

Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix, S.J.: History  
and the French Atlantic World in the Short Eighteenth  
Century, 1682-1761

By

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## Abstract

This dissertation demonstrates that Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix, S.J. (1682-1761) constructed in his historical writings a French Atlantic World that evolved during what I have termed the Short Eighteenth Century. The years 1682-1761 represent Charlevoix's lifespan as well as the approximate lifespan of the French colonial enterprise on what was, for them, the far side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Charlevoix wrote about his world from multiple perspectives, all of which are evident in his writings. This study examines four of Charlevoix's works, *La Vie de... Marie de l'Incarnation* (1724), *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole* (1736), *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* (1744), and *Histoire du Paraguay* (1756) to elucidate those perspectives as well as their evolutions.

It is evident that Charlevoix hoped to see the French Atlantic colonial enterprise prosper, but under

the auspices of the Catholic Church. The biography of Marie de l'Incarnation indicates how critical it was for the Jesuits to guide the spiritual development of those throughout the French Atlantic World. The other three works considered here continue that theme, but also reflect Charlevoix's fading optimism regarding the French and the Jesuits and the roles they would play in the Atlantic World. By the end of the short eighteenth century, neither the French nor the Jesuits were forces with which to be reckoned, and the French Atlantic World was but a weak reflection of potential never reached.

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Dr. Pat Galloway taught me how to ask questions, and Professors Sheila Skemp and the late Win Jordan at the University of Mississippi helped me begin to answer them. Peter Mancall convinced me to return to graduate school and to place my interests within the context of the Atlantic World. My advisor, Luis

Corteguera, knew exactly when to be forceful and when to leave me to my own devices. All Ph.D. candidates should be so fortunate.

My family never wondered if I would ever finish my dissertation, but they did often ask when. To Sarah, who got her doctorate before I did, to Caroline, who is smart enough not to want one, to Will, who knew things, and to my parents who still do-  
*thank you* seems hardly adequate. To Bruce who continues to tend things even though I no longer have an excuse, I will try to say *thank you* more often as I head out to the barn.

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## Introduction

Quioque l'on ne comprenne ordinairement sous le nom de Nouveau Monde, que la seule Amérique, je lui donne ici une signification plus étendue; car j'y comprends tous les Pays, qui étoient inconnus aux Européens avant le XIV siècle.<sup>1</sup>

Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix belonged to a family of minor French nobility with connections to local politics in and around Saint-Quentin, his city of birth. His ancestors held posts such lieutenant au bureau de la foraine, controleur au grenier à sel and conseiller au baillage. They were also in the prévôté in Saint-Quentin. Two were lawyers and mayors of the town. Charlevoix's father was a substitute royal

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix, "Projet d'un Corps d'Histoires du Nouveau Monde," *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, Paris: Rollin, fils, 1744, I: i. "Although ordinarily one includes only America in the name of the New World, I give it here a more extended meaning, for I mean all the countries that were unknown to Europeans before the fourteenth century."



prosecutor who married Antoinette Forrestier in 1683, two years prior to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and one year after Charlevoix's birth in 1682, if records are correct.<sup>2</sup>

John Gilmary Shea, translator of the *History of New France* (1870), states that Charlevoix "decided to become a Jesuit."<sup>3</sup> We have no insight into the psychological processes that the young man, then sixteen years old, may have experienced. It is not likely, however, that he remained unaffected by his own education in the Jesuit college Louis-le-Grand from 1701-1704. He studied rhetoric and philosophy there. Charlevoix's first teaching assignment provided him with his first trans-Atlantic voyage in 1705;

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<sup>2</sup> Louis Le Jeune, "Charlevoix," *Dictionnaire général de biographie, histoire, littérature, agriculture, commerce, industrie et des arts, sciences, mœurs, coutumes, institutions politiques et religieuses du Canada*, Ottawa : Université d'Ottawa, 1931, vol. 1, 368- 369.

<sup>3</sup> John Gilmary Shea, trans., "A brief biography of the author and the translator by John Francis Bannon, S. J.," *History and General Description of New France by the Rev. P.F.X. de Charlevoix, S.J.*, Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962.

otherwise, the next few years appear to have been fairly uneventful. For four years (1705- 1709) he taught grammar at the Jesuit college in Quebec and, as Shea and others conclude, he began to compile an impressive list of sources and acquaintances that would aid him in his later efforts.<sup>4</sup>

Upon finishing his term in New France, Charlevoix returned to Paris and the Collège Louis-le-Grand in 1709 where he continued to teach. There, in one of his classes, he encountered the young Voltaire who is said to have found the Jesuit "a bit on the talkative side," a characteristic that shows in Charlevoix's writing style as well.<sup>5</sup> Charlevoix's ordination took place in 1713 after the completion of his studies. There must have been more than family connections to him, for at the same time that his list

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<sup>4</sup> Bannon, in Shea; Louis Le Jeune, "Charlevoix," *Dictionnaire général de biographie, histoire, littérature, agriculture, commerce, industrie et des arts, sciences, mœurs, coutumes institutions politiques et religieuses du Canada*, Ottawa: Université d'Ottawa, 1931, vol. 1, 368- 369.

<sup>5</sup> Bannon, in Shea.

of publications was beginning to grow, Charlevoix was chosen by the French government to assess the boundaries established by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) as well as verify the rumors of a water passage to the Pacific Ocean. The journey lasted from 1720- 1722. Upon returning to France he began a publishing career that lasted until his death in 1762 in La Flèche, France. Apart from these few rather mundane details, we know little else.

There is another historically convenient reason for using Charlevoix's writings as a way to understand the man and his time. His life span, 1682- 1761, corresponds roughly to the heyday of French colonial power in North America and the Atlantic World. These two "lives" provide a finite period in which can be identified trends, ideas, and events representative of life in the eighteenth- century Atlantic World. The "short" eighteenth century also helps draw attention to the fact that French power and influence were not limited to New France and Louisiana. Charlevoix was an agent of both Church and State who struggled with the

duality of that role. The making and writing of this history neither began nor ended with him. Although his histories treat the nations of Europe as independent entities, he refuses to separate those of the New World so clearly. The result is a body of work that depicts an early concept of the Atlantic World.

This dissertation considers those of Charlevoix's histories that discuss peoples and lands considered to be part of the Atlantic World. *La Vie de la Mère Marie de l'Incarnation* (1724) gives us Charlevoix's interpretation of the life of a French woman whose desire to become a nun eventually led her to abandon her own son and travel to Canada to devote her life to spreading the Catholic faith among the Indians. In 1730 *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole ou de S. Domingue* was published followed by *Histoire et Description Generale de la Nouvelle France avec le Journal Historique d'un Voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* (1744), and *Histoire du Paraguay* (1756). Together these three histories provide lengthy descriptions of the European

"discovery" of those countries. Although Charlevoix never used the phrase "Atlantic World," it is argued here that the works under consideration present a coherent view of a French Atlantic World. Charlevoix saw the Atlantic World as one that should have been predominantly French and Catholic, as influenced by the Jesuits, hence his perspective becomes increasingly clouded by pessimism with the passage of time. Eventually both the French and the Jesuits lost their hold over the lands and souls of the colonial realms, and we see Charlevoix fighting against stronger currents in the Atlantic World.

There is much more information about the written works of Pierre François- Xavier de Charlevoix, S. J. (1682- 1762) than about the details of what must have been a very interesting life. As a writer he was nothing less than prolific, publishing five major histories and numerous articles and reviews in the *Journal de Trévoux*. The histories are *Histoire du christianisme au Japon* (1715), *Vie de Marie de l'Incarnation* (1724), *Histoire de Saint- Domingue*

(1730), *Histoire du Japon* (1736), *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle-France* [...] (1744), and the *Histoire du Paraguay* (1756). Articles in the *Journal de Trévoux*, the Jesuits' answer to the *Journal des Savants*, were unsigned, but style and subject matter leave little doubt as to which ones to attribute to Charlevoix.

Charlevoix joined the editorial board of the *Journal de Trévoux* in 1723 after his first voyage to America. This journal is of particular importance because of its relationship with the non-Jesuit reading public. Published under Jesuit auspices from 1707 until their suppression in 1762, the journal was one of France's most important periodicals. It addressed a variety of topics including literary reviews, history, mathematics, physics, and philosophy. The founders of the journal had originally intended to use the publication to attack Protestant writings emanating from Holland, but impartiality eventually became a stated goal in all areas save religion and morality. The articles provide the Jesuit

perspective on the prevailing intellectual currents during most of Charlevoix's life.<sup>6</sup>

Charlevoix's own published works also provide many such insights. It is the aim of this study to determine how Charlevoix viewed the evolving Atlantic World in which he lived. Starting with the biography of Marie de l'Incarnation (1724), we find the beginnings of a relationship that was never without ambivalence. New France represented an ideal opportunity for the French to gain both territorial

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<sup>6</sup> Léon Pouliot, *Charlevoix (1682- 1761)*, Montréal: Classiques Canadiene, Ottawa, 1959, 9; Léon Pouliot, *François- Xavier de Charlevoix, S.J.*, Documents Historiques, No. 33, La Société Historique du Nouvel- Ontario, Sudbury :Université de Sudbury, 18- 19; Cyril B. O'Keefe, *Contemporary Reactions to the Enlightenment (1728-1762): A Study of Three Critical Journals: the Jesuit Journal de Trévoux, the Jansenist Nouvelles ecclésiastiques, and the secular Journal des Savants*, Geneva, Slatkine, 1974, 9; Catherine M. Northeast, *The Parisian Jesuits and the Enlightenment, 1700- 1762*, Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1991, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 288, 4- 5. See also, John N. Pappas, *Berthier's Journal de Trévoux and the Philosophes*, Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1957, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, vol. III. There were occasional lapses in the impartiality, but ultimately the editors held to their belief that the right to judge the merits of articles lay with the public.

and spiritual ground. While praising individuals of exceptional piety on both sides of the Atlantic World, Charlevoix also expressed his relief that he did not perish in its western reaches. By 1733 and the publication of the history of S. Domingue, Charlevoix was still more impressed with the possibilities of the New World in spite of the shortcomings of the pirates and buccaneers. The history of North America (1744) depicts a French Atlantic World in danger of succumbing to internal and external attacks, but one that is entirely worth the effort required of the French at home and abroad. Paradoxically, Charlevoix's Paraguay (1756) shows a shrinking Atlantic World for the France and Jesuits as the competitors continued to stake out portions of the New World.

For years Europeans had been interested in the possibility of the existence of a direct water route from Canada to the Pacific Ocean. Reluctant to fund a full-scale mission, the French Crown opted to send Charlevoix who could ask all sorts of questions under the guise of an inspection tour of French Missions in



Canada and along the Mississippi River. After all, an itinerant Jesuit would be much less likely to arouse suspicion than a group of soldiers. It is this journey, lasting from late in 1720 until 1722, that gave Charlevoix the material for the *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* to which he appended last volume of his history of New France. After returning to France, Charlevoix devoted the rest of his many days to the writing of his histories. He was an editor for the Jesuit- directed *Mémoires de Trévoux* for twenty years, during which time he was also appointed *Procureur des Missions de la Nouvelle France et de la Louisiane*. According to Léon Pouliot, we do not know the duration of this post nor do we have much in the way of helpful information regarding the rest of Charlevoix's life. He died in 1761 without having to see France lose many of its North American colonies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Léon Pouliot, S.J., *François-Xavier de Charlevoix, S.J.*, La Société du Nouvel-Ontario, Université de Sudbury: Sudbury, 1957, pp. 16- 17.

Unfortunately we have very few unobstructed glimpses into the day-to-day life of a man who had much to say about his world. But by considering Charlevoix's studies of some of the New World, namely those parts in which the French played an active role, it is possible to discern the development of the author as well as certain currents of thought that were present during his lifetime. During a time in which organized religion was once more being questioned, it is ironic that some of the most influential works about France and the New World were written by a Jesuit with perhaps the firmest grasp of the reasons behind the failure of many of France's colonies to prosper.

The goal of this study is to examine Charlevoix's writings for evidence of a concept of the eighteenth-century Atlantic World. This dissertation argues that in trying to tell the story of the colonial Americas, Charlevoix unwittingly created an Atlantic World History. Thinking that there could be no relation between the two "sides" of that world, the

boundaries he constructed proved to be weak and mostly artificial.

A secondary purpose of this work is to highlight details that might help us understand Charlevoix himself. What we will find is that Charlevoix's worldview evolved nearly as fast as the world he inhabited. It is the assertion here that as the boundaries of the Atlantic World moved farther away from Europe and the level of knowledge about the world increased, change, including the ways in which history would be written, became increasingly threatening to Charlevoix, the Jesuits, and his readers in France. Those more aligned with his thinking saw changes in France's devotion to religion as the reason for its failing colonial strength. There were others, in France especially, who saw France's waning Atlantic empire as appropriate given the problems at home.

In addition to the aforementioned issues, this dissertation seeks to assemble as much biographical information about Charlevoix as possible. The historical and biographical writings of Charlevoix are

autobiographical in their revelation of the reactions of at least one individual to the eighteenth-century version of globalization. The writings are also revelatory of how it was possible to remain loyal to certain modes of thought, in this case one's country and religion, while adapting to changing circumstances. Whether narrating the life of Marie de l'Incarnation or the story of a French colony, Charlevoix takes the role of a participant engaged in the developments he recounts, and he expects that his readers be equally committed to discovering truth. By his own admission, he met disappointment on more than one occasion.

All of Charlevoix's works demonstrate the intentional intermingling of religious fervor and historical objectivity at a time when the two were thought by many to inhabit separate realms. When describing the writings of Marie de l'Incarnation, for example, Charlevoix observed that they possessed "excellent taste, sound reason, a sublime spirit, and that divine unction which so well distinguishes the

writings of the saints.”<sup>8</sup> He also noted wryly, “... these spiritual matters, and especially the sublime ways of the mind, are no longer even scarcely in style.”<sup>9</sup>

The first of Charlevoix's works to be considered here is *La Vie de la Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, Fondatrice et première Supérieure des Ursulines de la Nouvelle France* (1724). Judging by the number of titles published, Marie's life and letters were popular subjects in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. A number of works about Marie also appeared in the twentieth century. Aware that the popularity of his chosen subject and style has faded, Charlevoix nonetheless felt that he owed his readers a readable biography from which they could learn to distinguish between those who were able to reconcile “saintliness with theory, practice with theory” and those who “follow no other rule in their judgments than their

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<sup>8</sup> *La Vie de la Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*, 1724, 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

own senses." Charlevoix clearly placed himself among the former.<sup>10</sup>

The biography of Marie de l'Incarnation is the most noticeably devout and introspective of Charlevoix's writings. It is, after all, the story of a young woman who becomes a nun and goes to the New World to make Christians of the Indians. It is also the story of the spiritual development of a young girl into a woman. This maturation is characterized by visions and communications with holy, divine beings, a correspondence that Charlevoix used his own arguments as well as those of the Church Fathers to defend.<sup>11</sup> If readers might question the life of a mystic, they

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<sup>10</sup> Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *La Vie de Marie de l'Incarnation*, Clairmont-Ferrand: 1862, 24. See also *Lettres de la venerable Mere Marie de l'Incarnation Premiere Superieure des Ursulines de la Nouvelle France*, Paris: Louis Billaine, 1681; Dom Claude Martin, *La Vie de la venerable Mere Marie de l'Incarnation, premiere superieure des Ursulines de la Nouvelle France*, Paris: Pierre de Bats, Martin Jouvenal, et Antoine Vuarin, 1684; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> *Marie*, 14-58. The rest of the preface is devoted to a logical defense of Marie and her spirituality.

could not reproach Marie's works of charity. Even those in any century who berated her for leaving her young son to become a nun had limited weapons in their arsenal, for who could criticize a calling that demanded such sacrifice?

The first line of Charlevoix's preface to Marie's biography mentions two reasons for her early popularity. As founder of the Ursulines in Canada, Marie's inclusion in the annals of history was already guaranteed; however, Charlevoix also wanted to call attention to a more personal connection. He considered Marie as his protector and felt compelled to honor Marie for not allowing him to perish in North America in the prime of his life. There is much evidence throughout his writings of Charlevoix's avid dislike of harsh living conditions.<sup>12</sup>

Charlevoix refers to Marie as his benefactress, considering her merits responsible for the fact that he did not have to finish out his life in a foreign land, a fate that Marie welcomed and blessed for

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<sup>12</sup> *Marie*, 11.

herself. In fact, a shared faith appears to be the only thing that Charlevoix shares with his subject. Marie knew prosperity only for brief periods in her life, whereas Charlevoix appears to have been fairly comfortable except for the miserably cold weather he endured in North America. Marie's purpose in life was to make Christians out of the Indians. Charlevoix evinces no such missionary zeal, though he does have a great deal of praise for those who choose such a life. He also places a great portion of blame for the relative weakness of the French colonies on the lack of French missionaries and priests in North America.<sup>13</sup> Marie had to seek the approval and financial support of others to go abroad. Charlevoix, because of his connections, was chosen by the French government to make the trip.

Marie may have been impassioned by charity and compassion, but other motives direct her biographer.

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<sup>13</sup> *Marie*, 41. The lack of religious instruction at times takes a secondary place to the scarcity of women for the male colonists to marry and start families that would then necessitate stable, agricultural communities. See below.



*La Vie de la Mère Marie de l'Incarnation* is the only work considered here in which the New World is not the primary subject. Charlevoix's other works provide the reader with "mini- biographies" of the major players in order to create a richer account of the French and their attempts, some more successful than others, to establish themselves in the New World as a dominant colonial force. These characters include colonists, colonial officials, Indians, and of course the Jesuits. Charlevoix recognized and extolled the virtues (and acknowledged the weaknesses) others possessed while demonstrating his own strength as an observer and narrator.

As a source of spiritual strength Marie may have been of great help to Charlevoix on his travels, and perhaps throughout his life, but the Jesuit had more earthly relations to cultivate as well. By writing the biography of Marie de l'Incarnation, Charlevoix provided the public with another means of access to the life of an exemplary Christian woman whose spiritual development was guided by the Jesuits. The

histories of the French colonies also provide examples, but on a smaller scale, of worthy and unworthy individuals as well as the nations from which they came.

No such nationalistic pride is evident in the biography of Marie that is dedicated to Queen Elizabeth of Spain. In contrast, the *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole ou de S. Domingue* (1730) is dedicated to Count Maurepas, "minister and secretary of state."<sup>14</sup> Charlevoix recognized that individuals are important, but that they must be connected to a greater context. In this case he observes, partly from flattery and partly from reality, that any reader should be surprised if the name Maurepas were not the first thing one saw in a history of St. Domingue.<sup>15</sup>

In Charlevoix's youth, the main exploits in the "Dutch lake"<sup>16</sup> were those of the buccaneers. Once they

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<sup>14</sup> Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole ou de S. Domingue*, Amsterdam: François l'Honoré, 1733, i.

<sup>15</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: i.

were no longer a threat, by the 1720s, the French turned their energies against the English. While the Jesuits did not figure largely in this particular part of French colonial history, they did contribute significantly to its writing. Charlevoix used the documents he located in the *Depôt de la Marine* to supplement the memoirs of a colleague, Jean Baptiste le Pers, "Jesuite Walon," who worked for twenty-five years in Ste. Domingue. Le Pers is credited with the baptisms of "[t]hree thousand adult Negros and a greater number of children" as well as "nine or ten churches built through his care in the dependencies of Cap François and Port de Paix."<sup>17</sup>

In 1724, at the age of forty-two, Charlevoix had already traveled to North America and experienced first-hand the life of a traveler, if not that of a missionary. Marie's biography may have benefited from this experience, and the *Histoire et description de la*

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<sup>16</sup> Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972, 16- 23.

<sup>17</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: v.

*Nouvelle France* (1744) certainly exhibits the sort of first-hand knowledge and credibility that Charlevoix and his readers valued. However, before sharing this expertise with the reading Atlantic World, Charlevoix accepted another commission. At the behest of a friend, he agreed to take over the writing of the *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole ou de S. Domingue* (1730).

This narrative provides the expected descriptions of island people, flora, and fauna. It also introduces some of Charlevoix's favorite themes such as gold-hungry Spaniards, French settlers who fail to take advantage of their opportunities, colonial competition for land and souls, and Indians who are unable to follow God unless removed from contact with all but the missionary priests. He provides short biographies of important colonial officials, explorers and Christian Indians. Always ready to turn a good story into a battle in the war between good and evil, Charlevoix uses the Caribbean pirates as a means to further some important points about life on the "far edge" of the Atlantic World. Loyal to no one but

themselves, the pirates represent an extreme degeneracy that is due to their *choice* to live such immoral lives.

Charlevoix was all too cognizant of the fact that the reading public was interested in more than the numbers of souls harvested for the Catholic Church. He refers to the discovery of the New World as "the greatest event of these last few centuries."<sup>18</sup> This and Charlevoix's other histories would describe France's role in such a momentous event while simultaneously pleasing and instructing the reader. The history of Santo Domingo fulfills its author's goals by providing a discussion of the exploration of the Caribbean and its islands as well as the inhabitants, both human and otherwise. He also includes, for the reader's pleasure, a discussion of the pirates of the Caribbean and their adventures.

In 1735 there appeared in the *Mémoires de Trévoux* an article that can be attributed only to Charlevoix. The custom of the journal was to publish its material

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., I: ix.

without signatures from the authors, but the topics and titles mentioned, as well as the style of the article, leave no room for doubt as to its author. Charlevoix envisioned a "body of histories of the new world" that would help Europeans to understand those parts of the world discovered since the fourteenth century. He states that there is very little connection between the histories of the parts of the New World to which he refers by their European names (e.g. New France, New Spain).<sup>19</sup> This study suggests that he was more aware of the connections than his prose suggests and that the process of his acceptance is evident in his historical writings.

When Charlevoix finally got around to the history of North America in 1744, he was sixty-two years old. He had crossed the Atlantic, traveled the continent from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, and lived to tell about it. In the years between his return to France and 1744, Charlevoix was busy with the publication of his other works, a trip to Rome, and his editing and

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<sup>19</sup> Charlevoix, "Projet" in Pouliot, 17.

contributing to the *Journal de Trévoux*. Charlevoix had so much more to tell, that he added a reconstruction of a journal to the last volume. The *History* proper provides the type of detail that the reader would know to expect from Charlevoix, including the discussion of existing literature on the subject.<sup>20</sup>

Charlevoix's last historical work is as different from his others as is his first. Although there are plenty of maps, the *Histoire du Paraguay* contains not a single illustration. The author also allows himself a bit more latitude for personal pursuits, particularly, the defense of the Jesuits against all accusations (of which there are many). One is able to forget, at times, that the larger story is about France in the New World, not just the failed utopian efforts of Jesuits of varied nationalities.

The periods of eighteenth-century Jesuit history coincide (for the most part) with Charlevoix's life in such a way as to provide some interesting insights regarding Charlevoix's life. He was one of a small

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<sup>20</sup>Pouliot, 23.

number of Jesuits known as '*scriptores librorum.*' These men interacted with the reading public of Paris; Jesuit publications, excepting reports and letters from missions, fell under their auspices. Numbering from seven to fifteen, they pursued both personal and official interests. In the early decades of the eighteenth century, both the Jesuits as a group and Charlevoix arrived at a crossroads where the intersection Church doctrine and intellectual life was anything but clearly marked.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps only fortuitous timing saved the pro-monarchy Jesuits from the same fate as the institution they staunchly defended. Expelled from the Atlantic World but alive, the Jesuit Order would live to fight another day. On the other hand, the Jesuit insistence upon the goodness of God and the redemption of humanity were more in tune with Enlightenment thinking than was the pessimism of the Jansenists.<sup>22</sup> Charlevoix rarely condemns anyone directly in his

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<sup>21</sup>Northeast, 3.

<sup>22</sup>Northeast, 218.



writings. Instead he cautions the reader to read carefully and "with attention" in order to discover, for example, who is responsible for the failure to convert "these Barbarians" to Christianity (i.e. the Indians were not to blame).<sup>23</sup>

The Europeans' discovery and exploration of land and people on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean represents one of many redefinitions of the "known world" throughout history. Very few people have successfully articulated a definition of the French part of that world tending, instead, to focus on other manageable chapters of history. Charlevoix's histories of portions of the western Atlantic World were published between 1724 and 1756. In 1682, the year of Charlevoix's birth, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, was making his way down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico and claiming the lands along its extent and those to the east and west for France. Of course, these claims extended horizontally on the map only as far as the Spanish to the west and the English

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<sup>23</sup> *Histoire*, I: viii.

to the east would permit. Charlevoix's life came to an end in 1761 as French power in North America was decidedly waning. His life and writings provide us with a glimpse at what was, for the French, the short eighteenth-century Atlantic World.

While this glimpse is as subject to interpretation as a larger view, it has escaped the notice of many historians who, instead, have often preferred to use quotations from Charlevoix's writings to support a thesis in which Charlevoix and his works are secondary to the points being argued, for example, exoticism, alcohol and Indians, as well as Charlevoix's views of history. This study uses what little information can be gathered about Charlevoix in combination with his own writings to explore, in the first place, Charlevoix himself, and second, Charlevoix's Atlantic World as he experienced it.

By the time the *Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle France avec le Journal Historique* was published in 1744, Charlevoix, at the age of 62, had changed his tone slightly to reflect a more "global"

perspective. From Charlevoix's perspective France was losing not only the competition for flourishing colonies, but the contest for souls as well. Colonists made bad choices once in North America, but they had little in the way of support or discipline from France.

Janet Gurkin Altman finds that early Enlightenment letters are often readable as "personal autobiography" as opposed to courtly introspection.<sup>24</sup> In all likelihood, the letters in Charlevoix's journal were composed from notes made during or shortly after his trip to North America. We learn very little about the day-to-day life of their author, and their tone and style can hardly be called familiar, but we do see an attempt to bring the reading public closer, if only through a literary construct.

Literary device becomes even more of an issue in the *Histoire de Paraguay* (1756). Fulfilling the desires of readers to become acquainted with the

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<sup>24</sup> Janet Gurkin Altman, "The Politics of Epistolary Art," in Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, 420-421.

history of Europeans in the province, Charlevoix also uses the struggle of the Jesuits, past and present, to represent the worldwide struggle between good and evil. The job of the reader is to recognize that people did not always remain on the same side.

Charlevoix was born into a France that was generally Cartesian in its outlook. However, while some Jesuits displayed slight Cartesian tendencies, most of the brothers turned resolutely in other directions. Charlevoix may have started out in the Cartesian minority. The biography of Marie de l'Incarnation (1724) reveals both a separation of body and spirit, but a study in method as well. The history of S. Domingue (1730) suggests that perhaps its author may have been reluctant to change with his time despite increased Jesuit participation in colonial affairs, especially in their writing. By 1744, twenty years after the actual voyage to America, Charlevoix produced a work that evinced a more conciliatory approach to unorthodox ideas while providing the reading Parisian with valuable information. In this

work we also find evidence that Charlevoix saw the Atlantic World as an interconnected "place," instead of two worlds separated by an ocean. The story of the lost utopia in Paraguay represents Charlevoix's recognition of past troubles and his forecast for the future.

Throughout his life Charlevoix continued to engage himself with the changes he and his readers faced in their expanding world. This is just one of the characteristics that sustains my interest in Charlevoix that began in 1990. While I was working on a project at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History it became quite clear to me that "everybody" had heard of or read some of Charlevoix. He was a great source for quotes on just about anything to do with the French in the Lower Mississippi Valley. By the time I resumed my graduate studies, Charlevoix had been cited as an authority on everything from Indians and alcohol to History and

Truth,<sup>25</sup> but there was no definitive study of the man or his works for their own sake, and eighteenth-century French Louisiana was not attracting very many scholars.

Charles O'Neill edited the parts of Charlevoix's *History* pertaining to French Louisiana, and the *History and Journal* have been translated into English on more than one occasion.<sup>26</sup> Yet it is still rather difficult to grasp more than a few fragments of Charlevoix's personality. By including both in the more recent field of Atlantic History, there are at least possibilities among them, the chance to create a sort of intellectual biography of a man whose writings

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<sup>25</sup> Peter Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1995; Anne Gagnon, *Charlevoix: un jésuite en quête de vérité, Etude historiographique d'Histoire et Description générale de la Nouvelle France*, M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1997.

<sup>26</sup> Pierre Berthiaume, ed. *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, Montreal: Presses Universitaire de Montreal, 1994; Charles E. O'Neill, ed., *Charlevoix's Louisiana: Selections from the History and the Journal*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977; Louise Phelps Kellogg, trans., *Journal of A Voyage to North America, translated from the French by Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix*, Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1923.

(and personality?) have been cannibalized to suit the purposes of authors with other arguments to pursue and develop.

In this study I have argued that there is more to be said about Charlevoix than is accomplished by the brief sketches referred to above. I have attached to Charlevoix a degree of relevance that is justified not only by the things he says, but sometimes by things left unsaid as well. A man of his connections in eighteenth-century France would have been expected to have well-founded opinions and to voice them carefully. For example, he could not just state that the French got what they deserved when they gave up Louisiana, but he would have had to make strong references leading the reader to conclude that on his or her own. By addressing some of Charlevoix's topics and conclusions I have made assertions about the kind of person I perceive him to have been and about the world in which he lived and wrote.

In Charlevoix's writings I find tangled connections to many of the great themes of the

Enlightenment that one studies: reason, religious faith, truth, human nature, government, trade, and of course, change. In this last topic I find perhaps the greatest indicator of Charlevoix the individual. His prose style and religious orientation were increasingly unpopular, yet the perspicacity of his observations remains unassailable today. Charlevoix saw his French world grow, then spin out of control. By the time he wrote the *Histoire du Paraguay*, he could be quite tiresome as he occasionally allowed an "I told you so" to creep in; however, his biases do not preclude the usefulness of his relation.

This study, then, is but a small but significant piece of the history of Eighteenth-Century France and North America, and of course, the Atlantic World. It is a beginning, rather than an end because there is much yet to do especially the development of more comprehensive studies that deal with Charlevoix as a primary source in the development of a particular theme or idea that we know to have been important. Charlevoix was very much aware of the changes taking



place in his world, and it is time for us to achieve a greater understanding of him and his life through his own works. For generations historians have been aware that Charlevoix will probably provide them with a quote. Indeed, Charlevoix's comprehensive indices and chapter summaries make it easy to raid his works for comments on a topic of choice. Charlevoix himself does the same thing in his own writing, relying on those who went before him to lend credibility to his own work.

Charlevoix not only relied on his fellow historians, but he assumed that others would rely upon him in the future. Recognizing that his project of a history of the New World was a project beyond his life span, he fully expected that other historians would take up the story. He never expected to have the last word. Despite his statement that the histories of the parts of the New World had little to do with each other, he none-the-less saw the project as a cohesive whole. The same can be said about those components of the Atlantic World that Charlevoix did publish. Many

view them as separate entities with a common author. This dissertation demonstrates that nothing could be less accurate.<sup>27</sup>

This study combines the available information about Charlevoix with a critical look at his works that pertain to the Atlantic World. The works are considered in the order in which they were written. Charlevoix's first work, *La Vie de Marie de l'Incarnation* (1724), provides the subject for the second chapter of this study. Charlevoix develops on paper a relationship with a woman whose spiritual life matured in New France. Despite having already traveled to the New World, Charlevoix remained firmly anchored in France and Europe, as did most of his compatriots. Six years later, in 1730, he published the *Histoire de Sainte-Domingue*. Chapter three demonstrates that Charlevoix and French citizens are much more aware of the increasing size of their world. Chapter four is a continuation of that theme with the unmistakable suggestion that the French were failing to take

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<sup>27</sup> See "Projet."

advantage of all the opportunities in the Atlantic World. By the time Charlevoix produced the *Histoire du Paraguay* (1756), France was already becoming a lesser power in the New Atlantic World. Chapter five finds Charlevoix's condemnation of this failure in his last and least objective history in which Charlevoix's dedication to souls anywhere clearly precedes his loyalty to earthly kingdoms.

There remains one final point which must be addressed here, and to do so it seems only fitting to resort to Charlevoix's words.

One should not then be at all surprised at the length or the multitude of quotations that will make up the content of this book, and I even assure myself that if one has any reproache to make of me, it will be that I have not at all allowed to speak a person who speaks so well.<sup>28</sup>

This dissertation is riddled with quotations from Charlevoix's writings, some of them quite long. The

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<sup>28</sup> *Marie*, 38. Even a translation risks further distance between reader and writer.

beauty of these passages is that in articulating the individual's thoughts they help illuminate the individual in a way that a summary cannot.

## Chapter 1

### Charlevoix the Historian in Context

#### Introduction

The Jesuit historian Charlevoix is a transitional figure in the French Atlantic World of the eighteenth century. As a researcher and scholar he differs from many of his predecessors whose reports were more strictly religious or propagandist, or both, in nature. Yet, as a Jesuit priest and traveler, his works are not wholly secular either since they display some loyalty to what were rapidly becoming old, even irrational methods of seeing the past, present, and future. Charlevoix maintained that God was present in humanity of the past and the present, and that one could rationally explain events in history while allowing for divine direction.

Rather than limit Charlevoix by one specific classification, it is more helpful to look at his histories as representative of changing intellectual currents within the French Atlantic World. Charlevoix hoped to encourage French men and women to establish

devout Catholic families in the colonies, and often resorted to economic opportunity as an inducement. He did not avoid criticizing the French when the situation demanded it, but he never criticized the Jesuits for their role in exploring the New World and spreading Christianity to the Indians. Presented with many occasions to embellish the past as well as the present, Charlevoix held to his ideal of a truthful history of the Atlantic World that depicted both the accomplishments and shortcomings of the French colonial effort.

Without ignoring the corporate and religious components of Charlevoix's life, this study places Charlevoix in the larger Atlantic context in order to analyze his actions within that New World. We find discussion and acceptance as well as negotiation and resistance on the part of an individual connected to his environment by a great variety of ties. The emphasis on Charlevoix as an individual is also what lends novelty to this study because of a preference for research concentrating on the institutions by

which we identify the Jesuits and their "way of proceeding": the *Spiritual Exercises* that guided them, the flexible *Constitutions*, and the schools.<sup>1</sup> Charlevoix acted within and according to these institutions, yet it is his uniqueness and personality that render him more than a curiosity to one studying the French Atlantic World of the short eighteenth century.

This chapter will place Charlevoix among four different sets of historians as a means to better extract from his works a clearer picture of his idea of the French Atlantic World. Since Charlevoix was a historian of exploration and colonization, the first task is to compare him to some earlier historians of that phase of Atlantic history. A second, related group to which Charlevoix belongs is the Jesuit historians. His contemporary Enlightenment writers, Jesuit or otherwise, make up the third group to which Charlevoix was also connected in a literary world

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 27-28.

Finally, by considering a few modern historians who use or respond to Charlevoix's many comments without definite reference to this particular historical context, the need to integrate Charlevoix's works into modern historiography will be addressed. The discussion of Charlevoix's place in Atlantic historiography is reserved for the conclusion of the dissertation. Charlevoix's desire to provide interesting as well as instructive material for his readers offered a sometimes irresistible temptation to give in to a bit of commentary. Such authorial intrusions were acceptable in his time, but strike the modern reader as the commentary of an "opinionated" historian. Always engaged with the sources, however, these descriptions and even analyses also provide a wealth of information and quotations on a variety of topics that will be demonstrated below. This study helps to provide a context within which to read and use Charlevoix, that is, the French Atlantic World during his own lifetime.



### Different Goals: Telling the Truth

Telling the truth was equally important for the Spanish Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566), an early historian of the European expansion to the Americas whose work shares several important similarities to Charlevoix. Both the Spaniard and the Frenchman were members of Catholic religious orders. Both of them strongly defended the missionary duties of Europeans to bring the Catholic faith to the peoples of the New World. At the same time, both were highly critical of European colonizers and their governments for placing self-interest ahead of their missionary duties.

Despite these similarities, there are a number of important differences in the work of the two men. Las Casas' suggestion that God's wrath would destroy the Spanish empire as a punishment for the cruelty of conquest goes far beyond Charlevoix's criticisms of the conquistadores. The *Breve Relación de la Destrucción de la Indias* (Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies, 1522) provided polemical

accounts that would influence generations of historians as would the *Apologética historia sumaria* (pre 1559). Carl Ortwin Sauer finds that "Las Casas as polemicist has overshadowed Las Casas the historian and geographer."<sup>2</sup> Although Charlevoix praised Las Casas for his strong condemnation of the Spanish and their treatment of the Indians, he stopped short of knowing God's plans for their souls.<sup>3</sup>

Neither Charlevoix nor Las Casas adhered to the suggestion of many early modern writers that brutal conquest and conversion could go together, and Charlevoix shared Las Casas's opinion that the Indians were capable of understanding and accepting the Gospel. Yet Charlevoix was more moderate in his praise of Indian virtue than his Dominican predecessor. Furthermore, he described the French in terms that

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<sup>2</sup> Carl Ortwin Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, 39.

<sup>3</sup> Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001; J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*, 64; Sauer.

indicated that they were indeed capable of far better behavior than they exhibited. The Spanish were portrayed as Charlevoix thought them to be. Indeed, Charlevoix found that Las Casas's only fault was he sometimes allowed his vivid imagination to dominate his histories.<sup>4</sup>

Charlevoix also promoted the spread of Christianity, but from the Catholic perspective. He did not "promote" the New World in a manner that approached false advertising, rather, his sales pitch relied upon experience, research, and an approach to the writing of history that demanded truth in the telling. In this sense Charlevoix differed from Richard Hakluyt, the Elder (1552-1616) who wrote of "inducements" to settle Virginia. The "Inducements to the Liking of the Voyage Intended towards Virginia in 40. and 42. Degrees" proposes three reasons for settling abroad:

The ends of the voyage are these:

1. To plant the Christian religion.

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<sup>4</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 139.

2. To trafficke.

3. To conquer.

Or, to doe all three.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding the Indians and their practices was not necessary. The religion of the English was not questioned. If the Indians tried to "expel" the English, then Hakluyt finds that the "lords of navigation" would easily be able to defend themselves. The goal of a promoter is to get people to settle in Virginia, not to understand why they might or might not wish to go.<sup>6</sup>

The souls of the Indians were of concern to many Europeans, as was the question of their origins and religious practices. One way in which Europeans came to envision Indians in general was through travel literature. Louis Armand de Lorm d'Arce, Baron de

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Hakluyt (the elder), "Inducements to the Liking of the Voyage Intended towards Virginia in 40. and 42. Degrees" 1585, in *Envisioning America: English Plans for the Colonization of North America, 1580-1640*, Peter C. Mancall, ed., Boston: Bedford Books, 1995, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 33-44.

Lahontan (1666-1715), provided his readers with an image that evolved into the stereotype of the "noble savage." Lahontan traveled in New France from 1683-1693, and his *Dialogues curieux entre l'auteur et un sauvage de bon sens* (1703) (Interesting Conversations Between the Author and an Indian of Good Sense) provided an idealized comparison that placed the Indian in nature in a more favorable light than the "civilized" and corrupt Europeans. Charlevoix's sense of duty to his reader would not allow him to engage in such device, and his version of primitive Indian belief in a supreme being came to rival Lahontan's unbelieving, yet noble, Indian. By contrast, the *philosophes* argued for a deistic version of history.<sup>7</sup>

#### Jesuit Historians

From their inception in 1540 onward, the Jesuits demonstrated a "corporate concern for accurate

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<sup>7</sup> Catherine M. Northeast, *The Parisian Jesuits and the Enlightenment, 1700-1762*, Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1991, p. 174. See also Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, Berkley: University of California Press, 2001.

documentation.”<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Wright finds that there has never been one Jesuit history, nor has a single Jesuit “ethos” ever existed.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, we continue to search for a definition of what it means to be a Jesuit and what Jesuit history entails. Neither the Enlightenment nor the Jesuits may be neatly described exclusively as possessed of “forward-looking rationalism” or “moribund religious faith.”<sup>10</sup> As we will see, Charlevoix’s histories also defy such categorization.

In the *Jesuit Relations*,<sup>11</sup> as they have come to be known, we find the letters and memoirs of missionaries and explorers like Paul Le Jeune (1592-1664), Jerome

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Wright, *God’s Soldiers: Adventure, Politics, Intrigue, and Power— A History of the Jesuits*, New York: Doubleday, 2004, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>11</sup> *Relation des Jésuites: contenant ce qui s’est passé de plus remarquable dans les missions de Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus dans la Nouvelle-France*, Montréal 1972; Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, Cleveland: Burrows Bros., 1896-1901.

Lalement (1593-1665), and Jacques Marquette (1637-1675), the first European to locate the Mississippi River. Their annual reports were sent to France during the years 1632-1791 and later edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites to include documents from the years 1610-1791. These and other Jesuit writers wrote from a position of absolute control over their texts if not their missions and expeditions, a position that renders their reliability as witnesses suspect. Therefore, Carole Blackburn argues, their reports of loyal and faithful Indians are not to be taken literally. The cultures described by the early Jesuits were assessed through unabashedly and perhaps unwittingly, ethnocentric filters.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the *Jesuit Relations*, Charlevoix consulted French state archives in Paris, including the *Archives des Colonies*, the *Archives de la Marine*, the *Archives du Service Hydrographique*.<sup>13</sup> These

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<sup>12</sup> Carole Blackburn, *Harvest of Souls: The Jesuit Missions and Colonialism in North America, 1632-1650*, Montreal: McGill University Press, 2000.

documents contain correspondence between France and the colonies in North America, including the Caribbean. Charlevoix was granted access to some of these documents. Fellow Jesuits also sent him memoirs and notes that he used in his histories.

It is commonly assumed that in the eighteenth century the Jesuits continued to write a kind of history that either could not or would not acknowledge the changes occurring throughout the French Atlantic World.<sup>14</sup> But in the early 1700s the Jesuits successfully made the transition from being mainly chroniclers of mission activities to participants in the larger world of letters on a level that was commercially viable. This world included new inhabitants, both plant and animal, as well as new ideas, and the Jesuits contributed to the debates of all.<sup>15</sup> The first two of Charlevoix's histories—his

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<sup>13</sup> Archives des Colonies, Paris, Series B, C2, C9, C11A, C13A, C13B, C13C.

<sup>14</sup> See Wright.



biography of Marie de l'Incarnation and his history of Saint Domingue—fall within this period when Charlevoix's worldview is correspondingly positive and lacking the defensive tone that would come to characterize his later writing.

Carole Blackburn writes that the Jesuits' "portrayal of North America did not rely on the themes of reason and progress" that are so evident in more modern, secular works.<sup>16</sup> Charlevoix as a Jesuit historian acted and reacted to changes and challenges in France and abroad. He tried to portray his subjects objectively despite his privileged position as narrator. He also tried to reason his way through some of the weightier debates of his day. By the 1730s we find that Charlevoix is one of a small group of Jesuits who adapted to an increasingly commercial, colonial, and secular Atlantic World. In this company we also find Joseph-François Lafitau (1681-1746) whose

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<sup>15</sup> Catherine M. Northeast, *The Parisian Jesuits and the Enlightenment, 1700-1762*, Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> Blackburn, 17.

*Moeurs des sauvages américains, comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (Manners of the American Indians Compared With Manners of the First Times) is an example of early comparative ethnology.<sup>17</sup>

Among his contemporaries, Charlevoix was not the only Jesuit to defend America against what would evolve into a full-blown degeneracy theory concerning the species of the New World. Writing from the same sense of obligation to his public that Charlevoix expresses, Francisco Javier Clavigero, S.J. (1731-1787), a missionary to Mexico, interpreted that part of the Atlantic World as worthy of study in its own right instead of as an inferior version of European civilization as presented by a range of scholars including Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, and Voltaire. Clavigero is another exemplar of the same transitional Jesuit history produced by

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph-François Lafitau, *Moeurs des sauvages américains, comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, Paris, 1724; Catherine M. Northeast, *The Parisian Jesuits and the Enlightenment*, Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1991.

Charlevoix. This new phase in general is characterized by a break with strict dialectical reasoning and an overt striving for objectivity within the increasingly permeable bounds of the Roman Catholic Church and the eighteenth-century Atlantic World.<sup>18</sup>

As a Jesuit, Charlevoix insisted that God was present and active in the course of history, but even in defensive mode, stopped short of advocating that Roman Catholicism was the only acceptable faith. In judgment of the decision by Louis XIV and Louis XV not to allow French Huguenots to settle in Louisiana, Charlevoix separates the notion of king and country. Had either monarch allowed freedom of conscience to a group who pledged their allegiance to both France and their king, then Louisiana would have been more populous and prosperous.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Charles E. Ronan, S.J., *Francisco Javier Clavigero, S.J. (1731-1787), Figure of the Mexican Enlightenment: His Life and Works*, Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1977.

<sup>19</sup> *Histoire de la nouvelle France*, III: 387.

Charlevoix's break with previous Jesuit historiography is clearer than his embrace or rejection of the new style of history that was emerging during the Enlightenment. Charlevoix's *Histoire et description de la Nouvelle France* seems to have satisfied some of enlightened France's desire for "lively and readable history pointing a humanistic moral."<sup>20</sup> It also seems that "all Paris" was reading it and was especially amused and instructed by the *Journal* contained in the final volume.<sup>21</sup> This being the case, it is not the case that all, or even most of Charlevoix's contemporaries wrote about him or his works. There is, on the other hand, a staggering amount of eighteenth-century and Jesuit historiography into which Charlevoix's works may be placed. Voltaire may not have seen New France as a worthwhile topic, but he agreed with Charlevoix that history should

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<sup>20</sup>John McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth Century France, Volume 1, The Clerical Establishment and its Social Ramifications*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, 599.

<sup>21</sup>McManners, Volume 2, *The Religion of the People and the Politics of Religion*, 521.

either record important events or otherwise be notable for having been well written.<sup>22</sup>

Charlevoix never embraced a deistic version of the world and its history. For him the Church provided an ordained hierarchy within which humanity could not only make progress, but find happiness as well. The fact that people did not always adhere to the prescribed guidelines provided Charlevoix with another reason to explore and write about the French Atlantic World. Those who challenged Charlevoix's worldview perceived the Roman Catholic Church as an insurmountable obstacle to those same goals of progress and happiness that could be attained through human reasoning alone. History, they argued, evolved along the developmental lines of humans' reasoning capabilities, not divine will or intervention.

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<sup>22</sup> Theodore Besterman, *Voltaire*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969, p. 157. A.J. Ayer makes this same point in his *Voltaire*, New York: Random House, 1986, p. 87. Voltaire referred to New France as "a few acres (*arpents*) of snow" in his *Essai sur les mœurs...*

## Charlevoix and Enlightenment Historians

As skepticism of organized religion, especially Roman Catholicism, increased, so did the Jesuit engagement in the literary exchange of ideas and alternatives such as Voltaire's Deism or the attacks of the Encyclopedists. How did the peoples on the far side of the Atlantic fit into a God-centered universe? Charlevoix's histories represent the compromise and flexibility with which some Jesuits considered the problem. In fact, referring to the spiritual condition of the New World's primitive inhabitants, Catherine Northeast finds that "Enlightenment acceptance of Charlevoix's account was overwhelming." She also notes that the Jesuits were not "forced into open confrontation with the secular Enlightenment" until the 1750s.<sup>23</sup> Charlevoix's last published work, the *Histoire du Paraguay*, reflects a defensive reaction

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 174, 218; Marc Fumaroli, "Between the Rigorist Hammer and the Deist Anvil: The Fate of the Jesuits in Eighteenth-Century France," John W. O'Malley, S.J. et al, eds., *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006, 682-690.

against this move away from amusing and instructing the reader and toward a preference for more secular, rational histories.

Charlevoix was an agent of the Roman Catholic Church with Gallican tendencies as suggested by his staunch loyalty to France in what some view as his "sometimes contradictory service."<sup>24</sup> This contradiction stems partly from the fact that after issue of the papal bull *Unigenitus* in 1713, the now unorthodox Jansenists found some unexpected allies in the *philosophes* in their attacks on the Jesuits. Charlevoix was faced with the task of defending the Church and State, if not king, against the ideas in texts such as Pascal's *Pensées* (1660), Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des lois* (1748), and Voltaire's *Candide* (1759).

If the eighteenth century can be said to have given us the notion of progress, then it must also be noted that some of those who lived, wrote, and read

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<sup>24</sup> D.G. Thompson, "The French Jesuit Leaders and the Destruction of the Jesuit Order in France, 1756-1762," *French History* Vol. 2, No. 3, 1988, 240.

during what we now term the Enlightenment also supported and attacked that notion with all their mental, and sometimes, physical, powers.<sup>25</sup> Then, as now, newness did not equate to progress, and the effort to understand both concepts remains equally crucial. For the inhabitants of what I have termed the Short Eighteenth Century, the lands and inhabitants of places connected primarily by the Atlantic Ocean faced a new, bigger world in which ideas were often simultaneously disruptive and hope-filled or, as in the case of those who remained uninspired by the New world, uninteresting or inferior.

It goes almost without saying that Charlevoix had access to the same written records that we today consider the iconic works of the age: Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755), François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1772), Denis Diderot (1713-1784), to name but four. These men also had access to Charlevoix's work,

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<sup>25</sup> See, Neil Postman, *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.



as did Thomas Jefferson.<sup>26</sup> More specifically, and worthy of study in its own right, Charlevoix provided a critical list or a discussion of authors and documents consulted, including maps, for each of the works considered here. To the *Histoire du Paraguay* he actually appended some of documents that would reinforce his assertions as well as references throughout the text.

Charlevoix was part of the swirling debates concerning the nature of humans and other species both in France and throughout the Atlantic World. These debates have been studied and outlined in several studies of three important periodicals of the day, the *Journal des Savants* of the *philosophes*, the Jansenist *Nouvelles ecclésiastiques*, and the Jesuit *Journal de Trévoux* of which Charlevoix was an editor from 1733 until 1755. In these journals the readers of France could keep abreast of issues and publications that demonstrate the prevalent intellectual trends of the period such as the widening of both mental and

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<sup>26</sup> [www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org)

physical horizons. Articles in the *Journal de Trévoux* did not bear the author's name, so it is impossible to definitively assign authorship of any pieces to Charlevoix.<sup>27</sup> In Charlevoix's evolving perspective we see not only an individual's growing pessimism, but also the coming of age of a less determinedly Catholic Atlantic World.

#### Charlevoix and Modern Historians

Although Charlevoix proposed a history of the New World, his histories today are generally considered individually or as vehicles for the conveyance of themes such as the nature of truth or as secondary sources of information and illustrative quotations. The developmental nature of Charlevoix's writings has

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<sup>27</sup> See Cyril B. O'Keefe, S.J., *Contemporary Reactions to the Enlightenment (1728-1762): A Study of three critical journals: the Jesuit Journal de Trévoux, the Jansenist Nouvelles ecclésiastiques, and the secular Journal des Savants*, Geneve: Librairie Slatkine, 1974; *Journal de Trévoux*, January, 1735, 161-172; June, 1742, 1053-1091. Of course the *Projet* and the *Éloge du Cardinal Polignac* are attributed to Charlevoix. The latter appeared in the *Journal de Trévoux*, June 1742.

allowed historians throughout the years to employ portions of his work to aid in the fulfillment of other research projects. In 1943 Nellis M. Crouse published a study of the French in the West Indies. He relied upon Charlevoix's *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole* for a few comments about pirates and battles between the French and English. Focusing upon the "English against Dutch and French, French against Spaniards, French and Spaniards against English and various other combinations,"<sup>28</sup> his story is one of military interaction and does little to highlight the broader framework of an Atlantic World, French or otherwise.

The early 1990s, in contrast, saw an increased interest not only in the history of the French in North America, but in connecting that story to larger events and ideas. Robert S. Weddle mentions the maps in Charlevoix's *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* in his study of the geography, mapmaking, and the exploration

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<sup>28</sup> Nellis M. Crouse, *The French Struggle for the West Indies, 1665-1713*, New York: Octagon Books, 1966, 1.

of the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>29</sup> The limited development of the first two elements produced effects that would prove politically significant throughout the Atlantic World as the Europeans raced to locate the mouth of the Mississippi River from the sea.

In the same year that Weddell's study appeared, 1991, Catherine M. Northeast published a study that integrated the Jesuits of Paris, including Charlevoix, into the intellectual currents of the Enlightenment. Concentrating on problems that the Jesuits encountered as a result of their adherence to Christianity and the published accounts of that debate, she finds that "the eighteenth-century re-evaluation of Christianity was very much a process involving both Catholics and non-believers."<sup>30</sup> Charlevoix was a part of this process as an individual historian and as a part of a body of priests whose very existence was predicated by corporate loyalty and obedience to the Pope in Rome.

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<sup>29</sup> Robert S. Weddle, *The French Thorn: Rival Explorers in the Spanish Sea, 1682-1762*, College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991.

<sup>30</sup> Northeast, 216.

In the *Journal*, Charlevoix recorded much that is valuable to historians of the Lower Mississippi Valley. Daniel H. Usner considers the myriad of exchanges that took place there between peoples within an economic context, and Charlevoix provides several comments regarding one of the more deadly forms of exchange, that of disease. Usner finds that those involved "found plenty of common ground upon which to adapt."<sup>31</sup> That common ground would erode from beneath the Indians as it would the Jesuits and France in the Atlantic World.

By the eighteenth century, yet another type of exchange had become an established and debated part of the many types of interactions in early America. *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* by Peter C. Mancall suggests Charlevoix's realistic, and pragmatic stance to the liquor trade where the English were concerned. Painfully aware that brandy

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, 17 Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992, 8.

stood in the way of the missionaries' goals, Charlevoix also knew that the Indians could procure the beverage from the English should the French choose to put a stop to the trade.<sup>32</sup>

The literature that addresses Charlevoix's work as its main topic of analysis is less varied. There are three well-researched masters' theses that address selected histories by Charlevoix in order to assert the presence of a certain characteristic within the texts or of the author. George R. Healy writes,

By 1700 or thereabouts it was manifestly impossible for the intelligent European to hold, as had his medieval predecessors, that the sum total of the world's important events and achievements had been contained within the boundaries and history of Europe.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Peter C. Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.

Healy concludes that the conservative Charlevoix never intended to portray Europeans in an unflattering light. He depicts a reactionary man caught in the dilemma of having to address the radical ideas from the New World, thereby contributing to their continued existence. Charlevoix stands apart as a historian in his decision to omit European History from his discussion, as well as for his scholarship.<sup>34</sup>

In his 1988 thesis, Alban Boudreau observes correctly that throughout the historiography there is a desire on the part of writers to call more attention to Charlevoix or some aspect of his work. Boudreau addresses Charlevoix's *Projet* to affirm the Jesuit's providentialist view of history. By considering the *Projet* from a historiographical standpoint and comparing the plan to the histories of Japan, New France, and Paraguay, Boudreau is able to assert that Charlevoix is indeed representative of the eighteenth-

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<sup>33</sup> George R. Healy, "Charlevoix's Histories of the New World: A Study in Exotic Radicalism," Master's Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1950, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Healy.

century, Jesuit historian who both entertained and instructed his reader within the bounds of religious faith. Finding that, with the exception of impartiality, Charlevoix adheres to his own conception of the way divinely-ordained history ought to be framed and written, Boudreau, like Healy concludes that Charlevoix was a consistent writer of history.<sup>35</sup>

Focusing solely upon the *Histoire et description generale de la Nouvelle France*, Anne Gagnon analyzes the method of historians as represented by the *philosophes*, for whom historical facts needed to be true as well as useful, and the *érudites* who viewed facts as ends unto themselves, and concludes that despite the presence of tensions in the larger community of historians and within Charlevoix's writings, he successfully presents the truth to his readers. Perhaps more importantly, Gagnon's thesis

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<sup>35</sup>Alban Boudreau, "Le 'Projet d'un Corps d'Histoires de nouveau Monde de P.-F.-X. de Charlevoix': une etude historiographique", Masters Thesis, Université de Montréal, 1988.



demonstrates the great variety among schools of thought that existed during the eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

Each of the theses mentioned above has recourse to many of the same basic authorities with regard to the scarce biographical information. Pierre Berthiaume's more recent 1994 edition of the *Journal* however, will probably remain definitive as a source.<sup>37</sup> These sources consist of dictionaries and prefaces to translations of Charlevoix's work on North America. The present study is no exception.<sup>38</sup> It does move farther afield, however, in its attempt to delineate a French Atlantic World as portrayed by a man who was probably more aware of the contradictions that existed in his own writings and the ways he used them to subtly, sometimes too much so, to criticize as well as

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<sup>36</sup> Anne Gagnon, "Charlevoix: un jésuite en quête de vérité, Étude historiographique d'*Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France*," Master's Thesis, McGill University, 1997.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Berthiaume, ed. *François-Xavier de Charlevoix: Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1994.

<sup>38</sup> See bibliography.

praise elements of that world. The shortage of studies devoted to the evolution of Charlevoix's many ideas, as opposed to a characteristic of his works, is testament, not to the insignificance of his works, but to the complexity of even the "short" eighteenth century. As a Jesuit, Charlevoix perceived truth and the writing of history to be as clearly delineated by a reasonable and merciful God as they were for other enlightened authors by "pure" reason.

#### Conclusion

No other Jesuit applied his methodology to so vast a portion of the New World. "Newness" was Charlevoix's criteria for inclusion, as being a part of the eighteenth-century French Atlantic World is a requirement for this study. As with Charlevoix's *Projet*, this study seeks to introduce a large entity to its audience. The years 1682-1761 impose strict chronological limits upon a non-static concept that helps us understand a larger world. Conclusions regarding that understanding as well as Charlevoix's

place within the Atlantic literature will be addressed in the conclusion of this study.

Charlevoix was a historian above all, who though devout, was interested in recording the achievements of the Jesuits, and hoping to encourage the expansion of the French in the Atlantic World, nonetheless insisted on following standards of historical research that underscored truth based on documentation and primary sources. These goals were not mutually exclusive to Charlevoix, nor should they be so to us.

## Chapter 2

## Chaos, Order, and Boundaries:

## Charlevoix and Marie de l'Incarnation

Due, as I have reason to believe it, to the merits of the founder of the Ursulines of Canada, I did not end my days in a foreign land in the flower of my youth, it seemed to me that I could do nothing less to honor my benefactrice than to make her well-known to the public.<sup>1</sup>

There was no complementary women's organization among the Jesuits, yet despite Ignatius's instructions, women have sought relationships with the brothers and their society since its inception. Elizabeth Rhodes provides some insights into the frustrations of early modern Spanish women who sought

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix, *La Vie de la Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*, Clermont-Ferrand: Typographie de Ferdinand Thibaud, 1862, 11. This work was first published in 1724.

spiritual self-realization through the Jesuits in direct conflict with their societal training. We find overt resistance to the Jesuits' version of Christianity and non-complementary sex roles among the Huron and Montagnais women of New France. In the midst of the turmoil we find Charlevoix trying to fit an educated, married and widowed business woman into his own evolving spiritual Atlantic World.<sup>2</sup>

Historiographically speaking, this work approaches hagiography in its praise for Marie while simultaneously making reference to verifiable sources in its quest to provide true history.

Published in 1724, Charlevoix's biography of Marie Guyart (1599- 1672), later known as Marie de l'Incarnation, is not the definitive source of information about a young woman of ordinary means

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<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Rhodes, "Join the Jesuits, See the World: Early Modern Women in Spain and the Society of Jesus," O'Malley et al., 33-49; Karen Anderson, *Chain Her by One Foot: The Subjugation of Native Women in Seventeenth-Century New France*, New York: Routledge, 1993. See also Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

whose life was anything but ordinary. In 1724 Charlevoix presented *La vie de la Mère Marie de l'Incarnation* to the French reading public. The work he delivered was more psychological and spiritual than fact-oriented. Her actual deeds, though recorded elsewhere, are largely absent from the life constructed by Charlevoix. In this way, the "inner biography" that he created about Marie de l'Incarnation is frustratingly similar to the biographical sketches that have been written about Charlevoix. The difference, however, is that Charlevoix had his subject's letters and other biographies from which to choose. Several of Marie's confessors and religious superiors ordered Marie to record her spiritual development. No such collections of letters are extant for the Jesuit author and traveler, nor do we witness anything less than a strong desire to write. Throughout the biography of Marie we trace the spiritual development of a devout woman from the perspective of a man engaging in the process of ordering his Atlantic World. From

Charlevoix's writings, including Marie's biography, we learn what he thought and felt about a huge variety of topics that would have interested contemporary readers.

The first of three themes to be addressed here is Charlevoix's use of biography to write instructive, if not entertaining history. The discussion provides a backdrop against which Charlevoix and his subject may be placed together in the eighteenth century. The second section concentrates on Marie's spiritual life in the seventeenth century as Charlevoix tells it during his own lifetime. Finally, Marie's missionary calling and its eventual fulfillment caused Marie both grief and ecstasy. The opportunity to win souls for God came at the expense of a life with her own son. In such a situation, Charlevoix is more charitable to Marie than many in France from either century.

#### Writing the Biography of a Saint

This biography is not usually a part of larger studies of Charlevoix's work. It is too tempting to

dismiss the short study as something he felt he had to do because, unlike Marie, Charlevoix returned to France after his trans-Atlantic voyages and he thanks her for preserving his life. Whatever Charlevoix's sense of obligation to Marie, Charlevoix was equally driven, not to live among the unchurched, but to write good history which he attempts to define throughout all of the writings considered here. He also had to fit Marie into a world in which women held some power in the world of secular letters. For Carla Hesse, this awareness of the self as "self-creating" is what constitutes modernity.<sup>3</sup> Charlevoix's Marie is not aware of any power that she might have held.

In 1724 Charlevoix had not yet published the "*Projet d'un Corps d'Histoires de Nouveau Monde*" in which he would outline a plan for a history of the New World.<sup>4</sup> He had visited North America, which to many represented the entirety of the New World. It is not

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<sup>3</sup> Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, xii.

<sup>4</sup> The *Projet* appeared in the *Journal deTrévoux* in 1735, and was also included in the *Histoire* in 1744.



clear what the New World meant to Charlevoix in this, his first published work. On one hand we see a man who is thankful that he had not died in the French colonies; on the other we find a Jesuit who commended the piety and bravery of a woman who did give her life for the inhabitants of a foreign land. The Atlantic World, especially North America, was for Charlevoix, a place of possibilities as yet unorganized and unclassified. In Marie's biography, Charlevoix sought to impose a strictly religious frame onto its newness.

There is, however, evidence of a plan, or perhaps a desire, to introduce Christianity to whatever peoples were encountered. With that in mind today's reader is able to follow Charlevoix's evolving perception of the eighteenth-century French Atlantic world from a land (or lands) full of opportunities for spiritual and earthly conquests to a place where the farthest reaches were mostly unattainable for the French. Things went well for Marie de l'Incarnation, as for the French in general, when the Jesuits were in charge, and Charlevoix hoped to encourage not just

French missionaries, but French families as well to settle in North America.

Charlevoix was completely at ease in both the public and private literary spheres of the eighteenth-century French Atlantic World. As an educated, well-travelled member of the Jesuit order in the early stages of a distinguished career he was already accustomed to writing to and about others. It would never have occurred to him that someone, in this case Marie de l'Incarnation, might not desire the same mobility. As we shall discover, Marie shrank from the public eye as determinedly as Charlevoix and others sought to expose her to it.<sup>5</sup>

There is an ironic similarity in the frustrations Charlevoix experienced while trying to write Marie's biography and the obstacles encountered by this author in the attempt to tease out a biography-- if only an intellectual one-- from the writings of one person. No

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<sup>5</sup> For an excellent discussion of eighteenth-century French notions of public and private, see Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, *Epistolary Bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Letters*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

one forced Charlevoix to write, yet his sense of duty is unmistakable especially with regard to the imposition of order upon such a life as Marie's. Charlevoix tells us that he expected to pick up Marie's writings, recorded "by order of her confessors," and simply fill in the silences with a summary of her life. Once he began the project, however, he discovered that Marie's writings were not in order "because she wrote them on varying occasions and for varying people." He would never be able to avoid confusion and repeats. His mission became the restoration (imposition?) of "natural order" upon the story.<sup>6</sup>

Whether to excuse or efface himself, Charlevoix advised his readers that he was not the "master" of the body of writing he aspired to present. Nor was he the sole narrator or protagonist of his own experiences in the eighteenth-century Atlantic World. The portrait we get of Marie is more impressionistic than realistic. Admitting his failure to restore

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<sup>6</sup> *Marie*, 37-38.

order, Charlevoix let Marie do all the talking. The resulting biography is an assemblage of quotations the length of which would make many a dissertation director shudder. The writer is by no means the master here.

Charlevoix's skeletal description of Marie's secular life is not without its insights. For example, aside from the obligatory birth date for Marie, October 18, 1599, we learn that she was born in Tours, France. Her father was a silk merchant according to Charlevoix, "more commendable for his probity and straightforwardness than for the advantages of his fortune."<sup>7</sup> Marie's mother, Jeanne Michelet, "descended by the female line from the house of Bourdazière, but experienced in nothing any of the grandeur of her relations."<sup>8</sup> Marie's early childhood passed "without

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<sup>7</sup> *Marie*, 40. Mali states that he was a master baker; Davis, a merchant baker. Anya Mali, *Mystic in the New World: Marie de l'Incarnation (1599-1672)*, New York: E.J. Brill, 1996; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> *Marie*, 40.

any circumstance that merits to be retold."<sup>9</sup> From her memoirs, Charlevoix learned that even as a child Guyart knew that God had greater expectations of her. The growing appreciation of childhood as a stage of life was not lost on the author: "her most usual amusements at that age, and even several years after she had obtained the use of reason, were to imitate the ceremonies of the Church."<sup>10</sup> For Marie, however, these imitations of things beyond the grasp of most childhood intellects were a source of tears because they evinced God's exceptional demands of devotion from her.

Though Charlevoix strove to present balanced, reasoned narratives to his readers, reason plays an intriguing role in his reconstruction of Marie's life. Most of the sources to which he had access are the attempts of their authors to comprehend and explain divine spirituality in rational prose. Charlevoix portrays Marie's tendency toward charity thus: "The

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>*Marie*, 40-41.

first passion that appeared in her was a keen charity and a very tender compassion for the poor and the sick."<sup>11</sup> Her greatest sorrow was to be unable to help someone in need, and she gave anything that she had to those in need. Yet even Marie was aware of the struggle between reason and passion, balance and excess. Charlevoix portrays her generosity in this way: "She acknowledged that she went to great excesses in that; but her intention was good, and God let her know in a very particular way that her feelings were in accordance with his heart."<sup>12</sup>

Knowing and feeling are inextricably interwoven in Marie's mind and heart and in Charlevoix's description of her life to a greater degree than in any of his other writings. One cause is perhaps obvious, but it is more difficult here than in other works to view Charlevoix as a historian first and foremost, then as a Jesuit priest. The nature of his subject and his own background presented difficult

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<sup>11</sup> *Marie*, 41. Italics added.

<sup>12</sup> *Marie*, 42.

obstacles for the author who wished to remain impartial. One day while making her rounds among the poor, Marie passed by a cart that was being loaded. Her sleeve became caught in the loading machinery, and Marie was lifted "*fort haut*," then dropped to the ground. All who saw the incident presumed her dead, but Marie sustained no injury at all. From that moment on Marie was persuaded that Providence had saved her in order that she might help the poor.<sup>13</sup>

Charlevoix tells us that we do not know Marie's age at the time of this first manifestation of divine protection; however, Marie did note her age when she recorded other events such as the encounter with Jesus Christ that became the foundation of her mystic life. For the first time in the biography, Charlevoix turns the telling over to Marie, introducing the first of many lengthy excerpts from Marie's own memoirs. Giving Marie the privileged place that he reserves for eye-witnesses in later works, Charlevoix states, "One ought not be surprised at the length or the multitude

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<sup>13</sup> *Marie*, 41-42.

of quotations, which will make up the content of this book, and I assure even myself that if one has some reproach to make on that, it will be that I did not let speak even more a person who speaks so well."<sup>14</sup> Although Charlevoix does not abandon the use of quotations completely, Marie's biography is the first and last instance of such a concession.

#### Marie's Spiritual Quest

The first encounter described by Marie took place when she was but seven years old. Jesus Christ appeared to her while she was sleeping. She uses the phrase "*en mon sommeil*" (in my sleep) as opposed to in a dream, as if perhaps the latter were not as reliable. Charlevoix returns only after the description in order to relate the effects of the encounter on the young girl who became increasingly more pious. Charlevoix expresses his surprise at the intensity of her activities as well as her young age.

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<sup>14</sup> *Marie*, 38. Charlevoix issues this caveat in the Préface. Charlevoix often used long quotations when necessary, but not to the extent he does here.



... but what was more surprising, because one would expect it less in the activities natural to this age, was to see a girl from nine to ten years old, hide in the most secluded places and look for the least frequented churches, to spend there the better part of the day in conversation with the Lord.<sup>15</sup>

For a nine-to-ten-year-old girl to hide away during the day might not be seen as exceptionally odd, but for her to spend that time in conversation with God would be exceptional during any period. As Marie grew older, her parents allowed her more liberty to seek such isolation from the world. This liberty would be curtailed, however, when Marie reached the age of seventeen, and her parents began to plan for her marriage.

Marie did not have a spiritual director who could have guided her into a more cloistered world.

According to Charlevoix, Marie's mother was pleased by

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<sup>15</sup> *Marie*, 44.

her daughter's religious fervor, but mistook her lack of objection as a sign of her daughter's acceptance of her destiny and parents' will.

She submitted nonetheless and regarded this purpose of her parents as an order from God himself. She replied to her mother, that since it was resolved, and her father wanted it, she believed herself obliged to obey.<sup>16</sup>

Absent the intervention of a spiritual director, how could Marie have done otherwise? The way Charlevoix paints this particular scene one can almost, but not quite, imagine the steadfast Marie accepting the proposed marriage and vowing to consecrate a son to God's service. Harder to discern is the intent of Marie's declaration that, were she ever to regain her freedom, she would have no other spouse than the Lord.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Marie*, 46.

<sup>17</sup> *Marie*, 46. "Elle ajouta que si Dieu lui donnait un fils, elle le consacrerait à son service; et qu'elle-même, si dans la suite elle recouvrait la liberté qu'elle allait perdre, elle n'aurait plus d'autre époux que le Seigneur." Charlevoix was equally

With matrimony, the trials began in Marie's life. Much later she wrote to her son that the burden of the cross of marriage was God's way of bringing him into the world. Charlevoix notes that others noticed in Marie "*un air gai*" which led them to wonder if perhaps Marie was ill suited for the cloister after all. He adds that

She actually had to endure many hardships during the two years that her promise would last. N. Martin, her husband, was the innocent cause of them : that's all that I could learn about it ; the industrious charity of the mother and son having come to the end of hiding from us knowledge of a detail that could have wronged the memory of a father and a husband.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever Marie's husband did or did not do, Charlevoix assures the reader that Martin was a good husband and

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concerned that men in the French colonies should marry in order to establish solid families who would then become productive contributors to the Atlantic market.

<sup>18</sup> *Marie*, 47-48.

father, and that Marie and her son are responsible for the denial of further detail to his readers.

The young Mme. Martin fulfilled her duties as wife and as mistress of a large number of workers in her husband's silk business. She tended their health and needs as if they were her own family. Charlevoix states that she was more of a mother to them than a mistress. Internally and privately, however, she was torn. Despite the happiness she felt at the birth of her son, she never lost the desire for solitude and spiritual musing.<sup>19</sup>

These musings and meditations make up most of the selections that Charlevoix chooses to share with his readers. He never presumes to guess her thoughts, opting, rather, for occasional summaries and frequent phrases that indicate a transition to the primary documents. There is also the recurring expression of mild, polite surprise that a woman of eighteen years could attain such spiritual depths without the guidance of a director. As for Marie, even the tender

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<sup>19</sup> *Marie*, 47-50.

regret of her spouse at having been the source of her distress did nothing to lessen her desire for solitude. At this point Charlevoix turns to Marie's own words in order to provide a description of her inner, private experiences, but Marie goes in an unexpected direction:

The Divine Majesty, not content to have given me the disgust for vain things and the strength to carry the crosses that it had to send me, fortified my interior being and gave me a great inclination toward the frequenting of the Sacraments.<sup>20</sup>

Charlevoix chose to include in his biography those selections that would illuminate Marie's inner self, leaving the reader to consult other biographies or the primary documents in order to discover the details of Marie's daily life. In so doing, he found himself unable to explain his subject's innermost experiences - a set of circumstances that must have proved extremely frustrating. Despite the fact that

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<sup>20</sup> *Marie*, 50.

religious works were not the height of literary fashion, a fact that Charlevoix recognized, the need for the public to know about the spiritual development of his benefactrice outweighed the desires of the reading public.<sup>21</sup>

It is tempting to wonder if Charlevoix would have been as charitable in his portrayal of the next segment of Marie's life had she not eventually become a nun and gone to Canada. Pious widows were certainly a part of seventeenth-century life, but a young widow of nineteen would have drawn more attention to herself in most social settings. When Marie's husband died after only two years of marriage, he left the young woman to fend for herself and her six-month-old son. She scarcely had time to ponder her new situation before she began to receive proposals from "partis très avantageux."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Marie*, 15.

<sup>22</sup> *Marie*, 56-57. Davis (*Women on the Margins*, 72) acknowledges that Catholic reformers would have approved of widows who chose chastity as a way of life

It is difficult to discern Charlevoix's "view" of women, for he does not address them as a group. What is remarkable, perhaps, is his willingness to consider any individual woman as capable of living a life of interest. Other prejudices surface in later works, but a clear gender bias is not one of them. He makes no mention of Marie's looks, which were supposedly striking, when discussing her attractions to other men, an observation that would have been appropriate given her other desirable traits such as:

Her virtue, her good heart, her great spirit, her skill in all sorts of business in which she had given good proofs, took the place of goods, and caused her to be regarded as being able to make the happiness and even the fortune of whomever would have her as wife.<sup>23</sup>

Charlevoix can not bring himself to omit the fact that Marie was a destitute widow, but one with the

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during Marie's time. Charlevoix's own views on the subject are not clear.

<sup>23</sup> *Marie*, 57.

ability to make a man happy, nonetheless-- and a good heart as well.

However much he may have wished for Marie to remarry, he also credits her with the ability to recognize "a wisdom superior to all that of men" and follow it in making the decision to refuse all offers of marriage, leaving her future and that of her son, in God's hands.<sup>24</sup> Charlevoix insists that Marie was acutely sensitive to her own loss, but that she was unable to renounce solitude and spiritual union with God despite reminders from those around her of her obligations to herself and her infant. After her husband died, Marie moved in with her mother-in-law and helped with the family business. When that woman died within a month, freedom was again within sight for Marie.

Charlevoix tells us that "That death ended by placing the young widow in complete freedom." Despite the admonitions and reminders of her obligations to herself and her son that could only be satisfied by a

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



new husband, Marie declares that she will never remarry. She trusted God to take care of them both, but Charlevoix found a qualification of this decision necessary.

The ending of this story will convince the most incredulous, that neither an independant spirit, nor laziness, nor mood, fruits too ordinarily of poorly taken devotion, had any part of this resolution of Madam Martin.<sup>25</sup>

The reader must be assured that Marie's devotion and sincerity are sanctioned and not mere whims. By the time Charlevoix is done telling this part of the story, it becomes clear that Marie was not only a good woman, but a good Christian and fit to represent unwavering faith in a god whose ways were impenetrable to Charlevoix's reasoning.<sup>26</sup>

#### The Conquest of Souls

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<sup>25</sup> *Marie*, 59.

<sup>26</sup> *Marie*, 58-60.

Although Charlevoix and Marie de l'Incarnation both crossed the Atlantic Ocean and spent time in New France, the New World plays a small part in the biography. In fact, the very idea of going to Canada does not even occur to Marie until the later pages of Book III (there are six books), and we know that Marie would have been perfectly content to withdraw completely from "the world." The majority of pages preceding Marie's vocation are devoted to "what took place in her soul."<sup>27</sup> Charlevoix devotes a considerable bit of paper to the continuing trials of Marie while in France and the combination of bliss and anguish she faced living a life close to her God while being forced to attend to earthly matters, including increasing problems with her son, Claude.

Charlevoix's praise for Marie's spiritual development was lavish. He closed the first book of the biography with the following phrase:

She elevated herself so high, and spoke a language so divine, that would be necessary

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<sup>27</sup> *Marie*, 84.

to have been inspired by the same spirit that possessed her to find expressions to equal hers: that is what we will see in the following book in which I will barely do anything but copy her memoirs.<sup>28</sup>

Marie had moved in with her sister and brother-in-law, however, where she was more useful as a household worker than a mystic, yet "she asserted that she lost none of her application to God; and that her spirit was always plunged in divine Majesty."<sup>29</sup> The emphasis on continued devotion is important because it underscores Charlevoix's prioritization of a spiritual director in the life of a devotee, a recurring theme throughout his Atlantic World writings. By this point Marie was under the supervision of one of several confessors/directors who would intervene in her development.

In Marie's case this meant liberation from total ignorance. For Charlevoix it meant a huge transition

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<sup>28</sup> *Marie*, 84.

<sup>29</sup> *Marie*, 97.

in Marie's spiritual maturation that progressed rapidly once Marie understood it. Marie's intermediary may have even saved her great public embarrassment. Whereas before, she was not even aware that she needed another person in her relationship with God, now she shared all her desires with her director, including the need to write down all of her sins and post them on the door of the church. Parallels to other historical events notwithstanding, Marie's confessor accepted the list from her. Instead of posting it, however, he burned the list.<sup>30</sup>

If Charlevoix was quick to defend Marie before she obtained a director, he became more so afterward, and with an upgraded arsenal. Marie slept on a wooden plank at night. She wore a hair shirt and took pleasure in refusing herself everything that she had liked. To the possibility that one might be surprised at directorial approval of such behavior, Charlevoix adds only that Marie insisted that the director trusted her inspiration and that "Those who have

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<sup>30</sup>Marie, 60, 92-93. See also Davis, 67.

experience in the piloting of souls will find this reason good; others must at least suspend their judgment."<sup>31</sup>

Marie's relationship with her Lord grew more intimate, but at her son's expense. Claude was eleven years old when his mother, now aged thirty, chose to join the Ursulines. It is not difficult to imagine the distress that Marie's decision to leave him behind caused the boy. Marie was not without her qualms either which Charlevoix describes as an artifice of Satan:

The artifice that the temptor employed especially to cause her to resist the will of God was to make her aware of the little care she had for the interests of her son and for her own, and to make her believe that she was obligated to stay in the world in order to repair the mistakes that she had made in that matter.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Marie*, 108.

This painful dilemma held no option of complete salvation for Marie because of her obligations to her earthly child and to her Heavenly Father. Claude's sudden disappearance (the details are scant) as she was about to join the order caused her so much worry and distraction that she was denied entry. Again she faced harsh criticism from her family and friends for leaving her son, at an age when he needed her most, without any means of "living honestly." Three days later Claude was found, and Marie was resolute. The separation was a tearful occasion for all who witnessed it. This time, however, in the perception of all concerned, Marie remained steadfast in her commitment and turned her back on the world-- if only for a short while.<sup>33</sup>

Claude's schoolmates teased him without mercy because of his mother's actions. They said that his mother had left him in order to go live in a cloister. They also pointed out that he was poor. Of course,

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<sup>32</sup> *Marie*, 158.

<sup>33</sup> *Marie*, 159-166.

Marie knew nothing of this at the time. But just as children can be cruel, they can also have pity, and one day Claude's friends felt sorry for him. They devised a simple plan to go fetch Marie back to her son's side. They resolved to go to the convent's door and make so much noise that the nuns would have to return the boy's mother to him. Claude believed this would work and joined them in the disturbance.

Charlevoix relates the brief exchange that took place between mother and son. It seems that her sisters had to force her to meet with the boy who, in parting, walked away from her backwards so as not to lose sight of his beloved mother. This furnished the sisters with plenty of fodder for the gossip mill. The boys continued their assault upon the doors of the cloister, but to no avail. Marie, however, received a promise from Jesus. He assured her that He would take care of her son. As evidence of the promise, Charlevoix points to the agreement of the Jesuits to undertake Claude's education.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Marie*, 172-174.

Marie was greatly relieved to know that Claude was now in capable, and hopefully caring, hands. Just as she had been distracted by grief over Claude's sadness, Claude had also been drawn away from his books and prayers by his own distress. We lose sight of Claude for a while because, after taking her veil, Marie was again beset by temptations. Charlevoix is not specific, but Marie's torment was great and magnified by losing her director who was called to another posting. Marie's next director was unqualified for such a delicate position, and left his penitent too much to herself. Eventually Marie was inspired to seek out the Company of Jesus. Although the Jesuits had not formally established a presence in Tours, Father George de la Haye came there occasionally to preach and encourage the Ursulines. Marie's Superior told him of the young novice's situation and ordered her to unburden herself to the priest. In less than fifteen minutes La Haye had recognized the presence of divine grace in Marie.<sup>35</sup>

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Marie was calmed and relieved after unburdening herself to Father de la Haye. The priest, however, was not satisfied. He wanted a complete written account of Marie's sins and temptations, an exercise that would help her to better understand herself through a more ordered form of expression. There can be no doubt that without these writings, Charlevoix would not have had as many insights into the life of his adopted benefactor. Indeed, he might not ever have been attracted to her at all for it is under the direction of Father de la Haye that Marie began to feel the first whisperings of her calling to go to Canada.<sup>36</sup>

The desire may have been a distraction, but Charlevoix assures the reader that Marie never neglected her duties while allowing herself to dream of the future. The actual vocation came to Marie in a dream in which Mary and Jesus were discussing Canada and Marie. "The Mother of God was looking at these vast lands, that caused as much pity as dread, and one

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<sup>35</sup> *Marie*, 189-197.

<sup>36</sup> *Marie*, 190- 201.

could only go by a rough and narrow path."<sup>37</sup> The thought of emigrating to a place whose peoples were barely imaginable to one such as she brought Marie a sense of peace and calm-- not the typical reactions of many potential colonists.

After a miserable, three-month crossing, during which the sisters remained as separate as possible from the crew and other passengers, Marie saw her first Indians as the ship emerged from a dangerously thick fog. The year was 1639, six years after she first dreamed of Canada. Marie notes the joy of the Sisters in contrast to the surprise of the poor people who had never seen the likes of the nuns before. Father Vimond who had traveled with them informed the Indians "in the style of their country" that Marie and her company had come in love to instruct their daughters so that they would not be burned in fires. The Father also told the parents that the nuns knew what to do in order to be eternally happy and had forsaken everything to share this knowledge. The

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<sup>37</sup>*Marie*, 203, 201-206.

Indians did not understand. For Marie, who kissed the ground upon reaching shore, the danger existed in between the actual lands or worlds on either side of the Atlantic. The soon-to-be saved Indians guided the ships to Québec where their arrival, on August 1, 1639, was cause for great celebration. Work stopped, and shops were closed as the newcomers appeared.<sup>38</sup>

As the novelty wore off Marie and her compatriots began to settle into their religious habits and duties. In characteristic fashion Marie began to wonder if she had suffered enough. Charlevoix provides an experienced if biased answer that makes clear his distaste for the life that Marie had chosen:

One could not understand how they could live so, one atop of the other, pell mell with the Indian girls, who poisoned them with their infection, so that it was necessary to clean (décrasser) every day, and who by their dirtiness made them either not get enough to eat or to suffer in nourishing

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 283.

oneself with things almost as difficult as hunger itself ; but the divine love in which they were embraced made them find among so much suffering delights that the most pleasant life does not taste.<sup>39</sup>

Charlevoix writes that, despite filth, hardship, and quibbling over which order would dictate the women's dress in Canada, the very air itself was filled not only with infection, but with a kind of holiness that is always associated with newborn churches. In his other writings Charlevoix does not mention the experience of such delight amidst such acute misery (especially if the misery is his own).

On the other hand, there is some continuity in the theme of the New World as the epitome of peril and deprivation for those who devoted their lives to higher causes. Charlevoix suffered while in the newer parts of the Atlantic world as did many of those whose tales he tells in his later works. The remainder of Marie's biography consists mostly of a retelling of

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<sup>39</sup> *Marie*, 290.

the intense physical pain in which Marie lived out her years. Her stature increased with her poverty and self-sacrifice. She died in 1672, "a victim of her zeal for the salvation of the savages."<sup>40</sup> Unlike Charlevoix, she gave her life in the effort to convert the Indians to Christianity. It is more than a little ironic that Charlevoix's reason for writing this biography rests on the fact that he was spared such a death.<sup>41</sup>

#### Conclusion

The "synthesis of the sacred and the profane, which came to dominate 17<sup>th</sup>- century religious life" is clearly evident in Marie's life as described by Charlevoix in the eighteenth century.<sup>42</sup> Charlevoix's reluctance to dismiss Marie from her duty to her son may be an interpretation of attitudes regarding

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<sup>40</sup> *Marie*, 560.

<sup>41</sup> *Marie*, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Paul A. Chilton, "Devout Humanism," *A New History of French Literature*, Denis Holier, ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, 254.

women's roles in Marie's time, as well as an acknowledgement that by the publication of the biography in 1724, religion had already become a more accessible and emotional experience for women as well as men in the public sphere. Charlevoix's publication of this biography preceded the publication of Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Marquise de Sévigné, by one year, and it has been suggested that the earliest admirers of her letters "were not her literary contemporaries but writers who would shape the critical thought and taste of the Enlightenment-- Pierre Bayle and Voltaire, among others."<sup>43</sup> Among those others we must place Charlevoix, who by editing Marie's writings helped to circumscribe the role of women in the eighteenth-century Atlantic World.<sup>44</sup>

It is difficult to discern any specific intent on Charlevoix's part to develop a specific theme or group

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<sup>43</sup> Altman, "The Politics of Epistolary Art," *Ibid.*, 415.

<sup>44</sup> See also John McManners, *Church and State in Eighteenth Century France, Volume I: The Clerical Establishment and its Social Ramifications*, Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 534-570.

of themes in this biography. Though not obvious at first, the Jesuit role in the colonization process is quite important here. Marie flourished under the guidance of her Jesuit directors. The approval of Marie's vocation by her contemporaries and by Charlevoix indicates some continuity in what the Jesuits expected of women in on both sides of the Atlantic. Having lived up to her potential as a bride of man and Christ, the prodigal mother was deemed fit to become a role model for young women in Canada.

Perhaps this model and its existence beyond the walls of the church and cloister is partially to blame for the relative failure of the French colonial enterprises on the western side of the Atlantic, a topic which will be discussed in greater detail below. That "failure" is more apparent in the Lower Mississippi Valley where French women were doubly reluctant to venture. It seems fair to assert that Marie's biography would not have been especially effective in kindling the desire to go abroad in any but the most devout or financially independent women.

On the other hand, if instruction were the author's aim, then no reader would be able to escape without a clear literary portrait of a virtuous, if not "enlightened," woman who did not know to seek out the Jesuits but who was fortunate enough to end up in their spiritual care. Furthermore, in all of Charlevoix's works considered in this study, we see attempts to provide some insight through biographical sketches of important people of European as well as non-European background.

We also gain more insights into the personality of the author of such a biography. Though openly thankful for being spared a life of frontier hardship and a martyr's death, Charlevoix still found room to chide those who made what he considered bad choices. We will experience a *soupçon* of self-sacrifice from Charlevoix in his later works as he endeavors to instruct a non-compliant audience, most of whose priorities did not include trans-Atlantic travel. Charlevoix also makes another foray into the world of the epistolary narrative in the *Histoire* in an attempt



to more clearly delineate his Atlantic World and those who inhabited it. The rest of Charlevoix's works considered here include not only biographical sketches, but also maps and descriptive elements in order to educate, instruct. Furthermore, the desire to educate, instruct, attract colonists and chastise various "guilty" parties will become more pronounced with time.

## Chapter 3

"La Plus Puissante de nos Colonies"<sup>1</sup>: S. Domingue

## Introduction

The *Histoire de L'Isle Espagnole ou de S.*

*Domingue* (1733) was published in the years between Charlevoix's trip to North America in 1720 and the publication of the *Histoire de la Nouvelle France* and the *Journal* in 1744. In this particular instance, the author compiled his work from the memoirs of a fellow Jesuit and friend, Jean Baptiste Le Pers (1675-1735) who spent twenty- five years on the island.

It has been several years since Father Jean-Baptiste, a Walloon Jesuit with whom I had had great friendship ties in Paris while he did his theological studies, sent me some memoirs to write the history of the island of S. Domingue, where for twenty five years he worked at the vine of the Lord with a

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<sup>1</sup>"The Most powerful of our Colonies," Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole ou de S. Domingue*, Amsterdam: François l'Honoré, 1733, I: 8.

zeal which Heaven favored with its most abundant blessings.<sup>2</sup>

Charlevoix actually spent less than a month on the island and expressed great reluctance to take on the task of writing its history. He found the memoirs imperfect and incomplete, "a part of them having been mislaid through the negligence of those to whom the author addressed them to bring to me." At the same time, Charlevoix was preparing for a trip to Italy that would last for three years and he concluded that Le Pers would find someone else for the job. Upon returning to Paris, however, Charlevoix was quite surprised to find the memoirs waiting for him. Even more startling was the fact that Le Pers had "mended the gaps and the most urgent letters" himself as an encouragement for Charlevoix to begin the project without further delay.<sup>3</sup>

In the study of the French colonies James Pritchard finds that the period 1670-1730 is the most

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<sup>2</sup> I: v.

<sup>3</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: v-vi.

critical and most often neglected. During those years there were enough French immigrants to set up colonies that were economically and socially viable. Yet, largely because of colonial and continental warfare, by 1730 those colonies had not managed to become fully participating members in the Atlantic economy.<sup>4</sup> Though warfare is certainly part of the story here, Charlevoix's discussion of the French colony does not reflect this shortcoming in great detail. This chapter demonstrates his assessment and reaction to the choices made by a variety of peoples within the French Atlantic world, including his own decision to write this particular history.

Charlevoix's choice to devote time to this project instead of another that he preferred is at times closer to resignation than dedication. He was not immediately convinced that he could write a history that met his own standards. Deciding what to include was the next task. Charlevoix later wrote in

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<sup>4</sup> James Pritchard, *In search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1739*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

the preface to the *History of New France* that one censor had deemed the first volume of S. Domingue worthless; another thought that the material discussing the pirates and buccaneers should have been omitted. Before addressing them, however, Charlevoix provides lengthy discussions of Christopher Columbus and Henri, a Christian Indian. The discussion of African slaves follows. Finally, the pirates receive their due. All of these actors make choices that Charlevoix must analyze and present to his readers in such a way as to preserve the truth as well as demonstrate the need for good French people to support France's presence in the Atlantic World.

#### The Decision to Write: Friendship and Duty

There remains another reason for what Charlevoix considered a painful situation : he wanted to start on the *Journal* and the *Histoire Général de la Nouvelle France*. He confesses that " the Island of S. Domingue did not present me with anything very interesting,"

and that it angered him to have to take time away from a work that he judged of greater interest and more to the liking of the public as well. Friendship won out, and he set to work. Only after he began to read the memoirs was he amazed by the embarrassment of riches contained within.<sup>5</sup>

At this point it is safe to conclude that Charlevoix had devoted some serious thought to what we refer to today as an Atlantic World. In *S. Domingue* we find a hopeful Charlevoix writing the history of what he refers to as the most powerful of the French colonies. His literary method, already apparent in *Marie*, is one of instruction and entertainment while encouraging his readers to support France's colonial ventures. Charlevoix's eighteenth-century Atlantic World view was one of French progress in both spiritual and earthly endeavors.

As is the case with many undertakings, Charlevoix finds that once begun, the work suggested its own

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<sup>5</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: vi-vii.

order.<sup>6</sup> In this case Charlevoix saw the opportunity to give the reading public two stories for the price of one. "And in effect, the two parts, that naturally divide this history, could each furnish the material of a very curious work, and one of a reasonable length."<sup>7</sup> On one hand, Charlevoix felt that the history of the entire New World was beyond the capabilities of one historian, but wanted to at least discover "by what means and by what degrees the Spanish formed for themselves in America an empire as rich as that of the first Caesars."<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, by the third of three volumes, the French figure largely in the story of "the most powerful of our colonies of that of all the West Indies, the birth and progress of which are marked by traits more capable of pleasing and instructing."<sup>9</sup> Explaining the ascendancy of France's Catholic allies and rivals in the Caribbean while

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<sup>6</sup> "Projet", in Pouliot, 21.

<sup>7</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: vii.

<sup>8</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: vii-viii.

<sup>9</sup> *S. Domingue*, I, viii.

simultaneously instructing and pleasing his audience in no way discouraged Charlevoix. Rather, these goals gave him incentives to begin work.<sup>10</sup>

Once Charlevoix began to examine the materials given to him by Father Le Pers he encountered "voids that caused me pain." These voids were especially troubling to Charlevoix in such a recent history, so having already received permission from Le Pers to make whatever changes he deemed necessary, he went off to the Dépôt de la Marine which held official documents and maps in Paris. There he experienced the joys and frustrations of archival research that he felt no qualms about sharing with his reader.

Also, those who have been witnesses to the fatigues that I had to suffer in order to profit from the favor that had been granted me; they agree that it took a great love of

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<sup>10</sup> Of course there are other motives apparent in all of his works such as demonstrating the validity of the Jesuit missionary policy.



the truth to make those endurable: but I recognized the necessity therein.<sup>11</sup>

Hoping to use the memoirs and the documents at the Dépôt de la Marine to reinforce each other, Charlevoix found himself struggling to reconcile the differences that arose among eyewitness accounts and official documents. These he attributed to differences in motives, but he would continue to struggle with the nature of historical truth.<sup>12</sup>

It does not appear to have ever been Charlevoix's desire to reconstruct the history of S. Domingue before the arrival of Europeans. In fact, only eighty-three pages of the multi-volume work are devoted to that era. He signaled his completion of the pre-European part of his history as follows:

Such was the situation of the island of Haiti since it came to be known to the Spanish; but this great event which was for the islanders the source of many evils, did

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<sup>11</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: ix, x.

<sup>12</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: xi- xii.

not inspire them as much as one would have believed. They had been warned shortly beforehand that foreigners were coming to take possession of their country and here is what several among them told about it to Christopher Columbus.<sup>13</sup>

The problem of the absence of reliable sources would have been very significant, and, in all of his work, Charlevoix is lavish in his commentary on the sources available to him and his fellow historians. Rarely, in any of his works does he refer to another author without evaluating some aspect of that person's merit - either as a historian or fellow human being. In the case of the *Histoire de S. Domingue*, Charlevoix was sometimes unable to reconcile his sources, so he devoted considerable verbiage to other details such as the points of an agreement which he actually saw in the Dépôt de la Marine in Paris. Several contemporaries who had not been granted access to the archives had made mistakes in their histories;

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<sup>13</sup>*S. Domingue*, I: 83.

therefore, showing where others had fallen short of the standard of accuracy was perhaps a way for Charlevoix to assuage the insecurity arising from his minimal first-hand experience with the island.<sup>14</sup>

To Better Please and Instruct the Reader

The first order of business is to describe the geographical situation of the Caribbean islands. By the eighteenth century, instrumentation and map making had made great advances. The maps included in Charlevoix's works are no exception. As an introduction to *S. Domingue*, Charlevoix discussed the entire group of Antilles. Although relevant to sailors, the winds of the Caribbean did not represent a force of any interest when naming islands. It made more sense to him to name the islands with regard to the people who inhabited them.

One would have, it seemed, been better justified in dividing the Antilles according

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<sup>14</sup>*S. Domingue*, III: 45- 46.

to the character of their natural inhabitants, of which the first were the Caraïbes, or Cannibals, ferocious and cannabalistic; and the others who had no particular name at all, being extremely gentle and peaceful and having a horror of the practice of eating human flesh.<sup>15</sup>

Charlevoix's description of traits divided the islands "naturellement" into two parts that were "equal enough." Rather than continuing the discussion of the inhabitants of the Antilles, however, Charlevoix dismisses the topic, saying "the thing does not merit that one stop there longer."<sup>16</sup> Perhaps Charlevoix simply did not have access to information that he judged reliable.

The topic of Charlevoix's history is, after all, S. Domingue and its history since European discovery. His introduction of the island is a commentary on its

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<sup>15</sup>*S. Domingue*, I: 2.

<sup>16</sup>*S. Domingue*, I: 2-3.

characteristics as well as those he attributed to the Spanish, the island's first European conquerors.

... among all the Antilles a single one at first attracted and then fixed for long enough the attention of the Spanish, and it is the one about which I have undertaken to write the history. It is not the largest, but it is without contradiction the richest of all: no other could have put the first conquerors of America in the state of establishing themselves firmly beyond the seas, and one may say that it gave birth to all the Spanish colonies of the New World.<sup>17</sup>

The portrayal of the Spanish as greedy and driven by the lust for riches is a constant in all of Charlevoix's writings considered in this study, and this is one of the milder examples of such a depiction. By comparison, more of the *History of Paraguay* is an invective aimed at the Spanish, especially regarding their cruel treatment of the

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<sup>17</sup>*S. Domingue*, I: 4.

Indians, as well as all who attacked the Jesuits. Throughout the history of S. Domingue, Charlevoix recounts the explorations of the Caribbean by the Spaniards. When they encountered Indians one of the first questions posed to the natives concerned the existence of gold mines. The gold-hungry Spaniards even neglected their own sustenance in the search for riches:

What was most surprising, if ever one ought to be surprised that cupidity and greed blind men to the point of making them lose sight of their most genuine interests, and even their most pressing needs, is that before leading the newly enslaved Indians to the mines, one did not occupy them at cultivating the land to put an end to a famine that had lasted for quite a while.<sup>18</sup>

The consequences of such greedy, irresponsible behavior represent another recurring theme for Charlevoix and we will see such descriptions

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<sup>18</sup>See for example t. II, livre 4; II: 4.

throughout the history of European settlement of the New World.

Charlevoix's tangents and digressions do not lead the reader so far astray as to forget one of Charlevoix's main criticisms of early settlement efforts: the failure to establish agriculture in order to support families, a topic that receives greater attention in the discussion of North America. Situating the island according to longitude and latitude required further explanation. Not all cartographers were as accurate as Charlevoix would have liked, so he also provided a discussion of the reliability of existing maps. However, even nature appeared to have had its reasons for placing Haiti as it did in order to rule the rest of the islands.<sup>19</sup>

The forces of nature were of great interest to explorer and writer alike, and Charlevoix did not neglect a description of the weather in his histories. The heat and the rain, of course, would have been

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<sup>19</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 6.

sufficiently novel to warrant significant mention, if not encourage waves of colonists to emigrate.

Several people have claimed that there are weeks during which as many square inches of rain fall on the one island that is the subject of this history than fall in an entire year in Paris, which M. Mariotte counted up to 18 running. But these rains so abundant in refreshing the air cause a humidity that produces unfortunate effects.<sup>20</sup>

These effects included the rapid spoilage of meat (in less than twenty four hours), fruit, bread, and wine. Iron "rusts there overnight."<sup>21</sup> Charlevoix also noted in the research that thunder was a rare occurrence from November to April. This was due to the fact that the sun did not climb high enough on the horizon to "ignite the earth's exhalations."<sup>22</sup> Charlevoix

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<sup>20</sup>*S. Domingue*, I: 13.

<sup>21</sup>*S. Domingue*, I: 13.

<sup>22</sup>*S. Domingue*, I: 15.



appears to have been a firm adherent to the practice of truth-- as he knew it-- in advertising.

Such radically different weather was bound to affect Europeans, and Charlevoix informed his readers and perhaps warned future settlers that strength, wisdom, and acclimatization were necessary in order to live on S. Domingue for any length of time.

Also one sees few Europeans who, after several years on our island do not notice a great diminution of their strength. The heat erodes imperceptibly by its continuation even the most robust bodies that are not accustomed to it, and destroys little by little that which doctors call *l'humide radicale*, there being no winter during which nature can repara its strength lost by a violent perspiration.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 18. Cornelius De Pauw is one author who espoused the theory of New World degeneration and mentioned Charlevoix's lapse in not reaching the same conclusion. See *Recherches philosophiques sur les Amériquains*, London, 1771.

One could beat the odds, however, by exercising moderation in both work and leisure. Creoles who had managed to distance themselves from their European origins did not suffer as much as their distant Continental relations. The Indians and African slaves were said to live long and healthy lives, as did the Spanish who had had two centuries to adapt to the climate. According to Charlevoix, it was not unusual for a Spaniard to reach the age of 120 years.

"Finally, if one ages there sooner than elsewhere, one stays old there longer without feeling the discomforts of extreme old age."<sup>24</sup> One wonders what kept the aged and infirm in France from migrating en masse to the Caribbean. Here, as in his other writings, Charlevoix's attempt to provide a balanced account may have done more harm to his desire to see

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<sup>24</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 18. Even the streams were described as "fort saines & même salutaires, mais si vives & si fraiches qu'il n'en faut boire qu'avec discretion, & qu'il est dangereux de s'y baigner. (I: 22).

faithful French Catholics establish themselves in newer parts of the Atlantic World.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, French readers were also interested in the fauna of S. Domingue, and Charlevoix did not disappoint his audience. While the coasts of "our island" were not abundantly endowed with fish, "it is not necessary to go far at all to catch there some excellent fish in quantity."<sup>26</sup> Charlevoix was already acquainted with the hummingbird from his travels in Canada, but he still referred to it as the smallest wonder of the bird species in America, and the flamingo held the honor of being the largest. The lightning bug also merited some note in the insect world. Charlevoix regrets that the rest of the animal world *might* have been interesting had it not been quickly wiped out by the dogs and cats brought by the Spaniards. Charlevoix did provide occasional discussion of certain plants, but he judged a

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<sup>25</sup> Charlevoix was personally involved in the debate over degeneration and opposed the theory of De Pauw.

<sup>26</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 29.

botanical description of Haiti worthy of a separate work.<sup>27</sup>

Charlevoix wanted his readers to know about the people who inhabited the island at the time of European arrival. The descriptions, however, differed little from those of the birds or fish. "These islanders are commonly of an ordinary size, but well proportioned."<sup>28</sup> The character of the people received great attention as well, although certain more shocking behaviors such as male nudity were glossed over. "The men went completely naked and hid very poorly that which ought not be seen at all." Far worse, the women's skirts reached only to their knees, and the young girls wore "absolument rien."<sup>29</sup>

Charlevoix described the islanders as medium-sized, well-proportioned people with hideous facial traits such as wide nostrils and "a certain something

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<sup>27</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 47.

<sup>28</sup> I: 49.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

of trouble and wildness in their eyes."<sup>30</sup> They did nothing recognizable as work, nor did they appear to worry about anything, preferring to dance all day and sleep all night. "They knew nothing and had no desire to know; they were ignorant of their origin, and as we were only able to have learned it from them, we have only weak conjectures."<sup>31</sup>

The island people had nothing that passed for reliable history for two reasons: they had no written language, and perhaps more importantly, their songs "which took the place of annals" changed with the death of each ruler. Therefore, their traditions were scarcely old enough to be considered as such. On the other hand, Charlevoix found it worth mentioning that they, along with many peoples in America, did not believe themselves to be the first people on Earth, a "fact" that would have only further fueled the debate over the existence of non-Christian peoples in "undiscovered" parts of the world. Charlevoix agreed

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> *S. Domingue*, 50.

with this explanation, but found it more pressing to discover the source of the differences in morals and character among the Americans. With all these traits, real or imagined, in mind, Charlevoix cautioned his audience about forming conclusions based upon extreme judgments.<sup>32</sup> Nothing would be worse than to describe the islanders, on one extreme, as being human only in appearance, and on the other, as men without vices or passions,

as having only the faces of men, and plunged in the most vile dissolutions, and on the other to have them envisioned to the contrary as men without vices and without passions; one would not be mistaken here to take the middle between the two extremities.<sup>33</sup>

Taking the middle ground is a strategy adopted frequently by Charlevoix in debates such as this one. Charlevoix spends fewer than thirty more pages to

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<sup>32</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 50-51.

<sup>33</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 57.

describe such things as agriculture, starting fires, food, syphilis, and waging war, and then he introduces the Europeans.

#### Christopher Columbus: Hero or Villain?

A new paragraph on a page signals a huge indentation into the lives of the peoples inhabiting the lands on the western rim of the Atlantic world. "Everyone knows that the first efforts at new discoveries that made the fifteenth century famous are due to the Portuguese nation and, in particular, to the Infant D. Henri, Count of Viseo."<sup>34</sup> These navigators and explorers fixated on a passage to the East Indies by coasting the African continent. But "the first of many skilled pilots who ceased to limit his gazes to Africa and to a way to the West Indies by way of its coast was a Genoese pilot," Christopher Columbus.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 84.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Charlevoix, Columbus had suspected for a long time that there was inhabited land to the west of Europe: "His conjectures on the existence of a New World were based on foundations more solid than popular rumor."<sup>36</sup> These "foundations" included the observation of stars and the study of winds. While others persisted in searching for a passage to the east, Columbus, the best navigator in Europe, focused his energies and talents upon discovering new lands. At this point in the narrative Charlevoix seems to enjoy himself a bit at the expense of all those who refused to support Columbus's voyage. Only Ferdinand and Isabella were blessed with the sense to sponsor an expedition "that acquired for them a New World."<sup>37</sup> Even they refused to back the venture the first time it was presented. Throughout the recitation of Columbus's rejections, Charlevoix informs the reader that the increasingly discouraged adventurer wanted to try his luck in France. Indeed Columbus was on his way there

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<sup>36</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 87.

<sup>37</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 86- 100, 101.



when Queen Isabella sent after the explorer and had him brought back to Sainte Foi to give him the news of her acceptance.<sup>38</sup>

The voyage to the New World did not take nearly as many words to describe as did Columbus's tribulations in finding financial backing. Perhaps this is characteristic of any grand venture. What signals the importance of the landing of the Europeans in San Salvador is the new title of *Amiral* applied to Columbus throughout the rest of the history. Thus titled, Columbus led his men ashore in the New World. The claiming ceremony took place with the usual planting of a cross, "all required formalities" and "great religious sentiments."

All this took place in the Indians' sight whose astonishment grew continually. It seemed to them in the end, that they had looked at the Europeans for a long time, as men of an exceptional species and of a

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<sup>38</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 86- 104.

superior order. In effect, the difference between the ones and the others was great.<sup>39</sup>

The only thing uniting the two groups on the beach was their surprise at seeing each other, and the emphasis in Charlevoix's text is on the 'newness' of the world being described.<sup>40</sup> Charlevoix's admiration for Columbus takes over the narrative for the remainder of the first volume and forty-three pages of the first book of the second volume. Here we find a detailed account of Columbus's interactions with Indians and with other Europeans.

When Columbus and his entourage reached the island of Haiti, which they named l'Isle Espagnole, they received no welcome party. Instead the Indians all fled, having been warned by a system of alarm fires. Everywhere the explorers went they encountered

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<sup>39</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 112. The place of first encounter is designated by Charlevoix as the Island of Guanahani, or San-Salvador in the Bahamas (I: 111). Patricia Seed's excellent discussion of the ways in which Europeans claimed the New World is helpful here. See *Ceremonies of Possession: Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

<sup>40</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 111- 112.

Indians who ran away as soon as they saw the Europeans. Only by pursuit and gift giving over a period of days were Columbus and his men able to secure a place to stay.<sup>41</sup>

Columbus received from the Indians confirmation of information he already possessed about the famous mines of Cibao. The search for gold dominates much of this and other of Charlevoix's narratives, as do tales of exchanges. In this one Charlevoix recounts the generous Indians giving what gold they had to the Spanish in exchange for "some bells, some pins, some glass, glass beads, and other such trinkets." The bits of pottery and other pieces that the poorest European would not bother to collect were highly prized by the Island peoples, and each party considered itself to have bested the other in the trade. Two years later, in 1494, Columbus discovered three mines (copper, azurite, amber) in close proximity to each other. Charlevoix added to the description of the discoveries this commentary to the point that "a country where at

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<sup>41</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 120- 121.

every step one walked on gold certainly merited that one think of assuring oneself of its possession."<sup>42</sup>

The history rapidly becomes a catalog of intrigues against Columbus and the wrongs that he suffered at the hands of his detractors. Despite his good intentions, Columbus had to return to Spain several times to defend his honor to the queen, since Ferdinand was not among his allies there. Yet even Isabella could not support Columbus on the issue of "having... despite my interdictions, taken the liberty of a great number of Indians who did not deserve such a severe punishment."<sup>43</sup> However, this chastisement was, as Charlevoix makes clear, made at the king's behest, and Columbus knew better than to try to change that opinion. So Columbus sought permission and financial support for another exploratory mission to the New World.<sup>44</sup> However, Charlevoix also comments frequently on the ability of power in the New World to change the best of men into tyrants, "created by the destruction

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<sup>42</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 121-125, 161.

<sup>43</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 263, 262.

<sup>44</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 264.

of the unfortunate Indians" and a loss of fairness in dealings with fellow Europeans.<sup>45</sup>

When Isabella died in November of 1504, Columbus lost a powerful friend and ally. All of Spain mourned her death, but no loss was greater than that suffered by Columbus who lost also any chance of reinstating himself in the royal good graces. The eulogy that Charlevoix included is notable for its equation of Isabella's personal qualities with any of the greatest kings. In contrast, the great explorer should be remembered for his bravery, dignity, and probity, as well as his tendency to enjoy his fame and be inflexible in Indian matters. The list of survivors and burial details follow the tempered praise.

So how do we explain yet another seemingly irreconcilable contradiction? Columbus was not Spanish, but was, in one sense, in league with the rulers of that country whose realm he helped to increase. Perhaps it is only wishful thinking on Charlevoix's part, or the desire to point out a missed

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<sup>45</sup> *S. Domingue*, I: 269.

opportunity for France that leads him to defend Columbus up to a point. Charlevoix gives us no help, for at the end of the story, he adds simply, "But it is time to return to Spanish Island."<sup>46</sup>

#### Further Exploration and Encounters: Henri

The return takes the form of an account of further exploration of the Caribbean and "reciprocal hostilities" between the Castilians and the Indians and among the Spaniards themselves.<sup>47</sup> In fact, much of the remaining history consists of squabbles over issues of reputation and power as "l'Isle Espagnole imperceptibly lost all its natural inhabitants."<sup>48</sup> Charlevoix lamented this loss because of the cruelty involved and the failure to convert the inhabitants to Christianity before their untimely deaths.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 42-46, 46.

<sup>47</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 99.

<sup>48</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 109.

<sup>49</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 109- 110.

Charlevoix's narrative wanderings are not as random as they might seem to the first-time reader of his works. The stories and themes that he addresses all make up the complicated history of colonization of the western reaches of the Atlantic World. The history of Haiti takes another strange twist for the rest of the second volume and part of the third when Charlevoix discusses the exploration and colonization of the Caribbean and parts of Mexico and South America. African slaves do not figure largely in the narrative. They mostly merit brief mentions of their arrivals and conversion to Christianity. The other issue to be addressed is the conversion of the Indians, and this story unfolds around the Christian Cacique named Henri. Such continuous concentration on an individual is unusual for Charlevoix.<sup>50</sup>

Henri represents the best of all possible combinations of the New World and the Old, and one cannot fail to notice some similarities between Henri

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<sup>50</sup> See *S. Domingue*, II: 219 et seq. Charlevoix uses "Henry" and "Henri."

and Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), a literary coincidence that appears again in the *History of Paraguay*. His story begins in 1519.

... he was well made, of an attractive size, of good character: an air of wisdom spread over his entire person, a happy expression, intellect and pity told in his favor: in a word one saw in him everything that a good education can produce in a well-prepared subject, and no one deserved less the unhappy lot to which he found himself reduced.<sup>51</sup>

It appears that Voltaire learned a lot from Charlevoix. Henri is presented as all that could be hoped for from a well-prepared student who was given the right opportunities. As the sons of Caciques, Henri and others were taken at the behest of Isabella to be educated by the Franciscans. The education would prepare them to be employed "at things for which they would have rendered themselves capable; but in

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<sup>51</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 219.



that as in many other articles, her intentions were not followed."<sup>52</sup> Instead the young men, Henri among them, were put into the service of the Spanish. Henri suffered his lot with patience and loyalty to his master who repaid him with advances toward his wife. When Henri complained of this treatment to the authorities, the insults grew worse. His only hope was to serve out the terms of his service at which time he would be free.

Freedom did come to Henri who somehow managed to escape with some of his people. He secured their loyalty by promising them that they would never serve the Spanish. As word of Henri's rebellion spread, more Indians made their way to his mountain fortress motivated by the realization that the Spanish were not invincible. From time to time the Spanish tried without success to recover their slaves. Charlevoix notes that Henri was moderate in the use of his advantages and never rested on his successes, but worked constantly to keep his little republic in good

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<sup>52</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 219-220.

order. There was a place and a job for everyone, including the weak and the women who were in charge of raising crops for food. Henri was ever vigilant to the point that his subjects believed that he did not sleep. According to Charlevoix, he never slept in the same place twice.<sup>53</sup>

Henri's reputation attracted more and more subjects. Even slaves left their masters to become members of his group. The Spanish were not at all pleased,

and the terror of his name had so frozen all the courage at the same time that his good conduct thwarted all the Spanish policy that not one could be found who was willing to march against him.<sup>54</sup>

People were as afraid of the name "Henri" as they were inspired by his comportment in the face of his detractors. No one would go and fight him. The Spanish sent a Franciscan, Father Remy, to negotiate with

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<sup>53</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 221- 225.

<sup>54</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 226.

Henri, but the latter had learned the lessons of Christianity well, and the talks produced nothing.

Henri did not appear insensitive; but he replied that he only cared about the Spanish putting a stop to the war in which all was limited for his part, to defending against the tyrants who wanted his freedom and his life;... he would be the most foolish of men if he trusted the word of men who had never held to one since their arrival on the island; moreover he would try to always preserve within himself the religious sentiments that the Father had inspired, and that he would never cause Christianity to be responsible for violences, injustices, impieties, and dissolutions of the majority of those who professed it.<sup>55</sup>

Thus the student became the teacher, and Charlevoix makes certain that the shortcomings of the Spanish are

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<sup>55</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 228- 229.

as well publicized as the reasons for the inception of Henri's "Little Republic."

In 1532 the discord again became unmanageable between Henri's troops and the Spanish. The situation was so serious that there were only two options: end the war or abandon the island. Charlevoix informs the reader that by this point members of Henri's republic had also been guilty of atrocities. Relying on Henri's attachment to the Franciscans, a deputation from these fathers accompanied Spanish troops on a search for the rogue cacique. In August of 1533, Henri was still up in the mountains to the great irritation of the Spanish. Charlevoix is vague, probably out of necessity, as to the reasons, but Henri finally came to San Domingo and signed the peace treaty. He and his people were allowed to choose a place to settle and exempted from the tribute.<sup>56</sup>

We lose Henri to his fate very shortly after the signing of the treaty. He, his followers, and all Indians who could prove that they descended from the

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<sup>56</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 304- 321.

Island's original inhabitants go off to their new home. We do not know the standard of proof required in this case. Charlevoix ends their story thus:

They were around four thousand when they were thus reunited; but this number has diminished greatly since that time.

Nevertheless, I have some trouble believing that they were reduced, fifteen years ago, to thirty men and fifty men, as I saw indicated in a memoir that is otherwise very exact.<sup>57</sup>

He is reluctant or unable, or both, to admit that Henri's band had dwindled to such pitiful ranks, despite the reliability of other research. Unwilling to admit the failure of Henri's little republic, Charlevoix returns to the theme of decadence among the Spaniards and their failure to tend to the spiritual needs of the Indians.

It is tempting to see in Henri an early version of Candide for Charlevoix uses Henri as a means to

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<sup>57</sup> *S. Domingue*, II: 322.

portray a foreign culture as well as to point out the serious flaws of the Spanish (who were not as foreign). Unfortunately for Charlevoix, his illustrious student Voltaire presented a world in which Catholicism was not the way to happiness for Indians. A more contemporary work of which Charlevoix would certainly have been aware is Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721). Like the more celebrated author, Charlevoix was interested in differences, but not just in those attributed to peoples of more distant edges of the Atlantic world. Of course he also saw Catholicism as a benefit to its adherents. Recognizing and acknowledging common humanity in a new world, Charlevoix uses Henri to demonstrate French superiority of character, if not numbers, in the colonial race as well as the potential and duty to civilize others through education of the mind and spirit.<sup>58</sup>

#### Empires, Pirates, and Slaves

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<sup>58</sup> See James Creech, "Others," in Hollier, ed., 409- 415.

The French enter Charlevoix's history as a national entity in Volume III, in the year 1625. Charlevoix provides an overview of the squabbles over the various Caribbean islands between the French, the Spanish, the English and the Dutch. Interestingly, at this point, Charlevoix finds it worthy of note that "the ambition of the English troubled such a nice union."<sup>59</sup> He is referring to the fact that in 1625 the French and the Spanish found themselves joint occupants of the island of St. Kitts and mutual allies against the Caribs. The English upset the balance of power. In this section of the history we see the clearest evidence of Charlevoix's recognition of the increased size of his world as sugar and the African slaves to cultivate it interact with natives and Europeans.

The struggle takes place between nations as well as on a smaller scale. Although "born and raised in the frame of European civilization," the buccaneers and pirates of the Caribbean "consciously renounced

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<sup>59</sup>*S. Domingue*, III: 2.

their birthright in a 'superior' civilization, to choose in its stead the life of an outlaw hunter on the wild savannas of San Domingo, or that of a seafaring pirate." These men, of varied nationalities, represent another set of characters whose tales could provide instruction to the reader. They could be counted upon to attack the Spanish to such a degree that they were instrumental in the demise of Spain's Caribbean dominance, and their exploits would have been of great interest to the French reading public.<sup>60</sup>

Charlevoix's depiction of Henri and the Caribbean outlaws is a window into the shortcomings of French society. While Charlevoix is condemnatory of lapses of religious faith on anyone's part, he rarely grants to the Spanish any positive exposure. George R. Healy suggests that national loyalty and religious zeal caused Charlevoix to see the buccaneers and pirates "as the avenging arm of God on earth."<sup>61</sup> The

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<sup>60</sup> George R. Healy, "Charlevoix's Histories of the New World: A Study in Exotic Radicalism," Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1950, 44- 45.



combination of a Christian Indian and heathen Frenchmen (and other Europeans) serves as more than a literary device. The expansion of the permeable boundaries of the Atlantic World is visible to the modern reader and perhaps the attentive eighteenth-century reader as well. That these boundaries may have been perceived through relativistic eyes, as Healy suggests, only serves to reinforce the lack of clarity between the categories of "us" and "them" in Charlevoix's world.<sup>62</sup>

The fourth and final volume is more political in its tone and, according to some, of more worth as a history.<sup>63</sup> Part II, which officially begins with Volume III provides a history of European, especially the French, English, and Spanish, nations attempting to possess another part of the world, in this case the "other" side of the Atlantic. The outlaws, however, continue to harass the more settled story and its

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<sup>61</sup> *S. Domingue*, 54.

<sup>62</sup> *S. Domingue*, 56.

<sup>63</sup> Roy, 59.

protagonists until they are nearly wiped out much like Henri and his band of outsiders.

African slaves are described as members of three principal Nations: "the Congos, the Aradas, and the Sénégalaise. Strictly speaking, neither the ones nor the others have any religion."<sup>64</sup> Charlevoix uses *nation* here to refer to the three groups he mentions specifically as well as all Africans in general.

But all, upon leaving Africa, get rid of their attachment to their creed and their superstitious cult, or supposing that they still have it, one has no trouble at all to make them Christians, and the greatest predicament of the missionaries is to defer baptism to them until they are sufficiently instructed without offending them: it is also very rare to see any of them apostatize.<sup>65</sup>

Charlevoix writes that all Africans have a vague

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<sup>64</sup> *S. Domingue*, IV: 366.

<sup>65</sup> *S. Domingue*, IV: 367.

notion of a beneficent Supreme Being and a "malevolent spirit," and that they also possess an imperfect knowledge of "natural law" in that their only crimes are theft, homicide, and adultery. The crimes were so designated because they were all voluntary on the part of the criminal(s). Charlevoix is opening the door to their moral progress and inviting his readers to join him.<sup>66</sup> About the practice of enslaving Africans he writes that, in this case, it is a necessary evil, or at least one without a solution:

Unhappy is the colony that has many slaves:  
that is for it the source of many worries  
and an occasion to exercise patience.

Unhappy is the one that has none at all, for  
it can do absolutely nothing.<sup>67</sup>

Rather than openly choose sides, Charlevoix tactfully describes the problem in a mixture of moral and economic terms that he knows will appeal to his audience.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> *S. Domingue*, IV: 361.

In the history of S. Domingue, the Jesuits play a supporting role to the cast of converted African slaves and native Indians, all of who were misled by the Spaniards. This contrast renders S. Domingue unique in its history and in Charlevoix's telling of it. The Society had relatively little direct involvement in the colonization of the Caribbean islands. Charlevoix had already spent time in North America and the Caribbean by the time he published this history. He knew first-hand the dangers that alcohol posed to the Indians and had seen them avoid such pitfalls by segregation from the Europeans. Despite Henri's failure to create a separate, religious republic, the French eventually enjoyed great success in the Caribbean. They had only to adopt the cultivation of sugar, which they did in the mid-seventeenth century, to ensure a great earthly harvest. The final book of the last volume tells also of the colonists' struggle to obtain more slaves, not priests.

#### Conclusion

Much longer than the one-volume biography of Marie, this history is comparable in length to Charlevoix's other histories. The *Histoire de l'Isle Espagnole* contains 429 numbered pages; the *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, 388 (not including the *Journal*); and the *Histoire du Paraguay*, 461 pages. In his choice of subject matter Charlevoix seems to have stayed close to a formula. The discussion of flora and fauna here is not in any way exceptional. The most notable departure from a set of guidelines is in the treatment of individuals, specifically Henri and the pirates of the Caribbean. These brief biographical sketches are only superficially similar to the detailed, spiritual, "inward-looking" biography of Marie. Columbus made good choices, but was surrounded by bad people. Henri and the pirates are, respectively, examples of those who embraced or abandoned the Catholic faith. Marie left the Old World for the New in order to save the Indians. Henri was doomed by the cruel intentions of less worthy Europeans.

The pirates represent the state of those who

completely abandon their superior place of origin, but refuse to accept the ensuing responsibilities in the newer parts of the Atlantic World. Charlevoix's attempts to order this world can help us to order it as well. At the age of forty-eight, he considered the widening Atlantic World as one in which the French and the Jesuits had a rightful place. By introducing his readers to characters from the "other" side of that world, both native and European newcomer, he demonstrates a continuity of recognizable elements among the new and different. Yet, despite his best efforts, he is unable to reconcile the pirates who remain "in between" all boundaries. Citizens of no country or colony, and adherents to no religious faith, they point to a growing sense of unrest in and about the French Atlantic.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> See Healy, Chapter III, for a discussion of Charlevoix's actual portrayal of the buccaneers and pirates.

## Chapter 4

### Missed Opportunities: North America

#### Introduction

The French had a brief, inglorious stake in North America, and according to Charlevoix, they were entirely to blame. North America, especially Louisiana, had much to offer and required little in exchange. Throughout the *Histoire et description generale de la Nouvelle France (History and General description of New France)*, (1744), Charlevoix laments the fact that the small numbers of settlers who came (relative to the English numbers) were mostly male and unwilling to adopt a sedentary and productive family lifestyle on a farm. The fur trade enticed many Frenchmen away from the colonial fold. Others formed relationships with Indian women, often without the sanction of a priest. Very little could entice French women to even cross the Atlantic. Charlevoix was also of the opinion that the numbers of priests and nuns needed to be increased. Louisiana, it seems, was

destined to serve as a buffer between the English and Spanish colonies as well as a wedge between Spanish colonies along the Gulf of Mexico.

The goal of this chapter is not to definitively assert the reasons for the ultimate failure of the French colonial efforts in North America. Of greater interest is the increasing fragmentation of Charlevoix's Atlantic World view.

By 1744 the western reaches of the Atlantic World were hotly contested among Europeans and indigenous peoples alike. Charlevoix felt that this world was slipping away from God and the French. As the pirates of S. Domingue and *coureurs de bois* of Canada illustrate, there were men who were quite capable of establishing the conditions of their own existence without recourse to established authorities. On the other hand, there were occasional requests for priests and missionaries from both colonists and Indians. The *Histoire* together with the *Journal* presents the reader with Charlevoix's last hopeful, yet increasingly



doubtful, vision of an Atlantic World inhabitable by French and Indians as well as other Europeans. It also represents Charlevoix's determined, yet flagging, hope for North America to be a Catholic part of the French Atlantic World.

#### First-Hand Experience

Charlevoix traveled to North America in 1720 as part of an expedition to search for the fabled Northwest Passage which would grant access by water to the Pacific Ocean. The French authorities felt that a traveling Jesuit would not attract unwanted attention from competitors with the same goal. A single priest was also a less expensive investment than the equipping of a military expedition<sup>1</sup> His journey, along with archival sources in France, provided Charlevoix with the material for a nearly incontestable narrative of the French stay in North America as well as a reasonably reliable description of the New World for readers in Europe. The French may have been reluctant

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<sup>1</sup>J.-Edmond Roy, *Essai sur Charlevoix*, Ottawa: La Société Royale du Canada, 1906, 90.

to emigrate, unlike their English neighbors, but they were not unaware of the New World.

About the crossing itself, Kenneth J. Banks writes

Charlevoix's account fits neatly into current perceptions of eighteenth-century sea travel, since it is filled with dangers, close calls, and fantastic sights. As with many other aspects of transportation in the period, historians have assumed much and imagined more.<sup>2</sup>

We also know that Charlevoix suffered from motion sickness. It is hard to say whether the *Histoire* and the *Journal Historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roi* (1744) that follows were more popular during the author's time or during the present era. The difference would be in the reasons for that popularity. Certainly translations, especially into English, were prevalent then as now. They appealed to

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713- 1763*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002, 66.

historians and the educated reader. This is not the case with Charlevoix's other works. Books about North America were almost guaranteed to sell, and when a writer with Charlevoix's credentials assumed the task of narrating, the credibility factor also rose. There are mistakes and inaccuracies, but these must not be attributed to an attempt to mislead the reader. Charlevoix's research, in this particular case, is extensive and combined with first-hand experience. Today this work is familiar to many historians, but known by very few.

Charlevoix's trips to North America gave him a definite advantage that he used to bolster his authority as a historian. He spent the years 1705-1709 as a teacher in Québec. After that duty was fulfilled he returned to France and his historical writings. In 1719 his plans were again interrupted, this time by a royal commission. As stipulated by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, France had ceded Acadia to England. Charlevoix's assignment concerned the clarification of the boundaries of this territory. This particular role

made Charlevoix the logical choice for another, more secret, mission that was also of great concern to the Crown: to find the fabled passage to Pacific Ocean before the English did so. The voyage began in 1720, and Charlevoix was back home in 1722 where he stayed for the rest of his life.<sup>3</sup>

Ever conscious of his duty to the public, Charlevoix promised to rectify any omissions in his discussion of sources as soon as such oversights were brought to his attention.<sup>4</sup> Such concern for reliable sources and frequent references to them characterize all of Charlevoix's works. His plan was to supplement the observations he made while traveling in North America with a history of "all of the memorable events" that had occurred there in over two centuries.<sup>5</sup> It soon becomes clear to the reader, however, that this is one of the author's hyperboles, for many events are omitted from the *Histoire*.

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<sup>3</sup> Bannon in Shea, 4-5.

<sup>4</sup> *Histoire*, Préface, 7.

<sup>5</sup> See plan of work, *Histoire*, I: 1 (103).

The choice of what to include in a work is always up to the author, but Charlevoix does give insight into the reasoning behind some of his decisions. Among his motives for presenting the work to the public was the elevation of some reputations to the rank they deserved but had not received--through no fault of their own. In all likelihood, Charlevoix meant this historical character rehabilitation to affect most French explorers and colonists who, in his judgment, had received second billing to the Spanish in the New World. Granting the honor of prior discovery to Spain, Charlevoix turns the issue into one of relative personal merit and virtue. In such a contest, the French would surely receive all the credit they were due, especially after reading Charlevoix's "faithful" and "unbiased" account.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Historian's Craft

The history of New France begins with the first voyages and fishing ventures across the Atlantic that

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<sup>6</sup> *Histoire*, I: 104.

took place in the early sixteenth century.

Interestingly, the Portuguese decided at this early juncture that the northern reaches of the New World were not for them. They did not take to the snow and failed to recognize the value of the fish-filled waters or the skins worn by the inhabitants of North America.<sup>7</sup>

The *Histoire* is filled with such commentary about the various European nationalities that attempted to recreate themselves in the New World, and Charlevoix did not spare his own compatriots. As far as he was concerned, the French had only themselves to blame for their failure to establish a presence in North America capable of rivaling the English colonies. Charlevoix is equally judgmental, though less accusatory of the Indians. Their customs and morals are explained in relativistic terms that are perhaps atypical, or at least more open-minded, than other descriptions and opinions. Even the refusal of the majority of Indians to convert to Roman Catholicism is attributed to a

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<sup>7</sup> *Histoire*, I: 106 (1504).

lack of dedication on the part of the French. According to Charlevoix there were scarcely enough priests to tend the colonists.

The *Histoire* is not only a chronicle of the exploration of North America. It also provides an illustrated description of the plant and animal life as well as commentary on the geography and weather. As with all of his histories, he refutes the sources that are unworthy of his, and therefore the reader's, trust. His use of official documents and reliable secondary sources makes the *Histoire* a useful source today as well. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this work is the journal that Charlevoix published along with the *History*. The *Journal Historique* that follows the *Histoire* casts its author as the ultimate reliable source since it is constructed from notes taken by Charlevoix while he was in North America.

The *Journal* begins in June of 1720 and ends in September of 1722. Though never at a loss for words, Charlevoix is positively chatty in his address to the Duchess de Les Diguieres about whom there is little in

the way of reliable information. Making his apologies in advance for any shortcomings or oversights, he devotes more time to "wondering" and speculation than in the *Histoire*. Here he also is more biased in his preconceptions, as when he ponders what he and an ignorant savage of the New World could possibly have to say to each other.<sup>8</sup> Yet even then, there is no lack of detail concerning the lives of the French in North America, the Indians, other Europeans, or the varied interactions among the groups. The *Journal* also adds to an understanding of Charlevoix as a representative of the French Eighteenth-Century World. His interests and concerns are directly linked to those of the reading world in France and Europe. By taking advantage of the literary construct of the journal, he allows more of himself into the text than was perhaps permissible for a historian devoted to providing a more scholarly narrative.

On the first page of the *Histoire*, Charlevoix provides the most precise statement of his "world

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<sup>8</sup> *Journal*, Lettre I.



view." First he expands on the usual idea that the New World consists of only "Amérique." Charlevoix's definition encompasses all territory unknown to Europeans before the fourteenth century. His next comment, however, limits the possibilities for relationships between the various provinces or their histories when he asserts that neither the regions nor their histories have much in common. While expanding the definition of the New World, Charlevoix nonetheless slights its history by not acknowledging the kinds of relationships between histories that he finds in Europe's past. Despite the disclaimer, however, Charlevoix's histories do present a sense of continuity among "separate parts that have no dependence on each other" for he recognized that some parts of the story could only be told well by including their relation to the greater whole.<sup>9</sup>

Though completely cognizant of the interrelated stories of the European world, Charlevoix is reluctant

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<sup>9</sup>"Projet d'un corps d'histoires du Nouveau Monde," in Léon Pouliot, *Charlevoix (1682- 1761)*, Montréal, Classiques Canadiens, 1959, 17.

to admit that the same types of connections could exist in the New World. Yet a general history of Europe would be unwriteable, shared histories notwithstanding. On the other side of the Atlantic, however, Charlevoix does not see the connections even after European transplantsations there. His prejudices lead him to the conclusion that European civilization is much too complicated to be presented in a general history, while that of the New World is easily separated into parts and presented to the reader as a set of histories. New France and Louisiana are obviously inseparable, but not so with Louisiana and St. Domingue or Paraguay.<sup>10</sup>

Charlevoix wanted to write his histories for three reasons: to please his readers (the public), to serve his country, and to serve the Church.<sup>11</sup> The *Histoire du Paraguay* may be more laudatory of the Roman Catholic Church, in particular the Jesuits, but the *History and General Description of New France* puts

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Histoire*, I:1-2.

the nation of France in the most favorable position. This position is bolstered by another goal of Charlevoix's, to rescue from oblivion all those whose merit has thus far exceeded their fame. Special recognition should be given to France's explorers who exceeded those of Spain in merit if not in numbers.<sup>12</sup>

#### Words of Encouragement

Charlevoix's love of country was not one of blind devotion. He was never above chiding his compatriots for not taking full advantage of all that North America, especially Canada, had to offer. Cause for pessimism began with the early sixteenth-century voyages of Jacques Cartier. Despite his praise, the pitiful state of his party outweighed the enthusiasm of others who became convinced that Cartier's discoveries were of no use to France. This was due, in part, to his failure to discover any mines, something that seems to have been an expectation of "new" lands. The only people more concerned with the discovery of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

riches and mines in the New World were the "greedy" Spaniards.<sup>13</sup>

Cartier also provides Charlevoix with one of many opportunities to chide the French reading public for its fickleness and desire to be entertained and amused at the expense of historical veracity. "Truly the relation of a voyager is quite sad when he has not brought back something with which to compensate himself by some solid advantage for the fatigues and risks that he has run."<sup>14</sup> The Spanish explorers (and readers?) may have been greedy for gold, but according to Charlevoix, the French wanted amusement, even at the expense of the writer's reputation. Charlevoix struggled with the desire to simultaneously please and inform his audience more in this work and the *Histoire de l'isle Espagnole ou de S. Domingue* (1730) than in his other works.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Histoire*, I: 23-24.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

Every bit as important as the truth of the matters presented was the validity of French claims in North America. This meant the assertion of French priority over English and Spanish claims to the south of Canada, especially in the realm of Florida. The Spanish claimed that Florida had no boundaries. Neither the French nor the English shared this view of the New World. Charlevoix's point is that if Canada is to be included in Florida, then based on trading and alliances formed with Indians, French possession preceded that of Spain. Interestingly, during the early days of colonial Louisiana, trade between the French and the neighboring Spanish also flourished despite official disapproval. It was Charlevoix who also pointed out that the over-extended French were doing the Spanish quite a service by providing a buffer between them and the English colonies.<sup>16</sup>

In the assertion of French superiority Charlevoix was not all that different from his compatriots just as most of the Spanish or English would have rallied

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<sup>16</sup> *Histoire*, I: 37; *Journal*, Lettre XXXIII.

around their respective monarchies, religions, and territorial claims abroad. It is one thing, however, to defend the homeland against heretics from a rival nation, and quite another to be willing to cross the Atlantic Ocean to defend colonies and Indian souls against invasion. It is here that Charlevoix was perhaps not in step with his fellow French citizens. For him and his fellow Jesuits (and Ursulines) the New World was a vast land filled with uncultivated souls to be harvested for the Roman Catholic Church. Crops such as wheat and corn were the vital means of physical sustenance to enable the heavenly labors.

Unfortunately for Charlevoix and the French future in North America, there were more lucrative and less difficult ways to make one's living in the New World. Charlevoix found that as early as 1608 that men preferred the fur trade to farming as a means of earning a living. There were already signs of food shortages. Four years later preferences had had not changed, and the colony was struggling rather than flourishing. Charlevoix decried the French dependency

on the Indians for subsistence as the main reason for the failure to convert more Indians to Christianity. The Indians would not adopt the religion of those whom they held in contempt, and the priests had to settle for baptizing dying children.<sup>17</sup>

In the same paragraph Charlevoix provides an early reference to the perceptions of Jesuit power. Even more threatening to the spread of Christianity than the Calvinists or condition of economic dependency was the state of discord between the missionaries and those in power at Port Royal. Both parties had a financial stake in the colony, a fact that is not clear in Charlevoix's narrative. He does explain that the Jesuits were not wanted at Port Royal. The Indians could not help but notice the awkward situation and form a negative opinion about the religion they were being encouraged to adopt. Of course Charlevoix did have the privileged perspective of hindsight.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Histoire*, I: 190, 204-205.

<sup>18</sup> *Histoire*, I: 204- 205.

This perspective had to be adjusted somewhat as the French moved farther south. The Indians of Louisiana were as loyal as those in Canada, if not more so, but the missionary spirit seems to have waned somewhat. If that was not the case, there were certainly fewer priests and missionaries in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Loyalty, however, was not widespread among the French colonists, some of who deserted to go live among the English. Charlevoix hastily points out that people who are forced to emigrate or who are misled about conditions in the colonies cannot be expected to stay and contribute to the wellbeing of the whole. The solution to the problem was to send families who would farm the land and ensure a food supply for the entire region.<sup>19</sup>

Although Canada could have benefited from more missionaries and priests, Louisiana's clerical shortage was dire. Charlevoix states that below the Illinois River, there were no priests. As he traveled southward he had to perform marriages for all those

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<sup>19</sup> *Histoire*, IV: 230- 231.



who had formed households and families without formal benediction. His solution was to remedy the harm already done and hope that confession and more priests would solve the problem.<sup>20</sup> Unlike the religious utopia Charlevoix describes in Paraguay (see Chapter Four), his North America is full of tensions between the conversion of souls and the conversion of resources into riches.

#### God and Country

The *Histoire* may have been of limited use, but its appeal may also be attributed to the fact that it is better written than Charlevoix's other works. Charlevoix traveled extensively in North America; thus his history is more than an editorial compilation of the works of others. He was familiar with his subject from the perspectives of an experienced researcher and educated tourist. In the *History* and the *Journal* Charlevoix is both author and eyewitness of much of what he describes. When unable to give a firsthand

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<sup>20</sup> *Journal*, Lettre XXXI.

account, as always, Charlevoix relies upon his own extensive research and knowledge of the historiography. His list of authors consulted is extensive and contains an evaluation of each author's work for fellow researchers.<sup>21</sup>

In the first volume Charlevoix successfully introduces and removes the French from Florida and then turns the story back to New France. It is difficult to tell what Charlevoix thought and felt about the presence of French Protestants in North America, but there can be little doubt about the sentiments of the Spanish and some Frenchmen. From multiple perspectives he relates the story of some shipwrecked Protestant Frenchmen who fell into Spanish captivity in 1565. The French historians tell of perfidy and betrayal of their fellow countrymen by the Spaniards, whose version of the events differs

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<sup>21</sup> *Histoire*, I: i- ii. See "Liste et examen des Auteurs que j'ai consultés pour composer cet ouvrage," in Volume I.

somewhat. Charlevoix, however, suspends his judgment until the end; or so he presents it to the reader.<sup>22</sup>

There is more at stake in this tale than the veracity of other historians. French honor and the Catholic religion also had to be preserved. The dilemma becomes apparent when one of the stranded French officers asks the Spanish for the use of a boat. Such a loan would have been immediately forthcoming if the men had been Catholic and if the Spaniards had had any extra boats. Furthermore, despite the fact that France and Spain were not at war at this time (1565), the Spanish officer had declared a personal war against Protestants as part of his service to the monarchs of both nations. If the French would give up their arms, then the Spanish would allow God to guide their actions.<sup>23</sup>

Charlevoix was no lover of heresy, but in his final assessment we find, a glint of tolerance thought to be uncharacteristic of his religion if not of his

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<sup>22</sup> *Histoire*, I: 134- 138.

<sup>23</sup> *Histoire*, I: 137- 138.

age and order. He leaves judgment to his readers whom he credits as being every bit as capable as he of discerning the truth. Unexpectedly, the 'truth' is not really what matters in this story. The men who died at the hands of the Spanish were still French subjects despite their reformed faith. That those deaths were met by indifference in France was cause of great distress for Charlevoix. The official revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1598) by Louis XIV in 1685 had served to provide one more insurmountable obstacle for the nascent colony of Louisiana that was founded in 1699.<sup>24</sup>

On Charlevoix's balance sheet, a few Protestant heretics were worth the risk if their presence would have helped France hold her possessions in Florida. The French had driven a wedge into territory claimed by both England and Spain. Protestant refugees were willing to settle Louisiana, but Louis XIV would have none of it. The Spanish supported the refusal for two reasons: faith and power. The threat to the Catholic

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<sup>24</sup> *Histoire*, I: 134- 147.

faith was diminished while the French colonies bore the brunt of English colonial expansionist designs.<sup>25</sup>

Charlevoix was as aware as anyone that trade would have to support the colonies, but he had hoped that French religious rules would govern it, and that the commerce would be between families and farmers. Even without Florida, all was not lost, but in this case too, Charlevoix was to face disappointment. The story of the fur trade and the Jesuit missions in Canada is well known. It is clear that Charlevoix favored the promotion and spread of the Catholic faith (to be done by the Jesuits, of course), but in North America anyway, the French colonists as well as the monarchy had no one to blame but themselves for spoiling the spiritual and agricultural harvests. Charlevoix states that the fur trade had nearly completely halted all cultivation and that famine was not uncommon.<sup>26</sup> Without a harvest of food crops, there

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<sup>25</sup> See Weddle, *The French Thorn*; Shea, V:126.

<sup>26</sup> *Histoire*, I: 190.

could be no hope for the mortal hosts of the souls at stake.

While the majority of North America's Indians may not have immediately flocked to embrace Christianity, they did seem more attracted to the French than to other Europeans. This was especially true in Louisiana where both priests and colonists were relatively few in number. Charlevoix's history takes nearly as long to move south as it took France to reach the mouth of the Great River, the Mississippi. Even though La Salle successfully descended the river in 1685, its mouth could not be located from the Gulf of Mexico until 1699-1700. Accordingly, the French made few forays southward not daring to risk being cut off by Indians, the English or the Spanish--or some combination thereof.

Only in Book XVIII of Volume III does Charlevoix actually bring his characters to the discovery that should, in his opinion, have granted the French outright control of North America. From that point on, in fact, Charlevoix notes an important shift in French

policy, if not general perceptions. For a brief period anyway, Louisiana occupied the French ministry more than any other part of New France. Charlevoix nonetheless devotes the final volumes to topics in New France as well as the Mississippi Valley including both in his description of people, plants and animals, and the French failure to establish good farmers and families in North America.<sup>27</sup>

#### Others Also Worthy of Note

At the end of the second volume (in the edition used here), Charlevoix appends a section entitled "Particularités de la vie et de la mort de quelques Sauvages Chrétiens" (Particularities of the life and death of several Christian Savages). There is a separate introduction in which Charlevoix addresses those who are "sincerely" interested in Religion's triumph. His wish here is to combat the existing prejudices against the Jesuit missions by highlighting the best of the many examples available.

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<sup>27</sup> *Histoire*, IV: 377.

Three women and two men make up this honor roll, and their short biographies vary as to the degree of brevity (from 2 1/2 pages to approximately 22 pages). All five led lives of exceptional piety and devotion despite the ridicule of their fellow Iroquois. All but one died painful deaths at the hands of the non-Christian Iroquois. One of the martyrs was the mother of a small infant who was also killed.<sup>28</sup>

One story, a paragraph long, is devoted to a young girl "who passed for a beauty among the Indians."<sup>29</sup> The child's parents did not rejoice in their child's beauty, but prayed that God would remove such a potentially destructive advantage from their daughter. The girl was soon stricken with a sort of infection that left one of her eyes extremely deformed. Shortly thereafter, she became feverish and weak and died in her mother's arms. Her parents believed their daughter's salvation out of danger and praised God. The final heroes are Indian martyrs who

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<sup>28</sup> *Histoire*, II: 436, 436- 480.

<sup>29</sup> *Histoire*, II: 474.



espoused Christian virtues that, according to Charlevoix, the French did not admire. Yet chronologically, they preceded many of the French emigrés of notoriety. That Charlevoix did not integrate them into his history is indicative of his own struggles to order the "new" world.<sup>30</sup>

As for the plants of North America, they receive their own appendix as well, "Description des Plantes Principales de l'Amerique Septentrionale" (Description of the Principle Plants of North America) found at the end of the fourth volume. This particular section is beautifully illustrated with drawings of most of the plants described. Prior to the publication of the *Histoire*, in 1735, Charlevoix published his plan for "un corps d'histoires du Nouveau Monde" in the *Mémoires de Trévoux*.<sup>31</sup> He tells his readers that such a project will be expensive, but worthwhile. This was especially true with regard to the plants, many of which were either demonstrated or alleged to be

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<sup>30</sup> *Histoire*, II: 474-475.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Pouliot, *Charlevoix*, 21.

beneficial to those industrious enough to employ them.<sup>32</sup>

#### Epistolary History: The *Journal*

The *Histoire* itself ends in the year 1736, but there is yet another section- the journal. Its full title is *le Journal Historique d'un Voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionale adressé à Madame la Duchesse de Lesdiguières*. It is a reconstruction, recounting Charlevoix's journey to the New World more than twenty years earlier. Containing 36 letters, the *Journal* may belong more in the genre of epistolary travel literature. The most logical reason for the delay in its appearance is Charlevoix's publication record. He was busy producing the works that preceded the *Histoire* and *Journal*.

Anne Gagnon states that the *Journal* "really distinguishes itself only by its epistolary form."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Pouliot, 22.

<sup>33</sup> Anne Gagnon, "Charlevoix: un jésuite en quête de vérité, Étude historiographique d'*Histoire et*

For Gagnon and others, the authorship of the *Journal* is not in question, but rather whether or not it is a genuine epistolary work or one of "l'histoire proprement dite" (history, rightly speaking).<sup>34</sup> There can be little doubt that Charlevoix is the author of the letters that make up the *Journal*. Whether or not Charlevoix initially created them as such or later constructed them from notes, memory, or even another journal, they do provide a chronological account of Charlevoix's trip to North America and his descent of the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico and eventually the Caribbean.

That Charlevoix decided to try his hand at the epistolary form of travel documentation should come as no great surprise given the popularity of travel literature during his life. His reasons for publishing

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*description générale de la Nouvelle France,"* M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1997, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Gagnon, 17. Gagnon relies upon Pierre Berthiaume's annotated edition of the *Journal* to bolster her assertions. *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale, Édition critique par Pierre Berthiaume* (Montréal: Les Presses Universitaires de Montréal, 1994) 2 vols.

it along with the more traditional *Histoire* must remain in the realm of speculation. The Jesuits here are portrayed as the vanguards of colonization, as in Canada, and, by virtue of their absence, as contributing factors in the failure of colonial efforts such as that in Louisiana. The *Journal* cannot be relegated to any one school due to Charlevoix's determination to discuss multiple themes in his story. While seeking to provide an amusing collection of letters, there is often an undeniably impersonal, didactic quality to the prose as well. The *Histoire* and the *Journal* both discuss economy, individuals, groups, tribes, and nations. Discussion of religion, and the lack thereof, abounds, as do the military exploits of Europeans and American Indians. There can be no doubt that Charlevoix, at least, thinks he is writing history *proprement dite* as well as creating a more personal bond with his readers.

The most casual of readers will notice that Charlevoix's prose style in the *Journal* does not vary greatly from that of the *Histoire*. Gagnon notes "The

journal does not seem then to distinguish itself in as notable a manner as its author probably would have wished.”<sup>35</sup> It is perhaps more interesting, from a biographical standpoint, to inquire into the subtle, but noticeable change in style. An equally plausible explanation is that Charlevoix just was not good at the epistolary form. Willing to explore new lands and ideas, he was unable to master a new genre.<sup>36</sup>

What becomes clear in this portion of Charlevoix's larger vision of history is that no one had yet figured out a way for devoted Catholics and devoted Catholic Indians to coexist. The issue of peaceful coexistence between non-Christian Indians and the French is also understated.<sup>37</sup> Especially in Louisiana, the French found powerful trading partners

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<sup>35</sup> Gagnon, 18.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion that devotes more attention to the stylistic issues of the *Journal*, see Pierre Berthiaume's introduction to his edited *François-Xavier de Charlevoix, Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, Édition critique, Montréal, Les Presses Universitaires de Montréal, 1994.

<sup>37</sup> See Healy.

in many of the Indians, but made few inroads into their spiritual realms. Overall, the impression is one of fading optimism in the face of multi-faceted goals, a state of affairs that would make it extremely difficult to attract others to settle the struggling colony.

#### Unwilling Settlers

In order to settle in Louisiana, one needed financial support. Those unable to provide for themselves immediately could become *engagés*. In this version of French indenture a person was contractually bound to a patron, usually for three years. The idea was, of course, to supply the colony with settlers as well as workers. Most French did not find this an acceptable way to finance emigration from their homeland.<sup>38</sup> The other solution to the labor shortage was to force the immigration of African slaves, a

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<sup>38</sup> Peter N. Moogk, *La Nouvelle France: The Making of French Canada- A Cultural History*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000.

group who posed another set of issues to inhabitants of the Atlantic World.

In Letter XXX of his *Journal* Charlevoix writes of his visit to "the Natchez country." The Indians whose name the region bore had harassed the French intruders since the earliest encounters and continued to do so even after most were killed in the Natchez Revolt of 1729. Charlevoix found the region pleasing and thought that the French settlement along the bluffs of the Mississippi River would make the best site for Louisiana's capital. There were several prosperous concessions in the area, all in need of laborers. Charlevoix makes it quite clear that his preference is the system of engagés who were always subjects of the king and who became members of the colonial community after their term expired. It would never be so in the case of the Africans who were attached to the colony only by fear. Unlike the children of transplanted Europeans, the children of slaves would never be able to call their "new world" their country. Charlevoix further predicted that the

presence of too many slaves in the colonies might create a formidable enemy force.<sup>39</sup>

In 1731 Charlevoix's fear came very close to materialization. The Chickasaw Indians, who traditionally sided with the English, sent "a faithful Negro man to New Orleans to tell all members of his "Nation"<sup>40</sup> that it was up to them to recover their freedom and to go live in peace and plenty among the English. A servant woman who goes without further notice in the story informed the French of the coming danger. The leaders of the conspiracy, one woman and three men, were all executed. Their deaths not only let the other rebels know that they had been found out, but served to keep them in their place (leur devoir).<sup>41</sup>

This episode can be used to demonstrate that whatever Charlevoix thought about Africans as people,

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<sup>39</sup> *Journal*, Lettre XXX.

<sup>40</sup> Charlevoix's terminology.

<sup>41</sup> *Histoire*, IV: 294- 295. The woman is referred to as a "domestique."



he did not think it a safe choice to use them as an enslaved colonial work force. In the *Histoire de S. Domingue* Charlevoix stated that "The black is not a traitor," but that it would be a mistake to put too much faith in his loyalty or blind attachment.<sup>42</sup>

Charlevoix's discussion of African slaves is probably meant to apply to those in North America as well, but what changed to make him more fearful of them between the publications of the two histories? In keeping with his increasing pessimism about the Atlantic World, it is reasonable to suggest that had Charlevoix felt that sufficient effort had been expended to see to the souls of the slaves, then their loyalty might not have been in question. He suggests as much in *S. Domingue*.<sup>43</sup>

#### Conclusion

In the last paragraph of the Avertissement, which appears in Volume I Charlevoix asks:

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<sup>42</sup> *S. Domingue*, IV: 365.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

Who has halted the progress of the Gospel among these barbarians, and how is it that the oldest of our colonies, the one that ought naturally to have been more populous, is still the least powerful of all? That is what the end of this History will reveal to the eyes of those who will be willing to take the trouble to read it attentively.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, the responsibility belongs to the reader to be engaged in more than his or her own immediate surroundings. On the other hand, Voltaire also had some advice for the reader regarding colonial life. "Perhaps, one day, if there are millions too many inhabitants in France, it will be advantageous to people Louisiana; but it is more likely that we will have to give it up."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Histoire*, I: viii.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Pierre H. Boulle, "Some Eighteenth-Century French Views on Louisiana," in John Francis McDermott, ed., *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969, 15. McDermott uses a 1769 version of Voltaire's *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations*.

In the *History and Journal* we see Charlevoix wrestling with the "ambiguity [that] characterized the French presence in the Americas."<sup>46</sup> Candide displays a much more fatalistic attitude than Charlevoix who continued to encourage others to look to the Atlantic World as a place of great promise in the Atlantic world of the short Eighteenth Century. The rewards reaped directly reflected the sincerity of the effort expended, but even this optimism would fade as Charlevoix turned his attention to Paraguay.

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<sup>46</sup>Pritchard, 3.

## Chapter 5

## The Search for Happiness in Paraguay

## Introduction

The struggle between good and evil permeates the narrative in *l'Histoire du Paraguay*. Published in 1756, it discusses the years 1500-1747 and is the last of Charlevoix's histories. This is his only work dedicated to a territory in which the French never had a direct role as colonizers. Instead, the choice was dictated by another central theme in Charlevoix's oeuvre: the achievements of the Jesuit order in creating an ideal society in the New World.

More specifically, Charlevoix's last history represents a utopian justification of Jesuit activity in South America and the rest of the eighteenth-century world. We also find that while Charlevoix has not given up faith or hope, he is all too aware that his ideal version of the Atlantic World is shrinking even as knowledge of the world increases. In the introduction of this particular history to the public,

the author tells us that the variety and novelty of his topic were well suited to instruct and please the reader. Specifically, he refers to "those Christian republics, models of which the world has never seen and which were founded in the midst of the most ferocious barbarity... by men who cemented the foundations with their blood."<sup>1</sup> The intrepid Jesuits confronted Indians whose fury was already inflamed by the well-armed Spaniards.

Once "civilized," the new Christians voluntarily accepted the rule of Spain and were admired by all who knew them for one hundred and fifty years. Hyperbole aside, more than in any of his previous works, Charlevoix devotes much more time to the struggle between good and evil here than to the international struggle for colonial dominance in the New World. It is this degree of religious moralism, and the constant association of "good" with the Jesuits that would have disgusted Charlevoix's pupil, François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778). Yet Charlevoix's

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<sup>1</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 5-6.

increasingly defensive posture was also a reaction to the decreasing opportunities for France and the Jesuits.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, both Charlevoix and Voltaire shared the Enlightenment concern for the universal. Though written to describe Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), the following also illustrates the nature of Charlevoix's writings as well: "When combined with the travel motif, this narrative plan utilizes the problem of evil, implying that the tale concerns humanity, not just a few members of a given society."<sup>3</sup> Charlevoix does not use satire and irony to the extent that Voltaire does (indeed he uses them rarely), but both men address the problem of the existence of evil in the world and use Paraguay as the geographical locus of their stories. That their solutions differ is

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<sup>2</sup> Earlier in 18<sup>th</sup> century. See Aram Vartanian, "On Cultivating One's Garden," *A New History of French Literature*, Denis Hollier, ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989 *New History of French Literature*, 465- 471.

<sup>3</sup> Vartanian, 470. The "narrative plan" referred to is that of the *conte philosophique* in the case of *Candide*.

testament to the broad way in which "enlightenment," both religious and secular, may be interpreted.<sup>4</sup> Both men were searching for concrete answers in an Atlantic World whose boundaries were increasingly unfixed.

Charlevoix and his famous pupil recognized the presence of evil in the world, and both men held that reason alone would fail to conquer its forces. In contrast to Voltaire's satire, Charlevoix's more didactic prose insists upon the acceptance of divine intervention in the human struggle to discover and stay the course along the path of righteousness. Voltaire's anti-utopia is yet another canvas upon which to depict the cravenness of humanity. Charlevoix's New World, in this case Paraguay, is a rational exploration of what *might* have been: what truly good Catholics should have done elsewhere in the New World.

#### Establishing Boundaries

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<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Wright, *God's Soldiers: Adventure, Politics, Intrigue, and Power- A History of the Jesuits*, New York: Doubleday, 2004, 193.

The *Histoire du Paraguay* is another of Charlevoix's works composed with the extensive use of primary sources, many of which are actually included for the reader's benefit. Perhaps this maneuver was intended to counter such opinions and descriptions of the Jesuits as the one penned by Voltaire : "los *padres* have everything and the people have nothing; the government is a model of reason and justice."<sup>5</sup> In contrast, according to Charlevoix, there was nothing that the Jesuits would not sacrifice for their neophytes. Rather it was the Spanish in the towns and cities who took from the Indians and used them as slaves. It is more likely that Charlevoix included the 298 pages of letters and statements as direct evidence to counter charges against the Jesuits of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. Such evidentiary documents, in French and Spanish, would have gone far to demonstrate to the reader that Charlevoix was indeed interested in a truthful version of what happened.

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<sup>5</sup> *Candide*, 135. See also Alban Boudreau, "Le 'Projet d'un Corps d'Histoires du nouveau Monde de P.F.-X. de Charlevoix': une étude historiographique," M.A. Thesis, Université de Montréal, 1988, 67, 77- 78.



Although the *Histoire du Paraguay* is one of Charlevoix's longest works (six volumes, 460 pages), it is, according to historian George F. Healy, "in many respects, the weakest of his historical works."<sup>6</sup> The characterization is based on Charlevoix's omission of a critical bibliography and his overt prejudice in favor of both contemporary and past Jesuits who held the rights to colonize the province from 1607 until their expulsion in 1767. There are no types or themes here that do not appear in his other works, yet "the missionary, the cruel, gold-hungry Spaniard, and the lazy, improvident, unthinking, dissolute, but withal gentle and naïve Indian"<sup>7</sup> all continue to work out their roles in the Atlantic World, but within narrower parameters lest the reader misinterpret the boundaries of propriety.

The general description of the colony takes a scant thirty-four pages, some of which are devoted to

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<sup>6</sup> George R. Healy, "Charlevoix's Histories of the New World: A Study in Exotic Radicalism," M.A. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1950, 77.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

commentary and introduction. For Charlevoix the question is not really whether "la Religion mise à part" (religion aside) the Indians of Paraguay are better or worse off materially after having met the Europeans. Rather his concern is whether those about whom he writes behaved always in such a way as to create the most useful settlements among the Indians and to profit from the treasures that meant so little to them. This behavior would naturally include faithful adherence to Roman Catholicism. Perhaps Charlevoix is a bit too self-effacing in the claim that he is unsuited for such grand questions, but he forces the reader to engage the issues of European expansion, the Paraguayan Reductions, and the best way to go about the spiritual enlightenment of all souls in the Atlantic World. The novelty lies in the expectation that the Indians be happier than they were before encountering the Europeans. It is not a given here that this happiness is a direct result of Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

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## The Public Demands It

Charlevoix addresses the reader for seven pages, making clear that he hopes to inspire, instruct, and amuse his audience. "What pleasure in effect, for a reader, who loves and sincerely searches for the truth, to see it come into daylight through the clouds with which some have wanted it covered."<sup>9</sup> He also provides a bit of insurance for himself, informing his audience that this particular project exists "to satisfy the desire of a prince who judged it necessary for the honor of religion."<sup>10</sup> Charlevoix is not without device, however. He knows how to play an audience. Before getting down to the presentation of "many divers and unexpected events" Charlevoix leads the reader back to the general description of things which

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<sup>8</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Paraguay*, I:5. The prince is the Duc d'Orleans.

he claims very few know despite the fact that people talk about them every day.<sup>11</sup>

As one would expect, Charlevoix supplies the names and locations of major rivers and lakes. He also describes the regions of Paraguay and the peoples who inhabit them. In fact, Charlevoix points out the variations of the climate and the peoples of Paraguay as well as their characters and morals. Nevertheless, he finds a great deal to say "en general" about the Paraguayans. For example, "they all have an olive tint, but unequally." In their tendency toward stupidity, drunkenness, indolence, and vengeance, among other faults, the natives of Paraguay appear more equally endowed. These are the souls for which the Jesuits would risk their mortal lives.<sup>12</sup>

The New World was rumored and expected to be full of treasures and riches from the land, and Charlevoix provides a catalog of the few available in Paraguay. The Indians cared little for jewels and precious

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<sup>11</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 11- 12.

metals, not so with the Spaniards whose quest for worldly riches was, according to Charlevoix, no less dedicated in South America than in the other colonies. The greed of the Spanish may have surpassed that of other Europeans in Charlevoix's opinion, but in their willingness to pursue "imaginary mines" instead of "more suitable and certain measures" they were no different from the pelt-chasing French in North America. This discussion is one of Charlevoix's early maneuvers to defend the Jesuits against charges of hoarding the contents of secret mines throughout South America.<sup>13</sup>

The eighteenth-century reader in search of a detailed description can hardly have been satisfied by the brief description of some of the human and non-human inhabitants of Paraguay, for as abruptly as the description begins, it is over, and explorers are introduced. The dedicated reader must read the entire history in chronological order to find descriptions of other peoples and places. Charlevoix signals the year

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<sup>13</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 14.

of European entry to Paraguay, 1516, with a note in the margin. The transition and introduction of the intruders is simply the indention of a new paragraph.

Such, in general, is this large country that many people regard as one of the richest in the New World. The first discovery was made in 1516, by Jean de Solis, the great Castilian pilot, and by pure hazard.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, we do not learn much about this particular mission, for according to Charlevoix, Solis and several of his men were roasted and eaten by Indians. The Spaniards who remained in their boat had no choice but to re-board their ship and return to Spain. Charlevoix laments the loss of one of the world's best navigators. Then, citing fellow historian Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas (1549-1625) for support, Charlevoix suggests that perhaps Solis lacked the caution necessary for such a mission, quickly

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<sup>14</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 34.

dispensing with the early Spanish forays into Paraguay.<sup>15</sup>

The early days of interaction with the Paraguayans were no more fortuitous for the Portuguese. Upon hearing rumors that the Spanish had struck it rich in Peru, "Dom Martin de Sosa, governor and captain general of Brazil, conceived of the plan to share it with them."<sup>16</sup> After crossing from Paraguay into Peru the treasure hunters find "a little gold and a lot of silver."<sup>17</sup> But before the treasure seekers were able to share anything with the Spaniards, they were required to give their lives to some Indians who took the gold and silver for themselves. Another equally generous group of Portuguese met similar ends after the Paraguayans cut off their supplies. These unfortunate explorers were lured into pirogues that

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<sup>15</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 36.

<sup>16</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 36.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

the Indians had filled with holes and drowned before discovering the perpetrators.<sup>18</sup>

These anecdotes serve to further emphasize the questionable motives of the two nations discussed and the ways Charlevoix interpreted them. Why would Spain or Portugal wish to settle in a country where their adventures had been so tragic? According to Charlevoix, profit was the only motive, for Paraguay was wrongly said to contain more wealth than all of the rest of America. Perhaps it was the paucity of earthly treasure that inclined Philip III of Spain to grant the territory to the Jesuits in the first place in 1607. As for the English, they were "too busy at home to dream of establishing themselves in the New World."<sup>19</sup>

#### The Jesuits

Charlevoix devoted the remaining five volumes to a defense of the Jesuits' missionary zeal in the face

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<sup>18</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 36- 38.

<sup>19</sup> *Paraguay*, I: 38.



of Spanish jealousy and resistance. The Spanish resented the protection, and at times equality (even if only in theory), granted to Christian Indians by the Jesuits. Such Indians could not be enslaved. However, there were other Indians who were willing to raid the missions and provide the Spaniards with slaves. Furthermore, Charlevoix's concentration shifts from the theme of greed-driven Europeans interacting with the Indians to the defense of the Jesuits.

The Society of Jesus arrived in Paraguay in 1586. Colonized in 1547, Paraguay was either blessed or cursed with a paucity of natural, saleable resources. It seemed ideally suited for a religious colony and became a Jesuit province in 1607. Charlevoix's history ends in 1747, but was published in 1757 when the Jesuits were under vigorous attack throughout the Atlantic World. The Order was suppressed in Portugal in 1759. France expelled the Jesuits in 1764, and Spain followed suit in 1767. Pope Clement XIX finally dissolved the Jesuit Brotherhood in 1773.<sup>20</sup>

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Charlevoix goes to greater lengths than in any of his other works to provide documentation and "Pieces Pour Servir de Preuves & d'éclaircissement à l'Histoire du Paraguay" (Pieces to Serve as Proof and Clarification for the History of Paraguay).<sup>21</sup> In these letters and relations which he includes at the end of the respective volumes, we find the primary documents in French, Spanish, and Latin to which Charlevoix would have referred in order to piece together the parts of the history that pertain to Jesuit actions and the approval bestowed upon them by those in power. Nowhere else does he provide so much of the material to which he had access for his readers to also consider. Given his emphasis on the ability of his audience to reach the correct conclusions when provided sufficient evidence, we can imagine how disillusioned Charlevoix must have been by the now entrenched hatred of his brotherhood.

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<sup>20</sup> The Order was re-established by Pius VII in 1814.

<sup>21</sup> "Pieces to serve as proofs and clarifications in the History of Paraguay." See for example *Paraguay*, I: 344- 372; III: 246- 393; IV: 329- 399; V: 247- 450; VI: 220- 453.

By the time the *Histoire du Paraguay* was published, Charlevoix was 74 years old and an author with an established reputation. Not one to rest on his laurels, he surely had a reason for not including a critical bibliography as in his other histories. The *pièces justificatives* provide much of the documentation expected from a historian of merit.<sup>22</sup> These documents, in fact, provide a clear response to any charges of bias that may be made against Charlevoix. Clearly he thought that one of the most serious problems facing the Atlantic World was the lack of appropriate spiritual direction. For better or worse, the Jesuit Order went farther than most to provide both Indians and Europeans abroad with such guidance.

Charlevoix's open defense of his brothers put him at risk as an objective historian, so he went to great lengths to make sure he was able to parry blows that might be aimed at him. One of the letters he includes is part of an exchange between himself and Don Fernand

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<sup>22</sup> Healy, 77.

Triviño, secretary of the Royal Council of the Indies in Madrid. Referring to Charlevoix's reputation as an impartial writer, Treviño writes that having read Charlevoix's histories of l'Isle Espagnole and New France he has no doubt that that of Paraguay will be every bit as truthful and interesting in all respects. Statements of support such as this from a colleague serve to reinforce for the reader Charlevoix's ability to take what some would call a personal grievance and relate it to his larger body of works as well as the world in which he lived.<sup>23</sup>

#### God and Country (continued)

While Charlevoix remains a loyal citizen of France, it becomes clear in this history that his allegiance to the Jesuit brotherhood transcends national boundaries. This adds a new dimension to his view of the evolving Atlantic World while tempting the reader today to slight the *Histoire du Paraguay* because of its unapologetic religious biases and lack

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<sup>23</sup> *Paraguay*, VI: 438-439. The letter is dated 21 March 1746.

of bibliographical depth. George R. Healy finds in the *History of Paraguay* an "articulate conclusion" to Charlevoix's study of the New World while simultaneously finding it the "weakest" of Charlevoix's works. He finds nothing new or exotic, but Healy's aim is to prove Charlevoix a conservative in his institutional loyalties. Healy finds little difference between the Jesuit establishments in Paraguay and the governments of eighteenth-century Europe.<sup>24</sup>

The present study accepts Healy's conclusion and applies it to the emergence of the Atlantic World. Charlevoix's version of the New World is one that is not attainable by direct outside government control from any one country. His writings suggest that he often found himself torn between his loyalty to France and to the Church. Established religion and the Jesuit order were both facing serious challenges in Europe, and Charlevoix posed the Jesuit-controlled missions as

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<sup>24</sup>. Healy, 77, 79-80.

more evidence that Europeans had failed themselves and the Indians of Paraguay.

Healy finds little that is new in the Paraguay history, and he notes that "Charlevoix's conclusion is quite clear, if implicit: any society could achieve perfection; all that was required was sincere adherence to the dictates of religion and legitimate authority."<sup>25</sup> In Healy's reading of Charlevoix's works, the Jesuit never conceded that there might be a better way of life than that preached, or otherwise demonstrated, by the Europeans. This point is debatable given the absence of outright condemnation of Indian ways. It furthermore, cannot be asserted with certainty that Charlevoix

finished his studies of the New World as he had begun them, entirely convinced that Catholicism in religion, aristocratic principles in government, and European social and intellectual culture were

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<sup>25</sup> Healy, 82.

absolutely excellent and applicable  
throughout the entire world.<sup>26</sup>

It is equally plausible to find that although Charlevoix grew more defensive of the institutions with which he was familiar, he simultaneously reconciled their flaws with the realities, both positive and negative, in the New World while condemning fellow Europeans for their attacks upon the Jesuits. The missionaries were renowned for their ability and desire to learn the languages of those whom they taught. The ultimate goal was, of course, conversion of those pupils to Christianity, but the gesture is not one that can be ignored. As this study demonstrates, Charlevoix's views did not remain fixed over time but evolved to reflect his reactions to changes in the Atlantic World and the Enlightenment, both of which included him as a member.

As the competition grew fierce in eighteenth-century America, the Jesuits' spiritual priorities posed a threat to individual personal or national

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<sup>26</sup> Healy, 83.

prosperity. A monarch seeking to increase his country's territorial holdings had to maintain an interest in material wealth as well as spiritual rewards. In 1743, King Philip V decreed that one of his concerns was the complaint that the Jesuits were bringing foreign members into Paraguay. The King made known his awareness of the problem but reminded his objecting subjects that the Jesuits had always been loyal and that these foreigners were only following the orders of their superiors. Specifically he refers to Father Thomas Werle, a Bavarian, who was killed by enemies of Spain in Paraguay. For the moment King Philip only cautioned the Jesuits to pay more attention to their choice of missionaries and to the naval prowess of the priest's native country.<sup>27</sup>

#### Enlightenment ?

Charlevoix's last work was also his last effort to call attention to the fact that he, at least, had a

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<sup>27</sup> "Décret du roi catholique Philippe V, Au sujet de plusieurs accusations intentées contre les Jesuits du Paraguay," *Paraguay*, VI: 378- 379.



plausible explanation for France's failure to maintain a secure plantation in the farthest reaches of the Atlantic World. Under attack at home and abroad, the Brotherhood could do little to cultivate souls in the earthly garden being overgrown with newer, stronger ideas. These ideas had been planted long before 1756 when Charlevoix published the work considered here. By that time the Jesuit missions in Paraguay had seen their best days come and go in the years 1650- 1720. Charlevoix gives us no clue as to whether he felt the same about his own life. He seems to have weathered the storm despite his condemnation of Indian slavery and truthful claims that the Jesuits in Paraguay were not secretly mining treasures with the help of those Indians. The *Histoire du Paraguay*, like all of his works, also received the *approbation et privilege du Roy*.

Voltaire may have found some redeeming virtue in Louis XV's suppression of the Order, but Charlevoix, even if he saw the writing on the wall, would have seen the act as another in a long list of mistakes

that would cost France both earthly and Heavenly territory. By living among the Indians, the Jesuits had attempted to increase the numbers of souls and subjects loyal to the Church. Charlevoix praised the separatism of the missions while condemning the greed of all but the French and deploring the conditions that made such separation necessary. The happiness and civilization of the Indians did not require that they become Europeans. In fact, it seems that Charlevoix hoped for them to be better than the Europeans.

Voltaire and his enlightened fellows may have ultimately triumphed in the eighteenth-century culture wars, but Charlevoix and his sympathizers won a few battles. Voltaire saw little of value in North America, and it is likely that he felt the same way about the southern reaches of the Atlantic World. Charlevoix, on the other hand, saw much that was worth saving in all corners of the Atlantic World. Such an extended perspective places Charlevoix apart from many of his fellow French men and women because of his

willingness to transcend national boundaries as well as those of faith and religion.

#### Conclusion

In light of Charlevoix's perspective, the *Histoire du Paraguay* becomes nearly allegorical in its portrayal of past events in Paraguay as well as reflecting eighteenth-century events in France. This particular work is less important for discovering what went on in Paraguay; however, as a portrayal of attitudes toward those past events plus contemporary connections to them, Charlevoix's sermon is invaluable. The Atlantic World of Charlevoix's time was expanding, but not in such a way as to make it the best of all possible worlds for France. The separation of the Christian Indians from the rest of the Europeans and Paraguayans caused envy and hatred from the outsiders. The French who were growing ever more disdainful of organized religion saw the missions as a power play by the Jesuits. To make matters worse,

there were many Paraguayan Indians who were willing to launch slave raids against the Jesuit wards.

Charlevoix makes no references to his personal life in France, nor does he mention any circumstances that might give the reader an idea of his own experiences regarding the ill favor directed increasingly at his brotherhood. In the end of Voltaire's *Candide*, the party returns to Germany to farm a small piece of land. Their misadventures throughout their travels lead Candide to conclude that it is best to stay home and engage in meaningful, productive labors. Although Charlevoix never crossed the Atlantic again, he made it clear that, like North America, Paraguay was a garden in need of much tending, if not by the French, then by the Jesuits.

## Conclusion

### Introduction

This project began as an investigation of Charlevoix's concept of the French presence in North America. As the scope of his writings became apparent, my focus shifted to the Atlantic World. Not that Charlevoix defined it as such, but having designated as the "new" world what some today call the Atlantic World, the inquiry seemed promising.<sup>1</sup> I assumed (and hoped) that I would discover a coherent whole as other scholars had done when describing Charlevoix's views on history and truth or identifying other elements within his works.<sup>2</sup> What emerged was not the "mixed bag"

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<sup>1</sup> Charlevoix included Japan in this definition of the "New World." Those works were not considered in this study. See *Histoire de l'établissement, des progrès et de la décadence du Chriatianisme dans l'empire du Japon* (Rouen : 1715) ; *Histoire et description général de Japon* (Paris : 1736).

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Anne Gagnon, "Charlevoix: un jésuite en quête de vérité, Étude historiographique d'Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle France," M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1997; George F. Healey, "Charlevoix's Histories of the New World: A

from which historians pull anecdotes and quotations, but the developing personality or character of an individual, an area, and a moment in the past.

While not a micro-history in the usual sense of "the narrative exposition of a single event or a single life,"<sup>3</sup> this tentative intellectual biography of Charlevoix, based on the analysis of his extensive historical works, provides a case study on the history of the French Atlantic World in the "short" eighteenth century. The span of his life just happened to reach across the same years in which others have written histories about the climax and decline of the Atlantic World that are limited by such things as events, trends, geographical boundaries, and especially single ideas. To say here that Charlevoix inhabited a French Atlantic World is to assert that his actions and his

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Study in Exotic Radicalism," M.A. Thesis, University of Missesota, 1950.

<sup>3</sup> Lara Putnam, "To Study the Fragment/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World," *The Journal of Social History*, Spring 2006.

historical works reflect the aspirations and limitations that shaped that world.

Narrowing the field of research to the life and works of one individual only renders more noticeable those instances in which a person may be at odds with many, and simultaneously representative of many. Even this clash is not consistent across the spectrum of ideas. Juxtaposing Charlevoix's intellectual evolution with other representatives of that world- Jesuits, historians and promoters of European colonization, Enlightened *philosophes*- allows us to place Charlevoix in his historical context and also to rethink some of the categories used by historians to describe the period.

Charlevoix's failure to achieve the same status as some of his peers reflects the decreasing popularity of his message, his religious order, and of the French Atlantic colonies as well. The point is not to suggest that Charlevoix dreamed of being a famous author. Duty permeates his work. However, Jack R. Censer's reference to Charlevoix as "an obscure former

missionary to Canada" does strike one as inaccurate. As this study has demonstrated, Charlevoix and his works were well known to his contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic. Today Charlevoix's name is familiar to historians of colonial Louisiana and Canada, and the Caribbean. He is less known by Latin Americanists. As the "concept and contours" of a French Atlantic World began to develop Charlevoix's descriptions and analyses should prove beneficial to those seeking understanding of that world.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1724 publication of Marie de l'Incarnation's biography we encounter Charlevoix's enthusiasm for two causes: devout Christianity and its spread to North America. In contrast to his and his subject's dedication we find a Parisian public, and by extension yet to be explored, a French public, whose "only direct involvement with official colonial policy

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<sup>4</sup> Jack R. Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment*, New York: Routledge, 1994, 110. The phrase "concept and contours" belongs to Bernard Bailyn and does not apply only to things French. In fact the French receive little remark in this short work in comparison to the Spanish and the English. *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).



appears to have been Père Charlevoix's 1720-1723 expedition in search of a North-West passage" that he describes in the *Journal*.<sup>5</sup> We must forgive Marie for leaving her son behind, and we remain totally ignorant of the fact that she wrote some quite interesting letters. Charlevoix's praise of Marie and her devotion to others throughout the French Atlantic world reflects a determination to support colonization projects that seemed worthwhile if only to a small but powerful segment of French society.<sup>6</sup>

In the Caribbean, in contrast to North America, France wielded considerably more power due to the flourishing sugar trade. The production system was supported not by colonists, however, but by slave labor from Africa. Charlevoix was quite disturbed by

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<sup>5</sup> Catherine M. Northeast, *The Parisian Jesuits and the Enlightenment 1700-1762*, (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1991), *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 288, 13.

<sup>6</sup> M.J. Seymour, *The Transformation of the North-Atlantic World, 1492-1763: An Introduction* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 212-214. See also Robert Muchembled, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France, 1400-1750*, Lydia Cochrane, trans., (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

the existence of the pirates and their blatant preference to live outside the bounds of the rules that governed the Atlantic World, French or otherwise. Their refusal to conform to prescribed norms caused not only fear, but resulted in economic loss as well. These men represent one of many new worlds that emerged as the Atlantic World became less French and more globally connected.

These connections and some of their effects are evident in the story of Henri, the cacique from Saint Domingue. Although he and his band of Christian Indians, noble or otherwise, escaped enslavement by the Spanish, they never attained a peaceful freedom. Their lives on what we could refer to as a reservation undoubtedly contributed to the dwindling Indian population numbers on the island. Even their religious conversion was unable to secure for the Indians a place within the Spanish Atlantic World, a message that Charlevoix was quite willing to convey.

The *History of New France* further demonstrates Charlevoix's conviction that the French should take

advantage of all the opportunities available to them throughout the Atlantic World. In North America the Christianization of the indigenous peoples would be accomplished in tandem with the settling of the land by farming families who would be able to supply their own needs and sell their surplus. Providing a truthful account of the New World and its peoples was to Charlevoix a reasonable way to attract his fellow citizens to fulfill their duty to God and country. Yet we already know that few in France saw immigration to the far reaches of their world as an opportunity, far less a duty.

Because of the attractions of the fur trade as well as other forms of trade with the Indians and other Europeans, agricultural production rarely exceeded the subsistence level, and the procurement of basic necessities depended upon the infrequent arrivals of ships from France. Even then, there was no guarantee that the cargo would consist of needed

items.<sup>7</sup> The French government supported the colonization effort, but was not always forthcoming with funding to reinforce that effort. Charlevoix's mission to scout out the Northwest Passage is one such example of economic measures taken by the Ministry.<sup>8</sup>

Charlevoix's assessment of the reasons behind the failure of the French colonies to flourish reflects another strong current in the Atlantic World, but one that had not yet swept away the older edifices of French society. Members of the upper echelons of French society rarely relocated to the colonies, and the lower levels, especially the bourgeoisie, could not afford to do so. Caught between their increasing economic obligations to their superiors and to the strength of reason over that of faith, they saw neither duty nor opportunity in immigration. They had

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<sup>7</sup> One ship arrived with a cargo of lace collars that someone hoped to sell at a great profit in Louisiana.

<sup>8</sup>Seymour, 212-214; Northeast, 14.

yet to realize the power that they held in either realm.<sup>9</sup>

In Paraguay the Jesuits tried and failed to create another world within the larger Atlantic world. In this case they were able to fulfill their obligation to spread Christianity to the Indians, but only by keeping them separate from most of Christianity's non-Indian adherents. This separation cost the mostly Spanish colonists a valuable source of labor and caused Europeans throughout the Atlantic World to assert that the Jesuits had grown too powerful at the expense of other religious orders. Utopian comparisons do not completely explain the Jesuit efforts in Paraguay any more than they explain *Candide's* return to his place of birth. Both Voltaire's and Charlevoix's stories present well-intentioned protagonists whose concern for the greater

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<sup>9</sup> Bernard Groethuysen, *The Bourgeois: Catholicism vs. Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 48- 49; See also Robert Muchembled, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France 1400-1750* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).

good ends neither in total abject failure nor complete spectacular success.<sup>10</sup>

### The Tides of Change

This study has concentrated on Charlevoix's disappointment and developing pessimism in the course of his writings, yet it is necessary to reintegrate him into the larger world that is also under consideration here. Rather than limit the discussion by trying to define one man who inhabited *the Jesuits*, *the Enlightenment*, or *the French Atlantic World of the eighteenth century*, I have searched for components of a whole that is not static. For example, in trying to see how Charlevoix the Jesuit perceived various issues, I have not discovered one Jesuit way of thinking or acting. Rather, Charlevoix's histories

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<sup>10</sup> Dauril Auldin, "The Gang of Four and the Campaign against the Jesuits in Eighteenth-Century Brazil," in John W. O'Malley, S.J. et al eds., *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 707-724; O'Malley, "Introduction: The Pastoral, Social, Ecclesiastical, Civic, and Cultural Mission of the Society of Jesus," xxiii-xxxvi.

give us what one writer has referred to as "a cultural ecosystem" characterized by a "moral optimism" that set the order at odds with those more inclined toward the condemnation of humanity's spiritual souls or secular natures.<sup>11</sup> It is not a clear-cut dichotomy. Charlevoix believed that individuals and the French Atlantic World were not yet past redemption and he represents one of a variety of Jesuits who thought this way.<sup>12</sup>

As pointed out here in this study, Charlevoix was all too aware that the tastes, preferences, and intellectual patterns of his lifetime were changing, and he made quite an effort to keep up. This lifetime, to which I refer to as the short eighteenth century, is one of simultaneous expansion and withdrawal. To

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<sup>11</sup> Michael J. Buckley, S.J. "Reflections: What Have We Learned? Where Do We Go From Here?" in O'Malley, et al., I: 714; Northeast, 158; Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) 76.

<sup>12</sup> See Charles E. Ronan, S.J., *Francisco Clavigero, S.J. (1731-1787), Figure of the Mexican Enlightenment: His Life and Works*, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1977).

describe Charlevoix as staunchly one way or another is perhaps a starting point, but it is a description that is quickly belied by Charlevoix's work. Willing to accept that so-called savages were capable of goodness prior to a proper introduction to Christian theology, or at least the rites of baptism and marriage, this broad mindedness did not extend to his European contemporaries who voluntarily abandoned what Charlevoix put forth as the truly enlightened path of Catholic religion. Of Protestants he says relatively little given their prominence on the far side of the Atlantic World, and here is one of many 'smaller' topics that demands closer analysis in Charlevoix's writings.

Finally, Charlevoix's growing disappointment and defensiveness must be positioned within the swirling currents and rip tides of his world. Reluctant though I am to admit it, he seems to have grown a bit set in his ways. Charlevoix was seventy-four years old in 1756 when the *History of Paraguay* was published. His determination to make the world better by bringing its



inhabitants to the light of Christianity as sanctioned by the French monarchy, clashed with the ideals of many in France who saw conditions at home as a more fitting place to begin improving the world. Charlevoix remained attached to more "strictly evangelical goals" that, it has been suggested, some members of his order had already combined with a more general concern for the "common good" to be addressed through civic and social activities such as schools and hospitals which cared for those in a more present-oriented sphere.<sup>13</sup>

Charlevoix's vision of the French Atlantic World began to fade noticeably in the middle of his life. Unfortunately, from his perspective, the rules began to change, often being rewritten from the western reaches of the Atlantic, at roughly the same time that the Jesuits began to lose favor throughout that same world. These connections are not sufficiently unraveled here, but their existence demands further investigation as one among many conceptualizations of the short eighteenth century. Historians must avoid

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<sup>13</sup> O'Malley, II: xxix, xxviii-xxxiv.

approaching those years prior to the French and Indian War, or Seven Years' War, as a period that would inevitably end in the loss of a colonial empire for France or the Jesuits. Charlevoix certainly did not describe them so.

If the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) helped to make the sovereign state the entity upon which historians would henceforth focus their attentions, the field of Atlantic History has helped to draw attention to members of those entities whose actions and choices transcended the requirements of maps and treaties. If "Colonial America was necessarily a projection of Europe across the Atlantic," as Louis B. Wright asserted in 1947, then what was being projected? The images do not match up even as reflections, and it is too tempting to indulge in the effects of water on light and sound. Charlevoix remained loyal to France, while finding no conflict of interest in allowing the Indians to live separately from the Europeans if the Jesuits maintained the necessary connections between

worlds.<sup>14</sup> Making sense of these and other connections would fall to later historians.

#### The New Wave: Reconsidering the French Atlantic World

The idea of a French Atlantic world is one that must remain with us even in light of the failure of the French colonial effort throughout most of a region that developed its own "distinctive regional identity" characterized by brutal invasion and conquest as well as "the shared idealism of the Enlightenment."<sup>15</sup> Neither one nor the other, the sum exceeds the parts. This study has shown that Charlevoix's work was not only Atlantic in its perspective, but even global at times. He defined his world of histories by that which was unknown to Europeans before the Age of Exploration, a boundary that, paradoxically, left him

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<sup>14</sup> Peggy K. Liss, *Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution, 1713-1826* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 1-25; Louis B. Wright, *The Atlantic Frontier, Colonial American Civilization, 1607-1763* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Bailyn, 111.

with few guidelines regarding what to include and what to leave out. A final goal of the present work is to connect Charlevoix's histories to the already existing scholarship of the Atlantic World.

Since the present study has searched for themes that connect Charlevoix to the world in which he lived and wrote, it seems logical to consider the Atlantic World literature from a thematic approach as well. To that end, several themes do predominate the recent historiography. The first and most prominent is that of the struggle for empire. Approaches that are thus oriented begin their narratives in Europe prior to "discovery" and most often terminate at some point between the end of the Seven Years' War and American Independence. Frequently an air of destiny accompanies the British triumph in the North Atlantic. In comparison, the southern reaches of the Atlantic World receive scant attention just as Africa is frequently overlooked.

Patricia Seed has considered the ways in which early Europeans claimed and took possession of

portions of the New World from the years 1492-1640. Consumed by curiosity about the peoples they encountered, Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, rarely investigated each other with comparable inquisitiveness. Rather, the tendency was to simply dismiss or condemn differences among Europeans. Furthermore, as Seed points out for her designated chronological period, and Charlevoix illustrates in his, national differences often outweighed those stemming from religion.<sup>16</sup>

In a much-needed reorientation of perspective, Bertrand Van Ruymbeke and Randy J. Sparks have edited a collection of essays that address the French Huguenots both in France and in the colonies to which they emigrated. Van Ruymbeke shares Voltaire's observation that the Huguenots "were dispersed farther away than the Jews."<sup>17</sup> Of interest to this study is Van

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<sup>16</sup>Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

<sup>17</sup> Voltaire, *le Siècle de Louis XIV*, quoted in Bertrand Van Ruymbeke and Randy J. Sparks, eds., *Memory and Identity: The Huguenots in France and the*

Ruymbeke's argument that French Protestants became less Calvinistic and less "French" and more like their host cultures in order to survive the diaspora. These adaptations allowed the Huguenots to be assimilated into the English-dominated Atlantic World that would emerge.<sup>18</sup> Neither Charlevoix, nor the majority of French Catholics demonstrated this particular type of flexibility.

Rather than isolate those elements that held the Atlantic World, or community, John H. Elliott investigates the factors that caused or allowed some colonies to develop separate identities from their European parents. In a more recent work, he limits his scope to "Britain and Spain in America" as he emphasizes the relationships between colony and parent country as well as those that existed between colonial and indigenous peoples.<sup>19</sup> Charlevoix clearly believed

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*Atlantic Diaspora*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Van Rumbeke, 17. See also M.J. Seymour, *The Transformation of the North Atlantic World, 1492-1763: An Introduction*, Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004.

that Jesuit Catholicism provided the best basis for a relationship of any type, but was aware that relationships existed in multiple contexts.

Implicit in Atlantic World studies is the inherent tension between the goals of the monarchies, the colonists, indigenous peoples, and the religious and secular institutions involved. Many of the recent studies of Atlantic history use imperial economic goals as means to better understand European, colonial, native, and Atlantic relationships and identities. Missionaries and colonists had to eat and be housed and clothed. In Charlevoix's assessment, the New World could have been self-sustaining, especially

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<sup>19</sup> John H. Elliott, "Introduction: Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World," in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, eds., *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, 5; *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. For discussions of the ways in which Europeans identified "others" with whom they came in contact see Gordon M. Sayre, *The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero: Native Resistance and the Literatures of America from Montezuma to Tecumseh*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005; *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

the French colonies. In the attempt to save itself great expense, however, the French monarchy was too willing to relinquish control of much of the colonial economic life to proprietary ventures whose goals could not help but come into conflict with all but their own.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, one of the least explored areas of Atlantic History is the world of ideas. This intellectual biography of Charlevoix highlights several of the Enlightenment debates and issues of which he was a part. I have used the "short" eighteenth century to somewhat arbitrarily limit my study that at present only hints at the possibilities for investigating the relevance of Charlevoix's histories within Atlantic studies. Perhaps the same truncation should be applied to the Enlightenment in order to better assess how that concept existed and

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<sup>20</sup> Peter A. Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); L.H. Roper and B. Van Ruymbeke, eds., *Constructing Early Modern Empires: Proprietary Ventures in the Atlantic World, 1500-1750*, (Leiden: Brill, 2007).



evolved within not just the French Atlantic World, but  
in the larger world of ideas.

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