his exploits in arms and his virtue, exclaimed: 'Be they friends or enemies, it matters not. I notice by their tracks that they are not in greater number than we, so let us then advance without fear.' We had made less than half a league when the enemy, concealed among the grass and bushes, rose with a great outcry and discharged a volley of shots at our canoes. The noise of their arquebuses so greatly frightened some of our Hurons that they abandoned their canoes and weapons and all their supplies to flee into the woods. This discharge had done us no great harm: No lives were lost, and only one Huron was shot through the hand. Our canoes, however, were broken in several places. We were four French, one of whom was in the rear and escaped with the Hurons, who abandoned him before approaching

the enemy.[1] Eight or ten [Hurons], both Christians and catechumens, joined us. We led them in a short prayer as they bravely faced the enemy, and though it was thirty men against twelve or fourteen, our people held on valiantly. But when they saw another band of forty Iroquois, who had been in ambush on the opposite shore of the river, coming to attack them, they lost courage, and those who were not then caught up in the fighting abandoned their comrades and took to their heels. No longer sustained by those who followed him, a Frenchman named René Goupil (whose death is precious before God) was surrounded and captured, along with some of the most courageous Hurons.

"I was watching this disaster," says the father, "from a place very favorable for concealing me from the sight of the enemy, being able to hide myself in thickets and among very tall and dense reeds; but this thought could never enter my mind. 'Could I really,' I said to myself, 'abandon our French and leave those good neophytes and those poor catechumens, without giving them the succor that the church of my God has entrusted to me?' Flight seemed horrible to me. 'It must be,' I said in my heart, 'that my body suffer the fire of earth in order to deliver these poor souls from the flames of Hell. It must die a transient death, in order to procure for them an eternal life.' Having reached a decision without great opposition from my mind, I called one of the Iroquois who had remained to guard the prisoners. This man perceived me but hesitated to approach, for fear of some ambush. 'Come,' I said, 'be not afraid. Take me to the Frenchman and the Hurons whom you hold captive.' He advanced, seized me, and placed me in the number of those whom the world calls miserable. Tenderly embracing the Frenchman, I said to him: 'My dear brother, God treats us in a strange manner, but He is the master and he has done what has seemed best in his sight; he has followed his good pleasure. May His holy name be blessed forever.' This good young man at once made his confession, and I gave him absolution. I then approached the Hurons to instruct and baptize them. As more fugitives were being brought in by their pursuers every minute, I heard these too in confession, making Christians of those who had not been baptized. Finally, they brought that worthy Christian captain Eustache, who, on seeing me, exclaimed: 'Ah! My father, I swore and promised to you that I would live or die with you.' The sight of him pierced my heart. I do not remember what words I said to him.

[1]This phrase is obscure in the original French: *". . . se sauva avec les Hurons qui labandonnerent devant que d'approcher l'ennemy."* The intended meaning may have been "escaped with the Hurons, who abandoned him before the enemy's approach."

"Another Frenchman, named Guillaume Couture, seeing that the Hurons were giving way, escaped like them into those great forests, and, as he was agile, he was soon out of the enemy's grasp. But he was seized with remorse because he had forsaken his father and his comrade. He stopped quite short, deliberating whether he should go on or retrace his steps. The fear of being regarded as treacherous made him turn around, and there he found himself facing five big Iroquois, one of whom was aiming a gun at him. The arquebus misfired, but the Frenchman did not fail to find his own mark and shot him dead on the spot. His shot spent, the four other Iroquois fell upon him like enraged lions, or rather like demons. They stripped him naked, beat him black-and-blue with clubs, and tore out his fingernails with their teeth, crushing the bleeding ends to cause him more pain. Finally, they pierced through one of his hands with a knife and led him, tied and bound in this sad plight, to the place where we were. When I recognized him, I broke away from my guards and embraced him. 'Courage, my dear brother and friend,' I urged him. 'Offer your pains and anguish to God on behalf of these men who torment you. We must not shrink back. Let us instead suffer bravely for His holy name. His glory was our only object in this journey.' The Iroquois were at first quite bewildered before these endearments, then, imagining perhaps that I was applauding this young man for killing one of their captains, they fell upon me with a mad fury. They stabbed at me and beat me and overwhelmed me with blows from their war clubs, flinging me to the ground, half-dead. When I began to catch my breath, the men who had not participated in the beating came up and used their teeth to tear out my fingernails. Then they took turns biting the ends of my two index fingers, and with the nails gone, this caused me excruciating pain, as if they were being ground and crushed between two stones until small bone splinters began to protrude. The good René Goupil was given the same treatment, though they did not at that point do any harm to the Hurons. They were angry with the French because of the latter's unwillingness the year before to accept the peace conditions they had been willing to offer.

"When the hunters had returned from their chase after a human quarry and the party had reassembled, these barbarians divided up their booty among themselves, rejoicing in their prey with great shouts of joy. As I saw them engrossed in examining and distributing our spoils, I sought also for my share. I went round to all the captives, baptizing those who were not yet baptized, encouraging these poor wretches to suffer steadfastly, in the assurance that their reward would far exceed the severity of their torments. I ascertained, on this round of visits, that we

Scenes of Jesuit Martyrdom

A famous and widely reproduced tableau depicts several separate scenes of torture and death as though they took place simultaneously. In the foreground, Isaac Jogues is seen kneeling, awaiting execution, his fingers mutilated from an earlier period of captivity. Gabriel Lalemant is being burned alive in the center, while to the right, Jean de Brébeuf stands with red-hot axe blades searing his chest.

Courtesy of the University of Western Ontario.

were twenty-two captives, not counting three Hurons killed on the spot. An old man, aged eighty years, having just received holy baptism, said to the Iroquois who were commanding him to embark: 'It is too late for an old man like me to go visiting foreign countries. I can find death here if you refuse me life.' These words were hardly out of his mouth before they felled him.

"And so we set out, led off to a country truly foreign, where our Lord favored us with a share of His cross. During the thirteen days that we spent on that journey, I suffered bodily torments almost unendurable and, in the soul, mortal anguish: hunger, the fiercely burning sun, the threats and hatred of those leopards, and the pain of our wounds, which, in the absence of any dressing, became putrid and worm infested. All this certainly caused us much distress. But these things seemed light to me in comparison with an inward sadness that I felt at the sight of our first and most ardent Huron Christians. I had expected them to be the pillars of that rising church, and I saw them become the victims of death. Seeing the path to salvation closed for such a long time to so many nations, people who perish every day for want of succor, made me die every hour in the depth of my soul. It is a very hard thing, a cruel thing, to see the triumph of the devils over whole nations redeemed with so much love and ransomed in the currency of a blood so adorable.

"Eight days after we left the shores of the great river St. Lawrence, we met two hundred Iroquois, who were coming to hunt for French and for our Indian allies, and this encounter brought down on us another attack. It is a belief among those barbarians that those who go to war are fortunate in proportion to their cruelty toward their enemies, and I can assure you that they made us thoroughly feel the force of that wretched belief.

"Once they perceived us, they began by thanking the sun for causing us to fall into the hands of their fellow countrymen. They next fired an arquebus volley to salute their victory. That done, they set up a theater on the hill and went into the woods in search of sticks or thorns, whatever they fancied. Thus armed, they formed two lines, a hundred on one side and a hundred on the other, and forced us, all naked as we were, to pass in between along that path of fury and anguish. There was rivalry among them to see who could land the most blows and the heaviest. They made me go last, that I might be more exposed to their rage. I had not gone halfway before I fell to the ground under that hail of redoubled blows. I made no effort to raise myself up, in part because of my weakened state, in part because I was ready to make of that place my sepulchre. Seeing me prostrate, they rushed upon me. God alone knows for how long a time and how many were the blows that landed on my body, but the sufferings undertaken for His love and His glory are filled with joy and honor.

"Seeing that I had not fallen by accident and that I did not rise again because I was too close to death, they adopted a cruel compassion. Though their rage was not yet glutted, they wished to get me to their country alive, and so they tenderly picked me up and carried me all bleeding to the stage they had prepared. When I came to, they brought me down and began to offer me a thousand and one insults, making me the sport and the target of their reviling. They started beating me once again: On my head, on my neck, and all over my body another storm of blows rained down. I lack space to set down in writing the full extent of my sufferings. They burned one of my fingers and crushed another with their teeth, they squeezed and twisted those that were already torn with a demonic rage, they scratched at my wounds with their nails, and, when strength failed me, they applied fire to my arm and thighs.

"My companions were treated about the same as I was. One of those barbarians advanced with a large knife in his right hand, took my nose in his left hand, as if to cut it off, but then stopped suddenly, as if surprised, and went away without doing anything to me. He returned a quarter of an hour later, as if angry with himself for his cowardice, and grasped me again in the same place. You know, my God, what I said to you at that moment, in the depth of my heart. In the end, I know not what invisible force repulsed him a second time. My life was finished if he had proceeded, for they are not accustomed to leave long on the earth those who have been severely mutilated. Among the Hurons, the worst treated was that worthy and valiant Christian, Eustache. After making him suffer like the others, they cut off the thumbs of both his hands and then thrust a pointed stick into the incisions, right up to the elbow. Seeing this extreme torment, [I] could not contain [my] tears. Eustache perceived this, and fearing lest the Iroquois should regard [me] as effeminate, said to them: 'Do not suppose that those tears proceed from weakness; it is the love and affection that he feels for me, and not a lack of courage, that brings them to his eyes. He has never wept in his own torments; his face has always appeared dry and always cheerful. Your rage, and my pains, and his love are the occasion and the cause of his tears.'

"'It is true,' [I] answered, 'that I feel your pain more keenly than my own, and though I am covered with blood and with wounds, my body feels its tortures less as my heart is afflicted with your sufferings. But take courage, my dear brother, and remember that there is another life than this; remember, too, that there is a God who sees everything and who will reward the anguish that we suffer on his account.'

"'I remember very well,' replied that good neophyte. 'I will remain firm even 'til death.' And, indeed, his constancy was ever admirable and ever Christian.

"After they had made a sacrifice of our blood, those warriors went their way and we went ours. The tenth day after our capture, we arrived

at a place where we had to leave the water and proceed by land. The path, about four days long, was extremely painful for us. The man who was guarding me was unable to carry all his booty, and so he put part of it on my torn back. In three days, we ate only a few wild fruits, which we gathered along the way. Greatly weakened by our wounds and by the intensity of the sun during this hottest part of the summer, we fell behind the others. Seeing ourselves considerably separated from them and night falling, I told poor René that he should escape. Indeed, we could have done so, though for myself, I would rather suffer any sort of torture than abandon to their death those whom I could in any way console, and upon whom I could confer the blood of my Savior through the sacraments of His church. This good young man, seeing that I wished to follow my little flock, would never leave me: 'I will die with you,' said he. 'I could never forsake you.'

"I had always thought that the day on which the whole church rejoices in the glory of the Blessed Virgin — her glorious and triumphant Assumption — would be for us a day of pain. I gave thanks to my Savior, Jesus Christ, because, on that day of gladness and joy, he was making us share his suffering and admitting us to participation in his crosses. We arrived on the eve of that sacred day at a little river, distant from the first village of the Iroquois about a quarter of a league. There, on both banks, were many men and youths armed with sticks, which they let loose upon us with their accustomed rage. By then, I had only two fingernails left, and those barbarians tore them from me with their teeth, rending the flesh from beneath and cutting it clean to the bone with their nails, which they grow very long. A Huron, to whom they had given his liberty in that country, exclaimed, 'You are dead, Frenchmen, you are dead; there is no liberty for you. Think no more of life; you will be burned; prepare yourselves for death.' This fine reception did not afflict us to the degree that our enemies believed it would. My guard, seeing me all covered with blood and touched with some sort of compassion, told me that I was in a pitiable state, and, in order to make me more recognizable in the eyes of his people, he wiped my face.

"After they had glutted their cruelty, they led us in triumph into that first village. All the youth were outside the gates, arranged in lines and armed with sticks. Some even had iron rods, which they procure easily from the Dutch nearby. Casting our eyes upon these weapons of the Passion, we remembered the words of Saint Augustine: Those who turn aside from the scourges of God turn aside from the number of his children. Accordingly, we offered ourselves with all our hearts to his paternal goodness, ready at His convenience to be sacrificial victims to His loving anger, all for the salvation of these nations.

"Here is the order that was followed in that stately and funereal entry: One Frenchman was placed at the head of the line, another in the middle of the Hurons, and me the very last. We followed one another at an equal distance, and, to ensure that our executioners had ample time to beat us at their ease, some Iroquois thrust themselves into our ranks in order to prevent us from running and from avoiding any blows. As the procession began to enter this narrow road to paradise, a din was heard on all sides. It was then that I could say with my Lord and master, 'The wicked have wrought upon my back.'[2] I was naked to my shirt, like a poor criminal, and the others were completely naked, except poor René Goupil, to whom they allowed the same favor as to me. The more slowly the procession marched along this long road, the more blows we received. I received one above the loins, with the pommel of a knife or with an iron knob the size of a fist, which shook my whole body and took away my breath. Such was our entrance into that Babylon. We could hardly make it as far as the scaffold which had been prepared for us in the middle of the village, so beaten were we; our bodies were all livid and our faces all bloody. But René Goupil was more disfigured than the rest, so that nothing white appeared in his face except his eyes. I found him all the more beautiful in his resemblance to Him [Jesus], who bore a face which was viewed with delight by the angels, though he appeared to us, in the midst of his anguish, like a leper.

"When I ascended that scaffold, I exclaimed in my heart: 'For we are made a spectacle unto the world and to angels, and to men. . . for Christ's sake.'[3] We found some rest in that place of triumph and of glory. The Iroquois no longer persecuted us except with their tongues, filling the air and our ears with their insults, which did us no great hurt, but this calm did not last long. A captain exclaimed that the Frenchmen ought to be caressed. No sooner said than done, a wretch jumped up on the stage and dealt three heavy blows with a club to each Frenchman, without touching the Hurons. Meanwhile, others drew their knives and approached: They treated me as a captain, that is to say, with more fury than the rest. The deference of the French, and the respect that the Hurons showed me, were the cause of this advantage. An old man took my left hand and commanded a captive Algonquin woman to cut off one of my fingers, but she turned away three or four times, unable to force herself to carry out this cruelty. Finally, she had to obey, and she cut the thumb from my left hand. The same caresses were extended to the other prisoners. When this poor woman had thrown my thumb down on the

[2] Ps. 129:3; Latin in original.
[3] I Cor. 4:9–10; Latin in original.

stage, I picked it up and offered it to you, O my God! Remembering the sacrifices that I had presented to you for seven years past, upon the altars of your church, I accepted this torture as a loving vengeance for the want of love and respect that I had shown your holy body. You heard the cries of my soul. One of my two French companions, having perceived me, told me that if those barbarians saw me keep my thumb, they would make me eat it and swallow it raw; therefore, I should throw it away. I obeyed him instantly. They used an oyster shell to cut off the right thumb of the other Frenchman, so as to cause him more pain. The blood flowed from our wounds in such abundance that we were about to faint, when an Iroquois, tearing off a little end of my shirt, which alone had been left to me, bound them up for us, and that was all the dressing or medical treatment applied to them.

"In the evening, they took us down and led us into the cabins to be the playthings of the children. For food they gave us a little boiled corn, then they made us lie down on pieces of bark, binding us by the arms and the feet to four stakes fastened in the ground in the shape of a Saint Andrew's cross. The children, in order to learn the cruelty of their parents, threw coals and burning cinders on our stomachs, taking pleasure in watching us broil and roast. Oh, my God, what nights! To remain always in an extremely constrained position; to be unable to stir or to turn; to be under the attack of countless vermin that assailed us on all sides; to be covered with wounds, some recent and others all putrid; not to have half the food needed to sustain life: In truth, these torments are great, but God is infinite. At sunrise, they led us back upon our scaffold, where we spent three days and three nights in the sufferings that I have described.

"At the end of those three days, they paraded us into two other villages, where we made our entrance as into the first. They give us the same salutes of beatings, but to enhance the cruelty they beat us severely on the bones, either at random or on the shin of the legs, a place very sensitive to pain. As we were leaving the first village, a wretch took away my shirt and gave me an old rag to cover what ought to be concealed. This nakedness was very painful to me, and I could not abstain from reproaching one of those who had had the largest part of our spoils, saying: 'Are you not ashamed to see me in this nakedness, you who have had so great a share of my baggage?' These words shamed him somewhat, and he took a piece of coarse cloth, with which a bundle had been wrapped, and tossed it to me. I put it on my back to defend myself from the burning sun, which heated and corrupted my wounds, but this cloth mingled with my lesions and became stuck like glue, and so I was constrained to tear it off, in spite of the pain, and to abandon myself to the

mercy of the air. My skin was detaching itself from my body in several places. So that I might say that I had passed 'through fire and water,' through cold and heat, for the love of my God, I stood on the scaffold under a cold rain for three days, which greatly renewed the pain of my wounds. One of those barbarians, noticing that Guillaume Couture, although he had his hands all torn, had not yet lost any of his fingers, seized his hand and tried to cut off his forefinger with a dull old knife. Since he could not manage that way, he twisted it, and in tearing it off, he pulled a sinew out of the arm, the length of a palm. His poor arm swelled, and I felt the pain to the bottom of my heart.

"We left that second village and were dragged to the third, these villages being situated several leagues from one another. In addition to the salute and the caresses, as well as the reception that was given us at the two preceding ones, we received a new torture here. The young men thrust thorns or pointed sticks into our wounds and scratched the ends of our fingers (the nails missing) and tore them down to the quick flesh. In order to honor me above the others, they bound me to pieces of wood fastened crosswise. Because my feet were not supported, the weight of my body inflicted such hellish torture upon me that, after suffering this torment about a quarter of an hour, I felt that I was about to faint, which made me beseech those barbarians to loosen my bonds a little. They came running at my call, but instead of loosening them, they tightened them, in order to cause me more pain. An Indian from a more distant country, touched with compassion, broke through the crowd, drew a knife and boldly cut all the cords with which I was bound. This charity was afterward rewarded a hundredfold, as we shall see.[4]

"That act was not without providence: For at the same time that I was unbound, word arrived that some warriors, or hunters of men, were bringing some recently captured Hurons. I made my way there as best I could. I consoled those poor captives, and having sufficiently instructed them, I conferred upon them holy baptism. As a reward, I was told that I must die with them. I was told of the sentence decreed in the council: The following night would be — so they said — the end of my torments and of my life.

"My soul was well pleased with these words, but God was not yet ready; instead he willed to prolong my martyrdom. Those barbarians reconsidered the matter and then announced that the Frenchmen should

[4] Months later, while still a prisoner among the Mohawks, Jogues came upon this man. He was sick and dying, and, according to the missionary's account, Jogues gave him instruction in Christian doctrine and then baptized him. "Shortly after, he took his flight to heaven" (*JR* 31:91).

be given life, or, more exactly, their death should be postponed. They hoped to find more moderation at our forts on this account. They accordingly sent Guillaume Couture to the largest village, while René Goupil and I were lodged together in another one. Life being granted us, they did us no more harm. But alas! It was then that we had time to feel the effects of the torments that had been inflicted on us. They gave us for beds the bark of trees laid upon the ground; and for refreshment they gave us a little cornmeal, with sometimes a bit of half-cooked squash. Since our hands and fingers were all broken, they had to feed us like children. Patience was our physician. Some women, more merciful than the rest, regarded us with much charity and were unable to look at our sores without compassion."

God Preserves Father Isaac Jogues after the Murder of His Companion; He Instructs Him in a Very Remarkable Manner

When those poor captives had recovered a little of their strength, the principal men of the country talked of conducting them back to Three Rivers in order to restore them to the French, and arrangements went ahead so that it seemed certain. But the Iroquois were unable to agree among themselves, and so the father and his companions once more died a thousand deaths. Those barbarians are accustomed to give prisoners whom they do not select for execution to families who have lost relatives in war. These prisoners take the place of the deceased and are incorporated into that family, which alone has the right to kill them or to let them live. No one else would dare to offend them. But when they retain some public prisoner, such as the father, without giving him to any individual, this poor man spends every day within a hairbreadth of death. If some rascal were to knock his brains out, no one would do anything about it. If he drags out his poor life, it is by the grace of some individuals who have love for him. In such condition was the father, as well as one of the Frenchmen, for the other had been given to take the place of an Iroquois killed in war.

The young Frenchman [René Goupil] who was the father's companion was in the habit of playing with the little children and teaching them to make the sign of the cross. On one occasion, an old man noticed him making this sacred sign upon the forehead of his grandson and taking the child's hand to show him how to do it himself. He said to a nephew of his: "Kill that dog. The Dutch tell us that what he is doing is not good; it will cause some harm to my grandson." The nephew rushed to obey.

An opportunity to commit this murder outside the village presented itself in the following way: Father Jogues was coming to warn his poor companion that the plan to release the French prisoners had been abandoned and that consequently some young men had come looking for him at his cabin, in order to torture him and treat him as a victim destined to death. Wishing to prepare René for this fate, he led him to a grove near the village and told him of the danger in which they stood. Both of them prayed, and then they recited the rosary of the Blessed Virgin. In sum, they cheerfully prepared to die, drawing strength from him who never fails those who seek and love him. While they were returning toward their village, conversing on the blessings of the afterlife, the old man's nephew, along with another Indian, stood watching for an opportunity, their hatchets in hand. As they approached, one of these men said to the father, "Keep walking ahead." In an instant, he had smashed the head of poor René Goupil. As he fell to the ground, his last breath pronounced the holy name of Jesus. The father, seeing him prostrate, fell upon him and embraced him, but those barbarians pulled him off and dealt two final blows to that blessed body.

"Give me a moment's time," the father said to them, assuming that they would accord him the same favor as his companion. Accordingly, he fell to his knees, offering himself in sacrifice to the deity. He turned toward those barbarians, saying, "Do as you wish; I fear not death."

"Get up," they replied. "You will not die this time."

They dragged the corpse through the streets of the village and later cast it away in some out-of-the-way place. The father, wishing to pay him the last honors, searched everywhere for him until at last some children showed him where the body lay in a stream. He covered it with large stones to protect it from the claws and beaks of the birds, until he might come to bury it. But it rained all the following night, and this torrent became so violent and so deep that he could not find that blessed body. This death occurred on the twenty-ninth of September in the year 1642. . . .

After that young man, or that blessed martyr, had been thus slain, the father returned to his cabin. His people put their hands to his breast to see whether his heart was agitated with fear. Finding it steady, they said to him: "From now on, do not go outside the village unless you are accompanied by one of us. There are plans to kill you, so be careful." . . . This good father then spent every day like a bird on the branch, his life hanging by a thread, and it seemed to him at any moment it would be cut. But He who held the end of it, was not willing to let it go so soon.

Sometime after the death of his companion, God communicated to him in his sleep, as he did long ago to the ancient patriarchs, what I am about to relate. He [Father Jogues] himself has set it down in writing with his own hand: He wrote in the Latin language, but it is here translated into French [and now into English].

"After the death of my dearest companion, of happy memory, when my death was being plotted every day, and when my soul was filled with anguish, what I am about to tell happened to me in my sleep.

"I had gone forth from our village, as was my habit, in order to groan more freely before you, O my God, in order to offer to you my prayer and, in your presence, to open the floodgates of my anguish. On my return, I found everything altered. The tall posts surrounding our village appeared changed into towers, ramparts, and walls of an illustrious beauty, and yet nothing seemed to be newly built; rather it was a city of venerable antiquity. I could not believe that it was our village, until I saw some Iroquois whom I knew very well coming out, and they seemed to assure me that it was indeed. Filled with astonishment, I approached the city and passed through the first gate; then I saw engraved in large letters upon the right column of the second gate the two letters 'L. N.' Next I came upon a little lamb which had been slaughtered. I was surprised, for I could not understand how barbarians with no knowledge of our alphabet could have engraved those characters. As I was searching my mind for an explanation, I saw a scroll overhead, and on it were written three words: *'Laudent nomen ejus'* [Let them praise his name]. At the same time, I received a great inner illumination that told me those who truly praise the name of the Lamb are those who, in their distress and tribulation, strive to imitate the gentleness of Him who, like a lamb, said not a word to those who robbed him of his fleece and led him to his death. . . ."

[Father Jogues's dream continued: He entered the city, only to be arrested and taken before a stern judge who proceeded to beat him with an instrument resembling a Roman fasces, producing a pain like that of the beatings he had been subjected to by the Iroquois. Finally, the judge (God) stopped the punishment and, admiring the Jesuit's patience, embraced and consoled him. At this point, Jogues awoke.]

"Having returned to myself, I could not doubt that God had wrought wonders in my soul, not only because of the connections 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 mere remembrance of which, several months later, drew from me tears of the sweetest consolation.

"The conviction also that my death was delayed was several times impressed upon me in my sleep. It was my belief that I was following my dear companion who had been received into blessedness, running after him over a winding path so that I could never catch sight of him. Sometimes, while pursuing him, I came to gorgeous temples and went inside, attracted by their beauty. While I was offering prayers, charmed by the sweetness of the voices that I heard in those great buildings, I would become reconciled to his absence. But as soon as I left those delights, I once again felt the desire to follow him."

All this was taken, almost word for word, from the memoirs of that good father. At the time, he did not realize that the blows delivered to him by his judge betokened his return into that country, where he was to find entry into holy Zion by a hatchet blow destined to send him to live forever with his dear companion René Goupil.

A NATIVE SAINT

What follows is a religious life story concerning a native woman. Following the pattern set by hundreds of European narratives of female saintliness, this one concentrates on themes of inner spirituality, heroic struggles to avoid the entanglements of sex and marriage, and extreme ascetic practices. The fact that this account focuses on a native woman sets it apart from others of the genre, for European missionaries of the early modern era were not in the habit of recognizing "mere Indians" as paragons of Christian holiness.

Catherine Tegahkouita (or Kateri Tekakwitha, as she is usually called today) was a Mohawk who lived the last four years of her short life at the Jesuit mission of Sault St. Louis/Kahnawake, near Montreal. She was a central figure in the group of native women who in the 1670s pursued a life of Christian perfection as described in chapter 6 (see pages 146–154). Years after her death, the Jesuits published her life story in France, and it quickly achieved immense popularity, with Spanish, English, German, and Dutch translations following in rapid succession. The text reproduced here is taken not from the Jesuit Relations, *but from the* History and General Description of New France, *originally published in 1744, long after the* Relations *had been discontinued, by Father Pierre François Xavier Charle-*