Les missionnaires sauvages: Roman Catholic missionaries and *la mission ambulante* with the Métis, Plains Cree and Blackfoot, 1840-1880

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the study of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate and their interactions with the Métis, the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot in the prairie region of North America's North-West. Particular emphasis is placed on *la mission ambulante* or the bison hunt mission. Although historians have commented on *la mission ambulante* as an itinerant strategy or tactic in areas where Aboriginal people were more nomadic than settled, it has seldom been analyzed in any detail, much less as a process where changes to the mission occurred reciprocally with the colonization of Aboriginals. This thesis examines the intellectual and economic trends that have affected the cultures, spiritualities and identities of Plains communities from 1840-1880.

Cette thèse de maîtrise examine les missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée et leurs interactions avec les Métis, les Cris des Plaines et les Pieds-Noirs dans la région du Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique du Nord. La mission chez les chasseurs de bison, autrement dit *la mission ambulante*, sera analysée en détail dans cette étude. Les historiens ont souvent décrit *la mission ambulante* en étant une stratégie ou une politique visant l'évangélisation des peuples autochtones plus itinérants que sédentaire. Par contre, elle n'a jamais été analysée comme un processus d'échange culturel et religieux qui a affecté les missionnaires autant que les Autochtones. Cette étude examinera des courants intellectuels et économiques qui ont affecté les cultures, les croyances et les identités des communautés des plaines entre 1840-1880.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

In order to examine some of the complex cross-cultural interactions of Aboriginal peoples in the North American fur trade region known as the North-West, this Master's thesis will examine the actions of Roman Catholic missionaries from Lower Canada and France—particularly the Oblates of Mary Immaculate—as they accompanied Métis, Plains Cree and Blackfoot bands on their bison hunts across the prairies. The missionaries named this type of action *la mission ambulante* or *la mission à la prairie*. These were missions defined by the bison hunt that contrasted sharply with the itinerant missions and sedentary lifestyle that missionaries knew from their countries of origin. The bison hunting mission was especially popular among the Métis, who had requested priests for their bi-annual hunts since the 1820s. It occurred also with the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot bands during the years1860-1880—a period of great change and transition for the indigenous communities. During this time, Aboriginal groups were coping with the decline of bison populations, the spread of devastating epidemics, as well as the end of the fur trade economy, all of which led to the signing of numbered treaties, the establishment of reserves, and the consolidation of Canadian government sovereignty over the land that would become a European-settled agricultural West. Naturally, *la mission ambulante* ended with the near extinction of the northern and last herd of wild bison, since it embraced the itinerant lifestyle of Aboriginal bison hunters.

The setting of the pre-settlement North-West figures little in the scholarship of world mission history, and needless to say, the role played by Roman Catholic missionaries in the British Empire has been neglected. It is my opinion that both are telling examples of the interconnections that existed between missions and Empire and thus the part played by missionaries as imperialists. From a Eurocentric perspective, the North-West can be seen as a foil to the more 'successful' missions of South Africa, India and Asia: given local conditions such as the sprawling grasslands, dispersed indigenous populations and the immutable fur trade calendar, few permanent mission stations were established in the North-West. Indeed, Roman Catholic missionaries found that their cultural concepts were difficult to transpose because the beginning, frequency and duration of their missions were dictated by indigenous lifestyles.

Therefore, the missionaries had little success in radically transforming indigenous cultures towards sedentary Western European norms.

Roman Catholic missionaries competed with British Protestant missionaries in the North-West. The missionary Oblates were alien to British forms of colonialism because most of them arrived from France. They displayed different sorts of cultural practices and arrangements to their Aboriginal audiences, and perhaps not surprisingly, they locked horns with Anglican and Methodist ministers as these Protestant denominations each expanded their ecclesiastical structures. Nonetheless, Roman Catholic missionaries were major players in the process of colonialism as it unfolded in the North-West. Moreover, there were striking similarities in terms of Aboriginal agency between the Northwestern Roman Catholic missions of the prairie North-West and other world missions. Leading scholars have emphasized the role of Aboriginal interpreters and Christian missionaries in negotiating and propagating different forms of Christianity. The missionaries introduced quotidian Western European practices and arrangements to traditional Amerindian and Métis cultures, thus affecting the constitution of power within those societies, even though these societies were far from having been unaffected by previous cultural change. In the same process, Aboriginal agents reshaped these customs to forge distinct Catholic Aboriginal communities. This process is a testament to the reciprocal exchanges of knowledge, technologies, diseases, rituals, plants and animals that occurred during *la mission ambulante*.

The premise of this thesis is that some Aboriginal Plains communities and Roman Catholic missionaries shared a common interest in Christianity for pragmatic and ambiguous reasons. Missionaries were influential agents of cultural change in the sense that they introduced Western European customs and practices, yet they had little real power to impose them. Aboriginal groups accommodated the missionaries in an effort to satisfy their own interests, and to be sure, the priests themselves underwent significant cultural change as they were swept into an overwhelmingly Aboriginal world. In that sense, *la mission ambulante* is a historian's window into a *long conversation* during the transitional era: both sides introduced, reshaped, resisted and embraced customs in order to suit their mutual needs or desires, which led to creative misunderstanding and "congruences, either perceived or actual."[1] *La mission ambulante* was a means, other than force, that familiarized different peoples with each other's spiritualities and lifestyles in an effort to achieve their own objectives. In this way, this thesis confronts the

notion perpetuated by North American historians of the second half of the twentieth century that missionaries were the main agents of change and that Aboriginal people demonstrated either resistance or compliance.[2] It also assumes a longstanding theme in Western Canadian history: the adaptation of community behaviours to changing needs.[3]

Structure of the Thesis and Summary of the Arguments

The second chapter of the thesis, entitled "*Une belle mission, […] à ne pas manquer*," focuses on the objectives and the methods of the early Roman Catholic missionaries in order to demonstrate how much they depended upon local communities in order to perform their mission work. A home-and-abroad approach pinpoints certain historical patterns that led the missionaries to the North-West and analyzes the vocation and domestic training of the missionaries in Québec and in France. One finds that Roman Catholic missionaries were quite inexperienced in the region: they quickly realized that they had to adapt to Aboriginal ways of life outside of HBC posts, and that Aboriginal bands did not necessarily want to accommodate them. By acknowledging this position, the chaplains and their Aboriginal hosts created the dialogical spaces they needed to accomplish their objectives. The chapter also specifies how Roman Catholic missions maintained a dual character among the Métis and the Amerindians in the prairie North-West.

The third chapter, "*Tu es bien l'homme de Dieu c'est toi que j'ai vu dans mon rêve*," pertains to how a mutual interest in Christianity led to a pragmatic relationship between the Métis and the Oblates. The chapter begins by examining the compatibility of missionary-priests with the Métis, specifically in terms of the socio-cultural background of the missionaries and the recent transformation of the Métis to a 'proto-industrial' society. Indeed, the revivalist training of the missionaries complemented the desire of the Métis to perpetuate their own culture and heritage. I will make the point that the Métis missionized themselves in order to participate in the economic opportunities of the bison robe trade. Bison territory was highly contested among Plains peoples, so the Métis had to protect themselves by forming large regional groups. Chaplains were useful for prescribing norms of social conduct in the hunting expeditions and provided the mechanisms to ease the tensions of the whole. However, the Métis did not necessarily share the same epistemological categories and cosmologies as the missionaries. Through the ambiguity of their exchanges, the Oblates legitimized the traditional Amerindian

belief structures that enveloped their brand of Roman Catholicism. Therefore, this type of Métis Christianity was accessible to all who wanted to participate in the bison hunt. It also supported the creation of shared experiences that contributed to social cohesion.

This chapter also examines how Métis interpreters helped to spread Christianity to other Métis and Amerindian bands in light of their extended kin ties. The Oblates did not consider 'guides' as proper missionaries because they were hired as *engagés* who, ironically, did not undergo formal training and thus lacked the official sanction of Rome. Nonetheless, the Oblates recognized them as quasi lay brothers whom they counted on for labour and knowledge of the country. The Métis intermediaries led the missionaries to areas where Aboriginal communities were known to congregate, and they brokered *la mission ambulante* with the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot in light of their access to those societies. Indeed, some of the Métis *engagés*-as-missionaries devoted their lives to perpetuating their own cultural heritage and were therefore crucial to perpetuating Métis Roman Catholicism in the North-West.

The final chapter, "*Quand le dernier bison sera mort*," largely concerns the relationships that developed between Roman Catholic missionaries, Plains Cree and Blackfoot bands. Prior to the reserve period, the Plains Cree and Blackfoot were autonomous and self-reliant groups, but when they reached out to missionaries in the 1840s, they expressed concern that Aboriginal hegemony was not entirely secure in their environment. The growing crisis over the vulnerability of their resource base affected the cultural cohesion and political power of Amerindian households, so the inability of traditional systems to explain these changes or to stem the collapse of resources was advantageous to the missionaries. At a time when violence was becoming an obsolete form of resource rationing, hunt chaplains offered alternative solutions to their worries. In the words of Richard White, some interpretations could be ludicrous, but "it did not matter."[4] The argument here is that some Amerindians attempted to physically acquire power from missionaries in order to manipulate the mystifying circumstances that threatened their ways of life. Through their creative misunderstandings arising from the presence of chaplains on the bison hunt and the adhesion of Amerindians to Catholic rituals, some Amerindians found a way of safeguarding their traditional lifeways and cultures in a similar way to the Métis.

Key to this chapter is how hunt chaplains were inserted into the cultural constructions of Amerindian bands. What were their temporal, spiritual and gender roles? Not all missionaries

were invited into Plains Cree and Blackfoot societies, but Oblates such as Albert Lacombe, Constantine Scollen and Léon Doucet were highly esteemed by particular chiefs. Jean L'Heureux—a renegade Catholic and self-described Blackfoot Catechist—was never ordained and was generally mistrusted by Europeans, but he played a crucial role in familiarizing Western European concepts to the Blackfoot and was critical in setting the roles for hunt chaplains according to Blackfoot cultural premises. This chapter explores the possibility that missionaries were understood as male-bodied Two-Spirits: they had culturally defined roles as androgynous people with the spiritual sanction for supernatural intervention. This type of comparison highlights the traditions of alternative genders in Amerindian and Western European cultures.

Dynamic Approaches to Mission History

The first generation of academics to discuss the implications for history on Aboriginal peoples focused on the consequences of cultural change. Anthropologists like Ruth Benedict objectified Aboriginal cultures as she drafted tragic historical narratives about destructive western societies.[5] This culturalist view represented Aboriginals as the passive victims of European colonization, which largely overlooked the generation of their own adaptive strategies. In this way, world missions were linked to the problematic concept of cultural colonialism, which according to Ryan Dunch attributed "coordinated intent and coercive power to "capitalism" or "imperialism," and little to no autonomy to the people on the receiving end."[6] Beginning in the late 1980s, historians and anthropologists renewed their interest in mission history as they theorized about the nature of Aboriginal agency. Scholars demonstrated a need for a more dynamic and interactive framework that recognized multiple possibilities and assured creativity in cultural interaction.

The topic of 'conversion' was controversial from the start. Emefie Ikenga-Metuh rightfully stated that different authors used the term widely to refer to different meanings, so the term needed to be properly defined.[7] In the article "The Shattered Microcosm: A Critical Survey of Explanations of Conversion in Africa," Ikenga-Metuh argues that conversion was a multi-causal process between the adaptation of traditional beliefs and the adoption of new ones; Ikenga-Metuh draws attention to socio-cultural 'non-religious' factors like the collapse of traditional social structures and world views, as well as religious factors that point specifically to

conscious missionary efforts. In this case, the recognition of material and socio-cultural tensions in historical anthropology set apart 'conversion' from 'adhesion.'

In the South African context, Jean and John Comaroff question whether or not conversion reflects the material considerations of indigenous groups and therefore focus primarily on socio-cultural factors. They published two volumes of a three part series entitled *Of Revelation and Revolution* where they have shown how missionaries provided material resources in themselves: missions offered the indigenous Tswana certain trade goods like guns, but they also provided certain technical abilities for digging wells and creating irrigation systems.[8] Even though missionaries in South Africa were committed to separating the divine from the profane and the Church from the State, structures of tribal authority depended largely on the ability of leaders to supplicate rainfall. Some Tswana leaders took advantage of the missions as such, bidding to consolidate power among their people. Religious rituals and symbols were political by nature, and missionaries and the Tswana perceived internal politics differently. Furthermore, the interaction between indigenous communities, white settlers and the imperial government in South Africa rationalized a range of policy decisions from the metropole. These decisions created further ambivalences for the missionaries, who placed themselves in the middle of the conversation between those players. Hence, the relationship of the missionaries to the Tswana and the Imperial Government created competing foci of power relations that placed the missionaries in equivocal positions.[9] Indeed, the Comaroffs denote the ambiguous role of missionaries as agents of cultural change, which was nearly always indirect and incidental.

Key to the Comaroffs' argument is the double-sided role of missions in the colonial process. Missionaries failed where they hoped to succeed—in creating a *unified* indigenous Protestant Church—but succeeded where their efforts were the least tangible by the laying the ground for the integration of peoples in the capitalist world. By restructuring the indigenous conceptual universe, casting them in a world of rational individualism by engaging them in *long conversation*, missionaries necessarily altered the way the Tswana thought about self, culture, language, work, land, time, dress and other elements of their quotidian lives—even if the Tswana rejected or resisted missionary teachings. The Comaroffs' recognize the connection between mores and power in their methodology, and the *colonization of consciousness* was the means by which missionaries successfully planted the seeds of colonial domination that led to the proletarianization of the Tswana in the capitalist colonial order.

In her critique of the Comaroffs' view on hegemony and power, Elizabeth Elbourne focuses on the religious factors of conversion. Elbourne effectively argues that the role played by white missionaries in religious conversion was negligible compared to the role played by Christianity itself, thereby stressing the importance of religion in political, social and cultural history.[10] In *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1852*,[11] Elbourne studied the Khoekhoe people as they attempted to maintain an independent existence in the face of competing colonial forces in the East Cape. She stressed two points that I believe were applicable to the Northwestern Plains of North America: first, the effects of colonialism prior to the arrival of European missionaries, and second, the importance of Aboriginal intermediaries in the appropriation of Christianity. The linkages between political and cultural colonialism remained unclear, which essentially undermined the capacity of Christianity to convey a message of unifying orthodoxy as well as the ability of missionaries to accomplish their objectives. The result was a contest over the uses and ownership of Christianity, which Elbourne likened to Churches in Europe as well as other parts of the British Empire. This was especially true in the context of growing colonial racism during the 1830s.

Missions are not the focus of White's *The Middle Ground*, but they are an integral part of his argument. His work in the Great Lakes region of North America is very similar to the Comaroffs' and Elbourne's South African studies in the sense that he considers the ambiguity of colonial encounters as a dynamic space of cultural exchange. White rejects the culturalist notion of the purity of cultures, or 'otherness,' by recognizing the ability of actors to create new understandings and new cultural formations.[12] White focuses on the dynamic processes of exchange that mixes Amerindian and European patterns of economy, diplomacy and warfare. The 'middle ground' is also a spatial metaphor for the portion of *le pays d'en haut* (the Upper Country of French Canada) in what is now the Midwestern United States because it features "the infrastructure of empire—from missions, to posts, to a network of alliance chiefs, to a set of mutually comprehensible and oft-repeated rituals" that was necessary to support and expand the process.[13] He illustrates this point by claiming that the middle ground did not much surpass the Mississippi, even though the French themselves did.[14]

By looking at how Aboriginals and Europeans coexisted in Western Canada before 1900, Sarah Carter specified that 'middle grounds' existed impermanently in the areas surrounding

trade posts.[15] Intermarriage, the emergence of peoples of mixed ancestry, the creation of diplomatic languages, the mingling of customs and laws, as well as the interchange of material culture and technology were all signs of a middle ground, and out of these interactions grew opportunities for mutual interest and accommodation.[16] Indeed, *le pays d'en haut* reached across southern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and even into Alberta, where La Vérendrye made alliances with the Cree-Assiniboine and established a series of provisioning posts that other soldiers, explorers, traders and missionaries utilized in conjunction with local Amerindian populations.[17] Though the French retreated from the region after the defeat of France in 1763, their old trading empire was reincarnated as the North West Company and the old infrastructure continued to expand. Carter noted that the same methods, technology and vocabulary of the French were adopted by the NWC, and by a later date, the HBC.[18] She cites Arthur Ray, author of *Indians and the Fur Trade*, for his description of the fur trade as a partnership between European and Aboriginal peoples for the exploitation of resources, in which both groups were dependent upon each other for the supply of goods, furs and provisions.[19] Carter also cites Sylvia Van Kirk, who argued in *Many Tender Ties* that the pervasiveness and long duration of intermarriage in the fur trade was exceptional in the colonial setting of many parts of the world. These marital alliances, known as *marriages à la façon du pays* or 'customs of the country,' were an important avenue for the wealth and status of European men and Aboriginal women in the old fur-trade order.[20]

In this thesis I will argue that *la mission ambulante* grew from the process of the middle ground, but my analysis will keep an eye out for the unconscious socio-economic arguments of the Comaroffs as well as the conscious religious factors specified by Elbourne. I will discuss how itinerant mission methods may have accelerated the processes of cultural exchange during the era of 'great transformation' in the prairie region. I am also interested in how Christianity relates to today's traditional Aboriginal customs, and how much of it stemmed from these early encounters.[21] In short, this thesis will contribute to the recent interest shown by scholars in the history of Oblate missions in the Canadian West; an area of study that Frédéric Laugrand succinctly put as "en plein chantier."[22]

The Ecological/Ethnohistorical Approach to Western Canadian History

From the 1970s and onwards, Confederation disappeared as the point of interest in the work of Western Canadian historians as they began to study the history of Western Canada as a region. Their interest grew in the fur trade encounters between Aboriginal peoples and European traders as they adopted the methods of the new social history. The ethnographic and ecological approach was largely based upon statistical sources and was thus concerned with the management of resources. For example, historians asked themselves 'who benefitted from the resources' listed in the sources and 'what were the social ramifications of their usage.'[23] Arthur Ray in particular used account books and other quantitative fur trade records that had been largely overlooked in traditional historiography.

The premise of this approach held that the natural world is dynamic, changeable and entangled with human history.[24] Many historians adopted Irene Spry's argument regarding 'the great transformation' that took place in the Canadian West from the 1840s to the 1890s, whereby resources underwent a change from 'common property' resources to 'open access resources' and finally to 'private property.'[25] Common property was based on the principle that a band would equally distribute its resources among its members and its allies and that control of basic kinds of territory was determined by war. Borders between bands were by no means rigid, since bands would enforce them through their migratory lifestyles. Disruptions in the relative power of any group could determine expansionist tendencies, which meant that borders waxed and waned. In some cases, borders were separated by 'neutral zones' where no one could safely hunt and which became wildlife reserves.[26] The 'open access' resources régimes occurred once the North West Mounted Police started to impose Canadian government sovereignty and law in the 1870s, which meant that Amerindians were no longer allowed to keep intruders out of their territory by force.[27] This was a very wasteful period, since any one of the 'Great Mother's children' could exploit game and natural products.[28] This period was also short lived, since the bison herd completely disappeared from Canada in 1879. During the 1880s, Amerindians were expected to adjust to the 'private property' system of rationing scarce resources, but this made little sense because they had no rights individually on a reserve. This created constraints to the redistribution of wealth.[29] Since *la mission ambulante* was naturally dependent on the commons, the periodisation of this thesis is thus based on Spry's premise.

In *Common & Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains*, Theodore Binnema explains how disruptions in common property

resources worked in the Northwestern Plains, and he did so with the introduction of Europeans and their goods to the region. Influenced by the ecological approach of William Cronon, he explained how the abundance of bison and their vulnerability to skilled hunters made the Northwestern Plains an exceptional bison hunting habitat that attracted peoples from all directions.[30] Prior to the arrival of Europeans in the 1780s, horses had arrived through the southern Numic bands and European guns were introduced in the northern woodlands. This meant that unequal access to these new material goods had revolutionized patterns of trade, diplomacy and warfare. Furthermore, the transmission of diseases occurred through established trade routes, which weakened the capacity of bands to maintain their borders and thus control their resources. Hence, the arrival of European traders to the Northwestern Plains was a process separate from the arrival of other Plains communities. Since European traders provided an alternative means of accessing material European goods, Binnema is laying historical importance upon the arrival of Europeans as a 'disruption' to existing patterns of exchange. This counters the argument that Europeans were the cause of any dramatic cultural change among Aboriginal communities. Europeans therefore reinforced *and* changed Aboriginal processes of interaction.[31] In relation to this thesis, the periodization of Binnema's study does not extend to the transitional period or the arrival of Christian missionaries during the nineteenth century. It does not explain how Plains communities coped with the changing property systems that supported (and surely challenged) traditional patterns of interaction.

Gerhard Ens, author of *Homeland to Hinterland*, is interested in how the Red River Métis developed an identity in the economic and social niche they carved out for themselves in the fur trade, especially during the period of changing economic conditions that led to the open access of resources. Gerald Friesen argues in *The Canadian Prairies* that the market economy and industrial capitalism had 'recreated' the region of the North-West after the 1840s; a time when local control of the fur trade shifted to the metropole and an increased number of missionaries were sent to the North-West.[32] Ens maintains that the Métis "adapted quickly to these changed economic conditions, and actually guided the process and influenced the nature of change."[33] He holds that the Métis became more closely integrated into European trade networks following the emergence of competitive fur markets from the United States and the subsequent breakup of the HBC monopoly; this provided a new context for the emergence of the industrial capitalist system in Red River. The Red River Métis began differentiating themselves upon occupational lines as

farmers, labourers, freighters and hunters. The Métis increased their involvement in the bison robe trade, where the intensive labour required by all members of the family transformed the traditional peasantry into countryside cottage industries. Competition created surplus producers and surplus takers, which developed economic classes that substantially altered the operation of Métis households: "the family was no longer a closed unit of production and consumption; instead, it became enmeshed in a complex web of commerce."[34] Therefore, the return of the Métis in the fur trade "did not signal a return to 'primitivism' or 'nomadism,' but to a proto-industrialization of the Metis family economy."[35] His definition of the Métis (he leaves the word unaccented) includes all of the communities that participated in the opportunities of the bison 'cottage' industry, to which neither Amerindian nor European households responded.[36]

In order to hunt the bison bi-annually on Amerindian lands during the common property régime, the Métis succeeded in gaining access to the bison plains by developing sufficient military strength. By the 1840s, more Plains communities were willing to risk hunting on the bison territory claimed by other bands, which reduced the effectiveness of neutral zones for conserving wildlife. The disappearance of the bison transformed the Horse Wars of 1810-1850 to the Bison Wars of 1850-1870. John Elgin Foster is also interested in how the Métis participated in the bison robe trade, but unlike Ens, who concentrates mostly on the Red River Métis, Foster studies the formation of Métis communities in the Upper Saskatchewan District. In the article "*Le missionnaire* and *le chef Métis*," Foster uses Oblate records to describe the dynamic relationship that existed between missionaries and Métis hunt captains on a small scale. He studies the process of forming large bison hunting expeditions and thus "the evolution of *une nation* in the generation preceding the Rebellion in 1885." [37] He argues that their relationship provided the means for the Métis to group extended households and reduce social tension. Since traditional kinship systems were not sufficiently developed to regroup interethnic indigenous communities, the missionary had a role in strengthening the political authority of the Hunt Chief and his council. Although Foster mentions how the missionization of the Métis contributed to social cohesion, he did not fully explore the consciously religious factors that were involved in this process. That being said, Foster was the first historian to study *la mission ambulante* in detail as a dynamic process of interaction.

The Historiography of *la mission ambulante*

In the report entitled *To Evangelize the Nations*, Marth McCarthy explains that the Québec diocesan clergy that established themselves at the Red River settlement from 1818-1845 had adopted the itinerant methods of French Jesuit missionaries—the same that abandoned the region over half a century prior to their arrival. It was decided that "The single best way to Christianize the populace was simply by preaching the gospel," which involved following Métis and Plains Ojibwa camps wherever they went.[38] The parochial priests-turned-missionaries embraced a fundamental premise of Jesuit missiology during the French Régime: they believed that the religious conversion of proselytes must occur before radical cultural change to a sedentary lifestyle. Thus the "buffalo hunt missions" were born.[39] She argues that these methods were controversial among the priests because the transition of catechumens from an itinerant to a sedentary lifestyle remained the measure of success for their objectives. Once the missionaries realized that their methods reinforced the itinerant lifestyle of Aboriginals, there grew a panic over how to proceed.

The 'adaptation' shown by the secular clergy to indigenous ways of life was a part of the reason why White describes the Frenchmen who went beyond the Mississippi—including the Jesuits—as "graduates of the school of the middle ground."[40] By adapting their missiology and methods to indigenous lifeways, they appealed to beliefs other than their own, which helped them to regulate relations in *le pays d'en haut*.[41] In *The Invasion Within*, James Axtell acknowledges the issue of 'civilization' and conversion as early as the fifteenth century.[42] He claims the Jesuits were more successful at converting Amerindian people than any other missionary group in North America because they abandoned the assumption that "Indians had to be 'civilized' before they could be converted."[43] Unlike White, who places a critical emphasis on mediation between partners, Axtell describes the change in mission policy as a superior 'tactic' that places an accommodating stance solely on the side of the missionaries. Although his analysis was useful for comparing French Roman Catholic and English Protestant missions in the Northeastern region of North America, his approach does not reflect the reciprocal process of interaction and exchange that is vital to recent scholarship. Works such as Allan Greer's *Mohawk Saint* and Emma Anderson's *The Betrayal of Faith* have since provided a more balanced view of exchanges between the Jesuits and Amerindian peoples, while Ned Blackhawk's *Violence Over the Land*, James Brook's *Captives & Cousins* and finally Pekka

Hämäläinen's *The Comanche Empire* are significant contributions to writing history from an Aboriginal point of view.[44]

Raymond Huel shares Axtell's stance in *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis*. As the first critical evaluation of Oblate missiology, activities and objectives in the North-West to published, this book remains the most valuable source of reference for the history of the Oblates and their institutions in Western Canada from 1845-1967.[45] Huel studies the evolution of Oblate institutions over time as the missionaries altered their responses to Amerindian and Métis communities across Canada's Prairie, Pacific Coast and Arctic regions. He presents *la mission ambulante* as an example of the pragmatic responses that the Oblates developed in the field: by focusing solely on evangelization for conversion, the Oblates adapted their ecclesiastical structures to local circumstances, which means that, like Axtell, *la mission ambulante* was *not* "an accommodation on the part of the hunters to the Church and its precepts."[46] Huel therefore shares the belief that itinerant methods were part of a strategy to overcome the migratory nature of Aboriginal bands as well as the difficulties of supplying isolated mission posts. The problem with this perspective is that it does not consider Aboriginal viewpoints, and thus offers passing detail on the purpose of *la mission ambulante*.

Dawn Adèle Lamothe identifies this problem in her M.A. thesis, *The Oblate Construction of the Métis Other: Mission Ambulante among Les hivernants 1830-1880.*[47] Like Foster, she is interested in the ethnogenesis of the Métis, only she studies the way individual hunt chaplains conceptualized the place of the Métis within a Western European framework of social construction and identity. The context for her study is the Métis as 'discursive objects:' by researching the ways in which the Oblates constructed the Métis as an 'other,' Lamothe explores the intellectual beliefs and trends of nineteenth century missionaries and how those thought patterns affected the understanding of the Métis by Western Europeans. Lamothe chooses *les hivernants* as the basis of her study because they hunted the bison nearly year-round and could therefore be perceived as the most 'primitive' or '*sauvage*' of the Métis. She scrutinizes these views through the premises of current historiography, which represents the most recent intellectual trends for understanding the Métis. By adopting Foster's approach to studying *la mission ambulante*, Lamothe successfully achieves a better understanding of the reciprocal cultural exchanges that occurred during these encounters. Her work is also valuable for assessing written documentary sources because she warns historians of the dangers of taking

missionaries at their word. Like Foster, Lamothe does not explain how the same processes of exchange functioned among the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot. Indeed, some of the winterer-missionaries that she investigates participated in *la mission ambulante* with Plains Ojibwa, Plains Cree and Blackfoot bands as well, but from the perspective of the Oblates, those excursions were quite different from the ones with the Métis. The notions of 'otherness' that she describes are therefore exclusively reserved to written Western European frames of reference.

Archival Documentary Sources

This thesis offers a historiographical revision of *la mission ambulante* in order to situate the North-West—and Roman Catholicism by extension —in contemporary debates over world mission history. This means that the research presented here is systematically based upon documentary evidence, the likes of which were gathered from Oblate archives. Indeed, the ability to analyze sources with different approaches is a critical part of contributing to our knowledge of the past. This being said, few historians have shared my approach to the Oblate records and have thus interpreted the evidence differently. This thesis acknowledges those perspectives, yet presents new interpretations by creating original arguments.

An important part of research has involved theorizing a manageable corpus and assessing the validity of sources. My research involves identifying and reading the correspondences, personal diaries, mission journals, edited publications, unpublished manuscripts, pedagogical aids, scholarly articles and monographs that relate to the missionaries and the mission stations involved in *la mission ambulante*. My corpus naturally fell into the confines of the periodization of this study: *la mission ambulante* was performed most frequently during the transitional period of 1840-1880. The majority of the documents I have consulted are housed in the *Archives Deschâtelets* in Ottawa and the Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton. A certain amount can be found at the Glenbow Archives in Calgary as well.

Deschâtelets is a private institution, but it is also the central archives of the Oblate order in Canada, including the ecclesiastic province of Manitoba. Material from the Grandin Province, which covers Alberta, Saskatchewan and a portion of the North-West Territories, is loaned to the Provincial Archives of Alberta as a private collection owned by the Oblates. Access to these collections is restricted by the permission of the archivists. The Glenbow Archives hold a limited amount of Oblates sources, but they do have correspondences from the Scollen family,

the manuscript of "Jean L'Heureux's description of a portion of the Nor'west and the Indians," as well as a number of Blackfoot winter counts.[48] Due to financial and time restraints, I could not consult the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company in my research. However, a great deal of useful information located in Company journals has been divulged by fur trade historians in their own publications and have thus been incorporated into my research.

Huel stated that "no serious study of the Oblates can be undertaken without consulting *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*."[49] Indeed, this quarterly publication is the most cited source in this thesis. Published since 1862, it offers correspondences between missionaries in the field, reports on the missions, ethnographic accounts of Aboriginal populations, and specialized articles on the Oblates. The *Missions* was a medium of communication for Oblates around the world, but a considerable amount of information relates to the North-West. Missionary Oblates were prolific in the writing of journals and memoirs, some of which were published in this organ. At the request of the Bishop of Montreal, Alexandre-Antonin Taché, who was the bishop of Saint Boniface, wrote *Vingt années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique* as a retrospective account of his first twenty years in the North-West.[50] This particular journal helped to bridge the gap that existed between the years 1840 and the first edition of the *Missions* in 1862. It was published serially in the *Missions* and in the form of a book, achieving wide circulation among Francophone Roman Catholics in Canada and Europe.[51] Hence, the *Missions* were targeted to European markets that were fascinated by missionaries and indigenous populations all over the world. The Oblates were aware of this readership and therefore used this publication as a means of fundraising and recruitment; they selected material and edited it in order to suit those purposes. It also meant that the Oblates have included a great deal of ethnographic accounts of the different peoples they met. Like the Jesuits, the Oblates were skilled observers but tended to write about what they considered exotic. If one keeps in mind the context of the *Missions* journals, it remains the richest source concerning *la mission ambulante* as described by the Oblates.

Evidently not all missionary correspondences, notes, memoirs and reminiscences were published in the *Missions*. Among the most useful documents that I have consulted were the formal mission logs known as *codices historici*, which offered regular details into the actions of missionaries and their impressions over events they considered unusual. Considering Albert Lacombe's central role in the Plains Cree and Blackfoot missions, his memoirs are an essential

part of my research.[52] Léon Doucet also prepared a journal based on his own notes from 1868-1890; in it he described his experiences as a newly arrived missionary during the apogee of the common resource régime (again, the time that *la mission ambulante* occurred the most frequently).[53] The catechism ladders that Lacombe created for missions among the Blackfoot are valuable for analyzing their cultural exchanges, but most contemporary scholars have analyzed them simply as a pedagogical aid.[54] I have also used the unpublished manuscripts of Aristide Philippot, who was an Oblate archivist interested in the origins of the Oblate missions to the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot. Although uncritical, his accounts are a good source of biographical information.[55]

Since most of the historical sources I have gathered were written by Oblates, I am confronted with the problem of finding Aboriginal voices to balance those biases. This is an acknowledged problem in most studies because Western European empirical traditions have been hostile to oral traditions as legitimate sources of knowledge. This view began to change with the rise of ethnohistory in the late twentieth century. In the aptly titled *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, Martha McCarthy demonstrated how Dene oral history complemented her historical analysis of the Oblate missions in Northern Alberta.[56] Unfortunately, I did not—nor could I—obtain the appropriate resources to perform this type of research. Rather, I have consulted the works of other historians and anthropologists who provided details into Amerindian cultures as well as the theoretical framework to approach ethnographic sources. Olive Patricia Dickason's *Canada's First Nations* was particularly useful at this. However, some Aboriginal groups left written histories: the Blackfoot recorded their histories with painted pictographs, which I have managed to locate in the form of winter counts and war art that featured written descriptions in English.[57] Although this strategy was less than ideal, it assisted me nonetheless to consider Aboriginal perspectives in my research.

Editorial Strategies

Since the majority of documentary sources concerning the Oblate missions to the North-West are written in French, I will paraphrase a great portion of this material into English. However, I will retain the original citations when I think that the meaning associated with a passage is lost in translation. I will provide context and translation for those quotes either in the text or in the endnotes.

Another problem concerning the imprecise nature of missionary records was that the Oblates defined Aboriginal peoples through linguistically-defined ethnic groups. Labels such as '*Cris*' or 'Cree' were imposed by the missionaries in a way that reflected linguistic similarities to Algonkian speakers living in the Eastern Woodlands. The missionaries also referred to the Siksika, Peigan and Blood generally as the *Pieds-Noirs* or Blackfoot, and they recognized the Tsuu T'ina (which they called '*Sarcis*' or 'Sarcee') as a Dene dialect and were thus associated to the people of North Alberta that they mistakenly identified as '*Montagnais*.' I will try to be as specific as possible; however I will be forced to adopt these generalizations when the evidence does not permit further differentiation.

There is another concern over the general naming of indigenous peoples, so this thesis generally adopts Dickason's naming strategy.[58] 'Native,' 'Aboriginal' and 'indigenous' serve as comprehensive terms for "New World" peoples. While 'Native' is widely used this way in Canada, it does not share the same meaning in the United States of America, where 'Native American' has more currency. Similarly, 'First Nations' is a political term referring to the peoples registered in the Canadian Indian Act of 1876; its use is restricted to band-level collectivities that were recognized in the post-treaty context. And while 'Indian' is widely accepted in Canada and the United States, it is becoming increasingly ambiguous given the current immigration from India in both of these countries. For the purposes of clarity, I will adopt the term 'Amerindian,' which is borrowed from the French *Amérindien*. Although 'Amerindian' is a word rarely used in English, it is preferable to the others because it is more definite than 'Indian' and more particular than 'Aboriginal'—it excludes reference to the Métis and the Inuit.

'Métis' also warrants clarification. This term does not simply refer to ethnicity. As Ens explains, it underlines the economic, social and cultural aspects of a historical people that evolved from the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes fur trading system. The term 'Métis' refers to the communities that emerged distinctly from Amerindians and continued to share a sense of extended community in the Western Plains.[59] It therefore encompasses the 'Natives,' 'Hudson's Bay English,' 'Country Born,' 'Half-Breeds' and 'Rupertslanders' that did not necessarily share the same European heritage as the '*Bois Brûlés*," '*Métis*' or '*Métis Iroquois*.' Although historians such as Ens employ the unaccented 'Metis' to illustrate this nuance, I will keep the accent to reflect the word's origins.

Endnotes

[1] Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 52-53; Richard White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Misunderstandings," *The William & Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (January 2006), 9.
[2] Allan Greer and Kenneth Mills, "A Catholic Atlantic," in Seeman and Cañizares-Esguerra, eds., *The Atlantic in Global History* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 11.
[3] R.F. Beal, J.E. Foster & Louise Zuk, *The Métis Hivernement Settlement at Buffalo Lake, 1872-1877. Report/Appendices.* (Edmonton: Alberta Department of Culture, Historic Sites and Provincial Museum Division, 1987), 7.
[4] White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Misunderstandings," 9.
[5] For a study of twentieth-century American historical discourse and the tension that existed between history as an artistic or scientific narrative, see Kerwin Lee Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of America, 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[6] Ryan Dunch, "Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity," *History and Theory* 41 (Oct. 2002), 304.
[7] Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, "The Shattered Microcosm: A Critical Survey of Explanations of Conversion in Africa" in *Religion, Development and African Identity*, edited by K. Holst Peterson (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1987), 11.
[8] Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 1: *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) and vol. 2: *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
[9] Jean and John Comaroff, "Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa," *American Ethnologist* 13 (Feb. 1986), 5.
[10] Elbourne voiced her critique of the Comaroffs in a review article. See Elizabeth Elbourne, "Word Made of Flesh: Christianity, Modernity and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff," *The American Historical Review* 108(2) (April 2003): 435-469.
[11] Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1852* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).
[12] White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Misunderstandings," 13.
[13] White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Misunderstandings," 10.
[14] *Ibid*., 10.
[15] Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 34
[16] *Ibid.*, 34.
[17] There is a great deal of speculation concerning the location of the westernmost French establishment. Oblate records indicate that fort la Jonquière was built on 29 May 1751 at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers near present day Calgary, Alberta. See Jules Lecavalier, *Esquisse sur les origines et les premiers développements de Calgary (1873-1913)* (Calgary: Paroisse Sainte-Famille, 1936), 9-12; Adrien Gabriel Morice, *Histoire abrégée de l'Ouest canadien: Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta et le Grand-nord* (Saint Boniface: The Author, 1914), 14, 107.
[18] Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900*, 48.
[19] Arthur Ray, *Indians and the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of the Hudson's Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), xxxiii.
[20] Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1999), 231-232. The *en dérouine* fur-trade parties were normally led by a *commis*, who was a clerk under the authority of a *bourgeois* or a wintering partner. The term *dérouine* is probably related to the term *drouine*, which signifies the toolkit of mobile boilermakers. *Marriages à la façon du pays* literally translates to "in the manner or custom of the country" and was used to describe the marriages between Amerindians and Europeans within regional cultures and without the sanction of European clergy. They were also referred to as "country marriages."
[21] I am referring to the argument made by Irene Spry, "The Great Transformation: The Disappearance of the Commons in Western Canada," *Man and Nature on the Prairies*, ed. R.A. Allen (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1976), 21-45.
[22] A French Canadian expression that translates to "on the path," but means "in development." Frédéric Laugrand, "Les missions oblates auprès des Amérindiens et des Inuit du Nord canadien. Un chantier pour l'anthropologie historique," in *Société canadienne d'histoire et de l'Église catholique (SCHEC), Études d'histoire religieuse* 67 (2001), 129.

[23] Michael Payne, "Fur Trade Historiography: Past Conditions, Present Circumstances, and a Hint of Future Prospects," *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, eds. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens and R.C. MacLeod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), 7.
[24] William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995), 24.
[25] Spry, *op.cit*., 21-45.
[26] *Ibid*., 21.
[27] *Ibid*., 29.
[28] With reference to Queen, meaning British subjects.
[29] *Ibid.*, 42.
[30] Theodore Binnema, *Common & Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 35. See William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).
[31] Binnema, *op. cit.*, 87, 114, 119.
[32] Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).
[33] Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 5.
[34] *Ibid*., 90.
[35] *Ibid*., 89-90. Ens lists a number of sources that provide a fuller treatment of the concept of proto-industrialisation: Peter Kriedte, Hans Medick, Jurgen Schlumbohm, *Industrialisation before Industrialisation: Rural Industry in the Genesis of Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univesity Press, 1981); L.A. Clarckson, *Proto-Industrialisation: The First Phase of Industrialisation?* (London: Studies in Economic and Social History Series, 1985); Hans Medick, "The Proto-Industrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of Household and Family during the Transition from Peasant Society to Industrial Capitalism," *Social History* 1, no. 3 (October 1976): 291-316.
[36] Ens, *op.cit*., 8.
[37] John E. Foster, "*Le missionnaire* and *le chef Métis*" in *Western Oblate Studies I / Études Oblates de l'Ouest I*, ed. by R. Huel (Edmonton: Western Canadian Publishers and Institut de recherché de la Faculté Saint-Jean, 1990), 117.
[38] Martha McCarthy, *To Evangelize the Nations Roman Catholic Missions in Manitoba, 1818-1870*. *Papers in Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: Manitoba *Culture* Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources, 1990), 6.
[39] *Ibid*., 16.
[40] White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Misunderstandings," 10.
[41] *Ibid*., 10.
[42] James Axtell, "Preachers, Priests and Pagans," Chapter 11 in *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
[43] *Ibid.*, 273.
[44] Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Emma Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); James F. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
[45] Raymond Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel to the Indians and the Métis* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 175.
[46] *Ibid*., 15.
[47] Dawn Adèle Lamothe, *The Oblate Construction of the Métis Other: Mission Ambulante among Les hivernants 1830-1880* (Edmonton: Thesis (M.A.), University of Alberta, Department of History and Classics, 2002).
[48] See Glenbow Archives [hereafter GA], M8873, Scollen Family Fonds, Series 1, "Father Scollen's correspondence" 1861-1903; GA, M675, Jean L'Heureux Fonds, "Jean L'Heureux's description of a portion of the Nor'west and the Indians," 1871; GA, M4233, Houghton Running Rabbit Fonds, "Houghton Running Rabbit's Winter Count," 1937; GA, M4423, Teddy Yellow Fly Fonds, "Teddy Yellow Fly's Winter Count," 1927; GA, M8188, Arthur Family Fonds, "Bull Plume's Winter Count," 1910.
[49] Huel, *op. cit.*, 360.
[50] *Ibid*., xxxiii.
[51] Alexandre A. Taché, "Vingt Années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique," *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie-Immaculée* [hereafter *Missions*] 5 (1866), 73-108; Alexandre A.

Taché, *Vingt Années de Missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique* (Montréal: Librairie Saint Joseph, Cadieux & Derome, 1888); Huel, *op. cit.*, xxxiii.

[52] Provincial Archives of Alberta [hereafter PAA], Oblats de Marie Immaculée [hereafter OMI], 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Papiers Personnels du R. P. Lacombe [hereafter Lacombe], "Mémoires, copie dactylographiée," n.d. Lacombe's memoirs were reinterpreted by Katherine Hughes in her English-language biography. See Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black Robe Voyageur* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1911). Lyle Dick offered an excellent conference paper comparing amateur historians and archivists in Western Canada at the turn of the twentieth century. This included the work of Hughes. "Vernacular Currents in Western Canadian Historiography: The Passion and Prose of Katherine Hughes, F.G. Roe, and Roy Ito," *Western Canadian Studies Conference*, 19-21 June, Edmonton, Alberta, 2008.

[53]PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Papiers Personnels du R. P. Doucet [hereafter Doucet], "Journal 1868-1890" [hereafter Journal].

[54] See Philip M. Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, ed. Edward J. Kowrach (Fairfield: Ye Galleon Press, 1994); Huel, *op. cit*., 94-95.

[55] See PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, "Aristide Philippot, Manuscrit : "La mission de Saint-Paul-des-Cris et les premières origines des missions indiennes de l'Alberta-Saskatchewan," 1935; Archives Deschâtelets [hereafter AD], Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," n.d.

[56] Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995).

[57] Apart from the winter counts mentioned earlier at the Glenbow Archives, see Hugh Dempsey, *A Blackfoot Winter Count* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1965) and L. James, Dempsey, *Blackfoot War Art: Pictographs of the Reservation Period, 1880-2000* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

[58] Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2002), xiv-xvi. In these few pages, Dickason describes the problems of interpretation over the naming of founding peoples as she legitimizes her own naming strategy. This paper will use her strategy because it is the most recent among scholars and because it is the least ambiguous for the Canadian context.

[59] Foster, "*Le Missionnaire* and *Le Chef Métis*," 117-127; John Elgin Foster, "Wintering, the Outsider Male and the Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis," *Prairie Forum* 19 (Spring 1994): 1-13.

Chapter Two: "*Une belle mission, […] à ne pas manquer*:" the Roman Catholic Church in the North-West[1]

La mission ambulante began with the early Red River clergy in 1818. Yet, the missionary Oblates performed the greatest number of *à la prairie* missions with the Métis and the Amerindians during the transitional period. Although this thesis focuses mostly upon the Oblates from 1840-1880, it is necessary to look at the historical patterns that led to the return of European missionaries to the North-West. In order to understand how *la mission ambulante* came to be, this chapter will discuss some of the intellectual trends in Western Europe during the nineteenth century. It will also outline a brief chronology of Roman Catholic missions in the northern Plains until the end of the 'commons' and the 'public access' régimes.

Selkirk's Colony and the Roman Catholic Clergy

Missionary activity in the fur trade region known as the North-West developed in parallel with Protestant evangelicalism and its relation to British politics. Elbourne argues in *Blood Ground* that Protestantism was critical to the national identity of the British, but in the late eighteenth century, British Protestant culture was ambiguous and contested among Anglican elites and popular evangelicals.[2] The presence of alternative communication networks and the spread of literacy through the structure of evangelicalism had facilitated individual religious and political choices that threatened the status quo.[3] These networks, which reached down into the upper working classes, were politically empowering: it meant that artisanal classes had an increased capability to gain knowledge about the non-Christian world.[4] Most evangelical missionaries, especially the nonconformists that emerged from the upper working classes and middle classes, were seen by imperial administrators as dangerous enthusiasts; they sought to convert those who had not undergone true conversion experiences and thus articulated a millenarian language that set the tone for the evangelization of the world.[5] Since missionary activity grew from the public sphere, it created a split between worried conservatives and reluctant radicals over what kind of Protestantism should best represent the nation.[6]

Policies from Great Britain had direct repercussions on the fur trade in Rupert's Land. Many traders wanted to preserve their *ancien régime* policy in the fur trade; they recognized how missionaries would teach 'civilisation' and promote a sedentary lifestyle to Aboriginals, which

infringed with the gathering of furs and provisions.[7] Since the merger of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, Aboriginal traders could no longer barter among rival companies, so the control of the fur trade shifted to the upper hierarchy of British governing structures. This permitted the governor in London to centralize the decision-making structure upon himself, which further exposed the HBC charter to metropolitan politics. As Brian Stanley explains, Protestant Christians at the time believed in the superiority of the intellectual and technological aspects of Western European 'civilization,' and therefore felt that it was their duty to convert the non-Christian 'heathens.'[8] With the significant evangelical revival movement of the 1820s, politicians believed that they had the right to impose British structures over their empire and therefore sent missionary societies around the world. The HBC was forced to abide by these pressures for fear of losing political support.

When Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk, attempted to create an agricultural colony in the Red River valley, he believed that the presence of clergy would have a stabilizing influence upon the inhabitants of the country.[9] Selkirk's primary motive for the colony was to resettle Scottish crofters who were being displaced by their landlords. However, the majority of Selkirk's settlers, who first arrived in 1811, were Catholic Highlanders; they requested the services of parish priests that corresponded to their faith. In keeping with the request, Selkirk recognized that Roman Catholic missionaries would be useful in encouraging the nominally Catholic 'vagabond Canadians' of the area to adopt an agricultural life, secure their loyalty to the HBC, and ensure peace in the area.[10] In 1814, Selkirk asked Bishop Joseph-Octave Plessis of Québec to establish a mission in the colony in order to "give spiritual aid to a great number of Canadians who have established themselves there, & who lead a wandering life, in the manner of the savages, with whose women they have formed irregular connections."[11] Hence, Plessis sent his first missionaries to the Selkirk colony in 1818. Joseph-Norbert Provencher and Sévère Dumoulin were expected to lay the groundwork for the Roman Catholic Church in the North-West.

The imperial ties of Roman Catholic missionaries to Great Britain were rather unique. Despite the fusion of the internationalist Protestant outlook and the localist British identity in metropolitan politics, Selkirk's request for Catholic missionaries did not bother the British Crown, which looked favourably upon the Québec clergy since the latter had sided with the former during the War of 1812. Hence, the Bishop of Québec was in a relatively stable position

for the expansion of his Church within British North America: "Roman Catholic French-Canadians had proved to be as loyal to the British Crown as Protestant English-Canadians."[12] The government sent Captain de Lorimier of the Indian Department to accompany the missionaries to Red River in assurance of their support. In a letter dated 20 April 1818, sir John Sherbrooke, governor of the two provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, also expressed to Plessis his backing of the mission.[13] John West of the Anglican Church Missionary Society also established a mission at Red River two years later. This established the context for rival national-religious missionary societies within a common political framework.

Plessis' Instructions to the Red River Clergy

Dumoulin's and Provencher's mission at the Red River colony was not the first Roman Catholic mission in the region. During the French Régime, Jesuit missionaries were stationed in or around the Great Lakes, and some followed Pierre Gauthier de Varennes, sieur de la Vérendrye, his four sons and his nephew on excursions west of Lake Superior and into the prairie region.[14] Although the Jesuits abandoned *le pays d'en haut* after the Royal Proclamation of 1763, their North American missions were well documented and their methods well known to Plessis.[15] Since Dumoulin and Provencher were not trained as missionaries, Plessis gave them categorical instructions outlining their responsibilities as secular missionary-priests.[16]

Plessis stated clearly that—as missionaries—his priests should continue the work of the early Jesuits by evangelizing the Amerindians as well as the *Canadiens* who had been without spiritual guidance since 1763.[17] The first object of his instructions, dated 20 April of 1818, was to "reclaim out of barbarism and the disorders that result from it the Indian nations scattered across that vast country," while the second object was to "carry assistance to delinquent Christians, who have adopted there the customs of the natives and who live licentiously, forgetful of their duty."[18] This effectively retained the dual-character of the New France missions, which encompassed nearly the whole population of the North-West at the time. He thus called his missionaries "to go all places where the need of souls shall call them."[19] Plessis was aware that his missionaries would be competing with rival Protestant ministers, so he hoped that incessant work with the numerous local communities would preoccupy them and thus avoid entanglements. He also voiced his competitive ambitions: "I have a deep confidence that Catholics will be eager to surpass them [the Protestants] in an undertaking looking to the gradual

spread of our holy faith over the immense western region, which separates North America from the Pacific Ocean."[20] The Roman Catholics also wanted to spread their ecclesiastical institutions over regions that were far and isolated from their own. Plessis ordered his clergy to plant high crosses "in all spots that are outstanding, whether from position, or from the fact that *voyageurs* pass there, or that the Indians gather there."[21] The crosses were a sign of symbolic possession because property rights were subject to the authority of the Crown and thus exercised through the HBC.[22]

Plessis advised his priests to adopt the methods of the earlier Jesuits and to follow their example. He wrote that preaching the Gospel was "the most certain means of obtaining happy results," and that the study indigenous languages was necessary to make themselves "speedily of use to the natives of the region."[23] By breaking down the languages into sets of rules, and by publishing grammars after only "a few years of residence," it was hoped that the training process of future missionaries could be accelerated.[24] After one month in Red River, Dumoulin wrote to Plessis:

> Our main occupation, especially for me, has been study, for we have very little else to do here, even though the few Christians that there are seem to be well disposed. Our great work should be among the Indians, but in order to preach to them it would be necessary to follow them about from camp to camp, and this is hardly possible before knowing their languages.[25]

Dumoulin realized that the traditional parish structure was not suited for the itinerant lifestyle of most Plains communities. Since they did not know the local languages, they focused their efforts on the Métis, where "the barrier presented by language was reduced and the population possessed some connotations of the Catholic faith."[26] The Métis would congregate at Saint Boniface (Manitoba) and Pembina (North Dakota) for the bison hunts, so the priests built their mission stations there. In this way, the clergy hoped to prolong their encounters with the Métis and thus maintain their contacts with *les hivernants*, who otherwise spent most of the year away from any parish or priest.[27] The focus on the Métis meant that there were few recorded Amerindian conversions during the period 1818-1833.[28]

The secular clergy held a firm belief that whole communities could be converted under their influence, especially through change in marriage customs and family structures. Although the marriages *à la façon du pays* were valid under the eyes of the Church, the priests administered their blessings wherever they could.[29] They believed that to regularize unions and combat polygyny, it was necessary to baptize the women that "[lived] as concubines of Christian

men."[30] Plessis stated that the evangelization process should be directed towards bringing women and children firmly into the Church, which would provide the foundation for all future missionary efforts.[31] This guideline was pragmatic in the sense that women remained at camp while the men were off hunting. Like most of the other Jesuit methods, it corresponded to a 'middle ground' operation. Susan Sleeper-Smith argues that Catholicism empowered women as educators and active proselytizing agents during the era of the middle ground, which subsequently permitted them to develop Catholic kinship networks that exerted social pressure over fur trade husbands. Hence, women played a mediative role in fur trade society, and they were the main agents of cultural change.[32] This was especially true among the Métis, where monogamous intermarriage with European traders was frequent. However, the missionaries found that they had more difficulties with the Plains Ojibwa, whose bison hunting economies depended on polygamous unions to satisfy the traditional labour requirements of their hunting camps.

Schooling was another means by which the early Red River clergy hoped to inculcate Christian doctrine among families. Education was recognized long ago as one of the primary tools of evangelization. Like the Jesuit *reducciones* of Paraguay or the *réserve* schools in sedentary Huronia, Plessis acknowledged that protracted education could bring deep-rooted social change and opposition to indigenous spirituality.[33] In the Plains environment, however, the prolonged absences of both children and priests made the establishment of schools very difficult. Provencher described these challenges in a letter dated 15 August 1818: "They do not live in numerous bands," even though "the Indians are numerous—but they occupy an immense territory."[34] As early as 1818, Dumoulin speculated that, "In order to civilize and convert the Indians it will be necessary for the government to take steps to bring them together in villages; without that it will be very difficult to teach them."[35] Plessis' directive to provide schools in all settlements did not represent any practical form of mission policy in the North-West because the Red River clergy lacked the power to impose a sedentary life on Aboriginal peoples. Therefore, they found it difficult to "civilize and instruct."[36] The bison hunting missions, or *la mission ambulante*, remained their principal form of mission activity until the arrival of the missionary Oblates in the 1840s.

Controversy over Sedentary and Itinerant Mission Methods

Protestant missions among the Amerindians posed a serious challenge to the Red River clergy. When William Cockran of the CMS founded Saint Peter's mission among the Plains Ojibwa and Swampy Cree in 1831, Provencher traveled to Québec to recruit more priests in order to assign one to Amerindian mission work.[37] George Antoine Belcourt was the only priest who agreed to a transfer.[38] He had begun studying Ojibwa, an Algonkian language, at the mission of lac des Deux Montagnes near Montréal and mastered it at Saint Boniface over the next two years. By 1833, he established the mission of Saint Paul des Sauteux (Baie Saint Paul, Manitoba). He named it after Saint Paul, "the examplar of missionaries to the Gentiles or heathen," and the "Sauteux," which was the noun that Francophones used to designate the Plains Ojibwa at the time.[39] Although Belcourt devoted himself wholeheartedly to his task, he was soon at odds with Provencher over sedentary and itinerant mission methods.

Belcourt tried to convince the Plains Ojibwa to establish a village at Saint Paul as the Protestants had at Saint Peter's. He maintained that only through the radical cultural adaptation to an agricultural lifestyle could the Plains Ojibwa receive the Gospel. In this sense, Provencher believed that Belcourt adopted Protestant methods of "performing civilization" through the "power of display:" "Il ne fallait pas faire les missions à la protestante, c'est-à-dire acheter les sauvages mais les gagner par la persuasion."[40] Provencher found that there were too few residents at Saint Paul to merit this type of mission. He recognized that agriculture was not yet a viable way of life in the North-West, so it would be impossible to radically alter the Plains Ojibwa way of life as Belcourt had intended.[41] Although there is truth to Provencher's accusations, he was also tight on resources and was worried that Belcourt's mission would drive him into debt. He thus criticized Belcourt for spending too much time labouring as a farmer, builder and carpenter for the material benefit of the Amerindians and not enough time performing his duties as a proselytizer.[42] Nevertheless, Belcourt's example demonstrates how some Plains Ojibwa people were indeed interested in the innovation of agriculture, even though there was a "more-than-equal" need for the bison hunt.[43]

In 1841, the Plains Ojibwa associated with Belcourt's missions agreed to combine sedentary and itinerant lifestyles, so they accepted him for the fall and summer bison hunts.[44] When *les chasseurs* returned to the mission, Belcourt realized that they did not have a recognized leader, so he held an election in order to identify one chief. After the ceremony, the chief received a silver medal that was sent to him by the Bishop of Québec.[45] Again, this practice was

typical of early modern Catholic missions. This point cannot be understated because it underlines how Belcourt introduced political as well as economic and religious changes into the society attached to his mission.[46] The Métis employed a similar process for electing chiefs and chaplains during the bison hunt. The reasons why Aboriginals embraced these changes will be discussed in the next chapter.

The main funding body for the Red River missions—the Association of the Propagation of the Faith—favoured Belcourt's sedentary approach to missions. Belcourt even convinced the Québec branch of the organisation to fund his mission separately from those of Provencher. As Martha McCarthy notes, this was a very unusual step to take since missionaries were normally under the spiritual and material control of their bishops.[47] Furthermore, the Propagation of the Faith threatened to cut Provencher's funding if he could not establish new missions and perform more baptisms. Provencher took this as an affront to his control over the diocese, which may have been indicative of the difficulties of using someone trained as a parish priest as a missionary.[48] Therefore, Provencher believed that his clergy was stretched too thin and therefore lacked the "unity of effort and sense of direction" of a religious congregation.[49]

In theory, Provencher was in charge of an area that stretched from the Hudson's Bay through to the Rocky Mountains and up to the arctic. In practice, his missions were confined to southern Manitoba and northern North Dakota. After 26 years, Provencher had 12 secular priests at his disposal with never more than four at one time. In order to expand the missionary frontier, he asked the HBC for permission to recruit French religious orders into the colony. However, Governor George Simpson refused to "sanction a plan to bring "foreign priests" into the country."[50] Provencher persisted nevertheless. In 1842, Jean-Baptiste Thibault established a mission among the Métis of lac Sainte Anne in reaction to the arrival of three Wesleyan ministers, including Robert Rundle, near the HBC post known as fort des Prairies (Edmonton House) in 1840. Thibault also visited the Iroquois Métis at Fort Jasper and the Plains Cree and Blackfoot Amerindians surrounding the fort de la Montagne Roche (Rocky Mountain House, Alberta). In 1844, Provencher secured the assistance of the Sisters of Charity of Montreal (also known as the Grey Nuns) who agreed to assist in the fields of education, health care and social work.[51] Finally, the first missionary Oblates debarked in Red River in 1845.

The Oblates and the French Home Missions

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate culminated from Charles-Joseph-Eugène de Mazenod's foundation of an embryonic religious community in Marseilles, France, in 1815. In Western Europe at the time, religious revival movements were characteristic of a profound renewal of faith among people who coped with the political convulsions of the era. The upheaval of individual destinies and social cadres adjoined the radical transformation of societies to capitalism; the state apparatus itself was reformed to break with the protectionism of previous colonial economic systems in order to consolidate free-market policies. Under these circumstances, social life had to be reinvented, and religious institutions were particularly well suited to recreate social networks among populations and to ascribe meaning to national destinies.[52] In addition to Great Britain, religious revival movements occurred in a host of industrializing nations, including France.

From his residence in Marseilles, de Mazenod sought to revive the Catholic Church among the lower classes of Provence in reaction to the anticlericalism of the French Revolution and Napoleon's campaign against the Papacy. He considered the poor—much like the Catholic Church itself—to be an abandoned and neglected part of modern society that had to be redeemed.[53] Consequently, he formed the *Société des Missionnaires de Provence*, which conducted 'home' missions to local and countryside parishes by adopting the revivalist methods of the seventeenth century Counter-Reformation missions.[54] Rather than trying to win back European Protestants, the home missions of the Restoration were designed to re-evangelize parishes that had been left without priests or church services since the French Revolution. The missionaries of Provence traveled from one parish to another and offered three to six weeks of instruction, sermons, catechism and charity works. To them, 'mission' did not necessarily designate any formal missionary outpost, structure or location, but rather the work that needed to be done during parochial visits. Once a mission was over, the priest left one area in order to give another mission at different location.

Unlike the popular evangelicalism in Britain, the home missions of south-eastern France dealt with a population that was mostly illiterate and that generally spoke their own patois. In order to reconvert these people and instruct them about the Roman Catholic faith, the missionaries set hymns to popular tunes, preached emotive sermons on death and judgment, and spent lengthy sessions in the confessional, all in the local Provençal dialect.[55] It was hoped that these acts would encourage the practice of Catholicism by "helping people recognize their sins

and amend their ways to conform with the teaching of the church."[56] Therefore, catechumens learned about a compensative God that underlined the importance of religion and the reality of hell.[57] At the conclusion of a mission, mnemonic devices like the planting of a cross would serve as a lasting reminder of the teachings of the Church.[58] The practice of living and working among the poor, as well as teaching in the local language, "was not only pragmatic but readily modified to suit different conditions."[59] In this sense, postmillennialism was coupled with pragmatism. Mazenod strongly believed that these methods implanted the faith in a more lasting manner.[60]

The deconstruction of *ancien régime* modes of social organisation in France required people to redefine their sense of community as well as the social links binding them. In this way, the proto-Oblates essentially functioned as catalysts. Stressing the necessities of communal life and social order, the priests began their own custom of visiting each family in their homes with the intention of familiarizing themselves with family circumstances. In order to solidify family structures, they performed binding acts and they prescribed roles to age and gender: "they were to regularize marriages in conformity with the precepts of Canon Law, to instil in children the fear of God and the necessity of avoiding temptation and sin, to inspire a sense of piety in women, and temperance and honesty among men."[61] Furthermore, the priests established community groups known as congregations of the laity, where members were divided by age, gender, special interest and each was charged with a particular devotion. They were consequently recognized as lay leaders for the community and it was hoped that these leaders could ensure good results while the priests were away.[62] These methods were applicable for 'foreign' missions, since Catholic missionaries around the world employed similar techniques as outlined in the instructions of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith in Rome.

"He Sent Me to Evangelize the Poor:" Oblate Training and Expansion[63]

In 1825, de Mazenod changed the name of his missionary order to *Société des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*. This had been done mainly to favour pontifical approval for his burgeoning religious community, but it also expressed the order's dire need for expansion. The Oblate religious community remained quite small once Pope Leo XII granted his approval for them in 1826, and by 1840, the Oblates only had 55 men.[64] The significant renewal in French parish life, coupled with the increase in diocesan clergy, made it difficult for the

Oblates to continue their home missions in Provence and therefore curtailed their ambitions to expand into the other regions of France. By the 1830s, older religious orders like the Jesuits, Dominicans and Benedictines attracted so much prestige and attention that newer ones like the Oblates were already threatened with extinction.[65] The name change thus coincided with an important shift in policy to save the missionary society. Mazenod expressed his ambition to expand in areas the world over that same year. On 29 September 1831, the General Chapter of the Oblates unanimously approved de Mazenod's wishes to send missionaries to 'foreign' missions pending the 'right occasion.'[66]

The name change reflected significant ideological trends within the Church as well. By adding *Marie Immaculée*, de Mazenod explicitly acknowledged the normative concept of the Virgin Mary's immaculate conception that was supported by the Pope and other proponents of ultramontanism—a religious philosophy that also encouraged the expansion of the Roman Catholic Church into parts of the world where it was not institutionally established. By focusing on papal infallibility, the Catholic hierarchy and the supreme authority of the Church over the State, the ultramontane perspective regrouped people around a centralised belief that there could be no salvation outside of Roman Catholicism. This type of postmillennialist eschatology effectively intertwined religious and political programs just as Protestant evangelicalism had done in Britain. Mazenod assured the Pope that his missionaries had no other homeland than the Church in Rome, which confirmed the Church's stature over sovereignties and powers, and he asserted their willingness to spread the message of salvation to all areas of the world by performing the sacraments.[67] The *Constitutions et règles* of the congregation required each Oblate to swear a vow of obedience to the Holy See upon entering the congregation, effectively rendering them official delegates of the Church in Rome.[68] The Oblates felt it was their duty to expand the Catholic hierarchy in areas that were not under the political sovereignty of France, especially through acts of communal sacraments like baptism, which not only linked individuals to the Catholic Church, but expanded the Kingdom of God and 'defeated Satan' in all reaches of the Earth. Therefore, their primary directive was to continue the mandate that Jesus Christ conferred onto his apostles: to teach and baptize all nations, no matter the cost.[69]

Religious revivalism and the influence of ultramontanism were institutionalized in the education system that trained the French Oblates. French seminaries were in an abated state during the Restoration and the decadence of clerical scholasticism would persist into the later

stages of the nineteenth century. A vicious circle hindered the academic training of seminarians. On the one hand, renewed interest in French parish life accentuated the shortage of qualified priests, so theological studies were reduced to a minimum in order to send the available priests out for pastoral work. On the other hand, those in charge of preparing the clergy were self-taught men who lacked the specialization to teach theology and the scientific method.[70] The seminary professors did not have access to the former faculties of theology that were available to the priests of the *Ancien Régime*—those faculties were closed since the outbreak of the Revolution. The cycle was finally broken once legitimate faculties of the theology were founded within the new Catholic universities of 1875.[71]

Of concern to the French clergy was the polemic over the origins of religious knowledge and the relationship between reason and faith. This was a time when traditionalists clashed with ontologists over what they called 'rationalism,' which involved the role of the soul in the foundation of religious certitudes. By sacrificing reason, traditionalists defended faith on the grounds that the soul immediately perceived God. In rebuttal, ontologists tried to marry faith and reason. They claimed that the soul perceived God obscurely; reason was therefore necessary to focus a belief in God by explaining his works. After 1830, this issue resonated with the ongoing debate over the legitimacy and the use of modern liberalism.[72] The country was polarized over the issue of moderate Catholic liberalism, which practically advocated the separation of Church and State. The Ultramontains, who happened to be traditionalists, ultimately rejected this idea as they defended the prerogatives of the Church over the State. Provincial councils across France took the side of the traditionalists and thus condemned rationalism by drafting more precise rulings for their priests and their seminaries.[73] Therefore, candidates for the priesthood were selected for their romanticist qualities: virtue and piety rather than proficiency in philosophy and theology. Scholarliness was forsaken for saintliness.

The textbooks and moral doctrine taught in seminaries mirrored the traditionalist stance over knowledge. Textbooks with any trace of Gallicanist political beliefs or Jansenist moral theology were dispelled and replaced by the theology and philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and Alphonsus Liguori.[74] It was hence believed that the qualities of perseverance and courage would sufficiently guarantee success over the hardships and sacrifices of mission work *per se*. Missionary candidates had to demonstrate a real desire for their calling: "généralement on ne force jamais d'aller aux missions étrangères et même on ne voudrait pas y envoyer quelqu'un qui

ne témoignerait pas un grand désir d'y aller."[75] As pastors rather than theoreticians, the Oblates needed to possess "the zeal of the apostle Paul and Saint Francis Xavier and to imitate the former who was himself a follower of Christ."[76] In other words, little instruction was deemed necessary, so it was acceptable to excuse the students from their theology. The Oblate historian Claude Champagne argued that missionary Oblates were *men of action* precisely for this reason.[77]

Despite his blatant ultramontain sympathies, de Mazenod insisted that his Oblates "receive a solid education in both ecclesiastical and religious subjects regardless of where they were to serve" and thus attempted to remedy the situation by opening the first Oblate scholasticate in 1827.[78] Unfortunately for him, his efforts were compounded by the government regulations of 1828 where "the university replaced the bishops as the overseer of elementary education in France, the administration of colleges was restricted to those congregations authorized by the government, and institutions classified as seminaries were required to restrict their enrolment to aspiring clergymen."[79] These regulations effectively placed a bottleneck on the formation of the clergy, which, coupled with the high demand for diocesan priests, once again necessitated the hasty education of seminarians. Therefore, an Oblate normally completed one or two years of an otherwise four year program, where "secular subjects such as anthropology, sociology or linguistics were not to be found in the scholasticate's curriculum and a century would pass before their importance was recognized."[80] Their hasty education meant that any familiarity with secular subjects such as medicine were amateur rather than professional, and students who were not raised on farms in their childhood were not exposed to agricultural techniques. Nonetheless, the Oblates received a classical education with detailed study of the Greek and Latin languages, which later served as a model for the study of indigenous languages in foreign missions.[81] The English language was studied to a certain degree once the Oblates had established themselves in various parts of the British Empire in the 1840s.

Mazenod amended the *Consitutions et règles* and included an appendix called *Instruction de notre vénéré Fondateur relative aux missions étrangères* in 1851.[82] The *Instruction* reiterated Oblate philosophy and procedure, but it also refined them in light of a decade of experience gained overseas. The document recognized foreign missionaries as a select group with special characteristics and the strong sense of vocation. Of course, it reiterated the principle of evangelizing in local languages. Like the Jesuits, missionaries were required to learn those languages and study indigenous customs in order solidify their mission upon common ground.

Then they could begin preaching. Missionaries were expected to formulate catechisms, which were sequential questions and answers about Christian doctrine that could be memorized. Catechism was normally an oral exercise, but they could be illustrated as books or ladders if pedagogical aids were needed. Quotidian prayers and canticles, such as the *Pater, Ave, Credo* and *Gloria*, had to be translated and taught so their listeners could recite them.[83] Hence, non-literate forms of education, mainly through liturgy and ritual, were stressed in this document: "Bref, [ils] utiliseront tous les moyens capables de mettre la doctrine en belle lumière sous les yeux, de la fixer avec plus de force dans les intelligences et de la graver avec plus de vigueur dans leur mémoire."[84] Finally, in a manner typical of nineteenth century missionaries, the Oblates were expected to keep regular correspondences with their superiors. This allowed bishops to supervise their missions through the communication networks of the time.[85]

The *Instruction* differentiated 'home' and 'foreign' missions by their methods for the first time. This underlines how the Oblates were new to evangelizing non-Christian peoples. Their revivalist background had only prepared them for the re-evangelization of peoples that shared in Western European cultural heritages, and were therefore familiar with the symbolic connotations of Christianity identified by the Comaroffs: educational and ritual process, political and legal procedures, health and bodily discipline, canons of style and self-representation, public communication, and so on.[86] Hence, Alexandre-Antonin Taché, who arrived at Red River with Pierre Aubert in 1845, depicted the Amerindians as '*sauvages*' because they did not share the same symbolic cultural processes as Europeans: "non parce que tous soient d'un caractère barbare, féroce ou sauvage, mais bien parce qu'il y a quelque chose de sauvage dans leur genre de vie, ou par opposition au titre de civilisés, donné aux nations qui pratiquent une religion, vivent sous une forme de gouvernement, obéissent à des lois et se livrent aux arts ou à l'industrie."[87] Therefore, the realm of 'symbolic production' was entwined within Christianity. This was political in the sense that it was a site for potential power struggle between existing hegemonies.[88] Indeed, the indigenization of Catholicism was not a part of their training: "The missionary did not set to adapt his Church to indigenous cultures; he set out to convert any and all to the Roman Catholic Way, the only true way, for outside the Church there was no salvation—whether for pagan, infidel, Protestant heretic, or Eastern Schismatic."[89] However, the inexperienced Oblates conversed with Aboriginal communities; through impermanent

relationships like *la mission ambulante*, both sides attempted to understand these symbolic processes in ways that met their own interests.

The Oblates at Red River

The juncture for Oblate expansion into Canada occurred once Ignace Bourget, the Bishop of Montreal, travelled to Marseilles in 1841. After being turned down by the Jesuits in Paris, he struck a partnership with de Mazenod.[90] At last, the 'right occasion' had come for the Oblates, so four priests and two brothers were sent Montreal the same year. This started a trend among the Oblates, who expanded mostly, though not exclusively, into regions claimed by the British Crown: England in 1841, Red River in 1845, Oregon (under the auspices of the HBC) in 1847, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in 1847, Texas in 1849, Natal (South Africa) in 1852, Ireland in 1856, Mexico in 1858 and Basutoland (Lesotho) in 1862. In a very short period of time, the Oblates became far more numerous outside of France than within.

The 1840s was a period of organizational restructuration for the Roman Catholic Church in British North America, where the *Canadiens* underwent a significant religious renewal as well. The Québec diocese needed the support of French missionary congregations in order to match the demand for priests.[91] Following Lower Canada's ostensible revolutionary fervour during the Rebellions of 1837-1838, the Church contended with the assimilation policies of the Durham Report and the new Union of Canada, as well as the massive emigration of nearly one quarter of the population to New England factories and American Midwestern farmlands. Consequently, Church delegates needed to redefine their role in society in order to ensure the survival of *la nation*. They attempted to re-orient French Canadians towards an organic national destiny based on language and faith, and like the Oblates of Provence, the Québec clergy wanted to re-establish its ties with segments of the population that had not seen a priest in some time.[92]

In the 1840s, the British government favoured free trade and abandoned most of its colonial protectionist policies. Curiously, it renewed the HBC's trade monopoly in 1837 on the condition that it promoted the advancement of religion in the North-West.[93] Shortly thereafter, the Act of Union of 1840 permitted the Catholic Church to recruit 'foreign' clergymen for the first time since the Royal Proclamation. Bourget wasted no time. Once the Oblates arrived in Canada, they established schools in Longueuil (on Montreal's South Shore) and in Bytown (Ottawa) for the formation of French Canadian priests and missionaries within the order.

Mazenod designated the French Oblate Pierre Aubert to serve at Red River, and he instructed the latter to bring along the most suitable Canadian Oblate with him. He and Taché arrived by Company canoe on 24 June 1845.[94]

One year prior to their arrival, Norman Kittson re-established a trading post at Pembina for the American Fur Company. The post integrated the Red River colony into alternative fur markets from the Eastern United States and thus became an important source of supplies and capital for Red River society.[95] As Ens points out, the Métis embarked on an important movement of economic dynamism and social reorientation. This started the transition of the Métis economy to market capitalism, in which the right to free trade was ensured through the Sayer Trial of 1849.[96] Foster realizes out how these economic changes led to important challenges regarding the cohesiveness of the group. McCarthy even notes that the Plains Ojibwa at Belcourt's missions adjusted their society to the new economic opportunities of the bison robe trade: "Twice a year, the Sauteux and Métis left for the summer and fall buffalo hunts which provided the base of their economy."[97] In fact, the Plains Ojibwa described here were part of the Métis socio-economic movement and could therefore be considered 'Métis.' The Oblates felt they had a significant role to play among the Métis precisely because they were specialists at recreating these types of social networks.

If the Oblates felt at ease with the Métis in light of their revivalist training, the opposite was true when it came to inculcating Christianity. During their first year at Red River, Aubert and Taché studied the Ojibwa language and the rudiments of mission life from Belcourt, but the latter could only visit them periodically because he was needed *à la prairie* with the Métis. Aubert, who had little knowledge of local languages and customs, was forced to take charge of Belcourt's sedentary mission post at Wabassimong (Whitedog, Ontario) in June of 1846. Aubert expressed great difficulty in proselytizing because "Leur ignorance presque totale des choses chrétiennes lui apparut évidente."[98] Discouraged, he decided to abandon the mission permanently after one year: "A son retour, il acheva de se convaincre que les dispositions des Sauteux n'étaient pas assez heureuses pour qu'on pût leur donner un missionnaire, dont la présence serait bien plus utile ailleurs."[99] Aubert was incapable of finding the common ground that was necessary for the evangelization process to occur.

Even the most aspiring missionaries were unaccustomed to the Plains environment and its communities. Taché confided that he initially believed in the imagery of contemporary literature

like Chateaubriand, where Amerindians were represented as "docile and timid in the presence of a priest and who accepted Christianity as soon as the missionary spoke of God."[100] Having been confronted and "truly astonished" by life in the North-West, he became especially critical of these descriptions.[101] Grandin wrote to his father four years prior to his arrival and persuaded himself that he would be a capable missionary among the Amerindians because "on s'adresse surtout à de pauvres ignorants, à de malheureux sauvages et qu'il n'est pas nécessaire d'avoir grande eloquence pour les convaincre."[102] The historian Anne-Hélène Kerbiriou pointed out that Grandin had grossly underestimated them because eloquence was a prized social quality and crucial among Chiefs.[103] Taché and Grandin quickly confronted these prejudices as they learned that Aboriginal societies were much more complex.

The Oblates were indeed zealous missionaries. However, they were inexperienced to life in an Aboriginal world. On 8 July 1846, Taché and Louis-François Laflèche wanted to go "aussi loin que possible porter la bonne nouvelle du salut aux peuples sauvages du Nord-Ouest," and in September they founded a mission residence near the trading post at Île à la Crosse.[104] The veteran trader Roderick McKenzie was shocked when he saw two priests arrive at his post without knowledge of Cree or Dene languages, without an interpreter, or even anyone to gather food, wood or water for them while they were there.[105] As Huel states, the missionaries were unaccustomed to the 'immutable seasonal calendar' imposed on them by the logistics of the year-round fur trade.[106] Hence, "there were few conversions and the small tribes, separated by great distances, were, at best, visited sporadically."[107] Furthermore, being under the authority of Bishop Provencher, the Oblates were worried about being left alone in mission posts for more than a year. This prevented them from confessing and thus satisfying their own religious livelihood.[108]

It was true that de Mazenod expressed an uncommon zeal and excitement for the Northwestern missions due to their relative isolation from Europe. He characterized them as a "sublime mission" for "the most abandoned souls."[109] However, after reading initial reports and correspondences from Red River, de Mazenod concluded that the local conditions were very difficult for apostolic work. While de Mazenod praised the foreign missions as "un moyen éminent propre à procurer la gloire de Dieu, à contribuer à l'extension de la Religion, à ajouter à l'éclat de notre Congrégation," he admitted that "cette mission de la Baie d'Hudson est au dessus des forces de la nature. Il faut une assistance miraculeuse pour ne pas y succomber."[110] Hence,

he decided to abandon the region and reassign the missionaries in areas were results were more tangible.[111] He changed his mind, however, once Provencher appointed Taché as coadjutor bishop of Red River. Now that an Oblate was bishop, the appointment endowed the missionary order with the full responsibility and direction of the Northwestern missions, which de Mazenod was keen to accept.[112]

"*Les postes de l'extérieur*:" A Chronology of the 'Saskatchewan' or 'Western' Missions[113]

Taché wrote in *Vingt années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique* that the Oblates owed a great deal to Thibault and the secular clergy for laying the foundations of their missions in the Saskatchewan River Valley: "le vénérable M. J.-B. Thibault […] commença la série de courses et des travaux qui lui méritaient le titre du premier apôtre de la vallée de la Siskatchewan [*sic*]."[114] During Thibault's famous 1842 voyage, the missionary-priest traveled into Plains Cree territory and visited forts Ellis, Carleton, Pitt and Edmonton. Yet he surprised his peers by venturing into "les plaines du sud, jusqu'à la rivière du Parc-aux-Chiens," which was Blackfoot territory.[115] Company traders at the time were intimidated by the Blackfoot because the former were violently expelled from the latter's territory in previous decades.[116] Although Thibault was the first priest to perform *à la prairie* missions with the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot, his intention was to minister "auprès des Canadiens employés dans les Forts, et auprès des Métis, issus d'unions entre Blancs et Sauvagesses."[117] The dual-character of Roman Catholic missionaries continued into the Saskatchewan country as it had in Red River.[118]

Although Thibault was warmly greeted by some of the region's Métis, Plains Cree and Blackfoot bands, he witnessed how the extent of the bison herd was diminishing and subsequently retreating into Blackfoot territory. He noted that this was the cause of a great deal of warfare. Indeed, what were known as the 'Horse Wars' became the 'Bison Wars' at this time.[119] He believed that the bison hunt missions had become too dangerous for the chaplains: "il n'y avait pas assez de missionnaires pour en sacrifier un seul."[120] Upon returning to Saint Boniface in 1847, he recommended to Provencher that they cease the bison hunt missions altogether: "Quand le dernier bison sera mort, on pourra tenter alors quelque chose du côté des prairies."[121] This, along with severe funding cuts caused by the French Revolution of 1848, effectively led to the abolition of *la mission ambulante* from the years 1849-1859.[122]

With the arrival of the Oblates, Roman Catholic missionaries shifted their attention to overseas recruitment and the establishment of additional mission posts. Although they learned a great deal from the secular clergy, they adopted the itinerant mission style of their home missions: they traveled from their residences at lac Sainte Anne and Île à la Crosse to a number of newly established outposts in the Saskatchewan River Valley: fort des Prairies, lac Froid (Cold Lake, Alberta), lac du Poisson Blanc (Whitefish Lake, near Saint Paul, Alberta), lac la Biche (Alberta) and portage de la Loche (Methy Portage, Saskatchewan).[123] The outposts corresponded to Métis encampments that "n'étaient fréquentées que par un très petit nombre de sauvages, quelques familles seulement, unies aux métis par des liens de parenté."[124] Even though these missions were itinerant, they did not constitute an ambulant or *à la prairie* mission for two reasons: first, the priests were not accompanying a bison hunt, while second, they tended to be short and infrequent visits. However, like *la mission ambulante*, these itinerant missions were founded on the belief that the sedentary lifestyle was not a prerequisite for conversion to Christianity. The missionaries also visited Bay posts on their rounds, which allowed them to protest the trade of liquor.[125] Hence, the Oblates took it upon themselves to ease the tensions the occurred between Company traders and Aboriginals as they preached their message of peace and salvation.[126]

Taché took charge of the Saint Boniface diocese upon Provencher's death in 1853 and the mission field took on considerable expansion. From 1853 to 1870, he received 13 other Oblate priests, four Oblate brothers as well as another nine secular priests.[127] However, the availability of manpower was a constant source of worry. Léon Doucet was the first Oblate scholastic brother to be ordained priest in Alberta in 1870, even though he objected to his ordination on the grounds that he had not completed his theology, he could not speak Cree, nor did he know all the ceremonies of Mass. Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin dismissed his objections because he did not want to leave neophytes without a priest.[128]

The logistics of transportation and communication was another thorny issue. Albert Lacombe, a secular priest who replaced Thibault at lac Sainte Anne in 1852, recalled that "The Society of the Propagation of Faith was far from being able to assist us then as it did later; moreover our means of transport were practically nil. We depended entirely upon the good-will of this good Company to go from one post to another and to convey thither our small luggage."[129] The missionaries were all too recognizant of the 'exorbitant' prices of the

Company, so Taché ordered his missionaries to live as much as possible at a subsistence level.[130] By 1862, the Oblates used their residential missions at Saint Laurent (Manitoba), Île à la Crosse (Saskatchewan), Fort Chipewyan (Alberta), lac la Biche and lac Sainte Anne as supply depots for their outpost missions. Lacombe, who took his vows as an Oblate in 1856, began to explore alternative transportation routes by participating in Métis Red River cart caravans and utilizing the steamboat and rail networks developed by Fort Benton (Montana) colonists.[131] The ability to circumvent the HBC was symptomatic of the erosion of their trade monopoly and the commons régime.

The Oblates developed a love-hate relationship with the Anglican and Methodist missionaries who flocked to the Bay posts as well. Conservative company traders were not always sympathetic to missionaries because the latter feared the effects of 'civilization' on the *ancien régime* fur trade. However, the Catholics felt doubly disadvantaged, since the ministers were oftentimes the co-religionists of the traders. Hence, they believed that the Protestants had more resources at their disposal.[132] In 1853, Lacombe decried that "we were received and tolerated [by HBC traders], but it was because they could not do otherwise."[133] Therefore, it was advantageous to keep the mission posts a short distance away from Company forts.

The increased westward expansion of Roman Catholic missions necessitated the reorganization of a number of ecclesiastical boundaries. In order to counter Anglican successes in the Mackenzie River basin, Taché decided that a new bishop would be required for the development of missions west and north of Saint Boniface. Mazenod agreed and selected Vital-Justin Grandin for the position on 11 December 1857. Grandin undertook an extensive tour of the northern missions in June 1861 in order to lay the groundwork for a new vicariate in the arctic. He selected the site of Providence mission (Fort Providence, North West Territories) as the new see. However, he turned down the appointment in the Athabasca-Mackenzie region and recommended that his colleague Henri Faraud be named vicar apostolic in his place.[134] Taché decided to separate the Saint Boniface diocese and put Grandin in charge of the new Saskatchewan vicariate in 1868. On 22 September 1871, Rome elevated Saint Boniface as a metropolitan see, which transformed Grandin's vicariate into the suffragan diocese of Saint Albert.

Following the abolition of *la mission ambulante*, a number of Métis leaders and Amerindian chiefs requested chaplains to accompany them on their hunts. Taché declined due to

the 'contrarieties' or inconveniences of having priests give missions exclusively to one band for a large part of the year.[135] However, he was forced to reconsider when his missionaries complained about the isolation and inefficacy of mission posts. Oblates such as Lacombe, René Rémas, Alexis André, Jean-Marie Joseph Lestanc, Jean-Baptiste Richer, Constantine Scollen, Jean-Marie Caër, Vital Fourmond, Léon Doucet, Alexandre-Marie Blanchet, Jean-Marie LeFloc'h and Jules Decorby therefore recommenced their *à la prairie* missions with the Métis until the bison herd disappeared in 1879. *La mission ambulante* with the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot began when Lacombe convinced Florent Vandenberghe, Secretary of the Oblate Superior General, that the Amerindian missions required a dedicated priest in 1864. Hence, Lacombe founded the mission of Saint Paul des Cris (Brosseau, Alberta) a year later. In 1872, Scollen and Doucet replaced Lacombe among the Plains Cree and Blackfoot, where they founded the mission of Notre Dame de la Paix (Calgary, Alberta) among the Blackfoot in 1873. In a similar fashion to Belcourt's Plains Ojibwa missions, these new residences combined itinerant and sedentary methods. They remained the only stations entirely dedicated to the Amerindians of the Saint Albert diocese until the instauration of the private property regime in the 1880s.

Huel stated insightfully that "it was in the field and not in the classroom that the Oblates acquired the necessary experience and expertise to evangelize the Native and Métis populations of the North West."[136] The Oblates found that their concept of popular missions was difficult to transpose because the "commencement, frequency and duration [was] dictated by local conditions and the lifestyle of the Native populations."[137] However, they inherited and developed new 'middle ground' operations with the Aboriginal peoples that accommodated them on their bison hunts. Indeed, this was elemental to their learning experience.

Endnotes

[1] Requesting missionaries for the Northwest, Ignace Bourget described the Northwest to de Mazenod in those words on 10 October 1844. Gaston Carrière, "La réponse des Oblats de l'Ouest canadien à la perception de la « mission » chez Mgr de Mazenod," *Vie Oblate Life* 42 (1983), 197.
[2] Elizabeth Elbourne, " 'The Lord Is Seen to Ride the Whirlwind': Protestant Evangelicalism in the 1790s,' in *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 30.
[3] *Ibid*., 41.
[4] *Ibid*., 34.
[5] *Ibid*., 51; with reference made to Alan Frederick Perry, "The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the London Missionary Society in the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Ideas," (Ph.D. Thesis, Washington University, 1974).
[6] *Ibid*., 12.
[7] Hughes, *Father Lacombe*, 57; See Elizabeth Elbourne, "Word Made of Flesh: Christianity, Modernity, and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff," *American Historical Review* 108(2) (April 2003), 453.
[8] Brian Stanley established described how the British reworked the philosophical currents of the Enlightenment to establish patterns in the culture of popular evangelicals and the religious elite. Brian Stanley, *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 8.
[9] Raymond, Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 12.
[10] Selkirk wrote "vagabond Canadians" in reference to the French Canadian *homme libres* or freemen as well as the Red River Métis. Québec Archiepiscopal Archives [hereafter QAA], Selkirk to Bishop Plessis, 4 April 1816; Martha McCarthy, *To Evangelize the Nations*, 4-5.
[11] QAA, Selkirk to Bishop Plessis, 4 April 1816.
[12] McCarthy, *op.cit*., 3.
[13] *Ibid*., 6, as quoted from Provincial Archives of Manitoba, MG2A1 vol. 14 #4798, Selkirk to Plessis, 16 April 1818, and vol. 15 #5021, Selkirk to Sherbrooke, 13 June 1818. The priest Pierre-Antoine Tabeau, the son of the trader and soldier during the French Régime, ventured up to lac la Pluie and reported against a mission at Red River. After hearing of the Battle of Seven Oaks just south of *la grenouillère* (Frog Plains), Tabeau believed the Church would be placed in a detrimental position in the context of the HBC and NWC rivalry.
[14] According to McCarthy, the first Jesuit missionary in what is now Manitoba was stationed at Fort Bourbon at lac aux Cèdres (York Factory) from 1693-1713. Charles-Michel Mésaiger accompanied la Vérendrye on his 1731 northern expedition, where they established Fort Saint Pierre at lac la Pluie (Rainy Lake). Claude-Godefroy Coquart spent the years 1742- 1744 at Fort la Reine (Portage la Prairie), while Father Mornie spent the winter at Fort Dauphin in 1750. McCarthy, *op.cit*., 1-2.
[15] Literally "the high country" or "the upper country." This name was given to the territory upstream from Montréal.
[16] In the Roman Catholic Church, 'secular' clergy refers to priests that do not belong to a religious order or congregation. McCarthy, *op.cit*., 5.
[17] *Canadiens* refers to the self-identifying term that French Canadians used from the French Régime and throughout much of the 19th century.
[18] QAA, Instructions to the Priests of the Red River Mission, 10 April 1818.
[19] QAA, Instructions to the Priests of the Red River Mission, 10 April 1818.
[20] QAA, Bishop Plessis to the Clergy of Canada, 29 March 1818.
[21] QAA, Instructions to the Priests of the Red River Mission, 10 April 1818.
[22] McCarthy, *op.cit.*, 8.
[23] *Ibid*.
[24] *Ibid*.
[25] QAA, Dumoulin to Bishop Plessis, 14 August 1818.
[26] Huel, *op. cit*., 12-13.
[27] McCarthy, *op. cit*., 14, 21; Huel, *op.* cit., 12-13; Brenda Gainer, "The Catholic Missionaries as Agents of Social Change" (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1978), 22. An 1823 survey of the 49th parallel that determined that Pembina was indeed part of the United States, so the HBC pressured the Catholic priests to abandon this mission,

even if it was located on the Company's original land grant. The clergy complied, and some Métis households moved across the border to the Plaines du Cheval Blanc (White Horse Plains, Manitoba) following an arrangement with Cuthbert Grant in 1824. Provencher then transferred the mission of Saint François Xavier there from Pembina, but many refused to follow the priests and therefore continued to hunt bison in the summer and winter months. Those Métis became known as the *hivernants* or winterers.

[28] Provencher never had more than four priests at a time during this period, and sometimes he only had one. He continually complained about the priests that requested to return to Québec, since they gained some experience and learned some of the indigenous languages. By leaving the mission field, however, they did not render useful service to the mission field. McCarthy, *op.cit*., 15; Huel, *op.cit.*, 13, in reference to D. Roy, "Monseigneur Provencher et son clergé séculier," Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique, *Sessions d'Études* 37 (1970), 8.

[29] Meaning "in the custom of the country," in reference to the unions between Christian men and Aboriginal women without the official sanction of the European clergy,

[30] *Ibid*.; QAA, Dumoulin to Bishop Plessis, 30 August 1818.

[31] McCarthy, *op. cit*., 8.

[32] Susan Sleeper-Smith wrote about how Catholicism could enhance female autonomy and social prominence in fur trade societies, and she does so by expanding on White's model of the 'middle ground.' See Susan Sleeper-Smith, "Women, Kin and Catholicism: New Perspectives on the Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory* 47 (2) (2000): 423-452.

[33] Huel, *op. cit.*, xix.

[34] QAA, Provencher to Bishop Plessis, 15 August 1818.

[35] QAA, Dumoulin to Bishop Plessis, 30 August 1818.

[36] McCarthy, *op.cit*., 10, 14; QAA, Provencher to Plessis, 13 September 1818.

[37] Laura Peers, "Les femmes de la colonie de la Rivière-Rouge (1812-1870)," *Cahiers franco-canadiens de l'Ouest* 10(1) (1998), 8; McCarthy, *op.cit.*, 15. Saint Peter's mission was founded near present day Selkirk, Manitoba. Initially it was established nearby Netley Creek, but later moved to Cook's Creek.

[38] Sometimes spelled 'Bellecourt' or 'Bellecours' in a number of sources, but I have chosen 'Belcourt' because this was the appellation the most commonly used in primary sources.

[39] *Ibid*., 76, 78. The noun "Sauteux" was derived from the place of origin of the Plains Ojibwa, who migrated from Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario to the western Plains region. English-language historians continue to employ the term "Saulteaux," which is corrupted from the original French pronunciation and spelling.

[40] *Ibid.*, 80; Elbourne, *Word Made of Flesh*," 453.

[41] McCarthy, *op. cit*., 20, in reference to Herman Sprenger, "The Métis Nation: The Buffalo Hunt vs. Agriculture in the Red River Settlement (Circa 1810-1870)," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 3(1) (1972): 159-178.

[42] McCarthy, *op.cit.*, 18.

[43] *Ibid*., 89.

[44] *Ibid*., 89.

[45] *Ibid.*, 87.

[46] *Ibid.*, 87.

[47] *Ibid*., 88. L'oeuvre *de la propagation de la foi* is a lay society providing financial support for French foreign missions. Founded in 1822, it was endorsed by the Pope in 1823, and by 1836 it had established branches in most of Europe and Québec.

[48] See W.L. Morton, "George-Antoine Bellecourt," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, n.d., <http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=4821&&PHPSESSID=d0evuehgssq7qosjq189aujor1> (6 May 2009).

[49] Huel, *op.cit.*,15; Gaston Carrière, *Histoire documentaire de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie-Immaculée dans l'Est du Canada*, vol. 3 (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1961), 166.

[50] Huel, *op.cit*., 15, in reference to Gaston Carrière, "Fondation et développement des missions catholiques dans la Terre de Rupert et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 41 (1971), 254; McCarthy, *op.cit*., 23.

[51] Huel, *op.cit*, 15.

[52] Lucia Ferretti, *Brève histoire de l'Église catholique au Québec* (Montréal : Boréal, 1999), 56.

[53] Carrière, "La réponse des Oblats," 1.

[54] Some historians have referred to the 'home' missions as 'local' or 'popular' missions. At this time, little distinction was made by the Oblates between their 'home' and 'foreign' missions other than by geography.

[55] Also known as *langue d'oc* or *Occitan*.

[56] McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth*, 3-4.

[57] Claude Champagne, "Évangélisation chez Mgr Vital Grandin, o.m.i.," *Vie Oblate Life* 42(2-3) (Sept-Dec 1983), 232.
[58] McCarthy, *op.cit.*, 4.
[59] Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 34.
[60] Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 4, in reference to Émilien Lamirande, "L'Annonce de la parole de Dieu selon Mgr de Mazenod. Le ministère évangélique de la Congrégation," *Études Oblates* 18 (1959), III, 123-125.
[61] *Ibid.*, 6.
[62] McCarthy, *op.cit.,* 4.
[63] *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*: the Oblate motto.
[64] Robert Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1995), 11.
[65] McCarthy, *op.cit.*, 5-6.
[66] De Mazenod to Pedecini, *Missions* 70 (1936), 501. The letter was written 30 decembre 1825. McCarthy, *op.cit.*, 6; translated from "dès qu'il jugera que l'occasion est favorable." Carrière, "La réponse des Oblats de l'Ouest canadien à la perception de la « mission » chez Mgr de Mazenod," 194.
[67] McCarthy, *op.cit.*, 6; de Mazenod, "de Mazenord to Cardinal (unnamed) n.d.,"*Missions* 70 (1936), 502-3.
[68] Claude Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest canadien : mission et église chez Mgr Vital Grandin, o.m.i. (1829-1902)*(Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1983), 64.
[69] Huel, *op.cit*., 3, in reference to Donat Levasseur, *Histoire des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée: Essaie de synthèse*, vol. 1, 1815-1898 (Montréal: Maison Provinciale O.M.I., 1983), 28-29. The mandate came from Matthew 28: 18-19: "Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
[70] Champagne, *op.cit.*, 21.
[71] Champagne, *op.cit.*, 21.
[72] *Ibid.*, 22.
[73] *Ibid*., 22.
[74] Choquette, *op.cit.*, 13; Champagne, *op.cit.*, 22-23, 25-26, 33-34.
[75] "Generally we do not force anyone into the foreign missions and we certainly do not want to send anyone who has not expressed a clear desire to serve in them." Champagne, *op.cit.*, 34.
[76] *Ibid*., 34; Huel, *op.cit.*, 3-4; Champagne, *op.cit*., 6.
[77] Champagne, *op.cit.*, 31.
[78] Huel, *op.cit.*, 2.
[79] Choquette, *op.cit*, 10.
[80] *Ibid.*, 13; Huel, *op.cit.*, 2; Choquette, *op.cit.*, 2.
[81] Huel, *op.cit*., 30.
[82] Meaning "Instructions from our venerated founder in relation to the foreign missions." Gaston Carrière, "La réponse des Oblats de l'Ouest canadien à la perception de la « mission » chez Mgr de Mazenod," 196, 12, in which he cites the *Instruction de notre vénéré Fondateur relative aux missions étrangères* (Rome : Maison générale, 1936).
[83] These prayers are known in the vernacular as the Lord's Prayer (Our Father), Hail Mary, Apostle's Creed and the Glory Be.
[84] "They [the missionary Oblates] will use all the means necessary for neophytes to see, through their eyes, the light of religious doctrine and knowledge, and to fix it vigourously in their memories." *Ibid.*, 12.
[85] Tolly Bradford has done research into the communication networks that existed between Protestant missions around the world. His aim is to situate indigenous missionaries within the British Protestant world. Among his most recent conference papers is "Networkings: Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century British Missions in South Africa and Canada," *African Studies Association/Canadian Association of African Studies*, November 2004, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.
[86] Elbourne, "Word Made of Flesh," 436.
[87] "not because their character is barbarian, ferocious or savage, but because there is something savage in their lifestyle. The title of being civilized corresponds to the nations that follow one religion, live under one form of government, obey one set of laws and submit themselves to the arts and industry." Huel, *op. cit.*, 306; cited from Alexandre-Antonin Taché, *Esquisse sur le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique*, 2^{e}. éd. (Montréal: Beauchemin et Fils, 1901), 85.
[88] Elbourne, *op.cit*., 436; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 1, 31
[89] Choquette, *op.cit.*, 16.

[90] *Ibid.* 194.
[91] Ferretti, *op.cit.*, 55.
[92] See Henri Bourassa, *La langue gardienne de la foi* (Montréal: Bibliothèque de l'Action française, n.d.). For detailed analysis of this type of clerical French Canadian nationalism, I recommend Frédéric Boily, *La pensée nationaliste de Lionel Groulx* (Sillery: Les Éditions du Septentrion, 2003).
[93] John S. Galbraith, "The Hudson's Bay Company Under Fire," *Canadian Historical Review* 30(4) (1949), 323.
[94] Huel, *op.cit*., 16-17.
[95] Ens, *op.cit*., 73, in reference to Alvin Charles Gluek, "The Struggle for the British Northwest: A Study in Canadian-American Relations" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1953), 27.
[96] *Ibid*., 72-92. The Sayer trial of 1849 started when two Métis merchants, one French and one English, were arrested for illegally trading against the HBC monopoly. Seeing how the Company was the governing body of Rupert's Land, the British heads decided to try the two Métis according to British law. The jury, composed of Red River settlers, was instructed about British law and found them guilty. 400 Métis then circled the courtroom and the Judge refused to sentence them. Sayer then declared that trade was free as he exited the court. The HBC stopped trying to regulate the monopoly after this even, so the most ambitious Métis were allowed to trade freely in practice with American traders south of the border.
[97] *Ibid*., 82.
[98] "Their [the Plains Ojibwa] quasi-total ignorance of Christian things appeared obvious to him [Aubert]." Donat Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie-Immaculée dans l'Ouest et le Nord du Canada, 1845-1967* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995), 37.
[99] "He managed to convince himself that the Sauteux dispositions were not warm enough to merit the presence of a missionary, whose presence would be much more useful elsewhere." Taché, *Vingt Années de Missions*, 33.
[100] Huel, *op,cit.*, 20.
[101] Ibid., 20. From an insightful letter to his mother while he was at Ile-à-la-Crosse on 4 January 1851.
[102] "We are mostly talking about poor, ignorant and miserable Amerindians, so grand eloquence is not necessary to convince them." Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission*, 18; Anne-Hélène Kerbiriou, *Les Indiens de l'Ouest canadien vus par les Oblats* (Sillery: Les Éditions du Septentrion, 1996), 37.
[103] Kerbiriou, *op.cit*., 37.
[104] "As far as possible to bring the Good News to the salvation of the savage peoples of the North West." Taché, *op.cit*., 28.
[105] Huel, *op.cit*., 47; Barbara Benoit, "The Mission at Île-à-la-Crosse," *The Beaver*, Winter (1980), 41.
[106] Huel, *op.cit*., 47.
[107] *Ibid*., 24.
[108] *Ibid*., 24.
[109] Carrière, *op. cit.*, 195, as cited from de Mazenod to Guigues, 10 January 1851, *Lettres aux correspondants d'Amérique, 1841-1850* (Rome: Postulation Générale O.M.I., 1977), 111.
[110] "A means to procure the glory of God, to contribute to the extension of Religion, and to add to the allure of our Congregation." Carrière, *op.cit.* 196, cited from *Instruction de notre vénéré Fondateur relative aux missions étrangères* (Rome : Maison générale, 1936), 4; "One has to overcome the forces of nature at the Hudson's Bay mission. It would take a miracle not to succomb to it." de Mazenod is actually referring to the James Bay missions, but Carrière assures us that the Oblate founder expresses his repeated admiration for the missionaries of the West and the Arctic. Carrière, *op.cit*., 195, as cited from Letter to Guigues, 10 February 1851 in *Eugene de Mazenod, Lettres aux correspondants d'Amérique, 1841-1850* (Rome : General O.M.I. Postulation, 1977), 17.
[111]Huel, *op.cit.*, 24.
[112]*Ibid.*, 24-25.
[113] In the annual report of the Red River missions, the unnamed author described the missions to the north and west of Saint Boniface as the "exterior" mission posts. "Missions de la Rivière Rouge," *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée* [hereafter *Missions*] 1 (1862) 51.
[114] "The venerable M. J.-B. Thibault […] commenced a series of courses and works that earned him the title of first apostle of the Siskatchewan Valley." Taché, *Vingt Années de Missions*, 69.
[115] "the southern plains, all the way to the Parc-aux-Chiens river." This river was probably near Rocky Mountain House. AD, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 24; I am not sure where la rivière du Parc-aux-Chiens is located on the southern Plains, or how by what

name it is referred to today. However, it was surely in Blackfoot territory in the Rocky Mountain foothills. Taché, *Vingt Années de Missions*, 69.
[116] The NWC and HBC tried unsuccessfully to establish permanent trading posts among the Blackfoot at *la fourche des Gros-Ventre* (the South Saskatchewan River and Red Deer River forks near the present-day village of Empress, Alberta). Chesterfield House was founded in 1800 and abandoned in 1804. Chesterfied House number two was established in 1822 and abandoned the next year. Finally, in 1832, the Peigan Post (also known as Old Bow Fort) was built further west on the South Saskatchewan River at the base of the Rocky Mountains. It also had a brief two year existence. Binnema, *op.cit.*, 186-192.
[117] "among the Canadiens hired at the forts, as well as the Métis, born from unions between whites and Amerindian women." Taché, *op.cit.*, 69.
[118] By Saskatchewan country, I am referring to the river and its subsequent branches leading to the Rocky Mountains. I am not referring to the political boundaries of the present-day province of Saskatchewan.
[119] The 'Horse Wars' were fought over access to horses from 1810-1850. The diminishment of the bison herd quickly transformed the 'Horse Wars' into the 'Bison Wars' from 1840-1870, which corresponds exactly to the 'transitional period' of the commons régime as outlined by Spry.
[120] "There were not enough missionaries to sacrifice only one." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, "Aristide Philippot [hereafter Philippot], Manuscrit : "La mission de Saint-Paul-des-Cris et les premières origines des missions indiennes de l'Alberta-Saskatchewan [hereafter Saint-Paul-des-Cris]," 1935, 2.
[121] *Ibid.*, 2.
[122] Taché*, op.cit*., 108; PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 98.
[123] Taché, "Missions de la Rivière Rouge, 1858," *Missions* 1 (1862), 50-52.
[124] "only a small number of Amerindians frequented these ouptosts, a few families that were binded to Métis through kinship." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, "Philippot, " Saint-Paul-des-Cris," 1935, 1.
[125] Taché, *Vingt Années de Mission*, 135.
[126] See PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 113-114.
[127] Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie-Immaculée dans l'Ouest et le Nord du Canada, 1845-1967*, 46.
[128] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal," 13-14.
[129] Hughes, *op.cit*., 57.
[130] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6602, Boîte 159, Lacombe, "Relations d'un voyage fait aux États-Unis 1869," 1.
[131] Hippolyte Leduc, "Lettre du R. P. Leduc au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général, Saint Albert, 20 décembre 1869," *Missions* 10 (1872), 23; *Le Nouveau Monde*, 12 August 1869, reprinted in *Missions* 9 (1870), 114-115.
[132] Huel, *op.cit*., 14-15.
[133] Hughes, *op.cit*., 57.
[134] Grandin wrote a journal of this voyage and published it in the *Missions* quarterly publications. Vital Grandin, "Journal de Monseigneur Grandin, 20 juin 1861," *Missions* 3 (1864) 223-224.
[135] Lacombe, "Lettre du même au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 263.
[136]*Ibid*., 47.
[137] *Ibid*., 34.

Chapter Three: "*Tu es bien l'homme de Dieu c'est toi que j'ai vu dans mon rêve*:" Missionizing the Métis

The Métis During the Transitional Period

The Métis were a people who sought to redefine their socio-economic development and national destinies in light of the commercial opportunities of the pemmican and bison robe trades. Alternative fur markets from the United States offered a new source of revenue for bison hunters. In order to accumulate wealth, the Métis had to gain access to contested bison territory by force, which required large, multiethnic, quasi-military expeditions. By travelling with the Métis, hunt chaplains regularly identified Scottish "Half-Breeds," English "Country born," and even Plains Ojibwa, Assiniboine, Plains Cree, Blackfoot and Tsuu T'ina families in their ranks. The missionaries found the bison hunting economy to be a defining quality of the Métis, often referring to them collectively as *les chasseurs*.[1] As one can see, religious sectarianism occurred mostly among the European clergy than it did among Aboriginals.

In a letter dated 27 August 1818, Dumoulin announced to Plessis that he and Provencher had baptized 73 'little' *bois brûlés* on the hunt, and three days later, he found the mission to be so successful that he asked Plessis if they should object to the baptizing of "the *brûlés* whose Protestant fathers are absent, but whose infidel mothers wish to have them baptized."[2] Over sixty years later, Lestanc described his *hivernement* experience to the same effect. He claimed that more than 60 pagan families were living with Christian families in three villages separated about 12 miles from each other, and that he even administered a few baptisms to the Cree. On the other hand, he complained the Plains Ojibwa, who formed the majority of the camp, were utterly disinterested in his teachings despite being the first to hear the Gospel in Saint Boniface.[3] He was expected to speak Cree because it was *la langue du pays*—the political language of the camp: "En hivernement, c'est le cris seul qui se parle."[4]

The *hivernement* experience grew from the economic diversification of the Red River Settlement in the 1840s. The Métis increasingly differentiated themselves upon occupational lines, such as farmers, labourers, freighters and hunters. While some Métis continued subsistence agriculture in their villages, many others became year-round hunters as they traded bison robes as an adjunct to pemmican. During the winter months, furs were thicker, longer and more valuable, so the *hivernants* adapted their temporary wintering villages to the opportunities

of the bison robe trade. Jules Decorby offers the most vivid portrayal of the wintering village in his letter dated 1 November 1879:

> On appelle *hivernement* une place que nos sauvages ou métis choisissent pour y passer l'hiver, et se livrer de là aux expéditions et aventures de chasse. A cet effet, ils se construisent, au milieu de nos immenses prairies, des maisons provisoires qu'ils abandonnent à la fonte des neiges, et où, en attendant, ils trouveront un sûr abri. C'est habituellement après un examen sérieux que l'emplacement est définitivement choisi ; il est nécessaire, en effet, d'avoir à proximité du bois de construction et de chauffage, et, de plus, d'être à portée de troupeaux de buffalos que l'on veut poursuivre, pour en avoir la viande et la robe. […] Les métis abat les bois, se construit une maison, la cimente, y met un bon plancher et y dispose tout avec une solidité et une coquetterie qui sembleraient indiquer une prise de possession définitive. Il n'en est rien pourtant, et tout ce luxe ne tend qu'à se procurer un abri chaud pour quelques mois d'hiver.
>
> We call *hivernement* a place where our Amerindians or Métis choose to stay the winter, and to go from there on their hunting expeditions and adventures. To this effect, they build themselves, in the middle of the immense prairies, temporary houses that they abandon once the snow melts, and where, in the meantime, they will find shelter. It is after a serious examination of the surroundings that a definitive site is chosen; it is necessary, in effect, to have in proximity wood for construction and fires, and, additionally, the buffalo herd must be within range in order to obtain meat and robes. The Métis cut the wood, build themselves a house, cement it, and install good flooring, all of which has the solidity and appearance of a building that definitively marks a claim of possession. It goes without saying, however, that all of this luxury is only designed for warm shelter during a few winter months.[5]

Like the Plains Amerindians, the Métis were experts at locating camp sites. First they looked for water, trees for firewood and construction, protection from the elements, and—most importantly—proximity to the bison herd. However, unlike the Amerindians, the Métis winterers built temporary villages with cemented wooden structures to live through the winter. This lifestyle was particularly attractive for the Métis freemen or *Gens libres* who could not obtain salaried jobs with the HBC. It was fully adapted to the bison robe trade at Kittson's fort in Pembina as well as the provisioning market for pemmican at HBC forts.

The evolution of the Métis in the Upper Saskatchewan region occurred in a similar fashion. Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers visited the elder *Canadien* freeman Gabriel Dumont (the elder) at his settlement on the shores of lac du Diable (Devil's Lake, renamed lac Sainte Anne in 1842). Dumont, who was lucky enough to be employed by the HBC after the merger, established his settlement 75 kilometers northwest of fort des Prairies (the name used by the *voyageurs* and the Métis for Edmonton House) in 1830. Like the Red River Métis, Dumont found it difficult to secure employment for his three sons, who consequently became *hivernants*. Lacombe described their way of life in his memoirs:

> Habitant sur les bords d'un lac rempli de bons poissons blancs, ils s'y approvisionnaient abondamment, surtout en automne. En hiver, les hommes allaient à la chasse des grandes prairies avec leurs chevaux et leurs traines. Les chiens et leurs traines étaient loin d'être oubliés. Après un

> mois et plus, on revenait chargé de belle viande fraiche de buffalos. En été, on organisait une vraie caravane. C'est ce que je veux raconter dans ce chapitre. Comme un prêtre accompagnait comme chapelin cette aventureuse excursion, bien des fois j'ai pris part à cette mission ambulante.
>
> Living on the shores of a lake, they stock up abundantly with good white fish, especially in autumn. In winter, the men went on the hunt of the great prairies with their horses and their sleds. The dogs and their sleighs were far from being forgotten. After more than a month, we came back loaded with fresh buffalo meat. In the summer, we organized a real caravan. This is what I want to describe in this chapter. The priest accompanied, like a chaplain, this adventurous excursion, and I took part in this *mission ambulante* many times.[6]

The Métis missions at lac Sainte Anne mirrored those from Red River and Pembina. During the large *en caravane* expeditions of the Spring and Summer, which normally numbered between 1000 and 1500 people, the Upper Saskatchewan Métis followed the bison south of the North Saskatchewan River, while the latter followed them west to la montagne Tortue (Turtle Mountain, Manitoba), la montagne du Bois (Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan), the Touchwood Hills and la montagne aux Cyprès (Cypress Hills, Alberta). Even though the Upper Saskatchewan Métis did not have the same access to American forts as those in Red River, the historians Foster, Harrison and McLaren have pointed out how they developed routes outside of Company control that connected them with private traders in Red River.[7] Thus, the Métis had proven that they had the cultural capacity to respond to new market opportunities through their technological skills and entrepreneurial ethos.[8] Nonetheless, the bison robe trade was an adjunct to the provisioning trade: they also continued to supply Company forts by providing what they called *taureau* (pimikkan, pemmican) or *viande sèche* (dried meat, jerkey). This type of food was the main provisioning source of the fur trade and indeed all bison-hunting communities.[9]

Lacombe's travels during the 1860s traced the extent of those networks. In 1862, he claimed to have organized a large brigade of Red River carts from fort des Prairies to Red River and back with the Métis, all in the space of one month each way. In August to November 1869, he accompanied three Métis from Saint Albert to Fort Benton (Montana) as they reached the Missouri River.[10] The access to American water and rail transportation networks indicates how the geographical isolation of Rupert's Land from Euro-Americans was eroding. Doucet noted in his journal that the annual HBC canoe trips to York Factory, which transported furs and merchandise, were discontinued in favour of land routes during the 1870s. Consequently, a number of employees had lost their jobs and returned to the *Gens libres* lifestyle of the Métis bison hunt.[11]

In the 1850s, the Plains environment became increasingly violent as increased hunting on the Plains reduced the extent of the northern bison herd. Those who wished to gain access to the bison by force—like the Métis—were required to enter Plains Cree and Assiniboine territory, as well as Blood, Peigan, Siksika and Sarcee territory, in present-day Saskatchewan, Alberta and Montana. From la montagne aux Cyprès (Cypress Hills, Saskatchewan-Alberta), Decorby wrote that "Les buffalos, hôtes entêtés de ce pays, ont attiré tout ce monde, mélange de diverses races et de diverses religions."[12] However, the herd kept retreating into Blackfoot territory. In this context, the most at risk were the Plains Cree and the Assiniboine, who pushed westward in a major migration and effectively wedged a place along the North Saskatchewan River valley between the Blackfoot to the southern Plains and the Dene to the northern woodlands. However, once the epidemics of smallpox in 1857, scarlet fever in 1865, and again smallpox in 1870 took a devastating toll on the Blackfoot, they could no longer defend their territory south of fort des Prairies (Edmonton House). During these years of epidemic, the bands negotiated a series of fragile 'peaces' that permitted their households to scatter and cope with the disruptive effects of famine and disease.

This represented an opportunity for the Upper Saskatchewan Métis to gain access to the bison south of fort des Prairies. The establishment of peace necessarily meant open access to resources. As Lestanc explained, "quand la paix fut faite entre les Pieds-Noirs et les Cris, et entre les Métis et les Pieds-Noirs, les Cris se dispersèrent en petits camps, les métis commencèrent à prendre leur quartiers d'hiver le long de la rivière Bataille et de la rivière la Biche [Red Deer River] et le buffalo trouva partout des ennemies."[13] The Métis *hivernants* established a temporary settlement in the woods of lac du Boeuf (Buffalo Lake, near Red Deer, Alberta) in the winter of 1872-1873, and this location would prove to be an important wintering site until 1877.[14]

Both before and after the 1869 sale of Rupert's Land to the newly formed Dominion of Canada, many Red River Métis migrated west and joined the Upper Saskatchewan Métis: "the newcomers told of their alienation from the Canadians who acted as conquerors."[15] Many of the migrants turned to the wintering way of life. In 1875, Grandin wrote that "Sur 700 Métis établis à St. Albert au moins 300 sont allés se fixer sur les rives du Lac du Bœuf."[16] Grandin recognized that bison meat was still the primary source of food for these people, and the dramatic price increase in bison robes during the 1870s certainly contributed to the popularity of the trade. But

in these violent circumstances, the need to mobilize as large armies was critical to all who wanted to profit from the opportunities of the bison hunt: "in the endemic warfare that seemed to prevail between the Cree and the Blackfoot, the Métis in small household bands would fare disastrously."[17] Nonetheless, Doucet remarked that the Métis were much more efficient at hunting than most Amerindian bands: "Les Métis sont meilleurs chasseurs que les Indiens ; ils sont mieux armés. Mais ils tuent tant qu'ils peuvent et n'en prennent qu'une partie. Du vrai gaspillage."[18] Indeed, their semi-annual hunts permitted them to accumulate a much larger base of resources than most other Plains Amerindian societies.

Spreading the Good News

If there was a great deal of fluidity among the Métis in terms of ethnic identity, the same was true in terms of religious identity. Doucet mentioned in his journal that he was approached by a band of 'Assiniboine' bison hunters at the mission of Notre Dame de la Paix (Calgary, Alberta) in 1875. The Chief named Isiniki told him that he belonged to *la nation des Cris* and was once baptized by Thibault at Carleton. From there he joined the "Assiniboines des Montagnes," who were led by *le Grand Chef* Bear's Paw (Mistawasis)—a Methodist.[19] Doucet recorded that, "quoique Méthodiste, il [Mistawasis] affectionnait toujours la Religion Catholique. Il était politique comme beaucoup de ses semblables."[20]

The historian Heather Devine explains that the Plains Cree chief Mistawasis, whose band was part of the wasahikanwiyiniwak (House People), "was of Métis extraction, being the offspring of a Canadien or métis with the surname of Bélanger and a Cree woman."[21] Indeed, Mistawasis was the father of Keksayiwew (Bobtail), the principal war chief of the Beaver Hills-Rocky Mountain Cree band, and the younger Sehkosowayanew (Peau de Belette, Ermineskin), also a recognized Plains Cree chief.[22] His sons were known by their respective French names: Alexis Piché and Jean-Baptiste Piché. Once Rundle and two other Wesleyan missionaries had established themselves at Fort Edmonton in 1840, they became the first Christian missionaries in the area and thus ministered to Mistawasis and his band. However, when the news spread that Roman Catholic missionaries had returned to the North-West, Alexis Piché waited until "both Simpson [Governor of the HBC] and Rowand [Chief Factor of Edmonton House] [were] out of the country" before traveling to Red River to request a priest for his people. Thibault, who spoke Cree, was incapable of accompanying Piché that year. Yet, Piché returned with Thibault's

assurance that the latter would personally find him the next year. In the meantime, he was given a copy of Blanchet's illustrated catechism ladder, which would help him tell his people "what the Catholic priests teach here if they accept the teachings of a Protestant minister living in a fort not too distant from these people."[23] By inviting the missionary-priest to the West and by showing the ladder to his people, the 'Métis Piché' played an active part in spreading Roman Catholicism in the North-West. His actions indirectly led to the founding of the lac Sainte Anne mission in 1842.[24]

The chiefs Alexis and Jean-Baptiste Piché were Métis. Both married Métis wives as well. However, both claimed Cree kinship as they took treaty in the 1870s.[25] Their example best illustrates how the generations of Métis prior to 1885 perceived religion, politics and identity differently from Western Europeans. This was most apparent and especially problematic once the Métis had to grapple with the fixed categories laid out by Canadian legal authorities.

Reviving Religious and Cultural Traditions

Many Métis households practiced what historians such as Foster have called 'folk Roman Catholicism.' This is a problematic term because it connotes a primitive set of beliefs, which certainly was not the case. For the purposes of this thesis, I will employ the term 'Métis Roman Catholicism.' Indeed, Catholic beliefs and cultural expressions had been transmitted down through generations by Aboriginal oral traditions. The *Canadien* ancestors of the French speaking Métis knew about heaven and hell and thus recognized the necessity of the sacraments for salvation. Many of them felt it necessary to transmit these practices to their progeny, as well as the other Amerindians they contacted. Later generations remembered French and Latin prayers more than fifty years after the departure of the Jesuits from *le pays d'en haut*. Lacombe pointed out that the Métis could recite prayers and canticles prior to the return of Roman Catholic missionaries during the nineteenth century.

> Un jour, dans un de mes voyages, j'ai rencontré sur les bords d'un lac une famille métisse vivant entièrement comme des sauvages mais bien disposés à se faire chrétiens. Je demande au père s'il sait quelque chose du bon Dieu. "Je sais un peu prier," dit-il. Et alors il me récite l'oraison dominicale et la salutation angélique en latin que lui avait appris son vieux père qui vivant alors au milieu des sauvages. Malgré l'oublie des devoirs religieux, par l'éloignement des prêtres et de l'Église, malgré les désordres et la démoralisation de nos anciens voyageurs, qui après s'être éloignés du foyer domestique se trouvaient dans un pays sans loi, il est consolant de savoir qu'il n'a pas perdu la foi.
>
> One day, during one of my travels, I met on the side of a lake a Métis family that lived entirely like Amerindians but were so well disposed as to by Christians. I asked the father if he knew

> something of God. "I know how to pray a little," he said. And so he recited to me the Sunday oration and the angelic salutation in Latin that his grandfather had taught among the Amerindians. Despite the negligence of religious duties, despite the disorder and demoralization of the old voyageurs, who strayed from the domestic homeland for a lawless country, it is nonetheless comforting to know that he had not lost his faith.[26]

In his "Mémoire sur les Métis," Lacombe also described how the return of the Black Robe was a prophecy passed down through memory:

> À l'arrivée des missionnaires, de suite ils reconnurent la robe noire dont leur avait parlé leurs pères qui étaient chrétiens, et qui, malgré leur vie de dissipation et de sauvagerie, n'avait pas oublié leur religion. Ils disaient à leurs enfants et femmes : « Un jour, des hommes habillés en noir et avec la croix à la main, viendront vous dire ce qu'il faut faire pour servir Dieu comme il veut être servi. » C'est pour cela qu'à l'arrivée des premiers prêtres ou *hommes de la prière*, ces bons métis vinrent à nous avec la confiance pour être baptisés et recevoir les sacrements de l'Église.
>
> At the arrival of the missionaries, they immediately recognized the black robe that their Christian fathers had told them about, and who, despite their lives dissipated into savagery, did not forget their religion. They said to their children and wives: "One day, men dressed in black and with a cross in hand will come to tell you what must be done in order to serve God like he wants to be served." That is why, at the arrival of the first priests or *men of prayer*, these good Métis came to us with the confidence to be baptized and to receive the sacraments of the Church.[27]

Lacombe's anecdotes reveal how his arrival validated their memory and their prophecy. The Métis themselves approached the priests to receive the sacraments rather than the other way around. This implies that missionaries could only extend and encourage Métis religious practices and beliefs, which was indeed part of their revivalist training in France and Canada. They were, in effect, reviving a part of Métis cultural heritage.

Métis elders were especially welcoming of the Black Robes. When Thibault visited lac Sainte Anne in 1842, he was moved by Métis elders who repeatedly knelt to his feet as they requested the sacraments of baptism, confession and Eucharist.[28] Such cultural expressions were commonly interpreted by missionaries as a genuine desire for the missionary. Doucet remarked that the Oblates could do a significant amount of 'good' among the Métis: he was accustomed to the catechisms with children, visits to families and the sick, special instructions to 'the most ignorant' Catholics of the group. He considered his missions to the Métis to be "Le ministère le plus facile. […] Ils se montrèrent en général de bons Chrétiens attentifs aux bons avis du Missionnaire."[29]

The research performed by Beal, Foster and Zuk reveals that the Métis did not depend entirely upon European or Canadian priests in order to practice their brand of Catholicism. They noted that infant baptism occurred in the absence of missionaries at their wintering settlement in

lac du Boeuf, and that this tradition went back to the days of their ancestors, who felt the need to baptize their children by their Amerindian wives and that those children, in turn, baptized their own.[30] The role played by the wives is particularly important here. It supports Susan Sleeper-Smith's argument about the empowerment of women as proselytizers and agents of cultural change within the fur trade families.[31] Indeed, Aboriginal women were critical to the creation of Catholic family networks and kinship ties and it was they who performed the rite of baptism. The Métis at lac du Boeuf perpetuated this 'middle ground' tradition well into the 1870s.

Roman Catholic missionaries found common ground with cultural heritages other than their own. In 1868, Grandin wrote in a letter that Roman Catholic priests performed revival missions with the "Iroquois Métis de la Montagne," which according to him, was all the proof that was needed to demonstrate the success of Oblate missions in the North-West:[32]

> Quoique notre mission ait une grande étendue, le nombre des personnes qui en dépendent n'est pas considérable : il s'élève à peine à onze cents, dont sept cents environs baptisés. Ils sont de tribus et de races diverses. Les sauvages diminuent ou restent dans un état stationnaire, tandis que les métis augmentent et d'une manière assez rapide : un seul fait le démontrera. Il y a une quarantaine d'années que trois Iroquois et un Canadien vinrent s'établir au pied des montagnes Rocheuses et y épousèrent des sauvagesses. De ces quatre familles sont sorties cent trente personnes ; elles forment une tribu.
>
> Even though our mission covers a large territory, the number of people who depend on it is not that significant: there is only eleven hundred of them, with seven hundred baptized. They belong to diverse tribes and races. The Amerindians fall or stay at around the same level, while the Métis increase at a rather rapid pace: one particular example demonstrates this fact. About forty years past, three Iroquois and one Canadien settled at the foot of the Rocky Mountains and took Amerindian wives. Of these four families spurted one hundred and thirty people; they now form a tribe.[33]

The three Iroquois were, in fact, canoemen from Kahnawake near Montréal, although their identities were not explicitly mentioned.[34] After being hired by the NWC as salaried *engagés*, they chose to remain in the North-West as free traders after the merger.[35] Pierre-Jean de Smet, the Belgian-born Jesuit, was on a peacemaking mission between the Flat-Heads and the Blackfoot in 1845-46 when he first contacted the 'Iroquois' Métis at Mount Millet (nearby Jasper House). He met the old Louis Kwaragkwante (The Travelling Sun, Wandering Sun, Louis Cahiheue or Calihoo) and his family:[36]

> He has been forty years absent from his country, during which he has never seen a priest—has dwelt in the forest of Athabasca on Peace river and subsisted by hunting and fishing. The good old man was overwhelmed with joy, and the children experienced a similar feeling with their father. I will give you the old man's words in English, on learning that I was a priest: "How glad I am to have come here, for I have not seen a priest in many years. Today I behold a priest, as I did in my own country—my heart rejoices—wherever you go I shall follow with my children—all will hear the word of prayer—all will have the happiness to receive baptism.—Therefore my heart

> rejoices and is happy." The little Iroquois camp immediately set out to follow me to Fort Jasper. Most of them knew their prayers in Iroquois.[37]

Kwaragkwante had not seen a priest since he left Lower Canada to work for the NWC. The fact that most of his children knew how to recite prayers and practice other Iroquois customs suggested that they too practiced a form of Métis Roman Catholicism that was transmitted generationally from one to the other. Here too, the elders held an important role in shaping and perpetuating their Roman Catholic heritage. They remembered the Black Robes with nostalgia and great enthusiasm; they encouraged their children to listen to the priest's instructions and participate in his sacraments.

I have mentioned before that 'Métis Roman Catholicism' was shaped by the Aboriginal oral traditions. However, I also think it is structured within the cadres of indigenous spirituality as well. Consider the descriptions of memories and dreams that Fourmond described in his correspondence to the Superior General of the Oblates on 4 September 1870. In this particular letter, Fourmond described a conversation he had with his interpreter and guide, Paul Fayans, as they performed *la mission ambulante* with *le grand chef* Louison Montagnais near Jolie Butte (Goodridge, Alberta).

> - Père, me dit-il, c'est bien extraordinaire, ce que j'ai vu cette nuit dans mon sommeil ; il me semblait voir le ciel ouvert. Ah ! que c'était beau ! quelles belles loges ! quels beaux arbres ! quels beaux anges j'ai vus ! Puis il y avait comme une immense traînée de lumière, de la couleur de l'arc-en-ciel, qui venait jusque sur la terre. Là se trouvaient de grands arbres couverts de verdure et au pied de l'un de ces arbres une femme assise, dont le visage était voilé, ce qui fait que je n'ai pu la connaitre ; mais aussitôt une voix est venue d'en haut qui m'a dit :
> - Celle que tu vois au pied de l'arbre, c'est celle qui va monter par ce chemin dans la gloire du Grand Esprit.
>
> Ainsi parla Paul ; puis, ses yeux fixés sur les miens, la bouche à demi ouverte, il attendait respectueusement ma réponse.
> - Eh bien ! mon ami, lui dis-je, il faut bien croire qu'un si beau rêve vient du bon Dieu et que quelque belle âme de notre compagnie va s'envoler dans la demeure du Grand Esprit. Qui est-ce ? Nous le saurons peut-être plus tard ; pour le moment le bon Dieu nous le cache, peut-être pour ne pas nous contrister d'avance.
>
> Quelques jours plus tard, sa pauvre femme, l'une des meilleures et plus saintes de la colonie, tombait malade et mourait après une douzaine de jours de souffrance terribles. Elle est morte de la mort des saints, comme la plupart de nos catholiques, souffrant avec une patience et une résignation admirables. Elle eut la consolation d'être assistée à ses derniers moments par Mgr GRANDIN.
> - Ah ! mon Père, me disait le pauvre Paul, devenu veuf avec un petit enfant de six mois sur les bras, le bon Dieu est bien bon ! Il m'avait donné la meilleure des femmes, je n'étais pas digne de la posséder ; il me l'a enlevée pour la mettre dans son beau paradis, je l'en remercie de tout mon cœur et je le remercie aussi du beau rêve qu'il m'a envoyé, sûrement pour me consoler dans mon malheur.
>
> - Father, he tells me, I saw something extraordinary last night in my sleep; I saw the sky open up. Oh, how beautiful it was! What beautiful lodges! What beautiful trees! What beautiful angels I saw! Then there was an immense ray of light with the colours of the rainbow, which

> descended all the way to the ground. At that location were trees covered with foliage and at the foot of one of the tress was a woman, sitting, with a veiled face, which meant that I could not recognize her; then a voice from on high told me:
> - The one that you see at the foot of the tree will rise this way into the glory of the Great Spirit.
>
> And so spoke Paul; then, his eyes fixed upon my own, his mouth half-opened, he respectfully awaited my response.
> - And so, my friend, I told him, we must believe that such a beautiful dream comes from God and that the beautiful soul of one within our presence will fly to the residence of the Great Spirit. Who is this person? We might only know until later; for the moment, God is hiding this from us to avoid saddening us.
>
> A couple of days later, his poor wife, one of the best and saintliest of the colony, fell ill and died after suffering terribly for a dozen days. She died the death of saints, like most of our Catholics, suffering with admirable patience and resignation. She had the consolation of being assisted at her last moments by Mgr GRANDIN.
> - Oh! Father, the miserable Paul told me, having been widowed with a small child of six month old, Good is good! He gave me the best of wives, which I was not worthy to possess; he took her away to bring her to the beautiful paradise, I thank him with all of my heart and I thank him for the nice dream that he sent me, surely in consolation for my misery.[38]

Dreams were certainly a key part of Aboriginal spiritualities; they were a part of Aboriginal cosmologies as the link to the spirit world. The images and symbols of dreams were normally presented to a 'knower,' who could then interpret them. Fourmond claimed that he was recognized by Fayans as such. If this were true, Fourmond unknowingly adopted a role that was normally considered pagan. Certainly, the abundance of Christian imagery (the angels, the streak of sunlight through the cloud opening, the veiled face and the loud voice from on high, and so on) convinced him to think otherwise. However, from an Aboriginal perspective, the dream validated Fayans as a true spiritual authority because the future was presented to him. This, I am sure, would earn him a great deal of legitimacy and respect among his peers as a 'shaman.' Not only did Fayans have a sanctioned spiritual authority, but he imitated Fourmond as a missionary, who in turn confirmed the legitimacy of Christian symbols within his dream. In this capacity, Fayans had the power to bridge worlds. I will later return to this point.

A few days later, Fourmond described another instance where he presented himself as a 'knower' of dream-like symbols to the Métis. On 9 September, about 30 *chasseurs* left their camp in order to hunt a small band of bison that they had noticed in the distance. At dawn, they noticed a large prairie fire. The hunters explained that they watched the sun rise from the horizon—it was blood-red from the smoke that filled the atmosphere. Then they witnessed a miracle. Within the crimson disc in the sky appeared a large cross, then a monstrance, a heart, and finally a church—each in succession to the other. "Mamaskas! Mamaskas!" they cried.[39] Impatiently, the hunters asked Fourmond for an explanation.

Fourmond took advantage of the situation in order to perform his duties as a catechist. He replied that the cross was a sign of mercy and forgiveness ever since Jesus Christ shed his blood on the cross, and that the heart was a sign of God's immense love. The holy sacrament was symbolized by the monstrance; this was the most important of all miracles because of its divine charity to all of mankind. The Church represented the house of the Great Spirit where, night and day, he makes his home among all mankind. Then Fourmond offered an interpretation—or meaning—of the whole experience. In his words, the Great Spirit inflicted a terrible disaster from its other home in the sky in order to make the hunters respect its mercy and love in paradise. The hunters angered *le bon Dieu* on many occasions, therefore must ask him forgiveness from the bottom of their hearts. They must also abandon themselves entirely to the providence of the Great Spirit and patiently suffer for the expiration of their sins.[40] According to Fourmond, his words 'touched and consoled the Métis hunters.'[41] Unbeknownst to him, his participation in this exchange had legitimated indigenous epistemologies concerning dreams and the spirit world. Indeed, instances like these were contributing factors to why "it was the presence of the missionary which caused the Métis to refer to their wintering village as *la mission*."[42]

Indeed, the figure of the black-robed missionary was rooted in the memory of Métis families with mysticism. A common reaction to the sight of a missionary was to perceive him as an envoy from God. Grandin wrote:

> Plusieurs vieillards surtout en voyant le prêtre pour la première fois, supposaient [*le*] reconnaître et lui disaient : Tu es bien l'homme de Dieu c'est toi que j'ai vu dans mon rêve ou qu'avait vu mon père ou ma mère dans un rêve qu'ils m'ont raconté. Je ne crois pas qu'il y a un seul des anciens missionnaires qui n'ait rencontré des sauvages dans cette conviction.
>
> Having seen the priest for the first time, many elders especially claimed to recognize him and told him: You are the man of God it is you that I saw in my dream or that my father or mother had seen in a dream that they passed on to me. I do not believe that there was a single one of the old missionaries that did not first encounter Aboriginals in this manner.[43]

Grandin reported about the first encounters of a number of his missionaries with the Métis, citing a common reaction:

> Mon père, ce n'est pas absolument la première fois que je te vois, je t'ai vu avant et je te reconnais aujourd'hui ; je t'ai vu avec les vêtements dont tu te sers pour dire la messe ; je t'ai vu avez [*sic*] la crosse, et la mitre et j'ai été averti que nous devions t'écouter.
>
> My father, it is not necessarily the first time that I have seen you, I have seen you before and I recognize you today; I have seen you with the clothes that you wear to recite Mass; I have seen you with the cross, and the mitre and I have been warned that we must listen to you.[44]

Although Grandin criticized the 'dreams' and 'imagination' surrounding these encounters, he nonetheless recognized the description of missionaries as an extension of God's manifest action upon the world.[45] Indeed, this was the basis for the 'pragmatic exchanges' between the missionaries and the Métis.[46]

Some Métis believed that the missionaries-as-envoys had supernatural abilities in the temporal realm. This partially explains why—and if—Fourmond was recognized as a 'knower.' Another example involved Lacombe, who blessed the hunters just before the 'Great Hunt' of 1850 near la montagne Tortue (Turtle Mountain, Manitoba).[47] As the hunters had positioned themselves in a line of attack, he "recited an Act of Contrition to which the hunters responded with bent heads. They raised their eyes, took a long glad survey from the bluff—then—"*En avant!*" the leader cried, and men and horses as one flew forward with whirlwind velocity."[48] The hunters killed between 700 to 800 bison—an overwhelming success for one day—in which they would process the meat and robes at camp and load them into Red River carts.[49] The next day, the self-described *chapelain des chasseurs de buffalos* (chaplain of the buffalo hunters) recorded that Métis in the hundreds accompanied him to the top of the mountain in order to plant there a large wooden cross in thanksgiving.[50] The evidence suggests that the Métis attributed their success to Lacombe, and the cross certainly served as a mnemonic device for the success of the hunt. In this way, Lacombe demonstrated his ability to create experiences that unified all Métis communities.

The Métis Settlements of lac Sainte Anne, Saint Albert and lac du Boeuf

The Oblates learned from examples such as Mistawasis and the Methodists that first contact with Aboriginal populations was critical to their evangelization efforts.[51] This pushed Thibault to travel with his Métis 'servant' and 'guide' Jean-Baptiste Laframboise, and his wife, to lac à la Grenouille (Frog Lake, Saskatchewan) on 20 April 1842.[52] He then followed the elder Gabriel Dumont to his settlement at lac du Diable.[53] He described this encampment: "Les fidèles de cette localité sont métis ; ils vivent des produits de la chasse et de la culture [agriculture]; leur nombre varie de sept à huit cents. Sous le rapport religieux, généralement ils laissent peu à désirer, et, sans les flatter, on peut dire qu'ils forment une excellente chrétienneté."[54] Thibault met other Métis guides and leaders from this location, and they requested a mission for their settlement. In order to construct a definitive residential mission there—the first one west of Red

River—Thibault returned in the summer of 1844 along his colleague Bourassa. They convinced the Métis guide Michel Normand and his family to 'accompany' them as 'servants and *engagés*" for the trip.[55] I will return to the importance of the Métis guides.

There is a profound and indeed ambiguous spiritual importance to the lake. The unpredictable and violent storms that occurred there explained why it was known to the Cree as Manito Sakahigan (or Spirit Lake) or to the *Gens libres* and Métis as lac du Diable (or Devil's Lake). Witnesses reported spiritual apparitions on the surface of the water, and others claimed that the water had healing capabilities.[56] In any case, Thibault laid Christian claim to the area by renaming it lac Sainte Anne, in honour of the patron saint of grandmothers, sailors, and—as of 1876 by decree of Pope Pius IX—the civil and ecclesiastical province of Québec. The name was significant for two main reasons: first, it was commonplace for the *Canadiens* to devote monuments to her; this began once shipwrecked pioneers on the north bank of the Saint Laurent settled an area 35 kilometers east of Québec and named it Sainte Anne de Beaupré. It was reported in the Jesuit Relations that the laying of the church's first stones by the martyr Louis Guimond instantly cured him of liver disease.[57] Secondly, Saint Ann was the grandmother of Jesus. Indeed, the figure of the grandmother—or *kohkum*—held a central role in Cree society as an elder who told sacred stories and thus maintained their cultural values, practices and traditions.[58] The Christianizing of lac Sainte Anne was significant to Métis memory which, for the majority, shared both of these heritages. Interestingly, lac Sainte Anne and Sainte Anne de Beaupré are pilgrimage sites known the world over for their shrines and miracles, and both have overt associations with nationality: the former is dedicated to the First Nations and Métis, and the latter to French Canadians and Québécois.

The Métis wintering settlement at Lac du Boeuf (Buffalo Lake, Alberta), near la rivière la Biche (Red Deer River), also held spiritual and historical value for Aboriginal peoples. Doucet recalled that the lake owed its name to the shape of a bison when viewed from the western hillside, but my own informal conversation with a local resident revealed that the fog or evaporation that sometimes appeared on the lake's edges resembles the rising of bison spirits. Cree oral tradition reveals a similar lesson at the neighbouring lac qui Crie (Sounding Lake, Alberta), which was a doubly-sacred place where "the buffalo had burst up from the hand of the Creator" and where the Cree and Blackfoot had once dedicated a peace boundary nearby the Neutral Hills.[59] Neither lake was renamed to symbolize Christian Saints, but both were

considered a haven for bison at a time when the herd was disappearing. Hence, Lestanc claimed that many Métis had come to him requesting a missionary-chaplain for their wintering village near la rivière la Biche.[60] From the perspective of the Métis, it was clear that the missionary did not necessarily impinge on—but could actually contribute to—the promulgation of traditional indigenous spiritualities.

Requesting the Missionary and Accepting the Hunt

Lac Sainte Anne became the home base for the Oblates of the Upper Saskatchewan until 1861.[61] This residential mission was considered by the missionaries the first permanent mission for the Cree and the Métis of the region. It was from there that Métis guides requested the company of priests for their *hivernement* or *en caravane* hunts, or at the very least, the short visitations of a priest.[62] For example, René Rémas wrote in November of 1866 that,

> C'est au milieu de ces soins, qu'un jour, vers la mi-septembre, je vis venir à moi un jeune homme exprimant sur sa figure la joie qu'il avait de me revoir. Comme ses traits ne m'étaient point familiers, je ne le reconnus point d'abord, mais bientôt je le remis pour l'un de mes bons métis iroquois des montagnes Rocheuses. Il me venait, comme délégué des siens, pour m'inviter à me rendre dans leur tribu.
> Il était porteur d'une lettre que m'adressaient, en sauvage, ses compatriotes, portant ces simples mots, plusieurs fois répétés : « Toi, prêtre, maître au lac Sainte-Anne, viens donc nous voir ; douze enfants te demandent pour être baptisés, et tous les autres pour se confesser. Tu ne viendras pas inutilement, nous te donnerons des pelleteries. »
>
> It is in the middle of these services that one day, near mid-September, a young man came to me with joy to see me again. His traits were unfamiliar to me, so I did not recognize him, but soon after I realized that he was one of my good Métis Iroquois from the Rocky Mountains. He came to me as a delegate of his people and invited me to their tribe.
> He was the courier of a letter addressed to me, in Amerindian, by his compatriots, with these words often repeated: "You, priest, master of lac Sainte-Anne, come to us; twelve children are asking you to be baptized, et everyone else to be confessed. You will not come in vain, we will give you pelts." [63]

The offering of furs was common in these cases because beaver pelts were the *de facto* currency in the country. Furthermore, it was common practice in Aboriginal societies to trade valuable goods such as a horse to the medicine man for his services. Lacombe also set out to meet the 'Métis Iroquois de la Montagne' at Fort Jasper. In 1856, he travelled with "two pack-horses carrying his portable chapel and provisions, and saddle ponies for himself and his Métis guide, Michel Nipissing."[64]

Lacombe and Grandin moved their residence from lac Sainte Anne to Saint Albert in 1861 in an effort to facilitate agriculture at the mission. Saint Albert was a new hilltop location that was picked out in the valley of la rivière Esturgeon (Sturgeon River) near Big Lake. The

mission bore Lacombe's name. The area was more suitable for agriculture because it did not have the wooded marshy conditions that made it susceptible to early frosts. It was also closer to fort des Prairies and thus more accessible to the Blackfoot bands. Lac Sainte Anne was nearly abandoned by the Oblates until the 1880s. However it remained an important fishing location for the Plains Cree and the Métis; the Saint Albert missionaries visited the post in agreement.[65]

The Oblates ceased to accompany the Métis on *la mission ambulante* during the years 1849-1859, even though some secular priests continued to do so. From the perspective of the bishops, the increasing scope of Plains warfare on the prairie had become too serious a threat for the security of their missionaries. Furthermore, it sanctioned a way of life on which the Church did not want to lay its foundation for the future. Taché noted the response of the hunt chiefs when they no longer permitted the prolonged bison hunting missions:

> Depuis longtemps il n'a pas été question d'aller à la Prairie, ou du moins nos Pères n'y ont pas été depuis 1849. Des prêtres séculiers avaient quelquefois accompagné, depuis cette époque, les chasseurs qui en 1859, sollicitèrent avec de vives instances qu'on leur donnât celui des Pères qui leur sembla disponible.
>
> For a long time, going *à la Prairie* was out of the question, or at least our Fathers had not been since 1849. Some secular priests had irregularly accompanied, since this time, *les chasseurs* who in 1859, requested with great insistence that we give them Fathers who seemed available to them.[66]

The fact that the Métis did not abandon their hunts indicates that a missionary presence was not conditional for the hunt. However, the insistence of the chiefs underlined a genuine desire for missionary-chaplains and, most of all, their insistence for the bison hunting lifestyle. This led to frustration on both sides.

Grandin was perhaps the most vocal about his despair. He addressed the Propagation of Faith in 1870: "Réduire des adultes au travail, à la vie civilisée, en un mot, cela parait absolument impossible."[67] The Métis would not abandon their semi-nomadic lifestyle as long as bison continued to roam the prairies. He reiterated these sentiments four years later: "Cependant, un grand obstacle au bien, c'est l'instabilité de nos Métis, la grande moitié de la population est provisoirement fixée au lac du bœuf vivant de la chasse. Cet éloignement de la population nous met dans l'embarras et nous décourage même."[68] If they were to continue their missions with the Métis, the Oblate bishops determined that the immediate needs of their flock took precedence over their goal of permanent sedentary life: "C'est là le grand mal de nos Métis, nous ne pouvons les forcer définitivement: ils sont au moins 7 à 800 dans la prairie comme des sauvages."[69]

The Oblates came to the realization that the priests could still exert control over the sacraments, instruction and catechism, and norms of social conduct during the bison hunts.[70] Since the Métis guaranteed the security and material well-being of the missionary, it was the most cost effective means of evangelization that relieved a number of logistical pressures. Moreover, the multilingual skills of the Métis certainly helped the Oblates study indigenous languages. *La mission ambulante* was also the most efficient way of training new missionaries and lay brothers by learning in the field. Lacombe wrote in 1861: "L'Ete [*sic*] prochain, j'ai l'intention d'envoyer le P. Caër, avec les Métis, dans la prairie ; il le désire beaucoup ; il me dit que ce n'est qu'ainsi qu'il pourra apprendre le Cris."[71] Indeed, the Métis chiefs specified the roles of the chaplains: they were required to treat the injured, heal the sick, and handle of 'acts of God.'[72] I will later discuss how the missionary played an important part in legitimizing the authority of the chief and highlighting his prestige. Indeed, this provided the basis for 'pragmatic exchanges' such as *la mission ambulante*.

Saint Albert quickly became the most important Métis settlement west of Red River as the majority of the Upper Saskatchewan bison hunters congregated there at various times of the year. Mostly importantly, this was where the region's *chasseurs* requested a priest for *la mission ambulante* and l'*hivernement.* Due to the lack of mission hands, Grandin had to refuse Métis requests simply because he did not have any available and that it would be difficult to re-assign another priest.[73] Leduc concurred in his 1869 report on the Saint Albert mission: "il n'y a presque personne à la mission, tout le monde est à la prairie."[74] Unsurprisingly, the settlement was named the see of the new diocese in 1871.

Perpetuating Religious and Cultural Heritages

It was rare that Roman Catholic missionaries ever went *à la prairie* without a Métis guide. Lacombe described them as "nos interprètes, nos guides et nos fidèles compagnons de voyage. Aimés et estimés des tribus sauvages dont ils descendaient, ils étaient pour les missionnaires de puissants intermédiaires et introducteurs auprès des sauvages que nous venions évangéliser."[75] Again, in his "Mémoire sur les Métis," Lacombe commented on their uncanny navigation abillities: "Ils sont intrépides et infatigables voyageurs. Les Métis semblent posséder naturellement une faculté propre aux sauvages et que les autres peuples n'acquièrent presque jamais, c'est celle de se guider à travers les forêts et les prairies, sans autre boussole que leur

instinct d'observation."[76] The missionaries depended on them for their knowledge of the country and their usefulness as *engages*, however they were not so keen on recognizing them as proper missionaries and according them control over Roman Catholicism.

The missionaries wrote often about the difficulties of ministering in Métis camps in terms of numbers. Vital Fourmond had not even professed his final vows as an Oblate when he accompanied the experienced Alexis André *à la prairie* on the first of May 1869. Grandin wrote that the two Oblates did what they could, even though they were completely overwhelmed: "les deux Pères ont été admirable de zèle et de dévouement pour catéchiser les enfants, instruire les adultes, et réprimer les désordres qui peuvent glisser si facilement dans ce pêle-mêle de six cents personnes vivant au milieu des prairies."[77] Similarly, Decorby wrote that "on ne peut que glaner, parmi eux, leur temps de séjour étant trop court."[78] Hence, they felt it was necessary to hire their most devout Métis 'servants' as *engagés* for the mission.

As the administrator of the vicariate of Saint Albert, Grandin voiced his perpetual need for additional hired hands. The desertion and defection of priests from the diocese certainly dealt a blow to their efforts: "cinq ou six, il est vrai, ont persévéré, mais le reste, après un essai de quelques mois de la vie religieuse, nous ont lâchement abandonnées ; un autre Frère s'est retiré après ses vœux de cinq ans."[79] In some cases, the Oblates had to expel certain members, notably *le fameux* Galarneault, lay brother, who was expelled for same-sex sexual activity (Lacombe complained that "pendant que je faisait [sic] tout en mon pouvoir pour veiller sur sa conduite [et] lui faire du bien" Galarneault "ne cherchait qu'à satisfaire les plaisirs d'un infâme sodomite et à corrompre les jeunes gens, qu'il a scandalisé au dernier point."[80]) In 1861, Grandin issued a desperate cry to his superiors to send him more brothers, stating that he would never embark upon any voyage without one. As he travelled into the woodlands on his way to le grand lac des Esclaves (Great Slave Lake, NWT), he hired two Amerindians to paddle his canoe, as well as a 12 year old boy to replace Brother Boisramé once the latter was needed elsewhere. He outlined their roles: "il sera donc mon domestique, mon infirmier en cas de maladie, mon cuisinier, mon sacristain et même au besoin mon grand vicaire ; le cher Frère BOISRAMÉ va s'efforcer de le former à tous ces nobles emplois.[81] Fourmond's description of Paul Fayans was remarkably similar: "le bon Paul Fayans, mon guide et mon sacristain en même temps que mon maître d'hôtel, fonctions qu'il exerce gratuitement."[82] Indeed, the missionaries considered that some of their most devout Métis *engagé*-guides held official yet limited rank within the Church.

Grandin later revealed later that 'his' *petit garcon* was in fact the son of the Métis patriarch known as *le bon vieux* Beaulieu; the one who built a house for the purpose of gathering all of his children and grandchildren on Fridays, Sundays and feast days in order to sing canticles, recite the rosary, and listen to his advice or to be given reprimand.[83] Grandin noticed how effective the old man was at perpetuating his Roman Catholic heritage: "Ce bon vieillard est un vrai missionnaire à l'égard de sa famille et de ses voisins."[84] The fact that Beaulieu's 12 year old grandson served as his guide suggests that his progeny was active in perpetuating these beliefs and traditions.

From Grandin's perspective, some of his Métis *engagés* grew so strongly attached to missionary work that they could not bear being left behind.[85] Grandin often spoke of his old travel companion named Baptiste who, by 1869, was his companion for 10 years. In addition to the above mentioned responsibilities, Baptiste looked after the mission of lac la Biche in the absence of a postulant named Perrault.[86] He also assisted Étienne Bonnald near lac Pélican (Pelican Lake, Alberta).[87] Although I cannot confirm Baptiste's kin relations, it is possible that he was the brother of Michel Nipissing, an 'Iroquois' Métis guide who guided Lacombe to Fort Jasper in 1856. Michel and his brother Baptiste were indeed the sons of Louis Kwaragwanté and the French *métisse* Marie Patenaude.[88] If such is the case, it demonstrates how certain households took a leading role in spreading their cultural traditions and practices.

Although the Oblates never considered their Métis *engagés* to be true missionaries, there was nothing to say that the latter did not think of themselves as such. In a letter dated 1872, Prosper Légéard outlined the arrival of "le R. P. Doucet, le F. Bowes, le F. Grezeau, et un métis qui est presque considéré ici comme un frère convers" to Île à la crosse.[89] Doucet's journal identified the companion as Alexis Cardinal, who was for many years Lacombe's *à la prairie* companion with the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot. Cardinal was well known and liked by the Oblates: "le fidèle Alexis, que tout le monde doit ou devra connaître."[90] Hailing from lac la Biche, Cardinal was 'Franco-Cree' and was baptized by Thibault in 1844. Doucet wrote that he was related to the Nanouche family of lac la Biche, who were also Métis guides.[91] At some point he was hired by the HBC, but completed his work term by the time Lacombe arrived to fort des Prairies in 1852. Cardinal married a Métis woman named Nancy (Anne) Quintal on 24 April 1853, which was the same day that their six year old daughter Philomène was baptised. However, the marriage did not last. To console himself, he offered his unconditional services to

Lacombe: "Son désir était de devenir frère convers, mais sa piété peu éclairée et ses manières étranges ne permirent pas à la Congrégation des Oblats de le recevoir parmi les siens."[92] Nonetheless, Lacombe admired his loyalty: "Très attaché à moi surtout, pendant 17 ans, il ne m'a jamais laissé."[93]

The Oblates considered *le fameux Alexis* to be a skilled dog-runner, hunter, interpreter and carpenter. He built the mission structures at Saint Paul des Cris in 1865 as well as the missionary 'shack' at Notre Dame de la Paix in 1875, which Doucet called "la bicoque d'Alexis Cardinal."[94] According to Doucet, this was the first building of the present-day city of Calgary.[95] Cardinal also adopted an orphaned Cree child named David, of whom Doucet took care during the summer of 1875 at Notre Dame de la Paix.[96] David, like his father, was described as an important 'engagé' for the Notre Dame de la Paix mission.[97] However, the Oblates refused to consider him a veritable missionary. Indeed, 'his' *fameux Alexis* assisted in the religious duties of the priest: he kept the vigil at Île à la crosse and often helped to administer baptisms and tend to the sick when he was *à la prairie* with Lacombe, Doucet, and Scollen.[98] Doucet wrote that Cardinal was highly respected by the Plains Cree and the Backfoot, especially for his medicines: "Il a une foule de petits sacs remplis de certaines médecines. Il soigne les fièvres, les purges, les saigne avec un petit point de silex. Il porte des lunettes de couleurs avec verres pour se donner plus d'importance. Les Sauvages ont grand confiance en lui."[99] Although the Oblates thought nothing of it, Cardinal demonstrated his healing powers to the Plains Cree in the mid-1860s when a Protestant Cree knocked him unconscious on the ground for two days before he came 'back to life.'[100] The missionary Oblates did, however, notice how Cardinal dressed himself as one of them. As Lacombe remarked, he "wore a semi-clerical gown of black stroud, made by a half-breed woman on his own instructions."[101]

Alexis Cardinal was often described as having an 'unsound mind.'[102] Doucet attributed this to his 'childish' behaviour, whereby he would hide when work needed to be done. When asked where he went, Doucet would not believe the reply that he was 'out praying.'[103] Lacombe, who knew him best, believed that he had a much more profound problem: "Petit à petit, son esprit devint dérangé. Il se croyait inspiré et avec une mission d'en haut. À la fin, je ne pouvais plus le controler [*sic*]. Malgré tous mes efforts, pour le garder et en avoir soin, il s'éloigna de moi."[104] Indeed, Cardinal came to the realization that he—or perhaps his ideas—would never be recognized authoritatively within the Church. It is likely that Cardinal became a prophet just as

Louis Riel had done during the 1880s, whereby he contested the control of the priests over Roman Catholicism in the North-West. Tragically, Lacombe found him dead only a few years later near the mission at lac Froid (Cold Lake, Alberta) in 1882.[105]

Métis companions like Baptiste, Alexis Cardinal, Michel Normand and Nanouche were not rare and always outnumbered the missionary on their travels. The evidence suggests that these companions played a great part in propagating their own cultural customs, which in some cases was intertwined with Roman Catholicism. Of course, the 'guides' did not just perpetuate religious customs, but also their free trader heritage. René Rémas spoke of how "Un excellent chrétien arrive sur ces entrefaits de la Rivière Rouge et se propose comme moi de diriger ses pas vers les montagnes Rocheuses, non point pour y gagner les âmes, mais pour y traffiquer."[106] Doucet also spoke of how "un Métis Canadien nommé Pete [Matt?]" was pardoned as a horse thief once he led General Miles of the American Cavalry on his war with the Nez Percés and that he "rendit ainsi de grand services durant cette guerre."[107] In any of these cases, the Métis of the generation prior to 1885 had a canny ability to construct their own place between Amerindian and European hegemonies.

The Chaplain, the Chief, and the Council

The Métis leaders who requested a chaplain normally designated a time and place. When Lacombe accompanied the 1000 men, women and children to la montagne Tortue in 1850, he first joined them at Kittson's fur trade post near the forest-mission of Pembina. On the eve of the excursion, Métis families had already sown and planted their gardens at the mission post. It was Lacombe's responsibility to call the families together, which effectively put the hunting expedition in motion. They converged at the mission post to recite the evening prayers and hymns that had been translated into Ojibwa by Belcourt. Once the women withdrew to their lodges with their children, the men held a council to elect a chief and ten captains by a majority of votes. The council then drafted new laws, and at its close, the newly elected 'half-breed' Chief named Wilkie asked every man in the assembly to accept those laws for the duration of the expedition: "Ceux qui n'aiment pas ces règlements s'éloignent de nous; car une fois partis ensemble de ce present campement, il ne sera plus libre à quelqu'un de fourcher. Et cela pour toute la saison de la chasse."[108] The missionary-chaplain was called upon to assemble Métis households and hold the election of a leader, just as Belcourt had done in his 'Plains Ojibwa'

missions. However, the chaplain did not seem to have any meaningful say in the election process.

The presence of a missionary-chaplain seemed to highlight both the need for consensus among households as well as the prestige of the elected chief. Fourmond, who accompanied Paul Fayans *à la prairie* to Jolie Butte (near Goodridge, Alberta), not only described the election, but also the *grande allure* of the hunt chief:

> Le dimanche, 4 septembre, je réunis dans la soirée tous les chasseurs pour l'élection du grand chef, de huit conseillers, de huit capitaines. Le chef de la dernière chasse fut élu presque à l'unanimité. Louison Montagnais est son nom. C'est un homme remarquable par sa haute taille ; une belle et longue chevelure, noire comme l'ébène, retombe en ondoyant gracieusement sur ses larges épaules et encadre une figure bronzée dont le principal caractère paraît être sa bonté. Cependant la moustache qu'il porte et qui le distingue des autres chasseurs lui donne un certain air martial qui annonce de l'énergie.
>
> [On Sunday, 4 September, I united in the evening all of *les chasseurs* for the election of the *grand chef*, eight councilors and eight captains. The chef of the last hunt was elected almost unanimously. Louison Montagnais was his name. He is a remarkable man by his tall size; nice and long head of hair, which is black like ebony and graciously curls down his wide shoulders and frames his bronze figure where his principal character seems to be his kindness. However the moustache that he wars distinguishes him from the other *chasseurs* and gives him an invigourating martial look.][109]

Montagnais repeatedly welcomed chaplains to his council. At lac du Bœuf in the spring of 1875, Léon Doucet revealed in his journal that "Le Chef Métis Louison Montagnais convoqua un Conseil ou assistèrent les anciens parmi les Métis et les Cris: .... Je fus invité au Conseil."[110] The fact that Doucet was invited to the council signifies that he did not necessarily have a permanent seat, yet his presence was useful to *le Chef* in terms of legitimizing his political authority.

Sometimes it was the chief, rather than the band, who provided for the missionary. Doucet explained that, "le Chef, L Montagnais, un bon Chrétien, qui me nourrissait et prenait grand soin de moi, acheta un grand nombre de robes et autres pelleteries des Indiens et des Métis."[111] This suggests that the chief purchased the services of the missionary-chaplain as he would a medicine man. However, at the wintering village of lac du Bœuf, the band provided for Lestanc: "Pendant tout l'hiver, j'étais nourri et chauffé par mes bons métis, et je ne voyageais qu'à leurs frais. Non contents de fournir à mes besoins, ils m'ont fait plusieurs présents en robes de buffalos."[112] Lestanc's allowance of furs permitted him to trade for essential provisions among the band's free traders or at Bay posts. In another letter, Lestanc outlined that while the men were hunting, "Le Missionnaire […] faisait le catéchisme et l'école aux enfants, était fourni

de vivres, de bois, de chandelles, et avait un casuel assez respectable, entre cinquante et cent cinquante robes de buffalo."[113] This indicates that Métis provided for the hunt chaplain at great expense. Consider the surprise of M. Lucass, a Protestant surveyor, who met Lestanc near Fort Pitt; smiling, Lestanc told Lucass that "mes provisions sont dans les hangars de la Providence, que j'étais moi-même mon domestique et que j'avais une charrette pour porter ma personne, ma tente, mon lit et ma chapelle."[114] Strikingly, he omitted the sizeable efforts of his Métis hosts, who accommodated him at great expense to themselves.

The Oblates felt welcomed and appreciated by the Métis during their *à la prairie* missions. Doucet enjoyed them because he did not have to face "la solitude écrasante" of life in the mission posts.[115] Lestanc appreciated the luxury of the Métis camps and conformed well to their day-to-day life:

> Autrefois j'avais accompagné les métis dans leurs voyages de chasse ; j'avais plus d'une fois suivi sur les théâtres de leurs exploits ces Nemrods du Nord-Ouest ; pendant la belle saison, ma paroisse changeant presque tous les jours de campement, comme les Juifs dans le désert, et je faisais comme les autres, abattant ma tente le matin et l'embarquant dans ma voiture pour la remonter le soir au bord de quelques lacs ou sur les bords de quelques rivières. Mes métis étaient généralement très obéissants et très respectueux pour moi et j'étais dans l'abondance et dans le luxe de la civilisation, au milieu de ce bon peuple, vrai modèle de fidélité à tous les devoirs de la religion.
>
> In the past, I have accompanied the Métis on their hunting trips; more than once, I have followed the Nemrods of the North-West; during the best season, my parish, changing from camp to camp nearly every day like the Jews of the desert, I have acted like everyone else by pitching my tent in the morning and loading it on my cart in order to pitch it again next to lakes or rivers in the evening. My Métis were generally very obedient and very respectful of me and I was in the luxury of civilization among this good people, true examples of fidelity to the duties of religion.[116]

Lestanc wrote about his *hivernement* experience with great joy and admiration. To begin, the Métis "se réunirent aussitôt pour me bâtir une maison, et au bout de six à sept jours j'étais logé. Ma cahutte avait 20 pieds carrés et servait, bien entendu, d'église et de presbytère. Ce n'était pas un monument d'architecture, mais elle suffisait aux besoins de ma paroisse."[117] It was customary to build the church and the parsonage first: "À l'automne, vers la Toussaint, ma paroisse ambulante s'arrêtait dans quelque place bien fournie en bois ; au bout de quinze jours, les tentes étaient remplacées par des maisons ; mais l'église et la maison du prêtre étaient toujours les premières édifices de la ville improvisée."[118] In the spring, the Métis abandoned the village in order to pursue their itinerant hunting lifestyle in tepees: "la vie nomade recommençait. Le camp était plus ou moins considérable et comptait entre quarante et cent

familles. J'aimais assez cette vie errante ; j'étais si à mon aise dans la compagnie de ce bon peuple métis !"[119]

Decorby also described the animation of *la mission ambulante* and the wintering experience during the public access régime. In a letter to Lacombe, dated 1 November 1879, he wrote that, "à voir la foule qui s'y rendait, on se serait cru en une fête perpétuelle. L'hivernement est l'occasion de ce mouvement extraordinaire."[120] He reported that the church was normally the long building at the center of the village.[121] He also mentioned that the 'Cree' Métis built cabins for themselves as well: "Le sauvage non baptisé et qui n'a aucune teinte de civilisation est moins exigeant, et sa loge, dressée au fond d'un ravin, contraste étrangement par son état misérable avec la confortable maison du métis ou du sauvage chrétien."[122]

Doctors of the Soul, Surgeons of the Body

Other times the missions were not so cheerful. Lacombe carefully outlined the missionary-chaplain's role as "médecin de l'âme mais aussi comme chirurgien du corps."[123] There was a need for a physician because, in Lacombe's words, the shy and timorous buffalo can become terrible and dangerous when provoked. "Malheur au cavalier qui au milieu de la mélée a été renversé de son cheval. Il deviendra parfois le jouet d'un de ces animaux furieux qui lancera le malheureux chasseur à plusieurs pieds en l'air."[124] Decorby concurred:

> Quelquefois, réduit au désespoir et serré de trop près, l'animal [bison] furieux se retourne, fait front au chasseur, se rue sur lui, le renverse et lui laboure les flancs avant qu'il ait le temps de parer le coup. Il y a, dans la prairie, des trous nombreux dissimulés dans les hautes herbes ; si un cheval au galop se heurte à cet obstacle, il roule avec son cavalier, et bien souvent ce dernier ne se relève qu'estropié ; quelquefois une balle mal dirigée, dans le tourbillon qui passe si rapidement, va frapper un chasseur au lieu d'atteindre le bœuf sauvage ; il y a ainsi des accidents de tous genre. C'est pour cela que, pendant cette chasse si lucrative et si émouvante, il est bon qu'il y ait un prêtre attaché à l'expédition.
>
> Sometimes, when it was reduced to hopelessness and squeezed too tight, the furious animal [the bison] would turn around, face the hunter, charge at him, overthrow him and run around him before he has a chance to ward off the animal. In the prairie, there are numerous holes hidden by the tall grasses; if a galloping horse comes up against this obstacle, it rolls with the rider, and the rider is all-too-often maimed; in the whirlwind of activity that occurs so rapidly, a poorly-aimed bullet will sometimes hit a hunter instead of reaching the wild bull; there are therefore accidents of all sorts. It is for this reason that, while the hunt is lucrative and emotional, it is good that a priest takes part in the expedition.[125]

Lestanc visited an 'infidel Cree' lodge along la rivière la Biche and boasted of his effective—yet amateurish–skill in medicine, to which he attributed a supernatural healing ability:

> Avec mes médecines, j'ai bien *d'autres merveilles* dans la prairie. J'ai soigné un vieux qui avait une plaie profonde et horrible à la hanche, et je l'ai guéri ; une vieille se mourait dans des

> crispations et des tortures atroces ; je l'ai soignée et guérie ; d'autres maladies moins graves ont dû, à plus forte raison, disparaître devant ma *science* et mes bonnes médecines ; j'ai fait même marcher droit un cheval boiteux. Ma réputation était telle, que, si je ne guérissais pas un malade, homme ou animal, c'est que je ne voulais pas le guérir et que je n'avais pas de charité pour la famille affligée. Mon révérend Père, vous riez sans doute de mes succès dans la médecine ; j'en riais moi-même ; mais tout cela contribue à faire aimer le prêtre.
>
> With my medicines, I have done many wonderful things in the prairie. I looked after an old man who had a deep and horrible cut at his waist and I healed him; an old lady was dying from atrocious tensions and tortures; I treated and healed her; other less severe diseases disappeared thanks to my *science* and my good medicines; I even made a lame horse walk straight. My reputation was that if I did not heal the sick, whether human or animal, it was because I did not want to heal them and that I did not have kindness for the afflicted family. My reverend Father, you are undoubtedly laughing about my success in medicine; I am laughing about it myself; but all of this helps the priest to be accepted.[126]

As it was explained in Chapter Two, the Oblates had no real medical training. When Alexis Cardinal suffered from a growth on his hand, Lacombe asked Dr. John Rae, who was under the employ of the HBC at fort des Prairies, to look after it.[127] Lacombe was nonetheless appointed to the North-West Territories Bureau of Health as representative of the Plains regions in 1871. This was likely due to the role of missionaries, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, in administering the medicines that were supplied by the HBC or the Canadian government. From an Aboriginal perspective, missionaries were a means to gain access to these types of medicines.[128] Indeed, Grandin made a direct link between disease, famine and the relative success of his missions: "La famine, la maladie et la mort visitèrent ce nombreux camp en même temps que le Prêtre [Lacombe], ce qui aida beaucoup celui-ci à faire une mission fructueuse."[129]

During the transitional period, the effects of diseases such as dysentery, measles, smallpox and scarlet fever were by far the most severe and demanding challenges for an Oblate missionary-healer. Doucet specified just how overwhelmed the Oblates were by the devastation of the smallpox epidemic of 1870. In his journal, he wrote:

> La Picotte noire sévissait à St. Albert ; Il y avait des morts et des mourants : Le plus grand nombre des gens étaient à la Prairie pour la chasse d'été. Le P. Fourmond y fut envoyé à la hâte. Le camp était dans la désolation ; on n'y voyait que des malades : Les Buffalos s'éloignaient. Les feux de prairies courraient certainement le camp. Le Père y déploye son zèle habituel et un dévouement à tout épreuve. À peine s'il prenait un peu de sommeil la nuit tout habillé : Mgr Grandin alla passer quelques jours pour encourager et consoler le Missionnaire et ces pauvres gens affligés par la maladie et la famine qui les menaçait. Mgr Grandin revint en toute hâte à St. Albert : Les Pères y étaient tombés malades. Les mois d'Avril et de Septembre se passait, et la fléau de la Picote loin de diminuer semble redoubler d'intensité. Le Fr. Blanchet, guéri, et le frère Doucet vont chercher les morts dans les maisons et les tentes pour les conduire au cimetière.
>
> The Black Pox was rife at St. Albert; there were dead and dying: The greatest number of them were *à la prairie* during the summer hunt. Father Fourmond was hastily sent to them. The camp was in desolation; one only saw some of the sick: the buffalo was disappearing. Prairie fires certainly ran through the camp. The Father demonstrated his usual zeal and devotion to all

> ordeals. He barely slept: Mgr Grandin spent a couple of days to encourage and console the missionary and the poor people afflicted by the disease and the famine that threatened them. Mgr Grandin returned hastily to St. Albert: The Fathers all fell ill. As the month of April and September passed, the scourge of the Pox was far from over and seemed to double in intensity. Brother Blanchet, who recovered, and Brother Doucet went out to collect the deceased in houses and tents in order to bring them to the cemetery.[130]

Disease was coupled with famine. Many priests fell gravely ill, including Doucet, who remained at Saint Paul des Cris. Brother Dubé died of his affliction at Île à la Crosse.[131]

In a manner that was characteristic of nineteenth century missionaries, the Oblates tried to heal the afflicted with a combination of physical and spiritual healing. As Légéard stated, "contre la maladie vient les secours de la sainte-religion."[132] However, Aboriginal people distinguished between two kinds of illness as well: natural, which could be treated with plants, and spiritual, which required supernatural means.[133] Perhaps the most detailed description of missionary methods used in treating sickness and injuries during *la mission ambulante* was recorded by Fourmond. He was travelling in Louison Montagnais's expedition when the epidemic hit the hardest.

> s'il faisait beau temps, à l'arrivée on les déposait sur l'herbe desséché de la prairie ; si au contraire il faisait mauvais temps, le plus vite possible, les gens encore valides dressaient la loge, ce qui demande à peu près cinq minutes ; ensuite on étendait tout autour de vieilles peaux de *buffalos*, ou quelques vielles couvertures : c'était le lit des pauvres malades. J'en ai vu maintes fois qui n'avaient d'autres couches que le foin de prairie… Pour rechauffer les malades, préparer les tisanes et faire cuire le pot-au-feu, on courait vite, une hache à la main, chercher au plus près un peu de bois sec, avec lequel on allumait le feu au milieu des loges. Ces loges n'occupent pas une surface bien étendue, ordinairement elles n'ont pas plus de 3 mètres de diamètre. Dans ce petit espace, autour du foyer placé au centre, étaient couchés trois, quatre ou cinq malades ; une fois j'en ai compté dix. Alors on peut à peine trouver où placer le pied. C'est là que nuit et jour il me fallait exercer le saint ministère ; j'avais souvent une soixantaine de loges à visiter, […] lorsque la maladie entrait dans la phase de dessiccation, chaque malade était un foyer vivant de pourriture ; souvent c'est à peine si l'on pouvait reconnaître en eux les traits d'une créature humaine ; la face du malade était toute gonflée et couverte d'une croûte de gales noires et infectes qui présentaient un spectacle aussi affreux que lamentable. Cependant, sous cette hideuse enveloppe, il y avait une âme créée à l'image du bon Dieu ; […] Cette pauvre âme était souvent plus défigurée encore par le péché que le corps par la maladie, il fallait la sauver en la réconciliant avec son Dieu. C'était pour moi une tâche pleine de consolations.
>
> if the weather was nice, we laid them on the dried prairie grass upon arrival; if, on the contrary, there was bad weather, people put up the tents as quickly as possible, which took about five minutes; then we laid old *buffalo* skins or old blankets all around; this was the bedding for the sick. Oftentimes I have seen beds made only of prairie hay… to warm up the sick, prepare herbal tea and cook food on the campfire, we ran quickly with axes in our hands, seeking some dry wood that we used to light fires in the middle of the lodges. These lodges do not cover a large area, they do not ordinarily occupy more than three meters in diameter. In this little space, three, four or five sick people surrounded the hearth in the middle; once I counted ten people. It is thus difficult to step around them. I had to exercise my ministry night and day in these circumstances; I often had about sixty lodges to visit, […] when the disease reached the desiccation stage, each afflicted person became a living source of rot; most of the time, we could barely make out the traits of a human creature; the face of the victim was swelled and crusted with inflected black scabs that was

> as spectacular as it was horrible and lamentable. However, under this hideous envelope there was a soul created in the image of God; […] Oftentimes this poor soul was more disfigured by sin than by disease, so one had to save him by reconciling him with his God. For me, this was a task full of consolations.[134]

Although Fourmond wholeheartedly dedicated himself to the task of treating the sick and dying, he seems to have adopted the methods of the Métis. The sick were quarantined in separate tepees, lain on bison robes, and were kept warm by the fire. Apart from administering the sacraments and praying for the sick, Fourmond mostly offered food and herbal teas to the sick in order to help them rest. Indeed, the missionaries probably learned from Métis women, especially grandmothers, whose medical and pharmaceutical knowledge was inherited from generation to generation.[135] The historian Nathalie Kermoal states that the Métis would consult 'une *vieille*' for serious maladies because she knew the healing powers of each plant. The grandmother certainly knew more about treating 'natural' illness than the missionary. However she lacked the spiritual legitimacy of a shaman or a priest to cure 'supernatural' illness.

Fourmond reported in the *codex historicus* of lac Sainte Anne that "Nous avons eu 122 décès à la prairie, environ 200 à St Albert et au Lac Ste Anne."[136] While he was with the Métis, a great number of Métis asked for the sacraments of confession and baptism to help deliver them from the wrath of God and thus lead them to salvation.[137] Fourmond was overwhelmed by the number of requests and feared that he could not suffice to their needs.[138] In this state of emergency, the missionary-as-doctor became a political role because supernatural intervention was needed. Fourmond related that:

> Le grand chef, Louison Montagnais, voyant le danger, arbora son pavillon. C'était le signal convenu pour la réunion du grand conseil. Aussitôt il est entouré de ses conseillers auxquels il demande avis sur le parti à prendre dans cette périlleuse circonstance. Pendant ce temps, occupé que j'étais auprès de mes nombreux malades et croyant encore le danger éloigné, j'étais peut-être le moins inquiet de tous. Le grand conseil convint, à l'unanimité, de deux choses, savoir : que les craintes du public étaient sérieuses, et en second lieu, qu'il n'y avait que le Grand Esprit qui pût nous sauver. Sur-le-champ, on m'envoie un exprès pour me demander des prières publiques. Je me hâtai de faire sonner ma grosse clochette pendant que le crieur public invitait tout le monde à venir prier, et bientôt tous ceux qui pouvaient encore se traîner furent réunis devant ma tente, qui tenait lieu à la fois de chapelle et de presbytère.
>
> The *grand chef*, Louison Montagnais, foreseeing danger, deployed his pavilion. This was the signal to convene the great council. Soon enough, he was surrounded by his councilors to whom he asked advice to deal with the perilous circumstances. During this time I was busy with the numerous sick, and believing that danger was still far, I was probably the least worried of all. The grand council decided unanimously on two things: that the public's worries were a serious matter, and secondly, only the Great Spirit could save us. They sent to me a messenger on-the-spot to ask for public prayers. I hastily rang my large bell while the crier invited everyone to come and pray, and soon all of those who could still carry themselves assembled in front of my tent, which served as both a chapel and a presbytery.[139]

Le grand conseil counted on the Oblates as counselors to help them manage forces outside of their control. Fourmond suggested to Louison Montagnais that they spend a great deal of time reciting public prayers and hymns in order to guard themselves from the maladies. He claimed that two-thirds of the band had fallen ill before finally,[140]

> Le 14 septembre, jour de l'Exaltation de la sainte Croix, je fis faire une grande croix, comme à Jolie-Butte ; je la bénis solennellement, puis le grand chef et les membres du grand conseil la portèrent pieusement sur leurs épaules tout autour du camp, pendant que j'aspergeais les loges d'eau bénite et que nous chantions les litanies de la très-sainte Vierge et celles de tous les saints. Partout, sur le passage de la croix, les malades semblèrent éprouver du soulagement, ce qui nous fit croire pendant quelques jours que le fléau allait cesser. La croix fut plantée au milieu de notre cimetière. Deux fois nous campâmes non loin de ce cimetière, ce qui nous donnait la faciliter d'y enterrer nos morts.
>
> On 14 September, day of the exaltation of the Holy Cross, I arranged to have a large cross made, just like at Jolie-Butte; I blessed it solemnly, then the Grand Chief and the members of the Grand Council carried it piously on their shoulders all around the camp while I splashed the lodges with holy water and while we sang the litanies of the Holy Virgin and all of the saints. Everywhere, on the passage of the cross, the sick seemed to show some relief, which led us to believe that the plague would end. The cross was planted in the middle of the cemetery. We camped twice near that cemetery, which facilitated the task of burying our dead.[141]

In this ceremony, Fourmond and Montagnais created an experience that united a community struck with agony and anguish. Once more, the Christian cross, and this time the cemetery, became a meaningful site of memory—a *lieu de mémoire*.[142] In catastrophic instances like these, missionaries had a crucial role in calling together Métis households and leading them through practices of mourning and solace. Not only did this relieve tension, but the participation of the temporal Métis band leaders demonstrated how Roman Catholic practices were, from a Western European viewpoint, also political in nature. This rather exceptional ceremony occurred only a short time prior to All Saints Day, and as I will later explain, the members of the *grand conseil* were also members of a religious congregation known as *la congregation des hommes*. Therefore, le *grand conseil* was a political and religious body.

Social Behaviour and Conflict Resolution

The *chapelains des chasseurs de buffalos* were arbiters of conflict. Their presence *à la prairie* helped the hunt chief outline proper and acceptable behaviours, which, in turn, helped the hunt chief assure cohesiveness in the community. The Oblates believed that *la mission ambulante* could be useful to prevent deviation from Western European codes of conduct in the short term. Hence, they were mostly concerned with activities such as gambling, drunkenness

and promiscuity, which they considered—somewhat paradoxically—to be the harmful influences of white civilization. In this sense, they praised the Métis as models of moral conduct: "Ici nous n'avons point, comme en France, à deplorer les scandales du carnaval."[143]

Evidently, socially divisive incidents did occur. In 1866, Lacombe warned that "divers jeux de hasard […] sont la source de divisions et de disputes entre eux et même des meurtres."[144] Grandin, who replied to a letter from Doucet in 1874, said that he did not understand how such good Christians could play the hand game: "ce jeu cause tellement de désordre parmi les sauvages que je le crois inventé par l'enfer. […] Ne tolérez point ce jeu parmi vos gens, s'ils veulent jouer absolument, venez-vous en.[145] The Oblates recognized that gambling was very troublesome within families and the community at large, and although it was tolerated in practice when done in moderation, the Oblates refused to offer the sacraments to habitual players and resorted to excommunication in the most extreme cases.[146] These disciplinary measures effectively banished individuals from the community. Therefore, missionaries had a role in identifying community members. Their overt affiliations with *le Chef* and *le Grand conseil* offered him clout in these matters.

Perhaps some of the most striking instances of morality and scandal were recorded once again by Fourmond. In his "Chronique de l'année 1871," he recounted how a Métis male named Kisikawâsis had assaulted a Métis woman with a weapon. Charlot Gladu's wife was slashed with a knife on her right arm "en défendant courageusement l'innocense de sa nièce."[147] The cut was so severe that she lost the use of her right hand. Indeed, Fourmond played an important role in determining what was morally right and wrong. In this case, the crime was violent and the chastity of an unwed woman was at play. The context of the situation is somewhat lost: the aunt may have been trying to forbid the two from engaging in pre-marital sex, or else she could have been trying to prevent a rape. The latter was probably the case because the man was found to have murdered his wife at fort des Prairies a year later.[148] Although Fourmond clearly accused Kiskawâsis of the crime, the missionary did not have any say over the judicial sentencing—that was determined by *le conseil*: "Le malheureux malfaiteur, espèce de sauvage métis, sans religion ni moralité, a été condamné par le conseil de prairie, à donner un cheval à la victime."[149]

It is a distinct possibility that Gladu's wife and her niece were members of a woman's congregation. The Oblates organized congregations of the laity in order to single out role models and help them enforce social codes through community leadership. The *codex historicus* of the

lac Sainte Anne mission listed the creation of *la societé de tempérance* (29 September 1853), *la confrérie de l'adoration perpétuelle du très saint sacrament* (15 August 1856) and the *congrégation des filles de Marie* (4 April 1859) for the Métis who settled there parts of the year.[150] It also listed the creation of *la congrégation des hommes*, *la congrégation des femmes* and *la congrégation des filles de Marie* at the Saint Albert residential mission during the week of Easter 1869. In a letter to Grandin, Hippolyte Leduc described the founding of these groups:

> Un bien immense a été fait cette semaine à Saint-Albert. La retraite prêchée par le P. Lacombe a réussi au-delà de toute espérance. Toute la semaine, deux fois par jour, l'église s'est remplie de fidèles. Dès les premiers jours, le P. Lacombe a établi la congrégation des jeunes filles ; toutes ont répondu à l'appel qui leur a été adressé. Le vendredi, avant l'adoration de la croix, le Père a parlé de la tempérance, puis il a fait appel à la bonne volonté de chacun ; tous les assistants sont venus en masse adorer la croix, promettant de garder la tempérance toute leur vie. Les samedi, dimanche, et lundi suivants, tout le reste de la population, hommes, femmes et enfants, a fait la même promesse. La retraite s'est terminée par la plantation d'une belle croix sur le coteau de la mission.
>
> A great deal of good has been done this week at Saint-Albert. The retreat that was preached by Father Lacombe succeeded over all expectations. All week, twice a week, the Church was filled with the faithful. From the start, Father Lacombe established the congregation of young girls; all of them responded to the call that was addressed to them. On Friday, prior to the adoration of the cross, the Father spoke about temperance, then he called upon the goodwill of each of them; all of the assistants came [151]

As in Provence, frequent and lengthy instructions, pledges of temperance, and the creation of congregations were complemented by the ceremonial planting of the cross at the culmination of the mission. While *à la prairie*, Gladu's wife may have been attempting to enforce the explicit rules of her congregation.

The congregations of men, women and young girls required their members to consent and to practice Roman Catholic rituals as the expression of their faith and of their goodwill to the community through a vow of temperance for life, regular assistance at church services, the sacrament of first communion, monthly confession whenever possible, and the donation of a "shelling" per year to the benefit of the sick.[152] Each congregation had their own principles as well. The congregation of men was directed to abstain from forbidden dances and games of chance.[153] Moreover, the congregation of women was designed to protect them from sinful conduct and establish a peaceful Christian household, as per their instructions:

> 3. Vivre en bon accord avec son mari
> 4. Ne pas avoir l'habitude de faire des visites inutiles pour fermenter de mauvaises médisances
> […]
> 9. Faire tout en leur pouvoir pour ramener leurs maris à une vie chrétienne

3. Live in harmony with her husband
4. Avoid the habit of making needless visits to ferment malicious gossip

[…]

9. Do anything in their power to bring back their husbands to a Christian life[154]

In many ways, the congregation of young girls was similar to the congregation of women since both were required to wear their scapulars and medals of the Immaculate Conception continually throughout the year. They were supposed to pray the rosary communally on Sundays as well. However, their constitution was refined to shape them into "des bonnes mères de famille:"[155]

3. Ne pas aller aux bals, et assemblées nocturnes, défendues par l'Eglise
4. Ne jamais aller faire de visite, surtout la nuit, dans des maisons étrangères, sans être accompagnée de sa mère ou d'une proche parenté
5. Etre respectueuse et obéissante à son père et sa mère
6. Allant à la prairie, c'est là qu'elles doivent se veiller. 1 pour ne jamais se rencontrer seule, à l'écart, avec des jeunes gens, 2 toujours coucher avec une de ses sœurs ou parentes, 3 assister à la messe tous les jours, autant que faire se pourra.

3. One must not go to balls and nightime activities that are forbidden by the Church
4. During the night, one must never visit the houses of strangers without being accompanied by one's mother or a close family member
5. One must be respectful and obey one's father and mother
6. One must really watch oneself while going *à la prairie*. 1 so that one is never alone or separated from the group with young people, 2 always sleep with one`s sisters or kin, 3 attend mass everyday or as much as possible.[156]

The sixth point fits part and parcel with the Kisikawâsis incident, since Gladu's wife was indeed sleeping alongside her niece. Aside from that, all congregations were supposed to hold monthly meetings, and each had special tasks for community events such as marriages or funerals. The men, in particular, were supposed to hold a special service during mass for their deceased members during each of the eight days prior to All Saints Day (1 November). This was likely a contributing factor to why Louison Montagnais' *grand conseil* literally bore a large cross during the 1870 epidemic at lac du Boeuf, which not only remembered the suffering endured by Jesus, but by the community as a whole. Finally, each congregation elected their own annual president and a vice-president.[157] Leduc described the inauguration of new members and the election of lay leaders during the Oblate retreat:

> Le jeudi saint, le Père établit la congrégation des enfants de Marie et la société de tempérance pour les femmes. Les jeunes filles, averties d'avance, sont venues, la tête couverte d'un voile blanc, se consacrer à la très-sainte Vierge ; cette cérémonie a paru les rendre très-heureuses, et maintenant, à tous les offices, elles se réunissent aux pieds de la statue de la très-sainte Vierge, près de l'autel, du côté de l'Evangile. Les femmes ne sont pas venues avec moins d'empressement quand il s'est agi, pour elles, de prendre la tempérance. Puis, après l'office, les deux congrégations ont élu à la pluralité des voix une présidente et deux assistantes.

> On holy Thursday, the Father established the Congregation of Mary's Children and the Temperance Society for women. The young girls, who had been informed, arrived, covered with a white veil, to consecrate themselves to the most holy Virgin; this ceremony seemed to make them very happy, and now, during every service, they come together at the foot of the statue of the most holy Virgin, near the altar, on the side of the Gospel. The women did not come with less eagerness when it was time to take their oath of temperance. Then, after the service, both congregations elected a president and two assistants by voting out loud.[158]

The missionary played an important role in family litigation at the behest of the community. On 2 May 1876, Lestanc negotiated a separation agreement between Herménégilde Majeau and Christine Gladu: "J'ai été avec le R. P. Leduc voir le Vieux Ch [Charlot] Gladu et nous l'avons décidé à reprendre sa fille Christine, depuis quatre mois concubine d'Herménégilde Majeau. C'était ce dernier qui nous avait invités à faire cette démarche, désirant de sortir du bourbier où il s'était jeté."[159] Lestanc and Leduc brokered an agreement between Majeau and Christine's parents, in which Majeau was required to offer eight pounds to Christine on the day of separation, a pension of two pounds per month until the birth of their child, a pension of three pounds per month following the birth of their child as long as the child remains under her care."[160]

Once again, it is important to note how the Métis perceived religion and politics differently from the Oblates. They effectively legitimated their own political and religious leaders through the recognition of the Roman Catholic Church. The pragmatic nature of the Oblate missions with the Métis effectively demonstrates how the latter played a significant role in missionizing themselves, or rather using Christianity to their own ends.

Endnotes

[1] Lacombe defined *chasseurs* as everyone who participated in the Métis bison hunting excursions. OMI, PAA, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 84. There are many parallels between the terms 'Métis' and '*Canadien*' in terms of identity in the context of the development of capitalism in these societies. Both terms initially referred to Francophone Catholics, but they later signified multiethnic, inclusive projects in reaction to conservatives who favoured the status quo. For a detailed analysis of *Canadien* identity leading up to the Rebellions of Lower Canada, see Allan Greer, *The Patriots and the People: The Rebellion of 1837 in Rural Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).
[2] *Bois brûlés* is a term referring to the Red River Métis, but after the amalgamation of the HBC and NWC, use of the term generally waned. QAA, Dumoulin to Lady Selkirk, 27 August 1818; QAA, Dumoulin to Bishop Plessis, 30 August 1818.
[3] Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre de Lestanc à Aubert, Fort Pitt, 30 juillet 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 186.
[4] "when we winter, only Cree is spoken." *Ibid.*, 186.
[5] Decorby did not mention the proximity of water, which was most important natural resource for a wintering camp. Jules Decorby, "Lettre du R. P. Decorby adressée au R. P. Lacombe, Saint Florent du lac qu'Appelle, 1 novembre 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 193-194.
[6] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 134.
[7] John Elgin Foster, Dick Harrison & I. S. MacLeran, *Buffalo* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), 66.
[8] *Ibid*., 66.
[9] Lacombe explained how this was the main food source of Company men and indeed all Plains people because it was very compact, easy to digest, and could last years without spoiling. OMI, PAA, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 88.
[10] Hippolyte Leduc, "Lettre du R. P. Leduc au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 23; *Missions* 9 (1870), 114-115.
[11] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal," 56.
[12] "The buffalo, which are the stubborn hosts of this country, attracted all of these people, who are a mix of diverse races and diverse religions." Jules Decorby, "Lettre du R. P. Decorby au R. P. Lacombe, Saint-Florent du lac qu'Appelle, 1 novembre 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 196.
[13] "When peace was made between the Cree and the Blackfoot, and between the Métis and the Blackfoot, the Cree dispersed into small camps, the Métis began to establish quarters along the Battle River and Red Deer River, and the buffalo found enemies everywhere." Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre du R. P. Lestanc au R. P. Aubert, Assistant général," *Missions* 18 (1880), 168.
[14] See R.F. Beal, J.E. Foster and Louise Zuk, "The Métis Hivernement Settlement at Buffalo Lake, 1872-77," (Edmonton: Alberta Department of Culture, Historic Sites and Provincial Museum Division, 1987).
[15] *Ibid*., 70.
[16] PAA, OMI, Grandin, Divers…, boite 1, Cahier "Copies de Lettres, 1874-1877," 18-29.
[17] John Elgin Foster, "*Le missionnaire* and *le chef métis*," *Études oblates de l'Ouest/Western Oblate Studies* 1 (1990), 121; John S. Milloy, *The Plains Cree: Warriors, Traders and Diplomats, 1790-1870* (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 1987).
[18] "The Métis are better hunters than the Amerindians; they are better armed. However, they kill what they can and only keep a portion. It is real waste." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal," 24.
[19] "Assiniboine of the Mountains." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal," 86.
[20] "Even though [Mistawasis] was a Methodist, he was always fond of the Catholic religion. He was diplomatic like many of his contemporaries." *House People* was a name derived from their long association with the HBC trading forts; "Àlthough he was Methodist, he was fond of the Catholic religion. He liked politics like many of his peers." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal," 86.
[21] Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 232.
[22] As historian Sherry Farrell-Racette observed, and Heather Devine noted, ermine is a fur bearing animal that is white in the winter and brown in the summer. It is believed that this name corresponds to his complexion during the summer and winter as a Métis person. Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves*, 294.
[23] R.F. Beal, J.E. Foster and Louise Zuk, "The Métis Hivernement Settlement at Buffalo Lake, 1872-77," An Historical Report Prepared for Historic Sites, Alberta Culture, 1987, 64; Hugh A Dempsey (ed.), *The Rundle Journals* (1840-1848), Alberta Records Publications Board, Historical Society of Alberta and Glenbow-Alberta

Institute, 1979, xxxii; E.O. Drouin, *Lac Ste-Anne Sakahigan* (Edmonton: Editions de l'Ermitage, 1973), 9. Pictures of Blanchet's and Lacombe's ladders are included in Claude Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest canadien*, 112-115; A photograph of Blanchet's catechism ladder is featured in Claude Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest canadien : Mission et Église chez Mgr Grandin, o.m.i. (1829-1902)* (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1983), 112; It will be explained in Chapter Four how Lacombe elaborated on Blanchet's catechism ladder, thus explaining the similarities.

[24] Archives Deschâtelets, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 19.

[25] *Ibid*., 232-233; Foster, "*Le missionnaire* and *le chef métis*," 121.

[26] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 19-20.

[27] Albert Lacombe, "Mémoire sur les Métis du Manitoba et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest canadien," *Missions*, (1916), 449-450.

[28] R.F. Beal, J.E. Foster and Louise Zuk, "The Métis Hivernement Settlement at Buffalo Lake, 1872-77," An Historical Report Prepared for Historic Sites, Alberta Culture, 1987, 65-66; Archives de l'Archevêché de Saint Boniface, Fonds Provencher, Cahier C, P2526 F. J. Bourassa à Mgr Provencher, 23 avril, 1846.

[29] "The easiest ministry. […] They were generally good Christians that were willing to listen to the good advice of the missionary." PAA, OMI, Papiers personnels du R.P. Léon Doucet, "Journal," 97.

[30] R.F. Beal, J.E. Foster and Louise Zuk, "The Métis Hivernement Settlement at Buffalo Lake, 1872-77," An Historical Report Prepared for Historic Sites, Alberta Culture, 1987, 66.

[31] This argument was discussed briefly in Chapter Two of this thesis. See Sleeper-Smith, "Women, Kin and Catholicism," 423-452.

[32] Lacombe described the Métis Iroquois as such in his memoirs. PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 126.

[33] Vital Grandin, "Missions du vicariate de la Saskatchewan," *Missions* 7 (1868), 216.

[34] Kahnawake (written Caughnawaga in the original source) is a village near La Prairie, on Montreal's south shore. Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black Robe Voyageur*, 66-67.

[35] See Jan Grabowksi and Nicole St-Onge, "Montreal Iroquois *engagés* in the Western Fur Trade, 1800-1821," *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, eds. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens and R.C. MacLeod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001): 23-58.

[36] *Ibid*., 45-46. Louis Karagwanté is mentionned in an article dedicated to the Montréal Iroquois engagés in the fur trade.

[37] Pierre-Jean de Smet, *Oregon missions and travels over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-46* (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 194-195; Pierre-Jean de Smet, *Missions de l'Orégon et voyages dans les montagnes Rocheuses en 1845 et 1846* (Paris: Pussielgue-Rusand, 1848), 155-156.

[38] Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 480-482.

[39] I gather that *mamaskas* translates from Cree into "miracle." Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 493. The same experience was written without as much detail in PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Lac Ste Anne – Chronique du R. P. Vital Fourmond o.m.i. 1870-1872," 5-7.

[40] *Ibid*., 480-482.

[41] *Ibid*., 480-482.

[42] John Elgin Foster, "*Le missionnaire* and *le chef métis*," 124.

[43] Claude Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest canadien : Mission et Église chez Mgr Grandin, o.m.i. (1829-1902)* (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1983), 94.

[44] Claude Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest canadien : Mission et Église chez Mgr Grandin, o.m.i. (1829-1902)* (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1983), 94.

[45] *Ibid*.,

[46] In reference to Greer, *Mohawk Saint*, and Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith*.

[47] This was Lacombe's first *à la prairie* mission with the Métis. It is interesting that this occurred in 1850, precisely when the Oblates had effectively ceased accompanying the Métis on their hunts. Lacombe was still a lay clergyman at this point and was studying under Belcourt at Pembina. As it was mentioned in the Chapter Two, Belcourt was funded separately for missions and thus had a great deal of independence from the Bishop of Saint Boniface. Although Belcourt initially refused the Métis chief "Wilkie's" initial request to have the young priest accompany them, he later gave in. See PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 82-90; Hughes, *op.cit*., 22-34.

[48] Hughes, *op.cit.*, 28.

[49] About five bison can be loaded into each cart. Quite often an expedition consisted of about 1500 Red River Métis with about 1000 carts.
[50] Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black Robe Voyageur*, 31.
[51] Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 233.
[52] Archives Deschâtelets, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 19.
[53] The Codex historicus for lac Sainte Anne says that Thibault travelled in the summer of 1843, however most accounts of this trip dates it to 1842. A short description of his 1842 expedition along the North Saskatchewan in included in Alexandre A. Taché, *Vingt Années de Missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique* (Montréal: Librairie Saint Joseph, Cadieux & Derome, 1888), 69-70.
[54] "The faithful in this area are Métis; they live from hunting and agricultural products; their numbers vary from seven to eight hundred. From a religious perspective, they leave little to be desired, and, without flattering them, they are excellent Christians." Vital Grandin, "Missions du vicariate de la Saskatchewan," *Missions* 7 (1868), 213.
[55] *Ibid*., 213; PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 146.
[56] This is evidenced at the annual lac Sainte Anne pilgrimage, which occurs the last week of July.
[57] The Saint Anne de Beaupré Museum made a representation of the first miracle with wax figures, but it is no longer on display. The martyred Louis Guimond was mentioned in Heirosme Lalemant, "Relation de ce qvi s'est passé és années 1661 & 1662," *Relations des Jésuites* 47, 88.
[58] A valuable collection of these Cree stories is published in Glecia Bear, Irene Calliou, Janet Feitz, [*et. al.*], *Kôhkominawak otâcimowiniwâwa / Our Grandmothers' Lives as Told in their Own Words* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992).
[59] Rudy Wiebe, *Big Bear* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008), 102.
[60] Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre de Lestanc à Aubert, Fort Pitt, 30 juillet 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 186.
[61] Hippolyte Leduc, "Rapport annuel du R. P. Leduc au R.-R. P. Supérieur général," *Missions* 12 (1874), 513.
[62] Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black Robe Voyageur*, 61-62.
[63] René Rémas, "Lettre du R. P. Rémas au T. R. P. Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 221-222.
[64] Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black Robe Voyageur*, 67.
[65] Vital Justin Grandin, "Lettre de Mgr Grandin à MM. les membres des conseils centraux de la Propagation de la foi," *Missions* 10 (1872), 29.
[66] Note how 'Father' refers to priests that are part of a religious order. Alexandre A. Taché, *Vingt Années de Missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique* (Montréal: Librairie Saint Joseph, Cadieux & Derome, 1888), 108.
[67] "To reduce adults to work, or to the civilized life, seems absolutely impossible to me." Vital Justin Grandin, "Lettre de Mgr Grandin à MM. les membres des conseils centraux de la Propagation de la foi," *Missions* 10 (1872), 34.
[68] "Yet, the biggest obstacle for doing good is the instability of our Métis, of which half of the population is temporarily fixed at lac du Boeuf living off of the hunt. The disaffection of the population embarrasses and discourages us." PAA, OMI, 71.220/5, Papier Personnels de Mgr Grandin, Vol. 5, `Notes privés sur les missions et les missionnaires," 260.
[69] "That is the biggest flaw with our Métis, we cannot definitively force them; there are at least 7 or 800 of them in the prairie living like Amerindians." PAA, OMI, 71.220/5, Papier Personnels de Mgr Grandin, Vol. 5, `Notes privés sur les missions et les missionnaires," 263.
[70] Claude Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest canadien*, 173.
[71] "Next summer, I have the intention of sending Father Caër, with the Métis, to the prairie; he wishes it so, he says its the only way he can learn Cree." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6532, Boîte 156, Papier Personnels d'Albert Lacombe, Transcriptions de sa correspondance provenant des archives de Saint-Boniface 1861-1864, " Lettre from P. Lacombe à Mgr Taché," 13 April 1861.
[72] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 88.
[73] R.F. Beal, J.E. Foster and Louise Zuk, "The Métis Hivernement Settlement at Buffalo Lake, 1872-77," An Historical Report Prepared for Historic Sites, Alberta Culture, 1987, 62; Marcel Giraud, *Le métis canadien* vol. 1 (Saint Boniface: Les éditions du blé, 1984), 1068.
[74] "Almost no one is left at the mission, everyone is *à la prairie*." Hippolyte Leduc, "Lettre du R. P. Leduc au R.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 21.
[75] "our interpreters, our guides, and our loyal companions. Loved and respected by the Amerindian tribes of which they descended from, they were for the missionaries powerful intermediaries and introducers for the Amerindians to

which we came to evangelize." Peel's Prairie Provinces [hereafter PPP], 7908, Lacombe, *Les Métis du Manitoba et du Nord-Ouest Canadien*, < http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/7908.html >, 449-450.
[76] "They are intrepid and tireless voyageurs. They seem to possess the faculties that are unique to Aboriginals, that is to navigate through forests and prairies with nothing but their sense of observation to guide their way." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6608, Boîte 159, "Mémoire sur les Métis du Manitoba et du Nord Ouest Canadien," 5.
[77] "The two Fathers were admirable in their zeal and devotion to catechize children, instruct the adults and reprimand the disorders that can occur in a hodge-podge of 600 people living in the middle of the prairies." Hippolyte Leduc, "Lettre du R. P. Leduc au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 19.
[78] "Since the stay is so short among them, we can only scratch the surface." Jules Decorby, "Lettre du R. P. Decorby au R. P. Lacombe," *Missions* 18 (1880), 199.
[79] "It is true that five or six have persevered, but the rest, after attempting the religious life for a couple of months, have all abandoned us like cowards; one Brother withdrew after proclaiming his five year vows." Hippolyte Leduc, "Rapport sur le vicariat de Saint Albert," *Missions* 17 (1879), 435.
[80] "While I did everything in my power to supervise his conduct and do him some good," Galarneault "only wanted to satisfy the desires of a despicable sodomite and corrupt young people, whom he has scandalized for the last time." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6532, Boîte 156, Papier Personnels d'Albert Lacombe, Transcriptions de sa correspondance provenant des archives de Saint-Boniface 1861-1864, " Lettre from P. Lacombe à Mgr Taché," 13 April 1861.
[81] "Servant, nurse, cook, sexton and even Grand Vicar Vital Grandin. Brother Boisramé was train the boy for these noble tasks." Journal de Mgr Grandin," *Missions* 3 (1864), 210.
[82] "The good Paul Fayans is my guide, sexton and even head-waiter, and he performs these functions for nothing." Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 480-482.
[83] Vital Grandin, "Journal de Mgr Grandin," *Missions* 3 (1864), 382; Vital Grandin, "Journal de Mgr Grandin," *Missions* 5 (1866), 212-214, 228.
[84] "This old man is a real missionary with respect to his family and neighbours." *Ibid*., 213.
[85] Vital Grandin, "Lettre de Monseigneur Grandin au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 9 (1870), 170.
[86] Vital Grandin, "Lettre de Monseigneur Grandin au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 9 (1870), 242-243.
[87] Étienne Bonnald, "Lettres du R. P. Bonnald," *Missions* 16 (1878), 344.
[88] Grabowski and St-Onge, *op.cit*., 46.
[89] "the Reverend Father Doucet, Brother Bowes, Brother Grezeau, and a Métis who is almost considered a lay brother." Prosper Légéard, "Lettre du R. P. Légeard au R. P. Martinet, assistant, Secrétaire Général," *Missions* 12 (1874), 49.
[90] Alexandre-Antonin Taché, *Vingt années de missions dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Amérique* (Montréal: Cadieux & Derome, 1888), 128.
[91] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal," 84.
[92] "His desire was to become a lay brother, but his poorly-enlightened piety and his strange ways prevent him from being accepted in the ranks of the Congregation of Oblates." Paul-Émile Breton, *Le grand chef des prairies : Albert Lacombe, O.M.I., 1827-1916* (Edmonton: Éditions de l'ermitage, 1954), 60-61; PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, Aristide Philippot, Manuscrit : "La mission de Saint-Paul-des-Cris et les premières origines des missions indiennes de l'Alberta-Saskatchewan," 1935, 4.
[93] "Very attached to me especially, he never left my side for 17 years." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 148.
[94] Hughes, *Father Lacombe*, 50, 74; PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal," 85;
[95] *Ibid*., 85.
[96] *Ibid*., 84.
[97] *Ibid*., 84.
[98] Taché, *Vingt années de missions*, 128.
[99] "He has a slew of little bags filled with certain medicines. He treats fevers, purging them and bleeding them with a flint point. He wears coloured glasses with lenses to increase his importance. The Amerindians have great trust in him." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal," 24. *Silex* is crystallized sedimentary rock, like flint.
[100] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 2238, Boîte mi 15, " Journal de la Mission de St. Paul des Cris. 1865, 66, 67, 68," 3.
[101] Hughes, *Father Lacombe*, 197.
[102] The same was said during Louis Riel's famous trial in 1885, to which it has been established generations later that Riel was indeed a very lucid when he presented his defense speech. This is a perfect example of Richard

White's analogy to the film *Cool Hand Luke* and the 'failure to communicate.' In White's words, "the warden's famous phrase sprang from the fact that Luke's ostensible misunderstandings communicated his disdain and intentions all too well." White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Misunderstandings," 13.
[103] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal," 24.
[104] "Little by little, his soul became further deranged. He believed he was inspired by a mission from on high. In the end, I could no longer control him. Despite all of my efforts to keep him and take care of him, he strayed away." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 148.
[105] Hughes, *Father Lacombe*, 267.
[106] "An excellent Christian arrived to Red River, and like me, he proposed to make his way to the Rocky Mountains, not to win souls, but to conduct trade." L.-S. Culerier, "Le R. P. René Rémas, 1823-1901," *Missions* 64 (1930), 520.
[107] "rendered important services during this war." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Papiers Personnels de Léon Doucet, "Journal 1868-1890," 86.
[108] "If any of you do not approve of these laws, let him leave our camp and come not with us, for once we have set out together from this encampment no one will be free to separate from us." OMI, PAA, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 85. This was Lacombe's first *mission ambulante* among the Métis, which was named 'the Great Hunt of 1850' in Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black Robe Voyageur*, 24-33.
[109] Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au T.-R. P. Supérieur général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 483.
[110] "The Métis Chief Louison Montagnais convened the Council with the Métis and Cree elders… I was invited to the Council." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Papiers Personnels de Léon Doucet, "Journal 1868-1890," 65; R.F. Beal, J.E. Foster and Louise Zuk, "The Métis Hivernement Settlement at Buffalo Lake, 1872-77," An Historical Report Prepared for Historic Sites, Alberta Culture, 1987, 24.
[111] "[The Chief, L. Montagnais, a good Christian, who nourished me and took great care of me, bought a large number of robes and other pelts from the Amerindians and the Métis.]" PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Papiers Personnels de Léon Doucet, "Journal 1868-1890," 69; R.F. Beal, J.E. Foster and Louise Zuk, "The Métis Hivernement Settlement at Buffalo Lake, 1872-77," An Historical Report Prepared for Historic Sites, Alberta Culture, 1987, 26.
[112] "[Throughout the whole winter, my good Métis provided food and shelter for me, and I travelled at their expense. They did not stop at covering my basic needs, they offered me many Buffalo robes as presents.]" Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre de Lestanc à Aubert. Fort Pitt, 30 juillet 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 186.
[113] "[The Missionary […] performed catechism and schooling to the children, was offered food and supplies, wood, candles, and a respectable perquisite, between 50 and 150 buffalo robes.]" Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre du R. P. Lestanc au R. P. Aubert, Assistant général," *Missions* 18 (1880), 172.
[114] Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre du R. P. Lestanc au R. P. Aubert, Assistant général," *Missions* 18 (1880), 173.
[115] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Doucet, "Journal,"84.
[116] Nemrod was the founder of Babylonian empire and a mighty hunter before God. This can be taken in the strict sense of being hunters of wild beasts. Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre du R. P. Lestanc au R. P. Aubert, Assistant général, Fort Pitt, 30 juillet 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 172.
[117] "came to together to build me a house, and within six or seven days I had shelter. My hut was 20 square feet and served as a church and a presbytery. It was not an architectural monument, but it was sufficient for the needs of the parish." *Ibid*., 187.
[118] "In the fall, around All Saint's Day, my mobile parish stopped at a location well supplied with wood; within fifteen days, the tents were replaced by houses; but the church and the house of the priest were always the first buildings of the improvised city." *Ibid*., 172.
[119] "Nomadic life started again. The population of the camp was more or less considerable, numbering between forty and one hundred families. How I loved the errant lifestyle; I was at great ease among this good Métis people!" *Ibid*., 172.
[120] "when seeing the crowd gather, there was perpetual celebration. *L'hivernement* was the cause of this extraordinary movement." Jules Decorby, "Lettre du R. P. Decorby au R. P. Lacombe, Saint-Florent du lac qu'Appelle, 1 novembre 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 196-197.
[121] *Ibid*., 196-197.
[122] "The non-baptised Amerindian, who was without a shade of civilization, was less exigent, and his lodge, constructed at the end of a ravine, stood in contrast with the comfortable houses of the Métis or Christian Amerindian by its miserable condition." *Ibid*., 194.
[123] "Doctor of the soul and surgeon of the body," PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 88.

[124] "Unfortunate is the rider who is knocked off his horse in the middle of the fray. He will sometimes because the puppet of one of these furious animals who will throw and rethrow the unlucky *chasseur* many feet in the air." *Ibid*., 87.
[125] Jules Decorby, "Lettre du R. P. Decorby au R. P. Lacombe," *Missions* 18 (1880), 198.
[126] Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre de Lestanc à Aubert. Fort Pitt, 30 juillet 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 174.
[127] Hughes, *op.cit.*, 102.
[128] The so-called priest Jean l'Heureux, who imitated the Obaltes, begged for medicines from the HBC. See Raymond Huel, "Jean l'Heureux: Canadien errant et prétendu missionnaire auprès des Pieds-Noirs," *Après dix ans… bilan et prospective: Actes du 11e coloque du CEFCO* (Edmonton: Institut de recherche de la Faculté Saint-Jean, 1991), 214,
[129] "Numerous camps were afflicted with famine, disease and death while Father Lacombe visited them, and this helped the priest conduct a fruitful mission." Vital Grandin, "Lettre de Monseigneur Grandin au T.R. P. Supérieur Général, Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Île à la Crosse," *Missions* 9 (1870), 174.
[130] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Papiers Personnels de Léon Doucet, "Journal 1868-1890," 12-13.
[131] Prosper Légéard, "Lettre du R. P. Légeard au R. P. Martinet, Assistant, Secrétaire Général," *Missions* 12 (1874), 49.
[132] "Againt sickness comes the healing powers of holy religion." Prosper Légéard, "Lettre du R. P. Légeard au R. P. Martinet, Assistant, Secrétaire Général," *Missions* 12 (1874), 49.
[133] Nathalie Kermoal, *Un passé métis au féminin* (Québec: Les Éditions GID, 2006), 145.
[134] Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 485-486.
[135] Kermoal, *op.cit*., 145.
[136] "We had 22 death *à la prairie* and about 200 deaths at St Albert and lac Sainte Anne." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Lac Ste Anne – Chronique du R. P. Vital Fourmond o.m.i. 1870-1872," 7.
[137] The precise number is not mentioned in the letter, although Fourmond emphasizes the scope. Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 486.
[138] Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 495.
[139] Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 488.
[140] Again, the exact number is not mentioned.
[141] Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 10 (1872), 495.
[142] With reference to Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*, *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 7.
[143] "Unlike in France, here we do not have to worry about the scandals of carnival." Hippolyte Leduc, "Lettre du R. P. Leduc au R. P. Martinet," *Missions* 12 (1874), 507.
[144] "Various games of chance […] are the source of divisions and disputes among them and even murder." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au R.-R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 246.
[145] "This game causes so much disorder among Aboriginals that I believed it has been invented in Hell. […] Do not tolerate this game among your people, but if they absolutely want to play, walk away." Claude Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest canadien*, 142.
[146] Claude Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission dans le Nord-Ouest canadien*, 142.
[147] "courageously defending the innocence of her niece." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Lac Ste Anne – Chronique du R. P. Vital Fourmond o.m.i. 1870-1872," 7.
[148] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Lac Ste Anne – Chronique du R. P. Vital Fourmond o.m.i. 1870-1872," 8.
[149] "The ~~miserable~~ criminal, who is some kind of savage Métis without religion or morality, has been condemned by the Council of the Prairie to offer a horse to the victim." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Lac Ste Anne – Chronique du R. P. Vital Fourmond o.m.i. 1870-1872," 7.
[150] The congregations translate to the *Society of Temperance*, the *Brotherhood of the Perpetual Adoration of the Holy Sacrament*, and the *Congregation of the Daughters of Mary*. PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Journal de la Mission du Lac Ste Anne 1852-1872," 6-8.
[151] Hippolyte Leduc, "Lettre du R. P. Leduc à Mgr Grandin," *Missions* 9 (1870), 183.
[152] The context refers to something of monetary value, hence the word was probably a misspelled version of "shilling." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Journal de la Mission du Lac Ste Anne 1852-1872," 6.
[153] This is written in the original text as "3. Ne pas prendre part aux danses défendues et aux jeux de Hazard." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Journal de la Mission du Lac Ste Anne 1852-1872," 6.
[154] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Journal de la Mission du Lac Ste Anne 1852-1872," 6-7.

[155] "Good mothers of the family." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Journal de la Mission du Lac Ste Anne 1852-1872," 8.
[156] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Journal de la Mission du Lac Ste Anne 1852-1872," 8.
[157] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 4212, Boite 99, "Journal de la Mission du Lac Ste Anne 1852-1872," 6.
[158] Hippolyte Leduc, "Lettre du R. P. Leduc à Mgr Grandin," *Missions* 9 (1870), 185.
[159] "I went with the Reverend Father Leduc to see Ch [Charlot] Gladu and we convinced him to retake his daughter Christine, who was for four months the concubine of Herménégilde Majeau. It was this last one who invited us to do so, for he wanted to rectify the situation that he had put himself into." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6874, Boite 170, Jean-Marie Lestanc, "Notes privées, actes de baptêmes, mariages, etc. 1874-1879."
[160] *Ibid*.

Chapter Four: "*Quand le dernier bison sera mort*:" The Amerindian Missions

Thibault and the First Missions to the Blackfoot

If the Métis remembered Roman Catholic missionaries through heritage and memory, the opposite was true among most Amerindian peoples. In keeping with the dual-character of Roman Catholic missions in the North-West, some missionaries believed it was their duty to evangelize the Amerindians, whom they judged to be the most 'abandoned' or 'neglected' of 'God's people' on Earth. When Thibault tried to locate Alexis Piché and the 'Rocky Mountain Cree' band near fort de la Montagne Roche (Rocky Mountain House) in 1842, he also encountered the Blackfoot.[1] Thus began one of the first Amerindian missions south of the North Saskatchewan River.

Once Thibault arrived at fort de la Montagne, Thibault claimed that it was the Blackfoot who initiated the mission. In a letter addressed to Bishop Signay in Québec, he explained how the Blackfoot chose an interpreter-guide to lead them to the priest: "Le sept juillet, […] il arriva une brigade de Pieds-Noirs qui venaient en traite. Aussitôt qu'ils apprirent qu'il y a avait là un homme de Dieu, ils demandèrent s'il leur était possible de le voir et de lui parler. Sur l'affirmative, ils sollicitèrent l'interprète, M. Monreau, de les conduire chez moi."[2] The fact that the Blackfoot requested to meet with the missionary-priest signifies that they have heard about white missionaries before encountering the Red River clergy. How the Blackfoot perceived the social roles, tasks, functions or purposes of white missionaries is unclear, but one can gather that this type of information was exchanged through the longstanding patterns of interaction that were critical to Binnema's 'horse and gun revolution.'

The Blackfoot chose their own interpreter to guide them to Thibault. Philippot identified "Monreau" as Hugh (Hughes) Monro, and this man likely had a hand in spreading Christian ideas and rituals among the Peigan prior to Thibault's visit. Son of Philip Monro, who was a Scottish officer of the British Army, and Charlotte Girard, "une jeune canadienne d'excellente famille," Hugh was raised at Saint Charles Boyer in Lower Canada until he entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company and moved to the North-West.[3] Despite his parents' objections, he married a Peigan woman and was thus "déshérité par sa famille, sinon renié tout à fait."[4] Some Oblate authors considered Monro to be a Métis guide even though he did not have any Amerindian lineage: he was a francophone proto-Métis figure who had much in common with

the area's *gens libres*. He was a valuable interpreter for both Company traders and missionaries because he could speak French, English, Cree and Blackfoot fluently.[5] Philippot estimated that he was born between 1770 and 1780, which made him roughly 60 to 70 years of age, and earned him the epithet "le vieux Monro."[6] His marriage to a Peigan woman certainly granted him access to their society, so he was an ideal intermediary. Like the freemen, Monro may have wanted to perpetuate Christian rituals and beliefs within his family as well as introduce them to other members of the band. Lacombe mentioned this in a letter dated 3 December 1866 that "les Marchands traiteurs leur auront parlé de notre Père qui est au ciel," which, according to him, was the first time the Blackfoot heard of the concept of a God in Heaven.[7] He was certainly referring to merchants like Monro. *Notre père qui est au ciel*, or Our father who art in heaven, represented the first line of the *Pater noster* or Lord's Prayer, which means that these merchant traders who married *à la façon du pays* have taught their children how to recite prayers in Blackfoot. Therefore, the merchants played an initial role as translators and propagators of Western European cultural traditions, while the Blackfoot had the cultural capacity to create new words designating the beings and objects described to them.

As *l'homme de Dieu* (Man of God), Thibault was warmly greeted by the Blackfoot who were presumably near the fort. He spoke to the Blackfoot through Monro, who was fluent in both languages. Thibault reported that the Blackfoot were very attentive to his message: "Ils écoutèrent pendant trois heures consécutives avec une grande attention, ayant presque toujours les yeux fixés sur le crucifix, et semblant ne pas vouloir perdre une seule de mes mots."[8] The Blackfoot were particularly keen on the sacrament of baptism and immediately demanded that a large number of children be baptized:

> Ils m'amenèrent immédiatement leurs petits enfants, que je baptisai au nombre de quarante un. Quelques jours après, il en arrive une seconde brigade, qui, ayant été informée par les premiers de ce que je leur avis dit, demandèrent tout de suite à me voir et présentèrent vingt-trois enfants à baptiser.
>
> They immediately brought to me their little children [*petits enfants* could mean grandchildren], 41 of which I had baptized. A few days later, a second brigade arrived who, having been informed of what I said by the first, asked to see me right away and presented to me twenty-three children to baptize.[9]

Thibault decribed how quickly the news of his arrival could travel within the band, since parents told other parents about the Man of God who performed baptisms. I do not know the significance of the baptisms in these circumstances, but they clearly have to do with a 'disruption' or crisis of some kind involving infants. In this case, Thibault was sanctioned to

provide supernatural healing or protection (the type involving a spiritual authority) to a very large number of children. The experience shows how Amerindian people played a fundamental role spreading Christian rites. In this case, it happened at a very rapid pace. Thibault reported that "l'eau sainte du baptême coula pour la première fois sur les fronts des enfants de la plus redoutable des tribus du nord-ouest," but the validity of his statement was true insofar as the ritual was administered by the Red River clergy.[10] It was mentioned in the previous chapter how this ritual was shared among Amerindians by Company men, Freemen, the Métis, their wives and their progeny. It was possible that at least some Blackfoot households had witnessed baptism prior to Thibault's visit through their contacts with fur traders or the Métis.

Interpreting encounters such as these required a great deal of attention and creativity. Thibault felt as confused as he was pleased with his Blackfoot mission. A parting action near the mission's close left him quite puzzled:

> Quand ils ont été sur le point de me laisser, chacun s'est empressé de me faire un adieu solennel, en me passant les mains sur la tête, sur les épaules, sur la poitrine et sur les bras. […] Je ne pouvais m'empêcher d'éprouver de la confusion en voyant les témoignages de respect dont ils m'entouraient.
>
> When they were on the verge of leaving me, each one hastened to make me a solemn farewell by touching their heads, their shoulders, and their chest with their hands. […] I could not help but feel confused when I saw this token of respect performed all around me.[11]

Thibault assumed that the ritual was performed out of respect, which highlights his inexperience and naivety at this point. But during the 1860s, Leduc had written about the very same act and believed it was meant to acquire certain powers:

> Pendant que j'étais seul à Saint-Albert, je reçus la visite de plusieurs sauvages de la nation des Pieds-Noirs, venus en traite au fort Edmonton. Un jour, l'un d'eux vient me faire visite à la cathédrale, où j'étais occupé à réciter mon bréviaire. Après avoir fait à haute voix un assez long discours au Maître de la vie, il s'en vint gravement me déposer trois ou quatre gros baisers sur les lèvres, me passa les mains sur les épaules et le long des bras, faisant ensuite les mêmes attouchements sur lui-même. Enfin il me donna la main et partit content, espérant bien avoir tiré de ma pauvre personne une vertu qui serait pour lui le gage d'un bon voyage ou d'une bonne chasse.
>
> When I was alone at Saint-Albert, many Amerindians from the Blackfoot nation came to visit me while they traded at Fort Edmonton. Une day, one of them visited me at the cathedral, where I was busy reciting my breviary. After having made aloud a long speech to the Master of life, he approached me seriously and laid three or four big kisses on the cheeks, he laid his hands upon my shoulders and slid them down my arms, and then touched himself in the same way. Lastly, he shook my hand and departed content, hoping to have taken from my poor body a virtue that would be for him the gauge of a good voyage or a good hunt.[12]

Roman Catholic missionaries commonly experienced these parting actions with the Blackfoot. These were clear representations of how Blackfoot people believed that they could physically

gain supernatural power from the bodies or spirits of missionaries. The evidence suggests that baptism among infants also fell in line with this type of recourse. Of course, missionaries dismissed these meanings as pagan superstitions, but there was little that a priest could do to quell them. Thibault interpreted good intentions from the action and thus tolerated it because "tout cela contribue à faire aimer le prêtre."[13] The baptisms, however, seemed to be a 'pragmatic exchange' in the sense that both the missionary and the Blackfoot achieved what they wanted from the ritual, albeit with different understandings over its meaning.

Prior to Thibault's encounter with the Blackfoot, Provencher informed the missionary-priest by letter that Pierre-Jean de Smet was travelling to the Oregon missions and then over the Rocky Mountains to conclude a peace treaty between the Flat Head and the Blackfoot.[14] Thibault relayed the information to the Blackfoot. He stated that one particular chief named Renard (Fox) was so impressed by the news that he decided to travel south and find de Smet among the Flat Heads. Renard asked the priest for a piece of paper that would confirm to de Smet that they had met.[15] De Smet then received the letter from Thibault, which confirmed the peaceful intentions of the Blackfoot:

> They [the Blackfoot] are well disposed to embrace the faith. I cannot give you a better idea of these people then by comparing them to the Flat-heads. […] 'Come, then, to us,' they say, we, also, shall be happy to learn the joyous news you have brought to our brethren of the mountains; we are to be pitied, not knowing the word of the Great Spirit; be, therefore, charitable to us—come, teach *us* the way of salvation—we will listen to it.'[16]

Interestingly, Thibault and de Smet took part in an ongoing conversation between rival Amerindian bands as messengers. The example illustrated how the social networks and means of communication of the Roman Catholic priests were useful to Aboriginal bands: the priests were intermediaries that could rapidly and peacefully relay information, especially among hostile groups where missionary-couriers could minimize the risk of violent confrontation. In result, Thibault was invigorated by his experience and believed that the Blackfoot mission had promise.

The following year, Thibault witnessed first-hand the escalation of warfare between the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot. From that point on, he radically changed his opinion about *la mission ambulante* with the Amerindians. While he was performing a mission with a Plains Cree band that was trading at Fort Pitt, Thibault wrote that the Blackfoot had become "les plus méchants sauvages de ces contrées."[17] On 15 August 1843, a Blackfoot war party arrived and attacked the Cree during the night, which resulted with a death on each side. These violent confrontations represented how Amerindian bands defended their claim over territory and

resources during the common access régime. The increased frequency in confrontation, however, signifies a disruption in the access to resources which necessarily eliminated the 'neutral ground' along the borders. In retaliation, about 60 Plains Cree warriors "sont partis pour aller, comme ils disent, travailler les gens du large" and returned a couple of days later with nearly 100 stolen horses.[18] Thibault reported that one Blackfoot and one Cree warrior were killed as a result.[19] Such a large raid indicates that the Plains Cree relied on force to gain access to horses. Thibault revealed in his letter that another 20 Blackfoot were killed by Assiniboine horse thieves shortly thereafter. Thibault was not used to this type of violence and certainly did not understand its function in the commons. However, he clearly understood the message that it sent to intruders. As he stated, "ce n'est pas bien aisé de rôder dans nos prairies. Il faut sans cesse se garder et faire bien attention pour ne pas tomber entre les mains de ces brigands."[20] De Smet visited lac Sainte Anne in 1846. At the request of the Blackfoot, he urged Thibault to continue his mission among them. Thibault reluctantly agreed and met the Blackfoot at fort de la Montagne. Despite having performed 64 baptisms, he was not content with his mission and never returned.[21] This 'failure to communicate' expressed Thibault's disdain all too well.[22]

In 1847, Thibault traveled to Saint Boniface and reported on the western missions to his superiors. He recognized that the bison had become a highly contested resource and that it was the root cause of warfare on the prairie. He warned Provencher that "Quand le dernier bison sera mort, on pourra tenter alors quelque chose du côté des prairies."[23] He believed that the bison hunting missions represented too great a danger to the missionary and that the Church should lay off these types of missions. Bishop Provencher and then Taché complied with Thibault's suggestion and ended *la mission ambulante* in the vicariate from 1849-1859.

Old Understandings and New Misunderstandings

In spite of the turn of events, Thibault's experiences among the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot were rich demonstrations of cultural exchange during the commons. Initially, Thibault was struck by the enthusiasm of the Blackfoot for his teachings. He felt it necessary to provide them a lesson on how to tell time so that they could worship God in his absence: "Sur leur demande, j'ai donné à leur chef un papier sur lequel sont marqués les jours de la semaine, afin qu'ils puissent connaître le dimanche et le sanctifier."[24] The Australian historian and ex-Jesuit missionary Greg Dening explained how experiences such as these were characteristic of

missionary encounters around the world. In his review of Jean and John Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Dening explained how the lesson of time was at the root of "the processes of cultural exchange and interwoven hegemonies."[25] During religious encounters where indigenous audiences "were totally uncomprehending of their [the missionary's] language, their metaphors, and the context of every belief and ritual action," there was a need to express thoughts and concepts at the most basic level.[26] Indeed, as E.P. Thompson argues, the mechanization of time and the Christian calendar were indeed at the root of Western European cultures during the modern era.[27] Grandin adopted Aboriginal standards of time as well during his travelling mission to the northern woodlands and arctic in 1863: "nous sommes tous réglementaires ; nous mangeons quand nous avons faim, nous mesurons nos oraisons et méditations à l'horloge de notre ferveur ou plutôt de ma ferveur, car c'est moi qui donne le signal."[28]

Thibault and his peers described how modernity, religion, science and mysticism would crisscross as he observed Amerindian customs. Their judgments were based upon Western European epistemological genres, so their writings illustrate how Amerindian peoples understood things differently. From the perspective of the missionary, Amerindian animism resembled organized European religions in terms of rites, roles and relationships, which specified a genuine belief in religious truth. However, they perceived animism as a strange mix of science and religion, especially when observing the empirical techniques that Aboriginals used to conjure up the supernatural. Missionaries understood this practice to be contradictory to their own categories of knowledge and therefore associated animist customs to 'superstition' and 'sorcery.' In the case of the parting action mentioned earlier in the chapter, Leduc believed that the Blackfoot tried to accomplish tangible results through *a priori* beliefs in ritual forms. Hence, missionaries believed that this 'strange mix' of science and religion was typical of 'pre-modern' or 'primitive' societies—cultures they believed were antithetical to their own. Of course, the Eurocentrism of missionaries was most evident in such cases.[29]

Lacombe defined 'superstition' as a comprehensive term and 'jugglery' as a particular one as he analyzed certain animist customs. He thought there was only one form of 'jugglery' among Plains people, and it was called Kososatchikewin—a ritual for seeing the future and the unknown through Pawagans (dreams).[30] To perform this ritual, people would tie their members together, wrap their body in rope, and then sequester themselves in a structure made of sticks.

After singing to the animal spirits, the structure would shake and all the ropes would be thrown outside. Then the Pawagans would tell the juggler what he or she wanted to know.[31] Lacombe described a healing action that was performed by shamans—another person who had the spiritual sanction to treat supernatural illnesses:

> Vient ensuite l'action de souffler les malades. L'homme de cette médecine, après s'être fait payer un cheval, se rend auprès du malade, frappe le tambour, et après avoir fait plusieurs gestes, souffle sur la partie malade, pour en chasser le mal, y applique sa bouche, pour en extraire des morceaux de fer, d'os, etc. qu'il a cachés adroitement dans sa bouche.
>
> Then comes the action of blowing on the sick. After being paid a horse, the medicine man will approach the sick person, plays the drum, and after having made a variety of gestures, will blow on a part of the sick person. To chase the illness away, he applies his mouth to that part of the body in order to extract pieces of iron, bone, etc. that he had cleverly hidden in his mouth.[32]

Lacombe tried to discredit the shaman. However, one can gather from these descriptions just how important physical actions—or *touching*—were for gaining or influencing supernatural powers.

No matter their personal opinions regarding Aboriginal rituals, missionaries like Thibault, Leduc and Lacombe recognized that failing to reciprocate with Aboriginal traditions and ways of life could effectively close their religion to their audience. When the Oblate Julien Moulin told a chief "mais ce n'est pas tout de vouloir prier, l'important c'est de prier comme il faut," he suddenly realized that, "mes sauvages, bien qu'ils voulussent tous de la *prière*, n'en désiraient cependant prendre que le moins possible."[33] Therefore, the most successful missionaries were the most amenable ones.[34]

I am trying to say that the *reasons* for reciprocating were often different from the *act* of reciprocating. Groups can understand shared actions differently by ascribing their own meanings, so depending on the point of view, Christian rituals can be both Roman Catholic and traditionally Aboriginal, and *vice versa*. This could explain why—as Foster remarked in his footnotes to "*Le missionnaire* and *le chef métis*"—a Cree elder explained to him how the Sun Dance told the life story of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the elder saw his explanation as indigenous to the Cree, "certainly predating any historical contact with Euro-Canadians."[35]

"*Le missionnaire des sauvages des Prairies*:"[36] Lacombe and the Amerindian Missions

After the aging Thibault was sent to Saint Boniface in 1852, Provencher sent Lacombe, one of Belcourt's former students, to replace him at lac Sainte Anne. Unlike his predecessor, Lacombe expressed an ardent desire for *la mission ambulante* among the Cree and the Blackfoot:

"Envoyez-moi vers ces âmes abandonées, laissez-moi aller à elles."[37] During the winter of 1854-1855, Lacombe visited the Plains Cree on the prairie and administered baptisms to them. In 1857, he followed the Dumont *hivernants* to their wintering sites.[38] Indeed, the Oblates were not performing *la mission ambulante* between 1849-1859. That is why these excursions were quick and rare visits rather than veritable bison hunting missions.[39]

When the Oblates returned *à la prairie* in 1859, they had only done so with the Métis. In 1860, Rémas accompanied a small Métis caravan composed of 70 to 80 families (300 people) to la rivière la Biche. He reported that his *à la prairie* ministry was certainly more fruitful than if he stayed at lac Saine Anne that year: "Je pouvais avoir tous les enfants et les instruire tous les jours durant trois mois. Je voyais tous les adultes et les instruisais : une foule de gens ont fait leur première communion à la prairie… "[40] From Saint Boniface, Richer and Caër joined the Métis for *la mission ambulante* as well. André, who was posted at Pembina, became the official delegate of the American Army in an unsuccessful attempt to quell a Sioux uprising.[41] Lacombe also participated on the *à la prairie* hunt with the Métis, but persistently asked Taché, his superior, to let him become the exclusive missionary for the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot.[42] Lacombe admired André and described him as "ce brave entre les braves!"[43]

There were only four residential missions in the Saskatchewan country in 1864 and none of them were dedicated to Amerindians. By this time, a man by the name of Jean l'Heureux was accompanying the Blackfoot and pretended to be an ordained Roman Catholic missionary. According to Hugh Dempsey, l'Heureux "performed marriages, baptized children, and performed all the rites of a priest."[44] During Taché's Episcopal visit to lac Sainte Anne in 1861, a Blackfoot Chief asked the venerable prelate to offer a missionary like l'Heureux to his *nation* as well.[45] The Chief was not identified in the record, but Taché conditionally agreed to the request: not only would the missionary be free from harassment, but that in consideration to him, the band would refrain from conducting warfare in enemy camps while the missionary was present.[46] This set a precedent for all subsequent *à la prairie* missions. Only a couple of days after the negotiation took place, Lacombe and Taché chose the location of Saint Albert, which would serve as a residence for the Blackfoot missions: "le P. Lacombe multiplia ses rencontres avec les Pieds-Noirs."[47]

It was the custom of Blackfoot chiefs to wave their own personal flags to signal peaceful intentions to onlookers while travelling on the prairie. Lacombe noticed this custom as he

observed the chiefs approach Fort Edmonton to trade.[48] Before embarking on *la mission ambulante* with the Blackfoot, he arranged to have his own flag and mimicked their stature. During the negotiation between the Blackfoot Chief and Taché in 1861, the two parties agreed that Lacombe would carry a white flag with a red cross upon it, and that this flag would be respected by all.[49] Lacombe and the Blackfoot Chief had already negotiated an appropriate flag prior to Taché's visit, but the bishop nonetheless gave the symbol his blessing and official sanction. Even though Taché allowed Lacombe to visit the Blackfoot *à la prairie*, Taché refused to grant Lacombe the permission to conduct missions exclusive to the Amerindians. As an administrator, Taché was short of personnel and needed his missionaries to continue visiting the Iroquois Métis at Fort Jasper, the Beaver as far north as Peace River, the Métis, as well as the Cree on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River. For this reason, Lacombe continued to administer baptisms to Blackfoot children, even though a special register for the '*nation*' did not yet exist. All acts were recorded in the *Missions régulières* (regular missions).[50]

The symbolism of Lacombe's flag is an interesting point of discussion. Katherine Hughes described it as "a small white pennon about two feet by one and a half, with a red Cross emblazoned on it."[51] Philippot explained that it represented the combination of crosses and banners that were used in the churches of his home province during the processions of mass. The red cross symbolized the divine blood of Jesus Christ that cleansed the soul of sin, and the white background represented the immaculacy and purity of the soul once it was baptized. The whole constituted a sign of peace and salvation that was designed to protect human life, provide health relief, and thus help alleviate suffering for everyone on the prairie.[52] The flag ultimately represented a neutral protection symbol at a time when warfare between Plains communities was at its peak. Furthermore, this was a time of frequent starvation and devastating disease epidemics. Lacombe described his flag as "le drapeau de parlementaire" for these reasons.[53]

From the perspective of a contemporary historian, Lacombe's flag had a striking resemblance to other widely recognized Western European symbols that had humanitarian and colonial denotations. First, the International Red Cross represented humanitarian aims as well, even though it was founded two years later in Geneva, Switzerland. Although the red cross was an organizational emblem, it too was meant to be a symbol for protection. Second, Saint George's cross was identical to Lacombe's design. Saint George was a Christian martyr and prominent military saint from the Roman era; his cross was worn by both English and French

soldiers during the Crusades. Saint George was indeed the patron saint of England and Wales and his cross was adopted as the national flags of those countries. This was probably not a coincidence when one considers how Rupert's Land was indeed an area under British colonial rule. Third, Jacques Viger, the first mayor of Montreal, inducted a new coat of arms for the city in 1838 that emblazoned the British Cross on a French shield with the inscription *Concordia salus*.[54] The symbol explicitly married colonial symbols with a theme of harmony and agreement. All of these remarkable symbolic similarities points to how missionary organizations like the Oblates were part of a wave of globalization that disseminated transnational ideas while trying to organize all peoples of the world into a unified whole—a Roman Catholic whole in this case. Since the Oblates were operating under the political sovereignty of Great Britain, they needed to comply to British forms of imperialism, which they justified by saying that "Les missionnaires ont fait aimer les blancs et ont facilité leur accès dans le pays."[55] Their peaceful message opposed fundamental tenets of the common property system, which meant that the 'road to salvation' carried with it a message of political and economic change.

Saint Paul des Cris and Notre Dame de la Paix

Even though the unnamed Blackfoot Chief who met Taché at Saint Albert had not succeeded in obtaining an exclusive missionary for his people, Lacombe took up the cause and pleaded his case to the Assistant of the Secretary General, Florent Vandenberghe, who visited the North-West as a canonical visitor in 1864. Philippot wrote that "[Lacombe] s'offrit une fois de plus à devenir l'apôtre spécial des Cris et des Pieds-Noirs."[56] Hence, "Letters from missionaries in the North West had indicated to the General Administration that some personnel were unhappy and a canonical visit was deemed indispensable."[57] The canonical visitor travelled the world as an administrator of the Oblate missions. He visited the North-West in order to "introduce order and eliminate confusion" over the creation of the two distinct jurisdictions of Saskatchewan and Athabasca-Mackenzie.[58] Thus, Vandenberghe was granted full power over the northwestern missions.

As Vandenberghe met the Oblates individually at their respective missions, Lacombe reminded him that George McDougall and his son John founded a Presbyterian mission at Fort Victoria (Pakan, Alberta) in 1862. Lacombe commented on the Protestant mission in a letter dated 6 January 1866. He explained to the canonical visitor that the Protestant ministers had

done next to nothing in the Saskatchewan region for a number of years. In his words, the ministers had increased their resources and thus gained considerable influence in the country. Moreover, the head missionaries were capable men who knew the proper methods to lure 'poor Amerindians' into their 'sect.' Therefore, "lorsque quelqu'un dans notre contrée est devenu protestant, c'est-à-dire s'est converti à la religion anglaise, il est presque impossible de le ramener à la vérité, surtout s'il s'agit d'un sauvage. Il n'y a à cette règle que de rares exceptions."[59] This was why Lacombe insisted, once again, that the Oblates must develop first contact with all 'infidels' so they could "leur donner nos soins, avant qu'ils aient vu aucun ministre."[60]

Lacombe pointed out to Vandenberghe how the Protestant mission named Victoria at lac du Poisson Blanc (Whitefish Lake, near Smoky Lake, Alberta) was threatening to their evangelization efforts. Lacombe argued that Wesleyan 'fanaticism' made the station quite popular, especially because they offered lots of gifts and issued many promises "pour les engager à la prière anglaise."[61] In his words, the HBC had constructed a new trading post near the mission, which offered the ministers a steady captive audience. Most importantly, "Ils réussissent malheureusement assez bien auprès d'un certain nombre de ces pauvres gens, qui ne comprennent point la différence entre la vraie et la fausse religion."[62] Vandenberghe and Taché were alarmed by the news, yet unsure of Lacombe's proposal. They were worried about a number 'contrarieties,' which have already been discussed in this chapter.[63] Furthermore, Taché was aware that California gold miners had already migrated to the country, which was a sure sign of European settlement to follow: "cette autre "fièvre jaune," si peu redoutable, devra conduire, tôt ou tard, une population considérable vers la partie supérieure de la vallée de la Siskatchewan."[64] Vandenberghe convened the Oblates at Saint Albert in order to announce his decisions concerning the vicariate. On 1 January 1865, he granted Lacombe his request. In Lacombe's words, "J'étais déchargé de la préfecture de St. Albert et me donnait champ libre pour courir après les Cris et les Pieds-Noirs dans les Prairies."[65] Taché specifically instructed Lacombe to develop "les germes de foi déjà reçus."[66]

Lacombe wasted little time. A couple weeks later, he joined the Plains Cree on their winter hunt. He departed from Saint Albert on 17 January 1865 in order to reach the encampment at montagne du Castor (Beaverhill, Alberta). Little was recorded in the *codex historicus* of Saint Paul des Cris about this particular mission, but the account revealed that

Lacombe accompanied the Cree for three months and that his routine was similar to the Métis missions: "Pendant tout ce mois et les deux mois suivants il [Lacombe] fut très occupé à baptiser, instruire, visiter les malades et concilier les ennemis."[67] That winter, the Cree were coping with an outbreak of scarlet fever and the missionary seemed to provide some degree of relief. When the mission was over, Lacombe visited the Métis at Fort Jasper with his guide Michel Nipissing and fell gravely ill.[68]

Once Lacombe returned to Saint Albert, he and Alexis Cardinal received an urgent request from a Blackfoot delegation to accompany them to their encampment at lac du Boeuf.[69] Calf Child's (or Lone Chief) painted bison robe indicates that Jean l'Heureux was indeed part of this delegation, even though he was never mentioned in any Oblate sources.[70] The pair traveled during a violent snowstorm and found that the effects of scarlet fever among the Blackfoot were much graver than they were with the Plains Cree. Lacombe witnessed horrible scenes of suffering at the camp and wrote that he was shocked and disturbed by them.[71] Lacombe told Fort Edmonton traders that 1 100 people had died of the disease that winter, which matches the Blackfoot winter counts for 1864-1865: Bad Head recorded "Sikapixosin" (black smallpox) for the snow of 1865, while Running Rabbit wrote "Black pox years."[72] In those circumstances, Lacombe mostly performed baptisms. "Une grande partie des enfants que je baptisai à cette époque sont morts, comme j'ai pu m'en assurer depuis lors. Plusieurs adultes aussi ont eu le bonheur de rendre leur âme à Dieu peu après leur baptême."[73] The evidence suggests, as it did with Thibault, that baptism was considered a protective device and a gauge for long life. According to the new Blackfoot baptismal register, Lacombe had performed 381 baptisms among the Siksika that year, along with 39 for the Blood, six among the Piegan and 15 with the T'Suu Tina.[74] These figures represented the highest number of baptisms for any listed year on the register—given that this was the first.

The epidemic was responsible for a devastating population decrease among the Blackfoot, who could no longer defend their hunting grounds north of Battle River. They were forced to cede it to their enemies. Hence, the Plains Cree migrated to the region and made peace with the Blackfoot; this permitted those societies to disperse their households, which helped to cope with the disease, relieve stress on existing kinship networks, and finally locate the bison herd. However, as seen in the last chapter, this new—yet short lived—public access régime granted access to Métis *chasseurs* as well. However, it is interesting to note that Lacombe

performed a mission at lac du Boeuf at least seven years prior to the establishment of the first Métis *hivernement* settlement there.

Although the Oblates wrote a great deal about the Blackfoot missions, they spent most of their time with the Métis and the Plains Cree whom they considered the most sympathetic to their teachings. As a result of the migration, Lacombe asked the Cree to choose the location of a new residential mission that he would dedicate to them.

> Après bien des recherches et des pour parlers (en Mars) enfin ou se décida unanimement pour cette place qu'on nomme Kamabesuteweyak, lieu qui arrive en prairie d'une rivière et à qui on a donné pour patron St. Paul, apôtre. On est convenu d'appeler cette mission St. Paul des Cris. Cette place se trouve à peu près à mi chemin entre Edmonton et Fort Pitt, 90 milles à peu près des deux côtés. Placée sur la rive nord de la grande rivière Kisiskatchiwan (rapide courant) cette mission se trouve, bien avant, dans la prairie par le grand détour que fait la rivière en cet endroit, en s'avançant dans tous le large. C'est le grand passage de tout le monde. Les gens du lac Labiche et du lac Poisson-blanc, qui vont tous à la prairie ; le passage des brigades et caravanes de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson, qui traversent ici, ainsi que des autres commerçants enfin c'est un centre très avantageux pour faire face aux Ministres de Victoria et du lac Poisson blanc, sans compter que nous [sommes?] généralement à portée des sauvages, soit ceux du bois, soit ceux de la Prairie. Nous avons à 12 mille d'ici un joli petit lac, qui fournit du beau poisson blanc, hiver et été.[75]

The new mission residence had much in common with Belcourt's mission at Saint Paul des Sauteux, since both were founded in reaction to the proximity of rival Protestant missions and combined sedentary and itinerant methods. However, Lacombe's *mission ambulante* was different in the sense that he was more enthusiastic about going *à la prairie* than was Belcourt. Furthermore, Saint Paul des Cris reflected the interests of his Cree and Blackfoot hosts.

In response to the diminishing bison herd, the Plains Cree demonstrated a genuine interest in supplementing their provisions at the mission with potato crops and fish. Lacombe wrote in the mission journal for 3 May 1865 that a number of Cree tillers ploughed the land and planted potatoes, while others gathered firewood: "ils se préparèrent à partir pour la chasse aux buffles, car c'est là la seule ressource pour ne pas mourir de faim."[76] A few days later, 1000 people crossed the North Saskatchewan River for the summer bison hunt.[77] Lacombe briefly returned to Saint Albert before rejoining them *à la prairie* in early June. Once the hunt finished in September, the band and chaplain returned to Saint Paul des Cris where they built a wooden 'hutte' as a domicile.[78] The Cree harvested their crops and fished in the nearby lake. Once the Cree had stored their potato provisions, "les sauvages reprennent leur chemin de la prairie, où ils vont choisir leurs places d'hiver [?] cela dépendant où se trouvent les troupeaux de Buffalos."[79] Once more, Lacombe headed out *à la prairie* and spent most of the winter 1865-1866 wintering

with them. An *engagé* or a lay brother was expected to look after the mission during the priest's absence. The combination of bison hunting and agriculture at Saint Paul des Cris reinforces Sarah Carter's argument that Amerindians showed "an early and sustained interest" in establishing agriculture.[80] In this case, their interest was manifested prior to the reserve period in the 1880s.

Once more, Lacombe listed a number of "contrariétés" that affected the mission at Saint Paul des Cris. The first involved the HBC. While the similar mission of Saint Paul des Sauteux was constructed on land granted by the HBC, the Company objected to having a mission at Kamabesuteweyak on the basis that it discouraged the Plains Cree from trading at Fort Pitt. Hence, the traders tried to discourage the missionaries from establishing a mission post there: "Le découragement que cherchaient à nous inspirer les gens de nos autres, en nous disant qu'on ne pourrait jamais tenir ici, à cause du danger des sauvages en [prairie?]."[81] Lacombe wrote that Protestant missionaries attempted to drive the priests out of the area: "les sauvages protestants de Victoria et du lac du Poisson blanc excités par leur ministres qui entreprit de nous chasser d'ici."[82] As I have mentioned in Chapter Three, Alexis Cardinal was assaulted by such an individual when he was chased from the mission house before being hit in the head with a stick and lay unconscious on the ground for two days.[83] Nevertheless, the Oblates persisted in conducting missions from Saint Paul des Cris until it was abandoned in 1873. By that time, the Plains Cree had migrated further south and their households had scattered across the prairie. Therefore, Alexis Cardinal and Constantine Scollen founded the new residential mission of Notre Dame de la Paix at the confluence of la rivière des Arcs and la rivière Coude, where Doucet once camped in his tepee with the Blackfoot.[84] The new mission was much closer to the Blackfoot and the Plains Cree than the older mission of Saint Paul des Cris.

La routine

Lacombe's letter dated 6 January 1866 provides the most telling account of a missionary's *à la prairie* routine. He simply walked with the band until they located the bison herd. One full day after the kill, he began his evangelization duties: "Quand, un jour, on avait fait bonne chasse, la tribu demeurait au même campement pendant tout le temps nécessaire pour faire sécher la viande et préparer les peaux de buffle. C'était surtout pendant ces jours-là que j'avais plus de facilité pour instruire mes sauvages."[85] Lacombe began his mornings with his

own personal piety exercises, then he invited—or joined—the women at the centre of the camp in order to commence his evangelization duties: "je leurs apprenais leurs prières et divers cantiques, puis je leurs faisais une instruction."[86] He also studied how the women dried meat, made pemmican, tanned skins and processed robes. Then Lacombe delivered what he called *le ministère de charité.* This involved visiting the sick and administering to them the sacrament of the extreme unction, and offering any medicines that he had brought along with him.[87] Then he would venture "auprès de ceux qui ne voulaient pas prier ; je répondais aux objections qu'ils me présentaient."[88] Finally, "J'avais ensuite à remplir les fonctions de juge de paix et à vider les différends qui s'étaient élevés entre eux."[89] Indeed, the chiefs had seen at Company forts how missionaries would take it upon themselves to intervene in instances where drunkenness and gambling caused social unrest.[90]

At noon, Lacombe rang his bell and gathered the children for religious instruction. "J'étais, en un instant, entouré de tous ces petits Indiens, qui m'aimaient comme leur père, et chantaient des cantiques de toute la force de leurs poumons."[91] Lacombe wrote the words to one of the canticles in a letter to Superior-General Fabre:

Ninnan, spomo kinnan Sputch kitchi tapi Ikoy kitchi kama nitso Kidad jimohikkan.	Notre Père, aide-nous, d'en haut où tu demeures ; beaucoup je te demande la religion.	Our Father, help us, from on high where you live; I ask you bountifully for religion
Ninnan, spomo kinnan, n' t' akomitjiman arsiw kitchipohorsin ; natoyé krisikoyé, kitorkokkipinnan n' t' akoomitjimân.	Notre Père, aide-nous ; j'aime ta belle parole ; le dimanche que tu nous donnes, je l'aime.	Our Father, help us; I love your good word on the Sundays that you give us, I love it.[92]

Notice how Lacombe preached about a remunerative father in who lived up in the sky, a vertical conception of spirituality and religion, the importance of father's teachings, and finally the importance of Sundays. After the chaplain visited the children, he retreated to a wooded area to recite his breviary. Then he returned to camp to visit those who had missed the morning exercises. The men returned from hunting in the evening, and as they rested, Lacombe offered them instruction: "tout en fumant le calumet, chacun me faisait des questions relatives aux superstitions du pays et à notre sainte religion."[93] This concluded the missionary's weekly routine, though Sundays were unique: "le dimanche, tout le monde assistait, en même temps, aux divers exercises de piété, à la sainte messe et au chapelet. Ce fut ainsi que je passai à peu près

toutes mes journées pendant un mois et demi."[94] Hence, the chaplain's responsibilities corresponded loosely to the routine of a parish priest when the band was camped.

Lacombe continued to form congregations of the laity based on sex, age and health. The lack of evidence confirming the existence of any congregations for chastity, temperance, or other virtues indicates that the congregations were not as developed as they were with the Métis. The missionary was not necessarily invited into the legal processes of the band, so his congregations therefore lacked clout. His authority as a justice of the peace was rather limited and so he found this task rather difficult: "il n'était pas toujours aussi facile d'accommoder les parties adverses que je l'aurais désiré."[95] Obviously, this highlights the fact that Amerindians relied on their highly-developed kinship networks to prescribe and enforce standards of social conduct. Unlike the Métis, they were not interested in the chaplain's moral standards and norms of behavior for this reason. I will return to this point when I discuss Lacombe's catechism ladder later in the chapter.

Women and the Sexual Division of Labour

The chaplains of *la mission ambulante* often expressed shock at the sexual division of labour in Aboriginal camps. While men hunted, women had a number of domestic tasks that were quite different from those in European societies. Lacombe presented his point of view in a letter dated 6 January 1866:

> C'est à la femme qu'il appartient d'élever chaque soir sa loge au moment du campement, et de la défaire le lendemain matin, au moment du départ. Il faut, de plus, qu'elle prenne soin de se procurer le bois destiné à chauffer toute la famille au moment du campement, et c'est là souvent une rude besogne, car il faut apporter de bien loin et sur son dos le bois nécessaire à cet usage. À l'intérieur sont disposés, autour de la loge, les lits ou plutôt les misérables peaux de buffle qui en tiennent lieu ; au milieu est le foyer.
>
> It is the responsibility of women to raise her lodge at the moment of encampment each night, and to take it down the next morning at the moment of departure. She must also fetch the wood that is destined to keep the whole family warm at the moment of encampment, and that is dirty work, since one must bring the necessary wood on her back over considerable distances. On the interior periphery of the lodge are placed the beds or rather miserable bison skins; in the middle is the hearth.[96]

The missionaries considered this type of physical labour to be improper for women, even though they did little to change this role. Instead, they were intent on studying cultural differences such as these and they kept detailed notes on the customs that they considered 'exotic.' The above citation also reveals how the Oblates were acutely observant and that they had an excellent grasp

of the French language in their ethnographic writing. Since the hunt chaplains spent most of their time at camp, and since men were normally off hunting throughout the day, the chaplains paid close attention to the domestic labour of women. In her biography of Lacombe, Katherine Hughes included a detailed description of how pemmican was made *à la prairie*:

> The camp remained at this point for several days while the women after the centuries-old fashion of their sex dressed the buffalo skins and dried the meat. Father Lacombe watched their work with the interested eyes of the newcomer. They first cut up the meat in very long strips which they stretched to dry on scaffolds made of young trees. After two or three days' exposure to the sun the meat was sufficiently dry for the women to fold it into packages tightly bound with sinew, each bundle weighing from 60 to 70 pounds. Then with their stone mallets, they pounded dried meat to powder in wooden bowls, mixing hot grease and dried berries with it, packing the whole into large sacks of buffalo-hide, called by the Metis—*taureaux*…. This was *pimik-kan*, the manna of the Canadian prairies.[97]

Amerindian women manufactured a variety of goods from the bison while camped; due to the sedentary nature of this task, the organization of this type of labour was perceived as the closest to the standards of industrial societies. As a result, Lacombe accused Amerindian men of being lazy while they treated their women as 'slaves:' "ces gens ne travaillent jamais et n'ont d'autre occupation que celle de la chasse, qui est un exercice passager et peu fatiguant."[98] Indeed, this was a typical observation of European colonizers towards women of non-Western societies.

One can justly conclude that women represented the main force of commodity production: they tanned hides, processed furs, preserved food, fabricated and mended blankets, tents and clothing, and, of course, reared children. In terms of numbers, women made up a larger proportion of the band because men would die at greater frequency while hunting or engaging in warfare. If the bison was abundant, polygamy was necessary to satisfy the exigencies of household economies. Lacombe pointed out that "La polygamie est une coutume générale dans les tribus qui habitent les prairies."[99] Marriages were usually arranged by families and gift exchanges reflected status: "À peine a-t-elle atteint douze ans, qu'on la vend comme une marchandise. J'ai vu des pères spéculer sur la vente de leurs filles, pour augmenter le nombre de leurs chevaux."[100] Not all male suitors could afford wives in this way, so there were other ways of acquiring women. When Lacombe went *à la prairie* with chief Natous' Blackfoot band in 1865, Cree warriors assaulted the camp and took women and children into captivity: "du côté des Pieds-Noirs, douze personnes ont été tuées, deux enfants ont été enlevés et faits prisonniers. […] deux cents chevaux au moins ont été enlevés ou tués par les Cris."[101] Not only did the theft of horses increase the material wealth of the warriors, but the taking of captives helped Cree warriors satisfy their household labour requirements. In 1867, Lacombe encountered a band of

young Cree warriors who were visiting Saint Paul des Cris. In the mission *codex historicus* he wrote that "Une femme sarcise prisonnière chez les Cris est achetée, pour un cheval, par la mission, et renvoyée à ses parents [an adoptive Christian family] dans la caravane des Sœurs [to Saint Albert]."[102] The woman was taken captive by a Cree warrior, and he told the missionary that "I want a wife […] and I have nothing to buy one."[103] In a surprising move, Lacombe purchased the woman in exchange for a horse. Now that the captive was his personal property, he planned to return her to her original T'suu Tina family.[104]

At Saint Albert, the Grey Nuns christened the captive woman *Marguerite* and asked Lacombe to have her remain under their care. Her stay with the sisters was short-lived because Lacombe dismissed the nuns' wishes. Nonetheless, this was another form of captivity. In March of 1868, Marguerite guided Lacombe to her family's band near le fort de la Montagne. When they reached the camp, faces were "streaked with black paint and their hair cut, in token of mourning."[105] Lacombe returned the lost girl to her mother, and the women of the camp crowded about Marguerite, while the men approached the priest. Hughes' account states that:

> [the T'suu Tina] touched his hands and face and gown. They told him thanks in fervent language, and they shouted his name—*Arsous-kitsi-rarpi!* [The Man of the Good Heart] till the coulees rang. Then with the young men riding ahead as couriers Father Lacombe was brought in a savage procession to the Sarcee camp, where there were songs of triumph and oration by the chiefs. Truly, this was his day. "An ineffable moment!" he says, and one that gave him more influence among these people and spread more desire for his prayer and many sermons or visits would have accomplished.[106]

Lacombe returned to Saint Paul des Cris just a few days prior to Easter. This action had earned him friendship and respect among the T'suu Tina. In the mission journal for 3 April 1868, he recorded: "Arrivé du P. Lacombe de son voyage à St Albert et au fort de la Montagne_ heureuse rencontre à ce dernier fort du Père avec un grand nombre de Pieds noirs avec lesquels il renseignements pour l'été prochaine [*sic*]."[107] He was praised for bringing solace to the band.

Marguerite's example demonstrates how women and children were valuable agents and objects of cultural negotiation. Since Binnema's interest lies in European goods such as horses and guns, he overlooks captives as customary exchange items. However, James Brooks argues that they were the most mobile and negotiable item of exchange in the borderlands of the Southwestern Plains near New Mexico Southwestern Plains. Brooks defines trade as "not a matter of marketplace bargaining, but an exercise of power between "others" enacted by mutualistic and competitive bestowal of gifts."[108] Since cultural exchanges were important markers of differential power relationships, captive women and children were the most valuable

local commodities to enter into the circulation of power.[109] Hence, patterns of cultural sharing often occurred through systems of violence and kinship. With Marguerite in mind, it is fascinating to see how missionaries like Lacombe were implicated in this type of commerce and exchange. By offering the captive Marguerite back to her people, he effectively presented himself—and was accepted—as a powerful kinsman.

La mission ambulante: A Pragmatic Solution for Different Concerns

Once Grandin was named vicar of missions for the new Saskatchewan vicariate in 1868, he visited Saint Paul des Cris shortly thereafter. On 20 October, he wrote in his report that, "Je n'avais jusqu'à présent aucune idée d'une semblable mission," which was "entourée de près de 200 loges de Cris de prairies, sauvages qu'on m'avait jusqu'à présent représentés comme inabordables et sur lesquels le bon Dieu semble cependant avoir des vues miséricordes."[110] The Plains Amerindian missions were unique in the sense that many households desired the services of the chaplain even though they had no desire to convert to Catholicism:

> J'ai eu la consolation de donner la sainte communion et la confirmation à une douzaine d'entre eux. Un bon nombre sont baptisés et un plus grand nombre sont seulement catéchumènes. Les uns et les autres vivent avec des infidèles qui veulent rester infidèles, cela occasionne des difficultés auxquelles je n'étais point habitué parmi les Montagnais [Dene]. Les Pères souffrent là plus qu'ailleurs parce qu'ils ne peuvent avoir aucun engagé il est même difficile de leur donner un frère convers qui serait exposé à être seul des mois entiers pendant les voyages des pères.
>
> I had the consolation of offering the holy communion and confirmation to a dozen of them. A good number of them are already baptized and an even greater number are catechumens. They live with the infidels who wish to remain infidel, thus creating difficulties to which I am not accustomed to with the Montagnais [Dene]. The Fathers suffer there more than anywhere else because they cannot secure the services of any *engagés*. It is difficult to offer them even one lay brother. During the voyages of the Fathers, lay brothers would be exposed to solitude for months at a time.[111]

Consider Lestanc's negotiation about *la mission ambulante* with a traditional Plains Cree Chief in 1879. The Chief, who was not named in the letter, was alarmed over a disease epidemic that affected their horses and the bison. A couple of people in his band died because they ate the meat of the infected bison. Thus, "il voulait se munir de médecins, et, dans ce but, il vient nous trouver."[112] Lestanc noted that the Chief was afraid of heading back out on the prairie to hunt, so the missionary offered to go with him along with some medicines, treat the ill and pray to *le bon Dieu* for them. The Chief first consulted his band, then returned the next day to fetch the missionary. "Toute sa bande était fière d'avoir un prêtre, quoique ceux qui la composassent fussent presque tous infidèle ; mais, dans leur conviction, il n'y avait plus à craindre ni famine, ni

maladie, ni accident d'aucune espèce. Je partis donc avec ces quelques sauvages."[113] This confirms how some Aboriginal bands felt that the physical proximity of a missionary could ensure protection from disease, famine or any other worry.

Lacombe's efforts had convinced Grandin that *la mission ambulante* was indeed the best way to evangelize the Plains Amerindians. He wrote in April 1869 that:

> J'ai encore visité cette résidence en avril et mars. C'est surtout à la Prairie où les missionnaires passent une partie de l'hiver et tout le temps des chasses, qu'on instruit les sauvages. L'hiver dernier le P. Lacombe y a fait un bien immense, il a pu baptiser bon nombre d'adultes mourant, affermi les nouveaux chrétiens, baptiser bon nombre de catéchumènes et admettre des infidèles au catéchuménat. Maintenant le P. Dupin secondé par le F. Scollen ira continuer cette œuvre.
>
> Again I visited this residence in April and March. It's mostly *à la prairie* where the missionaries spend a part of the winter and the hunting seasons, where we teach the Amerindians. Last winter Fr. Lacombe made a great deal of good, he baptized a good number of dying adults, consolidated the new Christians, baptized a good number of catechumens and admitted the infidels to the catechumenate. Now Fr. Dupin, seconded by Fr. Scollen, will continue this task.[114]

Lacombe's mission had proven that *la mission ambulante* was the most efficient solution to their logistical worries, which had grown with the Riel resistance at Red River in 1869-1870. Furthermore, Grandin sent lay brothers and young priests out with the missionaries as the most effective way of training them. In November of 1869:

> Enfin, j'ai pu me constater que le meilleur moyen d'instruire et de christianiser les sauvages, ce n'est pas de les attendre dans un fort où ils vont faire leurs échanges, ou même dans un poste fixe quelconque ; on peut dans ces circonstances faire du bien, mais seulement aux chrétiens et aux cathéchumènes, nullement convertir les infidèles et les instruire ; ils ont alors trop de distractions. Le meilleur moyen, le moyen unique de convertir et d'instruire les infidèles c'est d'aller vivre avec eux, de la accompagner dans leurs divers campements pendant une partie de l'année. C'est une mission bien pénible, mais que l'expérience prouve être indispensable. Et je suis bien décidé pour ma part à essayer ce genre de vie et de ministère à mon retour du lac Caribou [in northern Manitoba]. Je ne serai pas le premier ; le P. Lacombe a montré que c'est possible, le P. Dupin et le Fr. Scollen ont marché sur ses traces et, dernièrement, tous ceux de vos enfants qui étaient réunis ici il y a quelque semaines, m'ont assurés avec un dévouement admirable que je pouvais disposer d'eux et les envoyer vivre à la prairie, soit avec les Cris, soit avec les Pieds-Noirs. Nous avons nos misères, bien-aimé Père, ce n'est malheureusement pas en cela que nous somme les plus pauvres ; mais une chose bien consolante me parait certaine : c'est que chacun est plein de zèle, de bonne volonté, de dévouement.
>
> Finally, I have been able to ascertain that the best means to teach and Christianize the Amerindians is not to wait for them in a fort where they go to trade, or even to any sort of fixed post; in those circumstances, we can only do good to the Christians and catechumens, we cannot convert or teach the infidels; there are too many distractions. The best way, the only way to convert and teach the infidels is to go and live with them, to accompany them in their various camps for a part of the year. This is a very difficult mission, but experience has shown that it is indispensable. I am convinced to try this type of life myself once I return from lac Caribou [in northern Manitoba]. I will not be the first; Fr. Lacombe has shown that it is possible, Fr. Dupin and Fr. Scollen followed in his footsteps and, lately, all of your children that were united here a

> couple of weeks ago assured me with devout admiration that I could rely on them and send them to live *à la prairie*, either with the Cree or the Blackfoot. We have our miseries, well-loved Father, unfortunately that is not what we lack; but I am certain of one particular consolation: that is that each one of us is full of zeal, good will and devotion.[115]

Doucet followed Lacombe during *la mission ambulante* as well. Both he and Scollen were hastily ordained in order to continue their mission to the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot.[116] Doucet gathered his impressions in his journal:

> Le Frère surpris objecte – il n'a pas fini la théologie. Il ne connait pas encore la langue du pays – le Cris – qu'il ignore les cérémonies de la messe basse… qu'il voudrait du temps pour réfléchir… Mgr comme un bon Père répond à ses objections… que c'était nécessaire pour ne pas laisser un grand nombre de picotés sans Prêtre, qu'il pouvait partir d'un moment à l'autre, qu'il se chargeait de l'assister à mes messes Bref, conclut-il, mettez-vous en retraite de votre [mieux?] et dans deux jours je vous ordonnerai. L'ordination eut lieu le 9 Octobre dans le hangar qui se servait de Cathédrale à l'Evèque de St. Albert.
>
> The shocked Brother objected—he had not finished his training in theology. He does not yet know the language of these parts—Cree—and he does not know how to perform the ceremonies of low mass… he would like some time to reflect upon it… Mgr like a good Father replied to his objections… it was necessary so that they would not leave a good number of people afflicted by the pox without a priest, that he could leave at any moment, that he would assist during my masses. In short, he concluded, go and retire [for prayer] as best as you can and in two days I will ordain you. The ordination took place on 9 October in the old hangar that served as the Cathedral for the Saint Albert Bishop.[117]

Doucet became the first Roman Catholic priest to be ordained in what is now the province of Alberta. He was expected to learn in the field through the pragmatic exchanges that he would develop with the Amerindian bands.

Indigenization, Christianization and the Constitution of Power

Hunt chaplains conformed to many fundamental aspects of Plains Cree and Blackfoot lifestyles while *à la prairie*. Their parochial work ultimately rested on a band's normal itinerary:

> « Les circonstances dans lesquelles se trouvaient les Cris, lorsque j'arrivai au milieu d'eux, étaient donc fâcheuses. Ce qui m'incommodait surtout, c'est que la disette forçait mes sauvages à changer, chaque jour, de campement, afin de s'approcher des troupeaux de buffles. Je ne pouvais alors que très difficilement travailler à l'instruction religieuse de la tribu. Ce ministère, d'ailleurs, pénible dans tous les temps, est particulièrement dur et fatigant pendant l'hiver.
>
> Once I found myself in the middle of Cree life, the circumstances that they found themselves in were distressing. What troubled me the most is that a food shortage forced my Amerindians to change camp sites every day so that they could get nearer to the bison herds. Hence, I had a great deal of difficulty teaching religion to the tribe. This type of ministry, however difficult it may be in any situation, is particularly hard and tiresome during the winter.[118]

In keeping with the rhythm and the pace of the bison hunt, Lacombe simply followed the band's movements as they considered the climate and the location of the bison herd. Although

missionaries often criticized the Amerindians for their hygiene, Lacombe traveled with not much more than a soiled and frayed *soutane* as well as some smoky linen.[119] He also ate meat served off of pieces of bark with his fingers "so he might not wound the Indians' feelings or lose their confidence."[120] Fourmond overcame his prejudice over the cuisine: "le pemmican est excellent, mais ça serait de la nourriture guère mangeable en Europe."[121] The preparation of food was also a venue for cultural exchange: voyageurs used to eat a type of pemmican stew mixed with flour that the Métis called *rabadou* (probably a corruption of the name Robidoux— the French Canadian Chef that was hired in Montreal to cook at Fort Edmonton). Grandin wrote in his journal that an Amerindian Chief once saw him preparing the dish. The Chief asked the Bishop if he would share with him, and the Chief subsequently took a liking for it.[122]

Lacombe tried to express his ideas in the language that his audience would find easiest to understand. The Cree and the Blackfoot did not necessarily share the same concepts of religion, God, the devil, the Church, the Pope, a bishop, a priest or even a Christian, since these ideas were part of the missionary's cultural baggage. In any case, these religious constructs were fundamental to Lacombe's teachings, so he tried to translate their meanings into Cree and Blackfoot. It was difficult to differentiate between the meanings of *religion*, *la messe* (mass) or *la prière* (prayer), so he described them as 'la bonne médecine qui rend le cœur fort.'[123] Note that this is again cast in terms of protection and healing. Lacombe repeated these words so frequently that both the Cree and Blackfoot found them to be an identifying quality about his person: the Cree named him Kamigo-atchakwet, meaning "celui qui a l'âme belle," and the Blackfoot Aahsosskitsipahpiwa, "celui qui a le cœur bon."[124] Lacombe used the existing Cree word *Kijé-Manito* to represent *le Grand-Esprit* (the Great Spirit), *Dieu* (God) or *l'être parfait* (the perfect being); the only similar Blackfoot nouns were "Ipson mitapi, celui, qui est en haut," which had been introduced by the merchant traders who translated the *Pater noster*.[125] Thus, Lacombe invented the expression *Omakko-natoyé tapi*, meaning either *maître de la vie* (master of life), *Dieu*, *le grand esprit* or *l'être divin* (the divine being).[126] *Le Diable* (the Devil) had been described by Lacombe as "le mauvais génie" and by Grandin as "le mauvais puissant."[127] While sitting in his chapel-tent with the Cree Chief Wikaskiseyin (l'Herbe odiférante, Sweetgrass), Lacombe translated the idea of a Pope, bishops and priests by explaining the Roman Catholic hierarchy: "*le grand maître de la prière* appelle auprès de lui tous les autres *maîtres de la prière*. – Comment se nomme-t-il, ce grand maître de la prière ? – Il se nomme PIE IX."[128] The Cree

and the Blackfoot referred to priests generally as "l'homme divin" (the divine man), though the Cree even went so far as to differentiate Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries by their ethnicity: "ils les appellent *les Français divins*, hommage magnifique à Dieu et à la France !"[129] Nearly all of these description-translations are vague, which leaves much room for creative misunderstanding. However, the word Ayamihaw made no distinction between the act of praying and being Christian; if Christian rituals manifested one's belief in Christianity, this was perhaps the most precise translation.

Lacombe tried to recite Christian stories by employing the Plains setting and aboriginal symbols. In his letter of 12 May 1870, Lacombe recounted the story of Christmas on *Ka-nipa-ayam-itiak* (The-time-we-pray-at-night) in Chief Wikaskiseyin's camp.[130] "Quelle est belle notre Bethléem des prairies ! qu'ils sont beaux nos bergers enveloppés dans leurs fourrures ! que j'aime à les voir ces pasteurs des grands troupeaux de buffalos, prosternés devant l'agneau sans tache qui ôte les péchés du monde !"[131] The same sorts of biblical interpretations are done in contemporary Aboriginal churches, such as Sacred Heart of the First Peoples in Edmonton, Alberta, or during the annual lac Sainte Anne pilgrimage.[132] Even though Lacombe's story was laced in metaphor, he offered explicit details on his *à la prairie* mission as well. He described his chapel-tent in a letter dated 12 May 1870:

> Voyez-vous ces cônes de neige disposés par ordre à peu de distance les uns des autres, avec un panache de fumée sur chacun d'eux : c'est le village que vos enfants évangélisent. Au milieu, vous remarquez une tente plus large et plus élevée, c'est l'église, ou plutôt c'est l'étable de Bethléem transportée au milieu des prairies.
>
> Do you see these cones of snow arranged with little distance between each other, with a panache of smoke on each one: it's the village that your children are evangelizing. In the middle, you will notice one tent that is larger and taller than the others, it's the Church, or rather it's the stable of Bethlehem transplanted in the middle of the prairies.[133]

He accorded most importance to the chiefs and the converts: "Silence ! le mystère s'opère ; tout le monde est à genoux pour adorer le Fils de Dieu devenu le Fils de l'homme ; les chefs et les communiants entreront pour la première messe, les autres auront leur tour à l'une des six messes qui doivent se succéder jusqu'à midi."[134] The story of the birth of Jesus coincided with the objective of pacifying the Amerindians: "Un certain tumulte pacifique et joyeux règne dans le camp et fait une singulière impression sur votre âme, au sein de cette immense solitude, rendue encore plus profonde par les ombres de la nuit : on se prépare pour la messe de minuit."[135] "Bon Noël," he said, "my dear shepherds, go and smoke your Christmas calumet."[136]

The language that Lacombe employed went beyond words. Once again, he mimicked the actions of chiefs, or those of high stature. He wrote to Fabre on 12 May 1870:

> « Nous mîmes encore trois jours avant d'arriver au camp de la tribu. À la fin du troisième jour, nous étions en vue de mes chers sauvages. Aussitôt qu'ils aperçurent mon petit drapeau blanc décoré d'une croix rouge, une nombreuse procession d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants accourut à ma rencontre en poussant des cris de reconnaissance. De toutes les bouches on entendait : « L'homme divin est arrivé !... Celui qui a le cœur bon, je l'aime ! » J'entrai ainsi dans le camp escorté par l'hosanna des sauvages. La plus grande loge fut mise à ma disposition. Le reste du jour fut employé à recevoir les condoléances des principaux de la tribu. Je fis une grande *fumerie :* le calumet de cérémonie passa de bouche en bouche, et fit plusieurs fois le tour de l'assemblée.
>
> We were still three days away from reaching the tribe's camp. After the third day of travel, we were within sight of my dear Amerindians. As soon as they perceived my little white flag adorned by a red cross, a large procession of men, women and children ran to me while yelling cheers of welcoming. From all of their mouths we could hear "The divine man has arrived!... The one with the good heart, I love him!" I entered the camp escorted by the hosanna of the Amerindians. I was given the biggest lodge. The rest of the day I received the condolences of the tribe's principal members. I called a large *fumerie*: the calumet of ceremony passed from one mouth to the next, and it went around the assembly numerous times.[137]

Like a "Big Chief of the Prairies," Lacombe waved his flag and called a calumet ceremony. He compared his entrance to the hosanna, a liturgical metaphor signifying a glorious cry of praise for the divine salvation of the messiah.[138] Since the chaplain's tent was a habitual site of gathering, Lacombe was offered the largest tepee. And like most welcomed visitors, he was called to meet the highest band authorities.

Lacombe normally hauled his own essentials when he paraded like a chief. In the fall of 1865, he explained that, "J'avais avec moi une charrette, deux chevaux, une tente, une caisse renfermant ma chapelle et quelques couvertures pour me servir de couche, pendant la nuit. C'était là tout mon bagage."[139] The skin tepee was useful in the sense that it was light and could accommodate 50-60 people, but "if there was a brisk wind it was often impossible to celebrate Mass in a tepee, because the smoke circled about the lodge half-way up and filled the throat of a man standing."[140] Moreover, the crucifix hanging above his head sometimes plunged into the chalice due to the tepee's rather low elevation.[141] Lacombe wanted a tent that would rival the chief's own tepee: he designed a new chapel-tent out of leather purchased from the Plains Cree at Saint Paul des Cris that was 25 feet by 15. He needed twenty poles to hold it up, and he asked the blacksmith at Fort Edmonton to craft him iron pegs to hold the tepee down.[142] He began using the tent in 1867, where he brought along "Trois chevaux, deux traînes, longues de 12 pieds et larges de 14 pouces, une tente de cuire, un poêle en tôle, des provisions de bouche et nos

couvertures en pelleteries."[143] He then asked the Amerindians to set it up: "The snow was cleared away by the squaws, while the men set up the frame and covering. The camp stove was put in place, a pile of wood cut for it and the snowy ground of the tent covered with boughs and buffalo-skin."[144] He boasted about the size of his tent: "Notre tente de cuir pouvait recevoir jusqu'à cent personnes."[145]

Lacombe preached about laws and proper social behaviour even though he tried to separate religious matters from the profane. Lacombe often preached in his sermons and instructions that "those that didn't want to work—*should not eat.*"[146] In 1867, he changed his mind once he faced hunger with the Plains Cree: "After experiencing such hardship from hunger how clearly one understands these words from the Father of the poor: 'I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat.'"[147] Lacombe met an old man during the hardships of the 1867:

> Un jour quand je leur expliquais le Décalogue, je leur dis en finissant : « Eh bien ! voulez-vous prendre cette loi et la suivre, puisque la forme du culte que vous avez suivi jusqu'à présent n'est invention du démon ? » Un vieillard se leva et me répondit ainsi au nom des autres : « Bien certainement nous acceptons la loi que tu nous offres ; elle est bien plus facile à pratiquer que celle que nous avons suivie jusqu'ici, laquelle ne nous est d'aucune utilité puisque nous ne travaillons que pour le mauvais génie. » En parlant ainsi, il montrait ses mains dont plusieurs phalanges avaient été coupées et offertes au soleil, ses bras, sa poitrine, ses épaules qui portaient les traces des cruautés qu'il avait exercées sur lui pour se rendre les génies favorables.
>
> One day, when I was explaining to them the Ten Commandments, I finished by saying: "Ah well! Will you accept these laws and follow them, since the type of cult that you have followed until now is but an invitation from a demon?" An elder stood up and replied in the name of the others: "Most certainly we will accept the laws that you offer us; they are much easier to practice than the ones we have followed until now, which no longer have any utility for us since we are only working for the evil spirit." As he spoke, he had shown his hands, where many phalanges had been cut off and offered to the sun; his arms, his chest, his shoulders all wore the traces of cruelties that he had inflicted upon himself in order to gain the favour of the spirits.[148]

The old man's self-mutilation was customary of traditional spiritual ceremonies, but the extent to which the man had offered sacrifices indicated how desperate he had become. Fasting and disease were frequent in the 1860s and many elders could no longer foresee the future of their families. He thus came to the missionary for help. The ambivalences in Lacombe's teachings and comportment meant that he had the capacity of leading a band himself. Lacombe sincerely believed that "J'étais grandement dédommagé des quelques souffrances que j'avais endurées pour me rendre auprès d'eux. Ils me traitent vraiment comme un chef et comme un père."[149] Although Lacombe could never lead an Amerindian band, he did share a level of authority at the band level and he was admired by his followers. When Lacombe tried to close his mission, "une quinzaine de familles qui voulurent m'accompagner jusqu'au fort des montagnes Rocheuses.

Après quelques jours passés ensemble dans ce fort, je me séparai d'elles avec regret, pour revenir à Saint-Albert."[150] When he was transferred to Saint Boniface in 1872, the Plains Cree made it known to other missionaries that their priest had abandoned them. André wrote that the Cree persistently asked to see Lacombe, and that he had to convince them that the two missionaries believed in the same God.[151] Lestanc wrote a year later that "ces Chrétiens demandent encore leur père Lacombe. « Il avait promis de mourir avec nous. »"[152] Thus it seems that the Plains Cree felt betrayed.

Lacombe understood how meaningful certain customs were for the social order of the band. As he was camped with Chief Wikaskiseyin, a courier delivered letters from Saint Albert:

> le bon Père se mit de suite à dépouiller sa correspondance, car souvent le Missionnaire en course apostolique ne la reçoit qu'une fois par année. Les sauvages le voyant verser des larmes, à la lecture d'une de ces lettres, le grand chef appelé *l'Herbe odiférante* lui en demanda la raison : – « c'est parce que, répondit le Missionnaire, cette lettre m'apprend la mort de mon père et plusieurs autres nouvelles tristes et affligeantes. – Mais, mon Père, reprit le chef, tu nous as dit que dans de telles circonstances, il ne fallait pas pleurer, mais se soumettre avec résignation à la volonté du Grand-Esprit. Eh ! bien, pour nous donner l'exemple, tire quelques bouchées de calumet. » (Chez ces tribus sauvages, on fume le calumet pour montrer que l'on se résigne à la divine providence.)
>
> the good Father immediately began sifting through his correspondence, since the missionary on the apostolic path only receives it once per year. The Amerindians, seeing him shed tears while reading one of his letters, had the Great Chief named *l'Herbe odiférante* [Sweetgrass] ask him the reason: – "it's because, the missionary replied, this letter informs me of the death of my father and many other sad and hearbreaking news. – But, my Father, replied the Chief, you told us that in such circumstances, we should not cry, but rather resign to the will of the Great Spirit. Oh! Well, to give us an example, we had a few puffs from the calumet." (From these Amerindian tribes, we smoke the calumet to demonstrate how we abandon ourselves to divine providence).[153]

By participating in the calumet ceremony, Lacombe adopted a pagan ritual of mourning because it cemented his relationship as the Chief's friend and ally. Once more, Lacombe tried to understand Aboriginal traditions through Western European epistemological genres. Lacombe thus wrote about the meaning of the calument to the 'civil' and 'religious' functions of Plains Amerindians: "Mais ce n'est pas seulement comme passe-temps, que les Indiens usent du calumet : il a de plus un rôle important dans toutes les cérémonies superstitieuses des sauvages encore infidèles ou qui ne connaissent que très imparfaitement notre sainte religion."[154] It was used for healing: "quand un malade ne peut plus fumer, il est condamné, personne n'attend plus sa guérison."[155] It was an essential part of legitimizing truth: "Dans toutes leurs cérémonies civiles et religieuses, sa presence est indispensable. Une assemblée tenue où ce fameux manche de calumet serait absent serait par ce fait radicalement illégale ; tout y serait nul et sans effet."[156] Therefore, it was only used on special occasions, such as meetings to conclude a peace.[157]

Interestingly, some of today's aboriginal churches burn sweet grass as a type of incense: the censer is replaced by a bowl and the smoke is spread with an eagle plume.[158] The contemporary ritual is nearly the same as it was in 1866: "Il est en suite présenté au Soleil, et cela se fait en le tournant vers les quatre points cardinaux. Le même cérémonial s'observe pour la terre, à laquelle on l'offre aussi."[159]

Lacombe took this as an important lesson when he too tried to broker peace among enemy bands. Lacombe had a profound respect for the calumet ceremony as a profane rather than a consecrated custom. He described both the calumet and the ceremony in great detail in his letters.[160] Even so, he tried to preach the distinction between the temporal and spiritual realms to his catechumens:

> Si nos sauvages devenus chrétiens s'abstiennent des assemblées et cérémonies superstitieuses, ils ne comprennent pas toujours très-vite qu'ils doivent s'abstenir de fumer dans nos assemblées religieuses. Un jour je confessais ; plusieurs personnes se tenaient tout près de moi et s'examinaient ; je vois tout à coup un sauvage allumer gravement son calumet, et se disposant à le fumer. Je dus lui apprendre, à sa grande surprise, qu'il y avait inconvenance de fumer dans un lieu de prière."
>
> If our Amerindians turned Christians abstained from superstitious assemblies and ceremonies, they do not readily understand that they must also abstain from smoking the calumet in our religious assemblies. One day I was doing confession; many people stood near me and observed each other; all of a sudden I saw one of them solemnly light-up his calumet, and began to smoke it. I had to let him know, to his utter surprise, that it was improper to smoke in an area of prayer.[161]

Lacombe's participation in calumet ceremonies was nearly always equivocal and transcultural; his role in political matters (from a European perspective) was temporal and spiritual (from an Aboriginal perspective) because he presented himself as an authority in both domains. Take, for instance, one of his experiences as diplomat between the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot. Lacombe rested at Saint Paul des Cris for five days before a courier notified him that two hostile Cree and Blackfoot camps were about one day's distance of travel from the mission residence. "Les Cris, redoutant une vengeance de la part des Pieds-Noirs, m'envoyaient prier d'aller trouver ces sauvages pour apaiser encore une fois leur colère."[162] At the request of the Cree, "On me pria, en plusieurs beaux discours, d'assurer les Pieds-Noirs des bons sentiments d'amitié que les Cris nourrissaient pour eux, et de leur grand désir de la paix."[163] The Blackfoot, who were surprised to see the missionary, stayed with them for five days: "ils consentirent de faire la paix avec les Cris ; le tabac des deux nations fut haché ensemble, et les grands calumets de paix furent apportés. On les fuma en signe de bonne intelligence ; je représentais les Cris."[164] As Lacombe

represented the Cree during the proceedings, he praised "notre divin Sauveur" Jesus Christ for the peace they had created, and he hoped that God's authority would help grant it longevity: "Je ne sais pas et Dieu seul peut savoir combien durera la paix cimentée de la sorte." [165]

Lacombe studied indigenous beliefs and traditions and tried to Christianize some of them. Lacombe was fascinated by the fact that "Contrairement à ce qui existe dans toutes les autres tribus de ce pays, les Pieds-Noirs n'ont aucun mot dans leur langue pour désigner Dieu. C'est là, sans doute, une chose étrange, puisque, dans les nations les plus barbares, on a toujours trouvé l'idée de Dieu, plus ou moins nettement."[166] He thought that the Blackfoot worshipped the sun, but it is more accurate to say they praised its association to the unknown spirit world:

> les Pieds-Noirs ne paraissent aucunement connaitre d'autre divinité que *Natous*, le Soleil matériel et visible, leur père et fondateur. Depuis que les Missionnaires ont pénétré au milieu d'eux, les Pieds-Noirs connaissent Dieu et l'appellent « Notre Père, qui est en haut. » Mais leur première divinité a toujours été Natous, le Soleil, ou Napi, le Vieux. C'est à lui que se rapportent toutes les invocations, toutes les supplications ; c'est au Soleil que l'on fait des sacrifices sanglants, qu'on présente des offrandes sacrées pour être heureux dans la guerre, avoir bonne chasse, vivre longtemps…
>
> The Blackfoot do not seem to know any other divinity than the *Natous*, the material and visible Sun, who is their father and founder. Since the missionaries have penetrated into the middle of their people, the Blackfoot know God and call him "Our Father, who are in heaven." But their foremost divinity has always been Natous, the Sun, or Napi, the Old Man. It is him that they invocate and supplicate; it is to the Sun they they make bloody sacrifices, that they present sacred offering to be happy during war, to have a good hunt, or to live a long life…[167]

According to tradition, the sun created the Blackfoot by spending many years on the Earth with the name of *Napi* or Old Man. Napi performed a number of wonders at sacred places on the prairie. But the Blackfoot had a number of secondary spirits as well. "Ils révèrent en particulier la lune, qu'ils appellent la *Vieille*, et les étoiles, sur le compte desquelles ils ont les fables les plus étranges."[168] The Blackfoot praised the earth, where "dans les festins, on lui offre sa portion de nourriture, ou mieux, on la lui jette ; dans les assemblés, le calumet lui est toujours présenté, après avoir été présenté au soleil."[169]

Lacombe used what he had learned about indigenous religion in order to connect their stories with the Christian myth of origin. When Lacombe told the bible story to two Blackfoot men in the summer of 1865, he found it difficult to teach the Christian principles, so he drew pictures in the sand. The next day, he explained the bible story by etching charcoal figures or pictographs on a bison hide laced between two upright poles, which was the medium by which the Blackfoot recorded and recounted their histories. [170] Lacombe was familiar with the widely distributed catechism ladders that were published by Blanchet and de Smet, which featured a

vertical line of bars and dots to symbolize the centuries before and after Christ. Lacombe elaborated upon de Smet's "two roads" technique, which featured two paths leading to good and evil, by adding the Old Testament, the seven Catholic sacraments and three virtues on the good road, along with the seven cardinal sins, idolatry and paganism on the bad road. The historian Philip M. Hanley points out that the ladder was similar to the climbing pole or *poteau sacré* that some shamans used to climb to heaven and back, which made it all the much easier to understand.[171] Lacombe made the bold statement that the sun and God were one and the same, since the holy trinity was surmounted by the sun—the Creator—at the very top of the ladder. With the Plains Cree, he developed a Cree-language catechism and illustrated catechism book that was much more detailed than the ladder.[172] It contained prayers, hymns and a number of themes relating to Catholicism that was meant to be used "by those who were familiar with the rudiments of the Catholic faith."[173]

The idea of having the same creator as well as the path to salvation has interesting parallels to elements of Western European philosophy. As it was mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, French missionaries studied Thomist theology that embodied a number of platonic notions such as Ideas or Forms and participation. A coloured edition of Lacombe`s pedagogical aid was published by the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame in Montreal and, unsurprisingly, it became the most popular of all Catholic ladders in the Western world.[174] However, Lacombe's ladder was controversial among the Blackfoot. The uncomplicated graphic colours and illustrations proclaimed "the saving events in which God entered into human history," which certainly helped Lacombe teach Catholic dogma, morality and history to the Amerindians.[175] The problem, as Huel noted, was that most of the Amerindians depicted on the ladder were on the path to perdition. Some listeners disagreed with a few points on the 'bad road' and explained how luxury, vengeance and pride were important to their culture and lifestyle: "Les Pieds-Noirs ne regardent comme péché que le meurtre, le vol entre parents et alliés, le mensonge et la colère. La luxure, la vengeance et l'orgueil ne sont point des choses défendues à leurs yeux ; ce sont des choses indifférentes et dont ils se vantent."[176] Some others rejected the ladder's the 'bad road' altogether as they claimed their stature as 'half-beings:' "Je me rappelle, à ce sujet, qu'un vieux chef me disait un jour : « Dieu a fait les blancs entièrement, ou, si vous voulez, ce sont des œuvres achevées ; pour nous, nous n'avons été faits qu'à moitié, nous n'avons qu'une demi-existence. »"[177] And finally, some attacked the foundation of

Lacombe's truth claims by rejecting the notion of a shared divinity: "Les blancs, disent-ils, ont été créés par un autre Dieu, et nous par celui-là ; c'est pourquoi nous vivons différemment."[178]

The Blackfoot still remember Lacombe's ladder. Maurice Gouthier produced a modern version with Blackfoot artist Niitsit Aipoyi (Standing Tall) in 1984, which they called *Come to Me… I am the Way* (in reference to Matthew 11:28 and John 14:6). As Mark Thiel notes, this multi-coloured ladder added a number of distinct features, notably the sacred circle of life, as well as the Amerindian shield and Christ's shield (once more, symbols of protection). "It tells the Catholic faith story with Blackfoot symbols, including a sun dance pole, sweat lodge, peyote alter and the virgin of Guadelupe."[179] While some contemporary Oblates have criticized its theology for being 'pre-Vatican II,' it has achieved some success in Canada: "it has gone through more than one printing and a YouTube version is now under consideration."[180] Indeed, these once hand-crafted pedagogical aids have quickly become mass produced charts in the last two centuries. In borrowing the words of historians Greer and Mills, the ladders are indicative of the "diverse, locally rooted, popular sets of beliefs and gestures" of Catholicism on the one hand, and the "dynamic program of discipline and regulation intruding into local societies with the aim of reshaping the outlook and behavior of peasants and other in the laity" on the other hand.[181] They also show how Catholic communication networks were efficacious in spreading ideas around the world.

Priests, Medicine Men and the Supernatural

Some Amerindians believed that Lacombe possessed supernatural powers. On the night of 4 December 1864, during the Cree assault on Chief Natous' camp at Three Ponds (east of Hobbema, Alberta) near the Battle River, "je fus logé dans la demeure même du grand chef de la tribu" when a thousand Plains Cree, Assiniboine and Plains Ojibwa men attacked the camp.[182] Many of them had come from as far as la rivière Castor (Beaver River, Saskatchewan).[183] Calf Child, or Lone Chief, depicted this battle on his painted bison robe. He claimed that the Plains Cree chiefs Mistahimaskwa (Gros Ours or Big Bear), Pdtikwahanapiwdyin (Poundmaker), and Minahikosis (Petit Pin or Little Pine) attacked them during the night while Lacombe and l'Heureux were both in his tent: "Lacombe spoke in Cree to them telling them to go away but they would not."[184] Lacombe explained that "Quand je vis qu'il m'était impossible de me faire entendre des assaillants et d'arrêter ce combat nocturne, j'encourageai les chefs à donner

courageusement, s'il le faillait, leur vie pour leur nation. Pour moi, je courus vers les mourants et les blessés."[185] Lacombe—and probably L'Heureux as well—baptized the mortally wounded until the sun rose at dawn. Lacombe wanted to establish a cease-fire:

> Enfin, l'aurore vint à paraître, je me revêtis alors de mon surplis et de mon étole ; puis, tenant d'une main le drapeau de parlementaire et de l'autre ma croix, je m'avançai vers les combattants. Les Pieds-Noirs cessèrent le feu, car ils pouvaient, eux, facilement me voir et m'entendre, mais un épais brouillard et la fumée que la fusillade avait produite me dérobaient à la vue des Cris. J'avais beau leur faire des signes, le feu continuait, les balles tombaient à mes pieds ou sifflaient à mes oreilles. Les combattants dont j'avais arrêté le feu me criaient de me retirer, quand une balle, qui sans doute avait déjà touché la terre, rebondit sur mon épaule gauche et vient de là me frapper au front. Je faillis être renversé ; je crus alors devoir me retirer et revenir près des Pieds-Noirs. […] Un Pied-Noir leur avait crié , paraît-il : « Vous avez blessé le prêtre. C'est assez. » Et les Cris répondirent : « Nous ne savions pas que le prêtre était au milieu de vous. Puisqu'il en est ainsi, nous ne voulons plus nous battre. »
>
> Finally, at daybreak, I dressed myself with my surplice and my stole; finally, holding in one hand my parliamentary flag and in the other my cross, I advanced towards the combatants. The Blackfoot ceased fire because they could easily see and hear me, but the thick fog and smoke caused by gunfire concealed me from the sight of the Cree. No matter the signs I tried to make, the gunfire persisted, and the bullets fell at my feet or whistled past my ears. The warriors who stopped firing yelled at me to retire, and then a bullet, which had undoubtedly ricocheted from the ground, bounced upon on my left shoulder and struck me in the forehead. I nearly fell over; I then thought I should retire and go back to the Blackfoot. […] One Blackfoot apparently shouted to them, saying: "You have wounded the priest. That's enough." And the Cree responded, "we did not know the priest was with you. Since this is the case, we no longer wish to fight."[186]

This was Lacombe's most famous story and he often repeated it decades later. However, he overstated his influence among the Cree. First, the Chiefs identified by Calf Child were not all sympathetic to Roman Catholic missionaries, and the attackers most certainly pulled back because they were routed by Isapo-Muxica (Pied de Corbeau, Crowfoot) and his Siksika reinforcements.[187] Nevertheless, Lacombe claimed that "Partout en entend parler de la protection visible de Dieu sur le camp des Pieds-Noirs. Les Cris sont abattus et honteux."[188] The next year, when Lacombe returned to the Cree, they thought he was killed in the raid: "je fus reçu comme un *revenant*. On avait ouï dire que j'avais été tué, et l'on était tout heureux de me revoir en bonne santé."[189]

Chief Sotai-na (Chef de la pluie, Rainy Chief) was one of the few Blackfoot chiefs to accept Christianity during the nomadic era, and as a medicine man, he "believed he inherited supernatural powers from the priest [Lacombe]."[190] According to Hugh Dempsey, Sotai-na was trying to solidify friendly relations with the whites even before he befriended Lacombe in 1865.[191] He cited James Doty, and American who approached the chief in Montana in order to sign treaty in 1855: "Sotai-na's band was always poor, perhaps because he was on good terms

with everyone and did not encourage the theft of horses, a source of wealth, from enemy tribes."[192] Over the years, Sotai-na's following steadily increased as more and more communities tried to gain access to the resources of their environment: in 1855 his following consisted of only 18 lodges, but by 1870, this number had increased to 29 lodges and 348 people."[193] Both Sotai-na and Lacombe had common views about establishing peace on the prairie. Lacombe even described Sotai-na as "le chef de cette nation [of the Gens-du-Sang or Blood] […] qui est mon grand ami."[194]

Sotai-na's relationships with other Roman Catholic priests revealed that the supernatural powers he obtained from Roman Catholic priests were not exclusive to Lacombe. When Lacombe was transferred to Saint Boniface, Scollen was ordered to take his place: "Ce cher Père, immédiatement après son ordination, était envoyé chez les Cris, où il devait passer l'été. Il avait ordre en même temps de visiter les Pieds-Noirs."[195] Scollen wrote that he received "l'acceuil le plus empressé" by the Blackfoot and that "La plupart des sauvages étaient pour moi de vieilles connaissances." [196] He identified Chief Sotai-na by name: "Le vieux chef, Sotena (chef de la pluie), vieillard qui compte soixante-quatorze hivers, ne me quitta pas un moment pendant un mois de pérégrinations ; sa foi et sa simplicité étaient vraiment touchantes ![197] Again, parting with the old Chief and his band was quite difficult: "Les Pieds-Noirs étaient désolés à la pensée de mon départ. Le vieux chef m'embrassa en pleurant, et tous les sauvages vinrent me faire leurs adieux et m'exprimer leurs regrets."[198] The Blackfoot, the Cree and the Métis were banding in great numbers that summer in order to protect themselves from their enemies, and even though a peace was still in place, each band still mistrusted each other. "Je revins par le lac du Bœuf. Mais au bout de quelques milles j'étais de nouveau abandonné par le sauvage qui me servait de guide. Bien que la paix existe entre les Pieds-Noirs et les Cris, ils ont toujours peur de se rencontrer quand ils ne sont pas en nombre égal."[199] Scollen replaced Lacombe both as a missionary to the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot, but also as a diplomat that could help ease interethnic hostilities.

Isapo-Muxica (Pied de corbeau, Crowfoot) was another Blackfoot chief known for promoting friendly relations with white fur traders and missionaries. He recognized Lacombe as the friend of Meekoostakwan (*The-Man-with-Red-Hair* or Richard Hardisty), who was the HBC trader in charge of fort de la Montagne.[200] Two years after the battle of Three Ponds, he famously prevented Blackfoot warriors from looting an HBC cart caravan by escorting the Métis

drivers back to fort des Prairies, thus defying the wishes of other warrior chiefs who wanted to kill them.[201] Violence had always been the means by which aboriginal bands could repulse intruders and conserve their land's resources, which meant that those Chiefs who were peaceful with intruders were *de facto* supporting the change to an open-access system of property.

Sotai-na's and Isapo-Muxica's actions indicate how Blackfoot kinship systems were under considerable stress as the confederacy tried to cope with ever increasing warfare and famine. Their friendly relations with the missionaries certainly represented one way of coping with the grave challenges they faced. By 1866, many Blackfoot elders felt that the future of their people was unclear. On 12 May 1870, Lacombe wrote that the elders continually complained that they were miserable. The intensity and devastation of warfare reached epic proporations, while the animals that they hunted were disappearing at frightening rates: "étant obligés d'en faire une plus grande destruction, afin de payer de leurs fourrures le prix énorme des ustensiles qu'on leur vend."[202] Indeed, the change in differential power relationships was exemplified through trading patterns.

The Plains Cree were in a more dire situation because the bison no longer roamed on their lands. They undertook more drastic measures. On 6 January 1866, Lacombe wrote that Plains Cree men ceased to have multiple wives, so polygamy was not as frequent as with the Blackfoot.[203] The scarcity of bison robes ensured a high price and they no longer had a monopoly over its access: "Pendant l'hiver dernier, dans l'espace de quatre mois, entre le poste de Carlton et le fort de la Montagne, espace de 550 milles, plus de trente mille buffles ont été tués et plus de la moitié étaient des femelles, les seules dont la peau soit estimée comme fourrure."[204] Therefore, "ces sauvages ont, depuis plusieurs années, écouté les instructions et les recommandations des Missionnaires."[205]

Missionaries and Two-Spirits[206]

It is difficult to know how Amerindians conceptualized the role of missionaries within their own societies, yet it is highly probable that they categorized the priests according to their own gender roles, sexualities and identities. The anthropologist Will Roscoe remarks that "native beliefs about gender and sexuality are avowedly constructionist, acknowledging the malleability of human desire and identity," from which patterns emerged cross-culturally.[207] Roscoe means to say that Aboriginal peoples conceived social roles that were different than

Europeans, but comparable nonetheless. Two-spirit people fulfilled many traditional gender roles in Aboriginal societies, and although there are important variations in the roles, Roscoe identified a set of core traits: specialized work roles, gender difference, spiritual sanction and same-sex relations.[208] Roman Catholic missionaries could possibly fit in three or all four of these criteria.

Male and female two-spirits are described by their preference for the work and activities that are culturally assigned to the opposite sex. This involved gender mixing, or the combination of masculine and feminine gender statuses.[209] Since the chaplains of *la mission ambulante* voluntarily remained at camp with the women and cared for the elderly and the sick, they refrained from culturally masculine activities such as hunting or making war. Indeed, this could have been stereotyped as effeminate, but the missionaries participated actively in masculine tasks such as coordinating ceremonial functions as well. Androgyny is more accurate to describe the chaplain's work roles.

In addition to engaging in a combination of men's and women's work activities, the gender differences of two-spirits "are distinguished from men and women in terms of temperament, dress, lifestyle, and social roles."[210] Indeed, the most visible marker of two-spirits was clothing. The priests' cassock, or *soutane*, was distinct from masculine and feminine Amerindian dress, yet, it resembled women's clothing in the sense that it was an ankle-length robe that covered most of the body. Roscoe explains that cross-dressing among two-spirits occurred less consistently than what was assumed, but in some cases, "they [female two-spirits] wore men's clothing only when hunting or in battle."[211] Indeed, Isapo-Muxica famously had a warrior wife, but how she dressed as she performed the war dance is unknown.[212] In any case, the long effeminate robe worn by missionaries corresponded to the unique status and pursuits of two-spirit people within the band.

Two-spirits were attributed spiritual powers, usually in terms of a vision complex, which not only justified their gender identities, but endowed them with special prestige.[213] These dreams or visions "were considered life-defining and believed to convey power."[214] Of course, the missionaries' message of salvation stressed the need to practice Catholic rituals in order to gain the favour of God; those who followed the good path would be spared punishment come the day of reckoning. The missionaries were self-appointed healers and many Amerindians believed that his presence could help safeguard the band from famine. The chaplains offered predictions

for the future of the Plains environment and spoke of how massive European migration would destabilize the life on the Plains. They stressed the need to take up industrial arts and agriculture, which would be the key to safeguarding their future once the bison became extinct. This message, though strange, offered alternative lifestyle to the chiefs and elders that could no longer foresee, or predict, the future of their people. In this way, the missionaries were people who familiarized the world of the whites to the Amerindians, just as two-spirits could do among men and women. Missionaries and two-spirits were valuable counselors since they were aware of each other's concerns and were thus blessed with the gift of foresight. Lacombe and l'Heureux had literally shown the future of the Plains environment to nine western chiefs by bringing them to the cities of Ottawa and Montreal in 1886. By that time, however, the Amerindians had already settled on reserves. The visit was exclusive to the chiefs who remained loyal to the Crown during the North-West Rebellion of 1885.

Two-spirits most often formed sexual and emotional relationships with other people of their own sex, but Richard Clemmer had concluded that "the berdache was not only—and sometimes not at all—a sexual role."[215] Although missionaries certainly formed emotional relationships with people they tried to help, they were required to make a vow of chastity and thus abstained from sex. This made them altogether sexually different. To put it bluntly, two-spirit people normally engaged in nonproductive sex, while missionaries were sexually nonproductive. Each case confirmed their alternative gender identities. Some Amerindians believed that intimate relationships with two-spirited people permitted them to acquire desirable powers and abilities. Roscoe wrote that Ojibway men had sex with Ozaw-wen-dib (Yellowhead), a two-spirited man who was an accomplished warrior, in order to gain his courage and ability to fight.[216] Similarly, "an Omaha chief once claimed he could change the weather because he had sex four times with a male berdache."[217] The relationship between Chief Sotai-na and Father Lacombe proves that the acquisition of certain powers was not always transmitted through sexual acts, but through close friendships as well. This may very well be an extension of the transfer of power through touching the way Thibault, Leduc and Lacombe had described it earlier in the chapter.

Jean l'Heureux, however, was a known homosexual. After a year of theological studies in the Grand Séminaire in Saint Hyacinthe, Québec, he was expelled from the seminary after either being caught as a thief, exposed as a homosexual, or both.[218] He subsequently travelled

west to Montana in 1859. Having convinced the Jesuits on la rivière Soleil (Sun River, near Great Falls, Montana) that he was a priest, he obtained a cassock from a missionary named Jordan. L'Heureux wore the cassock as he performed missions with the Blackfoot.[219] Once the Jesuits caught him having homosexual activities with Blackfoot men, l'Heureux "n'eut aucune difficulté à se faire admettre dans leurs [Blackfoot] camps et à les accompagner dans leurs pérégrinations à travers la prairie."[220] L'Heureux was a controversial figure throughout his life. According to Hugh Dempsey, he was "despised and mistrusted by many fur traders, an asset and embarrassment to the Oblates, and received by the Blackfeet with the mixed emotions they had for crazy people."[221] Scollen described him as "l'homme le plus incompréhensible que j'aie jamais vu. C'est un espèce de Gil Blas [in reference to the picaresque novel *L'Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* by Lesage], qui a joué toutes sortes de tours, s'est fait quelquefois passer pour prêtre, et s'intitule, depuis une dizaine d'années, *catéchiste des Pieds-Noirs*.[222] Ironically, Scollen also raised a great deal of controversy later in his career as well. He loudly denounced the Indian Department over treaty engagements, and he too was involved in a number of sex scandals. J. Damiani wrote a letter to Grandin on 29 June 1882 claiming that Scollen impregnated an unmarried Blackfoot woman and gave her "medicine, to prevent what we call generation, which ended up being the cause of the death of the savage who before dying was publicly announcing to the entire world, that she was very worried for her soul because, while confessing, she had forgotten to accuse herself of having committed a sin."[223]

Huel believed that the Oblates resented l'Heureux because "ses activités dans les champs aurifères et ses rapports sodomitiques transgressaient le rigoureux code moral de l'époque."[224] Huel concluded, however, that it was mostly "son usurpation du titre de prêtre-missionnaire qui lui valut le mépris du clergé."[225] L'Heureux directly challenged the Oblate claim to being the sole representatives of the legitimate Church in a way that Métis guides had not done until Louis Riel became a prophet in 1870s and 1880s. In fact, Riel asked l'Heureux in Montana to help him reclaim the North-West for the Amerindians and the Métis exclusively in 1879, but l'Heureux convinced the Blackfoot to return to Alberta and be wary of Riel's influence.[226] To the Oblates, l'Heureux was all the more reprehensible as a renegade Catholic, and unlike most of the legitimate missionaries, he was more successful at gaining "la confiance des autochtones et s'était fait accepter par eux comme catéchiste."[227] In many ways he was a reverse-prophet who could indigenize Catholic beliefs and customs in ways that suited their spiritual needs and

allowed them to retain their Aboriginal identities. Huel explained that "L'Heureux ne chercha pas à les convertir à la religion catholique, mais à leur montrer que le Grand Esprit qu'ils adoraient était le même Dieu que lui-même vénérait."[228] If touching did indeed permit one person's acquisition of power, it is also possible that l'Heureux was perceived as one who was more willing to transfer power (through sex) than the celibate Oblates. Hence, "He was despised and vilified by the clergy and fur traders both for being homosexual and for pretending to be a priest. He was also mistrusted because of his complete devotion to the Indians who, he had discovered, did not condemn homosexuality."[229] Yet, the Oblates did not renounce him entirely.

Missionaries like Doucet "pouvait pardonner les nombreuses excentricités de L'Heureux parce qu'il avait rendu de réels services aux premiers missionnaires."[230] Lacombe befriended and protected l'Heureux ever since the latter saved the former's life from illness in Chief Natous' (Old Sun) camp during the winter of 1864-1865.[231] His work as a catechist facilitated the missionary work of the Oblates: "Il se fit interprète des missionnaires, […] et même, s'étant arrogé les fonctions de catéchiste, il enseigna certains rudiments de la foi aux sauvages; ce qui lui valut le surnom de [Neokiskaetapiw]," which literally translates to *l'homme aux trois personnes* or Three Persons.[232] Huel attributed the name to the holy trinity (father, son and holy spirit), but his name could refer to his two-spirited stature as well.[233] Doucet noted in his journal that l'Heureux was the Godfather of most of the 368 Bloods and Peigans that were baptised in 1864-1865, and in 1872, he became the Godfather of 45 new Blood Christians that were baptized by Bishop Grandin. [234] He had remarkable skills in conflict resolution, as noted by Doucet: "L'Heureux qui fit l'office d'avocat avec un grand à plomb et surtout avec une loquacité intarissable."[235] Following the Marias Massacre of 23 January 1870, the Peigan sent l'Heureux as a peace emissary to better relations with Montana colonists. He also served as Isapo-Muxica's official interpreter during the Treaty 7 negotiations in September of 1877 at la Traverse des Pieds-Noirs (Blackfoot Crossing, Alberta), much to the chagrin of Scollen, who subsequently made scathing remarks about l'Heureux.[236] The Oblates were so embarrassed by him that he was seldom mentioned in their historical accounts. Grandin even excommunicated the old catechist, and after l'Heureux had died, the Oblates burned his memoirs that were "écrits sur un grand rouleau de papier." The Oblates feared that his conduct could damage the reputation of the Oblates in the future, and especially the reputation of their rising star: Albert Lacombe.[237]

Indeed, l'Heureux rivaled Lacombe and the other Oblate missionaries when it comes down to the overall 'successes' of his Blackfoot missions.

Endnotes

[1] AD, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 19.
[2] "On the seventh of July, […] a Blackfoot brigade came to trade. As soon as they heard that a Man of God was nearby, they asked [the traders] if they could see him and talk to him. When their request was accepted, they solicited the services of the interpreter M. Monreau to guide them to me." *Ibid*., 20.
[3] "A young Canadian women from an excellent family." Saint Charles Boyer is now known as Saint Charles de Bellechasse, and it is located at 20 kilometers southeast of Lévis on the south bank of the Saint Lawrence River. AD, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 20.
[4] "Disinherited by his family if not renounced altogether." AD, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 20.
[5] *Ibid*.,
[6] "The old Monro." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Papiers Personnels à Léon Doucet, "Journal 1868-90," 3.
[7] "The merchant traders told them about our Father who art in Heaven [or the sky. In French, Heaven and sky are the same]." AD, Correspondance Lacombe, G LPP 1975, "Mission de St Paul des Cris, District du Kisikatchiwan, Fête de St François Xavier 1866," 1-2.
[8] "They listened for nearly three consecutive hours with a great deal of attention, with nearly all of their eyes fixed on the crucifix and all seemingly trying to grasp every word I spoke." AD, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 20.
[9] "Immediately they brought to me their little children and I baptized 41 of them. A few days later, a second brigade arrived who, after being informed of my teachings by the first, asked to see me right away and presented to me 23 of their children to be baptized." *Ibid*., 21.
[10] "For the first time, the holy water of baptism trickled on the foreheads of the children belonging to the most formidable Northwestern tribe." Unknown author, "Les missionnaires catholiques chez les Pieds-Noirs," *Missions* 29 (1891), 48.
[11] AD, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 23. The sources I have gathered that describe this encounter do not state the duration of the mission or when it ended.
[12] Hippolyte Leduc, "Lettre du R. P. Leduc au R. P. Martinet, Secrétaire Général," *Missions* 12 (1874), 511.
[13] "all of this contributed to having them welcome the priest." Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre de Lestanc à Aubert. Fort Pitt, 30 juillet 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 174.
[14] Archives Deschâtelets, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 21.
[15] *Ibid*., 21.
[16] Pierre-Jean de Smet, *Oregon missions and travels over the Rocky Mountains, in 1845-46* (New York: Edward Dunigan, 1847), 163; Pierre-Jean de Smet, *Missions de l'Orégon et voyages dans les montagnes Rocheuses en 1845 et 1846* (Paris: Pussielgue-Rusand, 1848), 130.
[17] "The meanest Amerindians in these parts." Quoted from a letter written by Thibault to Provencher at Fort Pitt, 26 December 1843. AD, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 25.
[18] Quoted from a letter written by Thibault to Provencher at Fort Pitt, 26 December 1843. Archives Deschâtelets, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 25.
[19] *Ibid*., 25.
[20] "It is not very prudent to wander in our prairies. We have to be constantly alert and be very careful not to fall in the hands of these bandits." *Ibid*., 25.
[21] Ibid.,28.
[22] Again in reference to the *Cool Hand Luke* analogy in White, "Creative Misunderstandings and New Misunderstandings," 13.
[23] "We will be able to attempt something in the prairies once the last of the bison are gone." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, "Aristide Philippot, Manuscrit : "La mission de Saint-Paul-des-Cris et les premières origines des missions indiennes de l'Alberta-Saskatchewan," 1935, 2.

[24] "At their request, I provided them a piece of paper with the days of the week, which permitted them to know which day is Sunday and sanctify it." AD, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 23.
[25] Greg Dening, "The Comaroffs Out of Africa: A Reflection Out of Oceania," review of *Of Revelation and Revolution*, by Jean and John Comaroff, *The American Historical Review* 108 (2) (April 2003), 472.
[26] *Ibid*.,
[27] For a study of time and industrialisation, see E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York: New Press, 1993).
[28] "We all follow regulations; we eat when we're hungry, we measure our orations and meditations to the time of our liking, or rather my liking—I give the signal." Vital Grandin could not bring a clock with him for his travels and was describing the poverty of the woodland missions in the Athabasca Country. The *à la prairie* missions were even more deprived of tools and resources. This quote from Grandin best illustrated the way that missionaries adapted to the non-mechanized conception of time practiced by indigenous residents of the Plains. Vital Grandin, "Journal de Mgr Grandin," *Missions* 5 (1866), 389.
[29] See Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, Translated by Robert Frain with a Foreword by David Pocock (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 2.
[30] AD, Correspondance Lacombe, G LPP 1975, "Mission de St Paul des Cris, District du Kisikatchiwan, Fête de St François Xavier 1866," 6.
[31] AD, Correspondance Lacombe, G LPP 1975, "Mission de St Paul des Cris, District du Kisikatchiwan, Fête de St François Xavier 1866," 6.
[32] *Ibid*., 6.
[33] "It is not enough to want to pray, since the important part is praying correctly," and "although my Amerindians wanted *prayer*, they desired the least amount possible." Julien Moulin, "Extrait d'une lettre du R. P. Moulin," *Missions* 16 (1878), 353-354.
[34] *Ibid*., 2.
[35] Foster, "*Le missionnaire* and *le chef métis*," 120.
[36] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 2238, Boîte mi 15, " Journal de la Mission de St-Paul-des-Cris (1865-1872)" 1.
[37] "Send me out to these abandoned souls, let me be with them." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, Philippot, "Saint-Paul-des-Cris, 2.
[38] *Ìbid*., 2.
[39] *Ibid*., 2.
[40] "I could have all the children and instruct them every day for three months. I would see all of the adults and instruct them: there were masses of people that made their first communion on the prairie…" L.-S. Culerier, "Le R. P. René Rémas, 1823-1901," *Missions* 64 (1930), 522-524.
[41] Taché, *Vingt Années de Missions*, 161.
[42] Unknown Author, "Missions du vicariat de la Saskatchewan," *Missions* 7(1868), 214.
[43] "this brave among the braves!" PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 157.
[44] Hugh Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972), 83.
[45] No Author, "Les missionnaires catholiques chez les Pieds-Noirs," *Missions* 29 (1891), 49.
[46] *Ibid*., 49.
[47] "Father Lacombe multiplied his encounters with the Blackfoot." *Ibid*., 49.
[48] Hughes, *op.cit*., 60; AD, Monographies et Manuscrits, BP 2513 .P45 1937, Aristide Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 31.
[49] *Ibid*., 49.
[50] No Author, "Les missionnaires catholiques chez les Pieds-Noirs," *Missions* 29 (1891), 49.
[51] Hughes, *op.cit*., 97.
[52] Philippot, "Les origines des missions piednoires," 33.
[53] "Negotiator's flag." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 239.
[54] *Concordia salus* is latin for 'salvation through harmony.'
[55] "The Amerindians liked the Whites because of the missionaries, so the missionaries facilitated European access to their lands." No Author, "Les missionnaires catholiques chez les Pieds-Noirs," *Missions* 29 (1891), 50.
[56] "Lacombe offered himself up once more to become the special apostle for the Cree and the Blackfoot." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, "Aristide Philippot, Manuscrit : "La mission de Saint-Paul-des-Cris et les premières origines des missions indiennes de l'Alberta-Saskatchewan," 1935, 2.

[57] Raymond Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface: The "Good Fight" and the Illusive Vision* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003), 77.
[58] *Ibid*., 77.
[59] "Once someone in this country has become Protestant, that is to say converted to the English religion [referring to both nationality and language], it is nearly impossible to bring him back to the truth, especially if this one is an Amerindian. There are only rare exceptions to the rule." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 232-233.
[60] "offer them our services before any minister." *Ibid*., 232-233.
[61] "hire them to English prayer." *Ibid*., 232-233.
[62] "Unfortunately, they [the ministers] are successful among a good number of poor people who do not understand the difference between true and false religion." *Ibid*., 232-233.
[63] *Ibid*., 263.
[64] "This other "yellow fever," which is anything but formidable, will sooner or later attract a large population to the upper portion of the North Saskatchewan River Valley." Taché, *Vingt Années de Missions*, 187-188.
[65] "I was discharged from the prefecture of Saint Albert, which gave me full reign to run after the Cree and the Blackfoot in the prairies." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 166.
[66] "the germs of the faith that were already implanted." Taché, *op.cit*., 186-187; PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, "Aristide Philippot Manuscrit : "La mission de Saint-Paul-des-Cris et les premières origines des missions indiennes de l'Alberta-Saskatchewan," 1935, 2.
[67] "During this month as well as the next two months, he [Lacombe] was very busy baptizing, teaching, visiting the sick and reconciling enemies." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 2238, Boîte mi 15, " Journal de la Mission de St. Paul des Cris. 1865, 66, 67, 68," 1.
[68] Hughes, *op.cit*., 68.
[69] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6574, Boîte 157, Lacombe, "Mémoires," 168.
[70] L. James Dempsey, *Blackfoot War Art: Pictographs of the Reservation Period, 1880-2000* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 112.
[71] Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 225.
[72] Bad Head's (also known as *Pakap-otokan* and Father of Many Children) winter count in Hugh Dempsey, *A Blackfoot Winter Count* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1965), 12-14; Glenbow Archives, Houghton Running Rabbit Fonds, M 4233, "Houghton Running Rabbit's Winter Count," 3-4; Hudson's Bay Company Archives, b. 60/a/34, Edmonton Post Journal, 1864-65, March 24, 1865, Friday.
[73] Lacombe, *op.cit*., 225.
[74] No Author, "Les missionnaires catholiques chez les Pieds-Noirs," *Missions* 29 (1891), 51.
[75] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 2238, Boîte mi 15, " Journal de la Mission de St. Paul des Cris. 1865, 66, 67, 68," 1-2.
[76] "They were preparing to leave for the bison hunt, since this was the only resource that would stop them from starving to death." Lacombe, *op.cit*., 227.
[77] *Ibid*., 227.
[78] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 2238, Boîte mi 15, " Journal de la Mission de St. Paul des Cris. 1865, 66, 67, 68," 8.
[79] "The Amerindians returned to the prairie, where they chose their winter [?] locations wherever the bison herd was closest." *Ibid*., 7.
[80] Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), ix.
[81] "The others from our kind tried to discourage us by saying that we could never establish ourselves here. They warned us of the danger of the Amerindians [on the prairie?]." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 2238, Boîte mi 15, " Journal de la Mission de St. Paul des Cris. 1865, 66, 67, 68," 3.
[82] "The Protestant Amerindians from Victoria and Whitefish Lake were incited by their ministers to drive us away from here." *Ibid*., 3-4.
[83] *Ibid*., 3.
[84] Gaston Carrière, *Dictionnaire biographique des Oblats de Marie-Immaculée au Canada*, vol. 1-4 (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1976), 295.
[85] "On any day that we had a good hunt, the tribe remained at the same camp for all the time that was necessary to dry the meat and prepare the bison skins. I found it easiest to instruct my Amerindians during those days." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 230.
[86] "I taught them prayers and various canticles, then I offered them an instruction." *Ibid*., 230.

[87] See the description of Lacombe's encounter with Dr. John Rae, who was a surgeon, fur trader and explorer in 1864. Lacombe obtained medicines from Rae, who was under the employ of the HBC. Considering the limited resources of the Oblates, the medicines that they distributed were most likely supplied by the Company. On a side note, Rae was also quite famous for adopting aboriginal ways for transportation. Hughes, *op.cit*., 102.
[88] "among those who did not want to pray; I replied to the objections that they presented to me." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 230.
[89] "Finally, I had to fulfill the functions of a justice of the peace and resolve the problems that occurred among them." *Ibid*., 230.
[90] Hughes, *op.cit*., 101.
[91] "In an instant, I was surrounded by all of these little Indians who loved me as their father and sang canticles at the top of their lungs." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 230-231.
[92] *Ibid*., 262. The Cree and French texts are found in Lacombe's original letter, while I have added the English translation,
[93] "While smoking the calumet, each one asked me questions related to the superstitions of the country and our holy religion." *Ibid*., 231.
[94] "At the same time on Sundays, everyone participated in diverse piety exercises, in holy mass and with the rosary. And thus I have spent nearly each day in this way for nearly a month and a half." *Ibid*., 231.
[95] *Ibid*., 230.
[96] *Ibid*., 228.
[97] Hughes, *op.cit*., 31-32.
[98] "These people never work and have no other occupation than hunting, which an easy and straightforward activity." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 246.
[99] "Polygamy is general custom among the tribes that inhabit the prairies." *Ibid*., 247.
[100] "When a girl barely achieves the age of 12, we are already selling her as merchandise. I've seen fathers speculate on the worth of their daughters so they can augment their number of horses." *Ibid*., 247.
[101] "On the Blackfoot side, 12 people were killed, two children were taken and made prisoners. […] Two hundred horses were taken or killed by the Cree." *Ibid*., 240.
[102] "A female Sarcee prisoner among the Cree was purchased, for one horse, by the mission, and sent back to her [adoptive] parents with the Sister's caravan [to Saint Albert]." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 2238, Boîte mi 15, "Journal de la mission de St-Paul-des-Cris (1865-1872)," 11.
[103] Hughes, *op.cit*., 140-141.
[104] *Ibid*., 140-141.
[105] *Ibid*., 159.
[106] *Ibid*., 160.
[107] "Arrival of Fr. Lacombe from his voyage to St Albert and fort de la Montagne__happy reunion with the Father at the last fort with a great number of Blackfoot who were asking him information for next summer." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 2238, Boîte mi 15, "Journal de la mission de St-Paul-des-Cris," 17.
[108] Brooks, *Captives & Cousins*, 7.
[109] *Ibid*., 26, 48, 61. The Blackfoot and Plains Cree sun dances in the North-West were very similar to the sun dances of the Comanches and Kiowas in the South-West. They also incorporated a sacred role for virgin women, local or captive, which contributed to the "stitching together of ritual spheres." See page 19.
[110] "I had no idea that such a mission existed," and "surrounded by over 200 Plains Cree lodges, Amerindians which been described to me as prohibitive until now, but upon which the good lord seems to have shown mercy." PAA, OMI, 84.400, Item 973, Boîte 33, Papiers Personnels à Vital Grandin, "Rapports sur les missions – 1868-1872," 1.
[111] PAA, OMI, 84.400, Item 973, Boîte 33, Papiers Personnels à Vital Grandin, "Rapports sur les missions – 1868-1872," n. pag.
[112] "He wanted to obtain medicines, so he came and found us for this purpose." Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre du R. P. Lestanc au R. P. Aubert," *Missions* 18 (1880), 171-172.
[113] "His whole band was proud to have a priest with them, even though those who made up the band were almost entirely infidels; however, in their conviction, that they no longer had to worry about famine, disease, nor any sort of accident." *Ibid*., 171-172.
[114] PAA, OMI, 84.400, Item 973, Boîte 33, Papiers Personnels à Vital Grandin, "Rapports sur les missions – 1868-1872," n. pag.
[115] Vital-Justin Grandin, "Journal de Grandin," *Missions* 9 (1870), 247.

[116] Hippolyte Leduc, "Rapport du R. P. Leduc sur le vicariat de St-Albert," *Missions* 17 (1879), 451.
[117] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Papiers Personnels à Léon Doucet, "Journal 1868-90," 13-14.
[118] Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du même au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 265.
[119] Hughes, *op.cit*., 34.
[120] Hughes, *op.cit*., 49.
[121] "Pemmican is excellent, but no one would eat this food in Europe." Vital Fourmond, "Lettre du R. P. Fourmond au Supérieur Général. Lac Sainte-Anne, 26 décembre 1870," *Missions* 10 (1872), 480.
[122] Vital Grandin, "Lettre de Grandin au Supérieur Général. Mission de Saint-Jean-Baptiste, île à la Crosse, 12 juin 1869," *Missions* 9 (1870), 180; Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black Robe Voyageur*, 34.
[123] "the good medicine that makes the heart strong." Vital Grandin, "Lettre de Grandin aux membres des conseils centraux de la Propagation de la foi. Mission de Saint François Régis, Fort Pitt, 10 janvier 1870." *Missions* 10 (1872), 31-32
[124] "The one with the good soul" and "The one with the good heart." Émile Jonquet & Émile Legal, *Mgr. Grandin, Oblate de Marie Immaculée : premier évêque de Saint-Albert* (Montréal: The Author, 1903), 237; Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 Mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 259.
[125] "the one who is on high." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 259; No Author, *Missions* 9 (1870), 117; AD, Correspondance Lacombe, G LPP 1975, "Mission de St Paul des Cris, District du Kisikatchiwan, Fête de St François Xavier 1866," 1.
[126] Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 259; No Author, *Missions* 9 (1870), 117; Émile Jonquet & Émile Legal, *Mgr. Grandin, Oblate de Marie Immaculée : premier évêque de Saint-Albert* (Montréal: The Author, 1903), 239.
[127] "the evil spirit" and "the mighty evil one." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 261; Vital Grandin, "Journal de Grandin." *Missions* 5 (1866), 381.
[128] "The *Great Master of Prayer* called all of the other *Masters of Prayer* about him. What is the name of this Great Master of Prayer? – His name is Pius IX." The citation is from an interview with Lacombe by a journalist from the Montreal newspaper *le Nouveau Monde* 12 (12 August 1989). It was reprinted in the *Missions* journals. No Author, *Missions* 9 (1870), 117.
[129] "they call them *the divine Frenchmen*, a magnificent homage to God and to France!" *Ibid*., 116-117.
[130] Hughes, *op.cit*., 151.
[131] "How our Bethlehem of the prairies is beautiful! How are beautiful our shepherds wrapped in their furs! How I love to see these pastors of big bison herds, prostrated before the spotless lamb and who takes away the sins of the world!" Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 256.
[132] This is indeed the custom at the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, Alberta, where I participated in a mass led by Reverand James L. Holland, who is an Oblate and the pastor of the Church.
[133] Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 256.
[134] "Silence! The mystery is in progress; everyone is on their knees to adore the Son of God now turned Son of Man; the Chiefs and communicants will enter for the first mass, the others will have their chance during one of the six masses that will succeed each other until noon." *Ibid*., 256.
[135] "There was a certain peaceful uproar and joyous reign over the camp, which brought forth a unique impression over one's soul, in the middle of this immense solitude, rendered more profound by the shadows of the night: we are preparing for midnight mass." *Ibid*., 256.
[136] Hughes, *op.cit*., 153.
[137] Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 259-260.
[138] In reference to the title of Breton, *Le grand chef des prairies*.
[139] "I had with me cart, two horses, a tent, a case for my chapel and numerous blankets for a bed during the night. That was all of my luggage." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 229.
[140] Hughes, *op.cit.*, 143.
[141] Hughes, *op.cit.*, 143.
[142] Hughes, *op.cit.*, 143.

[143] "Three horses, two horse sleds measuring 12 feet long and 14 inches wide, one leather sled, a metal stove, bite-sized provisions and our blanket pelts." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 255.
[144] Hughes, *op.cit.*, 151.
[145] "Our leather skin tent could hold up to one hundred people." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 255.
[146] Hughes, *op.cit.*, 150.
[147] Hughes, *op.cit.*, 150.
[148] Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 261.
[149] "I was greatly compensated for the suffering I had to go through to find them. They really do treat me like a Chief and a Father." *Ibid*., 260.
[150] "about fifteen families wanted to accompany me to the fort des montagnes Rocheuses [Rocky Mountain House]. After a few days had passed in this fort, I had to leave them to return to Saint Albert." *Ibid*., 261.
[151] Alexis André, "Lettre du R. P. André au R. P. Lacombe. St-Laurent, 30 octobre 1878," *Missions* 17 (1879), 40.
[152] "These Christians still ask for their Father Lacombe. "He promised to die with us."" Joseph Lestanc, "Lettre du R. P. Lestanc au R. P. Aubert. Fort Pitt, 30 juillet 1879," *Missions* 18 (1880), 167.
[153] The citation is from an interview with Lacombe by a journalist from the Montreal newspaper *le Nouveau Monde* 12 (12 August 1989). It was reprinted in the *Missions* journals. No Author, *Missions* 9 (1870), 117.
[154] "The Indians do not sure the calumet as a simple pastime: it has a role in all the superstitious ceremonies of the infidel Amerindians or those who still do not know much about our holy religion." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du même au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 272.
[155] "when a sick person can no longer smoke, he is condemned. No one expects him to recover." *Ibid*., 271.
[156] "in all civil and religious ceremonies, its presence is indispensable. If anyone held a ceremony without the infamous calumet pipe, the ceremony would be considered fundamentally illegal; everything would be nul and void." *Ibid.*, 272.
[157] *Ibid.*, 272.
[158] This is indeed the custom at the Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples in Edmonton, Alberta, where I participated in a mass led by Reverand James L. Holland, who is an Oblate and the pastor of the Church.
[159] "It is then presented to the Sun, and this is done by facing each of the four cardinal points. The same is done for the earth, to which we also offer the calumet." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du même au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 272.
[160] See Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du même au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 271-273.
[161] Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du même au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 273.
[162] "The Cree, fearing the retaliation of the Blackfoot, sent me to find these Amerindians and appease their anger." *Ibid*., 269.
[163] "They asked me, with many eloquent speeches, to assure the Blackfoot of the kindness and friendliness that they felt for them, and their greatest desire for peace." *Ibid*., 269.
[164] "They consented to make peace with the Cree; the tobacco of both nations was cut together, and they brought forth the great peace calumets. We smoked them as a sign of enlightenment; I represented the Cree." *Ibid*., 269-270.
[165] "our divine saviour" and "only God would know how many years this peace would last." *Ibid*., 269-270.
[166] "Contrary to all the other Amerindian tribes of this land, the Blackfoot do not have a word in their language that refers to God. Undoubtedly, this is a strange thing, since even the most barbarous nations hold an idea of God, more-or-less." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.P. Lacombe au Supérieur Général. Mission de Saint Albert, fête de l'épiphanie, 6 janiver 1866," *Missions* 7, 250.
[167] *Ibid*., 251.
[168] "In particular, they revere the moon, which they call Old Woman, and the stars, to which they ascribed the strangest fables." *Ibid.*, 251.
[169] "During feasts, they always offer, or hurl, a portion of their food to it; during the assemblies, the calumet is always presented, after having been presented to the sun." *Ibid*., 251.
[170] Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 94; Mark G. Thiel, "Catholic Ladders and Native American Evangelization," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2009), 61; Winter counts and bison robe paintings were etched in this manner. See L. James Dempsey, *Blackfoot War Art*, 61.

[171] Philip M. Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder* (Fairfield, Washington: Ya Galleon Press, 1993), 121; L. James, Dempsey, *Blackfoot War Art: Pictographs of the Reservation Period, 1880-2000* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 61.
[172] See PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 8960, Boîte 235, Publications, Albert Lacombe, " Le catéchisme en images pour l'instruction des sauvages. Montréal, Imprimerie de la Providence, 1874;" PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6581, Boîte 157, Papiers personnels Lacombe, "Abrégé de la religion en tableau pour les sauvages par le père Lacombe s.d."
[173] Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 96.
[174] *Ibid*., 94; Mark G. Thiel, "Catholic Ladders and Native American Evangelization," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 27(1) (2009), 61.
[175] Hanley, *History of the Catholic Ladder*, 121.
[176] Huel, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 94; "The Blackfoot only consider murder, thievery from one's parents and allies, lying and anger to be sins. In their eyes, luxury, vengeance and pride should not be prohibited; these are indifferent things that they pride themselves on doing." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 251.
[177] "On this subject, I remember an old chief telling me one day : "God made the White Man whole, or they are completed beings, if you will; we have only been half-made, we only exist as halves." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 247.
[178] "The Whites, they say, have been made by another God, and us by that one; that is why we live differently." *Ibid*., 251.
[179] Thiel, "Catholic Ladders and Native American Evangelization," 69.
[180] *Ibid*., 70.
[181] Greer and Mills, "A Catholic Atlantic," 6.
[182] "I was housed in the same residence as the Big Chief of the tribe." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 236, 237.
[183] *Ibid*., 237.
[184] L. James, Dempsey, *op.cit.*, 112.
[185] "Once I realized that it was impossible for the assailants to hear me and put an end to this nighttime attack, I encouraged the chiefs to offer their lives, if necessary, to save their nation. As for me, I ran to the dying and the wounded." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 238.
[186] *Ibid*., 240.
[187] L. James, Dempsey, *op.cit*., 112; Hughes, *op.cit*., 119.
[188] "Everywhere we hear talk about God's visible protection in the Blackfoot camp. The Cree are beaten and shameful." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 242.
[189] "I was welcomed as a ghost. They all heard that I had died, and they were happy to see me well and in good health." *Ibid*., 241-243.
[190] Hugh Dempsey, "Sotai-na," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000, < http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=5273&&PHPSESSID=th34he7poe2oucdoopkqcau7s6 > (15 July 2009).
[191] *Ibid*.,
[192] *Ibid*.
[193] *Ibid*.
[194] "the chief of this nation… who is my great friend." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," *Missions* 7 (1868), 235.
[195] "Immediately after his ordination, this dear Father was sent to the Cree were he was expected to spend the summer. At the same time, he had orders to visit the Blackfoot." Hippolyte Leduc, "Lettre du R. P. Leduc au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Saint-Albert, 3 janvier 1874." *Missions* 12 (1874), 519.
[196] "the most eager welcome" and "most of the Amerindians were old acquaintances." Constantine Scollen, "Lettre du P. Scollen à Mgr Grandin. Saint-Albert, 15 septembre 1874," *Missions* 14 (1876), 35.
[197] "The old Chief Sotena (Rainy Chief), an elder that is about 74 winters old, never left my side for about of month of peregrination; his faith and simplicity were truly touching!" *Ibid*., 35.
[198] "The Blackfoot were desolate upon the tought of my departure. The old Chief cried as he embraced me, and all the Amerindians came to me to express their adieus and their regrets." *Ibid*., 35.
[199] "I returned via lac du Boeuf. Having only travelled a few miles, I was abandoned once again by the Amerindian who was my guide. Even though a peace exists between the Cree and the Blackfoot, they are still afraid to cross each other unless they are present in equal numbers." *Ibid*., 37.

[200] Hughes, *op.cit*., 123.
[201] Hugh A. Dempsey, "Isapo-Muxica," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000, < http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=5604&interval=25&&PHPSESSID=6k5iacjvipl242ij9079c8qgl1 > (15 July 2009).
[202] "they were forced to cause even more destruction in order to meet, with their furs, the exorbitant price of utensils that they sell them." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 263.
[203] Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général, Mission de Saint-Albert, 6 janvier 1866," Missions 7 (1868), 248.
[204] "During the last winter, in the space of four months, between fort Carlton and fort de la Montagne, which spanned 550 miles, more than thirty thousand bison were slaughtered and more than half of them were female because they were the only ones with valuable fur." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R.-P. Lacombe, au T.-R. P. Supérieur Général. Vicariat de la Siskatchewan, mission de Saint-Paul des Cris, 12 mai 1870," *Missions* 9 (1870), 263.
[205] "ever since then, these Amerindians have listened to the instructions and recommendations of the missionary." Albert Lacombe, "Lettre du R. P. Lacombe au T. R. P. Supérieur Général," Missions 7 (1868), 248.
[206] The term 'Two-Spirit,' though relatively new, is derived from interpretations of Aboriginal languages used to describe people who display both male and female characteristics. The term *berdache* was often used in anthropology, but many Aboriginal people found the connotations to be offensive.
[207] Will Roscoe, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 5.
[208] *Ibid*., 8.
[209] *Ibid*., 8; Sabine Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures*, translated by John L. Vantine (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 7.
[210] Roscoe, *op.cit.*, 8.
[211] *Ibid*., 8.
[212] L. James, Dempsey, *Blackfoot War Art*, 112.
[213] Roscoe, *op.cit.*, 8.
[214] *Ibid*., 8.
[215] *Ibid*., 8-9; Richard O. Clemmer, Review of *The Zuni Man-Woman. American Indian Quarterly* 18(2): 275-77.
[216] Roscoe, *op.cit*., 9.
[217] *Ibid*., 9.
[218] Huel, "Jean l'Heureux: Canadien errant et prétendu missionnaire auprès des Pieds-Noirs," *Après dix ans… bilan et prospective: Actes du 11e coloque du CEFCO* (Edmonton: Institut de recherche de la Faculté Saint-Jean, 1991), 207.
[219] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, "Aristide Philippot, Manuscrit : "La mission de Saint-Paul-des-Cris et les premières origines des missions indiennes de l'Alberta-Saskatchewan," 1935, 10.
[220] Hugh Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972), 83; "had no problem being admitted into their [Blackfoot] camps and accompanying them on their travels over the prairie." Huel, "Jean l'Heureux," 208.
[221] Hugh Dempsey, *op.cit.*, 83.
[222] "The most incomprehensible man I have ever seen. He is a type of Gil Blas, always playing all kinds of tricks, sometimes passed for a priest, and named himself a *Blackfoot Catechist* for the last dozen years." Constantine Scollen, "Au Révérend Père Aubert, Ass. Gén. Saint-Albert, le 24 juin 1878," *Missions* 16 (1878), 472.
[223] PAA, OMI, 84.400, Boîte 41, Item 1028, "Letter of J. Damiani S.J. to Biship Grandin, June 29, 1882," 116-117; PAA, OMI, 84.400, Boîte 41, Item 1028, "C. Scollen (Battle River) to Bishop Grandin, July 15, 1885," 119.
[224] "His activities in the auriferous fields and his sodomitic affairs transgressed the rigourous moral code of the time." Huel, "Jean l'Heureux," 210.
[225] "his usurpation of the title of missionary-priest that earned him the contempt of the clergy." *Ibid*., 210.
[226] *Ibid*., 215.
[227] "gaining the confidence of Aboriginals and being accepted by them as a catechist." *Ibid*., 210.
[228] "L'Heureux did not try to convert them to the Catholic religion, but to demonstrate to them that the Great Spirit that they adored was in fact the same God that he revered." *Ibid*., 211.
[229] Huel, "Jean L'Heureux," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000, < http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=7532&interval=20&&PHPSESSID=3ld4k2igdh0s535gusm7a28st4 > (1 August 2009).

[230] "could forgive l'Heureux's numerous eccentricities because his services truly facilitated the task of the first missionaries." Huel, "Jean l'Heureux," 210.
[231] Breton, *op.cit*., 69; , OMI, 71.220, Item 7259, Boîte 183, "Aristide Philippot, Manuscrit : "La mission de Saint-Paul-des-Cris et les premières origines des missions indiennes de l'Alberta-Saskatchewan," 1935, 10; Huel, "Jean l'Heureux," 211.
[232] "He became an interpreter for the missionaries, […] and having taken the role of a catechist, he taught the rudimentary tenets of the faith to the Amerindians, which earned him the name [Neokiskaetapiw]." Breton, *op.cit.*, 70.
[233] Huel, "Jean l'Heureux," 211.
[234] PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Papiers Personnels à Léon Doucet, "Journal 1868-90," 78; Huel, "Jean l'Heureux," 212.
[235] "L'Heureux was an excellent lawyer, which was a function that he accomplished with aplomb and untarnished loquacity." PAA, OMI, 71.220, Item 6382, Boîte 151, Papiers Personnels à Léon Doucet, "Journal 1868-90," 5.
[236] Constantine Scollen, "Au Révérend Père Aubert, Ass. Gén. Saint-Albert, le 24 juin 1878," *Missions* 16 (1878), 472.
[237] Huel, "Jean l'Heureux," 222.

Conclusion

Lacombe remembered that he was happy with the good that he had done among the Métis, even though his face was burned from the sun, the alter linens and ornaments of his portable chapel were in disarray, his *soutane* was torn and frayed, and everything smelled of wood smoke.[1] Grandin, who asked for increased funding from the Propagation of Faith, stated that, "Croyez, messieurs, que *tout sauvages* que nous sommes, nous ne pouvons oublier […] que nous vivons et faisons le bien."[2]

La mission ambulante represented an ambiguous relationship between Roman Catholic missionaries, the Métis, the Plains Cree or Blackfoot. Yet, it was through this ambiguous space of cultural interaction that each party had developed practical exchanges to suit their own needs. In some instances, this represented a *middle ground* process where all participants achieved mutual interests, albeit with different meanings. This was most apparent during the transitional period from the common resources to the private resources régimes on the prairies, which entailed the end of the fur trade economy, the disappearance of the last wild bison herd, the imposition of Canadian Government sovereignty and law, the signing of numbered treaties, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railroad, mass non-Aboriginal emigration to the region and, last but not least, the creation of an agricultural Canadian West.

The emphasis here is placed on mediation and complexity. European, Métis and Amerindian communities were all linked to a dynamic web of social interaction where changes among one group affected the other. Chapter Two describes how the missionary-priests of Red River and the burgeoning Oblate order, who hailed from the age of the Industrial Revolution in Europe (or what is now widely regarded as the dawn of modernity), responded to various intellectual and economic currents as they attempted to establish social networks that were designed to make all the peoples of the world interact as a whole. Competing religious networks emerged in the North-West as Roman Catholic missionaries from French-speaking Europe and Lower Canada were forced to compete with British Protestant missionaries during the decline of the old fur trade. This, of course, forced Roman Catholic missionaries to venture further out into Aboriginal lands. It was quickly apparent that the missions would have a dual-character among the Métis and the Amerindians.

The whole world was thrust into modernity in the early to mid nineteenth century. Chapter Three demonstrates how the Métis generations prior to 1885 were well attuned to the changing global economies as they seized upon the unique opportunities of the bison hunting lifestyle. Upon the arrival of European missionaries, the Métis missionized themselves in order form large and diverse social groupings. The Métis found in *la mission ambulante* the mechanisms that ensured social cohesion in the large hunting expeditions and in the consolidation of the new *nation métisse*. The relationship between hunt chaplains and the Métis helped to synthesize European and Aboriginal heritages as such.

Chapter Four explores how the Plains Cree and the Blackfoot found imaginative ways to cope with the profoundly bewildering economic and environmental changes that marked the decline of the fur trade, and, more importantly, the end of the commons. Roman Catholicism became a viable vehicle for the perpetuation of Amerindian cultural traditions thanks to the creative misunderstandings between missionaries and Aboriginals. This kind of religious syncretism is still present today in Aboriginal communities, either through religious rites, traditional beliefs, pilgrimages, biblical interpretations, ceremonies of reconciliation, and so on. The end of the commons represented a new, challenging era for redefining culture, spirituality, identity and livelihood. For many Aboriginal communities, Roman Catholicism played a critical role in this process, albeit not always the forms that one expects.

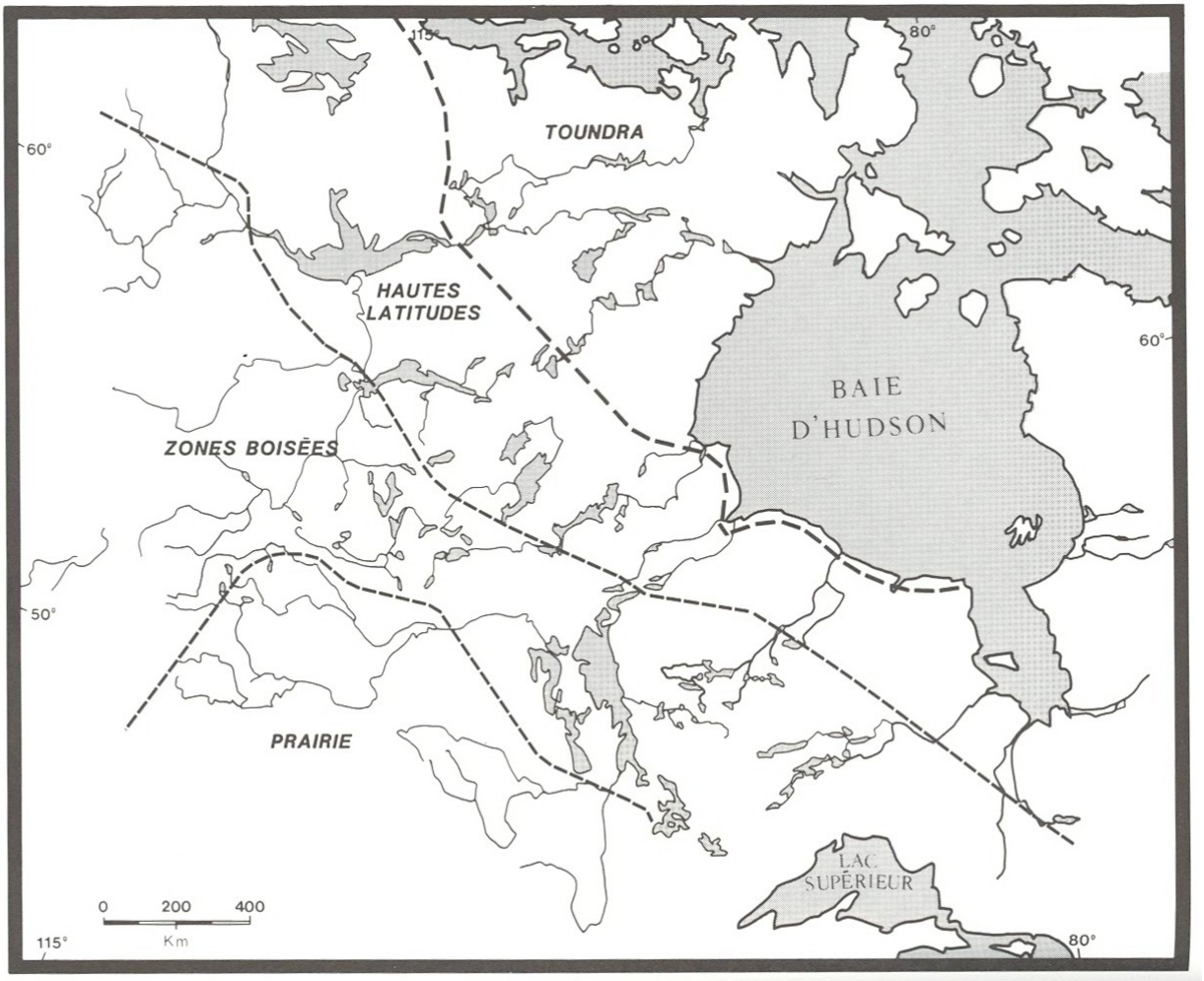
When interviewed about Canada's complex heritage, the historian Claude Couture explained that it is composed of a multitude of narratives, identities and shared experiences that are often misunderstood in light of certain paradigms.[3] In this thesis, I wanted to explore new perspectives by situating Roman Catholicism, the Canadian North-West and the history of sexuality into larger debates concerning mission history. Today's predominant image of missionaries such as the Oblates depicts them as intrusive imperialists who have caused a great deal of harm to Aboriginal societies. Yet, when Albert Lacombe, Jean l'Heureux and a delegation of Amerindian chiefs travelled to the cities of Ottawa, Montréal and Québec in Eastern Canada in the 1880s, Isapo-Muxica famously stated that "Notre Grand' Mère la Reine nous donne du pain ; mais le P. Lacombe nous donne plus encore, il nous donne la consolation."[4] It is interesting, in this case, to contemplate how different people, such as these, shared common experiences from each their own points of view, and what this history could mean to them and to people in the present day.

Endnotes

[1] Katherine Hughes, *Father Lacombe: The Black Robe Voyageur*, 34.
[2] The emphasis on *tout* sauvage is provided in the lettter. Vital Grandin, "Lettre de Mgr Grandin à MM. les membres des conseils centraux de la Propagation de la foi," *Missions* 12 (1872), 34-35.
[3] Elise Stolte, "Saint-Jean Professor Takes University's Top Award," *The Edmonton Journal*, 26 September 2009.
[4] "Our Grandmother the Queen gives us bread; but our Father Lacombe gives us even more because he offers us consolation." No Author, "Vicariat de Saint-Albert: Cinquante années de sacerdoce. Les noces d'or du R.P. Lacombe, O.M.I.: 25 septembre 1899." *Peel's Prairie Provinces*, n.d., < http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/7884/4.html?qid=peelbib|"Pied+de+corbeau"||score > (17 July 2009).

Appendices

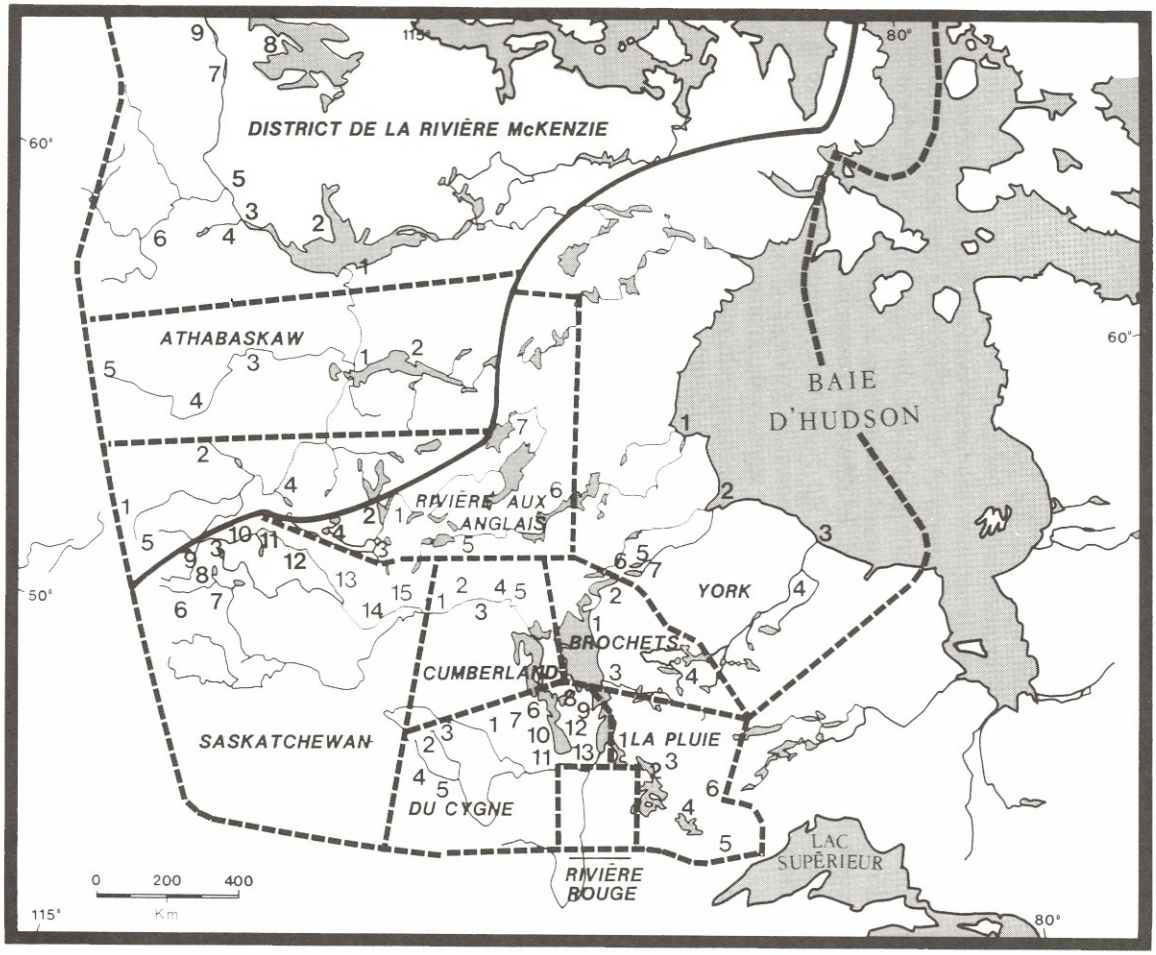
Appendix A



Le milieu physique.

Terrestrial ecozones of the North-West from left to right: prairie, boreal woodlands, boreal shield-taiga, and arctic. Source: Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission*, 60.

Appendix B



Département du Nord: les districts.

Map of the districts of the Rupert's Land Northern Department. See the following page.

Le Nord-Ouest: districts et lieux, noms des missions

Les numéros à côté des noms de lieux correspondent aux numéros sur la carte 2. L'orthographe étant encore incertaine, une seconde manière d'écrire un nom est inscrite entre parenthèses.

1. *District de la rivière McKenzie* (Mackenzie)

1. Fort Resolution (Grand-Lac-des-Esclaves), Saint-Joseph
2. Fort Raë (Rea), Saint-Michel
3. Grosse-Île (Grande-Île), Saint-Cœur-de-Marie
4. Providence
5. Fort Simpson, Sacré-Cœur-de-Jésus
6. Fort du Liard (Fort Liard), Saint-Raphaël
7. Fort Norman, Sainte-Thérèse
8. Grand-Lac-d'Ours, Saint-Cœur-de-Marie
9. Fort Good Hope, Notre-Dame-de-Bonne-Espérance

au-delà de notre carte:

10. Peel's River (Fort Anderson), Saint-Nom-de-Marie
11. Maison de la Pierre (Fort La Pierre House), Saint-Barnabé
12. Fort Youcon (Fort Yukon), Saint-Jean

2. *District d'Athabaskaw* (Athabaska ou Athabasca)

1. Fort Chippeweyan (Chipewyan), la Nativité (lac Athabaska)
2. Fond-du-Lac, Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs
3. Fort Vermillon (Fort Vermilion), Saint-Henri
4. Dunvagan (Fort Dunvagan), Saint-Charles
5. Fort Saint-Jean (Fort Saint John), Saint-Pierre

3. *District de la rivière aux Anglais*

1. Île-à-la-Crosse, Saint-Jean-Baptiste
2. Portage-La-Loche, la Visitation
3. Lac-Vert (Green Lake), Saint-Julien
4. Lac-Froid (Cold Lake), Saint-Raphaël
5. Stanley
6. Lac-Caribou, Saint-Pierre
7. Fond-du-Lac (selon TACHÉ, *Esquisse*, 62)

4. *District de la Saskatchewan* (Siskatchewan)

1. Fort Jasper, Saint-Hippolyte
2. Petit-Lac-des-Esclaves, Saint-Bernard
3. Lac-Sainte-Anne, Sainte-Anne
4. Lac-La-Biche, Notre-Dame-des-Victoires
5. Fort de la Montagne
6. Lac-aux-Tourtes (Pigeon Lake)
7. Lac-du-Bœuf (Buffalo Lake)
8. Fort Edmonton, Saint-Joachim
9. Saint-Albert
10. Victoria
11. Lac-du-Poisson-Blanc (White Fish Lake)
12. Saint-Paul-des-Cris (devenu Saint-Paul)
13. Fort Pitt
14. Fort Carlton, Saint-Laurent
15. Prince-Albert

5. *District de Cumberland*

1. Nepowewin
2. Cumberland House, Saint-Joseph
3. Le Pas
4. Lac-d'Orignal (Moose Lake)
5. Grand Rapide (Grand Rapids)

6. *District de la rivière du Cygne*

1. Fort Pellye (Fort Pelly)
2. Montagne de Tondre
3. Lac-des-Œufs
4. Lac-Qu'Appelle, Saint Florent
5. Fort Ellice
6. Rivière Platte
7. Baie des Canards (Duck Bay), Notre-Dame-du-Lac
8. Rivière de la Poule-d'eau (Waterhen)

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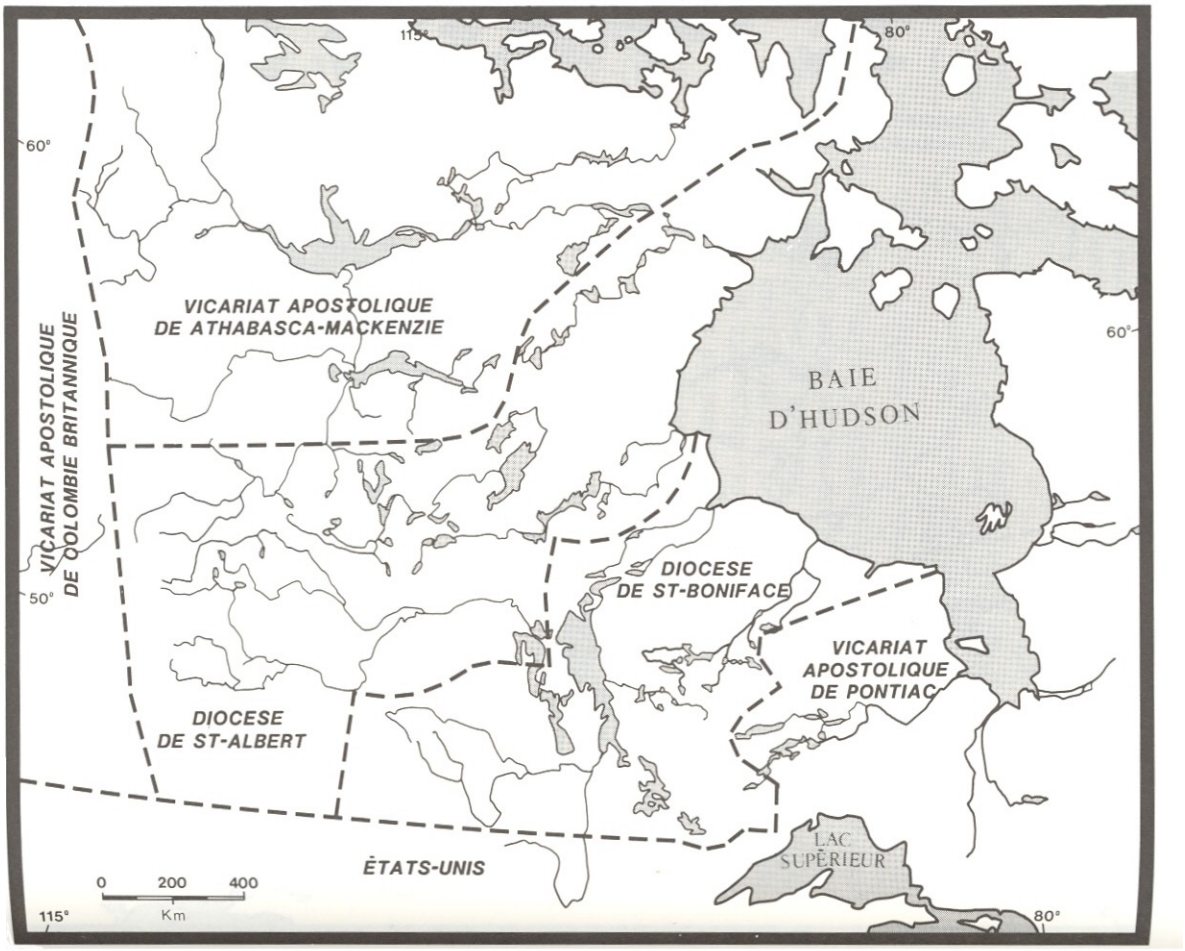
dentale, méridien de Greenwich» (TACHÉ, *Esquisse*, 1). Voir carte 1, p. 52. Un traité signé entre l'Angleterre et les États-Unis en 1818 avait fixé les frontières au 49e degré de latitude nord (cf. Adrien G. MORICE, *Histoire de l'Église catholique dans l'Ouest canadien*, 3 vol., Saint-Boniface-Montréal, 1915, 1, 155-156).

Source: Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission*, 54-55.

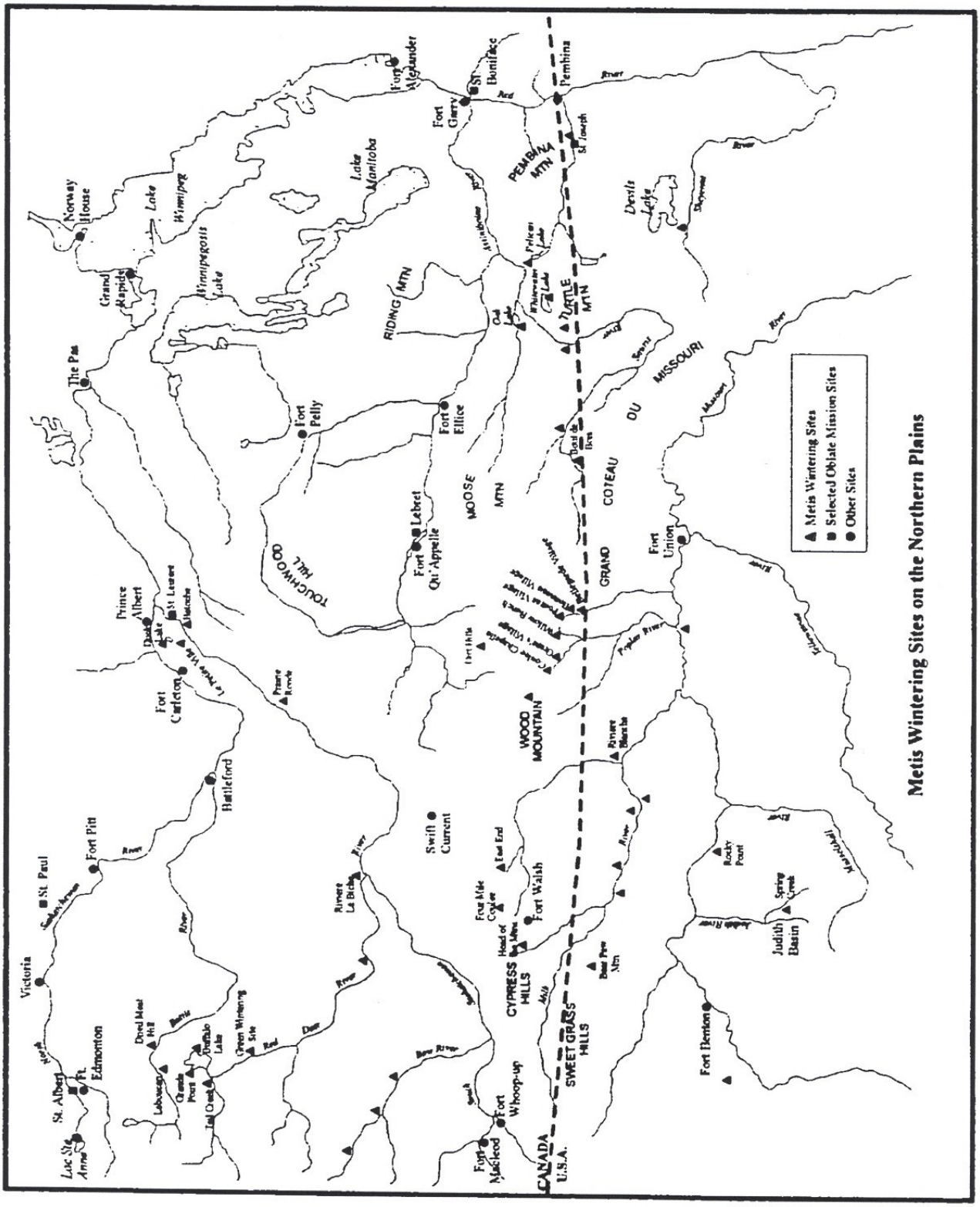
Appendix C



Le diocèse de Saint-Albert (1871)

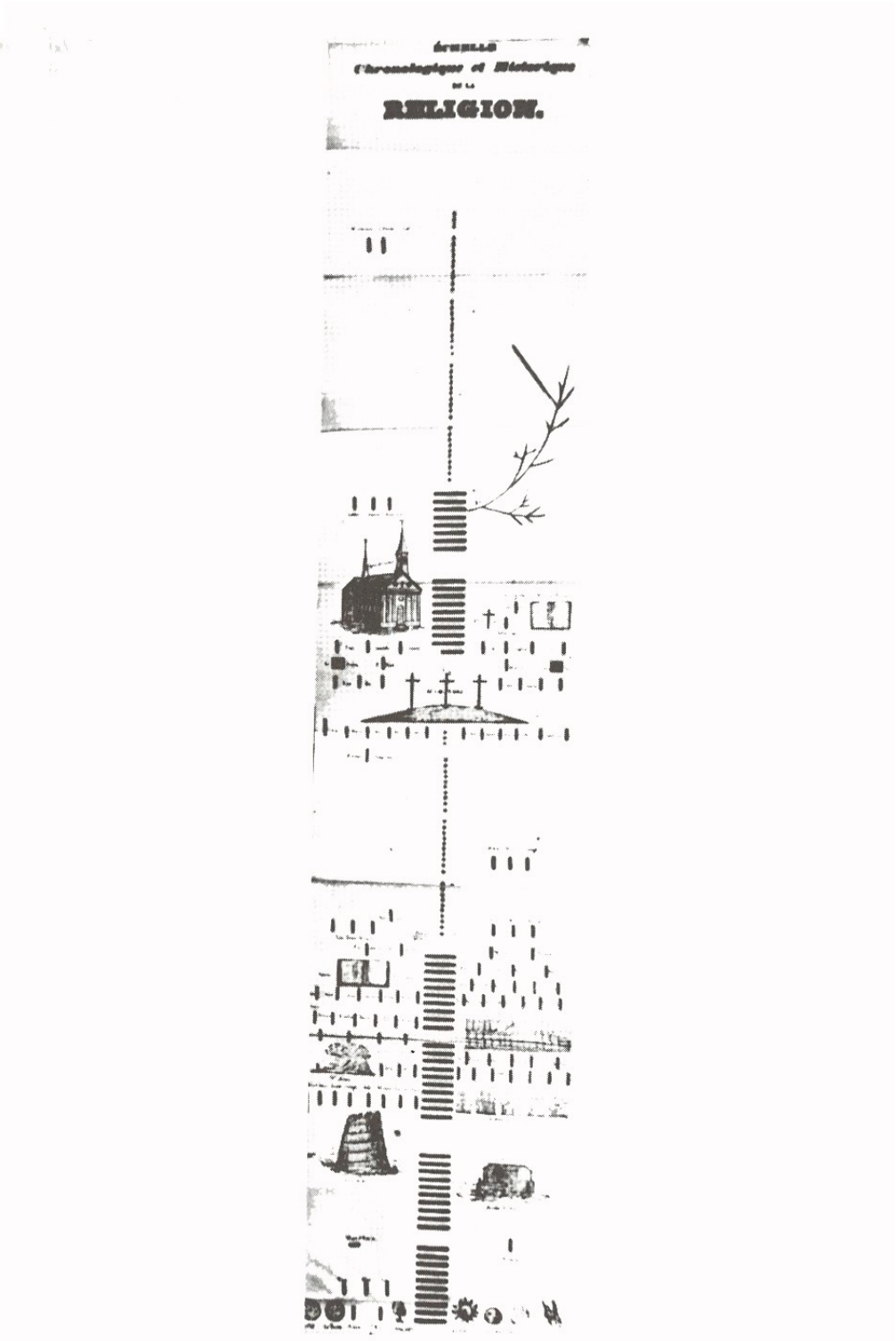
Map of Roman Catholic Ecclesiastical Divisions in 1871. Source: Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission*, 57.

Appendix D



Métis Wintering Sites on the Northern Plains from the 1840s to 1870s. Sources: Ens, *From Homeland to Hinterland*, 79.

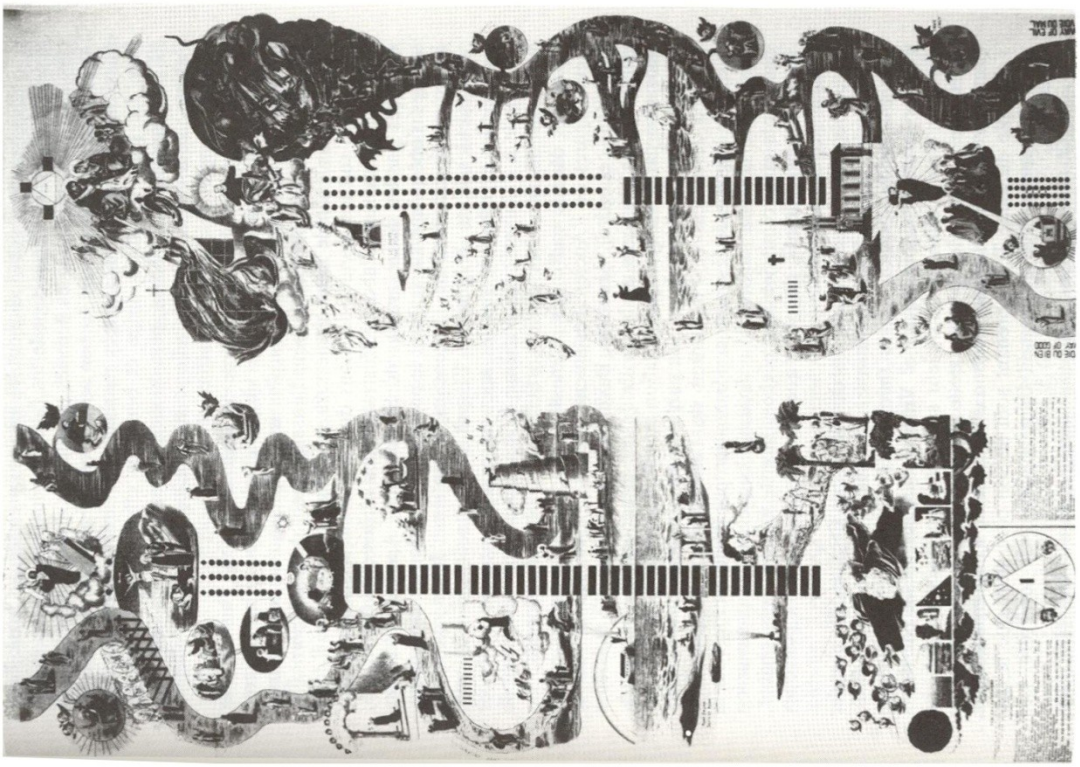
Appendix E



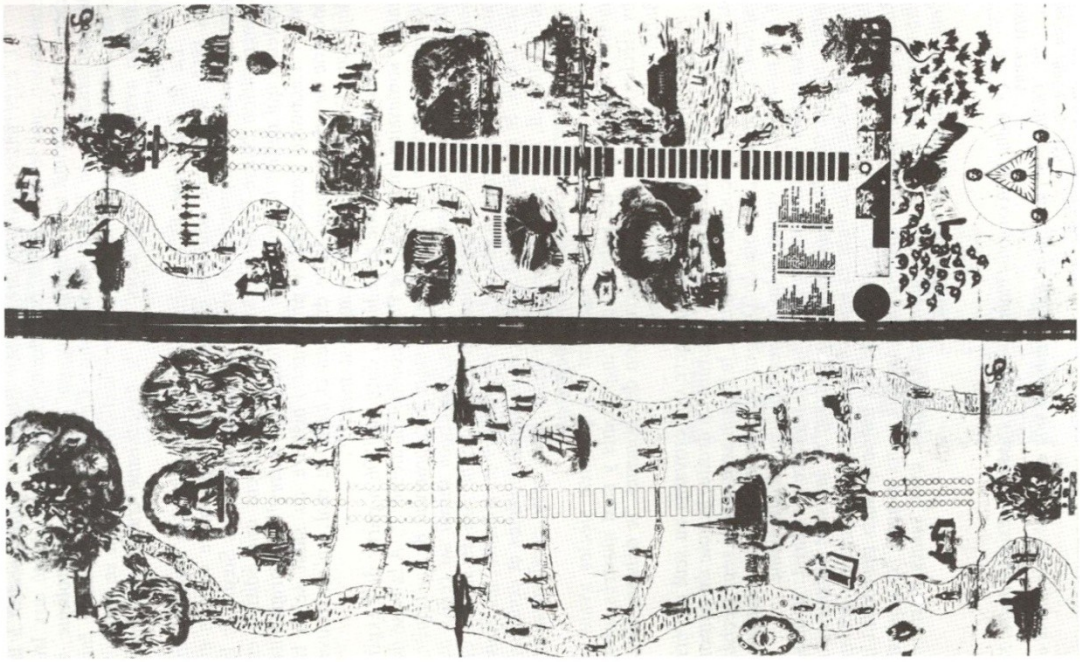
Reproduction 1: Échelle chronologique et historique de la religion de Mgr Norbert Blanchet, archevêque d'Oregon City.

Norbert Blanchet's catechism ladder. Source: Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission*, 112.

Appendix F



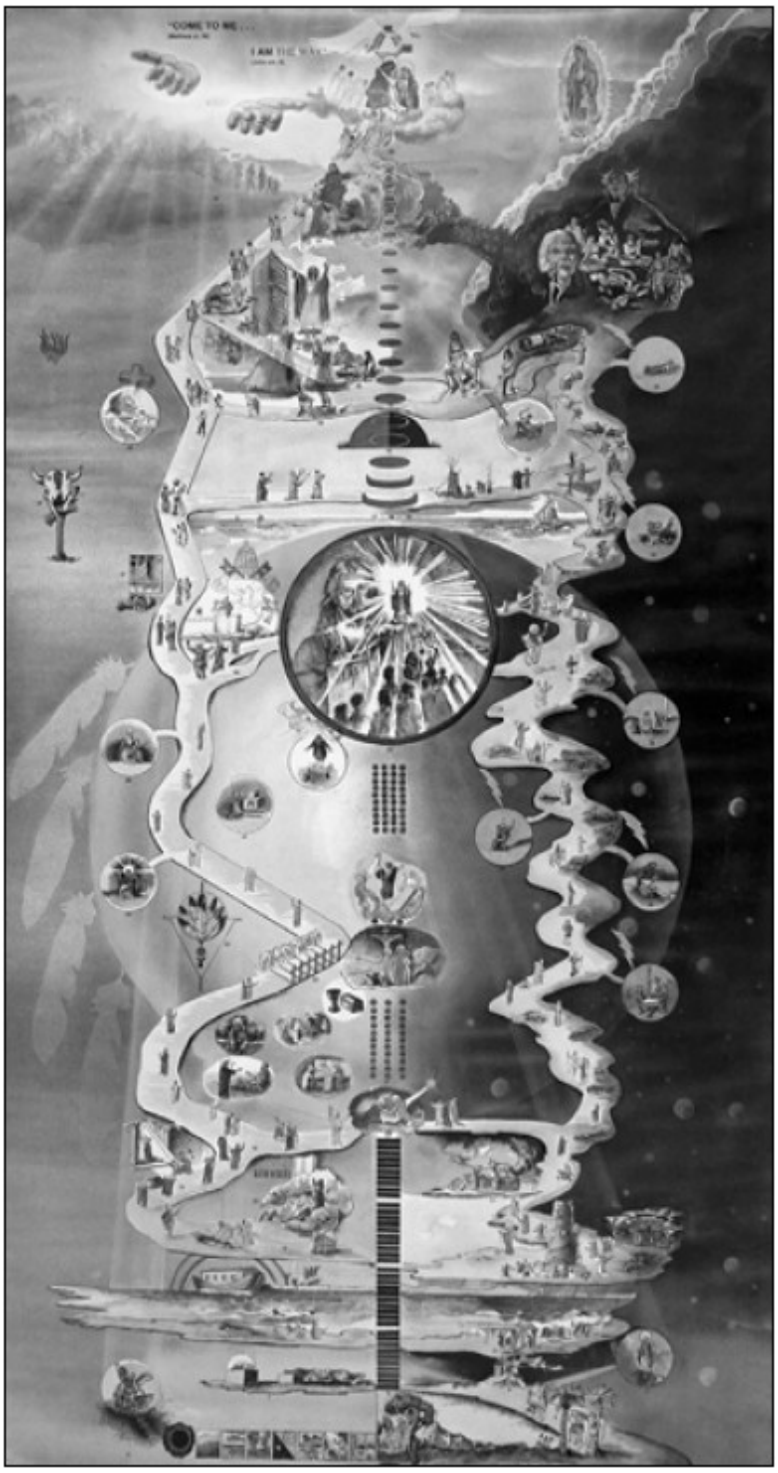
Reproduction 3 : Échelle (1896) du P. Lacombe



Reproduction 2 : Échelle en noir et blanc (1872) du P. Lacombe

Lacombe's catechism ladders. Source: Champagne, *Les débuts de la mission*, 114-115.

Appendix G



Come with me… I am the way. Maurice Goutier's catechism ladder with Standing Tall. Source: Thiel, "Catholic Ladders and Native American Evangelization," 69.

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