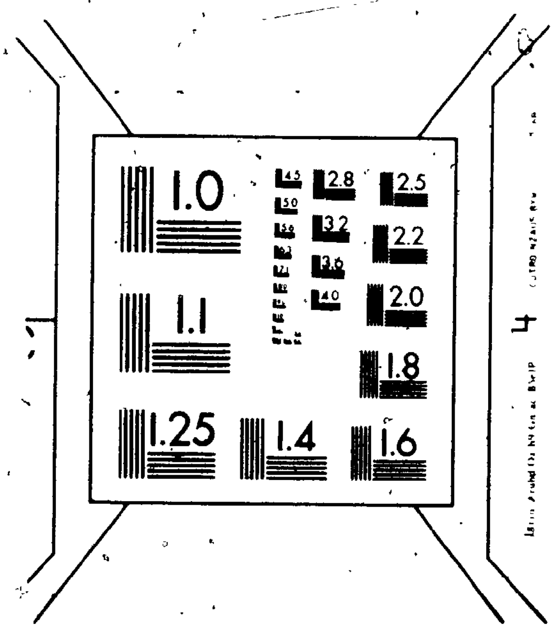
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THE CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES AS AGENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE AMONG THE METIS AND INDIANS OF RED RIVER: 1818-1845.

by

Brenda J. Gainer

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of History

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

1978

The undersigned recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies acceptance of the thesis

The Catholic Missionaries as Agents of Social Change Among the Metis and Indians of Red River: 1818-1845

submitted by Brenda Jean Gainer, B.A.,

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts.

Thesis Supervisor

Chairman, Department of History

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August 10, 1978

ABSTRACT

The historiography of the pre-1870 West generally views the Catholic missions as a factor of fundamental importance in shaping the unique culture of the French-speaking native people in the Red River area. This thesis argues that the Catholic missionaries aimed at the complete transformation of aboriginal society just as much as their Protestant counterparts. Chapter II outlines the difficulties and successes of the Lower Canadian priests in establishing missions in the Northwest. The following chapter describes their efforts to alter the economic basis of Métis and Indian culture, particularly through the introduction of settled agriculture. A fourth chapter evaluates the missionaries' success in using formal schooling as an instrument of cultural change. Finally, the moral and strictly religious aspects of missionary activity are discussed. Though the broad "civilizing" aims of the Catholic and Protestant missionaries were essentially similar, it is clear that the English-speaking and French-speaking cultures of the Northwest developed very differently. However, this study suggests that the pre-existent social and economic conditions were more important than the missionaries' beliefs in determining the responses of the various native groups to Christian civilization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Fernand Ouellet, for his valuable suggestions and comments. I am also indebted to Professor Cornelius Jaenen and Allan Greer for reading the manuscript and making suggestions for improvement. Two people must be acknowledged for the material contributions they made; Frits Pannekoek for giving me quantities of documents from Western Canadian and European archives it was impossible to visit, and Donna Gordon for many hours of typing and editing. I am also grateful to Gaston Carrière, o.m.i., for allowing me access to the material in the Archives Deschâtelets in Ottawa and to Shirlee Smith for access to the Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

ABBREVIATIONS

B.S.H.S.B.	Bulletin de la Societé Historique de Saint-Boniface, III (1913).
C.H.R.	Canadian Historical Review
MG	Manuscript Group
P.A.C.	Public Archives of Canada
RG	Record Group

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I

INTRODUCTION

Missionaries, naturally, were not the only agents of social change in the Northwest. The fur trade had brought European culture to the native people of this area centuries before Christian missionaries arrived, and had also given birth to the mixed-blood societies which were to form the focus of the early churches' efforts. In addition to fur trading posts, the establishment of an agricultural colony on the banks of the Red River exposed the native people to a different way of life than that to which they were accustomed. Both these factors — the fur trade and white settlement — had profound effects in shaping the native societies of Manitoba, and yet all too often it is the Church which is singled out as being the root cause of the unique features distinguishing one group of these people from another. The aim of this study is to examine in detail the role the Catholic missionaries played among the native people of Red River and judge the results; to determine why they came, what they intended to do, and what results they obtained. By answering these questions, it is hoped a clearer understanding will emerge as to the significance of Catholicism as a factor in shaping and determining the "national" character of the French-speaking natives of the Northwest.

Until the seventeenth century, the only inhabitants of the Northwestern plains were Indians. In the area around the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, where the missionaries were to

concentrate their efforts during their first twenty-five years in the colony, lived two tribes of the Algonkin language group, the Saulteaux and the Crees, and a few Sioux and Stoneys, from American territory or farther west. The early Catholic missionaries dealt mainly with bands of Saulteaux, when they dealt with Indians at all, and occasionally with Cree. By the beginning of the 19th century, the Saulteaux lived in an area stretching roughly from the Red River valley eastwards to Lake Superior. The Cree, on the other hand, covered the whole area of the vast plains and northern woodlands stretching from Hudson Bay west to the Rocky Mountains.[1]

As early as the seventeenth century, white European civilization had made contact with these native peoples. The English came in from Hudson Bay and the French westward from the St. Lawrence valley and the Great Lakes. And while fur traders of both these groups were to establish permanent posts and live for extended periods in the Northwest, two centuries were to pass from the first appearance of white men until "civilized" European settlement was to occur, including white women and children. By that time a large mixed-blood population, the off-spring of European fur traders and Indian women, had grown up in the Northwest.

The first colony of white settlers was established in this area early in the nineteenth century, under the auspices of Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk. He had been unable to interest the Hudson's Bay Company in his project, as naturally it was loathe to expend money or time on a venture which would harm the trade or, conceivably, work

contrary to its purposes. But in 1808 he began buying the stock of the Company in an attempt to acquire a controlling share, and eventually was able to secure a grant of land for his colony from them. The first group of his colonists left Scotland for the Red River valley in 1811, and arrived there in 1812.

While the Hudson's Bay Company had been indifferent to this colonizing venture, the North West Company was entirely hostile, for they thought the establishment of the colony was contrary to their economic interests. They set out to destroy the settlement, and to this end encouraged the Métis to strike against the colony to protect their territorial rights. The end result of this agitation, the Seven Oaks Massacre,[2] did not destroy the colony, however. Selkirk arranged to have military assistance sent to the area to solve the immediate problems posed by the Nor'westers and the Métis; discharged soldiers from the de Wattville and de Meurons regiments were engaged in Canada to restore peace to the colony in the Northwest. Selkirk also took steps towards "taming" the Métis through the introduction of Catholic priests from Lower Canada.

The first priests arrived in the settlement at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in 1818, and immediately assumed what Elizabeth Graham has designated as a "plural" role among the Métis and a certain number of Saulteaux in the area. Not only did these ministers labour to convert people to Christianity; they also assumed a cultural and social role among these more primitive societies. As well as

conducting catechism classes and masses, they taught reading, farming, morality and simple technical skills. Although the native people of the Northwest had been exposed to Western culture for a considerable period of time and many of them, of course, had one parent from a white "civilized" society, they had never been exposed to such a concerted effort to teach them new modes of belief and behaviour as the missionaries were to provide.

The missionaries presented the native people with new social patterns; some of these patterns were accepted and others rejected. What the missionaries chose to teach the native societies, and what those societies chose to adopt, forms the basis of the following study. It is a common belief among historians of the pre-1870 West that the Métis (and some Indians) had evolved a unique "national" society. The extent to which this society was shaped by Canadian Catholic missionaries is not a matter of agreement, however.

G.F.G. Stanley, in his book The Birth of Western Canada, has characterized the western half-breed and Indian societies who rebelled in 1870 as essentially primitive, and has accused those authors who view those societies as essentially French Canadian and Catholic of projecting "the prejudices of Old Canada" to their study of the Northwest.[3] The historiography of the western Métis and Indians who came into conflict with white society was originally written by historians doing just that, whether dealing specifically with the 1870 conflagration or considering native society generally in the pre-1870 period.

This type of work can be roughly divided into two groups: the "clerical" and the "secular". The former is largely written by priests, such as J.E. Champagne, G. Dugas and A.G. Morice, and seeks, by assuming that what the priests in Red River said they did was what in fact they accomplished, to prove that the Catholic clergy became the respected and revered leaders of the French-speaking native peoples and shaped them into a French Canadian Catholic society by sowing the first seeds of civilization among them. These writers often labour over the enormous difficulties these brutal heathen societies presented to the missionaries, and while they may differ as to the degree of success the missionaries achieved, usually are agreed the Catholic priests were responsible for whatever degree of civilization the French half-breeds and Indians possessed.[4]

The "secular" historians are generally more scholarly and critical of their sources, and are not writing to glorify the work of the Catholic church. Among this group is found the work of A.S. Morton, Harvey Golden, and Marcel Giraud. Nevertheless, this group, like the other, views the society of the French Métis and Indians as being essentially similar to that of Quebec, in that it was both Catholic and "civilized", and attributes their civilized state to the work of the Catholic church among them.[5]

The above interpretations of the native societies of the Northwest all came about as a result of an interpretation of the

rebellion of 1870 as a struggle between French Catholics and English Protestants, and when G.F.G. Stanley introduced his "frontier" interpretation of the rebellion, he also paved the way to studying the native societies which developed in the Northwest in a different way. W.L. Morton, accepting Stanley's portrayal of the Métis as a primitive people unable to make the transition to the new order coming in from Ontario, studied Red River agriculture and the economy of the colony and concluded that the buffalo hunt and the nomadic social structure it bred continued to be so important as a feature of Métis society because the economy could not function if based solely on agricultural production. While Morton agrees that the Métis continued to live a nomadic life based on the buffalo hunt throughout the nineteenth century, he also agrees with the earlier historians, particularly Giraud, that the Métis "...came to regard the mission churches and chapels among them as fixed centres in their still semi-nomadic life".[6] In fact, Morton goes farther and argues that despite the fact that the half-breeds can be considered a primitive people before 1870, subject to the ever active influence of the fur trade and the plains towards barbarism, "it is in the work of the missionaries ...that the principal reason is to be found for the successful maintenance of civilization in Red River."[7]

This seemingly contradictory position is further complicated by one of Morton's students, Frits Pannekoek, who takes the work of Stanley, Morton and a recent thesis by John Foster which emphasizes

cultural distinctions between the Country-born* and the Métis and concludes that while the French half-breeds did in fact remain "primitive", the English half-breeds adopted "civilization" as taught by the missionaries much more readily. Pannekoek extends this argument even further by then making the assumption that this observable difference can be attributed to the fact that the English Protestant ministers were more intent on teaching Western civilization to their charges than the more spiritually-minded Catholics.[8]

In essence what Pannekoek has done is to take the revisions of Stanley and Morton about the essential features of the social groups which rebelled in the Northwest and fuse them with the original idea of the rebellion as a conflict of a French and Catholic society against an English and Protestant force. In doing this Pannekoek has relied on assumptions about Catholic missionary work popularized earlier by Lanctôt and re-issued more recently by Jaenen, who argue that Canadian Catholic missionaries tended to be cultural relativists.[9] Pannekoek feels that this approach is in direct contrast to that of the Protestant clergymen who were not content to simply modify the native societies but wished to change them completely.[10] This assumption about the different approaches by French and English

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* In much of the literature on the Northwest, no distinction is made between the English-speaking half-breeds and the French. The word Métis is often used, inaccurately, to refer to both groups. Therefore, John Foster has decided to popularize the term "Country-born" (a term used by the fur traders themselves) to refer to the half-breeds of British origin, reserving the term "Métis" for the French-speaking half-breeds alone. These terms have been used in the same sense here.

missionaries to native societies has not been examined carefully enough in Canadian religious historiography, as Lewis Saum has attempted to do in his study of the myths pertaining to French and English fur traders in the Northwestern United States. Saum finds this myth of different approaches by French and English traders to native societies to be illusory.[11] In addition, it seems that Pannekoek, while accepting Foster's dramatic characterization of the differences between English and French native societies in the Northwest, has ignored Foster's emphasis on fur trade conditions (which preceded mission work) as being at the root of these separate cultural traditions.[12]

In the context of the above, the problem this study deals with is twofold. First of all, an attempt is made to look at the missionaries' goals and ambitions in the Northwest. Traditionally there existed two different approaches to native societies among Catholic missionaries. Primarily among the Dominican and Franciscan orders there existed a tendency to break down native culture entirely, and replace it with European Catholic behaviour. Among the Jesuit missionaries in 17th century Canada, however, a tradition of cultural relativism existed. The Jesuits, as Jaenen explains in a recent book on cultural contact, "...made concessions to existing customs and sought to link indigenous beliefs and morals to Christian principles"; they "...attempted to reshape and reorient existing native practices and beliefs with a view to facilitating conversion and to ensuring

subsequent fidelity". Jaenen continues by emphasizing that "contrary to the accusation that they expected less than others of their converts, it can be said that they accepted more than did other missionaries".[13] To some extent, this tradition among certain Catholic missionaries was the attitude the early missionaries to the Northwest adopted to their work. The missionaries tolerated nomadism and learned native languages in order to spread their Christian message, but it cannot be emphasized too strongly that their central aim was to build a new society in the Northwest, and that their ideal society was very different from the native cultures which already existed there.

In addition to this Catholic missionary tradition of cultural relativism, the priests were undoubtedly able to tolerate certain aspects of Red River society which did not conform to their ideal because Red River society in many ways was similar to the Lower Canadian society they had come from. Fernand Ouellet has recently demonstrated the dual nature of the rural French Canadian economy in this period, which was characterized by a heavy involvement in the fur trade and the seasonal absences which accompanied it.[14] While the priests may not have applauded these absences, they were forced to tolerate these conditions because the fur trade was so important to the Lower Canadian economy. The same type of situation existed in Red River, of course, except that the fur trade and the buffalo hunt were even more vital to the economy than agriculture. Therefore, while the priests may have wished to introduce an agricultural life

and establish rural churches supported by a peasant community, this ideal was even farther removed from reality than it was in Lower Canada. The priests found that the only way to gain the support of the native peoples of Red River for the Catholic church was to adapt its structure to the realities of a nomadic society and a non-agricultural economy. They only tolerated native behaviour of which they fundamentally disapproved, however, in the belief that they would ultimately be able to change it.

After examining the priests' actions and ambitions, some effort is made to evaluate the results of their work in the Northwest; whether they were able to change the native societies, and if so, in what areas and to what extent. These questions would be best answered through a quantitative study, which could offer some answers to the question of how widespread any observable changes in the social behaviour of the Métis and Indians were. However, while some attempt has been made to use the Red River censuses to provide material of this nature, in general such sources do not exist. The diocesan and parish records which would have given information about Christian baptisms, marriages and funerals, as well as material about literacy, were lost in 1860 when St. Boniface Cathedral was destroyed by fire. Therefore the major source used for this study was the accounts of their work written by the missionaries themselves. While the letters the priests wrote about their missions do not give much information about the numbers of converts, they are a rich source for studying the problems and

opposition that the missionaries encountered, as well as their own evaluation of their success or failure. In the later years reports were published in the dioceses of Montreal and Quebec about their respective missions, and these reports often do contain information about how many Indians converted. However, even this material is incomplete and difficult to assess in a study of this nature since the Indian population base is unknown. Nonetheless, the reports do provide a great deal of insight into the early Indian missions.

One problem which occurrs with the published letters and reports is that the former are written largely by the Bishop (and a few by Sévère Dumoulin), and the latter almost exclusively by Georges-Antoine Belcourt. Material written by the other priests which would round out the picture is usually lost or inaccessible. In any event, provided the biases of these men in their approach to mission work are recognized, the records they left form a fairly complete account of the early years of the Catholic mission in the Red River area. During the later period, when the Oblate fathers took over the missions from the Lower Canadian priests, a wealth of material was generated which still is preserved in the Archives Deschâtelets and various diocesan archives in Quebec. This material has not been used to any significant extent here, since the Oblate missions have been studied extensively elsewhere.[15]

In general, no attempt is made here to first reconstruct the native societies and then measure acculturation by the techniques of

anthropology. There is a dearth of historical sources from which to do this, and this study concentrates on historical material. Secondly and more importantly, the Indian societies in the area (Cree and Saulteaux) had been in contact with western European culture for centuries before the Catholic missionaries arrived, and the Métis and Country-born had only recently appeared as distinct cultural groups in the Northwest. Therefore, all these native societies were constantly changing regardless of the missionaries' influence and defy description as a static culture. While one can speak casually of the "traditional" behaviour of any of these groups, this term must not be taken to imply pre-contact behaviour in any sense. This study does not attempt to measure the social changes any of these groups experienced; instead it simply attempts to investigate the role the Catholic missionaries played in contributing to social change among them.

NOTES

[1] Diamond Jenness, The Indians of Canada, National Museum of Canada, Bulletin 65, Anthropological Series No. 15 (Sixth edition; Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1963), pp. 277, 283, 284.

[2] W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), pp. 51-55.

[3] George F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), p. vii.

[4] See the works of Joseph-Etienne Champagne, Georges Dugas, Antoine d'Eschambault, Donatien Frémont, A.G. Morice, David Roy and Albert Tessier. L.A. Prud'homme, though not a priest, must definitely be included in this list of hagiographers.

[5] See the works of Marcel Giraud, Harvey Golden and A.S. Morton.

[6] W.L. Morton, Manitoba, p. 62.

[7] Ibid., p. 73.

[8] Frits Pannekoek, "The Churches and the Social Structure in the Red River Area 1818-1870" (unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Queen's University, 1973), p. 20.

[9] Gustave Lanctôt, "Aperçu des premiers peuplements de l'Ouest", Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, XLVIII, sec. 1 (1954), 14. Cornelius J. Jaenen, Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1976), pp. 50-51.

[10] Pannekoek, "The Churches and the Social Structure", pp. 19-23.

[11] Lewis O. Saum, The Fur Trader and the Indian (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), passim, chap. IV.

[12] John E. Foster, "The Country-born in the Red River Settlement, 1820-1850" (unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1972), pp. 5-8.

[13] Jaenen, Friend and Foe, pp. 50-51.

[14] See Fernand Ouellet, "Dualité économique et changement technologique au Québec (1760-1790)", Histoire Sociale — Social History, IX, no. 18 (November, 1976), 256-296.

[15] See Gaston Carrière, "L'Honorable Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson et les missions des Oblats 1844-1861", Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa, XXV (juillet - septembre, 1955), 330-364, and "Méthodes et réalisations missionnaires des Oblats dans l'est du Canada (1841-1861)", Etudes Oblats, XVI (no. 1), 37-65.

II

MISSIONS AND MISSIONARIES: 1818-1845

Before 1815, life in the Northwest was dominated by one agent of European "civilization", the fur trade. In the early years of the 19th century, however, conditions in the Red River area suddenly altered, as settlers arrived to tackle the land and clergymen appeared to grapple with the people. The first missionaries who arrived in Red River were Catholic priests from Lower Canada who took up residence near Selkirk's settlement at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. It was not the absence of white settlement which had delayed the establishment of missions however. The ideas prevalent in the seventeenth century in French Canada of converting the heathen to Catholicism did not die in the eighteenth century or even after the conquest. After 1760, it simply become impossible to put them into practice. Because of British suspicion of the expansion of the Lower Canadian Catholic church, as well as the Church's own recruitment difficulties in a limited population, the Catholic church of Canada had neither the resources nor the freedom to expand into the Northwest to work with either the heathen Indians or the nominally Catholic half-breed offspring of Canadian fur trading activity.

In the 1810s, however, a number of circumstances coincided which made this expansion possible. When Lord Selkirk offered both the political connections to make the British government agreeable, and the financial aid to make the mission possible, the Bishop of Quebec, Joseph Octave Plessis, agreed to send Canadian priests to Red River.

The fact that a group of people existed in the Northwest, already both "Canadian" and "Catholic", meant that the idea of the new mission to win back lost souls also met with a certain amount of support among other Catholics not so personally interested in extending the Church's authority and power.

While the heathen Indians, who had never experienced the benefits of civilization, and the Canadian voyageurs, who had only to receive priests to return to Christian ways of living, were both to receive the attention of the priests, it was the Métis people who were to become the focus of the mission. These people wandered over much of the plains area, but had already begun to form settlements in various spots along the banks of the Red, Assiniboine, and Pembina Rivers.[1] They had evolved a particular way of life founded on their dual cultural tradition of both Indian and French heritage. Central to this tradition was the buffalo hunt, which, far from being simply an economic activity, was the embodiment of what they considered to be their "national" identity. The Country-born led a different way of life, founded on their own tradition and experience within the fur trade. Foster points out that the Country-born were subjected to much more diversity of activity and permanency of settlement around the Hudson's Bay Company's posts than the Métis ever were by the North West Company, and were therefore a pliable group for a European missionary intent on acculturation as well as conversion.[2] The Métis, however, would pose a difficult problem for

such a missionary. While their settlement was widespread, there were at least enough Métis settlements in the general area of the Forks to afford the missionary easy access to his subjects. Nonetheless, his potential converts were wedded to a way of life which drew them off into the plain, away from his care, at least twice a year. Even when the missionary adapted himself to follow his flock, he was fighting merely to teach the rudiments of Catholic religion. Ideas of agriculture, industry, and material well-being would be difficult to impose on a group with no previous experience of such a way of life.

The nomadic life based on the hunt was not attributable merely to the Métis' Indian heritage however, but to a tradition which grew out of the bands of "freemen" who traversed the plains. These voyageurs, once released from the employ of the North West Company, lived apart from both the posts and the Indians, but raised their mixed-blood children conscious of an allegiance to both.[3] Therefore, suspicious of the threat agriculture posed to their economic staple and loyal to the North West Company in its struggle against the Hudson's Bay Company, the Métis tried to break up Lord Selkirk's nascent colony in 1815 and 1816.[4] This action led Selkirk to invite the Canadian priests to come and convert and "tame" this Métis threat to his new settlement.[5]

Nonetheless, it was not the Massacre of Seven Oaks alone which caused Selkirk to extend his invitation to the priests. Before the Métis took direct action on behalf of the North West Company to destroy Selkirk's colony, and clergymen came to be considered agents of law and

order and "civilization" among the native people of the Northwest, Selkirk had decided that priests would be necessary to his colonists. At the very outset of his colonizing venture, a Catholic priest from Ireland was included in the group destined for Red River, though he never made it any further than York Factory before abandoning the group.[6] In 1813, Robert Semple, later Governor of the colony, was writing to Selkirk of "...the infinite service both Moral and Political..." a Catholic priest would be to the Canadian freemen, although he personally favoured the establishment of a Protestant mission first.[7] Governor Miles Macdonnell, reporting to Selkirk only a year later, stressed that a mission was not needed so much for spiritual reasons as political ones — the governor admitted that his free grants of land to the supporters of the North West Company threatening the colony would have little effect in changing their way of life, but felt that a French-speaking priest would.[8]

When the massacre two years later finally prompted Selkirk to act to obtain Canadian priests to ensure his colony's survival, he found that Macdonnell had already contacted Bishop Plessis of Quebec about the possibility of sending priests from Canada to establish a permanent mission in the Red River colony. Plessis had agreed to send two priests on an exploratory venture to the Lake Superior-Rainy Lake region, where there were reportedly many "lost" voyageurs in the employ of the North West Company, but Selkirk urged him to establish instead a permanent mission at Red River to minister not only to the employees of the Company

and the colonists, but also to the great numbers of roving freemen and half-breeds there.[9] Plessis agreed to send a priest to the area, but only on a travelling mission to determine the feasibility of a permanent mission.[10]

Grace Lee Nute has made much of Plessis' desire to erect Quebec into an archbishopric as a motive for his willing accession to Selkirk's plans for a permanent mission in the Northwest. She argues that Plessis thought a Red River mission would be too far distant to be easily administered from Quebec, and that the creation of parishes scattered over a large territory, established with the approval of the British government, would eventually lead the British government to approve the creation of several bishoprics and hence an archbishopric of Quebec.[11] While this was in fact the end result of the spread of the Lower Canadian church and the creation of new ecclesiastical divisions, the same goal could have been accomplished by the relatively self-sufficient organizations in the Atlantic area and Upper Canada. The missions in the West did not add to the power or the prestige of the Church in Lower Canada, and in fact were nothing but a constant drain on both its human and financial resources. It seems more likely that Plessis was truly moved by Christian concern for lost souls — this interest in evangelization, so strong in England at the time, was not limited only to Protestant sects. The Catholic church of Lower Canada had already established enough missions among Indians in the North to realize that working with these "heathens" did not lead to masses of Christian converts ready to establish an

independent organization but rather to years of costly and largely non-productive labour on the part of Canadian priests.[12]

Pierre-Antoine Tabeau, the priest Plessis had sent to evaluate Red River as a site for a permanent mission, painted a pessimistic picture, but the Bishop overrode his objections. Selkirk provided material support in the form of free transportation for the priests and a grant of land to sustain them. Plessis also started a subscription in Lower Canada to build a chapel and a house for the missionaries, which was generously supported by both Catholics and Protestants, including the Lieutenant Governor of Lower Canada. A petition carried by Samuel Gale to Bishop Plessis, representing the desire of the Bois-brûlés themselves to receive priests from Canada, seemed to guarantee spiritual success as well as material support, and Plessis therefore set about choosing candidates for the mission.[13]

Joseph-Norbert Provencher, the curé of Kamouraska, was approached to lead the group, and although he first demurred, claiming both spiritual weakness and physical incapacity as reasons for choosing another, he eventually agreed to undertake the task and travelled in the spring of 1818 to Montreal to prepare for his voyage. There he met with Sévère Dumoulin, another priest, and Guillaume Edge, a young sub-deacon, whom Plessis had selected to go with him to work in Red River. Early in May they set out from Montreal.

Selkirk had arranged for the missionaries to be accompanied by Captain de Lorimier, to protect them from hostile voyageurs of the North

West Company and their allied Indians. Obviously relations were extremely hostile between the two companies since Selkirk was fearful of the safety of the three Canadian clergymen if they were travelling in the Hudson's Bay Company's canoes. Nonetheless, Selkirk did not intend the priests to join the side of the Hudson's Bay Company in the struggle, but rather to maintain strict neutrality between the two. Plessis also stressed the importance of political neutrality in the missionaries' instructions and authorization. After a disagreement with Selkirk over whether the missionaries should stop at Rainy Lake to do a mission en route or go directly to Red River, he admonished Selkirk that "...le salut des âmes est leur premier objet et que toute consideration temporelle doit être subordonnée à celle-là".[14]

This exchange was typical of a pattern which became established in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Hudson's Bay Company. While most of the time they worked in co-operation and harmony to achieve mutual goals, the Church would occasionally defy directives of the Company which they felt would be detrimental to the spiritual welfare of their flocks, and would then bear the brunt of the Company's displeasure, expressed through threats or withholding of supplies or credit, until relations were smooth again. The issue of the disbandment of the settlement and missions at Pembina (discussed later) was one such incident which demonstrated the sharp divisions between the priests and company officials.

The priests' original plan had been to establish one residence in

the area, at the Forks, in keeping with the wishes of both Lord Selkirk and their own Bishop. After they arrived in August, 1818, they were housed in a building within the fort while planning the construction of a chapel and their own house on the opposite side of the river. Though construction proceeded slowly, due to shortages of workers, tools and materials,[15] the work of conversion began and was immediately successful. Within several days of their arrival the priests were preparing children for baptism and women for both baptism and marriage, and had already baptized seventy-two children, including one Saulteaux child.[16]

Within a month of their arrival in Red River, the priests realized that construction difficulties were to be the least of their worries. Despite the fact that even Company officials noticed the initial success of the mission,[17] Provencher was soon complaining of the difficulties involved in working with the native population. The Indians, he said, were impossible to convert because of the language barrier and their wandering life. Yet they needed conversion because they had fallen to the depths of sin as a result of contact with the white population, who were, according to Provencher, living a life of libertinage and sin. The Bois-brûlés had no idea of religion either, and their instruction was almost as difficult as that of the Indians because of their similar nomadic life.[18]

Provencher's summary of the obstacles in the way of large scale conversion was a preview of the pattern the mission was to follow in the colony. The Indians were largely left to their fate at first, since the

mission did not have priests who spoke the Indian languages for the next twenty years. In any event, there was enough work for the priests who were in the area at any given time just among the whites and the Métis. Even so, these people presented two separate problems, and two distinct styles of missionary work had to be undertaken to convert them. The white Catholic settlers (twenty Canadian families who had arrived with the priests, the remnants of the de Meurons, and a few men released from the service of the North West Company who had settled down to an agricultural existence) required the establishment of a church and the formation of a parish in the Lower Canadian style in the midst of their settlement. Yet the Métis, who did not live in one fixed location, required the development of an ambulatory — or at least widespread — type of mission work. These two approaches to the work of the mission, which often conflicted in later years, were established within a month of the arrival of the priests. Provencher stayed at the Forks to build the chapel, and Dumoulin followed the Métis to Pembina for the winter.

It was natural that Dumoulin should have been the one to follow the people to isolated settlements, for, from the moment of his arrival, he had taken a special interest in the problems of conversion outside of the main settlement. He wrote to Plessis about his concern for the Indians and the impossibility of their conversion due to language problems, the lack of concentrated settlement, and liquor. The answer to these problems, he felt, lay in the building of churches and villages near their assembly points. A mission at Pembina would fulfill this

function, for he anticipated having Indians in that neighbourhood during the winter of 1818-1819. He also hoped to take advantage of the opportunity to learn their languages.[19] Despite these hopes, however, the mission he founded at Pembina was always to be primarily concerned with the Métis.

After grasshoppers destroyed the crops in Red River in August, 1818, the starving Métis were forced to move down to Pembina because of the better growing climate and, more importantly, the proximity of the buffalo herds. Both Dumoulin and Edge followed, to help the Métis establish a permanent community there. Soon both priests were instructing the Métis, and a house, a chapel, and a school were built, though never completely finished.[20] Dumoulin recalled later that he was "...le conseiller, le père et le juge. Ce monsieur s'aquit l'estime et la vénération de tout le monde".[21] The fact that Dumoulin truly became the beloved leader of the people at Pembina was corroborated by other observers (Company officials, as well as Provencher). It was small wonder that when the Company forced his community to disband in 1823, Dumoulin's disappointment led him to leave the entire missionary field and return to Lower Canada.

Meanwhile, Provencher had been active at the Forks. His letters reported increasing numbers of baptisms and people under instruction, as well as several missionary ventures afield. As his flock expanded though, the number of problems increased. He made constant inquiries to the Bishop of Quebec regarding ecclesiastical decisions. It was many months

before an answer could be expected of course, and this often handicapped the priests who wished to perform baptisms and marriages as soon as possible. Provencher suggested to Plessis that on his trip to Europe to obtain bulls for new Bishops in Canada he should try to get very wide powers for the Bishop of Red River, and also try to get Papal permission to marry Catholics and Protestants, and people whose kinship normally barred them from marriage.[22]

Although Provencher and Dumoulin gave most of their attention to these two fixed establishments, they did not entirely neglect the people outside of Pembina and the Forks. In the winter of 1819 Provencher travelled down to Pembina to visit Dumoulin and Edge and then later visited the Souris River and the Qu'Appelle River. He also planned to journey to the fort at Lake Winnipeg but cancelled the trip as it seemed useless and the people needed him at the Forks. Dumoulin travelled the same year to Rainy Lake, leaving Edge to manage affairs at Pembina. It was a difficult task for two priests and a sub-deacon to deal with such a vast area, and the news that another priest and a deacon were to arrive in the colony in 1820 must have been welcome.

Provencher saw in the expansion of his forces the hopes for expanding his congregation, and wrote to Quebec requesting that both the newcomers be able to speak English. He also proposed to send one of them to Lac aux Deux Montagnes to study the Indian dialects. These skills were to prove unnecessary though, for as soon as the new priest, Thomas-Ferruce Picard (Destroismaisons), and the new deacon, Joseph

Sauvé (Sauvez), arrived at Red River, Provencher and Edge, who was by this time unwilling and unsuited to stay on in the mission, left for Canada. The same number of ministers was left to carry on with the same problems — a vast area to cover with few permanent settlements, a congregation with little knowledge of (and even less concern for) Catholic religion and morals, and no episcopal jurisdiction immediately available.

The latter problem was soon remedied, however. The same year that Provencher went back to Canada, Plessis returned from a trip to Europe, where he had gone in 1819 to obtain the division of his diocese. Provencher and Jean Jacques Lartigue of Montreal were both recognized as Bishops by Rome in 1820, but Provencher refused to open the bulls and accept this new position. Instead he wrote to Plessis that he felt himself incapable of assuming such authority, and that he preferred to remain in Canada as curé of Yamachiche and have another chosen for the bishopric. He was also worried that the establishment of a bishopric in the Northwest, regardless of who filled the position, would be opposed by the North West Company which naturally objected to the spread of missionaries and their accompaniments, permanent settlement and "civilization", among the Indians who trapped for that company.[23] When this problem was solved by the union of the two companies in 1821, Provencher finally accepted his nomination. He was consecrated as the Bishop of Juliopolis* a year later, on May 12, 1822, in the parish church of Three

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* Provencher became the Bishop of Juliopolis in partibus infidelium in 1822, and Bishop of St. Boniface in 1845.

Rivers.[24] In August of the same year he returned to his diocese, taking a young sub-deacon, Jean Harper, with him. Harper's arrival did little to add to his forces in Red River, however, for as soon as they arrived Sauvé left to go back to Canada.

Despite the fact that his formerly hostile relationship with the North West Company was no longer a problem, Provencher returned to do battle instead with the Hudson's Bay Company over the matter of the mission at Pembina. Dumoulin had met with great success in this area. While first Edge and then Sauvé had busied themselves giving schooling to the Métis children, Dumoulin had built a chapel, house and school and performed dozens of baptisms and marriages. While initially there was some concern on Provencher's part that the subscribers in Canada had intended to support only one mission at the Forks, the fact that the mission at Pembina met with much greater success than the main one soon won the Bishop over to full support for the cause of a permanent mission there. After only half a year at Pembina, Dumoulin could boast of 150 penitents, compared to only 50 or 60 converts the Bishop had made at the Forks.[25] As well as being more willing to receive the ministrations of the priests, the Pembina people also showed themselves more willing to give material support to a permanent establishment when a subscription was started for a building fund. Dumoulin compared the two missions thus: "I think that this subscription will come to nearly £350; already it amounts to $1,229 and that from scarcely forty men (heads of families), while at the Forks the settlers furnished hardly seven coins. The secret of the

matter is that the latter were sure of having a priest, and mine are doing it in order that they may be assured of having one".[26]

It was this tendency towards permanency that annoyed the Company, however, particularly since Pembina lay within American territory. Although Lord Selkirk had been in favour of the "civilizing" influence of the missionaries on the Indians and Métis, the tolerance of the Company diminished after his death. A company whose sole activity was the fur trade could hardly be expected to encourage permanent settlement and agricultural pursuits for the people who supplied them with furs. The Company, therefore, was very loathe to see the missionaries spread out from the main settlement at the Forks. Secondly, they had no desire to take responsibility for a settlement so far from the bounds of law and order, particularly if it was in the United States. They preferred the settlers to move to an area under the close control of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The decision regarding Pembina was taken in 1822, and it was decided to abandon the trading post and the fort there. John Halkett, the executor of the Selkirk estate, wrote to Provencher requesting that the Roman Catholic mission also take steps to abandon their establishment.[27] This Provencher was understandably reluctant to do, since the mission had been so successful in achieving conversions. However, the mission was desperately poor — in 1821 the building program had been abandoned due to lack of funds,[28] meat was scarce during the winter of 1822-1823, and the Company increased the hardship by elevating the prices of its

goods and threatening to withhold them altogether the following year.[29] The Sioux were also threatening the hunters from Pembina and consequently the Métis had to go to the plains in very large numbers for safety. This practice left the Pembina settlement almost completely deserted at times, and so, in 1822, Dumoulin began to follow the Métis out to the plains.[30]

Nevertheless, Provencher hesitated to leave the post. He never absolutely refused to conform to the Company's desires, but expressed his opinion that their threats to cut off supplies so that people would be forced to abandon their homes and land without compensation was very harsh treatment.[31] His complaints were to no avail, however, and his request that the Church be allowed to establish a new Métis colony at Lake Manitoba, where at least the people could support themselves by fishing, was also refused. In August, 1822, Halkett ordered that no further supplies be given to the people there and threatened to complain to the Bishop of Quebec and have Dumoulin recalled.[32]

This treatment, of course, forced Provencher to capitulate, and in the autumn of 1822 he agreed to abandon the mission, although not until the following spring. Dumoulin, obviously discouraged, decided to leave the Northwest and return to Canada permanently.[33] Provencher could not force the Métis to leave but assumed they would move away from Pembina quickly enough after Dumoulin was gone. He was hopeful that they would settle near enough to the Forks to be served by the clergy from that mission,[34] for with Dumoulin's departure the mission

was once again left to struggle with only two priests and one deacon.

Dumoulin, once back in Canada, became a parish priest again and began to circulate a subscription to raise money for the mission.[35] By that time the priests in Red River were so poor that they were reduced to borrowing from the Company's store even though this practice had been officially proscribed.[36] Dumoulin's subscription was similar to the one started in 1818 in Lower Canada. The money from the first subscription had quickly disappeared and only a few months after the priests arrived in Red River Plessis and Selkirk arranged to have a fund started in England. By 1820, the mission was so short of funds that when Provencher returned to Canada he had to borrow money merely to clothe himself. Then, while curé of Yamachiche, he managed to save most of his money for the mission, but when the Company refused to give him free transportation back to Red River at the last moment he was forced to spend all his savings merely for the trip, and the mission was left struggling as before. Although Dumoulin's subscription was met generously, it only produced enough money to sustain the mission for a few years. Another subscription was raised in Canada in 1831, and Provencher also undertook several voyages to Europe to raise money.[37] In addition to support from charitable sources, the mission had a small income from the lease of the mission lands and also received a small annual grant from the Hudson's Bay Company during most of its life in the settlement. However, despite this income, the mission was chronically short of funds as well as ministers.

With these problems to face, the fact that the Métis from Pembina settled near the Forks was fortunate for the Catholic priests. It was not until 1824, a year after Dumoulin's departure, that they began to move up to Prairie du Cheval Blanc (White Horse Plains — later Grantown), a location farther up the Assiniboine River from the Forks.[38] Only a few actually moved in 1824; the rest were still hoping to receive an American priest at Pembina.[39] The new community at White Horse Plains was placed under the patronage of St. Francis Xavier, and at first was served by a priest from the Forks, Destroismaisons. The first small chapel there was constructed in 1827, though a resident clergyman did not appear until 1834.[40]

The fact that the Métis had moved closer to the Forks improved Provencher's relations with the Hudson's Bay Company somewhat. In 1824 the Company gave the Bishop £25 worth of supplies, and the governor wrote to him saying he would inform the Committee in London of the valuable services performed by the mission in the colony. The governor also attempted to get the Council to agree to an annual stipend of £50 for the mission, which was passed in 1825. The mission received more than material rewards from the Company; Provencher reported in 1825 that the Governor had finally agreed that the Company would stop trading rum in Red River, although not in all its other posts in the Northern Department.[41]

Improved relations with the Company and the small stipend they provided did little to alleviate Provencher's most serious problem,

which was the chronic shortage of priests. Eventually he was able to obtain the services of two Métis girls from Pembina to open up a girls' school, but this did not relieve the priests of work since they still had to educate the boys. The boys' school continued under the tutelage of Harper, who, as well as teaching school, had to find time to study theology in preparation for his ordination. Destroismaisons was likewise overworked, as he ministered at both the Forks and White Horse Plains, and was also trying to learn the Indian dialects to begin a ministry among them. Harper was finally ordained in 1824, so that three priests served the mission for a time. But when Destroismaisons left the Northwest in 1827, the mission was left with only two priests again, though fortunately a young cleric came out from Canada that year. By 1829 this deacon, François Boucher, received his ordination, but this still did not increase the number of priests in the mission because Provencher was absent from the colony in 1830. When he finally returned in 1831, he brought another priest, Georges-Antoine Belcourt, with him. However, as Harper decided to leave Red River the same year, the number of priests at the mission was only raised to three.

Provencher's trip to Canada in 1830 had two goals. One was to try to raise money for the mission, in particular for the construction of a stone church at St. Boniface. As on the two previous occasions when a subscription was raised in Lower Canada, Provencher found the clergy of that province very generous. The Hudson's Bay Company also donated £100 towards the construction of this church, which helped

considerably as the money from the subscription had to go also towards the support of three priests, two Métis girls who taught school, two schoolmasters, the cost of shipping books from Europe, and the maintenance of the buildings already contructed. By 1834 he was short of money again, and in 1835 he left for Europe to try to raise funds there.

The second aim of his trip to Canada in 1830 had been to find a priest who would devote himself to studying the Indian languages and begin a ministry to the Indians of the Northwest, since Provencher felt his church was ready to expand in that direction.[42] He found a priest, Belcourt, who was willing to undertake this mission, and the two returned to Red River in 1831. For two years Belcourt worked at St. Boniface while studying the Indian languages, and then in 1833, he established a Saulteaux mission on the Assiniboine River above White Horse Plains. After two years he was forced to move the mission downstream because of trouble from the Sioux, and it was finally located four miles above White Horse Plains. The new mission was placed under the protection of St. Paul.

Belcourt did not devote himself exclusively to the Indians at St. Paul's, however. In 1838 he made his first trip to visit the Indians at Rainy Lake and Winnipeg River, and convinced them to accept religious instruction. He visited them annually after that time. In 1840, he opened the mission on Lake Manitoba at Duck Bay.[43] In addition to ministering to the Indians, Belcourt laboured to help his fellow missionaries. Through his study of the Saulteaux language he was able

to translate a catechism and compose a grammar of the language, which were published in Canada, as well as write a dictionary of the Saulteaux language, though this latter work was never completed or published.

While Belcourt helped Provencher at St. Boniface in 1831 and 1832, Boucher was delegated to follow the Métis to the Plains. Harper, who had run the school (and the whole mission in the absence of the Bishop), persuaded Provencher to allow him to go to Canada in 1831. This Provencher agreed to do, providing Harper returned the following year and also tried to persuade his brother, the abbé Charles Harper, to return with him. Only after Harper's departure did Provencher discover he never had had any intention of returning to the mission or of persuading his brother to undertake such work. Provencher begged the new Bishop of Quebec, Bernard-Claude Panet, to send another priest to replace this loss and in 1832 another unordained cleric, Charles Edouard Poiré, was sent to Red River. He was ordained early in 1833 and another cleric, Jean Baptiste Thibault, who arrived the same year, was ordained a few months later.

Poiré was largely responsible for the Métis at White Horse Plains. He had a school there which he operated year round except at the time of the hunt, when he abandoned his post to accompany the Métis to the plains.[44] In 1832 a house was finally built for him at St. Francis Xavier, and he became the resident curé in 1834.[45] Thibault also served at this post from time to time, particularly in summer when Poiré was away with the hunters. Both Poiré and Thibault learned enough of the

Indian language to preach a little and hear confessions, though neither had the fluency of Belcourt.

Belcourt's ability in Saulteaux was definitely an asset to the mission, and Provencher felt that the completion of his dictionary as soon as possible was the greatest service he could render. Belcourt, however, was occupied with his mission at St. Paul's, and could not devote himself full time to his literary task. He was busy supplying the material wants of the Indians as well as the spiritual — so much so that Provencher was often critical of his practices. The disputes thus begun in 1834 were to carry on between the two for many years. While Belcourt felt that the conversion of Indians could not begin until they were settled, clothed and fed, Provencher felt that some positive signs of conversion should be shown before starting farms and spending time and money on them. The mission had no money to support Belcourt in a settled establishment without support from his congregation — let alone enough money to support the congregation too.[46]

Because of the continual problem with funding, Provencher decided another trip was needed to raise money in 1834. The same year he received a petition from some former Company servants, Canadians with Indian wives and half-breed children, who were living in the vicinity of the Columbia River and wanted to have a priest. Provencher was willing to start a mission for them, and the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company promised to arrange free transportation west for the new priests, as long as they were Canadians.[47] In 1835, then, Provencher left for Canada

to find two more priests to go to the Northwest, and afterwards to continue on to Europe to raise money for the support of his endeavours.

By the time Provencher left for Europe in December of 1835, the priests for the new western mission had not yet been selected. His letters back to Bishop Joseph Signay in Canada reflected his concern that the men be chosen immediately so that they could leave early in the spring when the Company canoes were ready to take them. He emphasized two qualities which he felt were of paramount importance in priests for the Northwest. One was that the priests chosen to go had to be patient and perservering, and not become discouraged and leave if their attempts at conversion met with little or no success. Too many of Provencher's priests had left for that reason, and even Belcourt was threatening to give up his mission. The second quality he mentioned concerned relations with the Hudson's Bay Company. Provencher stated that the priests would find the Company their most valuable ally, or, if alienated, their worst enemy. Because the work of the mission in the Northwest could not succeed without the support of the Company, Provencher suggested that the new candidates would have to be able to close their eyes to many actions they did not like, as he had learned to do himself.[48]

As well as having to receive the bulls for this new mission area (Provencher's jurisdiction went only as far as the Rocky Mountains), more money was necessary to support it. In Canada he asked the Bishop of Quebec to try to get permission from the Pope to establish an

"Association de la Propagation de la Foi" in his diocese of Montreal in 1838. These societies operated by raising money for the diocesan missions by the sale of indulgences.[50]

Provencher arrived in Paris in 1836 and shortly afterwards travelled to Lyon to meet with the members of the Conseil de la Propagation de la Foi there. He had received an annual donation from this group for some time, and he received a substantial donation of a thousand dollars this year as well, plus a gift of as many books as he could take back to the mission with him. The Council also promised to support the Columbia mission as soon as they received word that priests had been sent there.[51]

All that Provencher had left to do was find the two priests to go to the Columbia River and during the winter of 1836-1837, which he spent in Canada, Modeste Demers and François Norbert Blanchet were selected. Demers went back to Red River with Provencher in 1837 and Blanchet arrived the following year. Thus it was not until the summer of 1838, four years after he had conceived the plan, that Provencher was able to start his mission work west of the Rockies.

As well as expanding his mission field by establishing a mission in this area, Provencher began to make arrangements for the missionaries based at Red River to travel over a much wider area than before. Up to this time the missionaries' work had been fairly strictly limited to the Red River area. This is not to imply that they did not try to expand their field of endeavour. Priests had travelled west to the

Qu'Appelle, north to the Bay, and east to Rainy Lake. These trips had always been of a short duration, however, after which the priests returned to the main base of operations in Red River. But in 1838 Provencher began to consider sending missionaries on long voyages in the Company's canoes as far as the Athabasca region.[52]

The Company refused permission for this project, and also delayed giving permission to begin the Columbia mission. Provencher attributed this to their reluctance to have Indians converted or educated outside of the main colony. Demers put in his time teaching school at Red River and studying Indian languages, and finally in July of 1838, a month after Blanchet arrived, the two men received permission to open a new mission and left for the Pacific. The same year the Red River mission received another priest from Canada, Joseph Arsène Mayrand, but lost two more as both Poiré and Belcourt chose to return home.

When Belcourt left, Provencher was worried that the mission at St. Paul's would deteriorate. Although Provencher had been critical of Belcourt's establishment, he nevertheless admitted that Belcourt had made some progress among the Indians and was afraid his conquests would be lost once he departed. Consequently Thibault was dispatched to fill the post at St. Paul's. He was also required to take care of the mission at White Horse Plains, while Mayrand stayed at St. Boniface with the Bishop.

By the end of 1838, Provencher's letters were full of indications that the constant problems of lack of priests, disagreement with them

over tactics, and lack of perseverance on their part were becoming more acute.. Left with only Thibault and Mayrand, he was constantly begging Signay to send more priests to the colony. Yet he was very particular as to the type of priest required in the Northwest missions. Thibault and Mayrand were not the type of priests suited to the mission work he visualized. Mayrand showed himself to be completely uninterested in trying to learn the Saulteaux language, and while Thibault had gained a little fluency, he preferred to teach school in St. Boniface rather than minister at the Indian and Métis outposts. Belcourt had shown himself able at languages and willing to labour in the outposts, but he and Provencher frequently clashed over the proper approach to the conversion of heathens to a Christian way of life. Yet even these two problems were small compared to the fact that all the priests, whether "suitable" or "unsuitable", wished to return to Canada after spending only a few years in Red River.[53]

All these difficulties could be traced to one source — the method of recruitment of priests for the mission. It was simply impossible to convince secular clergymen with aspirations and affections in Canada to abandon everything at home and go to the Northwest forever. Secular priests had not taken vows of poverty, nor had they dedicated themselves to a life of helping the poor and teaching, as those in religious orders had. Instead they often seemed more interested in using a two or three year period of service in Red River as a stepping stone to a more lucrative or prestigious position in Canada.

Provencher, naturally, was aware of the difficulties involved in trying to recruit secular priests in Canada. From his earliest days in Red River he had hoped to find a group of nuns to come and bear a large part of the burden of education in the colony, and he had also wished for a religious order of priests to enter the Northwest and dedicate themselves to the conversion of infidels. In 1838 he approached the Council in Lyon about money to begin building an establishment for a group of nuns in the Northwest. He also wrote to the Bishop of Amiens about the possibility of finding an order of priests who would be willing to go to the Pacific area. The Bishop of Amiens made some suggestions and by 1840 Provencher was corresponding with several European orders.[54]

At the same time he wrote to Signay, urging the independence of the Columbia mission. A separate diocese, with its own ecclesiastical organization and staffed by a religious order, would ensure that the mission's work would proceed smoothly. Otherwise the mission would be plagued by the same problems which had made the existence of the mission at Red River so difficult. Provencher emphasized, however, that while European priests should staff the new diocese, the Bishop himself should be from Lower Canada. He felt it was important that the ecclesiastical practice and tradition of Quebec be established and followed in the new territory so that there would be uniform religious practices throughout all the British possessions in North America.[55]

The last few years during which secular clergymen served in the Northwest missions increased Provencher's sense of urgency, for the

problems he had faced since the mission began intensified in the face of competition from the recently arrived Wesleyan missionaries. Unlike the Anglican clergymen in the area, these new Methodist missionaries did not confine themselves to settled areas but began to travel throughout the Northwest. Often they established missions in areas the Catholics had considered their sacred preserve. Provencher, despite inadequate funds and priests, was forced to expand the area his missionaries covered. In 1842 Thibault was sent up to the Athabasca country. Belcourt established a new mission to teach the Indians farming at Wabassimong, at the junction of the English and Winnipeg rivers. Jean-Edouard Darveau, a new priest who had arrived in 1841, travelled many times up to the Indians at Duck Bay on Lake Manitoba, where he eventually died.

While Provencher had always favoured the idea of enlarging the mission area, this sudden forced expansion proved an intolerable strain on his mission. When Darveau was killed, Provencher had no one with whom to replace him and yet could not abide the thought of his Indian converts reverting to paganism or worse still, converting to Protestantism. Other problems plagued him as well. He disapproved of Belcourt's farm at Wabassimong, thinking it a waste of time and money like his mission at St. Paul's had been. He also experienced difficulty with the Company, who proved reluctant to grant passages to the Catholic missionaries and yet seemed to encourage the Protestants.[56] It was, of course, the problem of the Protestant missions which overshadowed all others. While

only competing with Anglican clergymen who stayed for the most part in the settlements and occupied themselves with the pursuit of social status,[57] the Catholic mission could make slow progress among the heathen of the Northwest, despite financial and recruitment problems. But when the vigorous itinerant Methodist preachers entered the territory, Provencher knew his mission would have to be drastically altered to overcome its traditional problems and be able to compete effectively with the newcomers.

One thing that had become clear was that a religious order was needed to run the schools. With different priests constantly arriving and departing to Lower Canada, as well as travelling away from Red River to minister to the Indians, the schools were often forced to close due to a lack of instructors. Provencher negotiated with an order of Ursuline sisters, though he would have much preferred uncloistered nuns. When his discussions with the Ursulines broke off, he wrote to the Bishop of Louisiana, Mgr. Loras, for his advice about obtaining an American order.[58] He also wrote to the French-speaking Ordre de St. Joseph de Lyon in St. Louis, but received a negative reply.[59] Finally, in 1843, he went on a trip to try to find an order that would establish itself in the Northwest. He travelled first to the United States where Mgr. Loras offered him some nuns who had just arrived in his territory, but Provencher declined the offer since they could not speak French.[60] Instead he went up to Montreal and, aided by the Bishop, Ignace Bourget, succeeded in arranging for four Grey Nuns, the only noncloistered sisters

in the diocese, to travel to Red River in 1844.[61]

After these arrangements were completed, Provencher travelled to Europe to find a religious order which would consent to operate in the new diocese of Columbia and his own diocese as well. For two years he had been led to believe the Jesuits would go to the Northwest and in 1844 Père de Smet and several Jesuit brothers actually did leave Belgium to travel to the west coast of North America and then inland.[62] As it seemed that the Jesuits had too few members to staff the missions, however, Provencher eventually turned his attention to the Oblates (Oblats de Marie Immaculée), a French order based in Marseilles which had recently appeared in Canada and was working in the missions of the Ottawa area. By the summer of 1844 it was established that some Oblate priests would go to the Red River colony a year later.[63]

Provencher was able to find two more secular priests in Canada as well, Joseph Bourassa and Louis-François Richer-Laflèche, who went back to Red River with him in 1844. Bourassa was immediately sent out with Thibault to the Athabasca country, where the two eventually established a mission at Lac au Diable (Lac Ste. Anne), forty miles west of Fort Edmonton. Laflèche stayed in the Red River area, serving in the parish of St. Francis Xavier.

Despite the fact that by 1844 Provencher had five priests working in Red River (Thibault, Belcourt, Mayrand, Bourassa and Laflèche), he still faced the same problems he had had to deal with for twenty-six years. Although the number of priests had risen from three to six, the area they had to cover had expanded enormously. As well as travelling

to distant missions, there were at various times four permanent missions which required resident priests (St. Boniface, St. Francis Xavier, St. Paul's, and Wabassimong), in addition to several schools in need of teachers. The diocese was still very poor, and had to rely directly on the diocese of Quebec for both priests and financial support. All of these problems became immensely more difficult to deal with in the 1840's when the missionaries were faced with the necessity of expanding their struggling operation to meet Protestant competition.

By 1845, however, many of these problems seemed to have been largely solved. The Grey Nuns arrived and immediately took over much of the burden of providing education at Red River. The Oblates, although only two of their members arrived in 1845, eventually provided enough priests to visit the most distant missions while also staffing an increasingly large college and Cathedral at the Forks. Their arrival relieved the Northwest of its dependence on the diocese of Quebec, and this independence was made official in 1845 by the erection of the new Bishopric of the Northwest.[64]

Perhaps the most important aspect of the arrival of the Oblates was that the two roles of the mission, the attempts at "civilizing" through the work at Red River and the attempts at conversion through the travelling missionaries, were no longer contradictory. During the period when the mission was staffed by secular priests from Canada, the shortage of priests and, to a lesser extent, money meant that choices often had to be made between settlement missions and travelling ones.

The existence of one type of mission seemed to preclude the development of the other. Provencher never did decide between the two; instead the first twenty-six years of the Catholic church's life in the Northwest were characterized by an uneasy compromise between the goals of conversion and civilization. This attempt to fulfill both functions with inadequate resources meant that the Church was less effective in either area than had originally been hoped.

NOTES

[1] Barry Kaye, "Some Aspects of the Historical Geography of the Red River Settlement" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1967), p. 39.

[2] John E. Foster, "The Country-born in the Red River Settlement 1820-1850" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1972), pp. 5, 10, 13.

[3] Ibid., p. 5.

[4] Kaye, "Historical Geography of Red River", p. 39.

[5] Grace Lee Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, 1815-1827 (Saint Paul: The Minnesota Historical Society, 1942), p. xiii.

[6] Lord Selkirk to D. Murray, 10 February 1813, Public Archives of Canada, MG-19, E 1, vol. 76.

[7] R. Semple to Lord Selkirk, 20 December 1813, P.A.C., MG-19, E 1, vol. 7.

[8] M. Macdonnell to Lord Selkirk, 25 July 1814, P.A.C., MG-19, E 1, vol. 3.

[9] Lord Selkirk to J.O. Plessis, 4 April 1816, P.A.C., MG-19, E 1, vol. 6.

[10] J.O. Plessis to Lord Selkirk, 8 April 1816, P.A.C., MG-19, E 1, vol. 6.

[11] Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, pp. xiii.

[12] "Lettre Circulaire aux missionnaires des sauvages", 3 March 1813, in H. Têtu and C.-O. Gagnon, eds., Mandements, lettres pastorales et circulaires des évêques de Québec, III (Québec: Imprimerie Générale A. Coté et Cie., 1888), pp. 98-99.

[13] S. Gale to W.B. Coltman, 1 January 1818, P.A.C., MG-19, E 1, vol. 11.

[14] J.O. Plessis to Lord Selkirk, 12 May 1818, P.A.C., MG-19, E 1, vol. 12.

[15] J.N. Provencher to Lord Selkirk, 14 August 1818, P.A.C., MG-19, E 1, vol. 14.

[16] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 12 August 1818, "Lettres de Monseigneur Joseph-Norbert Provencher, Premier Evêque de Saint-Boniface, Manitoba", Bulletin de la Société Historique de Saint-Boniface, III (1913), 14.

[17] T. Thomas to Lord Selkirk, 20 August 1818 and Lord Selkirk to J.O. Plessis, 17 October 1818, P.A.C., MG-19, E 1, vol. 14.

[18] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 13 September 1818, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 17.

[19] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, 10 September 1818, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 151.

[20] J.N. Provencher, Mémoire ou Notice sur l'établissement de la Mission de la Rivière Rouge et ses progrès depuis 1818 in Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXIX (1930), p. 232.

[21] [J.N.S. Dumoulin], Notice sur la Rivière Rouge dans le Territoire de la Baie d'Hudson in Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXVI (1927), p. 179.

[22] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 15 January 1819, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 34.

[23] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 March 1821, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 50-51.

[24] [Dumoulin], Notice sur la Rivière Rouge, p. 180.

[25] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, 3 April 1819, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 216.

[26] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, 5 January 1819, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 179.

[27] J. Halkett to J.N. Provencher, 30 August 1822, P.A.C., MG-19, E 5, vol. 2.

[28] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, 16 August 1821, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 323.

[29] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, 13 November 1822, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 378.

[30] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 September 1822, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 78.

[31] J.N. Provencher to J. Halkett, 10 August 1822, P.A.C., MG-19, E 5, vol. 2.

[32] J. Halkett to A. Bulger, 27 August 1822, P.A.C., MG-19, E 5, vol. 2.

[33] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, 13 November 1822, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 377.

[34] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 September 1822, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 79.

[35] Provencher, Mémoire sur la Mission de la Rivière Rouge, p. 281.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., pp. 259-260.

[38] Ibid., p. 232.

[39] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 June 1824, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 93.

[40] Provencher, Mémoire sur la Mission de la Rivière Rouge, p. 233.

[41] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 12 June 1825, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 103.

[42] Provencher, Mémoire sur la Mission de la Rivière Rouge, p. 259.

[43] [Dumoulin], Notice sur la Rivière Rouge, p. 203.

[44] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 16 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 137.

[45] Provencher, Mémoire sur la Mission de la Rivière Rouge, p. 233.

[46] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 16 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher," B.S.H.S.B., 138.

[47] Provencher, Mémoire sur la Mission de la Rivière Rouge, p. 260.

[48] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 19 January 1836, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 147.

[49] [Dumoulin], Notice sur la Rivière Rouge, p. 206.

[50] Rapport de l'Association de la Propagation de la Foi pour le Diocèse de Montréal, 1839.

[51] [Dumoulin], Notice sur la Rivière Rouge, p. 230.

[52] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 4 July 1837, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 167.

[53] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 13 November 1838, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 176-177.

[54] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 8 July 1839, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 180.

[55] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 25 June 1840, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 186.

[56] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 25 June 1840, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 184.

[57] Frits Pannekoek, "The Churches and the Social Structure in the Red River Area 1818-1870" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Queen's University, 1973), passim.

[58] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 30 June 1842, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 203.

[59] [Dumoulin], Notice sur la Rivière Rouge, p. 255.

[60] Ibid., p. 278.

[61] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 19 October, 1 November and 6 November 1843, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 215, 219, 221.

[62] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 29 January 1844, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 228.

[63] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 20 June 1845, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 239.

[64] Lucien Lemieux, L'Etablissement de la première province ecclésiastique au Canada 1783-1844 (Montréal: Fides, 1967), pp. 476-477.

III

AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY

The Catholic missionaries' attitudes toward the nomadism of the aborigines and half-breeds has been a major theme in the historiography assessing the impact and contribution of the Catholic mission on Red River society. While historians are agreed that the missionaries did not limit themselves to the purely religious sphere in their dealings with the Métis and Indians, the effect of their interference on these nomadic peoples' traditional behaviour has been a matter of disagreement.

Those historians who consider the missionaries' work to be of great benefit in "civilizing the savages" of Red River overemphasize the importance of agriculture and technical endeavours in the missionaries' activities. The clerical historians write that Dumoulin "...avait donné à ses gens de leçons d'agriculture..."[1] or that Provencher "...taught them agriculture, and, disregarding his rank, put his own hand to the plough".[2] The Bishop has been credited with establishing the first industrial school in Red River to "...prevent idleness, which is the source of so many vices among the half-breeds...".[3] Marcel Giraud, with a less fanciful interpretation of Dumoulin's six chickens and Provencher's unlucky experiments with fruit trees and weavers, also considers the Catholic church to be the agent which enabled the Métis in the Red River valley area to adapt more easily to a sedentary agricultural economy. He is not quite so ready to attribute this to the deliberate "civilize through industry" policy as the earlier clerics who were interested in proving the missionaries had been of some secular

use to the colony. He considers the assimilation of the Red River valley Métis to be a combination of circumstances, listing the moral influence of the Roman Catholic church as only one in a number of factors involved in the process.[4]

More recently, Frits Pannekoek has denied both aspects of Giraud's interpretation in his Ph. D. thesis, "The Churches and the Social Structure of Red River 1818-1870". He argues that the missionaries had very little success in modifying the traditional dependence of the Métis people upon the buffalo hunt. He goes further than merely arguing that the missionaries met with failure in their efforts to change the Métis' economy and social values, however. He explains the fact that the Métis were still a nomadic hunting people in 1870 by claiming that the Catholic missionaries were tolerant of the Métis way of life and occupied themselves more exclusively with religious work among them.[5]

While the Catholic priests cannot be credited with converting the Métis people to an agricultural way of life, it also cannot be agrued that they did not wish to change the hunting economy and nomadism of the half-breeds. Catholic priests were often found accompanying the Métis on their semi-annual hunts, but the letters and reports of the missionaries make clear that the priests only tolerated the hunt in so far as it provided necessary food for the colony which could be gleaned no other way — certainly not through the inadequate and uncertain farming carried on in Red River in the early years. The priests, in fact, only accompanied the Métis on their hunt out of necessity, and always considered

their nomadism to be a great problem.

The priests, in general, did not consider the nomadism of the Métis to be intrinsically immoral, although after many years of constant effort trying to encourage them to settle down to sedentary occupations the Bishop blamed their wanderlust on the vice of laziness. In a moment of despair he wrote "...qui est-ce qui fera entendre à ses gens-là qu'il faut tirer sa vie de la terre. Il faut travailler pour cela c'est et [sic] ce qu'ils n'aiment pas".[6] Belcourt, however, expressed the missionaries' general attitude when he wrote:

> Though the half-breeds lose much of their time in idleness, I do not think this owes its origin to the vice of indolence, but rather to the absence of all commercial interests; that is to say, to the want of enterprises passably lucrative, or of rewards sufficiently inviting to make them sustain the fatigues of labour. For they are capable of enduring to an astonishing degree the most horrible fatiques; and they undertake them with the greatest cheerfulness when circumstances call for it.

Most often the missionaries undertook their endeavours in this belief. Rather than believe the Métis possessed an essentially immoral character, the Catholic missionaries believed the challenge was simply to modify the Métis life style and convert him to a sendentary manner of living to facilitate the work of gaining his soul for Christ.

This attitude was remarkably similar to the approach of the Protestant missionaries. John West, the first Anglican minister to labour in the colony, prayed "...that the Aborigines of a British Territory, may not remain as outcasts from British Missionary exertions

but may be raised through their instrumentality, to what they are capable of enjoying, the advantages of civilized and social life, with the blessings of Christianity".[8] Ideas of "civilizing savages" were central to the Catholic priests as well, and they were no more tolerant of any of the practices they conceived of as barbarous. But they did not have quite the same sense of priorities that the Protestant missionaries did — Christianity to the latter group was only one feature of a generally civilized way of life they meant to instill in the inhabitants of the colony, and settlement was invariably a feature of Christian civilization. The Catholics perceived their mission as being more exclusively concerned with converting souls to Catholicism, but to facilitate this goal, of course, they were obliged to undertake as much work in the temporal sphere as the Protestants. Both Protestant and Catholic clergymen were therefore to be found involved in agriculture among the native people.

The Catholic priests had very definite reasons for preferring a settled life for the Métis and Indians. First of all, the Métis were largely inaccessible to the priests when they were away on the hunt twice a year. As early as 1822, Dumoulin began to accompany the half-breeds on the hunt, but this system was generally unsatisfactory as it reduced the mission's effectiveness in the colony (occasionally closing a school, for example, or doubling the work load of the priests remaining in the settlements). Secondly, it was believed that the Métis were more subject to "vice" when on the plains. The Bishop expressed the desire

that "...toutes ces familles, qui courent ainsi les prairies, renoncent à cette manière de vivre; car elle est propre à faire pulluler le vice".[9] Provencher worried about how the hunt interfered with his efforts to educate the children, for he felt that "les enfants ne sont pas stables. Ils appartiennent à des parents qui ne vivent que de chasse, et ils sont obligés de les suivre dans les prairies. Si le pays prenait un peu plus de consistance et que les gens puissent en cultivant la terre, en tirer leur vie, je crois que l'on pourrait tirer un meilleur parti des enfants".[10] He was severely disappointed that the mission at Pembina was abandoned, because he felt that a priest's presence in their midst settled the Métis and thus had a moral effect.[11] An agricultural life would also contribute to morality and Christian education because, according to the Bishop, it was so much easier to live by agriculture than subsistance hunting, and an easier life, presumably, led to refinements and gentility.[12]

But strictly aside from the moral benefits to be derived from an easier life, the priests wished their flock to be able to live better and take care of themselves simply for their own material well-being. The Bishop was gravely concerned about the poverty in which the Métis and Indians lived. Time and time again he deplored the fact that the native women could not weave and were thus unable to clothe their families.[13] When writing to Lower Canada in 1819 to request more priests, Provencher said "il faut faire ici Marthe et Marie, il faut conduire le spirituel et le temporel. Si ce sont des hommes qui n'entendent rien

à bâtir, conduire les gens, etc. ça n'ira guère".[14] Yet at other times the secular activities of the priests were to cause the Bishop doubt. In 1826 he wondered "...si toutes ces choses temporelles entrent dans les desseins de Dieu. J'en jugerais peut-être autrement ailleurs qu'ici, mais je crois que si la mission ne met pas cela [weaving] en marche, personne ne s'en mêlera, la pauvreté ira toujours croissant".[15] So, to alleviate poverty as well as to promote morality, the priests laboured to induce the natives of the country to turn away from their traditional hunting economy and adopt a way of life similar to that of the farmers of Lower Canada.

One aspect of the latter which the priests tried to promote from their first days in the colony was the manufacture of domestic cloth. Although sheep were not uncommon in the colony, only a few Europeans knew how to make cloth from their wool.[16] During the winter of 1825-1826 Provencher had one of the wives of the Canadian settlers show the girls in the school how to make linen and wool. This program, he reported, was rather successful, and no doubt he had hopes for even greater success in 1828 when the Nolin sisters decided to move to Red River to teach school, work for the mission, and make cloth while instructing others in its manufacture.[17] By 1838 the Bishop had established what is credited as the first "industrial" school in the colony, having brought out two weavers from Canada to teach the girls and women of the colony how to make cloth.

The Bishop had planned to introduce this skill to the native people in the colony for many years before 1838, but had not had the

money to do so. However, in 1837 when George Simpson was returning to Red River, he remarked upon the fine cloth in which the Canadian canoesmen were dressed. The Bishop took the opportunity of discussing his plan with the Governor, and it was resolved that the latter would undertake to pay the cost of bringing out two weavers from Canada and would pay their wages for three years if the Bishop would undertake to feed them, lodge them and direct them and the school.[18] Thus in 1838 two Canadian weavers went up to Red River and began their school under the auspices of the mission.

Both the Church and the Company had great hopes for the benefit to be derived from this project. Sir George Simpson felt that "two great advantages are likely to arise from this school, the one is that the introduction of home manufactures will relieve the people of a heavy item of expense in the purchase of imported goods, and the other is that it will introduce habitudes of industry among the females...".[19] The Bishop considered the project to be "...la meilleure chose que la Compagnie ait faite pour le bien des habitants du pays".[20] Despite this enthusiasm the school soon ran into difficulties, for on March 26, 1839, the Bishop's house which sheltered the weaving school burned to the ground. The weavers and their students escaped, but all their equipment — looms, spinning wheels and carders — was destroyed.[21] Nonetheless the school continued to function and by 1840, after two years of operation, over 600 yards of cloth had been woven, half of it by native girls and women.[22] The success of the project was short-lived, however, because

one of the weavers decided to leave at the end of her engagement and the Company did not replace her. In 1841 the Bishop had only one weaver left — who was acting as his cook.[23]

At the same time, Belcourt conceived a plan to start his own school of industry at the mission of St. Paul, the object being to teach the girls to make cloth from nettles and buffalo hair. Nothing came of this project ultimately — Angelique Nolin, who had been able to spin a little, left the mission and Belcourt found it even more difficult than Provencher had to find a replacement. The Bishop summed up Belcourt's effort by explaining that not only could Belcourt find no one to teach weaving, but he could find no one interested in learning.[24]

During these years the Company undertook several other projects to boost the economy of the colony, although the Catholic church was not to play a leading role in any of them as it had in the school of industry. The Bishop, who considered a thriving woolen industry to be so essential to the development of cloth manufacture in the colony, was naturally interested in the Assiniboine Wool Company which was established in 1829. The Bishop was on the original list of shareholders in 1829 with a deposit of "100 louis" and eight shares, and continued to support the company throughout its brief career — even contributing 50 louis from his limited funds in 1832 when the Company was floundering and needed to buy more sheep.[25]

The aims of this Company help to explain why the Bishop wished to support this venture even though he was so desperately short of

money for his mission, for the company was not solely formed to develop business and trade in the colony. One of the stated objectives of the Company was:

> The dissemination of Religion, morality, education and general knowledge and information among the large and growing population of this immense country — benefits hitherto very partially enjoyed....and which the extension of trade alone can obtain for it.[26]

This objective was made even more clear in the deed of partnership where it was stated that:

> Altho' we have it in our view to raise Sheep on a large scale, we intend that the purchase of Wool from the Settlers of Red River shall form the leading part of our business in this country, and this can be done to so great extent, as in the course of a very few years the attention of not only settlers, but of numerous bands of Freemen and halfbreeds who are now leading the lives of Indians will be directed to the same object.[27]

These goals, of course, were exactly the goals the Catholic priests had been working toward since their arrival in the colony. Through example, bribes, persuasion and education they were trying to instill a liking for a sedentary life into the wandering Métis.

Originally their attempts at farming were limited to efforts to produce food simply for their own use and to introducing new products into the colony. Provencher had a farm at the Forks on which he worked himself. Although he frequently forecast good harvests he was prey to the same evils which plagued Red River agriculture in general — grasshoppers, mice and floods — so that his farm was certainly far from being an inspiration to nomadic people to give up the hunt. In the

early years Dumoulin also had a relatively thriving agricultural establishment at Pembina. Initially their crops were mostly potatoes, wheat, corn and a few other vegetables.[28] These products were raised for their own consumption and, once a mill had been built, they were even able to mill their wheat for bread.[29] The missionaries also kept domestic animals for their own use. By 1822 Dumoulin had a cow at Pembina, as well as a hen and a rooster — the only chickens in the country.[30] He also had several sheep, although they did not breed very well. The Bishop, by 1824, had two cows giving milk, three calves, and twelve chickens.[31] The same year he purchased more cows and calves and some horses from disgruntled de Meurons who were leaving the country.[32]

All these attempts to raise the same products that were produced in Lower Canada were prompted by a desire to reduce their dependency on wild buffalo meat, which the missionaries found unpalatible though obviously necessary for nourishment. As well as trying to duplicate a Lower Canadian diet for themselves, however, the missionaries were interested in improving agriculture in Red River in general. With this in mind, Provencher introduced fruit trees into the colony, although within a short time all the trees he had brought out from Canada had died.[33] He also planted hemp, hoping to be able to manufacture cloth from it, though this project failed as well. Belcourt, as mentioned above, became interested in utilizing local products and conceived a plan to weave cloth from nettles and buffalo hair, although this plan,

like others, was unsuccessful.[34] He also tried to tame a buffalo calf, which quickly died, although he reported that others were successful in this and used the animals for ploughing.[35] In any event, domestication of buffalo was certainly never widespread.

Of course, introducing new products and growing familiar ones themselves did little to better general conditions in the colony. Both to facilitate conversion and improve the precarious economic condition of the colony, the missionaries wanted the native people to take up agriculture themselves. But although the priests felt that a sedentary life would make the life of the Métis easier both morally and economically, there was little they could do to promote agriculture. Not only the Métis themselves, but the whole settlement at Red River including the missionaries depended on the semi-annual buffalo hunt for food, and unfortunately this activity took the Métis away from the colony at the two times their presence was most essential for successful agriculture — planting and harvest. Since example and persuasion did so little to convince the Métis to turn to agriculture, the priests had some hope that hardship might have some effect. While Provencher could hardly applaud the starvation that followed a poor hunt, he did hope that "...la misère qu'éprouvent en ce moment les coureurs de prairies et la perte générale de leurs chevaux va les forcer de s'établir et de cultiver...Cela contribuera grandement à leur bien moral...".[36] But a poor hunt did little to change the attitude of the Métis to agriculture, and by and large the Church had to hope that gentler means would have

an effect.

With this in mind, the missionaries took pains to align themselves with Cuthbert Grant and were obviously supportive of the Company's efforts to encourage him to become an agricultural settler and give up the hunt. Cuthbert Grant, an old Nor'Wester, was a leader among the Métis of great influence, and Simpson was originally interested in pacifying him to protect the Company after the amalgamation when Grant had been dropped from their service. But after getting Grant back into the fur trade, Simpson saw a way in which he could be of even greater service to the Company. The directors of the Company in London had always considered the Red River agricultural settlement to be a means of absorbing retired Company employees, and after the amalgamation and then the abandonment of the Pembina post, many of the unemployed traders were French half-breeds. Simpson naturally wanted these people to become peaceful settlers, but it was unlikely they would adopt a new lifestyle without the example of their "chief". Simpson, therefore, gave Grant every encouragement to become a settler, and in 1824 Grant retired from the service and turned to an agricultural life on a grant of land he received at White Horse Plains on the Assiniboine River. This plan to settle the Métis was immediately successful, for Simpson reported in 1824 that Grant had been joined at White Horse Plains "...by McGillis and about 80 or 100 families of halfbreeds all steady married men". He added that "Grant is turned very serious (religious) and by management will become a very useful man to the Colony and Company...".[37]

He could have also mentioned Grant's usefulness to the Church. Although the missionaries had not been active in persuading Grant to turn settler, they took advantage of the new settlement to establish a mission. The young cleric Harper travelled frequently to White Horse Plains and spent the winter of 1827-1828 there giving religious instruction to the women and girls. In the fall of 1828 a small chapel was erected at the settlement, under the protection of St. Francis Xavier.[38] Although there is evidence that some of the half-breeds continued to reside at Pembina after the dispersal of the settlement as long as there was hope of receiving an American priest there,[39] St. Francis Xavier eventually became the main area of Métis settlement.

Despite the fact that the Métis settled near the mission and their traditional leader, the priests thought they showed less inclination for agriculture than they had hoped. In 1826 Provencher complained that "tous ces gens ici comptent trop sur la prairie pour vivre, ce qui les empêche de semer autant qu'ils devraient".[40] By 1829 there was obviously some form of agriculture being carried on at White Horse Plains for the Bishop reported that the floods had been hard on the crops and there was a great deal of suffering — so much so that the men had all left the area, "...les uns à la chasse dans la prairie, les autres à la Baie engagés à différentes personnes qui transportent les marchandises de la Compagnie".[41]

If the priests felt that they were unable to convince the Métis to abandon their traditional occupations, they met with as little success

in their efforts with the Indians in the area. Although Provencher is often credited with having induced some Saulteaux to plant in the early years, Dumoulin, at the Pembina post, gave more devoted attention to the matter of training the Indians. In 1821 Dumoulin was trying to get some of the Indians to settle down so that he could carry on missions among them, but Destroismaisons expressed the belief that this would be very difficult because of their "natural inclination" for a nomadic life.[42] Nevertheless, Dumoulin was able to report that "I have succeeded this year in getting a good many Indians to plant; they have settled in small villages".[43] Obviously he was not convinced of his permanent success with these people, however, for a few days later he suggested to the Bishop of Canada that perhaps gifts would succeed where example had not.

> I have a new plan that I feel might be of benefit to this mission: the Indians of this region are accustomed to being won over with gifts rather than with logic. It would be much easier to get them to live in villages, and to civilize and teach them, if we had some advantages to offer them... Would it not be possible to send by Hudson Bay some of the many presents that are given to the Indians of Lower and even of Upper Canada,... The minister who is here wishes to write to the Bishop of Quebec about it; it would seem that he is seeking control of the matter, which would no doubt be very injurious to the Catholic Church.[44]

During the next decade it is true that the Protestants seemed to be enjoying more success in "civilizing" the Indians. After Pembina was abandoned and Dumoulin left the Northwest, the Catholic priests that were left devoted themselves to serving the settled parishioners

at Saint Boniface and White Horse Plains (nearly all French Canadians and Métis) and satisfied themselves with occasional voyages to visit various Indian bands wherever they happened to have gathered. Meanwhile the Protestants established St. Andrew's and later St. Peter's, Anglican missions where the Reverend William Cochrane devoted himself to teaching agriculture to the Indians who came to settle. The Catholics eventually undertook this type of endeavour as well, and finally by 1831 Provencher brought Belcourt back from Canada, the first Catholic missionary in the Northwest who was to devote himself entirely to ministering to Indians.

As mentioned above, Belcourt's mission of St. Paul's was a matter of continual disagreement between himself and the Bishop. Both men agreed upon the necessity of introducing Christianity to the Indians, and both agreed that it would be morally beneficial and geographically simpler if the Indians were to adopt agriculture and the sedentary life which accompanies it. The Bishop, however, never lost sight of the fact that conversion was the central aim of the missionaries' work in the Northwest. While he deplored the poverty of the natives in the region and had often supported his starving parishioners when the hunt or the harvest failed, he could see no point in frittering away the already strained resources of the Church on natives who showed no positive signs of adopting Christianity. He said of Belcourt; "il voudrait nourrir des gens qui ne lui feraient pas même la grâce de l'écouter; c'est un mauvais pied à leur donner".[45] While the Bishop was not indifferent to the sufferings of his flock, he believed in investing time and money only

where there were signs it would reap rewards. He also had faith that the word of God, if often enough repeated, would win converts even if material bribes were not offered "...à la protestante".[46]

Belcourt, on the other hand, had little confidence in his ability to win souls for Christ through purely spiritual means, and kept deferring public preaching until he should have a building big enough to assemble the people or until they came to seek him out themselves.[47] Meanwhile he turned his attention to farming at St. Paul's. In 1832 he asked the Hudson's Bay Company for pickaxes and a plow, and the Bishop was to send oxen to break the ground so the Indians could plant potatoes and Indian corn. In 1835 the Bishop could write that "...bon nombre de sauvages se sont rendus à son poste et ont semé des patates et du blé d'inde et sont disposés à se laisser instruire...".[48]

This state of affairs was short lived, however. When Belcourt returned to St. Paul's from a trip to Canada in 1839, he found the mission nearly deserted, the Indians having preferred to hunt the buffalo in the plains.[49] By 1842 Provencher reported that "le poste de M. Belcourt paraît aller plutôt en baissant qu'en croissant; peu de nouveaux chrétiens et ceux qui le sont tiennent fermenent mais le nombre n'est pas grand...ils n'ont à peu près rien semé cette année ce qui les force de s'éloigner l'automne. Ce poste sera abandonnée...".[50] Looking back on the project after Belcourt had abandonned it, the Bishop recalled that there had been very little agriculture practised apart from what Belcourt had done.[51] Belcourt himself realized the project

had not been very successful. In 1843 he admitted that "...la proximité de la prairie et de la chasse les rend paresseuses pour la culture".[52]

Although his mission at St. Paul had been more or less a failure, Belcourt had not abandonned the idea of promoting agriculture among the Indians. In 1839, when he went up to Duck Bay to do a mission, he found the Indians growing potatoes with a large measure of success. Hoping to diversify and increase their output, the following winter he sent them seeds for pumpkins, Indian corn, and "choux-de-siam". He also had plans to take barley and wheat seed up to them on his next visit.[53] But the major Indian agricultural project he undertook after St. Paul's was the new mission he established at Wabassimong.

In 1842, when he was travelling to the Rainy Lake Mission, he took three men with him to build a chapel at the confluence of the English and Winnipeg rivers, a spot at which he had already conducted a mission in 1838. Wabassimong was a central location for the Indians, and he had great hopes for a permanent mission station there. He wrote at this time

> Si les savages qui vont s'y établir réussissent à s'acquérir une certaine indépendance par la culture et par la fabrication de l'étoffe, il est certain que toutes les nations avoisinantes suivront leur example, et qu'en un instant on verra changer de face à cette vaste partie du nord de l'Amérique. J'espère [que] je pourrai procurer à cette nouvelle chrétienté des instruments d'agriculture, des semences de grains et de légumes et quelques animaux.[54]

With this goal in mind, he spared no effort to turn the Wabassimong mission into a flourishing farm.

In 1843 he planned to send a family to winter at the post with oxen, cows, and sheep to start the project which he felt would give such great encouragement to the Indians to practise agriculture. But a year later he reported that he had still had no success with getting animals to the station, because he could find no one to take them. This did not discourage him, however, and in the spring of 1844 he managed to return to Wabassimong himself with seed grain, kitchen utensils and six sheep. The next year he was able to send six cows and three oxen up to the mission. At that time he was optimistic that the Indians would finally be convinced of the advantages of a settled life, and reported that "comme la récolte de tout ce que j'y ai fait semer le printemps dernier parait devoir être abondante, on m'assure que le nombre des sauvages s'y augmente considérablement".[55] Whether this happy optimism was well founded or not is immaterial, for most of his crop was destroyed by grasshoppers and mice.

Aside from his theory that agriculture would make the Indian people more amenable to Christianity, Belcourt also thought that chapels should be built for the heathen before converting them. Their construction was as premature and disastrous as his investments in agriculture. They cost both time and money and gave no return to the mission in terms of converted Indians. Provencher felt that Belcourt's time would be better spent on preaching instead of building and that money should be spent constructing churches where there was a certain congregation to use them. Nevertheless he gave Belcourt money for these projects (mainly

so that dissatisfaction would not drive him back to Canada) although the Bishop often expressed his belief that a chapel would not be a mold for Christians.[56]

And, of course, the chapels which were built at St. Paul's and Wabassimong did little more to "civilize" or convert the Indians than planting crops had. Before the chapel at St. Paul's was even finished, the Indians had lost interest in both agriculture and Christianity.[57] The mission at Wabassimong had ended in an equal failure, and while Belcourt was away in Canada in 1847-1848, Father Pierre Aubert had quietly sold the remaining livestock to the Company and the post had been abandoned.[58] Aubert said at the time that, despite Belcourt's eulogistic accounts of what had been accomplished at Wabassimong, little good had come of the venture.

> There is absolute ignorance. Would you believe it that I have not yet met one who can make the sign of the cross? As to the cultivation of the fields which they are supposed to have been taught to christianize them more easily there is none. The savages have never begun to sow and do not dream of doing so.[59]

While the missionaries' own accounts seem to point to the fact that their efforts to teach farming to the natives largely met with failure, there is a more accurate source which can be used to evaluate their success, which is the Red River censuses. There are censuses available for nearly every fourth year from 1815 to 1870, and each one lists the heads of households in the settlement and gives details of their religion, place of birth, and property. No specific information

is given, of course, as to the nature of their racial origin, but by combining their religion and "country of birth", a fairly accurate guess can be made. A person listed as Catholic and born in Rupert's Land is fairly likely to be Métis, or an Indian converted to Catholicism if he lives at "Saulteaux village" (St. Paul's) on the later censuses. Likewise, a man listed as Protestant and born in Rupert's Land will be Country-born, or a Protestant Indian if he lives at Swampy Village.

Of course, this principle is only applicable to the censuses before 1838 (approximately twenty years after permanent white settlement at the Forks) since after that time people born in Rupert's Land of two white parents could conceivably appear on the census as the head of a household. (Though often the "country of origin" for these people is still given as the country of their parents' birth, this cannot always be assumed to be the case). For this reason, the 1838 census was selected for examination, since it is the latest in which one can select the Métis and the Country-born fairly accurately without using the technique of family reconstitution, which was felt to be too time-consuming for a problem of this nature. The census information is displayed in the following three tables. Table I shows the raw data — the total number of Métis or Country-born in each category. The Métis at White Horse Plains (Grantown) and the Protestant Indians at Swampy Village are listed separately. Table II compares the property ownership per hundred households (percentage) of the three groups of mixed bloods. In Table III, the percentage figures for the whole Métis population (both in the Lower

Settlement and at Grantown) are compared with those of all the Country-born in the colony. The census data was used not only to ascertain whether the Métis showed signs of adopting European agriculture, but to evaluate whether they showed discernible differences in acculturation from the English Protestant half-breeds which could be attributed to their different mission experiences.

TABLE I: LIVESTOCK AND FARMING EQUIPMENT, 1838[60]

	Native-born Catholics		Native-born Protestants	
	Lower Settlement	White Horse Plains	Lower Settlement	Swampy
Households	140	68	118	72
Houses	105	88	108	55
Stables	82	87	95	35
Barns	14	20	47	1
Horses	159	135	91	1
Mares	98	86	88	4
Oxen	212	192	251	38
Bulls	21	26	18	0
Cows	177	168	277	38
Calves	182	109	355	49
Pigs	219	123	268	8
Sheep	3	0	56	0
Ploughs	52	31	72	6
Harrows	52	52	87	5
Carts	234	227	146	5
Acres broken	320.5	841	558.5	7.5

TABLE II: LIVESTOCK AND FARM EQUIPMENT PER 100 HOUSEHOLDS[61]

	Native-born Catholics		Native-born Protestants
	Lower Settlement	Grantown	Lower Settlement
Houses	75	129	91
Stables	59	128	80
Barns	10	29	40
Horses	114	198	77
Mares	70	126	75
Oxen	151	282	213
Bulls	15	38	15
Cows	126	247	235
Calves	130	160	301
Pigs	156	181	227
Sheep	2	0	47
Ploughs	37	46	61
Harrows	37	76	74
Carts	167	334	124
Acres Broken	229	1237	473

TABLE III: LIVESTOCK AND FARM EQUIPMENT PER 100 HOUSEHOLDS[62]

	All Native-born Catholics	All Native-born Protestants
Houses	93	91
Stables	81	80
Barns	16	40
Horses	141	77
Mares	88	75
Oxen	194	213
Bulls	23	15
Cows	166	235
Calves	140	301
Pigs	164	227
Sheep	1	47
Ploughs	40	61
Harrows	50	74
Carts	222	124
Acres broken	558	473

An examination of these tables leads to two, rather surprising, conclusions. One fact which is evident is that the Métis at White Horse Plains had much more property and, presumably, a higher standard of living than the Métis living at the Forks. (See Table II). A second fact which emerges is that while the Métis had many more horses, mares and carts than the Country-born, they did not have a significantly smaller number of farm buildings, agricultural implements and livestock as might have been expected. (See Table III). It is surprising that the Métis had broken much more land than the Country-born, though of course these figures give no indication about the productivity of their fields.

These tables do seem to testify to the fact, then, that the Métis certainly continued to be dependent on the hunt, while the Country-born, as early as 1838, appear to have been less involved in it. However, the figures do <u>not</u> indicate that the Métis relied on the hunt to the exclusion of agricultural pursuits. In fact, the Métis seem to have generally adopted European agriculture, and have been almost as successful as the Country-born in their practice of it. The Catholic priests seem to have been justified in their continuous lamentations that the Métis still followed the buffalo on the plains, for the numbers of horses and carts they owned indicates that the hunt was indeed important to them. Nonetheless, their complaints that the Métis were not adopting agriculture seem to be less accurate, since the census indicates that, despite semi-annual journeys to the plains after buffalo, the Métis were turning their

attention to raising livestock and breaking land. Their efforts were not merely token ones either, for they were almost as successful as the Country-born, particularly at White Horse Plains.

Therefore, despite the fact that they continued to hunt buffalo, the contention that the Métis were a nomadic primitive unagricultural society is overly simplified and even fallacious, and the argument that this had anything to do with the "tolerance" of the Catholic missionaries even more so. It has been shown above that the priests were very eager to draw the Métis to farming and wean them from the hunt. The fact that the Métis continued to hunt and were not quite so successful at agriculture as the Country-born was more likely a result of the two groups' respective cultural traditions, since long before the missionaries appeared in the Northwest the Country-born had adopted a more settled life around the Company's posts while the Métis roamed freely over the plains.

The dramatic difference the census shows between the Métis at White Horse Plains and those at the Forks lends credence to this view. Not only did the Grantown Métis achieve more success in agriculture than those at the Forks, but they also approached the levels of the Country-born. Perhaps the significant agent in causing this group to adopt a new way of life to the extent they did was the encouragement and example provided by their traditional "chef", Cuthbert Grant, and not the example and exhortations of the Lower Canadian newcomers. If the denomination of the missionaries influenced the mixed-bloods in their

adoption of an agricultural life in the way in which Pannekoek has suggested, presumably the main trend discernable in these figures would have been that the Country-born demonstrated a success at raising livestock and breaking land that the Métis lacked. At the same time the Métis should have owned horses and carts to the exclusion of other livestock and agricultural implements.

To a certain extent, such a difference is demonstrated in Table III, but Table II shows that the religious explanation is unsatisfactory, since two groups of Métis exposed to the same religion and taught by the same missionaries experienced such different social changes. At White Horse Plains, where their "chef" settled and became a farmer, the Métis population generally achieved a far greater success in adopting European agriculture than the Métis who lived elsewhere without such a close association with their traditional leader. Perhaps the explanation for this phenomenon is that the Métis society in the first half of the nineteenth century had retained characteristics of the Indian societies from which it had developed. It seems that they were willing to adopt agriculture not because the priests encouraged them to do so, but only to follow the pattern established by their own respected leader. The fact that even at White Horse Plains the Métis showed no inclination to abandon the hunt as the missionaries hoped they would also argues for this interpretation. Even though they were becoming farmers, the Grantown Métis continued to follow their chief out to the plains as they did in the fields.

NOTES

[1] Georges Dugas, Monseigneur Provencher et les Missions de la Rivière Rouge (Montréal: C.O. Beauchemin et fils, 1889), p. 126

[2] A.G. Morice, "The Roman Catholic Church West of the Great Lakes", in vol. XI of Canada and its Provinces, ed. by A. Shortt and A.G. Doughty (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook and Company, 1914), p. 125.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Marcel Giraud, "A Note on the Half Breed Problem of Manitoba", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, III (1937), 543.

[5] Frits Pannekoek, "The Churches and the Social Structure in the Red River Area 1818-1870" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Queen's University, 1973), p. 20.

[6] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 20 June 1845, "Lettres de Monseigneur Joseph-Norbert Provencher, Premier Evêque de Saint-Boniface, Manitoba", Bulletin de la Société Historique de Saint-Boniface, III (1913), 240.

[7] G.A. Belcourt, "Department of Hudson's Bay", Minnesota Historical Society Collections, I (1850-1856), 181.

[8] John West, The Substance of a Journal During a Residence at the Red River Colony (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1966), p. vi.

[9] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartique, 15 June 1825, "Histoire de l'Ouest, Les Archives de l'Archeveché: Lettres de Mgr Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVII (1 March 1918), 67.

[10] J.N. Provencher to the Bishop of Saldes, 24 November 1819, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 43.

[11] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 8 August 1825, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 106.

[12] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 18 June 1828, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 123.

[13] See, for example, J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 26 September 1831, 18 June 1828, and J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 6 August 1838, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 135, 123, 174.

[14] J.N. Provencher to the Bishop of Saldes, 24 November 1819, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 41.

[15] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 2 February 1826, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 111-112.

[16] [J.N.S. Dumoulin], Notice sur la Rivière Rouge dans le Territoire de la Baie d'Hudson in Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXVI (1927), p. 92.

[17] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 18 June 1828, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 123.

[18] [Dumoulin], Notice sur la Rivière Rouge, p. 93.

[19] G. Simpson to the Bishop of Juliopolis, 1 March 1838, "Histoire de l'Ouest, Les Archives de l'Archeveché", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXXI (August, 1932), 191.

[20] J.N. Provencher to A. Dionne, 20 June 1840, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXXI (May, 1932), 114.

[21] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 8 July 1839, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 181.

[22] J.N. Provencher to A. Dionne, 20 June 1840, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXXI (May, 1932), 114.

[23] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 23 July 1841, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 197.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Section F, Class 30, Piece 1, p. 5.

[26] Ibid., p. 1.

[27] Ibid., p. 5.

[28] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 September 1822, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 79.

[29] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 15 July 1824, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 97.

[30] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 September 1822, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 79-80.

[31] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 June 1824, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 94.

[32] J.N. Provencher [to J.O. Plessis], 19 July 1824, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 99.

[33] Dugas, Monseigneur Provencher, p. 126.

[34] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 23 July 1841, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 197.

[35] G.A. Belcourt, "Buffalo Hunt", The Beaver, Outfit 275 (December, 1944), 17.

[36] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 2 February 1826, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 112.

[37] Governor Simpson to A. Colville, 31 May 1824, quoted in M.A. MacLeod, "Cuthbert Grant of Grantown", Canadian Historical Review, XXI (March, 1940), 32.

[38] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 6 June 1829, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 127.

[39] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 13 June 1824, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 96.

[40] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 2 February 1826, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 111.

[41] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 1 July 1829, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 130.

[42] T.F. Destroismaisons to J.O. Plessis, 3 January 1821, in Grace Lee Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, 1815-1827 (Saint Paul: The Minnesota Historical Society, 1942), p. 283.

[43] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, June 1821, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 310.

[44] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, 5 June 1821, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 311.

[45] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 16 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 138.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartique, 12 July 1832 and 5 June 1835, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVII (15 December 1918), 313 and XVIII (1 February 1919), 36.

[49] Rapport sur les Missions de Diocèse de Québec (1840, no. 2), p. 9.

[50] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 30 June 1842, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 205.

[51] J.N. Provencher to Conseils Centraux de Lyon et de Paris, n.d., "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 245.

[52] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 19 July 1843, Rapport sur les Missions de Diocèse de Québec (1845, no. 6), 87.

[53] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 9 November 1839, Rapport sur les Missions de Diocèse de Québec (1841, no. 3), 5.

[54] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 1 August 1842, Rapport sur les Missions de Diocèse de Québec (1843, no. 5), 18.

[55] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 6 August 1844, Rapport sur les Missions de Diocèse de Québec (1845, no. 6), 109-110.

[56] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 6 August 1838, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 173.

[57] L.A. Prud'homme, "Monsieur Georges-Antoine Belcourt, missionnaire de la Rivière Rouge", Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, III, sec. 1 (1920), 44.

[58] Ibid., p. 60.

[59] Letter from P. Aubert, n.d., quoted in James Michael Reardon, George Anthony Belcourt, Pioneer Missionary of the North West 1803-1874 (St. Paul: North Central Publishing Company, 1955), p. 59.

[60] Red River Census, 1838; P.A.C., MG - 9, E 3, vol. 1.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

IV

EDUCATION

In the area of education, there is not quite so much disagreement over the objectives and attainments of the missionaries as in the field of agriculture. Even those historians who consider that the priests were supportive of the traditional native way of life do not argue that they were tolerant of native ignorance. The missionaries' goals were clearly discernible from their early years in the colony, and they were unified in their estimation of the importance of these goals. Yet even with this agreement, their success among the Métis and Indians was less than they anticipated. Often, of course, factors beyond the control of the church would interfere with their efforts. Also much of the failure of their program can be blamed on a system of education completely unsuited to the native people of the Red River area, as well as to the fact that they set unreasonable goals for the people they were instructing. While the clerics who praise Provencher are correct in pointing out that he established the first educational institutions in Red River, their enthusiasm has often led to an overly generous assessment of the significance of this event. For by and large, until the nuns arrived in the colony in 1844, education was not at all widespread among the Catholic population. In fact, even among the students who did receive an education from the mission, the ambitions of the priests were far from being realized.

The priests had three reasons for wanting to educate the natives in the colony. The most obvious reason for promoting literacy was simply because it facilitated their own work among their converts.

Provencher complained that when they first arrived in the colony, the priests had to teach all the catechism lessons themselves, because no one among the Métis knew how to read.[1] Ideally the mission would have a group of literate native catechists who would relieve the priests of the task of simple rote drill in the catechism and prayers. This plan eventually met with some success. Belcourt, for example, planned to leave a native catechist and his wife at Wabassimong to continue religious instruction during the winter when a priest would not be there.[2] In general, however, the priests spent much of their teaching time giving religious instruction in the form of rote drills, because there were not natives able to do this task. Thus a vicious circle began; religious instruction took the time they wished to devote to teaching reading skills, but without teaching literacy they trained few native catechists.

The mere fact that the missionaries were interested in teaching reading so that people could teach the catechism and prayers of the Church did not mean that they were interested in promoting literacy in general, however. While Protestant evangelical movements of the nineteenth century were obsessed with the printed word, and even used their Sunday schools to teach basic literacy skills so that as many children as possible could have direct contact with the scriptures,[3] the Catholics still believed that the meaning of the Bible had to be interpreted to the faithful by the Church. When John West, the first Anglican minister in the colony, distributed a French testament to a

Swiss man married to a Catholic, Bishop Provencher called to retrieve it. Although the man would not give it up, he did lend it to the Bishop to examine. The Bishop did not simply object to these people having a testament because it was a Protestant one: when he returned the Bible he had inscribed above West's message of "Sondez les ecritures"; "Lisez avec soin les Ecritures, mais ne les expliquez point d'après vos lumières...c'est à l'Eglise de Jesus Christ qu'il appartient de determiner le sens des Ecritures".[4] This does not imply that the Catholic missionaries in Red River were opposed to mass literacy, of course. But it does indicate that they did not put a great deal of emphasis on imparting basic reading skills to as many people as possible for religious purposes.

Nonetheless, while it is true that they were not interested in teaching every converted Christian to read the Bible for himself, and only had to teach reading to a certain number of students destined to become catechists, there was another reason for wanting to open as many schools as possible. It was generally believed that education performed a civilizing role in the colony. The Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, for example, depended on the clergy (of both denominations) and the education they gave to overcome the "dangerous and expensive" problem of too many half-breeds in the colony living in "an uneducated and Savage Condition", and undertook to transport these cast-offs of the amalgamation of the fur trading companies to Red River free of charge, so that they could come under the civilizing influence of

Christian religion and education.[5] The missionaries subscribed to this theory too, and in 1846 Provencher said of the school the nuns had started, "Les principes religieux qu'on leur enseigne, le travail des mains et la politesse peu connue auparavant me donnent l'espérance de voir le pays se régénérer".[6] This consideration, therefore, determined that many schools were needed for the half-breed children — girls as well as boys — and the priests knew the Company and the Métis themselves would support Protestant schools as easily as Catholic ones. Therefore the Catholics had to try to establish as many schools as there were children to fill them, to prevent youngsters falling into the ways of heresy.

The main reason the Catholic church was interested in establishing an education system in Red River as soon as possible, however, was to produce native priests to work in the colony. The Bishop of Quebec, Plessis, constantly stressed the importance of this task in his letters to the missionaries,[7] and it dominated their thinking about education as well — particularly as it became increasingly difficult to recruit clergymen from Canada who would stay in Red River for any length of time. Nonetheless, although directing boys towards the priesthood was the main goal of the Catholic education system in the early years, the school system the missionaries established in Red River had to attempt to fill all of the above needs.

Thus the education offered to the Métis placed a heavy emphasis on religion, technical skills, and rudimentary reading and writing.

Lay people taught in some of the schools as well as priests, but priests always taught the classical course at St. Boniface. These lay teachers had no particular training for the task, but a few years school in Canada or, in later years, a few years at school in the colony sufficed. The lay teachers did have to be good Catholics, however, for they were expected to hold catechism classes, in the same way the priests did, outside of school hours for the older people or those who were not enrolled in school. These catechism classes were usually larger than the school enrollment.

St. Boniface had the only school that operated continually in the period 1818-1844, although its enrollment fluctuated widely. This school had a more sophisticated curriculum than the school which operated intermittantly at White Horse Plains. There were usually several students studying Latin at St. Boniface, and other advanced subjects taught were philosophy, rhetoric, and mathematics. By 1829 there was also an elementary school for girls at the Forks. After Belcourt established the mission at St. Paul's, he opened an Indian school there in which he attempted to teach the children in their own language, Saulteaux. This attempt quickly failed, however, due to a lack of text books (or a printing press on which to print them), among other factors.

All the schools suffered from the same problems which hampered the mission in other spheres of its activities as well. The lack of priests and an expanding school system meant that the schools could not be assured of competent teachers at all times. Often a lack of

space in the Company's canoes meant that books were often the first item to be dispensed with on a voyage from Canada. Not until the Grey Nuns arrived in 1844 did Provencher consider the future of Catholic education in Red River to be secure, or the quality of education tc be adequate to the needs of the colony.

The first priest arrived in July 1818, and catechism classes began immediately. These classes were simple rote drill, of course, but Provencher saw the need for reading instruction.[8] Thus the same year a school was started, accomodated in the same building as the chapel and Provencher's lodgings.[9] The Bishop was optimistic about educating the Métis, and thought they would learn to read quickly for they seemed easy to teach and generally intelligent.[10] Also in 1818 Dumoulin and Edge went down to Pembina, and started a school there the same year. By the beginning of 1819, Edge was teaching sixty young Métis. Dumoulin's impression of the students was similar to Provencher's; they seemed to him to be intelligent and apt students.[11] The Bishop thought the parents were anxious to have their children educated, and as early as 1819 wrote to Plessis that nuns were needed for the schools.[12]

However, after the first flush of enthusiasm had dissipated, it became clear that the obstacles to education were more numerous than simply a lack of nuns to teach in the schools at St. Boniface and Pembina. After the schools had been operating for a year, Provencher's reports to the Bishop sounded less optimistic. While he still boasted of a large number of baptisms and marriages as a result of religious instruc-

tion, he complained of problems with the school. The children were not "stable" enough — the result of the adults following the buffalo herds for their livelihood was that many students were constantly leaving the school.[13] The missionaries at Pembina, of course, had an even more unstable congregation as the population was entirely Métis. By February of 1819, Edge's school had less than forty students, whereas he had had nearly sixty only a short time before. However Dumoulin was able to extend schooling to some of the children who were not able to attend in Pembina, by engaging the services of a young man called Lagassé (Legacé) to teach in a winter camp. It is not clear how much education Lagassé had himself, or how much he was able to teach the children. He had forty students in February 1819, though Dumoulin anticipated he would have fifty by the end of the winter. These students were mainly learning the catechism, but Dumoulin reported that several who could not otherwise have attended school were learning to read as well.[14]

After Edge left the colony another young cleric, Joseph Sauvé, took his place at Pembina and continued teaching the school there. In 1821 there were about ten children learning to read and write at this school, and six others appeared to be advanced enough to study Latin.[15] The books Sauvé ordered that year included grammars, ABC's, abridgements of the classics, and, of course, religious books.[16] Dumoulin, who was working at St. Boniface while Provencher was in Canada in 1821-1822, attempted to get Sauvé to move his school to St. Boniface, though he

admitted there would only be five or six students at the latter place and still fewer in the winter.[17] Sauvé was understandably reluctant to change locations, but when the post at Pembina was abandoned in 1822, he began to teach at St. Boniface instead. As predicted, he had only a few students, most of whom made very little progress.[18] Shortly afterwards he left the colony and returned to Canada.

While Provencher was in Canada, and Dumoulin was filling his position at St. Boniface, Destroismaisons arrived in the colony. He took over the school Provencher had started at St. Boniface and taught there for two years. When Provencher returned, Destroismaisons was sent to the new mission at White Horse Plains. A new missionary, the seminarist Harper, replaced him at the St. Boniface school.[19] Harper stayed in the colony for nine years and taught school during the first five years, after which time Provencher had to send him out to evangelize due to the shortage of priests. Evidently Harper taught reading and writing and also arithmetic in which he had several students who were quite advanced.[20]

Dumoulin was able to report that he had two students at Pembina who were beginning to "show promise"; the curriculum they were following included grammar, syntax, Latin translation, and religious interpretation.[21] A knowledge of Latin was essential to the training of a priest, and that is presumably what Dumoulin was hoping for from these two scholars. Provencher usually taught the Latin scholars himself at St. Boniface. In 1824 he had four students studying Latin, two of whom seemed very

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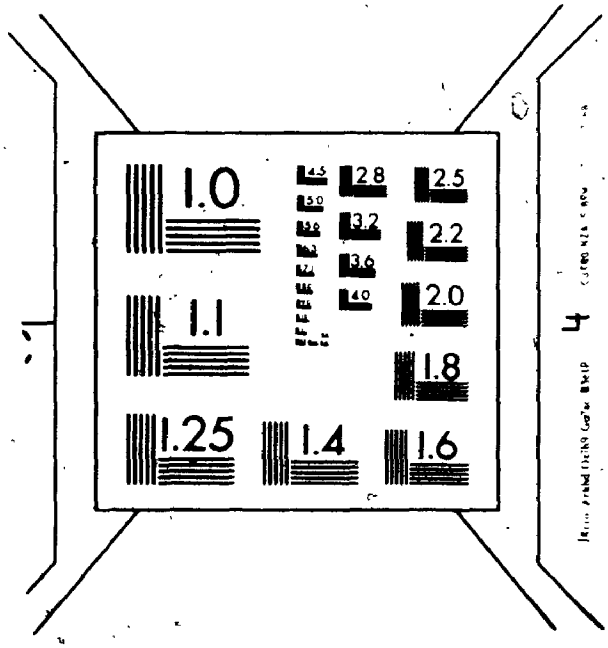

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advanced — at least in comparison to the general level of education among the Métis. However, the priesthood demanded a level of competance which was still beyond them, though Provencher wrote he was pushing them as fast as he was able towards that goal.[22]

Unfortunately he was disappointed a year later, as both of these senior students decided they did not want to become priests and left the school. Provencher had hoped that one of them, a Métis named Victor Chénier, would at least take over Harper's school, but he proved uninterested even in that and returned to his father at Pembina.[23] Provencher was forced to admit that his plan for training a native clergy would not be realized immediately. He wrote to Plessis that there were few scholars who were very advanced or showed much promise.[24]

The Bishop was not exclusively interested in the formation of priests, however. He wished to educate girls as well as boys — this being part of the general "civilizing" aspect of education. In addition, he wanted to get female education under way before the Protestants started a school.[25] He began negotiations with Angelique Nolin as early as 1824, but her father refused to let her leave Pembina. It was not until he died in 1829 that the Bishop's plans for a girls' school were realized. In that year two of the Nolin daughters decided to move to St. Boniface to teach in the girls' school. Aside from academic skills, they planned to teach cooking and weaving.[26]

Although this situation improved prospects for female education,

the established schools were plagued by problems. There was a constant shortage of books. The mission was short of funds and could not afford to buy many books. When Provencher was in Canada in 1821, he suggested to Plessis that the Lower Canadian priests should send all their old or extra books to the mission.[27] The acceptance of this suggestion did nothing to alleviate the problem, for apart from the expense of books, there was great difficulty in transporting them. The Company allowed the mission only a limited amount of space and weight in their canoes, and on several occasions Provencher was forced to ask Bourget (who was in charge of organizing the shipments for the Red River mission) to restrict a shipment to only the most essential and useful articles. As cloth and tobacco were used as media of exchange in the colony, they often took up all the available space in the canoes, and dictionaries and books had to be held back.[28]

Apart from this problem with books and school supplies from Canada, the constant shortage of priests and the nomadism of the Métis meant that often both teachers and students were lacking. The Bishop attempted to go some way toward remedying the latter problem by taking in students as pensioners. Their board had to be paid by the mission, of course, but it was hoped the parents of the students might help pay for their children's education by supplying buffalo meat for the priests and scholars. The students the Bishop lodged were naturally the senior Latin scholars; he wrote to Quebec in 1833 that he had many elementary students who could go on to Latin but that he could only

afford to take in a few as pensioners and pay all their expenses. Because of this difficulty, he was only able to have seven Métis students studying Latin in 1834.[29] Of course, simply providing the conditions whereby several native children could study Latin did little to further Provencher's goal of producing a native clergy. Few of them had any desire to go to Canada to study,[30] and none of them became priests.

The lack of educated people in the colony meant that often priests were neglecting their religious duties to teach school. It also restricted the number and type of schools which the mission could operate. To remedy the situation the Bishop attempted to find lay people to work as teachers for the elementary grades. The Nolins were the only people with whom he had much success, for though it took several years of negotiations to obtain their services, they stayed with the mission for many years and ran a successful girls' school at St. Boniface and later another school at Belcourt's mission at St. Paul's. Other lay teachers were difficult to find, however, and equally difficult to keep. Lagassé, for example, whom Dumoulin sent up to teach in a winter camp in 1819, must have lasted only a short while, for in the reports sent out to Quebec the following year, no mention is made of him or his school. In 1829 Provencher tried to convince a young Métis who had studied Latin but had no vocation to teach school at St. Boniface, where Boucher had been teaching.[31] This plan, if ever carried out at all, must have been equally short-lived because no further

mention is made of him in the reports of the mission's progress. Another Métis student, François Bruneau, helped Harper in his school at St. Boniface from 1829 to 1832 or 1833.[32] In 1834, the son of a former company agent, Shaw, took over the elementary school at St. Boniface. (Poiré had started this school in 1832, and when he went to St. Francis Xavier, Thibault took over the school in 1833).[33] Apparently Shaw had already been holding a school up the river for some years before he moved to St. Boniface. Once there he was able to teach English to the Latin scholars, whom Thibault was now teaching.[34]

By 1832 there were 150 students in the Catholic schools in the colony.[35] Four schools were operating by that year, Poiré had a school at White Horse Plains, Belcourt had opened a school at his new Indian mission of St. Paul's on the Assiniboine River, and there was a girls' school and a boys' school at St. Boniface. While the other schools taught fairly elementary skills, the latter had two teachers, a large elementary program, and a sophisticated curriculum including English, French, Latin and philosophy for its seven senior students. In 1834, for the first time, Provencher was able to write back to Canada that he seemed to have adequate personnel and that there was no need to send up new priests the following year.[36]

Despite this happy prediction, however, his school system was subject to the same problems in the 1830's that it had faced in the 1820's. The situation in 1834 notwithstanding, there was a shortage of teachers for most of the decade. It is not clear when Shaw left,

but by 1836 Proyencher was looking for new teachers again. He brought a young man called Morin from France to teach school that year, but he turned out to be ineffectual and quickly left for Montreal after costing the mission a great deal of money for his travel and expenses. In 1837, while waiting to arrange his passage to the west coast, Demers began teaching the only two Latin scholars who were left temporarily. At the same time the Bishop had to fire a young teacher who had been working up the river and had "lost the public confidence". There was no one with whom to replace him.[37] Though there was a priest at White Horse Plains to operate the school, Poiré was frequently absent because he went with the hunters to the plains twice a year.[38] By 1836 the Nolin sisters had decided to go to St. Paul's to take over the Indian school Belcourt had established.[39] While this may have freed Belcourt for evangelical work, it meant the closure of the girls' school at St. Boniface.

The situation deteriorated even further by the 1840's. The mission only had three or four priests at a time, and after two decades the area and the population they had to deal with had grown enormously. While some of the priests travelled to distant areas, the ones left in the colony were forced to limit themselves to strictly religious activities. Thus by 1842, Provencher described the situation as follows:

> Je suis sans école, il n'y a pas une fille ici capable de la faire. Je ne suis pas mieux partagé en école de garçons.... J'ai un de mes anciens élèves qui pourrait faire l'école; je ne suis pas sûr qu'il le veuille ni qu'il réussisse, ce ne pourrait être qu'une école de

> commençants. Les parents ont peu de courage pour envoyer leurs enfants dont ils ne veulent pas se priver, de sorte que tout va en traînant situé à peu près comme vous autres au milieu des protestants; manquer d'école est une chose grave.[40]

Provencher was not entirely without schools in the colony; despite the fact that the elementary schools had closed, a few senior scholars continued to study. And when the Grey Nuns arrived in 1844, the mission was once again able to offer elementary education on a wider basis. But certainly up until the arrival of the religious orders in the mid-1840's it would seem that the education offered by the Catholic mission could have had very little social impact on the general native population in Red River.

When discussing "social change" among a group of people, the effect of education should be one of the most important areas of discussion, for only schools and churches provided formal institutions of acculturation. Unfortunately the effect of the mission's campaign of example and persuasion regarding agriculture is easier to guage than the results of their formal lessons in literary skills, for not a great deal of quantifiable material remains to give us an insight into the literacy skills of the natives of Red River. The census does not give any information as to a person's ability to read and/or write. Other sources sometimes used to study literacy, such as petitions and marriage registers, do not seem to have survived in their original form. Therefore much of an assessment of the results of the mission's efforts in the field of education must rely on impressions gleaned from spotty

and incomplete qualitative sources.

Several very superficial examples lead one to believe that literacy had not become very widespread amongst the Métis in the colony. In 1859, four petitions were presented to the Council of Assiniboia on the subject of the evils arising from liquor being imported from the United States into Red River. In the minutes of the Council, it says that the petition from the parishioners of St. Johns had 39 signatures, the one from "Red River colony" had 146 signatures, the one from St. Andrews had 53 signatures, while

> the other one in French carried no signatures but the following attestation. Les Témoins soussignés attestent que dans une assemblée très nombreuse, convoquée et tenue à cet effet dans une des salles de l'Evêché de Saint Boniface, pendant la journée du 6 courant; tous les individues presents, après avoir entendu la lecture de la pétition ci-jointe, ont applaudi d'une voix unanime aux mesures qu'elle propose; que tous ont ouvertement exprimé de desir d'avoir, dans la Colonie, une loi qui, en fixant un impôt pour l'importation des liqueurs de quelque pays qu'elles viennent, établisse en même temps un susteme de licence, pour en regler la fabrication et la vente.....
>
> (Signed) Alex: Evêque de St. Boniface
> (Signed) Amable Thibault Leveillé o.m.i.[41]

There are two problems with this example: first of all, the mere fact that the French did not submit a petition in the same form as the others is no indication that they were not able to do so if they wished; and secondly, there is no proof that the other three petitions referred to actually bore the signatures of the individuals adhering to them and not simply a series of "x" marks. Nonetheless, it suggests that

perhaps the French-speaking group would not have been able to read and sign the document if it had been circulated in the normal way.

Another example of Métis illiteracy concerns only one man, but one who rose to prominence as a Métis leader during the rebellions in 1869-1870. William McDougall wrote to Governor Mactavish at Fort Garry that as he approached the settlement in November, 1869, two Métis who were "apparently recognized as leaders" warned him to turn back. McDougall resisted, and gave them his Commission under the Great Seal to read. He then added that "the Captain of the band looked at the Seal and parchment and made an effort to read the document but soon handed it back...".[42] While this incident only concerns one illiterate man (who may, in fact, only have been illiterate in English), perhaps it is indicative that many of the Métis involved in the rebellion could not read or write, for later the same month Mactavish said in a letter that "Louis Riel yesterday sent me, on the part of the French speaking section of the population, but signed only by himself, a protest...".[43] This does not prove that the other Métis could not sign the protest, but it is noteworthy that the petition only bore one signature.

While these isolated examples seem to indicate that a great many Métis did not learn to read and write, it can be said that in general the Métis were agreeable to having their children educated. In actual fact, they often took their children out of the schools when they went on the hunt, but when schooling was possible, there is no evidence that they did not send them. Certainly Provencher's complaints were always

about a lack of teachers, and not a lack of students. On one occasion, he mentioned that the parents did not like to send their children away from them. Nevertheless, when boarding facilities were available for scholars he explained that it was the mission's lack of funds and not the students' lack of interest which restricted the number of students in the program. Now it cannot be argued that the Métis and Indians were clamouring for places in the schools, but certainly the fact that the missionaries felt their efforts met with less success than they anticipated in attributable to other factors than hostility or absolute indifference on the part of their flock to education.

These factors have all been discussed above; there were not enough teachers or missionaries, those that there were usually only stayed in the Northwest for a few years, and so the schools were continually closing and being reopened. In addition, even when the schools were open, they were hampered by poor facilities and supplies. The major problem with their system, however, was that the type of education the missionaries were concentrating on was unsuitable and wasteful in terms of the society they were dealing with in Red River. Instruction in basic literacy skills and simple technical programs for as many people as possible was needed in the colony.

Instead, the Bishop's main thrust in the school system was to produce native priests. There is some evidence that not all the priests agreed with this priority. Belcourt, at least, attempted to teach simple skills in the Saulteaux language at St. Paul's, but the Bishop

thought he should teach only converted Catholics and otherwise not waste his time which could be spent proselytizing. The Bishop instead preferred to direct the time of at least one of his few priests to teaching Latin classes and devoted as much money as possible to give full support to a few senior Latin scholars. These were natural priorities, for the Bishop was not interested in spreading native literacy but rather in producing a native clergy — but in this goal, of course, he met with absolute failure.

NOTES

[1] J.N. Provencher, Mémoire ou Notice sur l'établissement de la Mission de la Rivière Rouge et ses progrès depuis 1818 in Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXIX (1930), p. 232.

[2] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 2 January 1843, "Lettres de Monseigneur Joseph-Norbert Provencher, Premier Evêque de Saint-Boniface, Manitoba", Bulletin de la Société Historique de Saint-Boniface, III (1913), 14.

[3] Allan Greer, "The Sunday Schools of Upper Canada", Ontario History, LXVII (September, 1975), 170.

[4] John West, The Substance of a Journal During a Residence at the Red River Colony (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1966), pp. 74- 75.

[5] R. Harvey Fleming, ed. Minutes of the Council of the Northern Department of Rupert's Land, 1821-1831, Champlain Society, Hudson's Bay Company Series, No. 3 (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1940), p. 34.

[6] J.N. Provencher to Conseils Centraux de Lyon et Paris, n.d., "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 244.

[7] Ivanhoe Caron, "Inventaire de la Correspondance de Monseigneur Joseph-Octave Plessis, Archevêque de Québec", Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec (1928-1929), 184.

[8] Provencher, Mémoire sur la Mission de la Rivière Rouge, p. 232.

[9] Ibid., p. 258.

[10] J.N. Provencher to A. Dionne, 10 September 1818, "Histoire de l'Ouest, Les Archives de l'Archévêché: Lettres de Mgr Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXXI (April, 1932), 86.

[11] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, January 1819, in Grace Lee Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, 1815-1827 (Saint Paul: The Minnesota Historical Society, 1942), p. 179.

[12] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 15 January 1819, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 35.

[13] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 24 November 1819, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 43.

[14] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, February 1819, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 205.

[15] J.N.S. Dumoulin the J.O. Plessis, January 1821, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 287.

[16] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 14 June 1821, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 56.

[17] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, 1821, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 321.

[18] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, August 1822, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 362.

[19] "Histoire de l'Ouest, Les Archives de l'Archévêché", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, IX (1 January 1910), 4-5.

[20] [J.N.S. Dumoulin], Notice sur la Rivière Rouge dans le Territoire de la Baie d'Hudson in Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXVI (1927), p. 181.

[21] J.N.S. Dumoulin to J.O. Plessis, December 1822, in Nute, Documents Relating to the North-West Missions, p. 389.

[22] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 June 1824, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 94.

[23] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 8 August 1825, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 106.

[24] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 12 June 1825, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 100-102.

[25] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 13 June 1824, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 96.

[26] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 18 June 1828, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 123.

[27] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 September 1821, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 57.

[28] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartigne, 25 October 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (1 Februry 1919), 35.

[29] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartigne, 24 July 1833 and 13 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (1 and 15 January 1919), 12, 22.

[30] Ibid.

[31] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 6 June 1829, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 127.

[32] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 23 July 1831, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 133.

[33] C.E. Poiré, "Notes sur les prèmières Ecoles et le premier Collège de la Rivière-Rouge", quoted in P.R. Regnier, "A History of Saint Boniface College" (unpublished M. Ed. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1964), pp. 24-27.

[34] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 16 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 137.

[35] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartigne, 12 July 1832, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVII (15 December 1918), 313.

[36] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 16 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 139.

[37] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 4 July 1837, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 168.

[38] C.E. Poiré, "Notes sur les premières Ecoles et le premier Collège de la Rivière-Rouge", quoted in Regnier, "A History of Saint Boniface College", pp. 24-27.

[39] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 17 November 1836, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 155-156.

[40] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 30 June 1842, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 203.

[41] "Minutes of the Council of Assiniboia", 10 March 1859, Public Archives of Canada, MG- 9, E 1, vol. 1.

[42] W. McDougall to Governor Mactavish, 4 November 1869, P.A.C., MG- 9, E 1, vol. 1.

[43] Governor Mactavish to W.G. Smith, 16 November 1869, P.A.C., MG- 9, E 1, vol. 1.

V

RELIGION AND MORALITY

Although the missionaries spent much of their money and time farming and teaching school, they were always well aware that their chief object among Red River's native people was spiritual conversion. All their efforts to teach farming, discourage nomadism, and increase literacy were not simply directed at improving the material lot of the Indians and Métis, but rather at enabling them to become Christians and to maintain a Christian life after their conversion. The missionaries felt that the introduction of these European material changes was necessary in order to achieve the spiritual and moral changes they sought.

It has always been an accepted notion that the Protestant missionaries from England, in addition to converting the heathen to Christianity, were trying to establish a "little Britain" in the wilderness. Certainly some of the diaries and letters of Protestant clergymen in Red River show every indication that "civilization" was of chief importance.[1] However the Catholic missionaries found it just as impossible to separate religious change from social change. Bishop Provencher and his priests were trying to establish a "little Quebec" on the banks of the Red River, and this goal encompassed far more in their minds than simply a similar ecclesiastical structure. They not only wanted to establish a diocesan system with several parishes, each supporting its own priest, looking to the Bishop of St. Boniface for spiritual direction. They wanted their parishioners to be good Catholic

believers; they also wanted them to wear clothes, become farmers, and be temperate.

Although these particular concerns were outside the strict boundaries of Catholic theology, many of the social and spiritual aspects of native life were difficult to separate. While nomadism, for example, was not specifically anti-Catholic, it meant the Métis and Indians were away from the moral supervision of a missionary for long periods of time. Similarly, while the consumption of alcohol was not prohibited, the fact that the Indians drank only to get drunk, and that drunkenness itself often held a pagan spiritual meaning to them, meant that the Catholic priests had to concern themselves with trying to establish temperance in the Red River colony. In other areas, the connection between religion and social change was more obvious. Polygamy, of course, was absolutely unacceptable to the priests, and it was quite clear that only a monagamous Indian could be baptized. The only change the missionaries sought which seemed to be unconnected to religion and stem strictly from cultural prejudice was the wearing of clothes. In all other areas, the changes the missionaries demanded really were necessary if permanent religious conversion was to occur.

The reason it was so important to the missionaries to establish a "Christian society" was that experience had taught them the fallacy of believing a repentant convert who agreed to baptism would continue to lead a good Christian life. In 1813, the Bishop of Quebec had been forced to instruct his missionaries in the Saguenay area to delay

baptism until native converts had proved their conviction and zeal by two or three years of observable "Christian" living.[2] The missionaries in Red River had noticed the same tendency of their Christian converts to stray from moral behavior when away on the hunt. Thus Provencher realized the need to establish fixed mission stations where the priests could undertake to transform the nature of native life as well as teach lessons of Christianity. Certainly there were differences among the priests as to what extent endeavours of a material nature should precede and outweigh those of a spiritual nature. But all of the priests shared a certain conception of the type of new society they were trying to establish among the Indians and Métis.

First and foremost, the missionaries were interested in spreading Catholicism. The Métis were already nominally Catholic, by virtue of their father's or grandfather's religion, so that the priests did not have to make the same type of conversion effort among these people as among the Indians. Among both groups, however, whether pagan or nominally Christian, there was a great need for instruction in the outward formalities of religion, as the Catholic practices of voluntary fasting, confession, and regular prayer, for example, were unknown. Aside from these spiritual practices, the missionaries also wished to encourage the native people to adopt material practices of Lower Canadian Catholicism by settling around a church and paying tithes to support a priest. And in order to accomplish the permanent establishment of Catholicism in Red River, the mission worked towards developing a

native clergy. Bishop Provencher, in particular, was concerned about the latter problem as he realized that Christianity would always be a superficial gloss on the traditional society of the native people as long as they were ministered to by priests from another culture.

Along with the acceptance of Catholic doctrine and the practice of Catholic rituals, the priests wanted the Métis and Indians to adopt a "Christian" life. It has already been discussed why the priests were opposed to nomadism and promoted a sedentary agricultural economy. While the men were tending the fields, the missionaries wished to see the women industriously spinning and weaving, while their children, neatly dressed, attended school and learned to read. The priests were not able to bring this situation about merely by introducing farming and schools, however. In the case of the Métis, the problem was mainly that they seemed better able to support themselves by hunting, as well as to have an understandably strong preference for their familiar way of life. The same situation existed for the Indians, of course, and was further complicated by two factors to which the missionaries were totally opposed — polygamy and drunkenness. In all their attempts to encourage monagamy and temperance among the Indians, however, the priests met with a singular lack of success.

Thus while the priests envisaged the same type of ideal society for both the Indians and the Métis, the problems they encountered with the two groups were vastly different. And, as with the introduction of agriculture and handcrafts and education, the responses they met

with from the two groups were different as well. Therefore, a clearer understanding of the social changes these two groups underwent could be gained by examining them separately.

While the life of the Métis was certainly unlike the Lower Canadian model the missionaries upheld, they were far from being nomadic heathens who had never been exposed to western social behavior. Long before the Catholic missionaries appeared in Red River, the Métis had evolved a sense of their distinct "nationality", a tradition born of the unique position they occupied in the fur trade of the Northwest. This tradition, while encompassing certain elements of "Indian" ways, such as their dependence on the buffalo hunt, owed much to its French origins as well. They lived apart from both the Indians and the fur traders, but were, as John Foster describes it, "...conscious of their dual heritage".[3] Foster points out the symbolic split of the colony into "...'North West Company' and 'Hudson's Bay Company', 'French' and 'English', Roman Catholic and Protestant, hunter and farmer".[4] This perception the Métis had of themselves as a group both "French" and "Catholic" meant that the Métis greeted the arrival of the Catholic priests from Canada with enthusiasm, and quickly set about learning the catechism and preparing for baptism, for Catholicism was a long-standing element of their cultural heritage.

Belcourt and Taché both wrote descriptions of Red River society in which they insisted upon the civilized morality of these people, despite the fact that they led what was considered an uncivilized life.[5]

Provencher never commented in his letters (at least in the ones which still exist) whether he considered the Métis as a group to be "moral" or otherwise, although he frequently discussed cases of drunkenness, and more often, marriage problems. At the same time, however, he was full of praise for the enthusiasm the Métis showed for religious instruction and the rapidity with which they learned.

Within a month of Provencher's and Dumoulin's arrival in the settlement, they were at work teaching the catechism to many women and children, preparing them for baptism and marriage. Already they had baptized 72 people, including a little Saulteaux girl. (Although Provencher did not specify, it is likely the majority of these students were Métis, since the French Canadians in the colony would already have been baptized and married, and he later pointed out that they could not convert the Indians in any measure without knowing their language.[6]) According to Provencher, the Bois-brûlé children showed a great deal of intelligence, and learned the catechism and prayers easily. The mere fact that they memorized prayers so readily is no indication of their spiritual conversion, of course. Provencher commented in September of 1818 that "tous ces enfants qu'on a appelés depuis quelques années Bois-brûlé n'ont pas plus d'idée de Dieu et de la religion que les autres sauvages".[7] As the Métis children seemed to be learning to read just as quickly and with as great enthusiasm as they learned their prayers,[8] and as Provencher never chose to comment on their religious conversions or devotion, one wonders if the enthusiasm they

demonstrated for learning was due more to an interest in education than Christianity. With reference to the Métis women, the wives of the Canadians employed by the North West Company, Provencher also noted their "bonne volonté" but made no mention of spiritual fervour or dévotion. All he mentioned was that they were slow to learn, handicapped as they were by age and an ignorance of French.[9]

While the priests never made much fuss over the deep constant faith displayed by the Métis (as they were later to do when discussing certain Indian tribes), the Métis did not, on the other hand, put up a steady opposition to the Christian religion. As well as seeming to welcome the priests for the education they provided, they seemed attracted by the ritualistic aspects of Catholicism. In 1834, for example, when Provencher introduced a new "devotion", it had a great effect on the Métis, all of whom went to confession and communion that week.[10] In fact, if anything, the Métis were probably too amenable to Christianity for the priests' liking. In 1843, for example, Thibault reported that on a previous mission to the Northwest, he had found that the Métis had been following a Methodist missionary, though most were perfectly willing to forsake him to listen to the Catholic priest. Some, however, had seriously embraced Methodism, particularly, he thought, the bigamists.[11]

The odd marriage entanglements of the Métis often created dilemmas for the priests. Situations of polygamy, of course, were absolutely condemned, and "infidels" with several wives were never

admitted to baptism or the other sacraments. This position of the church, however, created many more problems among the Indians than the Métis, for by and large the Métis were monagamous. The Canadians who took a native wife "au façon du pays" often had a typical French Canadian family life for all they had not been married in the Church. In addition, they usually wished to be married according to Lower Canadian custom when it became possible. Thus, when the priests arrived, it was a relatively simple matter for them to instruct the women, baptize them, and perform a Christian marriage ceremony. The Métis of several generations who had lived on the prairie in their own communities also tended to be monagamous, and were not at all averse to the Christian marriage the priests would perform after proper instruction and baptism.

Where the priests encountered difficulties, though, was with cases of marriages between a Catholic and a non-Catholic and, most difficult of all, consanguinity. Both these types of marriages involved people who were already cohabiting, usually with children, and wished to be married according to Christian principles. The priests, of course, were more than eager to have these people properly married. At the same time, Catholic law absolutely forbade the marriage of infidels, or of a Catholic and an infidel, or of related persons.

Bishop Provencher himself was usually willing to compromise about impediments of consanguinity, and made frequent requests to the Bishop of Quebec for dispensations to allow him to marry relatives

who were cohabiting and already had children.[12] While these requests for authority to accommodate the marriage practices of the Métis may be seen as an ability to compromise and not demand enormous social changes from the Métis on the part of the missionaries, it is also an indication that the Church felt little optimism about the outcome of demanding from the Métis rigid adherence to foreign rules. Certainly there is no indication of Christian Métis couples separating because of consanguinity.

With reference to marriages between infidels, the Bishop also showed a remarkable ability to compromise. In 1819 he seemed willing to marry Protestants and Catholics not only to legitimize the relationship of several unmarried couples who had been living together for a long time, but also to delay the arrival of Protestant clergymen in the colony.[13] However, once the first Protestant clergyman — John West of the Church of England — had arrived, the Bishop proved more intransigent. Though Provencher himself never mentioned the matter of Protestant-Catholic marriages again, West reported in his journal that "...the Canadian Catholic Priests...refused, because their intended wives were Protestants; and such was their bigotry in this matter, in refusing to marry a Catholic to a Protestant, that they expressed an opinion, that a Catholic could not be present, even as a witness, 'sine culpa',...when I performed the marriage ceremony, 'inter Catholices et Haeretices'".[14] While the Bishop may have changed his mind about marrying Protestants and Catholics, he always seemed to be fairly

flexible about marrying two Métis non-Christians, no doubt feeling that they would shortly become Catholics and that in any case it was better for them to be married than to live together without marriage.[15]

The fact that the priests adapted their marriage customs to Métis society as well as the other way around is one indication that the priests were not able to remodel Métis society to an exact replica of Lower Canadian society. While the Métis showed a certain amount of interest in getting married in accordance with Catholic custom, their interest seemed to extend only as far as making "official" a situation which already existed. There is no evidence that they ever came to believe consanguinity was any impediment to marriage, or that marriages broke up for such a reason. There are other factors which can be used to guage social change which seem to point to a similar conclusion — that the Métis accepted Catholicism in areas where it coincided with their own social customs, but that fundamental and deep social changes were not to be the result of the acceptance of Catholic ritual.

In the matter of drunkenness, for example, the priests never had to deal with the same kind of enormous problem among the Métis as they did among the Indians. Nevertheless, they did consider drunkenness a sin, of course, and tried to encourage the Métis to stop drinking to excess. Their pleas, examples and discipline seemingly had little effect, however, because in 1845 Provencher mentioned in a letter to Bishop Bourget that he had finally had to establish a temperance move-

ment. He wrote that "près de quatre cent sont enrôlés parmi lesquels il y a bien des ivrognes".[16] The fact that 400 people enrolled in the movement is an indication that the priests had had an effect on morals in the colony, but the fact that they found it necessary to establish the movement and comment on the number of drunkards in 1845 also indicates that the priests' influence on Métis drunkenness in the previous thirty years had not been dramatic.

Aside from condemming drunkenness, the priests seemed generally concerned about what they termed the "vice" that occurred when the Métis went out to the plains twice a year on the buffalo hunt. By doing so they escaped the watchful eye of their priests. Very soon after the priests began their mission in the colony, the Bishop began delegating a priest to accompany the Métis on the hunt. In 1822 Dumoulin, who had gone with the Métis from Pembina, was saying mass every Sunday that they were on the hunt and continuing to instruct people in preparation for their baptism.[17] In 1827 Harper began going with the Métis from White Horse Plains on the hunt. As it was estimated the voyage would last two months, Provencher was probably correct in assuming that the Christian instruction of the Métis would suffer if they had no priest with them for that length of time.[18]

Simply sending a priest along on the hunt, however, seemed to do little to stop the "vice" that worried Provencher. In his opinion only the end of the Métis' nomadic way of life would put an end to the vice it bred. After Harper had made several trips in 1827 and

1828 into the plains, Provencher remarked that he had spent a great deal of time "...sans faire grand bien; les gens étaient trop occupés."[19] In 1825 he had proposed a solution to the problem — the establishment of a resident priest south of the Forks, he felt, would encourage the Métis to settle down and cultivate the land and this in turn would "moralize" them.[20] In 1826, when the hunt was very bad, he hoped the ensuing misery would force the Métis to turn to cultivation despite their laziness and disinterest.[21] These hopes were never realized, as they were unfounded. The establishment of a mission and resident priest at White Horse Plains did nothing to stop the regularity of the hunt. Nor did the periodic misery which followed a bad season, to which the Métis were quite accustomed. In fact the hunt continued until much later in the century and only stopped then because the enormous herds of buffalo had vanished from the plains. Although the priests accompanied the Métis to the plains, and caused several slight changes in their traditional customs (for example, mass was said on Sundays and no hunting took place), the hunt itself continued — including the priests' complaints of its "vice". It was, of course, the institution most fundamental to the social character of the Métis, and the priests had no success in abolishing it and little in altering it.

In addition to being relatively ineffectual in areas of moral conversion, the priests seemed to have little effect in making fervent Christians of the Métis either. The point has already been made that there are no existing accounts of conversion experiences among the

Métis, but as this type of occurrence is not a feature of Catholicism as it is of many Protestant sects, its absence does not necessarily point to a lack of faith and committment to Christianity. The priests certainly did receive large numbers of the Métis for baptism, although there is no record of how many continued to confess and take communion regularly. Several examples point to the fact that they certainly were not committed to Catholicism to the extent of supporting their priests and their Church. In 1834 Provencher reported that his parishioners were not doing their corvée and that it had been necessary to demand the intervention of the government to force them to do so.[22] (These people may or may not have been Métis, however; in fact a good number were probably Canadians). The same year he remarked that he hoped the good harvest they had just realized would inspire the Catholics in the colony to donate more than they had previously given for the construction of the new church which was underway at St. Boniface, and which had practically had to be abandoned because of lack of support.[23] While it is of course debatable whether a reluctance to donate to the construction of a stone cathedral in a country as poor as the Red River colony is any indication of a lack of committment to the Catholic church, the situation with regard to financial support was clearer at St. Francis Xavier. Provencher reported that during the winter of 1836-1837 Poiré, who was stationed at White Horse Plains, had been unable to do much work at all because his parishioners, who had promised to fix up a building for him to teach catechism classes and school in, had failed

to do so.[24] In 1842 the situation was much the same. That year it was reported that Father Mayrand, who was serving both missions of St. Francis Xavier and St. Paul, had received hardly any support from his parishioners at all. Provencher said that "ses gens lui donnent peu. Il entend l'économie et il vivra ou d'autres crèveront de faim".[25]

Apart from these material indications of the impact of Catholicism upon the Métis, the most telling factor was the inability of the priests to attract even one Métis into the priesthood, despite the fact that they had had the formation of a native clergy as one of their major goals since their arrival in the colony. Provencher was well aware of the impossibility of continuing to staff the missions in Red River with priests from Lower Canada who were continually wishing to leave. What he wanted to see instead was a native clergy develop, but one that was just as dedicated and educated as the priests from Lower Canada. The vows of chastity and obedience which Catholicism required took more devotion than any of the Métis seemingly had. In addition a great deal of specialized education (notably years of Latin) was required of Catholic priests. Provencher was frequently able to attract students into Latin classes but invariably they left the school before attaining the priesthood. Whether they were deterred by classical studies or material sacrifices is unclear, but the fact remains that not one Métis in the Northwest elected to become a priest during this period.

Some Métis women, however, were attracted to a religious life. In 1845 three Métis postulants were admitted.[26] A year later Provencher

reported that three postulants were taking the habit and some time later Sister Nolin did as well.[27] In 1845, when the first postulants were admitted, Provencher admitted that they gave little hope of rising to the "first ranks".[29] This was likely no slander of their moral behaviour or spiritual state, but simply his opinion that it was unlikely that they would be able to take over from the Canadian nuns who by that time had assumed responsibility for most of the medical care and education for the Catholic population in the colony. As the nuns were teaching "les principes religieux,...le travail des mains et la politesse" to their students, it is not surprising that the Métis girls from Red River did not have the same abilities. In addition, while nuns were a very great help to the mission, they could never relieve the Quebec diocese of the burden of staffing the diocese of St. Boniface as native priests could.

However, despite the fact that these cases indicate that the Catholic mission did not have an extremely dramatic effect in altering the Métis society, the Hudson's Bay Company, which had introduced the priests as an instrument of social change in the first place, evidently felt that they were filling this function. In 1825 they began a policy of giving £50 a year to the mission for its services to the colony. The motion they passed read as follows:

> Great benefit having been derived from the benevolent and undefatigable exertions of the Catholic mission at Red River in the welfare moral and religious instruction of its numerous followers and it being observed with much satisfaction that the influence of the Mission

> ...had been uniformly directed to the best interests of the Settlement and of the country at large, it is — Resolved: that in order to mark our approbation of such laudable and disinterested conduct on the part of said Mission, the sum of £50 be given towards its support, together with an allowance of luxuries for its use.[29]

The same allowance continued to be made annually for the same reasons.

It was true that in many respects the priests had become important to Métis society, and did, of course, have a certain amount of influence. Whether they were ever able to direct the Métis to follow a certain course of behaviour is uncertain. It seems more likely that the Métis followed the leadership of a person such as Cuthbert Grant, since both the Company and the Church made a great effort to ally themselves with him. Nevertheless, the Métis did seem inclined to look to the leadership of the priests on occassion. In 1846, for example, when they were opposing the Company's fur trade monopoly, they had Belcourt draw up a petition for them to that effect.[30] However, despite the Company's allegations to the contrary, it seems that Belcourt only drew up the petition as the Métis requested and was not instrumental in shaping their opposition to the Company. Likely the Métis approached Belcourt to write the petition for them simply because he was literate.

The final conclusion which seems to emerge would indicate that the Métis welcomed the priests, adopted Catholicism easily, and had a certain respect for their position as leaders and authorities. When it came to accepting the leadership of the priests to the extent of

drastically modifying their own society, though, the Métis remained unmoved. None of them became priests, "vice" (at least what constituted vice to the priests) continued unabated, and, most telling of all, they never gave up their dependence on the buffalo hunt until forced to by economic necessity. The point has been made that the Métis considered being "French" and "Catholic" as distinctive characteristics of their separate "national" character in Red River. In view of their behaviour, it seem that they welcomed the priests more for nationalistic reasons than spiritual ones.

Nonetheless, in spite of the reluctance of the Métis to embrace all the aspects of "civilization", the priests never encountered the obstacles to conversion that the Indian societies they dealt with presented. The Indians had never been exposed to Christianity at all, and, in addition, had their own complicated belief systems to overcome. The Métis, on the other hand, were well disposed to the priests and nominally Catholics even before their arrival. The missionaries' task, then, was simply to teach them how to be <u>good</u> Catholics. When dealing with the Indians, however, spiritual education was just as difficult as moral.

When the priests first arrived in Red River they ministered almost entirely to the Canadians and the Métis, as both those groups spoke French. Provencher wished to extend the mission to the Saulteaux, the tribe which lived in the Red River area, but was handicapped by the fact that neither he nor his priests knew the Saulteaux language.

He stated shortly after his arrival though that he believed conversion of this tribe would be a simple matter if the priests could only speak their language.[31] As he was struck with the nakedness, drunkenness and laziness of the Saulteaux immediately upon his arrival,[32] he was very anxious to begin that work.

Although now and then one of the priests would go on a travelling mission west to Rainy Lake or north to the Bay, it was not until 1832 that a permanent Indian mission was established. This was St. Paul's, and Father Belcourt, fluent in Saulteaux, was the resident priest. Provencher had great hopes for the success of this mission. He thought the "savages" at St. Paul's loved Belcourt like a father and were eager for instruction.[33] He also thought they showed more confidence in the Catholic priests than in the Protestant missionaries who had approached them.[34]

Only two years later, Provencher's optimism had faded. He reported that Belcourt was very disappointed because the Indians continued to delay receiving religious instruction.[35] Provencher was willing to admit that Belcourt's savages were so brutal it would take a miracle to convert them,[36] but he also criticized Belcourt. He accused Belcourt of being afraid of the Indians' ridicule, and to Belcourt's explanation of how frightened the Indians were of the "terrible realities" of Christianity Provencher replied "il faut augmenter cette frayeur jusqu'à ce qu'elle les force à changer".[37] His major complaint in 1834, and repeated many times afterwards, was that Belcourt was making virtually

no converts among the Saulteaux.[38]

Provencher often accused Belcourt of being overly optimistic in the accounts he wrote and records he kept of his success in converting the Indians. While this was likely a valid criticism, and much of what Belcourt wrote was exaggerated, his description of his early years among the Indians at St. Paul's gives an interesting picture of how one group of Saulteaux reacted to his efforts. He began his efforts by simply having private conversations with several of the Indians, as a result of which he received permission to baptize a number of children. After he had mastered their language, however, he began a series of public confrontations with the old people in the tribe, who had the most authority. These controversies had the desired effect, which was to spark a lively interest among the Indians about the new religion. In general the younger members of the tribe seemed to be favorably disposed to Christianity while the elders resisted. The elders were so concerned, in fact, that they convoked a "fumerie" to devise ways to fight against Christianity. The younger people were victorious in this particular case, however, and it was eventually decided not to hinder Father Belcourt. He was able to baptize children more freely afterwards.[39]

Though this incident was cited in the Mission Reports as an example of Belcourt's success among the Saulteaux, the following paragraph was perhaps revealing. It seemed that many of the Indians at St. Paul's eventually began to attend religious classes and became catechumens. In 1839 Belcourt could boast that he had 300 neophytes and 150 catechumens.

However, wisely perhaps, the catechumens were not admitted to baptism until after two years of proving themselves to be faithful Christians and even after baptism were not admitted to communion until another year had passed. By 1839, after Belcourt had spent seven years at St. Paul's, only twenty Indians had been admitted to Holy Communion.[40]

This record is certainly not impressive and perhaps Provencher was right to consider the mission an expensive failure. But despite the fact that great numbers of Saulteaux never converted at St. Paul's, it seemed that those who did were very devout. In 1842 Belcourt reported that in six years none of his converts had succumbed to the temptation to get drunk, and that among them fasting and abstinence were scrupulously maintained.[41] A year later he again repeated his praise of their religious devotion though he was not so pleased with their agricultural progress.[42]

The other attempt at a settled mission among the Indians during this period was at Wabassimong. Several young Indians there had offered the labour to build a chapel for Belcourt free, and later several old men and women had begun to help with the project as well.[43] In 1843 Belcourt reported joyfully that Simpson approved of the project which he hoped would reassure the converts who were afraid of persecution if they became Catholic instead of Protestant. He added that the mission was going very well and that the heathen Indians were very concerned about the number of converts at Wabassimong.[44] Though his reports were enthusiastic about his results and forecast a bright future for the

station, Provencher, who had thought the project a useless waste of money and manpower all along, was once again proven correct.

When its establishment was first proposed the Bishop pointed out that there were only three men at Wabassimong, and he frequently complained about Belcourt's foolhardiness in sending up seeds and animals when there were no farmers there and building a chapel when there were no Christians.[45] Obviously his pessimism was justified, as the mission was abandoned in 1847. It was not only abandoned because there were no converts and the Indians seemed indifferent and did not want to hear about Christianity, but because they had actually become menacing and it was considered dangerous to continue.[46]

Apart from these two sedentary missions, the Cathlics tried to convert and minister to the Indians by travelling missions. During this period, they had little better luck with these missions than the agricultural ones. Rainy Lake was one of the most frequently visited posts, falling under Belcourt's care from 1832 on. This mission was rarely mentioned in either the official reports or the Bishop's private correspondence without some reference to how and why it was failing. After fourteen years, even the usually optimistic Belcourt admitted the Saulteaux there were largely indifferent to Christianity.[47]

One of the problems with this mission, in Provencher's view, was simply the fact that a priest did not reside with the Saulteaux there, and therfore even the Indians who were favorably disposed towards Christianity had only heard of God "in passing" and simply did not know

enough about God to be convinced of his call. The transitory nature of the mission also left long periods when the Indians were not only bereft of Christian instruction and example, but were also free from supervision and able to give free rein to "heresy" and "immorality".[48] While there might have been some truth in this explanation, it accounted for very little of the failure at Rainy Lake since the Saulteaux at fixed mission stations had converted in no greater numbers.

A far greater impediment, as the priests realized, was the polygamy practised by many of the Saulteaux and the lack of European standards of chastity among the tribe generally. This difference between the priests' beliefs and the Indians' beliefs not only arose at Rainy Lake, of course, but wherever the missionaries attempted to convert Indians. Belcourt said with respect to this problem of polygamy that "...c'est principalement contre cet usage que le ministre évangélique est obligé de lutter".[49] Even when a few Indian women at St. Paul's were willing to become Christians, they were held up because they were waiting for the elders of the band to do the same. Eventually most of the elders were prevailed upon to limit themselves to one wife, but most of them preferred to keep the youngest. Even this compromise the priests were unwilling to accept, insisting the Indians live with only their first wife.[50] Such rigorous requirements for baptism naturally kept many interested Indians from receiving the sacrament.

It seems that some Indians came to rely on their unchaste behaviour as an excuse for not becoming Christians. In 1842, when

Belcourt was preaching to the Saulteaux at Rainy Lake, the only answer they made him was to state that they could not practise chastity.[51] During the course of this exchange it became clear that not only the Indians hoped the missionaries would be dissuaded by such immoral intentions. In this particular case one of the Indians innocently told Belcourt not to suspect the Company's clerk of persuading them to ignore the priest, convincing Belcourt that in fact the clerk was behind the incident. This was the third problem the missionaries had to face in their efforts to convert the Indians, and the most difficult to overcome — the mixing of the Indians with white people through the fur trade.

The problem was not simply that the priests suspected that the Hudson's Bay Company would rather see the Indians remain uninstructed, or else see Protestantism flourish in the Northwest. Nor was it that the white traders were so immoral themselves (in the priests' eyes) that contact with them did not "edify" the Indians they frequented. While Provencher complained occasionally of both these things, the real problem which arose from the contact of Indians and whites was drunkenness.

Alcohol was a common trade good in the Northwest long before the nineteenth century, of course. The eighteenth century had seen a steady increase in the Indians' consumption of brandy, which was particularly high at times of greatest competition between the two companies trading for furs in the Northwest. Not only was brandy

used to entice the Indians to trade with one company or the other, but in times of fierce competition the prices of other goods fell and therefore the Indians could get the goods they desired by less work, leaving them more free time to indulge their increasing addiction to alcohol. By the end of the eighteenth century, although the Indians were not willing to trade only for brandy, there were incidents reported of some Indians refusing to trade at all if brandy or rum was not available.[52]

Of course, once the two companies had amalgamated, there was no further need for the Hudson's Bay Company to worry about a competitive advantage. By the 1820s, Simpson was proposing that the company send cheaper blankets, try to wean the Ojibwa off English clothing, cut the presents of liquor to the Indians in half and discontinue trading in alcohol altogether.[53] The policy with regard to alcohol was suggested not only to save money, but because the Company (and the British Parliament) was well aware of the social effect alcohol was having on Indian society. However, it did not prove to be an easy matter to reduce the presents of brandy to which the Indians were accustomed and addicted. While a ban was instigated within only a few years in the northern regions, it was several decades before the quantity of alcohol given to the Saulteaux the priests were dealing with was substantially reduced.[54]

The missionaries were concerned about giving alcohol to the Indians not only because they disapproved of drunkenness, but because

when given a choice between continuing to drink and embracing Christianity, the Indians invariably chose drink. By 1838, the Bishop was convinced that the possibility of converting the Indians at Rainy Lake was very slight as long as they were offered rum, because they refused to give it up voluntarily.[55] Unfortunately, even when the trade in rum was stopped at Rainy Lake in 1840, the chances of conversion were not improved. Though Belcourt applauded the move, he expressed fears that the Indians would blame the priests for the ban and thus be even less inclined to listen to them and accept their message. A journey later that year to Rainy Lake proved this assessment to be correct.[56]

In the initial contacts the priests had with Indians they had to overcome fear and suspicion, but by the 1840's this additional problem of false rumours and misconceptions also had to be dealt with. A lot of the "bad press" they received in the Northwest was likely due to the fact that the Company, while supporting the idea of civilizing and settling the Métis who were considered to threaten the smooth operation of the fur trade at worst and to be no asset to it at best, was not enthusiastic about educating and settling the Indians since agricultural Indians would no longer be trapping furs for the Company. Secondly there was a more general attitude on the part of the government in England, the governor in the colony, and the majority of the staff who dealt with the Indians at the posts that Protestantism was superior to Catholicism. In the early years of the settlement at Red

River support had been given to both the Catholic and Church of England clergymen who attempted to work with the Indians. Later, in the 1840s, the travelling Methodist missionaries who came in by the Bay and began to spread throughout the Northwest were seen by the Catholic missionaries as rivals and at the same time they began to complain that the Company was favouring the Protestant endeavours among the natives over their own.[57] In addition to accusing the Company of opposing the spread of Christianity, particularly Roman Catholicism, among the Indians, the priests accused the Protestant missionaries of spreading lies about them amongst the Indians.

It was certainly true that some Protestant clergymen working in the colony were violently anti-Catholic. John Smithurst, an Anglican priest working in Red River in 1840, welcomed his Wesleyan "brethren" to "make common cause against the enemy" — the enemy being Catholicism and not paganism.[58] On another occasion, when begging for additional funds from England, he spoke of the "eagle of Rome watching to seize as its prey those precious souls which cold hearted British Christians are about to consign to its grasp".[59] This kind of extreme attitude seemed to be shared by most of the Protestant clergymen working in the Red River colony and elsewhere in the Northwest, but while it is evident in their private journals and accounts written for other Protestants in England, it is not clear exactly what they told their Indian listeners about the Catholic priests. The Catholic priests did report occasionally that the Indians they visited in the outlying areas were unenthusiastic

or even afraid of Catholicism because of what the Protestant missionaries had told them.[60] In some cases where the Indians preferred to follow Catholicism, the Protestants spread rumours to the effect that the priests had abandoned them, which caused the Indians, if not to abandon Catholicism completely, at least to become suspicious and angry.[61]

There is no evidence, however, that the Protestant missionaries' anti-Catholic activities ever went any further than verbal abuse, despite Father Morice's allegations that the Protestant missionaries were behind Darveau's death at Duck Lake in 1844. Though it was assumed by everyone at the time that Darveau had drowned, Morice offers evidence that the priest was murdered by Indians who were motivated by a hatred of Catholicism inspired by the Country-born minister, Henry Budd.[62] Even if Morice's claims are true, this incident still remains as the only one of such an extreme nature.

In general the Indians seemed to prefer the Catholic priests. In 1832 Provencher reported with some complacency that the Indians were suspicious of ministers with wives and children.[63] A decade later he said that the Crees near the Rockies had been unwilling to listen to the Protestant minister that had visited them, and yet had gone so far as to request that a priest be sent to them.[64] It was also reported that the Indians at Winipic River and Wabassimong would not listen to a Protestant missionary who was sent to them.[65] Likewise there was a story of some Métis and Indians Thibault had visited near the Rockies abandoning Protestantism to turn to Catholicism when he appeared among

them.[66] Belcourt's accounts seem to bear out Provencher's assessment of the Indians' disposition to favour Catholicism over Protestantism, and on one occasion he even accused the ministers of trying to convince the Indians that Protestantism was very similar to Catholicism in order to conciliate them enough to listen to them.[67]

If the priests believed that the Indians would naturally favour a priest over a minister, why then were they so worried about their Protestant rivals? The answer is twofold. First of all, the Protestant missionaries seemed to have far greater financial resources than the priests, and were therefore able to win the allegiance of many of the Indians by giving them presents. These presents, often clothing or animals, worried the Catholic missionaries considerably because they made a big impression on the Indians who were very poor and yet, by the 1840s, completely dependent on western goods.[68] In the Rapports of the missions, there were accounts of Indians converting in return for the gift of one or two pigs, and it seemed one chief, who had previously promised to become a Catholic, was taking his children in for Protestant baptism only two at a time, in order to get more gifts.[69] Of course conversion that was undertaken for such material reasons was not particularly binding, and there were occasions when the Indians offered to become Catholics if the priests would give them all clothes, as the Protestants had promised to do.[70] But the Catholic priests did not have the money to indulge in "buying souls" and were scornful of this type of conversion anyway. In any case, they realized that there was

no point in bartering with the Indians to get them to accept baptism, because if the Protestants offered them presents afterwards, they could easily convince the Indians to change their allegiance.[71]

Not all the Indians were as mercenary as the chief described above who was having one child baptized for each pig he received, and quite a number, particularly from tribes other than the Saulteaux, were anxious to become Christians. The problem with these Indians, however, was that they were just as likely to become Protestants as Catholics if the Protestants got to them first, and the priests were well aware of this danger.[72] In their early years in the colony at Red River, most of the work of the missionaries (both Protestant and Catholic) was carried out in the immediate vicinity of the Forks. The Catholics, when they did work farther afield, concentrated their efforts on posts still fairly close to the Forks, to the south and west — at Pembina, White Horse Plains, and later, St. Paul's — while the Anglicans' establishments for Indians were slightly to the north of the main settlement. The Catholics also sent priests east, to places such as Rainy Lake, along the old route the Canadiens had used in the days of the North West Company. As the Métis were assumed by everyone to naturally fall under the jurisdiction of the Catholic priests, and as the Catholic and Protestant missions to the Indians were in different areas and not having much success in either, no serious rivalry for converts developed. In fact, most of the denominational strife which occurred seems to have been centered at the Forks, naturally enough, since it was there that

the two denominations' spheres of influence overlapped.

However, when Protestant clergymen began to arrive from the Bay, and started to spread from there south and west, the Catholic missionaries began to see that they too would have to expand their area of operation if the Northwest were to become a Catholic area, as they had always intended it should. In Red River itself, of course, they had never considered themselves to be the only church and had been resigned to the idea of peaceful co-existence with their Protestant counterparts. Provencher had initially, perhaps, cherished hopes of converting the Protestants in the colony, but had eventually given these up.[73] He had always wished to convert the pagans of the Northwest to Catholicism, but as long as he was as short of priests as he was, he relegated this ambition to the future. Nonetheless, when it became apparent that the Protestants had begun to expand the area of their mission, and that the Indians were likely to become Protestants if approached by those missionaries first and seduced by their gifts, Provencher realized that the Catholic mission too would have to cover a wider area. Thus, in the 1840s, Provencher began to send his missionaries farther afield, but the mission's enlarged area was never effectively covered by Catholic missions until the Oblates took over after 1845.

In assessing the impact of the missionaries on the Indians in this period, it is much more difficult to draw any conclusions or offer explanations than when discussing the Métis. The Métis, of course, were already a much more "civilized" society than the Indians, and therefore

the efforts of the missionaries during the period under discussion had some noticeable results — though not as dramatic or profound results as they had hoped for. The same cannot be said for the Indian societies they were working with. Even in their own estimation, their attempts to convert and civilize the Indians met with abysmal failure. This cannot simply be the result of the fact that they had only worked with a primitive pagan society for a short period, for during the same time the Protestants had much more success. The census from their Indian village, Swampy Cree, shows that these natives had settled down to agriculture at a relatively early date. In addition, the Protestants managed to produce at least one native clergyman. In contrast, the Catholics produced no native clergmen, and even their Indian converts remained faithful for only a few years before both St. Paul's and Wabassimong fell into ruin. What accounts for the failure of the Catholic missionaries to have a significant impact on Indian society in this period?

There are three possible explanations for this difference. The first is that, as has been pointed out above, the Protestant missions were in a better financial position than the Catholics. They could afford to have a full time minister at Swampy, while Belcourt was continually away from St. Paul's and later Wabassimong. In addition, the Protestants were no doubt able to supply more in the way of material assistance to their native farmers than the Catholics were. Farming aside, even the itinerant Methodists seemed to be able to distribute

attractive presents to the Indians which the Catholics were unable to afford.

Secondly, whether discussing fixed or itinerant missions, perhaps the nature of Protestant religions held more of an attraction for Indians than Roman Catholicism, and so it was easier for them to abandon their old beliefs and adopt new ones. Although it has been mentioned that the rituals of Catholicism were likely attractive to Indians, Graham has suggested that certain features of Protestantism were ever more so — for example, the Methodist conversion experience was similar to the "vision experience" which seems to have been a central feature of Ojibwa religion.[74] However, this explanation cannot be held to account for much of the relative success of the Protestants in Red River, for in general Protestantism had little in common with the Indian religions with which they came in contact. In addition, while the Protestants may have been more successful at encouraging a few Indians to change their means of existence and become nominal Christians, it is unclear how much this change in outward behaviour mirrored a similar change in their belief systems. Certainly there are many reports of Indians all over western Canada adopting certain features of western civilization and continuing to maintain their old pagan beliefs at the same time.[75]

Probably the most likely explanation of the different results described above lies in an examination of the Indian societies the missionaries were approaching, and not of the religion they were bringing

to them. Swampy village, where the above success was noted, consisted of Cree Indians, whereas the Indians with whom the Catholic missionaries were having such ill luck were Saulteaux. Unfortunately there are no statistics available whereby one could measure the results the two groups of missionaries obtained among the same tribes of Indians. But it must be pointed out that the Cree Indians had a long tradition of settlement and association with western fur trading posts by the time the missionaries approached them, while the Saulteaux previous contact with European society had consisted mainly of passing contact with voyageurs and fur traders. More importantly, anthropologists have suggested that different rates of acculturation among the Ojibwa tribes and Plains tribes may be due to differences in the traditional societies themselves. Hallowell has noted that even among those Ojibwa who have apparently been assimilated to a European way of life, the basic personality characteristics of their traditional society remain.[76] Barnouw, in an article on Ojibwa acculturation, stresses the ease with which they accepted white domination and supremacy and points out their greater compliance with white men than other more aggressive Indian tribes demonstrated. He feels that because of the "child-parent" relations that dominated their contact with white society, their acculturation was more gradual and their aboriginal characteristics remained longer than in other tribes.[77] While the results of the present study seem to point to a similar conclusion, it would be foolish to stress such an interpretation too strongly here, for not enough is

known about the comparative results the missionaries obtained in Red River.

NOTES

[1] John Smithurst Correspondence, Public Archives of Canada, MG - 19, E 6, vol. 2. John West, The Substance of a Journal During a Residence at the Red River Colony (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1966).

[2] "Lettre circulaire aux missionnaires des sauvages de J.O. Plessis", in H. Têtu and C.-O. Gagnon, eds., Mandements, lettres pastorales et circulaires des évêques de Québec, III (Québec: Imprimerie Générale A. Coté et Cie., 1888), pp. 98-99.

[3] John E. Foster, "The Country-born in the Red River Settlement: 1820-1850" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1972), p. 6.

[4] Ibid., pp. 89,-90.

[5] Alexander A. Taché, Vingt années de missions dans le nord-ouest de l'Amérique (Montréal: Eusèbe Senécal, 1866). Georges-Antoine Belcourt, "Department of Hudson's Bay", Minnesota Historical Society Collections, I (1850-1856), 207-244.

[6] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 12 August 1818, "Lettres de Monseigneur Joseph-Norbert Provencher, Premier Evêque de Saint-Boniface, Manitoba", Bulletin de la Société Historique de Saint-Boniface, III (1913), 14.

[7] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 13 September 1818, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 17.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 17 and 18 December 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 143.

[11] J.B. Thibault to the Bishop of Quebec, 18 June 1843, Rapport sur les Missions de Diocèse de Québec (1845, no. 6), 79.

[12] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 15 January 1819, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 34. J.N. Provencher to the Bishop of Saldes, 24 November 1819, "Lettres de Provencher, B.S.H.S.B., 43.

[13] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 15 January 1819, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 34.

[14] West, The Substance of a Journal, pp. 69 - 70.

[15] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 16 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 140.

[16] J.N. Provencher to I. Bourget, 30 June 1845, "Histoire de l'Ouest, Les Archives de l'Archeveché: Lettres de Mgr Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (15 November 1919), 298.

[17] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 1 September 1822, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 78.

[18] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartique, 18 August 1827, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVII (15 April 1918), 106.

[19] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 18 June 1828, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 122.

[20] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 8 August 1825, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 106.

[21] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 2 February 1826, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 112.

[22] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 16 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 136.

[23] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 4 September 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 141.

[24] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 17 April 1837, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 163.

[25] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 30 June 1842, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 205.

[26] J.N. Provencher to I. Bourget, 25 July 1845, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (15 November 1919), 74.

[27] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 16 June 1846, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 242.

[28] J.N. Provencher to I. Bourget, 30 December 1845, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XIX (15 October 1920), 193.

[29] R. Harvey Fleming, ed., Minutes of the Council of the Northern Department of Rupert's Land, 1821-1831, Champlain Society, Hudson's Bay Company Series, No. 3 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), p. 120.

[30] Frits Pannekoek, "The Churches and the Social Structure in the Red River Area 1818-1870" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, Queen's University, 1973), pp. 109-111.

[31] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 12 August 1818, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 14.

[32] J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 13 August 1818, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 21. J.N. Provencher to J.O. Plessis, 15 August 1818, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 24.

[33] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartique, 12 July 1832, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVII (15 December 1918), 313.

[34] Ibid., 314.

[35] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartique, 13 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (15 January 1919), 22.

[36] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 4 September 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 141.

[37] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartique, 13 July 1834, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (15 January 1919), 22.

[38] J.N. Provencher to the Bishop of Saldes, 24 November 1819, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 43-44.

[39] Notice sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1839, no. 1), 5-6.

[40] Ibid.

[41] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 1 August 1842, Rapport sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1843, no. 5), 7.

[42] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 19 July 1843, Rapport sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1845, no. 6), 89.

[43] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 1 August 1842, Rapport sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1843, no. 5), 17.

[44] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 19 July 1843, Rapport sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1845, no. 6), 87.

[45] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 30 June 1842, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 201. J.N. Provencher to I. Bourget, 1844, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (1 and 15 September 1919), 244.

[46] J.N. Provencher to P.F. Turgeon, 4 December 1847, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 265.

[47] J.N. Provencher to Conseils Centraux de Lyon et Paris, n.d., "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 245.

[48] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 30 June 1842, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 201.

[49] Notice sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1839, no. 1), 16.

[50] J.N. Provencher, Mémoire ou Notice sur l'établissement de la Mission de la Rivière Rouge et ses progrès depuis 1818 in Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XXIX (1930), p. 233.

[51] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 1 August 1842, Rapport sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1843, no. 5), 16.

[52] Arthur J. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 142-143.

[53] Ibid., pp. 197-198.

[54] Ibid.

[55] J.N. Provencher to I. Bourget, 25 July 1838, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (1 July 1919), 177.

[56] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 3 August 1840, Rapport sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1841, no. 3), 15.

[57] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 19 July 1843, Rapport sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1845, no. 6), 87.

[58] John Smithurst Diary, 17 July 1840, P.A.C., MG - 19, E 6, vol. 2.

[59] Ibid., 2 June 1840.

[60] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 29 July 1844, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 238.

[61] J.N. Provencher to the Bishop of Quebec, Montreal and Sydime, 31 December 1844, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (1 and 15 October 1919), 266.

[62] A.G. Morice, Histoire de l'Eglise catholique dans l'Ouest canadien du lac Supérieur au Pacifique (1659-1915) (Saint-Boniface: Chez l'auteur, 1921-23), pp. 173-182.

[63] J.N. Provencher to J.J. Lartique, 12 July 1832, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVII (15 December 1918), 314.

[64] J.N. Provencher to I. Bourget, 13 July 1841, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (1 July 1919), 180.

[65] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 7 January 1842, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 199.

[66] J.B. Thibault to the Bishop of Quebec, 18 June 1843, Rapports sur les missions du Diocèse de Quebec (1845, no. 6), 74.

[67] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 6 August 1844, Rapports sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1845, no. 6), 108.

[68] J.N. Provencher to I. Bourget, 30 June 1842, "Lettres de Provencher", Les Cloches de Saint-Boniface, XVIII (15 July 1919), 192.

[69] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 19 July 1843, Rapports sur les missions du Diocèse de Québec (1845, no. 6), 81.

[70] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 1 August 1842, Rapports sur les missions du Diocèse du Québec (1843, no. 5), 11-12.

[71] J.N. Provencher to J. Signay, 30 June 1842, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 204.

[72] G.A. Belcourt to the Bishop of Quebec, 6 August 1844, Rapports sur les missions du Diocèse du Québec (1845, no. 6), 108.

[73] J.N. Provencher to B.C. Panet, 1 July 1829, "Lettres de Provencher", B.S.H.S.B., 129.

[74] Elizabeth Graham, Medicine Man to Missionary: Missionaries as Agents of Change among the Indians of Southern Ontario, 1784-1867 (Toronto: Peter Martin and Associates Limited, 1975), p. 60.

[75] W.S. Grant to Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 1 July 1902, Public Archives of Canada, RG-10, vol. 3563, file 82-15.

[76] See A. Irving Hallowell, "Ojibwa Personality and Acculturation", in Beyond the Frontier; Social Process and Cultural Change, ed. by Paul Bohannara and Fred Plog (New York: Natural History Press, 1967), pp. 227-237.

[77] Victor Barnouw, "Acculturation and Personality Among the Wisconsin Chippewa", American Anthropologist, LII (1950), 71.

VI CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to examine the role the Catholic missionaries played as agents of change among the Métis and Indians of Red River. The Catholic priests attempted to teach their native flock farming and simple technical skills as well as to instruct them in western morality and the principles of Catholic belief. The preceding chapters have demonstrated that a certain amount of acculturation did occur among the French-speaking natives of Red River during the period under question — though not to so great a degree as the priests may have wished. However, the primary concern of this discussion was not the extent of change these people underwent in this twenty-seven year period, but how much of that change was directly attributable to their priests. In other words, the discussion focussed on the importance of the Catholic missionaries in the development of the French-speaking native "national" character so obvious later in the century.

Historians have argued that the Catholic missionary experience was of fundamental importance to this section of Red River society. Whether arguing that the priests were responsible for civilizing this society as A.S. Morton and Giraud state, or arguing that they were responsible for it remaining primitive as Pannekoek does, the historiography tends to emphasize Catholicism and the Catholic missionaries as being central to the development of the unique culture of the French-speaking natives of the Red River settlement. This thesis argues that the significance of the Catholic missionary experience (as opposed to

the Protestant) has been seriously overemphasized. This argument is not meant to deny that missionaries were important agents of change among primitive societies generally; it is understood that European missionaries caused fundamental and far-reaching changes among all primitive societies with which they came into contact, both in ways they intended and ways they did not. The preceding chapters point to the conclusion, however, that the Catholic and the Protestant missionary experiences were not greatly different for the native groups of Red River in this short period, and that the discernable differences between the two language groups at a later date are attributable to other causes than the denomination of their missionaries.

With regard to adapting to agriculture, for example, it is clear that the Métis continued to engage in the buffalo hunt to a much larger extent than the Country-born. This phenomenon, however, cannot be explained by arguing that Catholic missionaries were more tolerant of the buffalo hunt than were the Protestant missionaries. It has been shown in Chapter Three that in fact the Catholic missionaries were fundamentally opposed to the hunt and to the nomadism which accompanied it, and concentrated on teaching agriculture to the Métis and Indians at fixed centres of settlement in the same way the Protestant clergymen did. The reason for the continuance of the hunt in the colony is not attributable to ideological factors but instead to economic factors. As both W.L. Morton and Barry Kaye have shown, the economy of the whole colony, and not just the welfare of the Métis, was dependent on the

buffalo hunt because agriculture was insufficiently developed and unable to support the population of the settlement in these early years.[1] In such a situation, where the hunt was a necessary factor in the economy, it was natural its pursuit should fall to the Métis more than the Country-born or whites. The Métis' culture had developed out of a tradition of plains-wandering during the fur trade period, whereas the Country-born had lived a settled life around the Hudson's Bay Company posts for a long time before agricultural settlement came to the Northwest.

In the field of education it appears there is also little difference between the Catholic and Protestant mission experience. It is true that there were differences in approach between the two denominations. In the nineteenth century Protestant sects were generally more interested in the ideal of mass literacy than Catholics, and it has been argued that the inculcation of popular literacy is one of the most revolutionary kinds of cultural changes a society can undergo. However, it is not clear whether the Protestant missionaries in Red River were actually able to produce popular literacy.

In any event, both denominations were united in their understanding of popular education as a "civilizing" process. The Catholic missionaries in Red River, like the Catholic clergy in Lower Canada, tended to place more emphasis than the Protestants on education as a means of producing clergymen. Their efforts in teaching Latin and other subjects of a classical curriculum can be seen as a program of producing a "Little Canada" in the Northwest. They wished to educate a native clergy, not

simply to spread the message of Catholicism more effectively but, more importantly, to fill the role of community leaders that the clergy assumed in Canada. The concentration on candidates for religious vocations was only a matter of emphasis however and it was less pronounced in Red River than in the Catholic society of Lower Canada. Since the missionaries in the Northwest were interested in cultural transformation rather than preservation, their educational policy made greater provision than that of their colleagues in the East for the mass of the laity. Many aspects of their education program were explicitly "civilizing", most particularly their efforts with regard to female education. The priests were generally against native ignorance and seemed to favour the spread of popular education. That they were not too successful in this regard can be attributed more to material handicaps (lack of equipment, teachers and money) than to Catholic ideology.

The above arguments seem to point to the conclusion that too much emphasis has been placed on the difference between Catholic and Protestant beliefs in studying the mission experience of the native peoples of the Northwest. It is suggested that more effort should be directed towards studying the differences between the economic and social conditions of each group of native peoples rather than the differing ideologies of their missionaries. For example, the discussion of the census material in Chapter III indicates that the Métis as a whole were involved in agriculture to almost the same extent as the

Country-born, which seems to demonstrate that the acculturation of the two groups was not dependent on their missionaries. A more striking feature of the census data, however, is that two different groups of Métis people with Catholic missionaries showed vastly different rates of acculturation. This phenomenon seems to indicate that other explanations than the denominational one must be looked for to explain the adaptation of this native society to European culture. It was suggested that the primary reason for the White Horse Plains Métis' more successful adaptation to agriculture was the example of their traditional leader, Cuthbert Grant, who turned to agriculture on a large scale. The leadership and domination by a "chef" was a feature of Métis culture arising out of the tradition of the buffalo hunt and pre-dated the arrival of the missionaries in the colony. This feature of their traditional society explains their response to the introduction of agriculture better than their missionaries' denomination.

The description in Chapter V of the Métis' response to the Catholic religious principles the missionaries taught also points out the necessity of studying the needs of traditional Métis society to understand its acculturation. While the missionaries found the Métis were eager to receive Catholic instruction, baptism and marriage, it was suggested that this phenomenon was only a superficial acceptance of Catholic ritual arising out of the Métis' perception of their own "national" character as being essentially Catholic. The fact that related Métis couples continued to cohabit, that material and physical

support for the church was poor and, most significant of all, that no Métis was called to the priesthood indicates that the Métis were not profoundly affected by the spiritual message of Catholicism, despite the priests' own claims to the contrary. Catholicism seems to have been accepted, in this early period at least, in so far as it coincided with existing social conditions among the Métis.

The discussion in Chapter V of the Indians' response to Christianity lends further support to the suggestion that different rates of acculturation could be better explained by examining the differences in native societies. It was suggested that the higher rate of "success" the Protestant missionaries achieved in Red River was not so attributable to a particular Protestant approach as to the particular type of Indian society (Cree) with which they were dealing. Saulteaux society, with which the Catholics had most dealings in this period, presented more serious obstacles to conversion. An examination of the fundamental differences between Saulteaux and Cree societies would explain much about the different rates of acculturation these people experienced.

In any case, what seems clear from the above material is that the unique features of the French-speaking native society in Red River at the time of its confrontation with white Ontario society later in the nineteenth century cannot be attributed solely, or even primarily, to its Catholic missionaries. This is not to deny that the missionaries had a profound effect on native society. It does imply, however, that the explanation for the development of a unique French-speaking

native culture in the Northwest lies in an examination of social and economic factors beyond the denomination of its missionaries.

NOTES

[1] W.L. Morton, "Agriculture in the Red River Colony", Canadian Historical Review, XXX (December, 1949), 315. Barry Kaye, "Some Aspects of the Historical Geography of the Red River Settlement from 1812 to 1870" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1967), p. 72.

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