

The treatment of the role of the parish clergy and religion in old regime society is likewise subversive of general assumptions. He rejects, not surprisingly, Léon Dubreuil's radical-socialist certitude that peasant counter-revolution was "un des épisodes de la lutte millénaire engagée entre l'esprit d'autorité et l'esprit de liberté"; as also its mirror-image drawn by clerical and royalist historians in which the trusting peasants rose up in defence of the *bons curés*. But, relying on the recent work of the late Fr. Berthelot du Chesnay, he also refutes the notion that the *curés* were predominantly of peasant origin and therefore defended by the peasants because they were all from the same milieu. What, then, did the *curé* represent for countryfolk? He was the most educated man in the parish (though no apostle of the *lumières*); a mature man with a long previous experience of the rural world as an assistant *curé*; the organizer of parish relief works; a man with a decent tithe income but who attracted no envy for it because he performed his duty well and with dignity. Contrary to what the more ignorant students of "la religion populaire" would have us believe, he did not passively or cynically dispense élite doctrine to ignorant boors who attended his liturgy in order to transmute his words and prayers internally into a crypto-pagan folk religion. True, there was in Brittany, as elsewhere, a large grey area of practices — holy wells, curing saints and the like — with which the Church had long ago had to come to terms. But on the essentials, peasants and priests shared reasonably clear concepts of dogma and salvation: "Pour quelle fin avez-vous été mis au monde?" asked the penny catechism which country children learned by heart. "Pour connaître, aimer et servir Dieu sur la terre et parvenir au bonheur au ciel". "Clear, simple, orthodox, but hardly profound" is the author's verdict on this; we may wonder about the final adjective when we consider the layers of experience subsumed in that laconic answer. In any event, Dr. Sutherland shows by analysis of peasant petitions the immense importance of the Church as an instrument of social integration for countryfolk in the West, and, even more, the need they felt for Christian sacraments, doctrine and liturgy as the source of their personal and collective identity. Though Chartres-de-Bretagne was a republican area, its parishioners, asking for the return of their *curé* in the year III, explained that "nous en avons besoin pour nous consoler dans nos peines et nos malheurs. Nous ne voulons point vivre comme des bêtes, comme nous avons déjà fait pendant trois ans" (p. 218). As the author observes, "the liberal-humanist Revolution had ended up by attacking the sense of humanity of the people it had long professed to help." This judgment, like the whole book, has implications which take us far beyond the problems of the Ille-et-Vilaine and, indeed, the Revolution itself.

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A.J.B. JOHNSTON — *Religion in Life at Louisbourg, 1713-1758*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984. Pp. 223. Illustrated.

Throughout this study of "the spiritual dimension" of Louisbourg during the brief existence of the eighteenth-century city and colony, A.J.B. Johnston blends two complementary lines of analysis. The first is a detailed institutional history of religious organization in Isle Royale and of each of the religious orders that served there. Yet as he presents that history, Johnston also searches for the society's prevailing attitudes: to religion, to morality, to the stages of life, and to death. Emphasis gradually shifts from institutions to attitudes, and this dual approach succeeds. The institutional analysis gives structure to what might otherwise be a shapeless subject, while the depiction of attitude and behaviour reveals life in the institutional structures, and justifies the title of the book.

Johnston's first chapter shows that Louisbourg was almost unanimously Catholic and that Church and State were officially linked. Religious and public festivities tended to merge, and royal officials influenced many ecclesiastical decisions. There is little in all this to surprise anyone familiar with eighteenth-century France or New France. Yet at the same time the church in Isle Royale col-

lected no tithes, held no significant amounts of land, had no place on the *Conseil Supérieur*, and barely felt the influence of the remote Bishop of Quebec. To examine these particularities, Johnston first undertakes a detailed study of each of the religious orders of Louisbourg.

The Louisbourg priests were members of the Recollet order, a branch of the Franciscans. Unlike the Jesuits, whose cunning and dedication have been portrayed with such gusto by so many, the Recollets were known mostly for simple piety and the common touch. Johnston quotes several scathing official comments about the Recollets' ignorance and laxity, but he demonstrates that these were often provoked by the royal officials' high-culture disdain for the Recollets' plain style. The ordinary people evidently appreciated the priests for their accessibility and their support of popular concerns.

That the Recollets were missionaries was central to their situation in Louisbourg. As a missionary order, they kept separate from the diocesan authority of the Bishop of Québec, but they therefore lacked the usual powers and prerogatives of parish priests. Unable to levy tithes, they could only ask for charity, and they never raised enough money even to build a parish church for Louisbourg. Johnston carefully charts the complications that kept Louisbourg a mission field even after it had grown into a large and prosperous community.

Studies of the medical Brothers of Charity and of the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre-Dame complete an institutional study which must supersede all previous studies in this area. The brothers ran the Louisbourg hospital for the Crown on a pragmatic basis, with the state paying all the bills and the garrison providing up to 90 percent of the patients (pp. 73-74). By contrast, the sisters depended mostly on fees and charity to support their school. The Crown ignored the education of the colonists, but the sisters were welcomed for providing what people expected: female education that stressed behaviour and moral development. The detail here about schooling and medical practice whets one's appetite for general studies of education and of medicine in New France.

"Faith, Morals, and Popular Customs", the last chapter of the book, seems virtually a separate section but actually builds on the data of the earlier chapters. The institutional analysis presents Louisbourg as a notable anomaly: a part of New France where the Church lacked its usual temporal power and therefore depended largely on its moral authority and the faith of the populace. This section undertakes an impressively thorough examination of attitudes and beliefs. Nearly all the sources are official records, but the methods of analysis are eclectic. Johnston constructs demographic tables, quotes contemporary observations about folk customs, and discovers the *mentalité* behind scores of incidents and details. He even includes — and footnotes — the only known Louisbourg joke (p. 118 — possible classroom use?). Each topic adds to the complexities unearthed in the early sections. It bothered no one that a tenth of all brides were pregnant at marriage (p. 134), yet allegations of immorality were the common insult aimed at women (p. 136). The townspeople declined to build their church in the blithe confidence that the King would provide one, yet they gave strong support to priests and nuns opposed by the royal officials. The conclusion to all these intriguing explorations in social history ought to be pleasing to the much-maligned Recollets: though the town had "a decidedly secular orientation, ...one was surrounded by an all-encompassing popular religious faith" (p. 110).

In *Religion in Life at Louisbourg*, Johnston has performed a useful service for ecclesiastical historians and biographers, even providing names and dates for every priest, brother, and nun who served in Louisbourg. Other historians will be more attracted by his subtle evaluation of the social and religious attitudes that prevailed among the people of one part of eighteenth-century Canada. Johnston concludes this book with a call for studies of religious life elsewhere in New France. Certainly *Religion in Life at Louisbourg* provides a model worth emulating.

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