"Come into the habits of civilized life" : nineteenth century Catholic and Protestant missionaries in Upper Michigan

James E. Seelye

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A Dissertation

entitled

“Come into the Habits of Civilized Life:” Nineteenth Century Catholic and Protestant Missionaries in Upper Michigan

By

James E. Seelye, Jr.

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The Doctor of Philosophy in History

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May 2010
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An Abstract of

“Come into the Habits of Civilized Life:” Nineteenth Century Catholic and Protestant Missionaries in Upper Michigan

By

James Edward Seelye, Jr.

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in History

The University of Toledo
May 2010

This dissertation is, in part, a study of the missionary mind-set. I study three missionaries of different denominations, Frederic Baraga, Abel Bingham, and John Pitezel, who worked with the Ojibwa of Upper Michigan during the Nineteenth Century. I am interested in what they said their goals as missionaries were – just why did they conduct missionary work? What drove these men to spend time as missionaries? Furthermore, how much did they matter? What impact and what ongoing influence did they ultimately have upon the Ojibwa of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula?

It is sometimes believed that missionaries wished to save Native Americans from their own darkness by transforming them into whites culturally and spiritually. Others felt that they needed to be saved from white influences. Moreover, some missionaries felt that Native Americans had to be saved not only from paganism, but from other Christian denominations. This was particularly true in encounters between Catholics and Protestants, and this fact will become clear as you read on. While Protestants were sometimes willing to work with each other – Bingham and Pitezel preached together on occasion – Protestants and Catholics generally loathed and distrusted one another.
I will also analyze various ways missionaries differed in their theology. The final piece of the puzzle concerns missionary hagiography. Most writings about missionaries glorify missionaries while they vilify Native Americans. The reality of the situation was far more complex than this simple dichotomy allows. Only by carefully examining the sources and creating a balanced narrative can we hope to fully understand the relationships between Native Americans and missionaries.
This dissertation is dedicated to all of those who thought that the idea of Jim Seelye going to graduate school and ever earning a Ph.D. was nothing but a big joke and a waste of time. Well, here we are!
Acknowledgments

It is impossible to fully express my appreciation for all those who helped make this work possible in the one page the graduate school allows us for acknowledgments. Therefore, I will keep it simple. To the wonderful staffs at the museums and libraries listed in the preface, thank you. This dissertation would have never happened without you. I must specially acknowledge John Fierst and Susan Powers at the Clarke Historical Library. Thank you for accommodating me at my second home.

Drs. Danziger, Ingham, and Lora: thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to serve on my dissertation committee. My work will be unbelievably better because of it. Dr. Cave, my mentor, advisor, colleague, and friend, how can I ever thank you for all that you have done for me these past six years?

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My family has been unwavering in their support of me during my college years, and I would have thrown the towel in long ago without it. Dad – what can I say? Who knows where I would be without you.

Finally, I must tell my wife, Emily, how much she has done for me. Thank you for putting up with the research trips, late nights, and extreme moodiness. I love you more than you know, and this work is as much yours as it is mine.
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Preface

As you drive west on US-41 out of Marquette, Lake Superior disappears to the right, and the twin domes of St. Peter’s Cathedral, where Bishop Frederic Baraga is entombed, fades from view. A few miles down the road the area maintains its unparalleled beauty and becomes more rustic. The highway has been blasted out of hills. Approximately an hour west of Marquette are the towns of L’Anse and Baraga. As you drive out of L’Anse towards Baraga, a large sign over the road catches your attention: “Bishop Baraga Shrine,” points to the left. Upon parking near the gift shop, you first see a wigwam where you can pray and light a candle. What really catches your attention, however, is the sixty-foot-high copper statue down the hill. It is of Frederic Baraga and is supported by five teepees. This is odd, considering that the Ojibwa of Upper Michigan never lived in teepees. In addition, he holds a large cross in one hand, and a pair of giant snowshoes in the other. Baraga looms larger than life for many people in the Upper Peninsula today, and does so literally at this shrine.

I first discovered Frederic Baraga not long after I moved to Marquette in 2000 to attend Northern Michigan University. My first primary-source-driven research paper in an upper-level history course was about him as well. My paper made it into the hands of

1 A discussion of how the Ojibwa lived, and what they used for dwellings, is located in Chapter One.
James Garland, the immediate-past Bishop of the Diocese of Marquette. He took the time at the 2003 Easter vigil to pull me aside where he thanked and congratulated me on the paper, and let me know he would use it for sermon preparation. Looking back at that hagiographic piece of work now makes me cringe, and my current, less uncritical position on Frederic Baraga’s history has already inspired the ire of the Bishop Baraga Association and Archives.

This dissertation is, in part, a study of the missionary mind-set. In addition to Frederic Baraga, I examine two additional missionary figures, the Methodist John H. Pitezel and the Baptist Abel Bingham. I have combed through their voluminous personal writings, including journals and letters, to see how they actually felt about the Native Americans they worked with. Furthermore, I am interested in what they said their goals as missionaries were – just why did they conduct missionary work? The pay was horrible, the conditions harsh, and their potential converts sometimes not only did not want to see them, but were openly hostile on occasion. What drove these men to spend time as missionaries? Was it simply to assist Native Americans in their efforts to come into the “habits of civilized life,” as Abel Bingham and the title of this work suggest. Furthermore, how much did they matter? What impact and what ongoing influence did they ultimately have upon the Ojibwa of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula? In assessing the careers of missionaries to the Native Americans of Upper Michigan, there are several factors weighed. First, what was a particular missionary’s capacity to establish friendly or sympathetic relationships with Native Americans based on mutual trust? Second, to what degree were they able to fully understand Native American cultural values? What effects did their lack of understanding have on their work? Finally, how successful were
missionaries in their efforts to exert a positive influence on Native Americans, especially in their efforts to adapt to a newly dominant culture? Some of the responses to these questions are somewhat speculative, but based on the primary sources many objective answers are readily available. Of course, this entails some qualitative consideration, particularly when considering the numbers of converts.\(^2\) I will indicate that the number of converts must be taken lightly because of issues inherent in assessing the validity of conversions. The answers to these questions are found in the documents.

An additional goal of this work is to provide a revisionist history of nineteenth century missionaries in Upper Peninsula, especially of Frederic Baraga. The ongoing debate over his canonization has led to a series of hagiographic works about him. They all speak of his great love of Native Americans, and their love of him. Baraga is not alone in the debates over missionary canonization. Eighteenth-century Franciscan missionary Junipero Serra is the subject of a similar debate. In order to adequately and fairly evaluate the work of these men, objective studies, not hagiography, must be conducted.\(^3\)

The revisionist and comparative history presented here illustrates the importance of such studies to history. The comparisons need to include differences between Catholic and Protestant missionaries, as well as regional differences. Since so many of the existing studies lack the voices of Native Americans, the widest survey possible of missionary attitudes and endeavors must be conducted to provide the most complete

\(^2\) This question has been dealt with extensively by James Axtell. See his “Were Indian Conversions Bona Fide?” in *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 100-121.

\(^3\) See Appendix A for an overview of Frederic Baraga hagiography.
discussion possible. In addition to hagiographic studies of missionaries, there are numerous denominational histories as well. Many of them are written by active members of those particular faiths, and lack the analysis, synthesis, and interpretation that history offers. Even so, case studies are important and can contribute to history as long as they stay away from too much abstraction and emphasize the importance of local factors.

An early work about Native Americans and missions was Henry Warner Bowden’s *American Indians and Christian Missions*. The study is uneven. He states correctly that “missionaries were not heroes who sacrificed themselves to save red savages; natives were not innocent victims who watched evangelists ruin aboriginal value systems.” Bowden recognized that it is quite easy and misleading to demonize or canonize black robes, just as it is easy to do the same to Native Americans. He also cautions against overgeneralizations, and places events in the specific context of their space and time. A flaw in Bowden’s analysis is its inattention to Native American religions. Another book guilty of the same slight is Robert F. Berghofer’s *Salvation and*

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the Savage. Additionally, his work is limited in scope as it does not attempt to compare and contrast Protestant and Catholic missionaries. His is a study of Protestant missions only.7

Another work worth considering is R. Pierce Beaver’s Church, State, and the American Indian. Although he does not explain Native American responses to missionaries, he does provide an analysis of the ways in which the government and missionaries benefitted from one another. The government used missionaries to provide information about Native Americans, while missionaries relied on the government for funding. Beaver is inclined to over generalize way too much in his theory that European colonization had conversion of Native Americans as their primary goal. One needs only to look at the evidence of the interactions between Native Americans and Puritans to see that the gentle, moderate relationship Beaver maintained was not always present.8

Missionaries of different faiths bickered amongst themselves constantly. Although different Protestant faiths had issues with one another, it was nothing compared to the ill feelings Catholics had for Protestants, and vice versa. As Christopher Vecsey states, “It is apparent that the missionaries’ motives included competition with other

8 R. Pierce Beaver, Church, State, and the American Indian: Two and a Half Centuries of Partnership in Missions Between Protestant Churches and Government (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966). For relations between Puritans and Native Americans, see, for example, Alfred A. Cave, The Pequot War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).
Christian denominations as well as the conversion of the Ojibwas.”\(^9\) However, their aims and motives were not as disparate as many believe, according to Vecsey. Missionaries agreed that their work sprung from the belief that it arose directly from Jesus Christ. Christ revealed that God and humans are “alienated from each other, that God is almighty and humans are worthless without Him, yet (nay, consequently) humans by their sinful nature will themselves to alienation.”\(^{10}\) They also felt that God and man could be brought back together, but without Christ there was no hope for salvation. Only those who know Jesus Christ can be saved, so Christ commissioned his followers to spread his message. Missionaries believed that the Ojibwa were indeed human, and could either accept or reject God. A difference presented itself here, however, because “the Catholics emphasized man’s cooperation with God in his own salvation, man’s congruity with saving grace; Protestants tended to emphasize God’s overpowering role in salvation.”\(^{11}\)

Vecsey illuminates the differences that separated Catholic and Protestant missionaries. For example, Catholics often baptized converts sooner than Protestants. For them it was a step in the process rather than the ultimate end. Moreover, Catholics focused on Native American culture in the hopes of incorporating it into Catholicism,


\(^{10}\) Ibid, 37-38.

\(^{11}\) Ibid, 38. The author also states that although missionaries had many things to say about Native Americans – which is a main focus of this study – they all found things to compliment and approve of in Native American society. Several examples of this are forthcoming. All missionaries, regardless of faith, shared these views. Furthermore, as Vecsey points out, missionaries, although racist and ethnocentric, were not as blatantly racist and ethnocentric as their white neighbors.
while Protestants were almost exclusively focused on individual conversions. My own conclusions on this matter are somewhat different, and I feel Vecsey is a bit too simplistic in this statement. I also disagree with his conclusion that “Catholic missionaries were often more tolerant of Ojibwa culture than were the Protestants.” He states that Catholics allowed Native Americans to continue burial practices and mourning customs, for example, while Protestants refused to allow such things to continue. However, there is ample evidence to indicate that his is an overgeneralization. ¹²

In considering the responses Native Americans had to Christianity, Vecsey is again a foremost authority. He produced a three-volume study of American Indian Catholics where he traced the development of Native American Catholicism based on their interactions with various missionaries over a period of centuries. For the purposes of this study, the second volume is the most useful.

As Vecsey aptly illustrates, “The encounter between the Catholicism of Europe and the aboriginal religions of North America has produced distinctive forms of Native American Catholic tradition over five centuries.¹³ When the first Spanish missionaries arrived in New Spain in the late fifteenth century, a mixing of beliefs known as syncretism began. With this, Native Americans and Spanish missionaries created a blend

¹² Vecsey, 38-39. I argue that by the nineteenth century there was quite little that missionaries were willing to incorporate from Native American life into Christianity. Later in his work Vecsey concedes as much when he compares early Jesuit missionaries with nineteenth century missionaries. Also, contradictory of what Vecsey stated, Frederic Baraga burned Native American medicine bags whenever he could, and those were an integral part of their faith.

of faith that took parts from both groups in order to create a new faith based upon elements of the original two. Of course, the actual experience and process of syncretism was much more involved than this. Nevertheless, it allowed both groups to learn from each other’s respective faiths.

The title of Vecsey’s book under consideration is a key to understanding the processes of both syncretism and the development of Native American Catholicism. “The Paths of Kateri’s Kin” refers to Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk convert to Catholicism from the late Seventeenth Century. Vecsey states, “For thousands of American Indian Catholics from a panoply of tribes across North America, she serves today as a symbolic model of their two-part cultural identity. Indeed, many feel with her a profound kinship as they travel the paths of Native American Catholicism.”

It is important to bear in mind that missionary views of Native Americans changed over time. A superb discussion of this is C.L. Higham’s Noble, Wretched, & Redeemable: Protestant Missionaries to the Indians and the United States, 1820-1900. But for all its merits this book is another in a line of unbalanced works about missions and missionaries limited to the discussion of Protestants. Many authors do not blend Catholic and Protestant missions and missionaries, although one notable recent dissertation has done so. While studies of individual missions, missionaries, and regions abound, C.L. Higham presents a transnational, comparative story. She combines resources from American and Canadian archives in order to discuss the ways in which missionary views about Native Americans changed over the course of the nineteenth century.

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century. Furthermore, she illustrates the changing relationship between missionaries and the American and Canadian governments, which is a key to fully understanding the dynamics of overall missionary influence upon Native Americans. She focuses on certain missionaries such as William Carpenter Bompas, Thomas Crosby, William Duncan, Myron Eells, John Maclean, Stephen Return Riggs, Edward Francis Wilson, and Egerton Ryerson Young, men who represented missionary organizations with the means to provide at least some steady funding for their missionaries. In addition, the missionary societies, such as American Baptist Missionary Union, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and the Church Missionary Society, all produced periodicals for public consumption, and in doing so contributed to the development of white attitudes toward Native Americans.

Overall, Higham’s is brilliant history. Although she focuses primarily on Western Canada and the Western United States, there are many important things to consider for our purposes here. One of her primary concerns is to investigate how “missionary societies, the Canadian and U.S. governments, and various secular scholarly institutions placed financial and political pressures on individual Protestant missionaries that shaped how these missionaries portrayed the Indians to these institutions, as well as to the literate, white Christian public.”15 She also discusses the key role financial sponsorship played in missionary activities. During the first part of the nineteenth century, missionary societies provided a great deal of funding, but by the second half of the century many of those sources had dried up. This provides an interesting comparison for this study, because both Baraga and Pitezel received little funding from missionary

15 Higham, 1.
societies. Baraga received sponsorship from the Leopoldine Society, but quite little. Pitezel received limited funding from the Methodist Church, and the Baptist Abel Bingham got a little from the American Baptist Missionary Union. For the most part, the three main figures of this study were self-sustaining.

Another important aspect of Higham’s work is her study of change over time. Missionaries entered the field in the early nineteenth century with much different expectations and viewpoints of Native Americans than they did later in the century. These viewpoints changed due to interactions with Native Americans and the realities of missionary life, and due to the literature published about Native Americans. Higham breaks down three main stages that present themselves in the missionary accounts: Noble Savages, from 1820 to 1850; Wretched Indians, from 1851 to 1880; and finally Redeemable Savages, from 1881 to the end of the century. Besides actual experiences and published accounts, other events occurred that led to these appraisals of Native Americans. Missionary societies reduced their funding to missionaries for a variety of reasons. The amount of money provided was proportional to the number of souls saved. Furthermore, as the century progressed, missionary work among Native Americans was seen as less and less glorious, and more missionaries and missionary money went overseas. Furthermore, the United States and Canadian governments relied on missionaries for both information on Native Americans, and as potential mediators to possibly encourage Native Americans to follow governmental requests and demands. When this did not occur, another source of money dried up.

Higham reaches several important conclusions. First, she emphasizes that missionaries did matter. While conversion rates were not as high as both missionaries
and their sponsoring societies hoped for, an unforeseen benefit came from their work: information. While they must be used carefully, missionary reports, journals, and other records provide a rich resource of information on all aspects of Native American life and culture. Missionaries were respected as scholars. New lines of inquiry developed as the field of ethnology increased in importance and interest. Frederic Baraga, to cite one example, embraced the chance to answer the many questions posed by Henry Schoolcraft.\textsuperscript{16} Higham makes the vital point that “the answers missionaries gave [to various questionnaires] told as much about them as about the natives.” Regarding the images of Native Americans and the changes the image underwent during the nineteenth century, Higham stated,

The redeemable savage idea conceptualized Indians as remnants of some past glorious civilization that had been degraded by whites and was patiently waiting for help from the missionaries, the government, and the public. The image of the redeemable savage built on the images of the noble savage and the wretched Indian, both of which continued to exist. From the noble savage, this new image borrowed the belief that the Indians had admirable qualities worth preserving. From the wretched Indian, it took the idea that white intrusion had degraded native societies. And by suggesting that the natives needed help, the image of the redeemable savages created a place for missionaries and their work in future Indian policy.\textsuperscript{17}

Karl Hele’s dissertation provides a new approach at missionary activity. In \textit{By the rapids: The Anishinabeg-missionary encounter at Bawating (Sault Ste. Marie), c. 1821-1871}, he presents a complex composite of missionary activities using a borderlands perspective. Sault Sainte Marie is situated on the rapids of the St. Mary’s River that forms a boundary between the United States and Canada. Hele argues that this boundary

\textsuperscript{16} See Chapter Three.

\textsuperscript{17} Higham, 193.
was arbitrary and basically a non-issue for Native Americans who continued to cross back and forth as their needs necessitated. Missionaries often did the same.  

Furthermore, the Ojibwa in the area returned to the “middle ground” approach, as they played sides against each other for the best results. Two nations, the United States and Canada, were rapidly expanding, and the Native Americans attempted to use it to their advantage to achieve “intercultural relations in terms more to their liking.” He also rethinks the motivations that drove the Ojibwa to convert. He agrees with previous scholars who stated that materialist objectives helped them to convert, but that is not the whole story. Hele argues that those essential materialist objectives need to be considered in terms of “cultural understandings of reciprocity, alliance, and proper ‘civilized’ behavior.”

It is sometimes believed that missionaries wished to save Native Americans from their own darkness by transforming them into whites culturally and spiritually, while others felt that they needed to be saved from white influences. But, as I will show throughout this dissertation, Baraga, Bingham, and Pitezel did not fit neatly into this dichotomy. At times they appeared to sway one way or the other, but they most often seemed rather ambivalent. Moreover, some missionaries felt that Native Americans had to be saved not only from paganism, but from other Christian denominations. This was particularly true in encounters between Catholics and Protestants, and this fact will become clear as you read on. While Protestants were sometimes willing to work with

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each other – Bingham and Pitezel preached together on occasion – Protestants and Catholics generally loathed and distrusted one another.

I will analyze various ways missionaries differed in their theology; however, their differences were clearest regarding baptism. Frederic Baraga baptized far more Native Americans than Bingham or Pitezel. There is a reason for this, however. Baraga was not as concerned that Native American converts fully understood Christianity at baptism. By contrast, Bingham and Pitezel insisted on this understanding prior to baptism. This sacrament, they argued, was critical to the saving of souls, but before one soul could be saved, Native Americans had to comprehend the concepts of sin and forgiveness. Traditionally Ojibwa religion did not contain such teachings, and if someone does not realize that they are sinners and upsetting God with their behavior, how can they be saved?

A fundamental question must be considered: can Native American religions, including that like the Ojibwa practice, ever reconcile itself with Christianity? Christopher Vecsey argues that early on the Jesuits realized that their faith was incompatible with that of the Native Americans.20 It is true that Catholic missionaries often pointed out some of the similarities their faith shared with Native American religions. To cite one particularly crucial example, Catholics believe in a spiritual world, as do Native Americans. This point of comparison can be useful in bringing Native Americans to Catholicism, according to this view. However, it is flawed at its most basic level. Catholics believe in a spiritual world, but it is not of this world. It might influence

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20 Please see the bibliographic essay for a detailed discussion of Vecsey and his influence on my work.
our lives, but it is separate from us. The Ojibwa, on the other hand, feel that the spiritual world is all around them, constantly taking an active role in their lives on earth. They also believe strongly in remembering those spirits, which also explains why the Ojibwa, like so many Native Americans, were so attached to their land. With no one to remember and worship them, their Gods and spirits would soon disappear.

Native Americans often developed syncretic religions. Syncretism refers to a blending or mixing of faiths. For example, a Native American tribe might see some parts of Catholicism that they relate to, and they bring it into their religious practices. Native American religions did not practice exclusivity. They were not as dogmatic in their teachings that other beliefs were absolutely wrong. They generally had no issue at least considering other gods because their world was already full of them. Blending aspects of other faiths occurred frequently, especially as their contact with people of other faiths increased.21 As such, Native Americans were sometimes open to listening to the teachings of missionaries, even if they later discounted many of those teachings or ignored them totally. Missionaries could have been quite a source of entertainment for Native Americans at times as well. Perhaps that helps explain why they sometimes humored them even if they did not ultimately accept their most fundamental teachings.

Overall, I argue that the most lasting and important effect of nineteenth century missionary activity in Upper Michigan were not religious. The paucity of Native American Protestant and Catholic congregations today bears evidence to this. Euro-

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American style education and farming in the long run proved far more important to the Ojibwa than Christianity. While missionaries had to be quite resourceful, some of them had access to money from sponsoring organizations like the American Baptist Missionary Union and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. In addition, the United States created the Civilization Fund in 1819 to assist in the civilization of Native Americans. This provided funding sources for whites, including missionaries, to teach Native Americans trades like farming. Once missionaries left, the education Native Americans received and the farming they learned remained. Furthermore, the switch from independent Native American markets to capitalism dramatically altered their lives, and led to the Ojibwa acquiring individual plots of land and private property. Regardless of how one views missionaries, it is clear that they made a difference.

My methodology is simply stated: Carefully evaluate all of the primary sources relating to my topic as I can find. Be ever mindful of bias, while analyzing, synthesizing, and interpreting the data, and thereby producing a hopefully readable and balanced narrative. The time under investigation starts in 1828, when Abel Bingham first arrived in Sault Sainte Marie, and ends with Frederic Baraga’s death in 1868. The location scrutinized is Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, which I often refer to as “Upper Michigan.” The primary sources I consulted for this project included letters sent and received by the Office of Indian Affairs from the La Pointe, Sault Sainte Marie Agency, Mackinac Agency, and the Michigan Superintendency; manuscripts from the Bishop Baraga Association and Archives; manuscripts from the Van Pelt and Opie Library at Michigan Technological University; the Bureau of Catholic Indian Mission papers at Marquette University; manuscripts at the Marquette County History Museum and Longyear
Research Library; the Bishop Baraga collection, Bingham Family collection, and Rev. John H. Pitezel papers at Central Michigan University’s Clarke Historical Library; the Bingham Family papers at the University of Michigan’s Bentley Library; the Western Michigan Conference of the Methodist Church papers at Albion College; and the Michigan Conference papers at Adrian College. A close reading of these materials, along with the secondary sources cited throughout this work and in the bibliographic essay, allowed me to craft the narrative presented here.

This dissertation is organized in the following way: after the preface, I provide an overview of Ojibwa ethnography. Many scholars, some Native Americans themselves, have written about Ojibwa history, religion, life, and culture. Chapter One provides a sampling of their work that gives us a better understanding of what kind of world missionaries encountered, what kind of world missionaries tried to change, and why the Ojibwa reacted to missionaries as they did. Chapter Two discusses the life and labors of Catholic Frederic Baraga, while Chapter Three provides an in-depth analysis of his writings about Native Americans. Baraga merits a separate chapter on his writings about Native Americans because of the voluminous output he produced on the topic, whereas Pitezel and Bingham wrote about them much less frequently. Chapter Four discusses Methodist John Pitezel and the nine years he spent in Upper Michigan. Chapter Five presents the story of Peter Marksman, an Ojibwa convert to Methodism who became a minister and missionary himself. Chapter Six introduces us to Baptist Abel Bingham, who spent nearly fifty years as a missionary at Sault Sainte Marie. Chapter Seven attempts to tie the work together and present a synthesis of the information provided in
the previous six chapters. An appendix with selected pertinent documents and tables follows the final chapter.

A note on terminology: The Ojibwa are known by other names, including Ojibway, Chippewa, Chippeways, and Anishinabe. For clarity and consistency, I use the term Ojibwa except when another name is quoted in a source. Furthermore, I use the term Native American where others might substitute Indians, Aborigines, or First Peoples. While it might seem redundant, I felt using the same term would provide consistency, and when other terms, especially Indian, appears it is clear that it comes from another source. Most of the Native Americans I have talked to about this issue really do not care one way or another.
Chapter One

Ojibwa Ethnography

Kitchi-Manitou (Great Mystery), the Creator, made the world, plants, birds, fish, animals, and other Manitous to fulfill a vision.\(^1\) A flood covered the world, while a new world formed in the sky. Geezhigo-Quae (Sky Woman) then conceived with a Manitou in the sky. The creatures surviving in the flood asked the Giant Turtle to provide his back to Sky Woman, and she came down from the sky. In order to build the world, she needed soil. A muskrat dove into the flood and reappeared with soil. Sky Woman took it, spread it around the turtle’s back, and breathed life into it. As a result the soil was infused with “the attributes of womanhood and motherhood, that of giving life, nourishment, shelter,

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\(^1\) I took information from several sources to compile this section. They include works by Christopher Vecsey, Helen Hornbeck Tanner, and Edmund J. Danziger. For example, see Edmund J. Danziger, *The Chippewas of Lake Superior* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979). It is important to note that most sources differ somewhat on the specifics of the Ojibwa creation story; however, they are all similar.
instruction, and inspiration for the heart, mind, and spirit. She gave birth to twins whose descendants named themselves *Anishinaabæk*, commonly referred to today as Anishinabe. In addition to the Ojibwa, the Ottawa, Pottawatomi, Algonquin, and Mississauga took the name Anishinabe at some point in their history. Eventually Sky Woman’s world evolved into a continent, “The Land of the Great Turtle,” known today as North America.

According to Helen Hornbeck Tanner, the term “Ojibwa” refers to a language group of the larger family of Algonquin languages. The actual origin of the name may stem from the name these Native Americans gave to their moccasins, which to non-Native American ears sounded like “o-jib-i-weg,” meaning “those who make pictographs.” The Ojibwa did in fact decorate their moccasins with paintings. Another term commonly used in reference to this tribe, “Chippewa,” comes from a British corruption of Ojibwa. The Ojibwa generally refer to themselves as “Anishinabe,” which means either “spontaneously created or original man.”

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3 These Ojibwa traditions are at odds with many scholars who state that the Americans are direct descendants of Asian people who crossed the Bering Strait during the last ice age anywhere between ten thousand and twenty-five thousand years ago. There are numerous works on the “Bering Strait Land Bridge.” For an overview of some of them, see James E. Seelye, Jr., *Bering Strait Land Bridge* in “Popular Controversies in World History” (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, forthcoming 2010).

4 Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 60-61. For the sake of consistency, I will use the term “Ojibwa” throughout the dissertation. If other terms, such as “Chippewa” appear, it will only be in quoted sources. A third term,
The Ojibwa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi migrated from the Eastern Seaboard approximately five hundred years ago. They followed the St. Lawrence River and split up once they reached the Straits of Mackinac. The three tribes, known as the “Three Fires,” migrated as follows: the Ottawa to the region north of Lake Huron; the Potawatomi to the southeastern coast of Lake Michigan; and the Ojibwa to the eastern end of Lake Superior and the northern shore of Lake Huron. Population estimates of the Ojibwa prior to contact range from 4,500 to 50,000. Most scholars agree that 30,000 is not an unreasonable estimate.

Traditional Ojibwa life centered on the seasons and followed a yearly cycle. The cycle consisted of “fishing; hunting; collecting maple sap; gathering nuts, berries, and medicinal herbs; growing corn; and harvesting rice.” They were semi-nomadic. During certain times of year they lived a more sedentary lifestyle, while at other times they moved to follow game and to harvest and collect items at other locations. When they moved, they constructed a wigwam. Wigwams were constructed in less than one day with locally available materials. Men placed saplings in an oval on the ground that measured approximately fourteen feet by twenty feet. Then they arched the saplings while women tied the frame together with wooden fibers. The structure was covered by

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Anishinaabe can also appear in the sources. Many Ojibwa in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan today refer to themselves as Anishinaabe, sometimes spelled Anishinabe. According to Helen Hornbeck Tanner, the Ottawa also refer to themselves as Anishinabe. See Helen Hornbeck Tanner, The Ojibwa (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1992), 14.

5 Tanner, The Ojibwa, 14.

6 Tanner, The Ojibwa, 21.
birch bark, and an open fireplace provided warmth and light. The birch bark cover travelled with the Ojibwa when they moved on while the wooden frame stayed behind.

The Ojibwa made their own tools and clothing. They crafted tools from stone and bone. Bowls and ladles were made from wood, and clay was fashioned into larger containers. Storage containers came from bark and animal hides. Women made clothing using wooden awls or needles fashioned from thorns or bone. They stitched together clothing using animal sinew and tanned hides. Men and women dressed differently. Women wore deerskin dresses with leggings, and men wore breechcloths. Both genders wore moccasins. During the winter their clothes and moccasins were lined with rabbit fur to add to the warmth provided by heavy fur coats.

The Ojibwa’s primary source of food was fish. There were three main fishing seasons – winter, spring, and fall. After the catch the fish were dried and smoked for preservation. During the winter months they fished through the ice. In addition, game animals were vitally important. They served as building materials, clothing, and food. Hunting was an honorable part of Ojibwa life, and the best hunters received the praise of their people. Ojibwa elders often asked the best hunters to take on leadership roles in the community, and those men singled out as the best hunters and fishers received an additional benefit as well: parents preferred their daughters to marry men who could hunt and fish well.

Ojibwa hunting techniques were ingenious and practical. They shot various waterfowl with a bow and arrow, and used traps and snares to catch small animals. Some of the animals they caught included beaver and fox. To better facilitate the hunt of large game they herded animals such as deer into fenced-in areas. Once trapped, the animals
were easily killed with spears. The Ojibwa also hunted bears. They built traps known as deadfalls. These creative devices had a heavy object, such as a stone or log that fell onto any animal that happened upon it.

Maple sap was another staple of Ojibwa life. Somewhere between late March and early April hunting grounds were abandoned for maple groves. Women specially created birch bark buckets to collect sap. Once the buckets were filled they were dumped into moose-hide vats with a one-hundred gallon capacity. The vats were boiled until the sap transformed into thick syrup. They poured the syrup into a trough and worked it into a sugar. The sugar was used in the place of salt to season and dry fish, game, fruits, and vegetables.

As spring passed into summer the Ojibwa again were on the move. Families gathered together into the largest concentrations of Ojibwa Native Americans of a given year at traditional berry patches and vegetable gardens. These were generally located close to a body of water to facilitate fishing. Women and children harvested and dried berries and vegetables. Their diet included “strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, wild plums, cranberries, corn, quash, and pumpkins.” A portion of the harvest was always stored for winter consumption.

Rice was yet another staple for the Ojibwa. After the fruit and vegetable harvest concluded, men and women worked together to harvest rice. Men guided canoes through the shallow water the rice grew in, while the women reached over the sides of the birch bark vessel and grabbed the grass in their hands. The women then literally beat it with a stick to knock the rice into the canoe. Then they dried the rice on shore.

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7 Tanner, *The Ojibwa*, 23.
The canoe was essential to their economic well being. Families owned multiple canoes that weighed between sixty-five and one hundred twenty-five pounds. Canoes were constructed from a wooden frame. Gum from either Spruce or Pine trees sealed birch bark sheets that covered the vessel. The resulting vessel was strong and lightweight. Spring was the preferred time for canoe construction because the bark was easiest to peel off the trees then.

Overall the Ojibwa lived in a loosely structured society. Family ties were strong and clan affiliations were vital. Clan membership was traced through the father’s ancestry, and the resulting bonds were important. Marrying a member of the same clan was forbidden. Clans were represented by totems that included the Crane, Loon, Bear, Marten, and Caribou. They also cut across tribal lines.

Whites consistently misunderstood Native American governmental structures. There was no central government, no person at the top who made the ultimate decisions. Most Native American societies lacked that counterpart. An Ojibwa chief had little power. He generally had less than five hundred people in his band, and that number could be lower than one hundred. Each and every decision was discussed with a tribal council. The tribal council included all men and women. Councils were a fine needle to thread, however. If a chief called too many his people viewed him as indecisive. Such a view considerably weakened his power. It is to emphasize that no single person ruled over the entire Ojibwa tribe. Certain decisions were deemed so vital that a council of elders and chiefs met to determine the course to follow. This happened especially when warfare and other external relationships were at stake.
The Ojibwa divided and differentiated the duties of chiefs. There were civil and war chiefs. It was easier to become a war chief – any man who convinced other warriors to follow him into battle was a war chief. That being said, Ojibwa warriors were selective, and participation in war parties was voluntary. They only followed those men who scored high numbers of victories and enemy casualties. As in other Ojibwa ceremonies, the pipe was instrumental in accepting an invitation to join a war chief in battle. Warriors were under no obligation to follow a war chief until they smoked from the War Pipe. War chiefs commonly lost their positions if their war party was defeated, or if there were too many casualties. Furthermore, Ojibwa elders often cautioned young men against going into battle. Granted, elders recognized that warfare was an integral part of community and family defense, but it was supposed to be considered only when serious troubles arose. Elders did not regard warfare as the best way to show the community that a particular young man was strong and brave, knowing that war led to a persistent hunger for vengeance. If a community was in a state of real crisis, a war chief could be called upon to lead. Once the crisis passed, however, he was forced to relinquish his position.

The Ojibwa were drawn into warfare, despite their best intentions, with the Iroquois. Great Lakes Native Americans, including the Ojibwa, were dependant upon the fur trade with Europeans. By the early 1640s, the Five Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy – the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk, based in northern New York, found that their fur supply was running low. They decided to go to war with the Huron and other Native American nations in order to obtain the pelts they needed. The Ojibwa, although not as beleaguered as the Huron to the east, were forced to defend
their lands. In addition, they were engaged in wars with the Dakota and Mesquakie west and south of Lake Superior. The entire Great Lakes region was impacted by the Iroquois, or Beaver, Wars. At times upwards of two thousand warriors were involved in large-scale skirmishes. The Iroquois attacked the Ojibwa lands in the mid-1650s. They attempted to attack areas west of Lake Michigan but were forced to turn back because there was not enough food. The Iroquois split, and one portion of the force was defeated by the Ojibwa at Sault Sainte Marie. The war eventually ended when the Iroquois were chased back to their homelands with decimated numbers and morale.

The Ojibwa had a close relationship with French fur traders. By the latter portion of the seventeenth century, they represented a formidable force in the Great Lakes. They spread their influence in the 1690s as they moved about to gain trading advantages. Sault Sainte Marie was joined by Chequamegon, modern-day La Pointe, Wisconsin, and L’Anse as additional trading centers. The fur trade solidified a close relationship with the French, and a ceremony at Sault Sainte Marie in 1671 solidified the mutual trust each society had for the other.

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9 Ibid, 30-35.

10 Christopher Vecsey makes some important points about the results of the French relationship with the Ojibwa. First, through trade with the French that resulted in more power and prestige for the Ojibwa, coupled with its centralized location at Sault Sainte Marie and growing wealth, the tribe came into being by 1670. Prior to that there had been much less cohesiveness among the Ojibwa. In addition, he states that we must remember that although they were a cultural unit, they were by no means a political entity; “They were not a nation with a central organization. Leadership existed on the village level, even for warfare . . .” See Christopher Vecsey, *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1983), 13-14. In addition, Richard White cogently
At the close of the French and Indian War, the Treaty of Paris of 1763 replaced the French with the British in Canada and the Great Lakes. British attitudes and policies reverberated throughout Ojibwa society. Under the leadership of Jeffrey Amherst, the British made it clear that they would dictate the terms of trade and negotiation in the Great Lakes. Amherst’s arrogance and scorn of Native Americans led to open warfare. Pontiac’s Rebellion took place with Ojibwa assistance.\(^{11}\) The Native Americans across colonial North America were not instantly willing to accept their new masters. The Ojibwa only reluctantly traded with the British. Once the British strengthened their presence in the Great Lakes, the fur trade ramped up, and new companies joined the action. The Hudson’s Bay Company was joined by the North West Company in 1783, and the XY Company appeared in 1805. Despite their earlier distrust for the British, these entrepreneurs allowed the Ojibwa to reach its peak prosperity. They negotiated between companies for the best prices, and gained favored treatment. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century many Ojibwa adorned their clothing with silver, wampum, and mantles made out of fine cloth. By the turn of the century the number of available beaver pelts shrunk drastically. By 1821 the Hudson’s Bay Company took over

the North West Company, and the Ojibwa were unable to maintain their favored status, and their wealth decreased.\textsuperscript{12}

Elders played an important role in Ojibwa life. Advising adults was not their only or even most important role. They were instrumental in educating Ojibwa youth, as the Ojibwa were an oral people. Their stories were passed down through oral traditions. Elders used these stories, in addition to chants, songs, and dances to teach children Ojibwa history, customs, and values. Teaching children these things, providing an overall sense of understanding of life, was as important as indoctrinating them with the skills of the hunt and cooking techniques.

The education of Ojibwa youth was broken into stages. During the early years women and elders took care of children. Once a boy turned seven, his education was supervised by other men, who taught them how to hunt and fish. Girls stayed with the women, learning how to cook, clean, produce integral supplies, and sew. Once a girl menstruated for the first time, she was considered a woman. Menstruation was seen as a gift from their Creator that was denied to boys. Her first menstrual cycle was spent in a separate dwelling while she fasted, with her mother or grandmother her only company. When she returned to the village, she was treated like a woman.

The final stage of Ojibwa education took place when a youth went to the elders for direction. Ojibwa elders were wise, patient, generous, and knowledgeable. Practicing herbal medicine was a noble undertaking, but it could not be taught, as the true powers of healing lie within. Medicine men and women were known as \textit{Mide}. Those who

\textsuperscript{12} Vecsey, \textit{Traditional Ojibwa Religion and its Historical Changes}, 14-15. Vecsey states that 1821 signified the end of Ojibwa wealth.
evidenced the power of healing were asked to join the Mide. The Mide played an important role in Ojibwa religion.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Ojibwa Religious Practices}

Joining the Grand Medicine Society – the \textit{Midewiwin} – was an honored and serious process. Historian Michael Angel describes the society as a “flexible, tenacious tradition that provided an institutional setting for the teaching of the world view of the Ojibwa people.”\textsuperscript{14} The society promoted health “through balanced living, herbal medicine, and the vision quest.”\textsuperscript{15} On a vision quest, a person endured long, solitary vigils in the wilderness without food or water, seeking visions and revelations. The insights they received in solitude guided their lives.

Initiation into the Midewiwin took many stages. Initiates were first trained in traditional Ojibwa knowledge of medicinal plants. Certain plants were said to have important healing potential, but only if they were handled and prepared properly. Those methods were learned by the prospective Midewiwin member. They also mastered the

\textsuperscript{13} Basil Johnston makes a good point in the following statement: “It has long been assumed that people who were preoccupied with material needs and wants would have little interest in matters of the spirit and the mind. On the contrary, it was this very mode of life, this simple way of meeting simple needs that awakened in man and woman a consciousness that there were realities and presences in life other than the corporeal and the material.” My research indicates that this is accurate. Many white observers felt that the Ojibwa had no real religion beyond basic superstition. See \textit{The Manitous}, introduction.

\textsuperscript{14} Michael Angel, \textit{Preserving the Sacred: Historical Perspectives on the Ojibwa Midewiwin} (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002), 48.

\textsuperscript{15} Tanner, \textit{The Ojibwa}, 27.
songs and prayers that went hand-in-hand with the plants in healing ceremonies. After a year of learning the basics passed, candidates submitted to examination. If they were deemed worthy, they were then accepted into the society. The initiation commenced with a Pipe of Peace. The pipe was passed around to all those gathered for the ceremony. When the preparations were complete, the initiate came to the Midewigaan – Medicine Lodge, a special building constructed with its doors facing the east and the west. There was an opening in the top for light, air, and sound, and a freshly cut cedar pole was placed inside to symbolize the tree of life. The initiate listened to a series of songs and dances that symbolized the good parts of life, as well as temptations and other obstacles to good living. The critical moment of the ceremony came when the initiate was killed – symbolically. The person was shot with a sacred shell and fell to the floor. The presiding Mide elder then revived the initiate with the breath of life, and he or she was then reborn. After their rebirth, they received a medicine bundle, a small bag that was to be filled with objects full of the new member’s spiritual power. After the history of the Ojibwa was recalled by a story teller, the ceremony ended. Fittingly, the ceremony began with participants entering through the eastern door and exiting through the western door.

The newest member of the Midewiwin was a first-degree member, entitled to preside over funeral services and at the Feast of the Dead. The Feast of the Dead was an annual memorial ceremony held in honor of those who had passed away during the previous year. Ojibwa mourning ceremonies were full of symbolism. The body was placed on a platform for four days so the spirit could leave the body and move on to the next world. Once that occurred, the body was wrapped in birch bark and buried with the feet oriented westward. Personal possessions were buried along with the body, and the
grave was marked by the person’s totem that was turned upside down to indicate the death. Finally, small wooden structures known as “spirit houses” were built over the grave.

Members of the Midewiwin had to master other rituals. In order to do so, and to learn about new medicinal techniques, members went on an annual retreat where they prayed and fasted. Helen Hornbeck Tanner states that presently there are four degrees of membership for the Midewiwin. There may have been as many as eight in the past. A third-degree member had the potential to become a *Jeesekeed*. A Jeesekeed had to power to summon the supernatural for curing, and they could create strange vibrations. The shaking-tent ceremony occurred when a Jeesekeed presented his or her ability to create vibrations. The ceremony was sometimes used for healing. An Ojibwa would ask a Jeesekeed to construct a special tent, and at nightfall the ceremony commenced. The Jeesekeed summoned spirits to assist in the healing. The spirits announced their arrival by shaking the tent.

Members of the Midewiwin mastered a vast and rich religious tradition. The Ojibwa believe in a number of spirits called *Manitous*. Two of the primary Manitous are Kitchi-Manitou – the Creator – and Nana’b’oozoo – the prototype of humans.¹⁶ Parents told their children about Weendigoes (Giant Cannibals), and Maemaegawaehnssiwuk (Little People), who roamed the woods determined to take disobedient children away.

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Other Manitous included Muzzu-Kummik-Quae (Mother Earth), and the four brothers. In addition, there are a number of personal Manitous.

Scholars do not agree on how much present Ojibwa religion preserves their past practices.\(^{17}\) It should be noted that the Midewiwin is still strong today, but it is also by no means unique to the Ojibwa. Tribes such as the Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Winnebago also practice it. But it does appear that at least a portion of original songs are missing, as are portions of Ojibwa history which was once recorded on birch bark. Additionally, fewer and fewer Ojibwa retain knowledge of plant medicine. The deterioration of their traditional religion has significant implications that will be discussed later in detail.\(^{18}\)

\(^{17}\) For example, Christopher Vecsey states that aspects of traditional Ojibwa religion have “diminished to the point of disappearance; the cumulative effect is that traditional Ojibwa religion no longer exists.” See Christopher Vecsey, *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes*, 6.

\(^{18}\) It is difficult to ascertain just what constituted traditional Ojibwa religion. Vecsey uses the following formula: First, he checks the *Jesuit Relations* to see if particular religious aspects are discussed. He feels if a seventeenth century source mentions a certain aspect, such as the vision quest, than it is more likely to be traditional. However, he does not discount certain permeating practices that the Jesuits did not discuss. Vecsey also thinks we must look broadly at Ojibwa religion and see how it compares to the religions of nearby tribes. In addition, if a current religious practice is anachronistic to traditional Ojibwa life and culture, he generally discounts it. Finally, he looks seriously at the work of historians and other scholars, with the understanding that they are not infallible. Another issue is that many Ojibwa today do not know or remember their traditional religious practices because they have been lost. See Christopher Vecsey, *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes*, 6-7.
The Ojibwa and Christianity

The first Catholic missionary in the Great Lakes was not a Jesuit, but a Franciscan named Joseph Le Caron, in 1615. Two years later the order ran short of money and asked the Jesuits to visit the region. Although priests sporadically visited the Ojibwa after 1617, it was not until 1641 that a regular Catholic presence returned to the Ojibwa. Jean de Brebeuf and Antoine Daniel met the Ojibwa at Sault Sainte Marie that year. Attempts to spread their work across the Upper Peninsula met with mixed results, although a permanent presence was also established at Mackinac.19

The Catholic presence dissipated in the eighteenth century throughout the Great Lakes region, but never fully disappeared. By the start of the nineteenth century missionaries of various denominations were ready to spread the gospel to the Ojibwa. Catholic missionary work was supported by the Ludwig-Missionsverein of Bavaria and the Austrian Leopoldine Society.20 A number of Slovenian missionaries, including Frederic Baraga, came to American because of these societies. Methodist missionaries arrived in the 1820s, as did the Baptists. They were supported by missionary boards established by the hierarchy of their faiths.

Historians such as Christopher Vecsey and Ruth Landes provide insights into the impacts Christianity had upon Ojibwa life. One example is Vecsey’s *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes.*21 He visited the Grassy Narrows Indian Reserve in

19 Ibid, 26-27.

20 More information on different missionary societies will appear in the chapters dealing with the corresponding religions.

21 Ibid., 26-44.
Canada in the 1970s and concluded that traditional Ojibwa religion was dead. He said that the Ojibwa there found no relief in either Christian or traditional religion. Therefore, he concluded, not only had traditional Ojibwa religious practices declined, but they had disappeared totally. This is one of the book’s flaws. Other scholars, including Ruth Landes, strongly disagree. Landes conducted extensive research among Ojibwa in Canada and Minnesota during the 1930s. She found traditional Ojibwa religions practices alive and well. In fact, she described the key role the Midewiwin played in their

22 This book raises other questions as well. For example, it cannot be concluded that Ojibwa religion is dead based on observations at one location. Furthermore, the conditions and experiences of that particular group of Ojibwa were unbelievably tragic. Using them as the base of a study provides skewed research at best, and monumentally flawed at worst. Had he studied other groups of Ojibwa his conclusions might have been different. Compare these works with that of Ruth Landes and his shortcomings are even more apparent. For example, see Ruth Landes, Ojibwa Sociology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937); - - -, The Ojibwa Woman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938); and - - -, Ojibwa Religion and the Midewiwin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968). The examples of the Ojibwa of the Upper Peninsula illustrate that Native American religion, like all others, evolve and change over time. To bluntly state that a traditional religion is dead requires many qualifications. Syncretic religions contain elements of traditional beliefs with borrowed ones, and are the very definition of an evolving spirituality. Even with its shortcomings, Traditional Ojibwa Religion and its Historical Changes has a great deal of background information to offer. Ruth Landes wrote to Vecsey about his conclusions, and told him that she “saw religiousness in all the 1930s Ojibwa lifeways . . .” He replied that Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes overstated the loss of traditional Ojibwa religion. He said that he should not have looked at religion in a systematic sense, but in terms of an attitude. He concluded that religion pervaded Ojibwa life to the point that one cannot separate religion from life. See Ruth Landes’s review of Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes in American Anthropologist 87, no. 2 (June 1985): 417-418.
lives and the stronghold their shamans had on the society. Comparing Vecsey’s work to Landes’s illustrates the debates that rage in the historiography of Native Americans and religions. For example, can a religion really die? What basis do historians make these claims, and how reliable are they?

As many authorities emphasize, Native Americans were deeply spiritual. However, we need to always remember that there were many specific and important differences among the religions of the hundreds of Native American tribes that populated the Americas. The Ojibwa lived in constant awareness of a spiritual realm, both around and about themselves, that was home to powerful beings. They referred to the spirits as Manitos. The Ojibwa communicated with Manitos in dreams, so accordingly they put a great deal of faith into dream interpretation. Dream interpretation is important to many other Native American peoples, most notably the Iroquois. Traditions were passed down orally, and a class of religious specialists - people whites generally referred to as “medicine men” - were well-versed in the rituals of their people. Medicine Men looked to the Manitos for guidance in all aspects of life, from healing to hunting, to naming a child, to ensuring a proper transition to the next life, and almost everything in between. When hunts, fishing expeditions, and warfare were successful, the Ojibwa were careful to thank the Manitos. When the harvest was bountiful, they did the same. They lived in a spiritual and religious world, and that was what the earliest French Jesuit missionaries encountered.23

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23 I will discuss the spiritual and religious changes experienced by the Ojibwa in much greater detail later in this work.
As described in *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes*, Christopher Vecsey finds that Ojibwa responses to missionary activity ranged from “indifference to acceptance,” but “. . . conversions to Christianity came in large numbers only after Ojibwas had lost their political autonomy to whites and were subject to diverse pressures from whites and to abandon their old religious ways. In addition . . . Ojibwa conversions to Christianity have most often been nominal and superficial.”

The evidence presented in the following chapters shows these conclusions to be mostly correct.

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24 Vecsey, *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes*, 45.
Chapter Two

Frederic Baraga and the Catholics

A number of Catholic missionaries visited the Upper Peninsula prior to the nineteenth century. The Jesuits arrived in the seventeenth century, and priests maintained a presence in the Upper Peninsula, with varying degrees of saturation, up to the era under discussion. These early missionaries paved the way for future Catholic missionaries such as Frederic Baraga. By the nineteenth century the Ojibwa knew who the Black Robes were, and called upon them from time to time.

This chapter presents Frederic Baraga’s story. The famous Slovenian missionary called Michigan home from 1831 until his death in 1868. His activities are legendary among white Catholics, although many Native Americans have slightly different views. Along the way he established missions and claimed to baptize and convert thousands, even though he was not always welcome. However, as will become clear, missionaries had many different definitions of conversion.

Baraga relied on many people and groups for support. Missionaries did not work in a vacuum, and interacted with numerous whites while proselytizing to Native Americans. For Baraga that included missionary societies in Europe and several merchants and companies, such as the American Fur Company. Without their assistance
missionary work would have been next to impossible in a frontier region like the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Even after his elevation to bishop, Baraga continued his duties and his reliance on others for assistance. He left a legacy for many white Catholics and for the Slovenian missionaries who followed Baraga to North America.

The Life of Frederic Baraga

Frederic Baraga’s early life was influenced by several factors. First, his country’s independence was precarious. Following the Germanic invasions of the ninth century C.E., there were only two periods when Slovenia was not under a foreigner’s yoke. Although heavily influenced by German traditions, Slovenian culture, language, customs, and national identity survived and remained strong. Even the Germanic missionaries to the region were required to use the Slovenian language to spread Christianity in that area.

One of the brief periods of Slovenian independence came during the Napoleonic Wars. Napoleon’s troops occupied parts of Slovenia in 1797, 1800, 1805, and 1809. His proclamations were issued in Slovenian, French, and German. He promised to respect Slovenian customs, and established the state of Illyria in 1809. Illyria comprised the bulk of Slovenian lands, and part of Croatia. Ljubljana served as the capital. Many Slovenians viewed this as a unifying mechanism and emancipation from foreign rule. Illyria disappeared in 1813, but served as a catalyst for the Slovenians who developed a strong national consciousness. Indeed, it triggered a movement for an independent Slovenian state. In 1810, the University of Graz established the Slovenian Society, and two years later established a chair of the Slovenian language. A statue to Illyria and
Napoleon stands in Ljubljana today.\textsuperscript{1} Throughout all of the foreign influences, Slovenians maintained a separate culture, language, and national identity. It is worth noting that historically, Slovenians place a high premium on education and generally enjoy a high literacy level.

Frederic Baraga was born into this climate on July 29, 1797, at the castle of Mala Vas, in the parish of Dorbnic. His family was moderately wealthy, and as the only son Baraga was heir to the family fortune and property. He started his early education at home under the eyes of his parents, particularly his pious mother.\textsuperscript{2} He was sent to Ljubljana at the age of nine to study with a private tutor. Sadly he lost both parents a short time later – his mother when he was eleven and his father at fifteen.\textsuperscript{3}

Baraga attracted the attention of Dr. George Dolinar, a professor of canon law. He took Frederic into his home. When Baraga turned nineteen, he enrolled at the University of Vienna to study law. He also learned English, Italian, and Spanish. In addition to keeping his mind healthy, he committed himself to a rigorous physical routine, and took almost daily long walks. His language and physical training helped him

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{1} Edward Gobetz, \textit{Slovenian Heritage}, Volume I (Willoughby Hills, OH: Slovenian Research Center of America, 1980), 1-30.
\textsuperscript{3} Gregorich, 13.\end{flushleft}
in his future missionary endeavors. Baraga also kept his appearance neat, shunned alcohol, and relaxed by painting.4

Both his education and the influence of his mother paved the way for Baraga’s religious vocation, which was not his first career choice. He witnessed his mother’s piety, kindness, charity, and devotion to God prior to her death.5 Furthermore, while at the University of Vienna, he met the Redemptorist Blessed Clement Mary Hofbauer, who became Baraga’s spiritual advisor. The Redemptorists aspired to live a simple Christian life and to spread the gospel to the poorest and most neglected souls in the world. Hofbauer impacted Baraga greatly.6

Frederic Baraga courted George Dolinar’s daughter, and asked for her hand in marriage. She agreed to marry him, and their engagement commenced. However, his final year of law school, the year leading up to the wedding, was one of great change in Baraga’s life. He received the call to religious life. His decision was not hasty, and he took time to ponder, consider, and pray about his decision. His choice to break off the engagement after he finished law school and enter seminary surprised many of his friends and relatives.7 In 1821 he entered seminary. He gave away his inheritance to one of his sisters, and refused to accept the small annuity she urged him to take. Baraga finished the

4 Ibid., 15-22.

5 Ruth M. Murphy, Frederic Baraga: How His Education Influenced His Mission Work in Michigan, August 1, 1985 – Michigan History HS335 paper, Russell Magnaghi Papers, Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives.


7 Gregorich, 27.
three-year seminary program in two, and on September 21, 1823 was ordained into the priesthood.  

The sources indicate that people were impressed by Baraga’s incredible zeal and ability as a priest. It was said that mass attendance soared when he was the celebrant, and when he offered the sacrament of reconciliation, people stood in line hundreds deep. Tales of his kindness and charity are abundant. He met a poor, barefoot traveler along a road and gave him his shoes. He met a stranger lying sick and helpless, brought him into his home, and nursed him back to health. Baraga got out of bed to hear confessions even if people came at two in the morning. He taught children of poor parents how to read and write. At the same time, Baraga busied himself by writing. He penned a prayer book, “Dunsa Pasa” (Pastures for the Soul), which remains in print today.

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8 Murphy, 10; Gregorich, 33.

9 Gregorich, 18; Verwyst, 105.

10 Murphy, 9; Gregorich, 43. Interestingly, his superiors in the Catholic Church were not entirely impressed with the work. One letter remarks that the book contains nothing dangerous to good morals, but nevertheless has too many errors to be printed as it stood. For example, there were grammatical errors, which are understandable. In addition, Baraga was accused of repeating himself often and making the prayers “excessively long.” The same letter states, “Also the many ejaculations and sighs, of which each prayer, so to say, abounds, seem to give occasion against the will of the author, the excitation, stimulation and retention of holy feelings and pious sentiments.” Even with the criticisms, the book was noted as being a good thing because there were so few works, and it was ultimately published. See Rev. Francis Vojska to the Diocesan Ordinariate of Ljubljana, 19 May 1827, Bishop Baraga Collection, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University. (Hereafter collections that reside at Central Michigan’s Clarke Historical Library will be abbreviated CHL. The Bishop Baraga Collection will appear as BBC.)
For all of his popularity with the people, his superiors disliked him. He was bounced from one parish to another, each more remote than the last. One issue Baraga encountered was his opposition to both Jansenism and Josephinism. Jansenism, as opposed to mainstream Catholicism during that time, preached inordinate strictness of God’s commands, made confessions torturous, and severely reduced the availability and eligibility of the sacraments. Josephinism occurred when the state pushed its influence into ecclesiastical affairs. Two things Josephinism achieved, in part, were the abolishment of religious organizations and the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.¹¹

Formal investigations into Baraga’s conduct were conducted on more than one occasion. A report of one such investigation deserves to be quoted at length. A Reverend George Kalan wrote to the Bishop Ordinariate:

I have investigated the substance of the letter of complaint . . . against the local assistant Rev. Baraga, so much as can be done without arousing a sensation, and have reliably learned that the Sacred Heart Fraternity is actually spread in most of the parishes of Kranj deanery as well as in some bordering parishes of the Stara Loka deanery, and that Rev. Baraga has contributed much to the spread of this fraternity. . . . In order to better preclude beforehand the expected evasive answers, and in order not to excite myself too much because of his stubborn adherence to some monkish principles, I have questioned Rev. Baraga in writing . . . . The Rev. Ordinariate will see that Rev. Baraga, in respect to the Sacred Heart Fraternity, admits the main points . . . . In the meantime I did not think it advisable to press him further because he was too excited. The main object is attained if he, according to his promise, will never again lend himself to such business. And if a reprimand should be given him, then, in my opinion, it should be lenient. Since he was led astray into this illegal business, and has to be gathered from all this, only by sanctimonious women, the well-known shoemaker of the suburb Gradisce, but mostly by the example given him by the Franciscan monastery of Ljubljana, and moreover, his strict moral conduct, his liberality to the poor, his great concern for the hard pressed, needy sick, as well as his zeal

for the spread of moral views, must not be ignored. However, the undersigned believes that he must remark that Rev. Baraga gives too much confidence to single persons of the other sex, and for that he reaps presumptuous confidence from several of them, if not even carnal attachment, but without his knowledge. By his exaggerated zeal for hearing confessions, he has loaded himself, against my repeated admonitions, with a very heavy burden of penitents from several places, sometimes considerably distant, which he must, to remain consistent, continue, to the already visible detriment to the instruction of his children, until the Rt. Rev. Ordinariate will find it for the best to give him a pastoral post at some other place.¹²

Several things stand out in this letter. First, many of the secondary sources appear to be correct regarding reactions to Baraga’s zeal. Second, we see his stubborn streak that continued through his entire career. In addition, he obviously was not the most popular priest in the hierarchy of Slovenian Catholicism, and was considered guilty of some of the charges laid against him. The sources never fully explain Baraga’s unpopularity with his superiors, and leave much to speculation. Perhaps they truly disapproved of his doctrines, and his popularity caused jealousy. Whatever the reasons, he never found his place as a Slovenian priest. Because of the turmoil, Baraga was ready for a change. Providence provided and Baraga heard of a new society started for North American missions. In a short time, he would set sail for New York City.

¹² Rev. George Kalan to Rev. Bishop’s Ordinariate, 14 April 1828, CHL, BBC. Interestingly, in a letter of 29 July 1828, Baraga remarks that he gets along with the “very pleasing and sociable” gentlemen he works with. Either he was oblivious to their true feelings towards him, or his fellow priests and his superiors bore false witness to Baraga when he was in their company. See Frederic Baraga to Jernej Arko, 29 July 1828, CHL, BBC.
The Leopoldine Society

The Diocese of Cincinnati struggled mightily during the 1820s. It was located in a remote part of the country, and like many dioceses, suffered from a lack of priests. The bishop, Edward Fenwick, also had a number of Native Americans in the diocese that he felt needed to hear God’s word. Fenwick could not raise enough money himself for his struggling flock, so he sent his Vicar General, Frederic Rese, to Europe to plead for money. Rese visited Rome, Austria, and Bavaria. The Catholics responded.

Austria’s Prince Archbishop of Vienna, Leopold Maximilian, heard about Rese and his pleas. He arranged an audience for Rese with Emperor Francis I. The Leopoldine Society was the product of this meeting.13 The society chose St. Mary and St. Leopold as its patron saints, and set alms at approximately the equivalent of two cents per week. The primary beneficiaries of the alms were the dioceses of the United States, and its bishops were charged with distribution of the funds.14 Upon hearing the news of the establishment of the Leopoldine Society, Bishop Fenwick wrote a joyful letter of

14 We will see later that these funds were not always passed along for missionary purposes.

Frederic Baraga saw a great deal of his funding siphoned off for the construction of a new cathedral in Detroit. However, as Maureen Anna Harp fails to point out in her dissertation when she discussed this issue, the Leopoldine Society told the bishops of the United States that the money was earmarked for their “own diocesan needs, for churches, for missionaries, or for the Indians.” See Roemer, 152; and Maureen Anna Harp, “Indian Missions, Immigrant Migrations, and Regional Catholic Culture: Slovene Missionaries in the Upper Great Lakes, 1830-1892” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1996). When the Bishop Rese took money that Baraga’s sister sent for his missionary work, he acted outside of his authority.
thanks to the emperor. The bishop’s letter of January 15, 1830, expressing gratitude, spoke of “our weak endeavors to spread the Catholic Religion in these extensive lands, bereft of all spiritual and material resources, especially among the Indians, who constitute a large part of our diocese.”

A great deal of money was raised by the Leopoldine Society from 1829 to 1839. A total of 364,620 Florins were collected, equivalent to approximately $170,000 in 1830s values. The following table illustrates the amount of Florins that was sent to the various dioceses throughout the United States:

Table 2.1: Distributions of the Leopoldine Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese</th>
<th>Amount (in Florins)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bardstown</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston</td>
<td>43,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>97,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit</td>
<td>43,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston (Upper Canada)</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>27,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincennes</td>
<td>36,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is an obvious disparity in the amounts some dioceses received compared to others. As Roemer points out, it was never the intention of the Leopoldine Society to send aid to dioceses equally. The needier the diocese, the more aid it received. Bishops submitted

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15 Roemer, 153.
16 According to the current inflation values, this figure is worth approximately $3.3 million today.
17 Information compiled from Roemer, 155-156.
reports that outlined the needs of their diocese, and the Leopoldine Society evaluated them and divided up the money available.\textsuperscript{18}

In addition to helping missionaries serve Native Americans, Leopoldine Society funds were used for a variety of other purposes. A Bishop England wrote the Leopoldine Society and informed them that his first priority was “for the foundation and upkeep of seminaries to educate a native clergy”; from there, he supported convents, established religious schools, built churches, and sent missionaries to Catholics in far-off places. It is interesting to note here that England wanted to train Native American clergy. Frederic Baraga never thought it was a worthwhile investment to train Native American clergy.\textsuperscript{19}

As the letters of many bishops and priests attest to, the Leopoldine Society was instrumental in whatever success many early missionaries had. Those in the Vatican felt similarly. On November 17, 1832, the Congregation of the Propaganda sent the following letter to Vienna:

\begin{quote}
The holy Congregation of the Propaganda, in grateful recognition of the zeal, with which the pious Leopoldine Foundation labors for the good of Religion in America, and very much pleased at the generous support that has been given to the bishops in those dioceses, considers it a duty to express its most grateful satisfaction and its sincere pleasure to you, Most Reverend Sirs, and through you to all participants in a work so pleasing to God.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18} Many supplies were donated in addition to monetary gifts. Items such as chalices, vestments, crucifixes, paintings, and rosaries were regularly sent, and the values of those items were not included in the numbers listed above.

\textsuperscript{19} Roemer, 157. I will discuss Baraga’s views on training Native American clergy in the coming pages.

\textsuperscript{20} Quoted in Roemer, 158.
Just a few years after it was founded, the Leopoldine Society had made its mark, and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church took notice.

But not everyone who knew of the Leopoldine Society approved of it. As anti-Catholic sentiments simmered in the United States, it chose the Leopoldine Society as the target of its attacks. The main spokesperson of those united against the Leopoldine Society was Samuel F.B. Morse, the future inventor of the telegraph. He felt that Catholics were no friends of the United States, and were in league with Austria to bring about the downfall of the nation. Anti-Catholics fostered great fears of “Popery” and “Popish” thought. Some saw the pope as the equivalent of a monarch, and cited the founding fathers’ warnings against kings. Morse regarded the Leopoldine Society as a cover for Popish schemes. Furthermore, he wove a thread of anti-German thoughts into his argument as well.21 The available evidence contradicts Morse, as Roemer presents several examples of Leopoldine Society internationalism – bishops of no one nationality, whether German, French, or Irish, received any favored treatment.22

21 Samuel F.B. Morse, *Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States through Foreign Immigration and the Present State of Naturalization Laws* (unknown publisher, 1835).

22 Roemer, 153-154. The Leopoldine Society was not the only missionary society in Austria. The Ludwig Missions Verein was founded in 1838. Its goals included “the spread of the Catholic Faith among heathens and unbelievers, especially in Asia and North America; the support of the religious and educational institutions needed for this purpose, as well as of the missionaries who consecrate themselves to this arduous and dangerous work; and the support of the Franciscan Fathers at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the maintenance of the Holy Sepulchre itself.” See Roemer, 153-155.
Frederic Baraga Travels to America

Catholic priests, of course, cannot act on a whim. In this case, Baraga could not simply leave Slovenia. He needed permission from two people – his own bishop, and the bishop of the diocese he wished to enter, in this case Cincinnati. On August 10, 1829, he wrote to the Bishop Ordinariate in Ljubljana for permission to leave Slovenia. He stated his desire to “preach the gospel to the pagans who as yet do not know God, and to show them, with God’s help, the way to salvation.” He testified that he spent over two years discerning the move, and that it was God’s will for him to become a missionary, to bring “the light of faith to some souls who still sit in the darkness of paganism and in the shadow of death, and to lead them on the way of the only saving faith to the heavenly kingdom.”

The Diocesan Ordinariate of Ljubljana had no problem releasing Baraga. However, Baraga soon reconsidered his decision, a fact that his hagiographers leave out. On August 30, 1830, he wrote a letter in which he renounced his desire to become a missionary. On September 22, 1830, he wrote a second letter where he wept over the prior letter, and begged forgiveness for his grave error, and for the letter of August 30 to

23 Frederic Baraga to Bishop’s Ordinariate, 10 August 1829, CHL, BBC. He needed three permissions total to leave Austria. He needed the Bishop of Cincinnati to accept him, he needed his own bishop to release him, and he had to petition the government of “the imperial-royal Austrian states” as well.

24 Bishop Ordinariate to Provincial Government Office, Ljubljana, 26 August 1829, CHL, BBC.
be forgotten. His indecision had no ill after effects. Bishop Fenwick granted Baraga’s request, and upon hearing of this, he made preparations to leave for America.

On a Sunday whose date was not recorded, Baraga celebrated his last mass in Slovenia. According to Joseph Gregorich and others, many people grieved and wept. As he walked out of church, scores of people followed Baraga and kissed his cloak. He boarded a coach the following day to take him to his next stop. However, one more encounter with an angry superior was waiting. The priest Baraga assisted yelled to Baraga, “Who will pay for the debts you incurred . . .?” He replied, “You know my pockets are empty, but I will gladly leave my overcoat to help pay the debts.” Apparently he left his new coat behind, and left Slovenia for North America. He arrived in New York City on New Year’s Eve, 1830.

Baraga made it to Cincinnati a month after his arrival in America. His first task was to improve his English. At the same time he started to study his first Native American language, Ottawa. A Native American who was studying for the priesthood tutored him. Eventually Baraga learned seven separate dialects of Native American languages, and mastered the Ojibwa language to the point where he compiled a dictionary. Baraga counted Slovene, German, Latin, French, English, Italian, and the Native American languages in his resume by the time he was finished. Near the end of

25 Frederic Baraga to Leopoldine Foundation, 22 September 1830, CHL, BBC.

26 Baraga originally wrote to Bishop Fenwick of Cincinnati in 1829, but Fenwick’s reply took quite some time to reach Baraga. See Frederic Baraga to Edward Fenwick, 13 November 1829, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives.

27 Gregorich, 44.

28 Murphy, 14.
May, 1831, he left Ohio for Michigan, and encountered Native American tribes for the first time. He wrote to his sister, “Happy day that placed me among the Indians, with whom I will now remain uninterruptedly to the last breath of my life.” So began thirty-seven years of missionary labors.

It will be apparent throughout the body of this work that Catholics and Protestants disagreed as to the best way to be a missionary. They followed different models and preached different doctrines. For Baraga and other Catholic missionaries, the first concern was always the soul. The first building they erected was a church. Catholic missionaries counted thousands of Native Americans among their converts because they generally baptized them early on. For Catholics, baptism was but a first step on the road to conversion, whereas Protestants saw it as the ultimate goal, the culmination of the process. Therefore, when Baraga claimed 547 conversions in a two-year period, the number was likely inflated, as he baptized 547 at Harbor Springs, in the northern Lower Peninsula. Baptism did not necessarily equal conversion, particularly in terms of fully understanding the process.

Baraga established his first mission at Harbor Springs. Once the church was built, the next job was a school. Acquiring and keeping teachers was not easy. Baraga and

29 Frederic Baraga to Amalia Baraga Gressel, 10 August 1831, CHL, BBC. In the same letter he recorded the Lord’s Prayer in Ottawa.

30 In a letter to the Leopoldine Society he discussed the “indescribable joy and consolation” that he experienced when he baptized Native Americans. Quoted in Gregorich, 39.

31 At Harbor Springs Baraga employed a Mr. L’etourneau from Detroit to teach the sixty Native American children at the school reading, writing, arithmetic, and French. Eventually a Mrs. Fisher arrived from Mackinac to teach the girls, and Baraga spent an hour each day on religious instruction. After a
the Catholics placed a high premium on education as a means of civilizing Native Americans. They also worked at settling Native Americans in stable communities. All missionaries found their work hindered by wandering Native Americans, many of whom, like the Ojibwa, followed seasonal cycles and moved when appropriate. Missionaries liked to teach Native Americans how to farm as well, which was difficult in the Northern Michigan climate and short growing seasons. Once basic needs were met, Baraga worked at getting blacksmiths and carpenters to the missions. He felt that the Ojibwa were adept at using their hands and in mechanical skills, and he sought to exploit that.

The federal government later joined forces with missionaries, including Baraga, in providing blacksmiths and carpenters. The mission at Harbor Springs grew while Baraga was in residence. It was originally established by the Jesuits in the eighteenth century. According to the New Catholic Encyclopedia, “Baraga transformed the deteriorating mission of Harbor Springs into a model community.”

Missionaries faced severe trials in their work. Baraga was no exception, especially with the harsh winters he faced in Northern Michigan. He often travelled alone in the wilderness. Lodging was scarce, so he often slept outside. After he pulled his coat over his head and lay down in the snow, he sometimes woke up covered with several inches. Food was a problem as well, but it appears that Baraga had little appetite, while, however, L’etourneau demanded $100 per year for his work, which Baraga agreed to, because he felt the school would crumble without him. He did not, however, have access to those funds. See Frederic Baraga to Frederick Rese, 12 November 1832, CHL, BBC.


and generally ate bread and fish - never meat - and drank water. Many people who say Baraga should be canonized point to these habits as proof of his sanctity, and feel that he received his energy from his trust in God, not from food.\textsuperscript{34}

Baraga’s teacher for girls at Harbor Springs, Mrs. Fisher, told him not long after her arrival of an urgent invitation she received. There were a number of Catholic children on Lake Superior who had absolutely no one to teach them, not even a priest. She felt that there were a number of possible converts as well, and that convinced Baraga that it was time to move on. As time went on more reports reached Baraga that said the same thing. Fur traders reported that the Native Americans consistently asked for a Black Robe. There were both white Catholics and Native Americans along Lake Superior. Baraga also heard that Protestant missionaries had tried with no success to convert, so to say that he was eager to get to Lake Superior is an understatement. He asked Frederick Rese if he could move on, and stated that the new mission would cost Rese nothing.\textsuperscript{35} Baraga’s plea did not fall of deaf ears, although his mission to Lake Superior had to wait. His next stop was the Grand River mission, near present-day Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Things did not go well for Baraga at Grand River. He spent one of the most frightening nights of his life there as intoxicated Native Americans, at the urging of fur

\textsuperscript{34} Camier, 13. Baraga did not always have to travel alone. He chose to do so. In 1833 one of his sisters wanted to work with Baraga as a missionary. However, Baraga wrote to Frederick Rese, who informed him that his sister was en route, that “I am not at all satisfied with her coming here. She knows not a word of French, nor will she ever learn it. Then what good can she do here?” See Frederic Baraga to Frederick Rese, 5 March 1833.

\textsuperscript{35} Frederic Baraga to Frederick Rese, 7 March 1833, CHL, BBC.
traders, tried to break into Baraga’s cabin. He lamented in a letter to the Leopoldine Foundation the fact that fur traders kept the Native Americans at Grand River intoxicated with an unlimited supply of alcohol. Baraga pleaded with the traders to stop doing so, and they threatened his life. He had a difficult time, but claimed to make progress.

Yet things did not get any easier at Grand River. On October 29, 1833, the Protestant Native Americans of Grand River filed a petition with the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA). The letter started off by describing to the OIA the progress the Native Americans were making with the materials and people that were provided. Although they referred to him as “the French priest,” they are talking about Baraga. The issue was this: “When he came to our village it became divided & our village is broken, this it is like. Five families hear the French priest. Nineteen families of us who remain are of one mind.” The Protestant Native Americans stated that they never called upon a priest, and did not want him there. Twenty-one Native Americans left their mark upon the document, and the Protestant missionary of the area, Leonard Slater, attested. In response, Baraga prepared a list of ninety-one converts. It was actually a list of baptisms he performed that listed the dates of baptism, their Christian and Native American names,

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36 Throughout his life Baraga showed no tolerance for those who drank too much. Both priests and teachers suffered his fury. In 1835 he returned to a mission station to learn that the school teacher had been drunk several times during his absence, and the teacher was immediately fired. Baraga also sent word to Detroit to not accept the teacher or offer him any sort of aid. Frederic Baraga to Rev. Vincent Badin, 27 May 1835, CHL, BBC.

37 Frederic Baraga to the Leopoldine Foundation, 1 February 1834, CHL, BBC.

38 Petition of the Protestant Indians on Grand River to Indian Agent George Porter, 29 October 1833, CHL, BBC.
and their ages. It is arguable that the large number of baptisms goes back to a fundamental difference between Protestant and Catholic missionaries. It is also likely that the Native Americans Baraga baptized were not properly instructed, and did not fully understand what baptism was all about in the first place.\footnote{Frederic Baraga to Indian Agent George Porter, 5 November 1833. He also listed twenty-eight Native American students and seven American and French students.}

The Protestant Native Americans of Grand River did not give up easily, and neither did Baraga. They sent another letter of May 13, 1834, that complained about Baraga’s presence. They stated that things were hard there, and that they were lonesome because

\textit{... there came among us a foreigner [Baraga] a white man who separated us from our Friends, now hatred & violence is among us. ... This white man the Priest all the time comes to our houses & tells us we shall be miserable if we are not Sprinkled & that we shall go to hell & our children. This is the reason we are lonesome, we are not pleased to have him live at our village. We have feeling [sic] like you if the Priest tell your children they would go to hell if they are not Sprinkled you would be lonesome.}\footnote{Chief Noonday to George Porter, 13 May 1834, CHL, BBC.}

Twenty-four Native Americans left their marks on the letter. The Protestant missionary Leonard Slater also sent a letter with the Native American petition. He claimed that not only did the Native Americans not want Baraga there, but his very presence was illegal:

“As it is a Statute in the U.S. Laws that no white person shall locate himself in the Indian Territory without permission from Govt [sic] or Natives.” The Native Americans did ask
Baraga to leave, and he refused to do so. The Native Americans prevailed. Not long after, Baraga took his leave from Grand River. 41

His next mission station was La Pointe in northern Wisconsin, on the western-most tip of Lake Superior. Presbyterian missionaries had preceded Baraga at La Pointe, and the usual Protestant-Catholic rivalry in the battle for souls soon commenced. On January 2, 1836, Baraga wrote to Bishop Rese that many Native Americans had converted to Catholicism, yet none to Presbyterianism. He stated, “During the 5 years that they are here, the Presbyterians have won only one single family. . .” 42 This letter reveals a current that runs throughout Baraga’s writings: For him, if baptism did not equal full conversion, then baptism combined with church or sermon attendance did. Protestants felt entirely different about what constituted conversions, requiring a deeper understanding of the faith, which could be why Baraga’s “conversion” numbers were so much higher than Protestants. Furthermore, he stated that only “one single family” converted. He might have misunderstood the definition of family for the Ojibwa, and the family in question might have contained a substantial number of people.

In the January 2, 1836, letter to Rese, Baraga lamented about issues that plagued both his and most other missionary’s work – a lack of both money and personnel. He regretted the fact that he was alone in La Pointe, and although a school would benefit the mission greatly, he lacked a teacher. He stated, “A school would be very useful in this

41 Rev. Leonard Slater to George Porter, 13 May 1834, CHL, BBC. Interestingly, Baraga’s June 26, 1834, report to the Leopoldine Society makes no mention of his troubles at Grand River. Instead he elaborates on events that took place at Harbor Springs. See Frederic Baraga to the Leopoldine Foundation, 26 June 1834, CHL, BBC.

42 Frederic Baraga to Frederick Rese, 2 January 1836, CHL, BBC.
mission; but it is impossible for me to do both, to keep school and to perform properly my frequent mission duties and the visits to the sick.\textsuperscript{43} Is it possible that Baraga ever regretted dismissing his sister Amalia’s offer to join him in his missionary duties?

Antonia Baraga was the youngest of the Baraga children.\textsuperscript{44} She married a knight of the Holy Roman Empire, Sir Felix Von Hoeffern, on May 31, 1824. Her brother presided at the ceremony. The marriage ended just a few short years later upon Felix’s death. There were no children.

Her brother Frederic regularly wrote to his sisters and narrated his missionary activities. The letters deeply impressed Antonia. She gave up her rather leisurely life and gathered up as much capital as she could and travelled to America to join Frederic. However, when she arrived in America, she learned that her brother was back in Europe. She waited, and Baraga was surprised when he discovered his sister waiting for him when he returned in 1837.

At her first mission stops she distributed some of the wealth she had brought with her. Some of it was used to construct chapels. At Mackinac she established an industrial school where she taught Native American women how to sew, wash, bake, and cook. In addition, she apparently gained the trust and respect of many Native Americans. According to Msgr. F.A. O’Brien, if Native Americans travelled to Mackinac to talk to Frederic Baraga, and he was absent, that they went to Antonia instead and valued her and her counsel. She left Mackinac and joined her brother at La Pointe, where small pox

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.

broke out, infecting hundreds of Native Americans. Antonia labored incessantly for the ill, and her work has been credited to an increasing number of conversions.45 However, she also contracted the disease, and that, coupled with the climate of Lake Superior, suggested to her doctors that perhaps a return to Europe was in order. She followed their advice.46 This is an interesting side note to Baraga’s story, and it is puzzling that it is relatively unknown.

Baraga departed North America for Europe in 1837. Part of his mission was to gather donations of money and priests for his missionary endeavors. Catholic missionaries in the United States had to work much harder at generating money for their missions, because they received little to no government aid for their work. Furthermore, Catholic missionary societies were fewer in number than those for Protestants. What little money existed for Catholic missionary efforts was spread thin. He also took advantage of his time in Europe to have a prayer book and a life of Christ that he wrote in Ojibwa published.47 Baraga’s writing, however, raised questions. He presented his work to a “veteran” missionary to the Algonquin Indians. The missionary found “serious mistakes in the expressions referring to the Holy Eucharist.” Baraga agreed to correct the books prior to their distribution. The mistakes bothered Baraga to the point that he

45 Although “death bed” conversions were not rare.

46 O’Brien, 221-224. There is confusion over her actual date of death. O’Brien suggests that she did not live long after her return to Europe. However, other sources, such as the editorial notes to Baraga’s diary, indicate that she outlived her brother and perished in 1871. See Baraga Diary, 31.

47 Or possibly written in Ottawa – the sources are unclear.
requested Bishop Rese to recall and destroy earlier copies of the books that Baraga had passed out while still in America.48

The record of Baraga’s activities between his return to America in 1837 and his move to L’Anse (Kewawenon) in 1843 is somewhat sparse. He did write his sister Amalia in 1840 from La Pointe to update her on his work. Again he discussed the solitary nature of missionary work. He relied on the generosity of local Native Americans and whites to take care of his basic needs. Regardless of economic or personal hardships, Baraga seemed content, aside from wanting a servant! But the number of conversions had slowed dramatically, he reported. His congregation was made up of a diverse group of people, including Canadians and mixed-bloods, as well as Native Americans.49

During Baraga’s tenure at La Pointe, some Native Americans entrusted him to prepare letters on their behalf. A “principal chief” of the area Ojibwa asked Baraga to write for him because “he has the confidence in me that I write them the most faithfully, and because he can understand me best of all when I translate to him in Indian the letters he receives and which are written in English or French. – So much for his copper-red majesty.”50 In the same letter he mentions the departure of his other sister, Antonia. The fact that she gave up a life of luxury and wealth to join her brother in missionary work is surprising. Baraga’s hagiographers either do not mention this interesting fact, or they simply brush it off.51 Since she did not fit the typically accepted model of a nineteenth

48 Frederic Baraga to Frederick Rese, 23 May 1837, CHL, BBC.
49 Frederic Baraga to Amalia Baraga Gressel, 15 January 1840, CHL, BBC.
50 Ibid.
51 Antonia was not the sister Baraga asked not to come to America previously – that was Amalia.
century woman, and her work might take the spotlight off of her brother, perhaps they felt it best to not bring her up at all.

Baraga’s financial troubles continued at La Pointe. His European trip was successful in terms of money raised for the missions. However, much of that money was pledged. Baraga fully expected to receive that money, especially when correspondence informed him that it was on the way. His frustration boiled over at Bishop Rese, whom he felt, rightly so, was withholding money. He wrote:

I can no longer be silent! Neither my conscience or my circumstances permit it to me. If I had no worldly needs, than I would disregard all worldly means; alas, now I cannot and dare not do it. I am building a new and large church, and I need money. I was never intrusive in the raising of money, as you well know, Rt. R. Bishop! And also this time I demand nothing else, but what according to all godly and worldly right is mine! From the accompanying letter . . . you will see that considerable sums have been forwarded to me since my return from Europe . . . I have received only 250 dollars . . . where is all the rest?52

In her dissertation Harp cited several other examples of money that never reached Baraga. In addition, the cardinal of Vienna caught on to the monetary issues as well. Instead of following the dictated way of sending money to missionaries through their bishop, he sent his donations to Baraga via the American Fur Company.53

The above example illustrates the extent to which many missionaries relied on outside secular help. This was especially true for Baraga for two reasons: the frontier location of his work, and the fact that what little financial help he received was an ocean away. The American Fur Company and Baraga had an interesting relationship. Baraga

52 Frederic Baraga to Frederick Rese, 4 March 1841, CHL, BBC.

53 See Harp, 94-95. I will discuss Baraga and other missionaries’ relationship with the American Fur Company and other merchants later.
deplored alcohol and its effects on Native Americans, and generally blamed fur traders for it. However, he behaved and acted prudently towards the American Fur Company because he knew his survival and the survival of his missions depended on them.

Ramsay Crooks was president of the American Fur Company from 1834 to 1859. He and Baraga were regular correspondents. Crooks did not mind helping missionaries out, as long as they did not “meddle with the trade.”

54 Ramsay Crooks to Lyman Warren, 18 February 1835, CHL, BBC. Also see the American Fur Company Papers at the Clarke Historical Library.

55 This work is discussed at length in the next chapter.

56 Frederic Baraga to Ramsay Crooks, 25 February 1836, CHL, BBC.

57 Loisson to Ramsay Crooks, 5 October 1837, CHL, BBC.
Baraga that sales were quite low.\textsuperscript{58} By 1840 sales still were not as Baraga hoped. Earlier he suggested that Crooks send the bulk of the wine west to see if it could sell better there. By late 1840 the suggestion turned to an order: “In some of my former letters I advised you, to send part of my wine to some places in the West. But in the present, I send you herewith an \textit{express order} to send the whole of my Champagne – wine, on my risk, to the following places: Mackinac, Greenbay [\textit{sic}], Milwaukee, Chicago, and Prairie de Chien.”\textsuperscript{59} The wine sold somewhat better after the price was dropped from ten dollars to seven dollars per bottle in 1843.\textsuperscript{60} In 1844 the wine finally sold out. It appears as though the wine scheme never panned out as Baraga had hoped, and never turned into a reliable source of money.

Baraga’s relationship with the American Fur Company and Ramsay Crooks was productive and genial. Crooks respected Baraga, as evidenced by the following:

\begin{quote}
I had the pleasure of meeting . . . our old and much esteemed friend the Revd. [\textit{sic}] Mr. Baraga, who is still labouring with his untiring zeal in the good cause, & has done a great deal of good among the people of this wild region – The Character of many of the Indians has been changed undoubtedly for the better, and among the mixed men [Métis], which are the descendants of the Canadians, his pious labours have had a most beneficial influence.\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

Crooks appreciated the mutual benefits that the partnership between missionaries like Baraga and the American Fur Company provided. Obviously there were some self-serving benefits as well. Fur traders often hoped missionaries could make their jobs

\textsuperscript{58} Ramsay Crooks to Frederic Baraga, 5 May 1838, CHL, BBC. Crooks also told Baraga to expect some things that his sister sent, including blankets and a coffee pot.

\textsuperscript{59} Frederic Baraga to Ramsay Crooks, 1 October 1840, CHL, BBC.

\textsuperscript{60} Ramsay Crooks to Charles Borup, 30 August 1843, CHL, BBC.

\textsuperscript{61} Ramsay Crooks to Loisson, 9 November 1844, CHL, BBC.
easier by negotiating with or for the Native Americans on their behalf. That plan did not always work, as we have seen earlier in Baraga’s career, but the men in the field and the president of the company were of entirely different character.

Peter Barbeau was another merchant Baraga depended on. Barbeau was born in Quebec in 1800 and moved to Sault Sainte Marie around 1817. After working for the Hudson’s Bay Company and the American Fur Company, he opened a general store and trading post in Sault Sainte Marie. Baraga and Barbeau became friends, and the former relied on the latter immensely. In fact, the relationship between Baraga and Crooks of the American Fur Company would have stalled without Barbeau, because Crooks generally sent Baraga things through Barbeau.62

Peter Barbeau is an interesting figure in Sault Sainte Marie history. He was a civic leader, in addition to running a successful business. Both Native Americans and missionaries depended on and trusted him. Barbeau was asked to accompany a group of Sault Saint Marie Native Americans who raised a claim against the government over money due from a land transaction, and was granted power of attorney rights.63

62 Baraga was not the only missionary who relied on Barbeau. Methodist missionary John H. Pitezel, the subject of chapter four, did as well, even after his days on Lake Superior ended. See John Pitezel to Peter Barbeau, 29 October 1852, BPL; another Methodist missionary in the Sault Sainte Marie region, E. Steele, was sure to inform Barbeau that the Native Americans of his mission did not refuse to pay their debts, even though they owed Barbeau and had for some time. Smallpox broke out in Sault Sainte Marie in 1852, and the Native Americans were afraid of contracting the disease. See E. Steele to Peter Barbeau, 20 December 1852, BPL; finally, missionaries as far away as La Pointe asked Barbeau to provide goods and services. In 1858 a man named Gaudin asked Barbeau to send along goods for the upcoming “Indian Payment” (annuity distribution). See J. Gaudin to Peter Barbeau, 13 August 1858, BPL.

63 Chute to Peter Barbeau, n.d., BPL.
official asked him on another occasion to try and explain certain legal issues to the Native Americans in Sault Sainte Marie. It appears that both whites and at least some Native Americans trusted Barbeau enough to turn to him for assistance.64

Barbeau sent a wide variety of items to Baraga. He sent a bell to Baraga’s L’Anse mission, in addition to farming implements.65 In 1851 Baraga entrusted Barbeau to sell copies of his Ojibwa grammar.66 Later that year Baraga entrusted a L’Anse merchant named Captain Bendry to secure a barrel of crackers and a length of pipe for a stove from Barbeau, and also asked him to give Barbeau a package to send along to Detroit.67 These examples are just a small sample of the types of things Baraga relied on other merchants to do for him. His missionary work would have been considerably harder without them.68

By 1842 Baraga had completed another prayer book in the Ottawa language. He sent it back to Ljubljana for printing. However, bureaucracy stood in the way. In order

64 William Shaw to Peter Barbeau, 20 December 18?, Bayliss Public Library, Sault Sainte Marie, Judge Joseph Steere Collection (hereafter cited BPL); Peter Barbeau to Frederic Baraga at L’Anse, no date, BPL.

65 For example, see Peter Barbeau to Frederic Baraga, 18 September 1858, BPL.

66 Frederic Baraga to Peter Barbeau, 1 August 1851, BPL. Baraga also instructed Barbeau to give some copies to a priest who was due to travel through Sault Sainte Marie, as long as they were not selling.

67 Frederic Baraga to Peter Barbeau, 27 September 1851, BPL.

68 Baraga requested goods from Detroit and elsewhere, such as flour, to be sent to him in the Upper Peninsula. Nearly everything that reached him after 1842, when it was opened, passed through Barbeau’s business. In addition, Barbeau provided Baraga with other necessities as well. Baraga ran out of red sealing wax for letters, and asked Barbeau to send him more, because “I am obliged to seal this letter with black wax, like a death-letter.” See Frederic Baraga to Peter Barbeau, 20 October 1851, BPL.
for it to be printed, it had to pass through the governmental censorship office. No one there could read the dialect, so they would not print it.69 A few days later another letter reached the Provincial Government Office. The letter provided basic biographical information about Baraga, then went on to strongly recommend printing of the book regardless of the fact that no one there could read it. The author of the letter noted that Baraga published several devotional books while a priest in Slovenia, “all of which contain genuine Catholic doctrines . . .” The letter also stated that Baraga was known as a good missionary, and it could be assumed that the Native American prayer book contained only sound doctrine. This incident shows that Baraga never ceased creating works for Native Americans in their own language, and also that the once-unpopular Slovenian priest was developing a reputation as a popular missionary.70

The L’Anse Mission Commences

Frederic Baraga arrived at L’Anse in 1843. This was the same location the Methodist missionaries referred to as Kewawenon.71 He continued his usual routine there. The Native Americans were baptized before the church was even constructed. He helped them build log homes and sample different farming techniques. He spent the first winter visiting many Native Americans and whites throughout the area, and walked over six hundred miles during one five-week span.72 He wrote to the new bishop of Detroit,

69 Provincial Government Office, Ljubljana, to Diocesan Ordinariate of Ljubljana, 11 January 1842, CHL, BBC.

70 Diocesan Ordinariate to Provincial Government Office, 17 January 1842, CHL, BBC.

71 For a discussion of Methodist missionary activities, see chapter four.

72 Lambert, Shepherd of the Wilderness, 66.
Lefevere, in December 1843 about his progress. He stated that prior to his arrival all of the Native Americans were either pagan or Methodist, and that they received him with “great joy.” He converted many Methodists to Catholicism, and numbered his baptisms since his arrival at fifty-four. The school was up and running with fifty-one pupils, both child and adult. Because of the progress and promise of the L’Anse mission, Baraga decided to leave the La Pointe mission for good. Another priest, Father Skolla, was left in charge there.73

Those at L’Anse did not exactly warmly welcome Baraga; in fact, his presence was soon challenged legally. The old Protestant-Catholic rivalry came to life, but with a legal twist this time. A recent circular issued by the Office of Indian Affairs mandated that only one missionary could be in a given area. It was literally a “first come, first served” situation. The Methodists were there first, and had been for over a decade. The Methodist mission challenged his presence based on the circular. Baraga recalled his legal training to fight the order. He wrote to Robert Stuart, superintendent of Indian Affairs at Detroit, that the circular, being a law, “can have no force for anytime before the day of its publication.” He argued that his mission had been established seven months prior to the circular’s release. Baraga went on for four pages and provided reasons why he was perfectly entitled to be there.74

The Methodist missionary across the bay from Baraga was George Brown. He wrote a letter to Stuart the same day Baraga penned his. His main concern was the general state of excitement among the Native Americans that coincided with Baraga’s

73 Frederic Baraga to Bishop Lefevere, 27 December 1843, CHL, BBC.

74 Frederic Baraga to Robert Stuart, 29 May 1844, CHL, BBC.
arrival. The animosity between Baraga and Brown is clear in the letter. They both wanted the Native Americans to hear the circular, but refused to use the other’s translator—Baraga did not trust Brown’s translation, and vice versa. Brown said of Baraga: “He calls it all an act of persecution, and to increase, and strengthen, and settle the hatred against yourself and the Methodists, he keeps it continually before the minds of the Indians that we are the cause of all this, and that all this great movement was simply because he came here.”75

Another point of contention surrounded Baraga’s claim that he was called to L’Anse by Native Americans. Brown did not believe it. He informed Stuart that Peter Marksman, a Native American convert and missionary, held a council to find out who called upon Baraga. Apparently they all denied that he had been sent for. Brown felt that Baraga heard about the location through a merchant named Crebessa. Crebessa told Brown that he had done so, and also that he told the Native Americans that if a priest came, they must all join the Catholics. It is no surprise that the Native Americans were in an excited state. Brown felt Baraga’s purpose was to break down the Methodist mission and convert every Native American in the area.76

Baraga called upon his bishop to intercede on his behalf. He wrote to Bishop Lefevere and told him about the “terrible persecution” that he endured because of the false reports the Methodists sent to Stuart. Baraga felt that the circular in question closed the door to Catholic missionaries in “Indian” country. He also told Lefevere that the circular was issued with reference “to me only.” That is an overstatement, but in fairness

75 George Brown to Robert Stuart, 29 May 1844, CHL, BBC.
76 Ibid.
to Baraga it is easy to see how he might have felt that way. He implored Lefevere to
travel to Washington on Baraga and the mission’s behalf. Lefevere was to visit the
secretary of war, who Baraga felt “does not know the whole truth of this entire
transaction; if he did know it, he would not be pleased, being a free American.”77 There
is no evidence to indicate whether Lefevere visited Washington, and the drama
continued.

A L’Anse farmer named C.T. Carrier asked Stuart to visit the area himself. The
standoff between the Methodists and the Catholics filtered down to everyone else in the
area as well. Carrier worked for the Methodist mission, and others in the area laid the
blame for the turmoil at the Methodist’s feet. He knew how enraged the “Romans” were
at Stuart, and cited Baraga’s use of the word “persecution” to describe the situation.
Carrier’s problems arose over potatoes. The government sent Carrier some potatoes for
the Native Americans, but he did not send any to those living near the Catholic mission.
However, two Catholic Native Americans planted a garden on the Methodist side of the
bay, and they received potatoes from Carrier.78 This letter paints an image of overall
confusion in the region because of the dueling missionaries. Ironically, an episode of
missionary fornication caused this whole mess to disappear. The lurid details are
discussed in the chapter on Rev. Peter Marksman. Nevertheless, by April 1845 tensions
had receded markedly on Keweenaw Bay. The Methodists, now led by Rev. John H.

77 Frederic Baraga to Bishop Lefevere, 3 June 1844, CHL, BBC.

Pitezel, requested Baraga’s help in securing a bell for their church. Baraga kindly
donated his church’s bell once a replacement arrived from Sault Sainte Marie.79

Indian Removal came late to the Upper Peninsula. The Indian Removal Act went
into effect in 1830. However, it did not concern the Lake Superior Ojibwa right away.
No resources of note or importance were located in their lands, so there was no need to
move them. However, that all changed when massive copper deposits were discovered in
1844. Missionaries had varying points of view about removal. Baraga generally thought
it was a good idea, but only if there was a guarantee of continuous religious instruction.
In 1848 the government wanted to move the Native Americans out of L’Anse. Baraga
struggled mightily for five years to keep the mission where it was. He did not want to see
his hard work vanish. To combat removal, Baraga purchased the land his mission sat on.
Again he called upon his friend Peter Barbeau for assistance. He wrote to Barbeau that
he wished to purchase a “fraction of land lying in fractional Section No. 10 of Township
No. 51, Range No. 33 West.” The plot in question lay between land he had previously
purchased from an independent land owner, and Baraga’s own. He wanted the whole to
be used for the benefit of his mission, and wanted the land uninterrupted. He asked
Barbeau to go to the Land Office to see exactly how much land there was, and secure it
for him.80 The land issue was on the Native Americans minds as well. The Catholic
Native Americans of L’Anse wrote to William Richmond, superintendent of Indian
Affairs in Detroit: “We the Indians of the western side of Anse-Bay [sic] wish to know
whether the lands around this Bay are to be sold this summer or not. Our missionary, the

79 Frederic Baraga to John H. Pitezel, 7 April 1845, CHL, BBC.
80 Frederic Baraga to Peter Barbeau, 6 March 1852, BPL.
Rev. Frederic Baraga intends to buy for us a quarter of Section which we actually occupy, inhabit, and cultivate, and which he holds for us under the privilege of pre-emption right.  

The hardships associated with missionary work started catching up with Baraga by the end of the 1840s. He had lost most of his hearing near the end of his life. He first mentioned deafness in 1853. Other ills also plagued and vexed him. He wrote to Bishop Lefevere in late 1848 to request a dispensation from fasting. In reply to the bishop’s dispensation, Baraga wrote, “Formerly I could fast without much difficulty, even more rigorously than the Church prescribes.” One of his issues concerned the hour he woke up. He claimed to be up for the day no later than three o’clock in the morning. He spent the early hours in prayer and by writing. He felt obligated to provide Native Americans with ample reading material about religion once they learned to read. In early 1849 he put the finishing touches on a six-hundred-page book of “meditations on the virtues and on the good works of a Christian; on all the different sins, and on all the truths of our religion.” He was pleased that he could write in “Indian” almost as well as in French. He also spent time on his Ojibwa dictionary that he composed in Ojibwa, French, and English.

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82 Frederic Baraga to Bishop Lefevere, 30 January 1849, CHL, BBC. Baraga also mentioned in the letter that the Ojibwa language was “not so rich in words as the civilized languages.” After all the years spent among Native Americans, he still felt them uncivilized, even when they converted and were literate.
Frederic Baraga is Elevated to Bishop

By the 1850s, enough Catholics lived in the Upper Peninsula for the Vatican to consider creating a new diocese. Copper fever brought thousands of immigrants to the region. Baraga’s name and reputation moved him to the top of the list of those considered for the position of bishop. In May 1852, the First Council of Baltimore petitioned Pope Pius IX to create a diocese and appoint a bishop in the Upper Peninsula. The pope agreed, and Baraga was named first bishop of the new Diocese of Sault Sainte Marie and Marquette. Baraga’s diary entries reveal a man none too thrilled with the appointment. However, he felt obligated to accept the position, although he was concerned about his missionary work carrying on as well.

Baraga’s first concern was the “spiritual misery of the Upper Peninsula” and the great shortage of priests. He travelled to Europe in late 1853 on a recruitment mission. He issued a report on the Lake Superior Missions to the Detroit Catholic Vindicator prior to his departure. He provided an overview of his work, now spanning twenty-two years.

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83 The pope originally named Baraga as bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate. An actual diocese was not approved until 1857.

84 See Baraga Diary, 56-59; Murphy, 17. In the letter from Pope Pius IX to Baraga that informed him of his appointment, the pope told Baraga that he was chosen due to his “piety, zeal for religion, and missionary work among the Indians.” The original name of the diocese was not Sault Sainte Marie and Marquette, however. Pius appointed Baraga “Bishop of Amyzonia.” Pope Pius IX to Frederic Baraga, 29 July 1853, CHL, BBC. In 1854 Baraga wrote Pius with the following request: “I . . . humbly petition that Your Holiness deign to erect my Vicariate to the status of a Diocese under the title of the Diocese of Mariopolis.” He seemed embarrassed that he was surrounded by four dioceses named for the bishop’s residences - Toronto, St. Paul, Milwaukee, and Detroit - while his was named for “a certain city in partibus infidelium.” Frederic Baraga to Pope Pius IX, 5 March 1854, CHL, BBC.
His goal always was to start missions, get them off the ground and sustaining themselves, then finally leaving them in the capable hands of another missionary while he ventured off to new grounds. This report shows that he achieved those goals. At La Pointe he “brought into the sheep-fold of the Good Shepherd, by conversion and baptism, over seven hundred souls.” In 1853 the mission survived under Father Skolla. He converted over three hundred at L’Anse and left it to Father Angelus Van Paemel, a man fluent in Ojibwa.85

Frederic Baraga felt that 1845 was a turning point in both the culture of the Upper Peninsula and in mission work. Until that time, he had spent his days teaching and preaching for Native Americans. However, in 1845 waves of immigrants moved to the Upper Peninsula to work in the copper mines. Many were Catholic, and Baraga could not tolerate “how destitute they were of the comforts and benefits of our holy religion.” From that point on, he spent a great deal of time preaching at mining locations, although he never neglected Native Americans. The extra labor only punctuated the point that there was a great shortage of priests in the Upper Peninsula.86

He appealed to the Paris-based Society for the Propagation of the Faith for assistance during his European trip. He told them that he needed everything imaginable for a successful diocese: “churches, dwellings for the priests and school teachers, school houses, houses for brothers and sisters of different charitable activities, etc.” Baraga prudently did not ask the society to pay for building construction – he stated that he could


get the local population to do so at their expense. His main concern was his own cathedral. He admitted that it was a modest building that measured eighty feet by forty feet by twenty feet, located at the first see of the diocese in Sault Sainte Marie. In addition, he requested that the society defray the transportation for future priests of the diocese. Baraga hoped to find at least ten priests, but he was picky. Since English, French, German, and Ojibwa were spoken, the priests had to speak at least some of those languages. Finally, he requested assistance with furniture, both for himself and the new priests. None of his requests seem unreasonable considering the fact that his was truly a frontier diocese.87

As bishop, Baraga maintained missionary work. He did not shy away from duty even in the face of the harshest conditions. In the winter he travelled by sleigh and on foot. In April 1855 he was called to the sick bed of a Native American on Bois-Blanc Island, three miles off shore from Mackinac. He travelled across the ice on horseback.88 In addition, he was often preoccupied with the state of education. Missionaries

87 Frederic Baraga to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, 30 December 1853, CHL, BBC.

88 Ibid.

Baraga felt his trip was a success overall, because he returned to the United States with a handful of priests in tow, as well as some seminarians who agreed to finish their training in the United States while working on their languages. Frederic Baraga to Archbishop J. Purcell of Cincinnati, 15 May 1854, CHL, BBC. By 1855 he had ordained four additional priests. For example, see Detroit Catholic Vindicator 3, no. 24 (1855), 2.
consistently sent him reports on the state of the schools at their missions, and the school at Sault Sainte Marie boasted 103 Native American students in 1855.\(^89\)

With the exception of Baraga’s elevation from a bishop of an apostolic vicariate to a bishop of a full-fledged diocese, the remainder of the 1850s was basically uneventful. Baraga spent his days taking care of both the diocese and the missions. In 1856 he performed the sacrament of confirmation for the first time with Native Americans. Prior to this there was little to no mention of that sacrament in his writings.\(^90\)

In October 1856 Baraga sent a prospectus to the *Detroit Catholic Vindicator* for the St. Mary’s Academy for Young Ladies. The academy was proposed by sisters of the Ursuline order and wished to teach young ladies “English Grammar, Arithmetic, ancient and modern Geography, ancient and modern History, Cosmography, Astronomy, four different kinds of writing, all kinds of female manual work, as sewing, knitting, embroidery.” Sadly there is no record that indicates whether or not the academy saw the light of day, nor if Native American women were invited.\(^91\) Baraga received an invitation in 1857 to join the Historical Society of Michigan. His reply: “I don’t feel

\(^89\) For example, see A. Lacoste to Frederic Baraga, 1 August 1855, CHL, BBC; Ignatius Mrak to Frederic Baraga, 30 August 1855, CHL, BBC; Frederic Baraga to George Manypenny, 26 September 1855, CHL, BBC.


inclined at all to become a Member of the Hon. ‘Historical Society of Michigan.’”

By 1859 and 1860 Baraga’s health started to falter. He discussed the speed with which stiffness and other ailments settled in, especially compared to his early years in the United States. He still found solace in missionary work. In a letter to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, he said, “. . . I was obliged to perform the functions of a simple missionary at several mission stations. The bishop was completely forgotten.” He enjoyed instructing catechumens, listening to confessions, baptizing, and celebrating mass. He continued missionary work as the 1860s progressed and his health declined further. In 1862 he felt obligated to visit a mission himself “because the priest who is with me at the Saut [sic] does not speak Indian.” In addition, former mission stations called upon him to visit. In September 1865 Native Americans from the L’Anse mission sent him a letter that implored him to visit. They stated, “We think some time your [sic] have forgot us. And don’t fail to come. We have a few words to address you and we know you shall give us a blessing and satisfaction.” Baraga discovered that the pope agreed to his request to move the see of his diocese from Sault Sainte Marie to Marquette.

92 Frederic Baraga to B. Hubbard, 24 August 1857, CHL, BBC.

93 For example, see Frederic Baraga to Leopoldine Foundation, 23 June 1859, CHL, BBC; and Frederic Baraga to Leopoldine Foundation, 8 September 1859, CHL, BBC.

94 Frederic Baraga to Propagation of the Faith, 2 July 1860, CHL, BBC.

95 Frederic Baraga to Propagation of the Faith, 4 February 1862, CHL, BBC.

96 Edward Assinins to Frederic Baraga, 3 September 1865, CHL, BBC. Ultimately he had to let them down. He replied that it was too late in the season for him to travel, and that he would visit them the following summer. Frederic Baraga to Father Gerhard Terhort, 1 October 1865, CHL, BBC.
at the end of 1865. He requested the transfer because of the increasing population in areas far west of Sault Sainte Marie, and Marquette was centrally located in the Upper Peninsula.97

Frederic Baraga’s first official act of 1866 was to revise his will. He wanted Caspar Schulte, his assistant, to take care of his possessions until his successor arrived. He did not entrust the Native American Schulte, however, to execute his last will and testament. Baraga named two priests as executors.98 Later that year, as he prepared for a council in Baltimore, he suffered a stroke. He felt obligated to go, and endured the trip. He suffered another stroke in Baltimore, and fell down a flight of stairs. As he fell his pectoral cross pierced his chest. He returned to Michigan even though he was urged to stay in Baltimore.99 He spent the remainder of 1867 in great pain. He could no longer write for himself.100 His hearing was nearly gone, and his head, hands, and feet consistently hurt him.101 As 1867 passed into 1868, and Baraga and those around him knew the end was near. He only stood with assistance, and switched between his bed and his chair in a futile search for comfort. His breathing was shallow and labored, and by

97 Frederic Baraga to Rev. Edward Jacker, 11 December 1865, CHL, BBC.

98 Frederic Baraga, Last Will and Testament, Marquette County Probate Court, 4 January 1866, CHL, BBC. An inventory of his property and assets appears in the appendix.

99 Jamison, 175; Camier, 10. Also see Frederic Baraga to Propagation of the Faith, 30 January 1867, CHL, BBC.

100 Frederic Baraga to Rev. J.O Pare, 1 February 1867, CHL, BBC.

101 Frederic Baraga to Rev. P.B. Murray, 19 February 1867, CHL, BBC.
January 9 he stopped eating. On January 19, 1868, Frederic Baraga passed away in Marquette.  

**Lasting Legacy of Frederic Baraga**

Frederic Baraga was and continues to be quite popular with Catholics, particularly in the Upper Peninsula and to those of Slovenian heritage. The Upper Peninsula is home to the town of Baraga and Baraga County; many Baraga Streets and Avenues; a 60-foot bronze shrine, in addition to numerous smaller ones; and a Baraga Park. The Baraga home is in Cleveland, and a Baraga Pilgrimage Home is located in Lemont, Illinois. Internationally there is a Baraga Mission Center in Buenos Aires; the Baraga House for Immigrants in Australia; and the Baraga Theological Seminary in Ljubljana.  

Many Catholics consider Frederic Baraga a saint, even without the authorization of the Vatican. The Bishop Baraga Association was founded in Chicago in 1930 to promote the cause of Baraga’s canonization. Marquette Bishop Thomas Noa officially opened the cause in 1952. In 1972 Joseph Gregorich presented the Vatican Congregation of Causes for Sainthood fourteen volumes that documented Baraga’s life, deeds, and purported intercessions. Several miracles have been proposed to date, but none have withstood the Vatican’s scrutiny.  

Baraga was the first in an impressive procession of Slovenians to come to North America for missionary work. He consistently wrote letters and reports to Europe about the need for priests, and went on two recruiting trips. In her dissertation, Maureen Anna  

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103 Gobetz, 130.
Harp states that the twenty-some Slovenian priests who followed Baraga in the Great Lakes “did work for some time with the Ottawa and Ojibwa(y), bringing to bear the greatest single ethnic Catholic influence on the Native Americans in this region in the nineteenth century.”104 There are several notable examples. These men answered the call when the shortage of priests put Catholics in the Upper Peninsula into dire straits. Francis Pierz, Otton Skolla, and Joseph Buh come to mind. Buh responded to Pierz’s appeal for additional priests and arrived in the United States in 1864. He worked in Minnesota for the remainder of his life. Like Baraga, both Pierz and Buh wrote about Native Americans.105 In addition, the two bishops of the Diocese of Sault Sainte Marie and Marquette who came after Baraga - Mrak and Vertin - were Slovenian.106

The Slovenian missionaries who worked with the Ojibwa utilized a conversion process different from their fellow Protestant missionaries. They did not expect comprehension of Catholic doctrine from the Native Americans. There is evidence that certain aspects, such as the Eucharist, were glossed over or not taught at all out of a fear that Native Americans would equate it with cannibalism. Protestants spent much more time educating Native Americans about Christian beliefs. For most of them, baptism was


the final step. Catholics saw baptism as one of many steps toward salvation, although it appears that as long as Native Americans were baptized and occasionally listened to the God’s word, they were considered converted.\(^{107}\)

Historians such as Christopher Vecsey argue that the earliest Jesuit missionaries realized that Catholicism was incompatible with Native American religions.\(^{108}\) They struggled with elements of Native American religion that were veiled in secrecy, while Catholicism was visible to the world. Furthermore, the misinterpretations and ethnocentrism against Native American religions hindered all missionaries from the start. Many Catholic missionaries felt that they could compare their spiritual world to that of the Native Americans, and that it would be a point of congruency between the faiths. However, Native Americans do not see the spiritual world as a separate realm as Catholics do. This represents a fundamental, irreconcilable difference.

By the time Catholic missionaries arrived in the Upper Peninsula in the nineteenth century, traditional Ojibwa life and religion was different from what the Jesuits had encountered. As Karl Hele reminds us, “Christian folk practices influenced” the Ojibwa. Visitors to the Upper Peninsula included traders, soldiers, explorers, and miners, and the Ojibwa likely borrowed certain aspects of white culture and added it to their own.\(^{109}\) Furthermore, the Jesuits and French fur traders distributed and traded rosaries whether

\(^{107}\) There is a long history of Protestants who said that Catholics convert and baptize too many Native Americans without any thought. For example, Roger Williams wrote a famous diatribe against the Catholics on this issue. See Perry Miller, ed., *Christenings Make Not Christians* (New York, 1964), 26–41.

\(^{108}\) Please see the bibliographic essay for a discussion of Vecsey’s works that I utilized in this study.

\(^{109}\) Hele, 175.
the person was baptized or not. These symbols and stories survived to the nineteenth century.

It is easy to demonize Black Robes as racist practitioners of ethnocentrism who did not respect Native Americans and never tried to learn about them. It is equally easy to fall into the trap of hagiography and sanctify their every action. Catholics like Baraga were interested in learning about Native American culture, even if for educational purposes or propaganda purposes only. Whether they respected what they observed is another story.

In the case of Frederic Baraga, people, even scholars, have a hard time judging his life or evaluating his contributions objectively. His overall contributions and effects on the Ojibwa will be discussed more in chapter seven, but he clearly mattered, as did all missionaries. In order to evaluate the potency of his presence, we need to compare him to other missionaries who worked with the Ojibwa in the nineteenth century Upper Peninsula. But first, we will analyze Baraga’s voluminous writings about Native Americans.
Chapter Three

Baraga’s Observations on Native American Culture and Customs

This chapter will deal with Baraga’s diary entries about Native Americans, his *Short History of the North American Indians*, his *Chippewa Indians, as Recorded in 1847*, and a speech he delivered late in his life. These records illustrate how Baraga viewed the Native Americans he worked with for nearly forty years. Baraga’s biographers and hagiographers have not fully analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted Baraga’s writings for what they really say.

Baraga often wrote about revisiting his missions and his pleasure at what he saw. After a visit to Arbre Croche, he wrote that the mission had increased in size, and there were but a few pagans left who stubbornly resisted the efforts of missionaries. Baraga felt Native Americans were fully converted when they adhered to the principles of Catholicism, settled into a system of agriculture, and abandoned alcohol. These three things were vital to their success and survival. Simply abandoning their heathen religion was not enough.¹

On one occasion, Baraga called at a village of Native Americans he had not previously visited. He spoke to the chief about religion, but the chief told Baraga emphatically that in no way did he want to become Christian. However, Baraga did not give up. He spoke with three others, again to no avail. “. . . but these poor creatures said very positively that they do not want to accept the religion.” In a letter describing this trip, Baraga stated, “They were real savages who knew nothing about God and His Son, whom He had sent.” As was his rule, he clearly defined the difference between Native Americans based on their acceptance of Christianity.

In another letter to Wahrheisffreund, Baraga described a different mission trip:

I have just returned from a long and fatiguing mission visitation journey, but I hope a useful one . . . . Some of these missions I have founded and established 27 years ago, and some I have continued, and at that time I have had many conversions and baptisms. For a long time all these Indians have been converted and now live by agriculture, like other civilized people. If here or there a pagan is still about, then he is a stubborn individual from whom nothing good can be expected.

In a different letter, he stated, “An extraordinary solemnity took place in our Missionary Church at Little Traverse Bay, which caused much spiritual joy to Native Americans of

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2 Baraga Diary, 256.

3 Baraga Diary, 257.

4 Frederic Baraga to Leopoldine Society, 30 August 1862, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.

5 Frederic Baraga to Wahrheitsfreund, 22 July 1858, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.
the whole surrounding country." Many of these letters were written for publication in various newsletters and periodicals, which may have affected what and how he wrote.

An example of his flair for the dramatic came in 1860. Writing about a mission trip, he said,

> We tied the snowshoes on our feet; the two companions walked ahead, to trample the way a little, and I followed them close by. A scene that would have moved to tears every friend of the missions, if he could have seen me there! An old mission bishop [62] walking laboriously over deep snow, following two half-Indian guides who, worried, glanced back from time to time to see if the old bishop is able to follow them; and when they saw that I followed them actively they were satisfied and relieved.7

He certainly knew how to get his reader’s attention and sympathy. Granted, Baraga’s travels were quite difficult; nevertheless, he wanted to make sure others knew just how hard they were.

Whatever Baraga’s motives may have been, he clearly wanted the Ojibwa of Lake Superior to receive the best teaching possible. He was distressed about the level of instruction they received, and at one point stated, “This afternoon I had a sad Indian confession. The Indians of this mission are, for the most part, very negligent, very poorly instructed Christians.”8 At the same time, Baraga was unsure how to promote the welfare of Native Americans. When he gave an Indian some money, he said, “A poor

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6 Frederic Baraga to Detroit Catholic Vindicator, 21 January 1856, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.

7 Frederic Baraga to Wahrheitsfreund, 3 March 1860, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.

8 Baraga Diary, 93.
Indian came here and begged for charity. I gave him a dollar; but, perhaps, I have thereby done more harm than good.”

Baraga put a great deal of effort into a mission on Beaver Island in Lake Michigan. In 1857, he assigned a teacher there named O’Donovan, a man with whom he laid his confidence. He said that O’Donovan “is like a missionary, especially against drunkenness. On June 7 I had all the men sign the temperance pledge.” He visited the island the following year, and stated, “Today I sailed to Garden Island and remained there on the 15th and 16th in the bitterness of my heart, because of the general drinking of the local Indians.” Interestingly, this diary entry sounds quite different from the report he submitted to Wahrheitsfreund about the same visit:

From Cross Village I was given a ride to Beaver [Garden] Island which lies far from the land, in the middle of Lake Michigan. When I came on this island for the first time, 27 years ago, where before no priest had ever set foot, all the inhabitants were pagans, and I had the consolation of converting many to Christianity and baptizing them. In the course of time all have been converted to the Christian Catholic religion, and now diligently visit the church on Sundays and feast days, even when no missioner is there. They assemble themselves in the church in the morning and in the afternoon to sing holy hymns and to pray the rosary in their own language. If possible, a missioner visits them every month, but sometimes the elements will not permit them to come. And when he does come, they usually all come to confession.

The report portrays a truly converted population of Native Americans. Baraga did not want to give an indication of any problems, so he decided to omit the drinking problems.

9 Baraga Diary, 95.
10 Baraga Diary, 110.
11 Baraga Diary, 124.
12 Frederic Baraga to Wahrheitsfreund, 22 July 1858, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.
Although not totally honest, he probably thought it prudent. In truth, Baraga constantly struggled with the alcohol abuse on Beaver Island and elsewhere. He wrote in 1860, “. . . I had nothing but bitter grief because of the wickedness of the local Indians . . . I preached about drunkenness to which they are now terribly addicted. A few came to confession, and fewer to Holy Communion. The poor Indians on Garden (Beaver) Island are very demoralized.”

Baraga’s mission at L’Anse is an excellent example of both a mission he considered a success, and of his differentiation between converted and non-converted Native Americans. He founded the mission in 1843 and spent ten years there before leaving Father Edward Jacker in charge. When he returned in 1858, he said, “Whenever I enter into the small room assigned to the missioner, I am reminded of the many consolations and spiritual joys I enjoyed when I saw that a savage band of Indians, degenerated by being sunk deep in drunkenness, would be transformed into a zealous Christian congregation through the powerful and benevolent influence of the Holy Words about the Cross, which God the Lord . . . let be announced to them in their own expressive language.”

Baraga was satisfied with the work that he had done in L’Anse. He converted Native Americans in their own language, and ensured that his work continued. (However, he was not as impressed in 1860, when he stated, “Today I visited all the Indians in L’Anse in their dirty, neglected houses.”) In addition to L’Anse, he was happy with other missions as well. He considered the mission at Cross Village a

13 Baraga Diary, 184-185.
14 Frederic Baraga to Wahrheitsfreund, 24 October 1858, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.
15 Baraga Diary, 189.
success, because the Native Americans there were diligent in attending church.\textsuperscript{16} This mission continued to grow as well. When he visited there the following year, he found that it was so large that the church was too small to accommodate all those who assembled for mass.\textsuperscript{17} Baraga was also satisfied with Cross Village because of the industrious nature of the Native Americans there. He said, “I encouraged the Indians (at Cross Village) that they should work on it (a larger church) themselves so as not to be compelled to hire carpenters and pay dearly. The Indians of this mission, who have been converted already for such a long time, are able to work very well.”\textsuperscript{18} Furthermore, he received word that a new settlement of Native Americans from Vieux Desert, quite a distance from Cross Village, were coming the following year to seek instruction and conversion.\textsuperscript{19}

A unique example of the success of Baraga’s conversions is provided by Margaret Sagima, an Indian who wished to enter a convent. The bishop received reports of the girl’s pious life and faithfulness to the Church. Soon Sagima herself went to Baraga and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[16] Frederic Baraga to \textit{Wahrheitsfreund}, June 24, 1859, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.
\item[17] Many of Baraga’s mission churches eventually became too small. In 1861, he wrote, “I visited the southern part of this diocese where are our most important Indian missions. The population of these missions is always increasing. The population of Cross Village especially had increased so much that its mission church is already much too small.” Frederic Baraga to Leopoldine Society, November 11, 1861, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.
\item[18] Frederic Baraga to Leopoldine Society, September 11, 1861, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.
\item[19] Frederic Baraga to Leopoldine Society, September 8, 1859, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.
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asked for admission into an Ursuline Convent. Baraga asked her parents to testify about their daughter. They told him that many men had asked Margaret to marry them, but she always refused. After extensive questioning, he took her to the convent, whereupon she was accepted. As a footnote, Baraga added, “If she will only remain persevering.” But no matter what Baraga said or implied about Native Americans, he was happiest when he was preaching to them. During a ten-day trip to La Pointe in 1860 he remarked, “There I was again right in my element, and very satisfied, for the Indian missions are truly my element.”

Frederic Baraga published his *Short History of the Indians of North America* in Paris in 1837. He started to write it in 1835. In a report to the Leopoldine Society, he said, “In the free evening hours of the winter I shall try to write something complete on the manners and customs of the Indians and bring it to the attention of the public.” Baraga may have had fundraising in mind with the writing of the work as well. He had it with him during his 1837 trip to Europe. The plan of that trip was to solicit funds and

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20 Frederic Baraga to *Wahrheitsfreund*, June 24, 1859, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.

21 Baraga Diary, 177; 143.

22 Frederic Baraga to *Wahrheitsfreund*, July 4, 1860, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.

missionaries for the Great Lakes, and *Short History of the Indians of North America* was an excellent promotional tool.\(^{24}\)

Records are sketchy as to how much information Baraga collected about Native Americans before he arrived in North America. In his letters asking for permission to come to North America to work with Native Americans, he claimed to have been thinking about mission work to Native Americans for many years.\(^{25}\) Hence, there is a fair chance Baraga had read at least some volumes about the Native Americans of North America. Some of the works Baraga likely consulted were Jonathan Carver’s *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768*; B.B. Thatcher’s *Lives of the Indians*; Colden’s *History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada*, as well as works by Adair and Heckewelder.\(^{26}\) One thing is unclear, however, and that is the extent to which these volumes influenced Baraga’s thinking about Native Americans. However, looking at his later publication about Native Americans from 1847, and the speech he gave in 1863, it is apparent that Baraga reached his own conclusions about American Indians.

It is interesting to note Baraga’s use of the word *savage* and *barbarous savage*. Although Baraga’s hagiographers ignore this, in his *Short History* he used these two terms sixty-two times. The editor of the work, Graham MacDonald, tried to justify this by saying, “The terms ‘savagery,’ ‘barbarism,’ and ‘civilization’ became common in the works of colonizers, enlightenment writers, and missionaries. Such utterances were often

\(^{24}\) Baraga, *Short History*, 31.

\(^{25}\) Baraga, *Short History*, 31.

\(^{26}\) Baraga, *Short History*, 32.
tinged with a romantic flavor and may have . . . demonstrated a strong curiosity about parallels that might be drawn between the Indians and ‘barbarian’ peoples described by ancient classical authors such as Julius Caesar.”  Baraga was not concerned with the romantic element. When he said “barbarian” and “savage”, he meant it in the way his contemporaries meant it. The French “savauge” was not what Baraga had in mind when he said “savage.” Baraga did not accept the “Noble Savage” idea, but deplored savagery in all its connotations.

According to Baraga, the history of America began on October 12, 1492. “This was a decisive day for America, the most important day in its annals, when Christopher Columbus discovered this part of the world . . .” It was Columbus’s firmness, resoluteness, and genius that allowed the voyage and discovery. Furthermore, “Providence opened the path to a new world entirely unknown to civilized peoples.” Baraga felt that it was God’s divine will that allowed America to be “discovered.” He implied that those already living there were not civilized. He discounted Indian oral traditions, and felt that the history of North America prior to contact would always remain unknown.

Actually, Baraga felt that the Native Americans of North America only had 69 years of true history. He declared that 1607 “commenced the history of the Indians” in North America. Baraga felt that the savage Indians, with their spirits of malice and revenge, waged constant warfare on the innocent settlers. The best chiefs, like Virginia’s

27 Baraga, Short History, 42-43.

28 Baraga, Short History, 47.

29 Baraga, Short History, 48.

30 Baraga, Short History, 49.
Opechancanough, had qualities of courage and strength. But the roots of the “chief of the savages” were always found in the more civilized Mexican tribes.31

Baraga was objective enough at times to recognize the occasional missteps of the settlers. He said, “History proves that they [colonial settlers] were very well able to imitate, and even surpass, the examples of treason, revenge, and slaughter that the savages had bestowed upon them.”32 He described the 1637 burning of a Pequot Indian village in Connecticut, ordered by Captain John Mason, stating, “. . . the miserable inhabitants falling prey to the flames. Those who sought to escape the huts were annihilated without distinction by the English, who in this circumstance surpassed the savages with their inhumanity.”33 No matter what happened between the settlers and Native Americans in the meantime, Baraga felt that by the end of King Philip’s War in 1676, Indian importance, and their history, had run its course. He said, “From this time on, the Indians of North America were no longer a historical force in their country, and became a people without importance, whose role it was no longer necessary to mention in historical and geographical works except to speak of the singularity of their morals and customs.”34 Needless to say, Baraga missed the mark with that assumption, as he did on other topics as well.

Baraga knew that the numbers of Native Americans had decreased significantly since contact, and that their numbers were continuing to fall. Within a few centuries, he

31 Baraga, Short History, 53-55.
32 Baraga, Short History, 56,
33 Baraga, Short History, 57. For more information on this and the Pequot War, see Alfred A. Cave, The Pequot War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).
34 Baraga, Short History, 64.
believed, Native Americans would be a people who existed only in history books. The extreme sluggishness of Native Americans would be a leading cause of their demise. They were impoverished, and stuck on poor land. Because of their natural state of indolence and laziness, they descended even further. Famine led some Native Americans to cannibalism. Another reason for their decline was their addiction to alcohol, with some Native Americans perpetually drunk. When in that state, they often fought to the death, which further decreased their numbers. A final reason for the decline was disease.35 Although Baraga was correct about the poor farm land some Native Americans were forced to live on, and the effects of disease, Native Americans never disappeared. He did not understand the nature or extent of the Native Americans’ lack of natural immunity to diseases of European origin.36

Baraga frequently wrote about his experiences with Indian culture and lifestyles. However, those details were often colored by his flawed judgment and biased commentary. “Indians convey an overall appearance of indolence and laziness; they often remain for weeks by the fire, smoking their pipes, until hunger forces them to seek food . . .”37 According to Baraga, and thankfully for him if any of them ever read his

35 Baraga, Short History, 65-69.
book, Native Americans had an extraordinary capacity to endure insults. But if someone did truly offend Native Americans, they, with their vindictive nature, would wait years for revenge.  

Baraga felt that while Native Americans were often ingenious with their costumes and ornamentation, many of their outfits were of the “most ridiculous manner,” and the colors used were of the “most ghastly type.” Those outfits were also generally dirty, full of vermin, and foul-smelling. But once converted, Native Americans embraced cleanliness. Before being Christianized, however, Native Americans were “generally quite slovenly and dirty.”

Baraga reported that converted Native Americans, who as such had adopted regular and civilized ways of life, built nice homes. Conversely, “idolatrous Indians always construct small, quite miserable hovels in the manner of their ancestors.” Baraga did not understand this particular aspect of Indian life. Many Ojibwa lived in seasonal homes, such as the tipi and thatched-roof dwellings. It was a minority of Native Americans who had permanent dwellings.


38 Baraga, Short History, 75. Densmore addresses the “Right of Revenge” in Chippewa Customs, 132.

39 Baraga, Short History, 79-86.

40 Baraga, Short History, 79-86.

41 Baraga, Short History, 87.

42 See Densmore, 22-28.
Baraga again made a distinction between converted Native Americans and non-converted Indians when he discussed food. It is to Baraga’s credit that he assisted Native Americans in becoming more self-sufficient by showing them improved agricultural techniques. However, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, there is an extremely short growing season. Food can be scarce, and Native Americans had to eat whatever they could. About this, Baraga said,

Indians feed upon many things that are repugnant to the taste of civilized peoples. They eat not only dogs and cats, but also wolves and carrion. When they see a dead fish floating on the water or thrown up on the shore, they eat it without revulsion; it is similar for all dead animals that they find in the forest, some so decayed that they are already imparting an odor. I have seen thousands of examples during the mission trips I have undertaken, but on the whole, the Indian converts abstain from such practices.\(^43\)

Baraga also discussed Indian cannibalism in this section. According to him, contrary to what earlier authors noted, North American Indians in general had a great abhorrence of human flesh. Only in the direst circumstances would Native Americans resort to eating their own. Baraga also cited examples of “civilized” cultures doing the same.\(^44\) This is one example where his opinions actually conformed to the evidence. Baraga, as well as other missionaries, did occasionally get it right.

One aspect of Indian life Baraga found impressive was their arts and crafts. He stated, “One is surprised, however, in seeing the results that they achieved when one considers the implements at hand. With their stone tools they made all types of small furniture, bows, arrows, snowshoes, sleds, and even boats.”\(^45\) Throughout his life among

\(^{43}\) Baraga, *Short History*, 90.

\(^{44}\) Baraga, *Short History*, 93.

\(^{45}\) Baraga, *Short History*, 99.
Native Americans, Baraga was consistently impressed with their canoes and skills therein. The Ojibwa were experts with canoes. In this same chapter, he described the plentiful reindeer in North America, and their skill in carrying heavy loads. He criticized Native Americans for not using reindeer like the Lapps of Europe, owing again to their laziness and indolence.\footnote{Baraga, \textit{Short History}, 99-102.} In fact, Baraga was wrong here. Reindeer in North America were and are confined to the extreme northern regions, and there is no evidence Baraga ever visited there. If he had, he would have found the Inuit and Eskimo tribes using them.

Another aspect of Native American life Baraga praised was their hunting skills. He said, “There is nothing so formidable as the power with which Indians shoot an arrow, and the skill with which they undertake their task.”\footnote{Baraga, \textit{Short History}, 105.} Native Americans were phenomenal hunters, and were well-known for their skills with the bow and arrow. He was further impressed with their “tireless zeal and speed” in their pursuit of wild animals, especially since Indians “are in general lazy.”\footnote{Baraga, \textit{Short History}, 106-107. Like many other European observers, Baraga did not understand Native American cycles of labor. See Cave, \textit{Pequot War}, 30-33.} Baraga felt the Indian custom of speaking to the animals they killed was nothing more than superstition.\footnote{Baraga, \textit{Short History}, 107.} Baraga mentioned certain animals, including deer, wildcats, beavers, otters, and the porcupine. He went into detail about this last animal. He described it as being extraordinarily lazy,
not even trying to escape predators. When Indians eat them, they tend to sleep; “the laziness and imbecility of this animal is thus proverbial with them.”

With respect to marriage, Baraga recognized that practices vary according to different tribes. In great detail, he described some of these, and in a rare example, did not offer commentary, but rather what he observed. However, the overgeneralizations soon returned:

Marriage among the North American Indians is no more than the temporary and voluntary union of a man and a woman. As soon as this type of life pales upon one of them, he goes and returns to his parents or relatives and resides with them, or departs to marry elsewhere . . . . When an Indian marries, he is not committed to remain all his life beside the woman, even though when he makes the commitment he looks at it as such.

Baraga did mention the fact that some tribes considered it shameful for a man to abandon a woman. Nevertheless, Baraga felt that all Native Americans believed they had unlimited liberty to separate from their spouses and remarry at will, with polygamy being a custom in “all Indian tribes without exception.”

Baraga took some care to differentiate tribes when he wrote the chapters on religion. He said, “They all believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, which they designate as the Great Spirit of the Master of Life; but the other points of belief and practice and religious ceremony differ considerably.” As a case in point, he discussed

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50 Baraga, *Short History*, 112.

51 Baraga, *Short History*, 127-128.

52 Baraga, *Short History*, 128.

53 For a discussion of marriage among the Ojibwa, see Densmore, 72-73.

54 Baraga, *Short History*, 135.
some differences between the Delaware and Missouri tribes. However, Baraga did not fully understand the Indian conception of a Supreme Being.\textsuperscript{55}

According to Baraga, most North American Indians, except for some individuals, believed in an afterlife, but they differed as to the destination of the soul after death. They also generally believed in a system of rewards and punishments in the other world.\textsuperscript{56} Baraga thought that many of their beliefs were due to white influence and contact. He also felt that many of their ceremonies were nothing more than atrocities, and quite savage.\textsuperscript{57} Furthermore, many of their beliefs were not true religion, just pagan superstition. Their idols and their worship of certain animals were not true religion.\textsuperscript{58} Dreams were another cause of superstition and delusion. “Indians are, as all savage people, full of superstition.”\textsuperscript{59}

Baraga had a particular contempt for certain members of Indian society known as jugglers. He referred to them as “charlatans.”\textsuperscript{60} He described them as people who pass as luminaries, or as being possessed by the Devil, and who use their prestige to persuade other Native Americans that they possess knowledge of the future and of other people’s lives. They live well, according to Baraga, because they charge for their “services.” He

\textsuperscript{55} An excellent discussion of Native American conceptions of the Supreme Being can be found in Alfred Cave, “The Delaware Prophet Neolin: A Reappraisal,” \textit{Ethnohistory} 46, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 265-290.

\textsuperscript{56} Baraga, \textit{Short History}, 136-137.

\textsuperscript{57} Baraga, \textit{Short History}, 141.

\textsuperscript{58} Baraga, \textit{Short History}, 142-143.

\textsuperscript{59} Baraga, \textit{Short History}, 147.

\textsuperscript{60} Baraga, \textit{Short History}, 147.
further stated, “He [the juggler] was dressed and painted in such a terrible fashion that the sight alone would have been enough to turn a timid man superstitious.” It is understandable that Baraga did not like these men as they were opponents and roadblocks of his work as a missionary.

Baraga noted that modern Native Americans were not as warlike as their ancestors, and the number of warring tribes had decreased. This was the product of one thing to him: Those tribes which had more frequent dealings with whites no longer resorted to war. He described war dances, and felt that Native Americans often did nothing but exhaust themselves for battle because of them. In addition, he felt Indian war tactics such as disguising their footprints with animal prints, and their methods of guerilla warfare, were nothing more then deceitful; the end did not justify the means for Baraga. He did not care about the greater success of Native Americans in battle because of their tactics that white people quickly copied. The only thing that seemed to impress him was the Native American ability to endure torture, of which he cited a few examples.

61 Baraga, *Short History*, 152.


64 Baraga, *Short History*, 155-163.
Baraga had interesting things to say about an “admirable example of a heroic Englishwoman whom the Indians took prisoner along with her twelve-year-old son.” An edited version of Baraga’s account follows:

One day, during their excursions, ten savages arrived in the locale where this woman lived. After committing several murders, they continued on their course, taking with them the Englishwoman and her son . . . . On the second night of their journey, she conceived a plan, the execution of which would have done honor to the bravest hero . . . . When all the Indians were given over to a deep sleep, she was able, with much effort, to free her hands of the bonds. She then awoke her son, and told him to go directly and silently where she directed him. She . . . seized an axe and gave another to her son, and instructed him to follow her example. This heroine then delivered a deathblow to one Indian after another . . . . This extraordinary event is recorded in the annals of North American Indian history and may serve here as proof of the atrocities which are often committed in the Indian country and which we deplore with all our soul.  

If the tables had been turned, this would have been nothing more and nothing less than another example of barbaric Indian savagery. However, since it concerned a white woman killing Indians, it was not only acceptable to Baraga, but heroic.

Baraga’s discussion of Indian government began with an interesting statement that encapsulated his perspective on the “vanishing Indians”: “The Indians of our day compose a people without importance, confined to the wildest regions of the country, living on the edges of lakes, and dispersed in the immense continental forests. They have no cities, nor even their great former villages, where they gathered in the several thousands. They are no longer lords of the country, but rather very impoverished neighbors whom the government continually drives before them, until finally they will

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65 Baraga, *Short History*, 164-165.
all, in fact, be absorbed by civilized states.” This statement is problematic. Baraga failed to address why Native Americans were being pushed around by the government. Moreover, he thought the prospect of Native Americans being swallowed by “civilized states” was in their best interests.

Baraga’s most glowing chapter concerning the Indians of North America was his discussion of diseases and cures. As was the rule, he generalized, but nonetheless, he was quite genial. He claimed that there were few disabilities or deformities among Native Americans. Because Indian women did not wear clothes that narrowed their bodies, such as tight shoes or corsets, they were spared the problems these articles caused. Baraga stated that there were sicknesses Native Americans experienced only through contact with whites, which is obviously true. He said those diseases affected them terribly. However, he apparently believed that smallpox’s deadly entry into the Americas occurred in 1738: “A merchant warehouse in Charleston, South Carolina, was the source of this disease and from there it had spread among the Cherokee Indians by the way of the goods which they had bought, and by way of the Cherokee it spread to a host of other tribes.” Baraga received his information from Adair’s History of the American Indians. As we now know, Christopher Columbus’s original voyage in 1492 brought smallpox. The account Baraga described did not occur until 1738. In the meantime,

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67 Baraga, Short History, 179.

68 Baraga, Short History, 179.
millions of Native Americans died of smallpox. Obviously, the disease was here long before 1738.  

Baraga said that in general, suicide was rare among Native Americans, but not unknown. He stated, “They will, however, blow their brains out, hang themselves, or take poison.” He felt that Native Americans reached older ages because of their interactions with whites (the above discussion of smallpox seemingly did not apply) because of their advanced medical training and knowledge. On the other hand, Baraga was impressed with Indian physicians, who he felt possessed great natural skills in the curing of invalids, and understood the powers of certain plants, roots, and barks. In addition, Native Americans refrained from ceremony when treating whites with their remedies, saving that for their own people.

In stark contrast to how he felt about Indian treatments of the sick, Baraga had real issues with their burial customs. He was appalled at how fast Native Americans buried their dead, and stated, “One can imagine how many people who appear to be dead have been buried alive as a result of this barbaric custom.” Perhaps Baraga forgot the custom some practiced in Europe of burying the dead with bells because of the same issue. At any rate, he felt that the “Christian religion is alone strong enough to abolish this cruel and absurd custom.”

Unfortunately, Baraga’s interpretations of Native Americans...

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70 Baraga, *Short History*, 180.
71 Baraga, *Short History*, 181.
72 Baraga, *Short History*, 183.
73 Baraga, *Short History*, 187.
74 Baraga, *Short History*, 187.
American mortuary customs showed another serious lack of understanding regarding their lifestyles and customs.75

Baraga’s *Short History of the North American Indians* is condescending in tone, and describes them as a group of people who are, for the most part, backward, savage, unimportant barbarians. There are a couple of reasons for this largely negative image. Perhaps Baraga honestly felt what he wrote was literally true. Native Americans were indeed thoroughly inferior and unimportant. However, there is another possibility. The editor of the work, Graham MacDonald, noted that Baraga used this volume as a fundraising tool. Baraga accordingly may have wanted to give the work some added “shock value,” thereby eliciting additional sympathy, and therefore funding, for his missionary work.

Ten years after the publication of his *Short History of the North American Indians*, Baraga published another work on Native Americans entitled, *Answers to the Inquiries Respecting the History, Present Condition, and Future Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States*. The 1976 publication of the work goes by the title, *Chippewa Indians as Recorded by Rev. Frederick Baraga in 1847*. Baraga selected a number of questions from Henry Schoolcraft’s *Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States* to respond to.76 The manuscript was

75 For a discussion of Ojibwa death, burial, and mourning customs, see Densmore, *Chippewa Customs*, 73-78.

76 Henry Schoolcraft (1793-1864) devoted decades of his life to the study of Native Americans, and created opinions for the numerous people who read his materials. Many considered him to be one of the foremost experts of Native American history and life of his day, and he certainly considered himself to be one as well. His writings provide a glimpse into the study of ethnography, perceptions of Native
copied by Rev. Bertrand Kotnik. Like the previous two volumes discussed, this book also gives many details about Baraga’s feelings about Native Americans he knew. Furthermore, it allows for a comparison with the work he authored ten years prior, to see how his had views changed.

Baraga began by admitting that the only tribe he knew well was the Ojibwa tribe, and that the answers he gave in the work pertained to them only.\textsuperscript{77} He recorded that the tribe had lost over half its numbers because of great epidemic diseases, with large villages dying away entirely.\textsuperscript{78} The Ojibwa faced adverse conditions as well. The climate was rather cold, changed often, and was unfavorable for agricultural purposes. They were familiar with numerous animals, many of which they venerated and mentioned in their religious speeches, including the serpent, wolf, turtle, grizzly bear, and white eagle, whom they called as “Manitos,” meaning spirits.\textsuperscript{79}

In his discussion of technology, Baraga dismissed Indian arrowheads as things created without any skill. But he was wrong. In fact, it took great skill for Native Americans to make good arrowheads without ruining the stone and injuring themselves in American life, and into Schoolcraft himself. For more information on Schoolcraft, see Robert Bieder, \textit{Science Encounters the Indian 1820-1880: The Early Years of American Ethnology} (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986); and Richard G. Bremer, \textit{Indian Agent and Wilderness Scholar: The Life of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft} (Mt. Pleasant, MI: Clarke Historical Library, 1987).

\textsuperscript{77} Frederic Baraga, \textit{Answers to the Inquiries Respecting the History, Present Condition, and Future Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States} (New York: Studia Slovenica, 1976), 7 [hereafter to be cited Baraga, \textit{Chippewa Indians}, to use the modern title].

\textsuperscript{78} Baraga, \textit{Chippewa Indians}, 8.

\textsuperscript{79} Baraga, \textit{Chippewa Indians}, 10-12.
the process. He also felt that Native Americans had no understanding of the sun, and were unsure what to think of it. The Ojibwa had no computation of years, and could not remember or account for five or six years prior. They were unable to tell him their ages, and had no cycles of years. Until they were converted to Christianity, they had no expression or idea of a week. Although they had no computation of years, according to Baraga, they counted by one, and had a distinct way of counting all the way to one million. Baraga was probably mistaken when he declared that the Ojibwa had no computation for years; winter counts were just a different method of computation. He also misunderstood their beliefs regarding cycles.

Baraga changed his views about Ojibwa medicine. He still felt Native Americans were careful with their sick, and said the sick were treated with tenderness and patience. However, no longer did he regard all Indian doctors as particularly talented. They were much better handling external problems over internal, since they only had three main remedies for internal issues: purging, vomiting, and bleeding. Another issue was this:

When there is a sick person in a camp, ten or twenty doctors, (every Indian is a doctor, more or less) assemble in the lodge of the patient, and every one of them gives him a different dose. Besides this they give no repose to the sick; they continually chant and drum over them, day and night, by turns. And so they kill most of their patients. Would they let them alone, and let operate their strong nature, many would recover, who must die under the Indian treatment.

He did not recognize any value in their way of healing, and dismissed it without regard.

Their attempts to heal did more harm than good, in his eyes. However, he continued to

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82 A discussion of Ojibwa medical practices can be found in Densmore, 44-48.
be impressed with the way they handled external issues, and stated that Native Americans are “admirably skillful and successful, and very careful too . . . They use splints with considerable skill and great tenderness.” 83 Conversely, the powders with which he used to be so impressed were now dismissed: “They mix sometimes their medical powders, but of course, without any principles of combination.” 84

Regarding government, Baraga remarked that there were no women chiefs among the Ojibwa. Furthermore, the women in the tribe were not respected enough to be admitted to the tribal council. When the men were summoned, the women had to go a respectable distance away from the assembly. Baraga mentioned in this section his continued hatred of “jugglers” as well, stating that even though they did not provide any functions of a chief, they nonetheless had influence because of their tricks and ceremonies. The Ojibwa, in his view, were also a rebellious, retaliatory tribe. Their revenge was savage and barbaric, and no amount of time would relieve their vengeful resentment. 85

Baraga hesitated to answer questions regarding trade. He stated, “The questions contained under the head ‘Indian Trade’ will be more properly answered by sincere, intelligent, and well educated fur traders, than by missionaries.” 86 Credit should be given to Baraga for admitting there was an area where his knowledge was not strong. However, he asserted that Native Americans were much better off and more civilized,

83 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 20.
84 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 21.
85 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 22-24.
86 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 26.
indeed less barbarous and savage, due to increased intercourse with whites.

After the question on trade, Baraga made the following commentary:

“Are they (the Indians) moral, sober, and discreet?” Great heavens! We look in vain for morality, soberness, and discretion among our heathen Indians . . . Nothing but Christianity, (I do not speak so merely because I am a missionary myself; experience teaches it!) nothing but Christianity can civilize the Indian, can make him become a moral, sober, industrious, good happy man. Whoever has sincerely and judiciously compared the Christian Indians of our missions with the savages of the forest, must acknowledge that this statement is true. 

Baraga spelled out the differences between converted Native Americans and non-converted Indians. The only hope for their survival and livelihood was accepting Christianity. Those who did not were doomed.

Baraga held nothing back when he discussed alcohol. He had the utmost contempt for men who dealt and traded in spirits, because once an Indian was drunk, he would give away everything he owned to stay drunk. Furthermore, the traders cheated them because “these ignorant people [Indians] are not able to keep their accounts.” The traffic in alcohol was and always would be the greatest cause of the “astonishing depopulation, and of all the misery of the Indian tribes in these United States.”

Overall Baraga was an advocate of Indian removal, explaining that:

In my humble opinion the sale of Indian lands, hunted out, or abundant, is always beneficial to the Indians. They receive their annuities for many years, they become more civilized, have teachers, farmers and mechanics

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89 Baraga, *Chippewa Indians*, 29.
with them, and become more industrious, and acquainted with the advantages of agriculture. 90

However, Baraga did buy land for his converted Native Americans so that his mission would not go to waste. For those who remained in a savage, non-converted state, it was better to let the government buy them out and move them west.

Baraga trusted the government to pay Native Americans their annuities regularly. His trust was misplaced, for when they did receive them, they were often for much less than the land was worth. As to the benefits of civilization that removal would eventually bring, Baraga could not have foreseen the effects of reservations on suicide and alcoholism rates. Baraga also felt that Native Americans benefited from intermarriage with whites. He felt tribes doubtlessly gained from it, because the women changed their savage habits for more civilized modes of life. Most importantly, they gained from the Christian religion. 91

The longest section of the book was Baraga’s analysis of Ojibwa religion. He began by discussing the Great Spirit. The Great Spirit was the master of life, but death was not his work. Death, which they feared very much, came from an evil spirit who lived underground. The Ojibwa did not ever sacrifice victims, and had a notion of heaven and hell. Good Native Americans went up in the sky to be with the Great Spirit, while bad ones went underground, where the evil spirit dwells. However, instead of

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91 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 69.
crediting the Ojibwa religion with their own beliefs, he felt that this notion of heaven and hell was the result of early Christian visitors.92

Besides the Great Spirit and the ground-dwelling evil spirit, the Ojibwa have a multitude of spirits flying around the air, who can be messengers from the Great Spirit. This was similar to the God of Christianity and his angels, according to Baraga. They also trusted amulets, and most Native Americans wore them, similar to Christians and Catholics wearing a crucifix or relics of saints.93 Baraga did not make comparisons, however, because he would never associate Christianity with Native American paganism. To do so would have been heretical.

Baraga described Indian familial ties as being strong. The bonds of marriage, however, were not so strong. Here his belief did not change over the years. Again, he said marriage was not permanent, and that Native Americans did not marry with any intention of remaining together until death separated them. Although polygamy was acceptable, it was not common, because it was too troublesome for an Ojibwa man to take care of one wife. And besides, according to Baraga, there was very little beauty amongst the “squaws” anyway.94

The education of Ojibwa youth consisted of oral traditions. From an early age, the whole stock of moral and other knowledge, kept in the memory of the tribe, was passed down. These tales were numerous and common. Any Indian who was old could tell the tales. In addition to education, many of the tales were told for entertainment.

However, according to Baraga, the stories contained little moral doctrine, and like the naming of their children, the stories were often purposefully ridiculous. Many were simply “bad stuff.”95

Baraga’s earlier accounts of Native Americans eating dead fish and other animals right from the ground or lake are contradicted in this volume. He stated, “Raw meat is never eaten by the Indians . . . they like it rather overdone.”96 Besides meat, they gain some sustenance from agriculture. But, according to Baraga, “They rather spend their time in the summer in dancing, sporting and drinking, than attend a little to agriculture . . . .”97 Baraga failed to realize the importance of certain rituals to the Ojibwa concerning agriculture. Their belief was that if certain songs and dances were not performed, they would have a poor crop.98

One of the harshest comments Baraga made concerning Native Americans in his life came in this book, under the heading “Mental Powers.” He stated:

The Indian mind and his mental powers are poor, uninteresting, not capable of much refinement, and generally unfit for the higher branches of education and for literary pursuits. I don’t know to which group of white people the Indian mind bears most resemblance; it is rather an original cast. Very few of them are possessed of strong powers of memory. Some old Indians are of a reflective and grave character; but for the most part the Indians are fickle-minded, or a light and inconstant character, easy to be persuaded, deceived and imposed upon.99

95 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 42-43; 51-53.
96 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 64.
97 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 65.
98 For a discussion of farming among the Ojibwa, see Densmore, 119-130.
99 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 67,
Baraga was well-educated but narrow-minded and ill equipped to cross the cultural divide. He saw them as racially separate. While Native Americans may travel a long way on the road of acculturation, they could never be equal to whites. His feelings regarding Indian oratory mirrored his feelings about their intellect. He said, “Indian oratory is poor. Among all the thousands of Indians I have seen, I can remember but one who was a tolerable orator. In their public speeches they return ten times to the same thing.” Baraga simply had no understanding of Ojibwa rhetoric.

Overall, his feelings about Native Americans had not changed much within the ten years which passed from the writing of the Short History to the writing of Chippewa Indians. Baraga’s misunderstandings of Indian religion, customs, and lifestyles persisted throughout his career. The final piece of the analytical puzzle of Baraga’s persona comes from a speech he gave about Native Americans in 1863, near the end of his career.

Twenty-six years after the publication of Frederic Baraga’s Short History of the North American Indians, and less than five years before his death, he spoke to an audience in Cincinnati. The topic was the manners, customs, and living habits of Native Americans. He began by stating, “The Indians are divided into many tribes which differ from each other in their language as well as in their customs and way of living. I confine myself in this lecture principally, although not exclusively, to the tribe of the Chippewa Indians, among whom I have spent nearly half of my life.” From there, Baraga

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100 Baraga, Chippewa Indians, 68.

proceeded to reiterate the distinction between converted and non-converted Indians he had maintained throughout his entire career in America.

Baraga declared that Native Americans were peculiar. There were two categories: “wild, unconverted Indians,” and “converted, Christian Indians.”102 He told the crowd that there was little to say about the religion of the wild, barbarous Native Americans. Their religious practices consisted of nothing more than “utterly repulsive, monotonous sing-song or rather howling.” This went on for four-day stretches, in which the men simply ran around howling and beating a drum.103 Here again Baraga showed his utter disdain for Indian religious practices, in addition to his total misunderstanding of them.

He concluded his hostile portrait of the unconverted by stating, as he often had in the past, that the finest characteristic of Native Americans was their hospitality. They possessed it in a high degree, and not only practiced it among themselves, but among total strangers. On the other hand, as hospitality was their finest characteristic, the worst trait of their character was their “fatal propensity to drunkenness.”104 The most terrifying thing a man could encounter, said Baraga, was a drunken Indian. Yet there was hope: Christianity.105 According to Baraga, drunkenness was not considered a sin among wild Indians. However, once they saw the light of Christianity, they left their sinful drunkenness behind.106

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102 Baraga Lecture, 103.
103 Baraga Lecture, 103.
104 Baraga Lecture, 105.
105 Baraga Lecture, 106.
Another aspect of Indian life Baraga disdained in his address was the education of Indian children, along with other parental practices. “The education of children is entirely neglected and disregarded by the savage Indians. The Indians love their children foolishly and irrationally and let them have their own way in everything. Thus the children grow up and become very stubborn and disobedient; they know absolutely nothing of the virtue of obedience.”107 Not only does Baraga’s lack of understanding of Indian culture show itself here, he also illustrated the strait dividing European life and Indian life.108 Baraga regarded education as very important, and had received an excellent one himself. He also showed in this exchange the effect of his office on his personality: Baraga had developed an appreciation for obedience.

Baraga discussed converted Native Americans at the end of the address. While the way of living among the savage Indians was very laborious and uncertain, it was not so for Christian Native Americans.109 Once converted to Catholicism, Native Americans become totally different. They completely gave up drinking, and every other aspect of their mannerisms was different than their pagan brethren. As such, Baraga was happiest when he could baptize and convert them.110

The speech provides the last evidence available regarding Frederic Baraga’s thinking on Native Americans. The four major pieces of his written record, which provide an in-depth look at Baraga’s thoughts, values, missionary methods, and views about Native Americans, have been analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted. Baraga was

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107 Baraga Lecture, 107.
108 See Densmore, 48-72.
109 Baraga Lecture, 108.
110 Baraga Lecture, 110.
an admirable man; nevertheless, he was human. His understanding of Indian life was clearly not as thorough as Baraga himself and later admirers have thought. Like most missionaries, he believed that conversion to Christianity was the only way to save the souls of those he worked with. Native Americans were nothing more than savage pagans if they clung to what they had the nerve to consider religion. On the other hand, if they accepted Christianity, they would be saved. In the bulk of his work, Baraga was very paternal. He did not feel that Native Americans had much capability or capacity for improvement without Christianity. Their indigenous way of life was inferior, and had to be abandoned for them to survive.
Chapter Four

John Pitezel and the Methodists

Methodist Missions in Michigan

Daniel Freeman is credited as the first Methodist minister in Michigan. The New Jersey native underwent a profound spiritual conversion and started to preach at nineteen. He visited Detroit during the spring of 1804 during his thirty-fifth year to preach. Records indicate that he left Detroit after only a few days. However, the seed of the Methodist faith was planted, and would soon bear fruit.¹

The Methodists organized the state into various districts, but the Upper Peninsula was thrown in with other districts, including the Detroit District in 1837 and then the Ann Arbor District in 1838. Finally, in 1839-1840, the Upper Peninsula was named a separate

William Brockway was named superintendent and spent the next ten years there. Only then did the Upper Peninsula begin “to receive more adequate attention.”

Methodist missionary work began in earnest in the Upper Peninsula in 1832. A man who claimed pilgrim ancestry, John Clark, was sent by the New York Annual Conference to work with Native Americans at Sault Sainte Marie. As always, money was scarce, but Clark did receive a bit of assistance from the national Methodist Missionary Society. In the Upper Peninsula during the early days of Methodist activities in that region, missionary work was done almost exclusively among Indians; in the Lower Peninsula, by contrast, there were many more whites who needed to hear the Good Word. As time progressed more money was funneled into the Lower Peninsula. It was thought that perhaps Native Americans could be trained as ministers. If so, their missions would eventually be self-sufficient.

As noted before, Native Americans were familiar with missionaries by the nineteenth century. There are many examples of a missionary realizing a greater degree of success because of those who traveled the same paths in years past. John Clark was such a man. In this case, however, it was a Native American minister who trod in his area first. Methodist John Sunday, whose true name was Shahwundais, spent approximately two years at Sault Sainte Marie before Clark arrived. The sources indicate that Sunday was a man who had loose morals and enjoyed drinking before converting to

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2 Ibid, 123.

3 Ibid, 103. MacMillan does not address the fundamental key point that missionaries were more successful if they could speak to their flock in their native tongue, which Native Americans who became missionaries could naturally do.
Christianity. He developed a way to reach other Native Americans, and apparently whites enjoyed Sunday as well. Henry Schoolcraft even applauded Sunday’s work.4

Clark arrived with his wife, two children, and three assistants in June 1833. He talked to the local Ojibwa chief about setting up a mission and a school. Then, adhering to a general pattern that most missionaries in the Upper Peninsula and elsewhere followed, he established a day school, Sunday School, religious education classes, and regular prayer meetings. Clark employed a Native American as an interpreter, as he never learned any Indian languages himself.5

In frontier regions such as the Upper Peninsula, there was a serious shortage of ministers; therefore, many missionaries had a varied flock to tend to. Missionaries often tried to convert Native Americans at the same time they preached to whites and took care of their religious needs as well. Clark’s schedule is both impressive and typical of many missionaries in the area, including John Pitezel and Frederic Baraga. On Sunday he preached first to the citizens of Sault Sainte Marie, and then held a separate service for Native Americans. Fort Brady is located in Sault Sainte Marie as well, and Clark provided a separate service for them on Sunday afternoon. The evening concluded with a prayer meeting, also held at the fort. During the week he held a Tuesday evening Bible class for army officers and their families. On Wednesday he preached to both Indians and town citizens, and Thursday was reserved for a private Bible class for Fort Brady

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4 Ibid, 104.

5 After his first year, he reported that his Native American school had a female teacher and thirty-five scholars. Quoted in “Methodists’ Indian Missions Among First U.P. Religious Units,” Marquette Mining Journal, n.d.
soldiers. Friday he returned to the fort for prayer meetings. Saturdays were set aside for mundane chores typical of pioneer living. Clark’s missionary efforts with Native Americans had mixed results. Approximately two hundred fifty miles west of Sault Sainte Marie is Keweenaw Bay. An Indian settlement known as Kewawenon was located there, near present-day L’Anse. Indian Agent John Holliday lamented “the degraded, drunken, and quarrelsome” demeanor of the Ojibwa who lived there. Holliday asked Clark to visit the area and start a mission, as he had at Sault Sainte Marie. At first, the Indians were quite hostile toward Clark’s efforts. In 1833 started a school that had only two small girls in attendance. However, interest in the new arrival spread, and once a medicine man converted, others followed. A few months passed, and Clark made Kewawenon a branch of the Sault Sainte Marie mission. His report listed thirty-one Native American members of the new mission. In the following year, Clark left the Upper Peninsula for locations in the Lower Peninsula. His missions remained, and continued to grow. In 1834 there were two mission stations at Sault Sainte Marie. Fort Brady had a class of twelve adult students and a Sunday school. An Indian station was located two miles away in a place called Missionville, where there were thirteen houses, a school, and a mission building. In addition, all the aforementioned places had temperance societies. Temperance went hand-in-hand with missionary work, and will be discussed in greater detail later.

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8 Ibid, 104-105.
Clark experienced the problem many of his colleagues did: lack of help. Other missionaries, particularly Baraga, discussed this issue a great deal. Two of Clark’s assistants left soon after their arrival at Sault Sainte Marie. His need was alleviated somewhat by the arrival of Rev. Daniel Chandler, who volunteered his services. Clark sent him to the mission at Kewawenon. Even then Clark had to travel at times to Kewawenon to assist Chandler. He eventually persuaded the Indians there to give up some of their land so a mission station and a school could be constructed. Chandler was a useful addition, and stayed on for several more years. In 1836 he had three Native American assistants, and they were instructed to find out if additional missions could be started, particularly on the Ontonagon River. Later that year, Clark was transferred to the Illinois Annual Conference, and Chandler was appointed to the Michigan Annual Conference with assignments to Sault Sainte Marie and Kewawenon.9

One of the next major figures in Upper Peninsula Methodism was William Brockway. He started preaching in Michigan at the age of twenty, spent ten years as the superintendent of Upper Peninsula Indian Missions, and eventually spent fifty-eight years of his life active in the Methodist ministry.10 Brockway was appointed to the missions at Sault Sainte Marie and Kewawenon in 1838. In 1839 he reported that his missions had sixty-five Indian members and had raised seventy-eight cents for conference collections. In 1840, a separate Indian Mission District was formed in Michigan with Brockway as Superintendent. At the start he had five ministers assisting him at the Sault Sainte Marie, Kewawenon, and Mackinac missions. Two of those were Native Americans: John

9 Ibid.


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Kahbeege and Peter Marksman.\textsuperscript{11} Brockway received even more help in 1843 with the arrival of Rev. John H. Pitezel, who left behind an exceptionally rich record of his life and work in the form of letters, journals, and an autobiography.

\textbf{Rev. John H. Pitezel}

Rev. John H. Pitezel’s parents made their first home in Graceham, Maryland, and “nominally they were Lutherans, faithful to the letter . . . In after years, genuinely converted in a most marked and signal manner, they united with a people they once heartily despised – the Methodists.”\textsuperscript{12} John was born on April 18, 1814. He witnessed many itinerant ministers in his youth, as his parents let them stay with the family on a regular basis.

The Pitezels moved to Ohio when John was nine. A pivotal turning point arrived in John’s life the following year. He went to a Methodist camp meeting in August 1824 near the town of Delaware. Pitezel experienced his “conversion” at the meeting but his euphoria was short-lived. The family fell on hard times, and his father was hit especially hard. On May 15, 1828, the elder Pitezel passed away after an extended sickness. John said, “An intense sufferer for some months, on the 15\textsuperscript{th} day of May 1828, just as the sun was bursting gloriously from the eastern sky, he triumphantly closed his eyes to earth, to open them in Heaven.”\textsuperscript{13}

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid, 138-139. John Kahbeege’s name is spelled with a few variations, although all are similar. For the sake of consistency, I will use this spelling throughout.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
At the age of nineteen, John became the patriarch of the family upon his father’s death. He was the eldest of six children. They stayed where they were for a year, and then in March 1829 moved to Tiffin, Ohio. The move saddened him, as he saw it as a permanent break from their old family home. However, he did not blame his mother for moving. She had received an invitation to move her family from her widowed brother-in-law. Pitezel had an unwavering respect, love, and admiration for his mother. He penned another poem that stated,

> Three words a blessed trinity  
> Blending in sweet affinity  
> We scarce can rank another even  
> With those of Mother, home, and Heaven.  

Tiffin was an undeveloped frontier town when the Pitezel’s first arrived. There was no schoolhouse, church, or courthouse. However, with the arrival of “intelligent enterprising and thrifty” citizens from Virginia and Maryland, the town quickly grew. Pitezel also met Native Americans in Tiffin; as he noted, “we often had the migratory visits of the natives.”

Religion played a key role in Pitezel’s childhood. Throughout his life his writings convey this fact. It took a few years after his conversion at the camp meeting to get firmly settled in his faith. He “united with the old temperance society” the first chance he found. He spent the rest of his life in a tireless pursuit against ardent spirits and drunkenness. His efforts reached even higher levels once he started his missionary work, and he preached temperance to Native Americans and whites alike.

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
Pitezel’s first experience with the ministry was still a few years away. He maintained his faith and participation with the church while he worked as a saddler. He described the five years he was engaged in that trade as the busiest and most important years of his life, spent “in the acquisition of a useful and honorable trade – that of a saddler.” He appreciated the discipline he acquired, along with a “moral and spiritual robustness.” The saddle trade was not the only reason why he appreciated those five years. He also listened to a Methodist minister named Russel Bigelow. Pitezel referred to him as a wonderful man, and quoted a Methodist bishop who stated, “Take him [Bigelow] all in all I think I have yet to hear his equal.” Pitezel received his first license to “exhort” on April 21, 1834, and jointed the Tiffin Circuit.\(^\text{17}\) He took advantage of his new position to deliver a temperance address on at least one occasion.\(^\text{18}\) At a camp meeting in August he witnessed the death of a member of the Universalist Church, a man who drank a great deal of whiskey and taunted ministers. Pitezel felt his death was divine retribution. He stated, “No drunkard shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”\(^\text{19}\)

John found himself pulled more strongly towards a permanent position in the ministry during his last two years in Tiffin. He said, “Imperative duty seemed to urge me in the direction of the gospel ministry.” The problem as he saw it was his lack of formal education, which he felt was “a serious obstacle.” Divine providence intervened and he entered the Norwalk Seminary. It was presided over by Jonathan Edwards Chaplin, “a

\(^\text{17}\) The term “circuit” was a route of locations that Methodist preachers were expected to reach and minister to on a regular basis. See Ronald A. Brunger, “Methodist Circuit Riders,” *Michigan History Magazine* 51 (1967): 252-268.

\(^\text{18}\) John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 8 July 1834, CHL, JHP.

\(^\text{19}\) John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 12 August 1834, CHL, JHP.
lineal descendent of the great New England divine, whose name he inherited.” There he met George W. Brown, with whom he worked extensively during his missionary years on Lake Superior. The young men worked hard at sustaining their lives while at the seminary. All the seminarians worked odd jobs to make ends meet. Many of them cut wood at three-and-one-quarter cents per cord to pay their way through school. They had to cut quite a bit, because the average cost of living at the seminary was around sixty cents per week. It all paid off for Pitezel when, on April 23, 1835, he received the presiding elder’s license to preach. He was officially Rev. John H. Pitezel.20

**Early Years on the Methodist Circuit**

Methodist circuit riders faced great hardships and trials, and their stories are full of heroic, and often romanticized, tales. Ronald Brunger, a Methodist minister and historian of that church, states the circuit riders in the first half of the nineteenth century “wrote a heroic saga of devotion amidst incredible hardships.”21 They spent a great deal of time alone riding from town to town over rough trails. There were but few roads, and the majority of those were in poor condition. Ministers and their horses crossed mosquito-infested swamps and often were stuck. Winter was particularly harsh, especially in the northern latitudes of Michigan.22

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20 Ibid. Biographical information on Pitezel is also available in MacMillan, 168-174; and in Reuter. The April license was the second he received that year from Ohio. Seneca County issued him in January that stated he was qualified to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, and English grammar, and that he had a good moral character. See CHL, JHP, Correspondence #43-58 (1834-1846).


22 Ibid, 253-255.
Pitezel rode the Norwalk and Maumee Circuits until 1837. From the start he wrote of the difficulties and hardships of his work. Money and food were in short supply, and often were absent altogether. However, he went about his work and received his rewards from the faithful, particularly when he started a camp meeting in Lower Sandusky in July 1836. He was admitted to the Michigan Annual Conference on trial in 1836, but his job was no easier. On one journey from Tiffin to Tecumseh, Michigan, Pitezel and his colleague were stuck in two and a half feet of mud. Prior to his transfer to the Upper Peninsula in 1843, he served in the following locations:

Table 4.1: Rev. Pitezel’s First Appointments in Michigan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1837-38</td>
<td>Adrian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838-39</td>
<td>Ypsilanti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839-40</td>
<td>Northville and Plymouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-41</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841-42</td>
<td>Homer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842-43</td>
<td>Homer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most locations he served in the late 1830s and early 1840s were not as devout as Pitezel might have hoped. The depth of his flock’s faith also vacillated. As was the case with many missionaries, regardless of faith and audience, Pitezel disliked other denominations

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23 For example, see John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 20 May 1835, 11 December 1835, and 23 July 1836, CHL, JHP.

24 John H. Pitezel to unknown, 25 September 1837.

25 Compiled from the John H. Pitezel Collection, Special Collections Unit, Stockwell-Mudd Libraries, Albion College – Western Michigan Conference Archives (hereafter material from this repository will be shortened to “Albion College”).
as a rule. 26 He laid the cornerstone of a new church in Adrian, Michigan, on May 24, 1838. He wrote to his mother that “the state of religion is not as flourishing as it was a short time ago.” 27 He blamed much of that on the “meddlesome and troublesome” Baptists and Universalists of the area. Pitezel found satisfaction in the temperance cause of the area. A county temperance meeting was well attended, and he witnessed “a great deal of spirit” that manifested itself for the cause. 28

**Rev. Pitezel is Transferred to the Upper Peninsula**

William Brockway, Superintendent of the Indian Missions of the Upper Peninsula, asked Pitezel to come to the mission at Sault Sainte Marie. 29 Pitezel arrived in the Upper Peninsula in August of 1843. His friends told him that “he was being exiled.” 30 Pitezel himself seemed to have misgivings, as MacMillan quotes him as stating that he would never again “stand before such an intelligent congregation of white people.” 31 Even so, after he received his appointment to the mission at Sault Sainte

26 A notable exception is Pitezel’s work with the Baptist missionary Abel Bingham. See Chapter Six.

27 John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 8 June 1838, CHL, JHP.

28 Ibid.

29 William Brockway was twenty years old when he arrived in Michigan from the Ohio Annual Conference in either 1834 or 1835. His first appointment was at Flat Rock, where he taught at a Native American school. Later in his life he was a chaplain in the Civil War and served as a trustee of Albion College. He never retired, and gave fifty-eight years of active Methodist ministry. See MacMillan, 107, 133.

30 MacMillan, 168.

31 Ibid.
Marie, he wrote to his mother that he had a “desire to do all the good I can, to save, if possible some of the benighted heathen from superstition and death.” He deplored the conditions that many Native Americans lived in. Pitezel and his wife stopped at Mackinac Island, and were shocked at the effects of traders and whiskey. He described the scene:

That afternoon was spent among the Indian wigwams, and seeing them receive their pay and spend it away among the traders, who thronged the place, and were ready to grab the Indian’s money as soon as it came into his hands, by fair or foul means . . . This morning I took a walk along the shore of the straits about a mile, where I saw scenes of woe and wretchedness. Some of the worse than heathen whites, French, and half-breeds, had been furnishing the Indians with whisky, and cheating them out of their money. The direst effects of drunkenness were witnessed among them. Some were raving and fighting, some singing, some dancing, some running and whooping, while in some of the lodges were men, women, and children, rolling and tossing, and making hideous noises or doleful moaning. What a very pandemonium was here seen – all the work of whisky! I was grieved to see such a mass, susceptible of high intelligence, debased below the level of the brute. Fearful, thought I, will be the final reckoning of the instigators of all this crime and misery, when the Judge of all the earth shall make inquisition for blood.

Like Baraga, Pitezel had nothing but the utmost contempt for the effects of alcohol, and for those who provided the intoxicating liquor.

When the Pitezels arrived at Sault Sainte Marie, their house was inhabited by Native Americans. The house was “filthy, the children had a skin disease, and everyone was vermin infested.” He had predicted that the Native Americans would be in rough

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32 John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 28 August 1843, CHL, JHP.
33 Pitezel, 27.
34 MacMillan, 168-169.
shape, but what he saw was beyond that. He soon realized just how much work was ahead of him if he wished to save their souls.

A good collection of John Pitezel’s thoughts about Indians and his missionary methods is found in his autobiography *Lights and Shades of Missionary Life: Containing Travels, Sketches, Incidents, and Missionary Efforts, During Nine Years Spent in the Region of Lake Superior*. Originally published in the 1850s, the volume was an edited and narrated version of the journals Pitezel kept, and is a superb account of his thoughts and attitudes.35

Pitezel had a clear idea of his job as a missionary:

Aside from its religious aspect, a Christian mission possesses no intrinsic importance. The aim of this cause is a direct one; it contemplates the salvation of deathless immortals. When this end is not accomplished missionary efforts prove a failure. The Christianization of the heathen is fundamental – civilization is the legitimate fruit.36

This statement shows similarities in the attitudes of Pitezel and Baraga, as well as a fundamental difference. They both saw the saving of souls through Christianity as the foremost purpose of their work. However, while Pitezel saw any failure to do so as the fault of a missionary, Baraga did not. If Baraga could not get through to the Indians he tried to convert, he simply moved on to other places, although not before voicing his displeasure about the stubborn heathen barbarians who refused to change.


36 Pitezel, 38.
In 1844, Pitezel found out that he was appointed to the Kewawenon mission.\textsuperscript{37} He was not overly impressed with the news. He wrote a letter to his mother that informed her of the move, and he described the beauty and decent crop production of Sault Sainte Marie, which he did not expect to find in his new location. He continued,

\begin{quote}
I would not have you think that we expect to find there a terrestrial paradise. Not so, we do not expect it in this world. We expect to contend with paganism among the Indians. In the immediate vicinity a Roman priest [Frederic Baraga] has planted himself and is doing his best to draw disciples after him. We expect to meet with trials . . . We came to this country with the expectation of staying somewhere among the Indians for five years if not longer.\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}

He also travelled to La Pointe with some of “his” Native Americans to attend the distribution of an annuity payment. Of the nearly two thousand Native Americans gathered there, he said that they were mostly heathens. They were filthy and nearly nude, while they decorated themselves with ornaments and face paint. He stated, “They are exceedingly superstitious and are great idolaters. They are passionately fond of gambling and often spend days and nights in playing their heathen games and in playing cards which they have learned from the whites. Poor souls they know nothing about the Bible or the Christian’s God.”\textsuperscript{39} Pitezel showed contempt for Native American culture and simply assumed their ignorance. It is possible that they did know “about the Bible or the Christian God,” but did not wish to convert to those beliefs.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{37} In his letters he generally referred to the location as L’Anse or the Anse).
\end{flushleft}
\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{38} John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 16 August 1844, CHL, JHP.
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\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{39} John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 20 August 1844, CHL, JHP.
\end{flushleft}
L’Anse was full of discouragements. Pitezel found the Native Americans divided by the presence of Baraga, and full of superstition.\(^{40}\) He was willing to do all he could, especially after what he witnessed at La Pointe the previous year. He felt that there were no people in the world more in need of the message of the gospel than Native Americans. Furthermore, Pitezel recognized the need for excellent, committed preachers and missionaries. He stated,

\[
\text{We need the very best ministers among us for our mission stations. Especially when we see what efforts the Roman Catholics are making. Shall we abandon them to this field? And what is it that makes them so successful? Their superstitious forms and ceremonies do much, but not everything. They go and stay for years in the Indian country, learn the language so as to preach in it and thus they gain a command over them which no one can have who is with them only a short time and depends on an interpreter. Our Presbyterian missionaries if they go to a foreign post go for life. Here is a great sacrifice and cannot well be made only for the sake of souls.}\(^{41}\)
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There is a great deal to digest in this excerpt of Pitezel’s. First, he, like other Protestant missionaries, felt a rivalry with the Catholics.\(^{42}\) However, there is an envious tone to Pitezel’s words, and he understood and recognized a key aspect of those missionaries.

\(^{40}\) Although Pitezel’s mother feared for him and his safety, Pitezel never felt threatened. He told his mother, “I think most of your fears are groundless about the dangerousness of our situation. So far as the Indians and Catholics are concerned we feel as safe as we should in your own neighborhood.” John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 19 December 1845."

\(^{41}\) John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 28 October 1844. This letter is reproduced in its entirety in the appendix.

\(^{42}\) Pitezel was not alone among missionaries in this aspect. In addition to Chapter Six of this study, see Howard L. Harrod, *Mission Among the Blackfeet* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); and William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).
who were more “successful”: the ability to speak to the Native Americans in their own tongue. He also saw that Catholics used aspects of their own faith to draw parallels with Ojibwa practices. Flawed as they may have been to an outside observer, their “superstitious forms” often looked like an exceptional tool in the arsenal to save souls. Finally, it appears that, as dedicated as Pitezel was to being a Methodist minister, he was not ready to commit his entire life to missionary efforts.

Pitezel’s competitive spirit towards Baraga is revealed in his description of how Baraga “stole” his Indians. He said:

At some times the mission would be left, for two or three months, to take care of itself. Taking advantage of such circumstances, Catholic emissaries, headed by the priest, brought about a division in the band, and induced a large portion to cross over to the west side of the bay, where a flourishing mission was established at an expense and sacrifice worthy of a better cause.43

It is doubtful that Baraga had sinister motives when he visited the Indians Pitezel thought were his own. He likely had the Indian’s best intentions in mind, and certainly did not lead the coup Pitezel imagined. As Pitezel stated, stating the money and efforts put into the Catholic mission were “worthy of a better cause.” Most likely that better cause would have been a Methodist mission.

In Pitezel’s writings about Baraga, it is evident that, although he hated Catholicism with a vengeance, he found much to respect in the priest. In his book, Pitezel wrote:

Rev. Frederick Baraga was the resident priest at L’Anse at our arrival… [he was] well educated, speaking readily six or seven living languages, including German, French, English, and Ojibwa. He spent years on the shores of Lake Superior . . . making extensive improvement . . . . He traveled extensively on foot . . . temperate in his habits, devout and

43 Pitezel, 78-79.
dignified in his private and ministerial being, he was universally respected by Indians and the mining community, and affectionately loved by those in closer fellowship.  

He further elaborated in a letter to his mother:

Directly opposite our mission is a Roman Catholic Mission. The Priest labors for the promotion of Roman Catholicism with a zeal worthy of a better cause and should put the blush on Protestants. While I abhore [sic] in my very heart the tyrannical power of the false and idolatrous worship, the erroneous doctrines of that Church, I admire the spirit of this priest. He does not sleep more than four or five hours in twenty-four, and as long as he can have fish and potatoes he is willing to live and labor among these Indians.

Pitezel’s admiration speaks highly of Baraga. In the estimation of someone who had the utmost contempt of the Catholic religion, Baraga showed certain qualities and characteristics that earned even Pitezel’s respect.

Pitezel travelled back downstate to Adrian the following year, and spoke to a congregation about the Native Americans of Lake Superior and the missions among them. There is no record of whether he received, or even requested, any donations, but he did spread the word about what was going on up north. A few weeks later he visited a mission on Lake Huron and heard from another missionary about a Native American who “renounced heathenism and embraced Christianity in conjunction with his wife, for whom he was violently persecuted by the rest.” Apparently he was beaten and had an ear ripped off by his brother.

On his way back to L’Anse he visited his former mission station at Sault Sainte Marie. He witnessed Rev. William Brockway baptize a Native American on his

44 Pitezel, 443-444.
45 Pitezel, 345.
46 See John H. Pitezel Journals, 6 September 1846; 7 October 1846, CHL, JHP.
deathbed. Pitezel said, “O that Christ may accept this poor heathen penitent into his fold.” He also visited the Baptist missionary Abel Bingham, and at Bingham’s request preached a brief sermon. It is not clear if Pitezel preached to Native Americans or whites. It appears, however, that whenever he could he preferred to preach to whites. Perhaps that was because he always had to use an interpreter, as he never learned any Native American languages. In November he recorded at Kewawenon that he preached to the whites while another missionary, Rev. Holt, preached to the Native Americans. Furthermore, when he did preach to Native Americans, he often recorded that he preached a “very plain discourse.” When he preached to whites, his reviews of his sermons were much more in-depth and self-congratulatory.

Pitezel’s opportunities to preach to whites increased greatly during 1846 and 1857. An expedition reported massive amounts of copper in the Upper Peninsula in 1841. An 1843 treaty cleared the way for miners and prospectors to flood the region. Protestant and Catholic missionaries alike were concerned about these new souls, particularly with the paucity of churches and clergy in the area.

Pitezel returned from a tour of the Copper Country mines in late 1846. He reported that he received a warm reception, and discovered religious “backsliders” and a number of Roman Catholics. He indicated, however, that everyone, including the

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47 John H. Pitezel Journals, 12 October 1846, CHP, JHP. For more on Abel Bingham, see chapter six. In 1848 the two men again shared the pulpit. See John H. Pitezel Journals, 29 October 1848, CHL, JHP.

48 John H. Pitezel Journals, 1 November 1846; 8 November 1846, CHL, JHP.

49 The “Copper Country” is the nickname given to much of the Keweenaw Peninsula of Michigan, where the majority of copper mines were established.
Catholics, were happy to hear a preacher of any denomination. The increased workload did not bother Pitezel, as he felt that “the addition of the mining district to our mission has greatly increased my labours but I trust that thereby I may be rendered more extensively useful. And this is the grand object of living – to be useful.”

The Upper Peninsula was transformed with the advent of the mining industry. Missionaries such as Pitezel had a front row seat to the evolution and life, culture, and environment wrought by mining. He wrote to his mother in 1846 of these changes:

Two or three years ago only a few white men were to be seen in all this region now there are some thousands. And as the tide of emigration is turned this way, villages and cities too, are destined to spring up in this country as if by magic and the loneliness of these forests, will be exchanged for the delights of civilization. Here we anticipate, at no very distant date, houses of worship will spring up and the adventurous pioneers of this country will be followed by the minister of the gospel. You may think me visionary. But I think what I have said will fall short of the reality. God never made such a vast & valuable territory as this for nothing.

He ends the letter describing how much he enjoys breathing in the scent of pine and viewing the magnificent vistas of Lake Superior. The letter has more interesting details of Pitezel’s personality than his love of scent and sight. He, like many whites, did not feel that the land was used properly prior to the coming of the white man. It was a lonely area void of civilization. Now that the miners were on the way, there was much to look forward to. God did not make the land to sit idle and beautiful; it was there to be used to its fullest potential. Finally, Pitezel may not have felt that his time was best spent as a

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50 John H. Pitezel to his Brothers, Sisters, and Friends, 16 January 1846, CHL, JHP; John H. Pitezel Journals, 4 December 1846, CHL, JHP.

51 Ibid.

52 John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 13 June 1846.
missionary to Native Americans. Perhaps he felt that his talents could only be used to its fullest potential with a white audience.

Pitezel was assigned as the missionary to the miners for both 1847 and 1848. As he mentions this to his mother, he brings up an important detail. He states that he was now separated from the Indian department. Although he could have been “contented to labour longer for the benefit of the natives but as we are again placed among the whites we are not desirous to change back again.” While he did not necessarily mind missionary work to Native Americans, and felt he was doing them some good, he was relieved to be back among whites. As he travelled among the mines in places like Cliff Mine and Eagle Harbor, he preached and delivered temperance lectures. Some of the lectures were successful, as he obtained some signatures. He also encountered the “Roman Catholic” priest, since many of the miners he encountered were either German or French Catholics. Although he was assigned to the mining district, he did not forget his Native American mission at Kewawenon. On February 21, 1847, he baptized James Tanner and his family, who had converted from Catholicism. He felt Tanner could be useful as an interpreter and possibly as a preacher if he kept his faith. Pitezel experienced great satisfaction when Catholics chose to listen to him preach. The next day he visited an elderly Native American woman who seemed to be unhappy with Catholicism. He

53 John H. Pitezel to his Mother, 19 November 1847 and 22 November 1847, CHL, JHP.

54 See John H. Pitezel to Joshua Pitezel, 13 June 1847, CHL, JHP; John H. Pitezel Journals, 14 January 1847 and 28 January 1847, CHL, JHP. In addition, it is important to keep in mind the many trials and hardships missionaries experienced on their circuitous journeys. For example, from 1847 onward Pitezel mentions a reoccurring boil on his knee, but he never let it stop him from travelling. See John H. Pitezel Journals, 6 February 1847, CHL, JHP.
turned to Catholicism and was baptized after “she tried in vain to find peace in the pagan worship.” However, she found no relief as a Catholic. “The priest never explained to her the way of salvation. She never heard such things as she has heard among us. She desires to find the true way.”\(^{55}\) While this statement must be evaluated carefully, it appears that at times one of the main complaints Protestant missionaries had against Catholic missionaries was accurate: They baptized first, and if they got around to it, instructed later. The Native Americans all too often never really understood the faith into which they had been baptized. In fact, it appears that at times Pitezel did not even preach to Native Americans because he thought were not ready. On April 18, 1847, he preached to whites, but “had a class-meeting among the Indians.”\(^{56}\)

One of the main complaints that all missionaries shared, regardless of denomination, was backsliding. Both whites and Native Americans were accused of not maintaining their faith on an appropriate level. Whenever Pitezel encountered this en masse, he held a meeting to inquire about the causes. One such meeting occurred in late June 1847. He gathered the Native Americans together “for the purpose of inquiring into the cause of delinquency and backsliding of some of the members.” He gave them his usual “very plain and practicable talk” about the importance of the religion, and cautioned them that if they refused to change their ways they would be laid aside “as dead and unprofitable members.” Pitezel also gave the Native Americans a chance to present their side of the story. According to him, “As what I said to them struck them as

\(^{55}\) John H. Pitezel Journals, 22 February 1847, CHL, JHP.

\(^{56}\) John H. Pitezel Journals, 18 April 1847, CHL. JHP.
being of a very serious nature they requested time for consideration & to meet again in the afternoon.” They met later that day, and Pitezel described the meeting:

As usual with them we were forced into a very tedious meeting. First they must have the general rules of the discipline read (which indeed was very proper) to see wherein they had departed from them. Then the rules respecting the duty of the missionary must also be read to see if he had fully discharged his duty at which he was very ready in the outset with humility to acknowledge that he had in many instances failed. But they must at any rate be satisfied. On the whole though there was on the part of two or three a disposition to find fault the generality appeared with meekness to listen to our well intended instruction with evident design to profit thereby.  

Pitezel’s margin note to this entry was that missionaries must be governed by their rules. Unlike Baraga, Pitezel was ready and willing to admit his errors. If his missionary activities did not work or did not hold, he could blame himself if warranted. Nevertheless, Pitezel was satisfied with the outcome of this meeting, because the next day he preached to a full congregation earlier in the day, and again later with “several more Indians present.” However, scarcely three months later he again complained to his journal about backsliders.  

57 John H. Pitezel Journals, 26 June 1847, CHL, JHP.

58 John H. Pitezel Journals, 27 June 1847, CHL, JHP.

59 John H. Pitezel Journals, 26 September 1847, CHL, JHP. He again mentions that he preached a “plain sermon to the Indians.” On October 10 1847 there is yet another entry that lamented backsliding, although this time whites were included with Native Americans as among the guilty. See John H. Pitezel Journals, 10 October 1847, CHL, JHP.
Pitezel Named Superintendent of the Indian Missions

Pitezel continued to travel around and preached to both Native Americans and whites, which led him to an interesting conclusion by September. He stated,

Much is said against the poor Indians – their slowness in making improvement. But I was led to contrast the actual condition of the natives with the whites of this region. At the village of Sault Sainte Marie the gospel has been preached by different missionaries for the last 18 or 19 years – Some of these have been talented and powerful preachers, but at this time there is not a Protestant society of whites in the place.60

While Pitezel never saw whites and Native Americans as equals, he did see religion as somewhat of an equalizer, and based his opinions of people on the level of their faith.

As noted earlier, Pitezel’s mother feared for his safety at times. Her fears intensified when news of the Whitman massacre reached her. Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa founded a Presbyterian mission in southeastern Oregon Territory. The mission turned into a regular stop for pioneers travelling the Oregon Trail. Cultural and religious differences between the Whitmans and Native Americans culminated after a measles outbreak in 1847. Soon after the Whitmans and eleven others were killed by the area Native Americans, while nearly fifty others were taken hostage.61 When Pitezel’s mother heard of this she wrote to her son in a panic, who was obliged to reply:

60 John H. Pitezel Journals, 8 September 1848, CHL, JHP.

You seem to think that our situation is somewhat dangerous on account of the Indians. The Indians of Oregon are very different from those in this country. They are no way related and have no interactions with each other. Besides our Indians here are but a handful; in Oregon there are many powerful & warlike tribes. And more than all we do not live among the Indians now at all but are surrounded with several hundred white people on every side. In a word whatever else we might fear we have no reason to indulge the least apprehension from the Indians of this quarter.62

If nothing else, this letter shows that Pitezal did see differences among Native Americans that could go beyond Christian and non-Christian. Nowhere did he mention Christianity in this message to his mother, nor did he blame the Whitman Massacre or devilish pagan Natives.

Pitezal was named superintendent of the Indian Mission district in 1848 in place of William Brockway. Pitezal recorded little about his appointment. Perhaps he saw it as business as usual, or perhaps he welcomed the chance to take a break from dealing with Native Americans all the time. If he thought he would spend less time with Native Americans because of his supervisory role, he soon found that this was not the case. In September he joined Native Americans at their annuity payment in La Pointe. He, like many other missionaries, preferred to attend if it would help to keep alcohol out of Native American hands as much as possible.63

On the trip to La Pointe, Pitezal took advantage of the boat ride to read a book on “Papal Rome.” Sadly, he did not indicate the author or the title, but his commentary on the book is telling. He agrees with the author’s ideas on the best way to conquer Rome – advance both Church and State against it simultaneously – and he cited the Church of

62 John H. Pitezal to his Mother, 10 July 1848, CHL, JHP.
63 John H. Pitezal to his Mother, 9 October 1848, CHL, JHP; John H. Pitezal Journals, 19 September and 23 September 1848, CHL, JHP.
England as a great example of that strategy. He finished the book a few days later, summarizing the best ways to defeat the Papacy, and stated,

Finished book on Papal Rome – A sickening picture sure enough if drawn correctly. And we have no reason to doubt the truth of what came under his (the author’s) own observation. Nor can we doubt the other portion as it is backed at every turn with the history of her own writers. If the Church of Rome is infallible!, it is for ambition, usurpation, tyranny, and corruption!64

Based on the available evidence, it is clear that many if not most other Protestant missionaries of the nineteenth century would have agreed with Pitezel’s views on the Catholic Church and the institution of the Papacy.65

Pitezel and Temperance

As noted, Pitezel was a fervent supporter of temperance. He frequently preached about it, lectured about it, and established societies devoted to keeping ardent spirits out of the bodies of both whites and Native Americans. His journals detail several notable examples of his temperance crusade.

Pitezel worked hard to prevent religious backsliding. Hand in hand with that came a fear that alcohol would lead Native Americans astray once more. One time he encountered a trader who provided Native Americans with alcohol in order to get as

64 John H. Pitezel Journals, 23 September and 29 September, 1848, CHL, JHP.

much money as possible from them. The trader then accused Pitezel of using goods appropriated for the missions for his own private use, a charge for which there is no evidence.\textsuperscript{66} Nonetheless, Pitezel was not afraid to confront anyone he suspected of providing Native Americans with alcohol.

Native Americans could and did die of alcohol poisoning or from accidents caused by intoxication. Pitezel encountered this on more than one occasion. In December 1848 he assisted in the funeral services of a man named Nanbenaosh. He was known as a heavy drinker, and was found burned to death in a neighbor’s “lodge.” Pitezel said, “The lodge was consumed over him badly mutilating him. A bottle was found by his side. O the horrors of intemperance!”\textsuperscript{67} It comes as no surprise, given his temperament and experiences, which Pitezel railed at and against anyone who used or provided alcohol. He was pragmatic enough to realize that his efforts would not always be successful. In April 1849 he stated, “I think the rum dealers will not thank me much for my morning talk. But what is this to me. My duty is to preach the whole truth without disguise, giving to saint & sinner a portion in due season. The issue I leave with God.”\textsuperscript{68} The following month he preached to the Native Americans gathered at Naomikong, a site north and west of Sault Sainte Marie, and urged them not to touch whiskey. “I tried to urge such motives as ought to move Indians namely the poverty, suffering, and disgrace it heaped upon them and especially the many deaths occasioned among them by intemperance.”\textsuperscript{69}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{66} John H. Pitezel Journals, 6 October 1847.
\textsuperscript{67} John H. Pitezel Journals, 1 and 2 December, 1848, CHL, JHP.
\textsuperscript{68} John H. Pitezel Journals, 1 April 1849, CHL, JHP.
\textsuperscript{69} John H. Pitezel Journals, 13 May 1849, CHL, JHP.
\end{flushright}
There is a final and interesting note about Pitezel and alcohol. It seems that he did not necessarily blame Native Americans for their drunkenness. He did not see them as a people who were naturally inclined to drink more. Rather, he blamed traders and others who supplied alcohol. In 1850 he visited L’Anse and encountered a Native American whom he had previously converted. Pitezel was grieved to see the man in the drunken state he was in. He stated, “He is one of our members . . . oh how changed! I had often beheld him happy in the Lord – had heard him tell the story of the cross while tears would bedew his cheeks; but now he had the walk & look of the drunkard. May God have mercy on the dealers in this liquid fire.”

Missionary Activities of Rev. Pitezel through his transfer in 1852

John Pitezel worked with Native American convert and missionary Peter Marksman from time to time. Often Marksman took care of the morning service to the Native Americans, while Pitezel handled afternoon services to the whites. One evening a Canadian Native American named J.M. Muskrat held a prayer meeting and preached. According to Pitezel, the Native Americans “were much affected and cried aloud before he concluded.” Here is another example of the effect Native American preachers had on their brethren. They could communicate in a way white preachers, regardless of whether they spoke a Native language, never could. Muskrat related the persecution he endured at the hands of his fellow Native Americans who declined to accept Christianity. He had tomahawks aimed at his head, and had parts of his clothing cut away by knives. Pitezel

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70 John H. Pitezel Journals, 3 July 1850, CHL, JHP.
attributed his deliverance from danger to his acceptance of the Gospel.\textsuperscript{71} For the next few Sabbaths, Marksman preached to the Native Americans in Ojibwa, and Pitezel preached to the whites. While Pitezel never learned to speak Ojibwa, he learned enough words to occasionally transcribe some of Marksman’s sermons into his journals.\textsuperscript{72}

When the Pitezels moved to Sault Sainte Marie near the end of 1848, Peter Marksman and his wife joined them. From 1848 until his transfer to the Lower Peninsula in 1852, Pitezel logged many miles. During a short time in October 1848 he went from Sault Sainte Marie to Copper Harbor, the northernmost point of Keweenaw Peninsula, and back, in order to preach to both miners and Native Americans.\textsuperscript{73}

When he returned to Sault Sainte Marie at the end of the Copper Harbor trip, he administered “the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper” to some Native Americans. This is the first time in his journals or letters that he mentions doing so.\textsuperscript{74} The fact that it may have taken Pitezel five years to first deliver that particular sacrament is really no surprise given the time he spent teaching Native Americans prior to their baptism. Based on a January 1, 1849, journal entry, it seems that Native American prospects for conversion endured a series of steps on the way to salvation with Pitezel and Methodism. He stated that he again administered communion, with only eleven communicants. This sacrament was reserved for only those who were ready. Once received, however, it was not to be taken lightly nor for granted. Pitezel was upset because of the small number present at that communion. He said, “I have often witnessed great backwardness among the Indians

\textsuperscript{71} John H. Pitezel Journals, 17 October 1850, CHL, JHP.

\textsuperscript{72} See John H. Pitezel Journals, 24 October and 7 November, 185

\textsuperscript{73} John H. Pitezel Journals, 5 October, 11 October, 22 October, 29 October, 1848, CHL, JHP.

\textsuperscript{74} John H. Pitezel Journals, 13 November 1848, CHL, JHP.
about communion but never quite so much as at this time.”75 Backwardness and backsliding were underlying themes throughout Pitezel’s journals.

Pitezel’s journal from 1849 is one of his most intriguing. There is a great deal of Ojibwa ethnography present, and used with caution, gives us insights into both Pitezel’s mind and the Ojibwa world. On January 6 he and Marksman reached a site on Carp River and met up with some Native Americans whom he knew and who were apparently happy to see him. They enjoyed a short prayer session together, and then the missionaries moved on to another location. He found “Monomence, my old friend, the chief lately removed from Grand Island.” Pitezel was happy to see his friend living in a log house, which he considered to be certain advancement towards civilization. The chief used to live in a wigwam – a marker of savagery to Pitezel.76

The next day was the Sabbath. Pitezel and Marksman stayed with the chief Saturday night. Sunday saw a good congregation of Native Americans gathered. Pitezel himself preached “a very plain practicable discourse” on how the grace of God brings salvation to all men. Marksman preached in the afternoon. The rest of the day was spent in a prayer meeting and in song. He also baptized an infant.77 While the missionaries prepared to leave they were asked to travel to another location six miles away. Some Native Americans there who wanted to see him, he was told. In addition, there was a “Native missionary there who preached in such a scolding manner that the Indians do not

75 John H. Pitezel Journals, 1 January 1849, CHL, JHP.
76 John H. Pitezel Journals, 6 January 1849, CHL, JHP.
77 Pitezel never baptized adults until they were properly instructed, unless they were on their deathbed. He would, however, baptize infants if asked.
like to hear him.” Since the request was rather pressing and urgent, Pitezel and Marksman decided to go.78

Upon their arrival at the next location, Pitezel entered a Native American dwelling that he said provided “a demonstration of the selfishness of heathen Indians . . . .” Pitezel followed his usual routine of walking around and shaking everyone’s hands. He offered his hand to an elderly woman who was making snowshoes. The woman ignored Pitezel’s presence. After pausing a few moments to see if the woman would acknowledge Pitezel, he turned away. Upon doing so, the woman said, “I see your hand but there is nothing in it that will benefit me. I am poor and you might bring me something that would do me some good.” The passage ends there, as Pitezel does not provide commentary, nor did he try to explain what happened. Perhaps he included it out of frustration, or as an example of what he perceived to be Native American pettiness. Finally, Pitezel might be trying to indicate that Christian Native Americans would never act in such a manner, and that the woman’s heathenism was to blame for her behavior.

After this, Pitezel returned to the primary reason for his visit. He visited the local chief’s wigwam. The chief told Pitezel that he was “very desirous to have us come and preach.” He stated that he spoke for everyone else, and that it was the wish of the local band to have the missionaries preach. The chief also complained about the Baptist missionary, who was also a Native American. It seems he had a harsh manner. Pitezel told the chief that they would do all they could. At that point, Pitezel told the chief that he was glad to see him again, as he realized that he had met this man and his family five years previously when he preached a funeral service for one of the chief’s sons. Up to

78 John H. Pitezel Journals, 7 January 1849, CHL, JHP.
that point the chief did not recognize Pitezel either, but then he asked, “Me suh owh kaget,” which means, “Is this the very one?” Pitezel said that he was indeed, and the chief “reached out his hand to me saying ‘bushoo bushoo’ and appeared as much rejoiced as if he had met with one of his own children.” Pitezel and Marksman then travelled to the other band and preached.  

As Karl Hele reminds us, neither Native Americans nor missionaries paid much attention to arbitrary government borders, particularly those drawn between the United States and Canada. For centuries Native Americans passed over the St. Mary’s River that separates the United States and Canada at present-day Sault Sainte Marie. Pitezel’s journals bear testament to that. On January 23, 1849, he visited the Native Americans located at Garden River, north of Sault Sainte Marie on the Canadian side of the international border. Pitezel makes no mention of crossing an international boundary. This was not the first time Pitezel visited those Native Americans, as he remarked in his journal that “we formally had a class at this place. But an Episcopal preacher is now living among them and they do not come near us any more.” Pitezel met with that unnamed Episcopal minister on this trip, and stated that “an Indian family lives with him – not the most neat either to appearance. I do not admire his way of living for a missionary.” He also felt that if a missionary lived a life of self-denial, he was doing plenty of good, but he would do more if he taught school, especially since there were numerous children at the location. Overall, Pitezel was happy to see the Native Americans at Garden River receiving religious instruction, even if it was not Methodist.

79 Ibid. Marksman also served as Pitezel’s interpreter. Although I am not certain how Pitezel made this judgment, he remarked on January 21 that Marksman interpreted “unusually well.”
The true state of the case is these Indians were all once under the instruction of Episcopal ministers. Several years ago their mission was abandoned, and we took the Indians under our watchcare [sic]. Now they seem inclined to follow the way first showed them. There are a few we dislike to give up but they are doing well & we bid them God speed.\(^{80}\)

Had the Garden River Native Americans been under the care of a Catholic priest, he would have felt entirely different. Regardless, the night after he visited the Episcopalian he was the beneficiary of a priest’s hospitality. Pitezel referred to him as a “singular Frenchman – a Roman Catholic. He did more than was necessary to make us comfortable.”\(^{81}\)

Pitezel learned a great deal about Native American life and history from Peter Marksman, and recorded some of it in his journals. In fact, occasionally he filled several pages with information recalled from Marksman. For example, not long after the above trip, Pitezel and Marksman were again walking several miles through the snow. Marksman told Pitezel that his father wanted him to become a medicine man. He spent the first fifteen years of his life preparing to be a medicine man prior to his conversion. Pitezel outlined the details Marksman provided, and mentioned that the real intimate details of the medicine man society are known only to members. He did learn, however, that there were usually six male elders who portray gods of medicine, and one female elder who portrays the goddess of medicine. Members were instructed to never use harsh language when talking to or about their deities, and that the Great Spirit sees all, because

\(^{80}\) John H. Pitezel Journals, 23 January 1849, CHL, JHP.

\(^{81}\) John H. Pitezel Journals, 24 January 1849, CHL, JHP. To this entry he added, “For many days it was insanely cold – down to 40 degrees below, and five feet of snow was measured in the woods . . . the oldest inhabitants say that they have never witnessed such a winter.”
the eyes of the Great Spirit are as large as the sky. Overall, Pitezel appeared to enjoy the long discussions he had with Marksman, and from time to time recorded the stories he heard without commentary.

Near the end of their journey an impromptu camp meeting was held. A few of the Native Americans from the surrounding area heard of Marksman’s and Pitezel’s presence, and decided to pay them a visit. Some walked a considerable distance. Pitezel remarked, “This looks a little like old fashioned Methodist meetings where people can work a little to get there.” A meeting was held in the evening where Pitezel explained the rules of the “society.” At nine the next morning they gathered again for “love feast.” Pitezel felt that “The Great Spirit also met with us.” This is the first time Pitezel talked of the Great Spirit being part of his world, as well as part of the Ojibwa world. The meeting was packed full of speakers, and could have lasted all day. Those who did not get a chance to speak wanted to. “Nearly all seemed to feel that God was in our midst.” Later on Pitezel explained “briefly the nature and design of the Lord’s Supper.”

Marksman ended the day when he preached to a sizable crowd.

In June, Pitezel travelled to La Pointe. His journals are filled with a new element on this trip: bugs. Anyone who visits the Upper Peninsula in the summer, even today, knows how thick bugs can be, particularly the nasty black fly. Mosquitoes are a nuisance as well. On June 16 and 17 Pitezel stated that the black flies and mosquitoes were so bad that he could not sleep. The same trend continued through the following week, especially when they had to travel through a swamp right after a heavy rain. He stated, “We were

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82 John H. Pitezel Journals, 7 and 8 March, 1849, CHL, JHP.

83 Ibid.
scarcely permitted to eat or to attend to any of the necessary calls of nature . . . By taking much precaution with our own tent & covering up from head to toe we made out to get a little sleep the past night. On awakening we found the tents swarming with our enemies.”84 This was business as usual for Upper Peninsula missionaries, and nothing could be done about it.

During the La Pointe trip Pitezel had a chance to see a medicine man actually practicing his ritual. He did not see it as an expression of faith; to him, it was just a performance. After meeting with other missionaries to discuss business matters, he states that he was “called to go and see the performance of an Indian medicine man.” He describes the ceremony in detail, and the passage appears in the appendix. Pitezel observed that the medicine man was supposed to swallow bones, and there was a bear claw with brass nails inserted throughout. The man who was to benefit from the ritual lay on a rug in front of the fire. As the ceremony progressed, Pitezel said, “I felt as if I were in the proximity of hell. So my brethren felt who were with me. Our hearts were lifted up to God in prayer for these poor souls while we beheld this idolatry.”85 Pitezel makes his feelings about traditional Native American religion clear in this single passage.

Conclusions

Rev. Pitezel and other Methodist missionaries shared some commonalities with Catholic missionaries, and also some key differences. Missionaries realized that they had a great deal of tough work to do. Pitezel realized this when he watched Peter Marksman

84 John H. Pitezel Journals, 16, 17, 23, and 24 June, 1849, CHL, JHP.

85 John H. Pitezel Journals, 21-22 June 1849, CHL, JHP.
repair a stone chimney and said, “Missionaries must be jack at all trades.”86 Both Methodist and Catholic missionaries endured harsh conditions. Pitezel, Baraga, and other white missionaries never hesitated to pass judgment on that which they did not understand about Native American culture. Their understanding of Native American culture was limited by nineteenth century ethnocentrism. Furthermore, Native Americans’ level of intelligence was often called into question. Pitezel often enjoyed preaching to whites because those were the few times he was in front of an “intelligent” audience.87 They also wanted to see the salvation of Native American souls, but had different ideas of how to get there. In fact, they generally distrusted one another greatly.

One fundamental difference concerned the definition of conversion. Baraga and other Catholics baptized frequently and in great numbers. Pitezel, the Methodists, and many other Protestants expected Native Americans to undergo much more instruction prior to baptism. Had Catholics wanted, they could have used Native preachers to a greater extent. In Baraga’s opinion, Native Americans lacked the mental capacity to ever become priests. Pitezel felt otherwise, and Peter Marksman is an excellent example of how beneficial the presence of a Native American preacher could be. When they were together, Pitezel often asked Marksman to handle services for Native Americans. This also ties into the issue of languages. Baraga understood the importance of learning Ojibwa and other Native American languages straight away. Pitezel and many other Protestants never learned, and always relied heavily upon interpreters. As Pitezel wrote in 1850,

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86 John H. Pitezel Journals, 17 November 1849, CHL, JHP.

87 John H. Pitezel Journals, 24 August 1849, CHL, JHP.
This day spent in transacting the business of the mission. Find myself greatly at loss to do anything among the Indians for the want of an interpreter. We have more trouble on this score than on any other connected with the supply of our Indian work. There are those who are well qualified for the work so far as mere interpreting is concerned, but most of them are strangers to piety and those who have known anything about religion, generally are deficient in stability and perseverance. Most of them are indolent.88

Another difference appears with regards to views of success. When mission attempts failed, Baraga tended to blame the Native Americans. While Pitezel did not totally exonerate Native Americans from blame, he also pointed the finger at himself. In 1849 he met with Native Americans who asked for a meeting. According to Pitezel, they wanted the missionaries to furnish them with medicine and food. In addition, they requested that the missionaries take children away from poor families and keep them in the missions, and they wanted missionaries to go to individual homes and teach the children because they, the parents, could not make them go. With all of these requests in mind, they did not want the missionaries to live among the Native Americans. Pitezel responded that some of their demands are not within his power to meet, and a stand-off ensued. Pitezel told them “that we did not force them to embrace our teaching, they had it in their power to encourage the missionaries or to withdraw their favor as they thought best.” In this case, the Native Americans withdrew their favor, and the mission was abandoned.89

Missionaries are a great source of information about the people and environments they worked with. Pitezel certainly realized this. Later in life, he indexed his journals. Additionally, people returned a fair amount of his correspondence to him, and he

88 John H. Pitezel Journals, 13 June 1850, CHL, JHP.

89 John H. Pitezel Journals, 28 June 1849, CHL, JHP.
reviewed them and made editorial remarks. He realized, or at least hoped, that he wrote for history. Reviewing his primary sources and comparing them with other missionaries allows us to gather the most complete picture of missionary activities possible. It also allows us glimpses into their thoughts and feelings about their work and for their charges. In the case of Pitezel, it also provides an example of a nineteenth century Native American who converted to Methodism and entered the ministry himself. His name was Peter Marksman, and he is the subject of the following chapter.

Missionary activity in the United States changed dramatically as the century progressed. The Civil War disrupted missionaries and missions all across the country. As Margaret MacMillan states, the thing that alarmed the Methodist Church most about the Civil War was the threat to foreign missions. The primary concern was financial. Many missions operated on a shoestring budget to begin with, and the war stretched those budgets to the breaking point. As such, less and less money was available for Native American missions. As the 1860s progressed, the conference minutes of the Methodist church in Michigan contain less and less about Native American missions, especially in the Upper Peninsula.

Accordingly, Pitezel left the Upper Peninsula in 1852. He was appointed to Kalamazoo, and he was never reassigned him to the northern peninsula. He continued to

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91 After the Civil War, denominational mission boards became intimately connected with federal policy and “humanitarian” reform, and missionaries became the vanguard of Americanization on the reservations. In addition to Higham’s Noble, Wretched, and Redeemable, see Francis Paul Prucha, The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indian (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).
preach, and was a noted and sought-after speaker. He lived to be the oldest member of
the Michigan Conference of the Methodist Church, and was the last surviving member of
the original 1836 Michigan Conference session. Rev. Pitezel passed away in Ohio on
May 2, 1906. He had seen ninety two years.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{92} Reuter, 59.
Chapter Five

Native Americans as Missionaries: Rev. Peter Marksman

For many missionaries and missionary societies, the ultimate measure of success is when converted Native Americans were ordained to the ministry. One notable instance of this is Rev. Peter Marksman, a Methodist who worked with John Pitezel. Much of the information available about Marksman comes from a biography Pitezel wrote about him.¹ His name appears in the records of the Detroit and Western Michigan Conferences of the Methodist Church as well.

Marksman’s actual date of birth is uncertain. In a 1901 interview, his wife Hannah said he was born in Wisconsin around 1815. His mother was a “half-breed Chippewa,” and his father was a “Christian full-blood Chippewa Indian.”² However, Marksman himself stated that his parents were never converted to Christianity, nor ever

¹ John H. Pitezel, Life of Rev. Peter Marksman, An Ojibwa Missionary, Illustrating the Triumphs of the Gospel Among the Ojibwa Indians (Cincinnati: Western Methodist Book Concern, n.d.). There is no clear date of publication for this book. However, the introduction of the book contains a poem by Pitezel written in 1893. The version of the book I possess is likely a second edition, since it contains the 1901 interview. It is not marked as such, however.

² Quoted in Ibid, 3.
inclined to do so. Soon after his birth, Marksman’s parents moved the family to Sault Sainte Marie, where he was later converted to Christianity by Canadian missionaries. According to his wife, he himself began missionary work at the age of fifteen at Mackinac. Marksman entered Ebenezer College in Illinois, a school affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1837. He received his first charge as a Methodist missionary to a mission station at Flint, Michigan, and then to L’Anse.\(^3\) He married Hannah Morien in 1844. For the remainder of his life, until he passed away in 1892, Marksman was a missionary throughout Michigan, except for a year at a mission in Wisconsin.

In his biography of Marksman, Pitezel quotes extensively from primary sources produced by Marksman himself. Sadly it appears these sources are lost to history now, but they were available to Pitezel. He states that he is fortunate to have had them, and remarked that Marksman’s penmanship was quite good, “especially for a Native American.”\(^4\)

According to Marksman’s account of his childhood, his father’s family belonged to the Catfish Clan, which “is very large in the Chippewa tribe.”\(^5\) He discussed the use of totems, and compared it to how the Israelites divided their families in a similar method. His grandfather and great-grandfather were the principal chiefs at Mackinac. Marksman’s father visited the west end of Lake Superior and fell dangerously ill. A woman named Wa-me-te-goo-zhe-qua doctored him back to health, and his father

\(^3\) Ibid, 2-4. L’Anse is straight across the bay from the Kewawenon mission station.

\(^4\) Ibid, 15-17.

\(^5\) Ibid, 16.
married her. Marksman had two brothers and four sisters. He said, “I was the youngest of the family. My father and mother thought everything of me; not only that I was the youngest of the family, but because I was a twin.”6 There were superstitions in his tribe about twins. They felt that twins were superior children and that they possess “gods that dwell in the heavens.”7

By the time Marksman wrote the sources Pitezel used, it is clear that Christianity had had an enormous impact upon him. He gave his date of birth as September 1815, and then stated,

I was appeared [sic] on one of the islands of the St. Croix River, between the head of Lake Superior and Mississippi River, north end of the State of Wisconsin and southeast of Minnesota. I was born in the night, well adopted in sin! In the night of heathenism! Born blind, my spiritual eyes were closed; I knew not my creator, God. September moon shone upon the place where I was born; well marked, there was a little true light shone upon the heathen from the great God of heaven and earth. The true light which the Indian race have is to know the right and wrong, to love and to hate, to obey and disobey, etc. The Almighty God writes these with his own finger upon the conscience of every man.8

Marksman thus spoke earlier of his childhood as a time of indoctrination of traditional Ojibwa religious and cultural practices. Christianity taught him to consider these years as “the darkness of sin.”

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7 Ibid. Marksman also explained the meaning of his name. His real name was Ma-dwa-gwun-a-yaush, meaning Ringing Feather. He was also known as Kah-goo-dah-ah-qua, meaning Marksman. See ibid, 18.
8 Quoted in ibid, 20-21.
After a five-year spiritual journey towards Christianity, Marksman was finally converted at Sault Sainte Marie in July 1835. Interestingly, Marksman had been in contact with the Baptist missionary Abel Bingham since 1830, but it seems to have had little effect. As Pitezel remarked, “Not until he heard the gospel preached with point and power from men of his own nation, like John Sunday, Peter Jones, John Kahbeege, and Taunche did the barbed arrow strike his sinful heart.” This is a critical point. Native American missionaries had many tools at their disposal to convert their colleagues. They had a common history, culture, and language, things the missionaries lacked. Even though Pitezel never said as much, in this example he provides crucial evidence to illustrate this fact.

After his conversion, Marksman felt the missionary spirit burning in his heart. In a letter to another missionary, he asked his colleague how he felt about spreading the glorious work of God. He said, “I tell you, my brother, what I feel when the missionary spirit burns in my poor heart. O, it sometimes makes me to jump out of my chair . . . Why, I see so many poor souls who starve for want of living bread.” Rev. John Clark invited Marksman to join him in missionary labor, and he was more than willing to go.

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9 Ibid, 51.
10 See Chapter Six.
11 Ibid, 52.
12 Pitezel notes that Marksman considered Rev. Peter Jones to be his spiritual father. In addition, one day when Pitezel and Marksman were walking together, Marksman pointed to a schoolhouse and remarked that that was where he was converted. See ibid.
13 Ibid, 57.
However, his parents did not want him to leave. They said that he was too young, and unable to care for himself. If he fell ill, who would take care of him? Marksman tried to comfort his parents by telling them that God would take care of him, and that He was too kind to let a missionary such as himself get sick. Marksman kept encouraging his parents to trust in God, and finally, according to Marksman, he won. His mother said, with tears in her eyes, “My dear son, the Lord will bless you. I let you go, for God calls you into the ministry. Be faithful.”15 There is no evidence that his parents ever even considered converting to Christianity, so his mother’s blessing is somewhat suspect.

Peter Marksman enjoyed his missionary endeavors. Like his colleagues, he travelled across long distances to do his work. This fact did not discourage him, as he stated, “O, how often I have had a glorious time . . . O, what a glorious cause! – although I often have been tired, not only in preaching but in foot traveling.”16 He encountered deep snow, bleeding feet, hunger, cold, and fatigue, but he was never deterred from the mission within his heart. He dug himself into the snow at night like a sled dog if he did not have access to lodging to keep warm. Never did Marksman feel that behavior was beneath him or any other missionaries.

**Missionary Trails of Rev. Peter Marksman**

The official records of the Methodist Church in Michigan contain gaps about Marksman’s locations from year-to-year. The following chart provides the information contained in those reports:

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Table 5.1: Missionary Appointments of Rev. Peter Marksman

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mission Station</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Sault Sainte Marie</td>
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<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>Kewawenon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>Kewawenon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>Fond du Lac</td>
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<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Sault Sainte Marie</td>
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<td>1849</td>
<td>Sault Sainte Marie</td>
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<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Sault Sainte Marie</td>
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<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>Fond du Lac</td>
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<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>Sault Sainte Marie</td>
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<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Janesville</td>
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<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>Saginaw Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Saginaw Bay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pitezel, with access to Marksman’s letters and journals, does his best to fill in the gaps in the official record. First, Marksman spent around five years with Rev. John Clark, learning the trade and remaining “on trial” in the eyes of the church. He spent the winter of 1834-35 with John Kahbeege and John Johnson at the northern Lake Michigan mission station at Ke-che-we-kwa-doong. The following winter he travelled to Fond du Lac to assist a Presbyterian missionary, Rev. Ely. There is nothing in the records to indicate how he crossed paths with this man. Marksman spent 1836-1837 with John Johnson and George Copway at Lac Court Orielles; all three men were under the guidance of John Clark. In 1839 he officially transferred to the Michigan Conference of the Methodist Church and went to Sault Sainte Marie with William Brockway. Pitezel states that the Minutes of the Michigan Conference in 1840 lists Marksman as “continued on trial.”

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17 Information compiled from the Western Michigan Conference of the Methodist Church Archives, Albion College.

18 Pitezel states in a footnote that Ke-che-we-kwa-doong is also known as Grand Traverse. See ibid, 72.
The mission station Marksman found at Sault Sainte Marie was impressive. It had 140 acres reserved for the sole purpose of a mission, and was separate from the military base from which it took those 140 acres. It was up against the fast-flowing St. Mary’s River, with crystal-clear water deep enough for a steamer to dock on the front side of the mission. The mission house had an addition attached where children received food, clothing, education, and were “nurtured in the arts of civilized life.” The mission also had a farm, and young Native American boys were taught the ways of farming, something traditional Ojibwa culture relegated to women. Both a day school and a Sunday school were run by missionaries. Additionally, many Native Americans lived in the region surrounding Sault Sainte Marie, and missionaries had to travel often to meet with them, both in good weather and in bad. As for Marksman, “He traveled and preached. He interpreted the word preached by the white missionaries. When needed, he taught the school. In the activities of this work he was a conspicuous factor.”

Marksman had an incredibly perilous journey travelling in bark canoe over the waves of Lake Superior to reach Sault Sainte Marie. He arrived there with John Kahbeege and three other Native Americans committed to mission work. He awaited Superintendent William Brockway’s arrival, and with that came the news that Marksman had to leave his homeland and join the Lakeville Mission in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, in the vicinity of present-day Flint. Needless to say, although he was saddened that he had to go so far away, he did not question the decision. He stated, “I was willing

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19 Ibid, 74.
20 Ibid, 74-75.
21 This is discussed in great detail using Marksman’s own writings of the journey in Pitezel, *Life of Rev. Peter Marksman*, 76-81.
to leave my native country and come down to the place where I was appointed, knowing that God sending [sic] his unworthy servant where he may be useful. God forbid that I ever feel to make my choice of the place where I shall labor!”

This statement taken along with others that Marksman made show a man who truly gave himself up to God and to missionary labors. He had no qualms about going anywhere to do what he had to do in order to pass along the word of God.

Marksman lamented about the same things his colleagues did, and produced stories that illustrated the positive effects of his work. He stated,

And when I came to the place where I have been laboring this year, I was pleased with the country and the inhabitants. And I have found some of the Lakeville Indians loving Jesus Christ as their Savior. They were kind to me after they learned that I was their preacher for this year. I immediately commenced preaching and visiting from lodge to lodge. The Lord blessed the poor Indians, who once lay along the streets of white men, who are part of them black men in their hearts! And now the Indians are praising God in the streets and roads of white men. Now poor whisky, or fire-water, traders are ashamed; for the Indians have joined the temperance society, and keep their pledges. Now soon these poor fire-water traders will hide in their whisky barrels. Lord, find them out in their fire-water barrels!

Temperance played a vital role in missionary work, and Marksman did his best to pass that message along. While not all Native Americans embraced Christianity or missionaries, Marksman found some happiness and success in Lakeville. He felt that all of the Native Americans there were open to Christianity, and noted that after he preached they rejoiced and praised the name of God exuberantly. He taught thirty-six students, and some of them “achieved three and four syllable words.”

Also, like his colleagues, he

\[
\text{\underline{22 Ibid, 83.}}
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\[
\text{\underline{23 Ibid.}}
\]

\[
\text{\underline{24 Ibid.}}
\]
often had to travel to neighboring tribes, and mentioned visiting Native Americans in Genesee County, near Flint, approximately thirty-four miles northwest of Lakeville.

As historian Joel W. Martin reminds us, Native Americans on the road to Christianity had to accept the Christian of sin. Marksman himself had to endure that realization, and he made sure he taught it during his missionary travels. While at the Lakeville and Genesee County missions, he stated that he preached from Luke 15:18, which proclaims, “I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.” Hearing these words from a fellow Native American seems to have had an effect upon his audience, because, according to Marksman, as their understanding of the concept of sin increased, so did the tears running down their faces. At the end of his sermon, he asked, “Who will arise and go to his Father?” Everyone in attendance rose as one and stated that they would rise and embrace Christianity. The following morning they took “bad medicines” to Marksman, who piled them up and burned them before the eyes of those who had brought them. Following that, he baptized sixty-nine Native Americans along with their children.

The year 1842 was of great importance to Marksman. The Michigan Conference of the Methodist Church admitted Marksman into full connection with the church and ordained him a deacon. On August 21, 1842, Bishop Thomas A. Morris signed the paper Marksman had been waiting for so long. No longer “on trial,” he was then appointed


26 Quoted in Pitezel, Life of Rev. Peter Marksman, 85.

27 Ibid, 85-86.
assistant minister to the Kewawenon Mission, along with Rev. George W. Brown.\textsuperscript{28} When they arrived in the Upper Peninsula, Pitezel estimates that Marksman and Brown had to deal with at least six hundred Native Americans at the south end of Keweenaw Bay. They were also responsible for a band of Indians at Grand Island. Grand Island is located just off the shore from present-day Munising, approximately halfway between the Kewawenon Mission and Sault Sainte Marie. The majority of them, according to Pitezel, were Methodist, and wanted a minister. Pitezel stated, “Thus situated, to preach, to teach school, to interpret, to visit the Indians at home and abroad, Mr. Marksman had a field worthy of his best talents and powers.”\textsuperscript{29} Both Brown and Marksman were reappointed the following year to the Kewawenon Mission. However, this year proved to spawn an unforeseen menace at that mission. Pitezel refers to it as a “forerunner of evil.”\textsuperscript{30} A Roman Catholic priest, Frederic Baraga, arrived and convinced around half of the Native Americans present to move three miles across the bay to the west side. They founded a new mission there. “A church was built, very plain and primitive,” in addition to other buildings necessary for a mission. For Pitezel, this was a death blow to the Native Americans at the Kewawenon Mission.\textsuperscript{31} However, Baraga’s arrival was not the only harmful event that occurred that year. Apparently Peter Marksman erred somehow. Pitezel stated that something happened to the spiritual life of one of the missionaries, and “its reflex influence on the mission was fraught with evil . . . I must record the fact that a wily snare, but too successfully laid, drew our subject from the strait and narrow way.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, 88-89.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 91.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
He lost his strong hold on Christ, his place in the Church, and in his beloved Conference.”  Marksman was removed from the conference for a year, and spent his exile in Wisconsin.

The following summer was better for Rev. Marksman. He met a woman named Hannah Morien in La Pointe, Wisconsin. She spoke Ojibwa and had a light “tint,” to use Pitezel’s word. She also apparently had some “idiosyncrasies of manner,” but otherwise could pass as a white woman. She enrolled at the mission school in La Pointe and converted to Christianity at the age of fifteen. Her chosen religion was Presbyterian. Her ability to converse in both Ojibwa and English made her especially valuable to missionary work. She married Peter Marksman on August 20, 1844, and was by his side for the rest of his days. She took particular care of female Native Americans, who appreciated both her ability to speak with them in their own tongue, and her familiarity with their customs.

The first mission station the newlyweds reached was one familiar to Peter: Kewawenon. Pitezel pauses in the biography to explain the name. Peter Marksman referred to the Kewawenon Mission as Kah-ke-wa-oo-naun. Phonetically, that sounds like Kewawenon. Pitezel states,

In the estimation of this writer, it seems almost sacrilegious that this euphonic and beautiful name (Kah-ke-wa-oo-naun) should have been dropped out of use, and the Indian work be hitched on to some other work

33 C.T. Carrier to Robert Stuart, 27 July 1844, Letters Received, La Pointe Agency, National Archives, Office of Indian Affairs.
34 Ibid, 93.
by the indefinite term of “Indian Mission!” The latest designation is “L’Anse and Pequauming Indian Mission.” Why not retain the old name for the Indian work, and let the white settlers at L’Anse and Pequauming have their separate names?36

For all of the negative judgments Pitezel made about Native American culture, at least he appreciated the sound of the language he himself never learned. Eventually, Kewawenon morphed into Keweenaw. Presently there is Keweenaw Bay, Keweenaw Point, and Keweenaw County, to name a few. Pitezel also mentions that the post office during his time at the Kewawenon Mission was referred to as “Kewenaw [sic] Bay.”

Pitezel and Marksman were colleagues together at Kewawenon for three years. Marksman served as Pitezel’s interpreter while he preached. Marksman also taught both the day school and the Sunday school. He was also responsible for blowing the conch shell that summoned Native Americans from a three-mile radius. Marksman, according to Pitezel, was a veritable rock during their times together. He preached and sang God’s word, even in the worst of times. During the winter of 1844-45, both Peter and Hannah were stricken with scarlet fever. In 1846, the Marksmans witnessed the death of their son. The pregnancy was not easy, and Hannah was confined to bed. There was no doctor within a fifty-mile radius, so the care of Hannah fell to C.M. Johnson, the government carpenter who had some knowledge of Native American medicines and their proper use. He felt that Mrs. Marksman required an operation to save both herself and her unborn son. To make matters worse, Peter was deathly ill during the winter.

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35 In the official proceedings of the Michigan Conference of the Methodist Church, they stopped calling the mission Kewawenon and started to refer to it as “Indian Mission.”

36 Pitezel, Life of Rev. Peter Marksman, 95.
Peter Marksman was also called upon to wear hats other than the missionary one. He took part in the Native American gatherings in which annuities were paid. James Ord, subagent of the United States Office of Indian Affairs at Sault Sainte Marie, named Marksman to be the chief speaker in general council. However, Pitezel displays his ignorance of Native American customs here. First, he does not say to which band Marksman was named chief. Second, the government did not have that power officially in the eyes of Native Americans. Third, there was no traditional office of “chief,” a fact that the United States government never figured out. Tribal chiefs only had jurisdiction over a limited, local area, and often their authority was tenuous at best. Missionaries often accompanied Native Americans to annuity payments to, as Pitezel stated, “to look after the interest of their little flock.” Perhaps this is what Ord had in mind when he appointed Marksman. When Marksman arrived at one of the payments, the only thing that he recorded that Pitezel passed along was that some missionaries associated with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions received him kindly.37

Evidence of Marksman’s impact on non-Native Americans is fairly prevalent. One example comes from the pen of another Methodist missionary named Eri H. Day. Peter Marksman served as Day’s interpreter for over a year while the latter was stationed at Fond du Lac. Their time together began in 1846. As it progressed, Day said of Marksman, “Let me say, at the beginning, I never, in all my life, saw a man that I thought more fully exemplified the character of a Christian gentleman.”38 To Day, this included

37 There is a fair chance that this is the only thing Marksman recorded, so it was the only thing Pitezel could pass along.

neatness in appearance and gentleness in both language and action. All in all, Day felt that Marksman “fully exemplified what Christianity can do for fallen humanity.” He was also impressed that Marksman could read the Bible in both English and Ojibwa.

Peter Marksman endured hardships equal to those suffered by his colleagues. Sometimes accidents occurred, like the evening he fell asleep a bit too close to the fire. He discovered upon waking the next morning that the bottoms of his shoes had melted, and the leather had shrunk to the point of uncomfortably pinching his feet. Then he travelled eleven miles across frozen ground in his bare feet, which were cut and bled. However, he said, “Suddenly the presence of God so filled my heart that I could not help weeping for joy. God was so good to me . . . I was so filled with the presence of God that I did not suffer.”

Sin was a looming topic in the ongoing Methodist missionary narrative. Missionaries wrote about it and preached about it relentlessly, and were extraordinarily pleased to see the influence of their work and words. In 1851 Rev. Salmon Steele, another Methodist missionary in Upper Michigan, wrote Pitezel and reported that the “religious prospects are of decided improvement. Meetings of all kinds well attended and interesting.” Marksman wrote Pitezel at the same time, but his thoughts were on sin. He said, “The Lord is now troubling the careless and heart-hearted sinners here. Last evening . . . I lifted my cries to God in prayer: ‘O Lord, thou hast permitted thy poor servant to see sinners converted to thee in former times! O, let us see sinners coming to

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid, 114.
41 Ibid, 128.
thee this evening!“ During his sermon, he pleaded with the congregation to ask Jesus for forgiveness, and in the process be saved. Four people heard the call and did so, and prayed until tears fell from their eyes.

For many Native Americans in the Upper Peninsula during the nineteenth century, Christianity was an inescapable presence, and missionaries indeed mattered. Rev. Ebenezer Steele, yet another Methodist missionary working in Upper Michigan, wrote to Pitezel about his time at Naomikong, a mission west of Sault Sainte Marie:

Our congregations are large, considering the population. The house is frequently crowded to overflowing. The Indians are attentive to the preached Word. They all, saint and sinner, male and female, old and young, kneel in time of prayer. We have had some interesting meetings, in which the presence of Christ was realized among his people.43

Rev. Steele further reported on January 30, 1852, about the conversion of a Native American woman. Apparently Marksman was instrumental in this conversion. Her pagan husband had travelled to Grand Island the previous fall, but she did not want to go because she wanted to hear the missionaries. As a result, her feelings about life and death changed dramatically. Her words deserve to be quoted in full:

The light has broken into my mind gradually. Some time since I was very sick; thought I should die; could not bear the thought of dying and being buried as a heathen, but felt strong desire to die and be buried in a Christian manner. When I felt unhappy in my heart, I went and prayed, and my mind became calm and happy; and for some time past I have felt a desire to unite with the people – Methodists; but last Sabbath evening I became more convinced than ever before. I now present myself. I am willing to be baptized.44

42 Ibid.
43 Quoted in ibid, 129. Emphasis in original. Unfortunately missionaries rarely recorded actual numbers, so we are unsure what constitutes large congregations.
44 Ibid, 131.
She was baptized, and received into the church on probation, the first step for all new Methodists, Native American and white alike. An interesting point appears in the above narrative. Before the arrival of missionaries, there is a good chance this woman would have had no idea that she was a “heathen.” Only with the arrival of missionaries and other whites brought that detail to her attention. Nevertheless, if this story is accurate, it shows a woman who truly felt something special, and acted upon it.

Not long after the camp meeting, Marksman received word that he would once again be assigned to mission stations in the Lower Peninsula. In 1853 he arrived at the Janesville mission to once again assist Rev. P.O. Johnson. Marksman spent the next several years moving from one mission station to the next, as the following chart illustrates:

Table 5.2: Missionary Appointments and Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mission Station</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>Janesville Indian Mission</td>
<td>Junior Preacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>Kazier Indian Mission</td>
<td>Preacher in Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>Janesville Indian Mission</td>
<td>Junior Preacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Grand River Indian Mission</td>
<td>Preacher in Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>Isabella Indian Mission</td>
<td>Preacher in Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>Saginaw Bay Mission</td>
<td>Preacher in Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Saginaw Bay Mission</td>
<td>Preacher in Charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>Iroquois Point; Sugar Island</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Oceana Indian Mission</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>Iroquois Point; Sugar Island</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45 In 1856 the Michigan Conference of the Methodist Church split. The Detroit Conference was carved out, and the remainder of the Lower Peninsula was called the Western Michigan Conference. The Upper Peninsula was now part of the Detroit Conference. This can be confusing if not paid attention to. Furthermore, confusion is caused by the Indian Mission District being renamed the Lake Superior District in 1852 because of the influx of miners. The Indian Mission District moved to the Lower Peninsula.

Marksman also received promotions during his career as a Methodist missionary. In 1850 he was named a deacon, and in 1862 he was ordained an elder. At times he travelled back to the Upper Peninsula. During one such visit he was greeted with joy and enthusiasm by his Native American brethren. At a camp meeting at Point Iroquois, Native Americans from L’Anse, where the Kewawenon mission was located, travelled over two hundred miles to visit him.47

The record exhibits some gaps regarding Marksman’s appointments between 1863 and 1869. From there, the record continues:

Table 5.3: Later Missionary Appointments48

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mission Station</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Kewawenon and Iroquois Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Iroquois Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>Kewawenon and Iroquois Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Kewawenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Kewawenon, Cedar River, and Grand Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Grand Island and Cedar River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Kewawenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Kewawenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Supernumerary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Hannahville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Hannahville and Grand Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Hannahville and Grand Island</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, the records of the latter years do not always indicate his role at a particular mission. It is known that he was in charge of the Kewawenon Mission in 1873, but that is all. As Pitezel states, “Of this period Mr. Marksman has left no record such as we


could desire. His record is engraven [sic] in human hearts. He has lived more in deeds than in words.49

Only occasionally did Rev. Marksman indicate specific data in terms of numbers converted at his missions. One time he did so was October 29 and 30, 1874. He recorded the following:

Table 5.450

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Probationers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kewawenon</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar River</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Island</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marksman also said that there was one church and one parsonage each valued at $600, and that he had collected $7.55 in travelling expenses during the previous quarter.

According to the records of the Detroit Conference of the Methodist Church, Marksman was listed as “withdrawn” in 1882. No one is certain what happened to cause this. Pitezel states, “The deflection, whatever was its import, was not reckoned among unpardonable sins.”51 He was back in action by 1884, and working at the Hannahville Mission. He also divided his time between Hannahville and Munising until 1888, and from 1888 until his death at Kewawenon. He perished in his bed on May 28, 1892. His wife reported that he preached God’s word until there was no more breath in his lungs.52

50 Data compiled from Pitezel, Life of Rev. Peter Marksman, 195.
Rev. Marksman wrote a final letter to Rev. Pitezel on April 12, 1892, just over a month prior to his death. It shows a man comfortable and content with his life and labors, and it deserves to be quoted at length:

I am really happy to hear from you, as it were one risen from the dead. Hearing you talk through the paper reminds me of the old times we used of have along the shore of the Queen of the Lakes, and how we used to stand together in the open air before the Indian congregation, tears running down their cheeks for joy while hearing how the blessed Jesus loved and died for them. Our hearts used to burn within us of the heavenly love while telling them of God’s love toward them in the gift of his well-beloved Son. I remember how we used to walk together through the deep snow with our snowshoes on our feet; when the evening came on, feeling half dead. The next morning we were hardly able to put our snowshoes on our sore and swollen poor toes. We never minded that, because the Word of the Lord ‘constrained’ us – feeling, ‘Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel . . .’ My little family are very poor . . . I received last fall, from our Conference, $90. That helped us very much. That is all gone now, and what next? . . . Eighteen years I was a heathen youth. The sun, moons, clouds, thunder, waterfalls, mountains, lakes, birds, and animals, - I called them gods, and worshiped them. O, how glad and happy I am that I have heard the great and mighty name of the living and true God and his Son Jesus Christ, the great Savior of mankind!53

Interestingly, when Marksman asked what was next, Pitezel added an editorial comment:

“Ah, brother, could you have fully realized it, Heaven was next!” Marksman spent his entire adult life preaching the name and the word of God, and is an excellent example of just how much Christianity and missionaries could impact Native Americans.54 He

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54 Upon his death, the Indians at the Munising Indian Mission passed the following: “Whereas, our father and elder brother, Rev. Peter Marksman, of L’Anse, has fallen asleep in Christ, and his spirit has been called to be with Jesus, we therefore, the Christian Indians of Munising Methodist Episcopal Church, assemble this afternoon to pay tribute to an honorable and noble life, a life covering nearly seventy-seven years. Our brother who has passed from us stood in the front of this people for nearly fifty years as a missionary and counselor. During these years of varied activity and great usefulness by word and deed, he
embraced Methodist doctrines and messages, and conveyed them to other Native Americans using their own language. This was their key advantage that missionaries who were Native Americans themselves had over all others. Even Baraga, with his language skills, was at a disadvantage compared with Marksman.

Resolved, That while we submit to the Divine will, we deeply regret and mourn his departure from earth, and we shall ever cherish his memory as a kind-hearted and faithful missionary among us. Resolved, That we hereby tender our profound sympathy and love to his wife and family, who are left to mourn over him, praying and commending them to the care and comfort of our Heavenly Father in these darkest hours of affliction and sorrow, while looking to that blessed hope when we all meet to part no more.” Quoted in Pitezel, Life of Rev. Peter Marksman, 216-217. The remainder of the biography contains a number of tributes and testimonies regarding Marksman’s life and impact written by a variety of people.
Chapter Six

Abel Bingham and the Baptists

Abel Bingham was born in New Hampshire in 1786. The family moved to northeastern New York a few years later, and Bingham met the local Baptist preacher. Abel attended church regularly and read the Bible. He lived a morally-sound lifestyle, but did not feel like a true Christian. According to John Cumming, Bingham was “obsessed with the fear that he was a sinner condemned to spend eternity in Hell.”\(^1\) He awaited some sort of sign or conversion experience, and when he was twenty-three, one finally arrived at the bedside of a dying friend.\(^2\)

Bingham married his wife Hannah on May 1, 1809. During the War of 1812 he served as a lieutenant of the local militia. The Bingham family moved to Genesee County in western New York when the war ended. Soon thereafter Abel received a call to preach. The Seneca Indian reservation was nearby at Tonawanda. Bingham heard that there were few Christians on the reservation, and those who were wanted both a school


and the opportunity to hear the gospel. He saw this as a divine sign, and first visited them during the summer of 1821. The lessons he learned there were valuable to the years he spent at Sault Sainte Marie. In New York he encountered fierce resistance to Christianity, and he took away tools he could use to navigate the often tricky waters of missionary life.

Bingham’s journals from this time vividly illustrate the seriousness of the missionary experience. Contrary to what some missionaries believed, not all Native Americans were eager to hear the gospel. Bingham ran into fierce resistance at Tonawanda. The Seneca leader Red Jacket was one of his main opponents. Through an interpreter, Red Jacket wrote that missionaries only succeeded in getting some Native Americans to consent to a preacher, and the result was confusion and disorder. He also said that the ultimate consequence of the confusion and disorder was the arrival of whites to take over the land. Bingham’s account of Red Jacket and the Seneca reservation provide yet another example, like Baraga and Pitezel, of how missionaries approached “civilized” Native Americans as opposed to unconverted Native Americans.

Abel Bingham commenced his missionary work at Tonawanda on April 4, 1822. He reported that a number of Native Americans greeted him and seemed pleased at his

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3 Ibid. 159.

arrival. Four days later he started a school with approximately ten scholars.\(^5\) By April 10 the situation changed dramatically. Bingham was unaware of an existing conflict on the Seneca reservation between Christian and non-Christian Native Americans. He soon discovered it, however. On April 10 he received a summons, along with the Christian, or “friendly,” Native Americans to meet with the “pagans.” Bingham described the meeting:

Red Jacket (with a firm and malicious countenance, his eyes sparkling with savage ferocity, being surrounded by about 20 of his adherents) addressed me and stated what the whites had done in driving them from their habitations and murdering their people. Then stated what he was witness to of our ministers receiving pay from poor people for preaching and how some had made themselves rich by instructing the Indians etc., and after a lengthy harrang [sic] closed by stating that I must leave the village. After which I made a reply, endeavored to remove several objections that was raised, but all to no purpose. The decree went forth that I must leave their village tomorrow. I then returned home . . . considered Missionary trials just commencing, viewed it time for prayer.\(^6\)

It was just six days after he began his missionary journey, and an unimaginable hurdle presented itself. The following day the “friendly” Native Americans visited him to discuss the previous day’s developments.\(^7\) Bingham told them that he could not leave the mission without direction from the missionary board. All present agreed that he must write the board without delay to inform them of the situation.

With the exception of a few more suggestions that he again meet with the pagans, the next few days passed uneventfully. On April 20 he received another summons, but since his wife was ill, he again declined. Then the entire group appeared at his house and

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\(^7\) Bingham took to calling those Native Americans who were Christian or open to it “friendly,” while he called the non-Christians “pagans.”
ordered him to leave immediately. He did not. On May 24 the friendly Native Americans told him how happy they were that he stayed, and assured him of their support. Bingham said, “Never did I feel my attachment to them as sensibly as at this time. I assured them that I was willing to go hand and hand with them through any trials . . .”

The rest of April passed without incident, and perhaps Bingham fell into a false sense of security. On May 19 he heard a rumor that the pagans planned to gather their numbers and take Bingham, his family, and their possessions off the reservation and leave them on the state road. Nothing happened until May 28 when Red Jacket returned. He called Bingham into a council and ordered him to pack and be ready to leave by noon the following day. He recorded that he wanted to speak, but was not allowed to, and he felt it best to respect their rules. He also noted that the Christian Native Americans present received a tongue-lashing as well. The following morning the Binghams proceeded about their normal routine. They locked up their house and went to the school. As promised, at noon a group of between thirty and forty pagans arrived. They asked Bingham to let them in, which he obviously refused to do. They somehow secured another key and let themselves in. The Bingham’s furniture was removed and left at the state road. The following day Bingham went to the state road to see what happened to the furniture. Apparently it was looked after by friendly Native Americans, who provided the family with provisions and supplies.

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9 Ibid., 167-168.
The situation at Tonawanda remained tenuous, but the Bingham did not leave. In fact, he retrieved his possessions and returned them to the mission. He experienced no interruptions for a few weeks. He taught school and preached. He also witnessed Native American medicinal practices for the first time, which he described as “sad.” A child fell from a horse. The Bingham offered all sorts of assistance, but as the child was a pagan, as were his parents, their offers were refused. The traditional medical practices he witnessed did not impress him, and he thought his offer would have benefitted the child greatly.\(^\text{10}\)

A few weeks later Bingham witnessed another traditional practice. A pagan woman was sick, and her brethren gathered around her to perform a dance of healing. Bingham went to watch with an interpreter, so he could “witness for myself those heathenish traditions . . .”\(^\text{11}\) A drum kept up a steady beat while a song commenced in tune with the drum. Bingham watched this scene unfold from outside, and as the Native Americans started to dance he entered the dwelling. Upon entering the “squaws burst into a fit of laughter, broke their ranks, and said they were ashamed.” They started to argue amongst themselves, and Bingham focused his eyes on the sick woman. He stated, “I could not refrain from shedding tears at the sight, viewing that poor distressed creature groaning under the burden of her disease with her ears stunned with the sound of that drum and the sharp voices of the singing. . . .” Like Baraga, Bingham did not understand

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 170.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 173.
the importance of these types of dances and songs to Native Americans, nor did they ever attempt to.  

The Bingham family, which included his wife and at least one child by this point, may have felt as though their troubles were over. Abel found himself lamenting over the state of Native American souls at the mission. He wanted “to see the arm of the Lord revealed in breaking those clouds of superstition, and removing the moral darkness from their minds which as so long covered the heathen world.” He strongly felt that unless this happened, and unless they embraced the Son of God as their only savior, they were doomed. Although he wanted to focus on this issue, his old problems with the pagans returned on July 26, 1822. He visited a local judge who told him that he was obligated to address the pagan’s complaints against Bingham.  

On August 1 Bingham and a Baptist elder held a council with the Christian Native Americans. They told the two men that they wanted Bingham to stay on and continue his work. He agreed to do so, even as he was threatened with the possibility of imprisonment by the judge. The pagans held a council at the same time. Bingham heard that a law student was among them, “being very zealous in the pagan cause, attended their council for the purpose of strengthening his pagan brethren in their old traditions and to aid them in putting down the Christians.” The law student was rumored to have stated that not only was the Christian missionary liable to imprisonment, but the Christian Native

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12 Ibid..  
13 Ibid., 171.
Americans were as well. Although the animosity the pagans held for Bingham continued
to grow, it had yet to reach its full potential.\textsuperscript{14}

One issue that the Christian Native Americans of Tonawanda faced was
uncertainty. Those who wished to learn more about the faith shared those feelings. They
were afraid of the repercussions they might face at the hands of the pagans if they were
catch with Bingham. In the middle of August 1822, Bingham walked to preach on
Sunday morning with a Bible in his hand. A pagan man stopped him in a friendly
manner. He asked Bingham what was in his hand, and was told that is “a good book.”
Bingham gave it to him, and told him that if he agreed to come to school, he would teach
him to read so he could get the maximum possible benefit from the book. As the man
spent a great deal of time flipping through the book, Bingham felt that he wanted to learn,
but was clearly afraid of what might happen if he left the pagans for the Christians.
Bingham never tells us what happened with this man.\textsuperscript{15}

At the end of August Bingham momentarily stepped away from Tonawanda to
visit a town south of the reservation. He does not provide a reason for the trip. He
travelled to the town of Pembroke to preach the gospel to some Native Americans there.
After being away from Tonawanda for more than two months, Bingham learned from a
district attorney and a judge that “it was best not to return to Tonawanda at present.”\textsuperscript{16}
He disregarded their advice, and returned there on November 17.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 172.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 173-174.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 174.
The rest of 1822 passed without incident. He continued to teach school with twelve scholars present, and preached on the Sabbath. On January 27, 1823, he attended a “pagan festival.” He wanted to witness more of their rituals, and added, “It was truly affecting to behold the miserable infatuation and delusion of these sons of the forest to see them so bound down in superstition and ignorance. They may justly be compared to the heathen in the desert that cannot see when good comes.”17 After he viewed some things outdoors, he went to the “council house” to watch a war dance. Red Jacket was there, and told the performers that Bingham “was an enemy, that my object was to get their land away. He also traduced the character of the Christian Indians in as cruel a manner as his savage sagacity could invent.” Bingham characterized Red Jacket during this speech as a man with “fury in his eyes and a heart swollen with rage.” The remainder of that evening passed without incident, but when Bingham returned the following day to witness another dance, he was not allowed in, and was “accused of visiting them for the purpose of laughing them to shame.” Yet again he was ordered to leave the area, and again he refused to leave.

Between January and September of 1823 Bingham recorded little in his journal. In September school started again, and on the fourteenth of that month he realized the importance of knowing Native American languages. It was the Sabbath, and he gathered with the friendly Native Americans to preach. However, he “had a very melancholy day. Had no interpreter. Our interpreter declined interpreting on account of his great sins.”18

17 Ibid., 175.
18 Ibid., 178.
The pagan crusade to remove Bingham reached a peak at the end of 1823. In late November Bingham travelled to Buffalo to assist Native Americans in drafting a petition to the state legislature to alter a law that removed missionaries.\textsuperscript{19} The Christian Native Americans gathered there at the council all signed the document. Bingham planned to circulate the petition when he returned to Tonawanda. December passed uneventfully, with the exception of his wife being asked to teach the Christian Native American woman how to make cakes and prepare a New Year celebration. He spent New Year’s Day 1824 preaching. Bingham stated that there were approximately seventy gathered to hear him, including thirty pagans. His interpreter informed him that the Native Americans wished to learn about Christmas and the New Year. He delivered a short discourse on those topics, but given the number of pagans, he decided to focus on the life of Christ. He read from the Gospel according to Matthew about the nativity of Christ. Then he

explained to them the object of the Savior’s advent into our world; endeavored to prove by ocular demonstration the existence and prevalence of sin; spoke of the goodness and condensation of Christ living in Heaven and coming down into the world to make an atonement for the sins which men had committed, spoke of the benefits of the atonement, and I urged the acceptance of C. as the only way to salvation.\textsuperscript{20}

He felt that the pagans paid attention to his teaching, but it is unclear how just how much of his lessons either the Christians or the pagans truly understood.

On Sunday, January 24, 1824, a sheriff arrived at the Bingham residence in Tonawanda. He had a warrant for Bingham, charging the missionary with residing illegally on Native American land. Appearing before a judge, he told the sheriff that he had no money for counsel, and that he “felt perfectly willing to submit my cause to ‘Him

\textsuperscript{19} He provided no detail about what this law actually said or what its powers were.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 180-181.
“who Judgeth righteously.”’ The judge told Bingham that he was accused of living on Native American land when he was not legally allowed to do so. After some dialogue between the judge and Bingham, the judge cleared him of the charges. However, the district attorney took issue with that and “censured the Judge for the decision he had made.” The attorney went on a lengthy tirade against Bingham, and demanded to know by what right he was there. Bingham replied that there was a passage he could not remember exactly, but it told him to, “Go, teach all nations.” The day ended in a stalemate, and Bingham was allowed to leave. In April he learned that his efforts to modify the law that required the removal of missionaries had failed. He fell into a deep depression that worsened as the weeks went by. He said, “On account of the dark cloud that hung over our undertaking, we saw no way for us to prosecute it to advantage. It was to us a time of great darkness. We could not give it up and yet no favorable way appeared to open for procedure.”

Even with the depression, hostile environment, and the threat of arrest, Bingham stayed at Tonawanda. His journal entries from April 1824 through May 1826 reveal little of interest, and are in fact quite scant in both number and in detail. On May 15, 1826, he attended a pagan council and was allowed to explain his views on their land, and why the missionaries established a presence there. He felt that they were friendly to his words, and they decided to meet in private to discuss things further before entering into an agreement with Bingham. They held another council in June and discussed some complaints and objections. Nothing was resolved in 1826.

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21 Ibid., 182-183.

22 Ibid., 190-191.
In July 1827 Bingham met with Red Jacket again. Their topic was religion. They talked through Bingham’s interpreter. Red Jacket, in “his usual sagacity, gave me to understand that I was moving in but a small sphere in life, having the charge of a little Mission station here at Tonawanda . . .” Although he used a friendly tone, he criticized Bingham’s school. Red Jacket conceded, however, that Bingham was “a good man.” When he took a breath, Bingham told Red Jacket that he did not want to talk about the school or other matters – he wanted to talk about Red Jacket’s death and soul. Bingham said, “you are old and must soon die. You undoubtedly feel that you are a sinner,” and proceeded to show the necessity of a speedy preparation for death. He told him what was necessary to prepare for a peaceful death. Red Jacket listened attentively, and agreed that it was a serious matter and that he would “think seriously upon it.” They continued to converse about many things. When the discussion concluded, Red Jacket told Bingham that he would visit him at the mission house. Bingham felt that the “interview” had been pleasant, and asked Red Jacket if he would kneel with him and thank God. He passed gently on the offer and told Bingham that he would rather defer until he visited the mission house. On July 20 Red Jacket made good on his promise. They talked over tea, and Bingham instructed him about the final judgment and appealing to the Father. Bingham said that he “addressed him with the appellation of the Father, and assured him that his days on earth were almost spent, and his case must soon be sealed up for the Judgment.” He also told him that listening to the gospel was the only way to fully prepare him. Bingham finished, and Red Jacket said, “My son, I am truly thankful for the very friendly talk we have had at this time, it has made a solemn impression on my
mind.” That is it. There are no further entries in the journal about his time at Tonawanda, and he never says whether Red Jacket listened to the gospel or not.²³

Bingham stayed there until March 1828, but made no more entries. In March he asked to be relieved of his duties so he could travel to Sault Sainte Marie. He had a military friend stationed there who told him about the need for a preacher and missionary. His experiences in Tonawanda certainly went with him and influenced his outlook and interactions with Native Americans in his new home.

**Transfer to Sault Sainte Marie**

Bingham first considered the possibility of transferring to Sault Sainte Marie in late 1827, and by 1828 the possibility became reality. He arrived at his new station on October 10, 1828, and was greeted by Henry Schoolcraft immediately after he walked off the steamer. Schoolcraft served him breakfast, and then introduced him to a Congregational minister who had established a “brief domestic mission” at Sault Sainte Marie. The appointment had recently expired, and the minister waited to see if he would be reappointed. However, upon Bingham’s arrival, the Congregationalist told him that since Bingham was a regularly appointed missionary, he would surrender the field to him. Then the minister invited Bingham to lodge with him. Bingham was impressed with the departing missionary, and felt that he possessed an “excellent spirit.” Before the Congregationalist left Sault Sainte Marie, the two men shared the pulpit.²⁴

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²³ Ibid., 191-193.

²⁴ Abel Bingham Journals, 10 and 12 October 1828, BFP, CHL.
Bingham followed the usual missionary practice of introducing himself to the local Native American leadership. His first month at Sault Sainte Marie was eventful. He met with a “minor” chief and told him that he was there to establish a school and to preach the “gospel of the Lord Jesus.” According to Bingham, his words were met with satisfaction. He secured the services of Charlotte Johnston to interpret for him, as she was fluent in both French and Ojibwa. Like Baraga and Pitezel, Bingham also preached to area whites, and for him this included troops at Fort Brady. The American Baptist Missionary Union instructed Bingham to “establish religious services and extend the benefits of the mission to all within reach” of his influence. They also told him that they would provide an interpreter if needed.25 He toured the area and lamented about the rampant alcohol abuse among most of the Native Americans. He also saw a Midewiwin initiation that he briefly discussed without commentary. By December he had a new interpreter because Charlotte Johnston was ill. John Tanner was called upon and was glad to serve. Finally, he started a school. On the first day he had twenty-seven scholars, the second day fifty, and the third fifty-seven.26 Overall, Bingham’s journals indicate that he thought it was basically a waste of time to try to work with Native Americans when there was no interpreter around. Although he eventually learned how to phonetically read sermons in Ojibwa, he never learned the language well enough to converse.

Although he differed in some of their methods and doctrine, Bingham fervently believed in cooperating with other missionaries, with the exception of Catholics. In April

25 Abel Bingham Journals, October 1828, BFP, CHL.

26 Ibid.
1829 he travelled from Sault Sainte Marie to Mackinac on snowshoes and met up with Presbyterian minister William M. Ferry. The two men felt a strong bond, and preached together while Bingham was at Mackinac. He stated that although the two men were of different faiths, “We seemed to feel as much at home when at each others station as if we belonged to the same denomination.”

While his relationship with Ferry seemed to be smooth, things were not always so with others. Again, Bingham believed in missionary cooperation. That did not mean, however, that debates did not occur. In April 1834 he wrote to Methodist missionary John Clark about baptismal practices. Bingham believed in fully immersing catechumens in water. Other denominations did not. There was also the issue of second baptisms. He told Clark that the term “Baptist” signified one who baptizes or one who is baptized, while the term “Anabaptist” referred to one who “rebaptizes [sic]” or who is “rebaptized [sic]”. He continued to describe the use of Anabaptist, and how many view it as an epithet. That being said, he uses it to describe Clark. Bingham watched Clark preach and baptize people, some apparently for a second time, at a public wharf in Sault Sainte Marie. He wrote to Clark, “How is it possible for you, in view of your services . . . yesterday to escape, or exonerate yourself from the just application of that epithet, or clear yourself from the just charge of that unscriptural practice?” Apparently Bingham felt that those people had been baptized appropriately before, and to baptize them again

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27 Abel Bingham Journals, 1 April 1829, BFP, CHL.

28 For example, he preached with Methodist John Pitezel in November 1843, and with Native American Methodist minister Peter Marksman in 1850 and 1851. See Abel Bingham Journals, 11 November 1843, 4 March 1850, and 20 July 1851, BFP, CHL.

29 Rev. Abel Bingham to Rev. John Clark, 14 April 1834, BFP, CHL.
bordered on the sinful. In fact, Bingham referred to it as a “very glaring unscriptural transaction.” There is no record that indicates if or how Clark responded. Interestingly, this incident came after an 1833 letter Bingham sent to Clark. In it, he told Clark that it was important for Christians of different denominations to “harmonize as much as possible, and especially missionaries laboring for the salvation of the heathen.”

It seems that Clark was ready to baptize some Native Americans. Bingham was “truly desirous to remove all external differences among us as far as we can without violating any principles of our faiths.” As long as Clark fully immersed those who gave evidence of their piety, Bingham agreed to “cheerfully receive them to our communion.”

The baptismal debate did not stop there. It continued in 1840 with Rev. William Brockway, the Methodist missionary superintendent. Bingham invited Brockway over for dinner. Brockway replied that he could not go in good conscience. He told Bingham that his attendance at dinner “would be a violation both of the letter and the spirit of your constitution. For though I was immersed I believe the man who had done it had not been immersed himself.” Brockway feared that Bingham would not consider his baptism to be valid. Brockway concluded by stating that he believed in immersion, and also believed that sprinkling on both adults and infants was equally valid.

Bingham’s debates with other denominations went beyond baptism. In 1848 he met a Mormon from Beaver Island, located in northern Lake Michigan. Mormons started

30 Rev. Abel Bingham to Rev. John Clark, 16 June 1833, BFP, CHL.
31 Rev. Abel Bingham to Rev. William Brockway, 10 January 1840, BFP, CHL; Rev. William Brockway to Rev. Abel Bingham, 11 January 1840, BFP, CHL.
a colony on Beaver Island in 1848. The Mormon visitor claimed to be a “seer,” or a prophet. Bingham and this unnamed Mormon had a discussion over the Mormon’s “peculiar doctrines and claims.” The man admitted to the truth of revelation and said that they held strictly to all of the truths and doctrines the revelation taught, but overall they felt the bible was merely a history of the Jewish nation through the times of the apostles. The Mormons had their own specific revelation – *The Book of Mormon*, which contained the history of the Latter-day Saints. They felt that their work was equal in authority to the sacred scriptures, Bingham recorded, and it was designed to form a part of divine revelation. Both the Father and the Son possessed a material body, while the Holy Spirit did not. The Holy Spirit was a spirit that dwelled within both the Father and the Son. Bingham asked the Mormon how he knew this, and the man replied that he had seen it. Bingham asked, “Have you seen the father?” The man replied, “I have seen the judge of all the world.” Bingham pressed on, “That was not the question.” The man continued with his reply that he had seen the judge of all men, at which Bingham countered, “Christ is the judge, and he possessed a human body. But have you seen the father?” The man did not change his response, and maintained that the gift of miracles and of prophecy was contained in their church, and that he possessed it.33

The Mormon attempted to quote from Proverbs 29:10 – “Where there is no vision the people perish . . . .” However, Bingham said, “with all his [the Mormon] prophetic knowledge he was unable to quote it, but said it could be found in Psalms.”

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33 Abel Bingham Journals, 24 June 1848, BFP, CHL.
conversation continued as the Mormon told Bingham that Mormons possessed the gift of tongues and were able to speak in new tongues. Bingham inquired about them addressing Native Americans in their own language. The man claimed that he had heard of such a thing occurring two years prior. Bingham countered that there was no proof because such an event would have been reported all over the area. “When the apostles began to speak in new tongues, it spread through Jerusalem like fire through the dry forest.” Bingham pressed him further, and asked if the Mormons had ever preached to Native Americans or the French in their own languages. The Mormon said not that he was aware of, but that the time had not yet come. Bingham asked him what evidence he possessed that the man could speak in tongues. He replied that one person would rise and speak in a language no one knew, and someone else would rise and interpret it. Bingham wondered if the new language was understood by anyone other than the interpreter, and the man replied that sometimes two or three others did. Then Bingham asked, “Does any unbeliever or person not in your communion” understand? “No.” The Baptist finished the barrage by telling his visitor that the Mormons failed in furnishing the gospel. “When the apostles spoke with tongues, it was to give instruction to some who did not understand their native language, and when it was interpreted it was that the address might be understood by all the assembly.”34 Bingham certainly felt that his faith was the one true faith, and he possessed a great deal of ammunition to support this. This exchange also shows that he understood the importance of being able to communicate to those he served as a pastor and missionary in their own language, even if he never fully learned to do so himself.

34 Ibid.
Bingham’s most furious encounter over religious differences occurred with an unnamed Jesuit priest at Sault Sainte Marie in 1834. He visited the house of a sick man, and the priest ordered him out. Then the following happened:

I let him know that I was in a free country and should do as I pleased about that. He wished to know what I was there for. I told him, because I pleased to come and visit my neighbor. He said if I wished to visit him, visit as a neighbor and bring none of my books. I replied that I should bring what books I pleased, and the man might do as he pleased about reading them. He seized a tract and went to the fire under pretense of flinging it into the fire. I paid no particular attention to it did not rise from my seat. He finally turned about and flung it at me. It fell on the floor near me & I picked it up. He afterward came & wished me to give it to him again. I declined. He seized it apparently determined to wrest it from me. I did not give it up, but firmly said to him, Do act like a gentleman if you can’t like a Christian. He then let go of the book but soon laid hold of the French testament which I held in my hand as if determined to wrest that from me; but I did not see fit to give that up. By this time he became considerably enraged, and declared that it was the word of the devil, that I was deceived, & a deceiver, a wolf, and my books were a lie & ordered me off. I replied, if I am deceived why don’t you come to me like a Christian & show me wherein I am deceived & try to undeceive me. And gave him to understand that if he wanted to come to me in a right spirit I would hear & converse with him freely & familiarly.35

The priest was in a fury, and Bingham stopped talking to him. He turned to the sick man and asked him if he had always been treated “kindly and in a Christian manner?” He replied that he had. Bingham then said how sorry he was that he had disturbed the man, and that he had come to visit with his usual feelings of kindness and charity. Apparently the priest never stopped shouting, and Bingham said that “he and I should by and by meet at the judgment seat of Christ and there would be known who of us were wolves and who were sheep.” The priest eventually left, but they encountered each other a few days later, and according to Bingham the priest shoved his interpreter aside and entered the lodge

35 Abel Bingham Journal 1834, BFP, CHL.
with a cudgel. This was the most extreme example, and the rest of Bingham’s encounters were peaceful.  

A final example of Bingham’s encounters with Catholicism occurred in 1848. In February he heard that a “Romish” priest told Native Americans that Bingham spoke nothing but lies. He discussed this two days in a row, and wrote

I am informed that the Cath. Priest for the Indians is disclaiming against me in every direction. But if I belong to Christ, I must expect to have my name cast out as evil, especially by those who bear the antichristian mark, or the mark of the beast. The priest is exerting himself to the utmost to bring the Indian children to his baptism.  

Bingham concluded that Catholicism was one of the most “dangerous snares to souls” ever contrived.

Bingham was satisfied with the work he completed during this first six months at Sault Sainte Marie. He felt that a “seed fell in a fruitful place.” He stated that within eight weeks of his arrival, one of the leading Native American men was “manifestly reclaimed from a sadly backslidden state, and came boldly forward and faithfully espoused the cause of Christ.” Sadly, however, this man never joined Bingham’s church because he was “sentimentally Presbyterian.” He reported two or three possibilities for conversion, and many more inquired about the process. One man told Bingham that he was “like a man in the fog, and can only see a little distance.”

36 Throughout his journals it is clear that Bingham thoroughly relished it when anyone, Native American or otherwise, who was Catholic converted to the Baptist faith.

37 Abel Bingham Journals, 19 and 20 February 1848, BFP, CHL.

38 Ibid.

39 Abel Bingham Journals, 1 April 1829, BFP, CHL.
Henry Schoolcraft’s wife, who was part Ojibwa, told Bingham about an elderly Native American woman, and suggested that he visit her. Mrs. Schoolcraft felt that this woman was a “true convert.” She had been intemperate and practiced irregular habits, but now “appeared like a new creature.” Bingham took her advice and visited the woman. She told him that she used to be “so ignorant” that she knew nothing of God. Furthermore, like many Native Americans, she knew nothing of the great pain she caused God by her sinful ways until a missionary taught her before Bingham’s arrival.\footnote{Ibid.}

Missionary activities cost money, and there was a limited amount of it to go around, especially as the nineteenth century progressed. Bingham found this out in 1830 when he received a censure from the board of the Baptist Missionary Society for spending so much money. He discovered in March that he spent too much money. In fact, the correspondent from the Baptist Missionary Society felt that “such expenditures are not necessary because of Indian habits, and it is unwise to change their condition all at once.”\footnote{L. Bolles to Abel Bingham, 18 March 1830, BFP, CHL.} Bingham spent most of the money he was allocated on a mission home and school. This letter does contain a solid piece of advice, however. Missionaries who did not try to overhaul Native American life overnight seemed to have more success. At the same time, there is not much evidence that Bingham tried anything of the kind. He felt that Native American children were better served if they boarded with the Bingham family, rather than live elsewhere and attend school during the day. Most missionaries believed two things about this strategy: first, the more time children spent away from Native Americans and their traditions, the better; and second, boarding scholars were
much less apt to miss school because of hunting, fishing, and gathering. Nevertheless, the Baptist Missionary Society told Bingham not to board Native American scholars, but to “leave them free.”42

The Native American Methodist preacher John Sunday arrived at the American side of Sault Sainte Marie on January 3, 1832. Bingham invited him to preach, which he did for approximately five weeks. Bingham said that he discovered an advantage Sunday had over him – the ability to speak to Native Americans in their own language. He felt that this gave Native Americans confidence in Sunday as a “Christian brother.” However, more turmoil loomed on Bingham’s horizon, for he discovered that Sunday had set up a separate meeting close to his own. He said, “I had no thought that he would take advantage of me to draw off the Indians from my meetings.” For a time many attended both, but it appears that many more decided to stay with John Sunday.43

The crisis over John Sunday and the Methodists subsided, although division continued to wreak havoc on Bingham’s efforts. In his 1833 report to his sponsoring society, he told them that with the exception of the school, things were going well. Division was the main problem, because there were many different groups of people present, including the Catholics and British officials. He taught the scholars reading, writing, and arithmetic, and most scholars made progress. He also taught introductory

42 L. Bolles to Abel Bingham, 5 July 1830, BFP, CHL.

43 Abel Bingham Journals, 3 January 1832, BFP, CHL. This event precipitated quite the little scandal in Sault Sainte Marie, and drew in Bingham, Sunday, and Henry Schoolcraft. Bingham felt that Schoolcraft deliberately undermined his interests and promoted Sunday’s, which he likely did. See John T. Fierst, “Return to ‘Civilization:’ John Tanner’s Troubled Years at Sault Sainte Marie,” Minnesota History (Spring 1986): 23-36.
geography. It is important to note that throughout his years at Sault Sainte Marie
Bingham taught both Native Americans and whites. In this same report he indicated that
progress among Native American students was not horrible, but lapses in the attendance
of non-boarded students kept it down. He set up a manual labor school with his wife for
Native Americans as well. Abel taught the boys farming and construction, while Mrs.
Bingham taught the girls how to sew, cook, and be a good housewife.44

Bingham’s 1835 journal entries show a man who is going through rough times.
He said, “At present our mission is enveloped in clouds of darkness.” The reasons
included a waning boarding school because of whites being drawn away, and the fact that
they had to dismiss their interpreter, John Tanner.45 In addition, he witnessed the
dramatic removal of one of his boarding students. Mr. and Mrs. J. Holiday left an
“interesting little girl, age eight or nine,” at the mission under the Binghams’ care. While
no reason is available the parties agreed to keep the girl at the mission until she was old
enough to leave. For some reason the Holidays wanted her back, but Bingham felt she
was not ready, in addition to the fact that this was not the agreement. Abel again saw the
inside of a courtroom as a defendant because Holiday secured a warrant for him.
Bingham claimed that there was no real issue, and the judge agreed. There is a chance

44 Abel Bingham Journals, 1833 Annual Report to the Board, BFC, CHL. The 1832 Annual
Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs states that Bingham’s school contained as many as sixty
scholars since its 1828 opening. In 1832 they only reported eleven. In addition, Bingham and the Baptists
build two homes, and they had three teachers at their disposal. See Annual Reports of the Commissioner of

45 Abel Bingham Journals, 4 October 1835, BFP, CHL. A sketch of John Tanner appears in the
appendix.
that the warrant was a decoy nevertheless, because in Bingham’s absence the Holidays literally broke into the mission house when they smashed open two locked doors and “violently forced the child from the mission.” Bingham then secured a warrant for the Holidays. Mr. Holiday was captured, but his wife escaped. Holiday was charged, and Bingham testified that he had been threatened. He also said that it was actually Mrs. Holiday who broke in and took the girl, but it was ultimately Mr. Holiday’s fault for not controlling his wife. Bingham also felt that the magistrate had purposely delayed serving the warrant on the Holidays in order to give them a chance to escape. Mr. Holiday was acquitted. Bingham lamented to his journal:

And I am forced to the painful consideration that although I live in a professedly Christianized society I am liable to have my house broken open, doors that are locked and bolted burst through, and the inmates of my family forcibly taken out, and I am refused any redress.46

There is no more information available about this interesting event. We do not know exactly why it happened, or if Bingham ever saw the Holidays or the girl again. While 1835 was not easy, and he may have considered moving on, Bingham discovered through others that a number of Native Americans wanted him to stay with them.47

46 Abel Bingham Journals, 7 October 1835, BFP, CHL.

47 Rev. Cameron to Abel Bingham, 1835, BFP, CHL. In 1835 Bingham was yet again reprimanded by his superiors on the board for excessive spending. See L. Bolles to Abel Bingham, 18 June 1835, BFP, CHL. Finally, he reported to his board and to Schoolcraft that there were eighteen Native American students enrolled at his school. In the report he lists their Native American name, then says “whom we call” and provides the European name. When he discussed the white students at his school, he always provided a prediction of their future in terms of occupation, including school teacher, farmer, and interpreter.
Bingham never moved beyond many of his narrow viewpoints about certain aspects of Native American life. He held no regard for Ojibwa medical practices. This is understandable given his place in life, and the fact that Sault Sainte Marie had medical doctors in residence.\textsuperscript{48} These beliefs also spread to Bingham’s impressions of the Midewiwin society. Around 1835 he witnessed a “medicine dance” and the preparations for the initiation ceremony “to initiate one into the mysteries of their religion.” He watched from a distance, and approached them once they finished. He told the Ojibwa, right after they completed an important religious and spiritual ritual, that they must abandon all of their superstitions and prepare for the proper worship of God on the next Sabbath. It appears that they humored Bingham, because he recorded that they “spoke encouragingly, but after I was gone their principal leader called to them again and kept them at it all night.”\textsuperscript{49}

In June 1840 Bingham delivered a stern lecture to a Native American couple who paid little attention to the Gospel. Bingham was concerned for the man’s soul “and his strong attachment to his vices and heathenism.” Since he asked the man about the “revival of his heathenism,” it seems possible that this man had participated in the mission. The man told Bingham that both he and his wife fell ill the previous year to the point of being bedridden most of the time. Before that, however, they were well. His wife felt that it was the “medicine religion” that made her better. She said, “When I was down . . . you and the Dr. tried your religion and it did not help me.” Bingham replied that “God wisely distributed medicinal roots and plants through the wilderness in almost

\textsuperscript{48} I will discuss the effects of white medicine on the Ojibwa in chapter seven.

\textsuperscript{49} Abel Bingham Journals, 1835, BFP, CHL.
every country and adapted it to the diseases of the people.” He conceded that if used correctly those plants were beneficial in healing. The medicine men and women, however, the “jugglers,” did nothing but postpone healing. While it does not appear that Bingham made any progress with this couple, he added to his journal on the same day that a Native American did not “join in their superstitions or drinking, and has taken to prayer.” He prayed before Bingham, and his interpreter said that he had never heard “such a prayer” from a Native American.50

In the 1836 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the issue of Native American population in certain areas was considered. For the Upper Peninsula, 717 were reported. The actual number was likely somewhat higher because gathering an accurate count is difficult when many people move around. However, this number calls into question some of the baptism and conversion figures presented by missionaries like Frederic Baraga. In addition to population, various people were asked to gather data on fish catches, agricultural yields, crime, birth, and deaths. The report stated that the “returns are too imperfect to attempt any generalization from them.” It concluded that a few Native Americans in the area were literate, and a few claimed to be Christians, “and there are strong inducements to the teachers to persevere in their benevolent labors. Some of them (Ojibwa) have died examples of piety, and a considerable number are strictly temperate, leading consistent and orderly lives, and making proper use of their annuities.” Missionaries were certainly responsible for facilitating at least some of these changes.51

50 Abel Bingham Journals, 5 June 1840, BFP, CHL.

51 See Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1838.
The 1838 report also included Henry Schoolcraft’s comments on Abel Bingham’s mission at Sault Sainte Marie. He seemed pleased overall. With the exception of the mission’s ever-present financial difficulties, things progressed well. Twenty-three scholars were enrolled at first, and that number grew to forty-one. We have no way of knowing, however, how many of these were Native American scholars and how many were not. One of the students became a blacksmithing apprentice. Schoolcraft also applauded what the school taught, from the rudiments of learning to manual labor.52

In 1841 Abel Bingham sent a report of his mission to James Ord, the subagent of the Office of Indian Affairs at Sault Sainte Marie. The total number of scholars never reached past sixty. Like other missionaries he felt that regular attendance was the key to the most efficient learning, and again, that is why Bingham preferred boarding scholars within the mission. Boys and girls were taught the same things he reported in previous messages. In addition to the teaching was the preaching. Bingham set up a circuit route of approximately one hundred twenty miles to see as many people, both Native American and white, as possible. He said that he travelled over eight hundred miles during 1840.53

Bingham also reported on the farming and agriculture of his mission. While I will save a somewhat deeper discussion of missionary effects on farming and agriculture for chapter seven, it is important to note that missionaries overwhelmingly believed that

52 Ibid..

53 In addition to the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Bingham’s reports and those of other missionaries are found in Letters Received, Sault Sainte Marie Agency and Mackinac Agency, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 75. I cannot adequately express my appreciation to the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University for acquiring all materials from Record Group 75 that pertain to the Great Lakes region.
Native Americans needed to “settle down” and abandon their seasonal cycles of moving to different places for food and supplies. To reach that end missionaries established farms. Michigan’s Upper Peninsula has a short and erratic growing season, but they always planted crops in the spring with the hope of a good harvest. Bingham said that the potato crop was good, and one family raised fifty or sixty bushels on their own, and another individual reported that he harvested over one hundred bushels. They also grew turnips and squash. Missionaries and Ojibwa attempted peas, beans, corn, wheat, and buckwheat, none of which grew in the harsh climate. To better facilitate farming, the Baptist mission had two oxen, and they allowed the missionary-less Catholic Native Americans to use them as well.\textsuperscript{54}

Bingham never slowed his temperance crusade. In 1842 he stated the following:

In my labors as a missionary, I have felt it to be one important part of my duty to disseminate temperance principles as extensively and effectually as possible; and I have, since the 1\textsuperscript{st} of November last, obtained sixty Indian signatures to the temperance pledge – a pledge of teetotal abstinence from all intoxicating liquor. And I can truly say, that it afforded me great satisfaction to witness the general firmness of those who had signed the pledge, when they came in contact with the temptations of this place. I have the happiness of reporting, that most of the Indians with whom I have labored the past year have signed the pledge. Some have done it on trial for one, and some for two years; but about one half have signed it without limitation.\textsuperscript{55}

Like other missionaries, Bingham placed a great deal of the blame for the prevalence of whiskey among Native Americans on traders. To counteract that, the Indian Department

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.. Bingham also reported that his mission had around six acres of land cultivated, which helped out since the number of fish caught was much lower than in the past. Furthermore, the Ojibwa continued to make maple syrup and sugar. The amounts from individual families ranged from three hundred pounds each to seven hundred pounds.

\textsuperscript{55} Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1842.
released a circular in relation to traders that regulated their licenses. If they provided liquor, they could lose their license.\textsuperscript{56}

By 1845 Sault Sainte Marie was widely recognized as a trading center. It had been for hundreds of years, but the numbers of whites and the numbers of Native Americans did not reach a level where the two were consistently at odds. That changed in the middle of the nineteenth century. Native Americans, missionaries, and government agents all recognized this fact, and many felt that the prospects for the Native Americans were rather poor as long as they stayed in such close contact. That year the acting superintendent for the Michigan Superintendency wrote to the commissioner of Indian Affairs that the “Indians under the St. Marie agency are unfavorably located for agriculture or hunting; their principal resource is from fishing.”\textsuperscript{57} However, the influence of missionaries and teachers allowed Native Americans to survive in the area as long as they lived like whites: “. . . . They have become comparatively temperate; many have purchased lands and made improvements thereon; and others, stimulated by their example and advancement, are preparing to do likewise.”\textsuperscript{58}

The 1845 report gives the impression that missionaries and government agents sometimes had different outlooks for their work. According to Sault Sainte Marie subagent James Ord, while the conditions of most of the Native Americans of his sub-

\textsuperscript{56} Letters Sent, Mackinac Agency, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 75

\textsuperscript{57} William A. Richmond to T. Hartley Crawford, 20 October 1845, Letters Received Michigan Superintendency, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 75, CHL. This makes the agricultural achievements missionaries and Native Americans reached more impressive. See chapter seven.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
agency were improving, those in Sault Sainte Marie proper were not. Furthermore, Bingham’s mission had not improved at all since the previous report. Abel Bingham had a slightly different impression of the previous year’s work. He felt things were going well, and that many of his students were improving. Most maintained their temperance pledges even with the numerous temptations in the area. One of the biggest changes he noted for the first time since his arrival at Sault Sainte Marie was the fact that many of “the Indians who fall under my labors” lived as private citizens and entrepreneurs. They caught fish and put it on the market to sell. They built permanent homes, and took part in the market economy. One Native American couple even married “according to the laws of our state and the usages of Christian nations.” All of that, however, was not enough. He concluded that the Native Americans “are steadily inclining to the habits of civilization and industry; and, with skillful guidance and proper encouragement, we trust they may eventually become a respectable, virtuous, and happy people.”

The Ojibwa of Sault Sainte Marie realized that the influx of whites into their lives was not going to slow down. In fact, they recognized it a year before the government formally reported on it. In 1844 they approached Bingham about establishing a settlement at Tahquamenon. He agreed, and drafted the “Articles of Agreement between the Baptist Mission at Sault Sainte Marie and Ojibwa at Tahquamenon.” The mission agreed to provide one hundred fifty dollars so the Ojibwa could construct homes that were to be built under the supervision of the missionary. Bingham wrote, “This is done

59 James Ord to William Richmond, 20 September 1845, Letters Received Michigan Superintendency, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 75, CHL.

60 Abel Bingham to James Ord, 17 June 1845, Letters Received Michigan Superintendency, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 75, CHL.
to encourage Indians to settle down and come into the habits of civilized life far as the peculiarities of the country and climate will admit, and to place them in circumstances more favorable for receiving both literary and religious instruction.” The Native Americans who agreed to accept the benefits of the Baptist Board had to promise to “maintain a sober, quiet, and religious settlement, keep away the evil influence of intoxicating liquor, listen to the Gospel from missionaries, including all Christian missionaries who may call on us.” Finally, the houses were jointly owned by the individual Native Americans who built it and the mission. In all, eleven Ojibwa left their mark on the document.61

Like Rev. John Pitezel, the international border between Michigan and Canada did not stop Bingham from visiting Native Americans across the St. Mary’s River. He visited Garden River numerous times in 1845 and 1846. He remarked how pleased he was to find the Native Americans there in 1846 “meaningfully employed cutting lumber for a steamship.”62 Between visits to Canada he carefully tended to his own flock at Sault Sainte Marie. In August 1845 he had a church meeting, and examined a Native American “as a candidate for baptism.”63 Bingham knew the man somewhat, but did not consider him ready to be baptized. “I failed of obtaining satisfactory evidence, and concluded to postpone it for further examination.” An unforeseen consequence developed, however. There were a number of previous Native American converts present

61 Copy of these articles is located in Abel Bingham’s Journal for 1844, BFP, CHL.
62 Abel Bingham Journals, 24 January 1846, BFP, CHL.
63 Abel Bingham Journals, 23 August 1845, BFP, CHL. He actually lists the man’s Native American name, but it is illegible.
at this man’s examination, including a number of Methodists. Bingham’s refusal to baptize the man so enraged a number of them that they walked out.  

The remainder of the 1840s were good ones for the Baptist mission at Sault Sainte Marie. James Ord wrote in his 1846 report that the conditions of the Native Americans there continued to improve – “they are becoming more sober, industrious, and religious, and those who are engaged in the work of their civilization take renewed courage from the results of the past year.” In addition, they worked off nearly all of their debts from hunting and fishing. He also said that they wanted to live in houses more than in lodges, and worked to achieve that. Bingham gave the example of a Native American from his mission who learned to read the New Testament “decently in Indian, and passably in English, and has acquired considerable knowledge of common business.” Although this may not have been his intention, Bingham basically placed capitalism on the same level as the ability to read and understand the gospel. Again he stated that the Native Americans “are evidently improving in civilization, industry, and business.”

Rev. Bingham’s letters and journals provide more evidence that things were progressing in these years, although familiar enemies were still present. Although he does not tell us who he is referring to or where he was at exactly, he stated, “the insidious foe had sent his agents with the firewater and had not only strengthened the heathen Indians in their former vices, but had also ensnared two of our members.” However,

64 Ibid.

65 James Ord to William Richmond, 1 October 1846, Letters Received Mackinac Agency, National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 75, CHL

66 See Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1846.

67 Abel Bingham Journals, 6 February 1846, BFP, CHL.
for each negative experience there seemed to be many positive ones. In February 1846 he visited a Native American whom he had known for quite some time. The man’s son had passed away recently after reaching only his sixteenth or seventeenth year. The man was happy to see Bingham, and “conversed freely about the death of his son and the impressions it left. He had no hard feelings toward the Lord for calling his son away, but felt pained and distressed about the evil example he set for his son by drinking.”

Bingham’s teachings and lessons were not always lost once he left. He also reached out toward the white population. A Frenchman presented himself before Bingham, placed his hand on the Bible, and swore to abstain from liquor for ten years. He continued to examine possible converts to evaluate their readiness for baptism. On October 20, 1846, a woman went before Bingham and passed the examination. The following day she was taken to the river and completely submerged beneath the waters of the St. Mary’s for baptism.

An extraordinary example of Bingham’s effectiveness as a missionary came in 1847. He visited a woman named Osheshanabiliokue, who was his first convert after he arrived at Sault Sainte Marie. She was now between seventy and eighty years of age. Bingham entered her home with his interpreter, and saw her expression brighten once she saw him. He was amazed at the “trial of her faith.” She had little food, and was alone. Bingham was vexed because he felt a woman of her age and health should not be left alone, especially with so little food. He could not, however, help to notice how content

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68 Abel Bingham Journals, 20 February 1846, BFP, CHL.
69 Abel Bingham Journals, 7 April 1846, BFP, CHL.
70 Abel Bingham Journals, 20 October 1846, BFP, CHL.
she was. She told Bingham that she was not lonesome because “she could pray when she wanted with no disruptions. She could think of God day and night. She had commanded herself into the hands of the Lord.” Bingham was understandably happy about the thoroughness of Osheshanabiliokue’s faith, and noted in his journal that although there were only three people present, he felt the Lord with them.\footnote{Abel Bingham Journals, 20 November 1847, BFP, CHL.} He was lucky to have had his interpreter present as well, or he would have missed the joy of her story. Earlier in the year he complained once again about the lack of one.\footnote{Abel Bingham Journals, 9 May 1847, BFP, CHL.} He encountered his first convert again the following summer. She was confined to her home with rheumatism. Her pain was so intense that she could scarcely bear to be moved, and some portion of the time is in such distress that she cannot refrain from groaning aloud.” Even with her discomfort, when she heard Bingham was back in the area she asked Bingham to hold his meeting in her home.\footnote{Abel Bingham Journals, 14 July 1848, BFP, CHL.}

As the 1840s passed into the 1850s, Bingham possibly guessed that his time in Sault Sainte Marie was limited. His sponsoring organization was in real financial trouble. Nevertheless, he preserved and continued his work as zealously as ever. In January 1850 he finally secured the services of an interpreter after a period without one. Bingham heard that a member of his church had fallen away from Christianity. Rather than condemn him, he reached out to the man, who confessed and promised to return to

\footnote{Abel Bingham Journals, 20 November 1847, BFP, CHL.}
\footnote{He was lucky to have had his interpreter present as well, or he would have missed the joy of her story. Earlier in the year he complained once again about the lack of one. Abel Bingham Journals, 9 May 1847, BFP, CHL.}
\footnote{Abel Bingham Journals, 14 July 1848, BFP, CHL.}
the ways of the gospel.74 Near the end of the year Bingham was resting in his room. A drunken Native American came to him because he wanted to have a meeting right then and there. The man said that he “had been doing something he should not have, and since there could be many present at the meeting, he wanted the opportunity to speak.” Bingham gathered some followers and held the meeting. He confessed to his sins, although Bingham did not record what they were. He did write about “how painful to me was the announcement of the facts! But it afforded much relief to witness the evidence of genuine repentance in him.”75

An old foe haunted Bingham in January 1851. After a period without mentioning them, an issue concerning a Catholic presented itself. He met with two members of his church that had been drawn away and “fell into their former habits of intemperance,” and they lost their standing in the church. However, the couple regretted falling away. Since their departure from Christianity, the man said he was “exceedingly wretched both in body and mind.” Christianity provided the food and clothes they used to desperately need, and then liquor took over. Bingham asked the man if “he had resolved with the divine to give up liquor and return to the Lord, and attend a meeting.” He replied that “he had been prevailed upon to give himself up to the Catholics,” and thought he needed to consult with the priest first. Of course Bingham could not accept that, so he inquired about the Catholicism’s ability to restore peace and happiness to his life. The reply was no, they had not. Bingham then asked, “What benefit had it been, and what benefit was
likely to come?” The man needed no further convincing, and he attended Bingham’s
next meeting. There is no record of whether his wife came along or not.76

Interestingly, Bingham had a different viewpoint about losing members to certain
Protestant faiths. There are numerous examples of Bingham’s desire to get along as
much as possible with missionaries of other denominations. One evening he met an
elderly Native American widow who wished to be baptized. As was his doctrine, he
examined her readiness for the sacrament. He did not think that she was “sufficiently
instructed in the general principles of Christianity” to admit her to the church. When he
stated as much, some of his brethren thought there was some danger of losing the woman
because she “was among the Methodist people. But I think it is safer to run the risk of
having a good member drawn away, than to receive one contrary to gospel rule.”77
Clearly Bingham was strongly indoctrinated. He was picky about who was received into
his church, as was Pitezel. However, two things should be considered here. First, if the
woman was among the Catholics instead of the Methodists, he might have admitted her
regardless of his unease about her readiness. Second, the Methodists she was among
included Rev. Peter Marksman, a man Bingham had respect and admiration for.

Like Baraga and Pitezel, Bingham distinguished Christian Native Americans from
non-Christian ones. His opinion of a given Native American was directly related to their
religious state and how they lived her life. In 1853 he visited a Native American
settlement where an elderly man and an infant had just perished. However, the infant

76 Abel Bingham Journals, 30 January 1851, BFP, CHL.
77 Abel Bingham Journals, 20 July 1851, BFP, CHL.
was the child “of an Indian girl with a bad reputation.” He recorded that there were no tears from him or anyone else present. He said,

> Truly for one, I felt that there was no cause of grief on my part; for the good old man who had maintained a regular standing in the church for more than twenty years and had often been surrounded and beset with snares and temptations, had now passed beyond the reach of those snares. . . we hope that he was relieved of his full share of evil things and is now about to receive his great things.\(^78\)

The following day they buried the man, and Bingham said that those present trusted he “may rest quietly until the Trumpet shall sound as a signal” for him to “arise and pass on to immortality.” After the initial mention of the death of the infant there is nothing. The death of someone so young generally brings a reaction from even the strongest of people, but there was nothing from Rev. Bingham because of her mother’s reputation.

Rev. Abel Bingham had a tremendous impact upon Native Americans during the nearly thirty years he lived at Sault Sainte Marie, in addition to his time in New York. He may have been content to remain in the Upper Peninsula for the rest of his life, but that was not to be. In 1854 it was clear that the American Baptist Missionary Union was in serious financial trouble and in danger of ending. Bingham’s report from that year provides perhaps a small part of the reason the union was in trouble. Prices of everything, including provisions and materials, had risen in Sault Sainte Marie, and his buildings needed many repairs.\(^79\) Throughout the rest of 1854 and early 1855 Bingham’s letters and journal attest that he knew the mission would close, which it did. On September 21, 1855, he closed the doors to the mission school, and left the Upper Peninsula.

\(^78\) Abel Bingham Journals, 14 February 1853, BFP, CHL.

\(^79\) Abel Bingham to the American Baptist Missionary Union, 30 June 1854, BFP, CHL.
Peninsula for the final time on October 2. The family moved to Grand Rapids, near the site of Rev. Frederic Baraga’s earlier mission, and Abel remained there until his death.
Chapter 7

Missionary Endeavors Assessed

After you visit the Bishop Baraga shrine, leave the parking lot and turn left on US-41. Follow the highway for six miles. You will be in the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community with the bay to the right. Off to the left on top of the hill is a beautiful log structure. In front stands a white marble statue of Frederic Baraga with his arms on the shoulders of two Native Americans. The sign tells you that you are at the exact location where Baraga once stood. The log structure is the Most Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church.

The church is the only Catholic Church in the Upper Peninsula that celebrates mass in such a way. The main altar is the first thing to see upon entering the doors. There is no crucifix or statue of Jesus elevated, nor any other symbol most Catholics expect on the altar. Instead there are snowshoes mounted on maple wood. Frederic Baraga’s most notable nickname is the “Snowshoe Priest,” and the Ojibwa of Upper Michigan earned subsistence and money from the syrup of maple trees. The interior of the church also houses an Ojibwa medicine wheel. The four colors and four directions of
the wheel represent the circle of life from youth to old age. In addition, it reinforces the Catholic liturgical cycle.

Both Native Americans and whites are welcome at Mass. The past few years have seen a fairly even mixture of whites and Native Americans in attendance. In addition to the aforementioned examples, other things present themselves during Mass that show the blending of Catholicism and traditional Ojibwa religious practices. For example, Catholics are used to a source of holy water near the entrance of church to bless themselves and acknowledge sin. There is no holy water in the font at this church. Instead there lies a piece of dry cedar. The cedar is lit at the beginning of Mass, and an eagle feather moves the smoke in a circular motion to purify the congregation, the priest, and the Eucharist. The celebrant of the Mass is white, and leads the people in the singing of both English and Ojibwa hymns.

Across the street from the church is the rebuilt schoolhouse that Baraga built while at Assinins. Today it is a small museum. To the left lie the ruins of a convent built in 1866. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelette arrived that year, and within a decade added a girl’s boarding school. A boarding school for boys came in 1881. Both schools served as an orphanage as well.¹

The ruins serve as a metaphor for nineteenth-century missionary activities in Upper Michigan. Part of a wall remains standing. This symbolizes the few lasting influences of the missionaries, such as the church described above, and the Methodist Indian Church in Zeba.² The remainder of the building lies crumbled around the standing

¹ These buildings were used until 1975 when they were declared unsafe.

² Information on this church is provided later in this conclusion.
wall, reminders of a time when missionaries had high hopes for Native Americans. They
wished to bring about wholesale, lasting changes to their lives. They wanted to bring
them into civilization while teaching the gospel. The missionaries had different beliefs
about how to teach Native Americans, and their doctrines differed from one another, but
they all shared the common goal of civilization and salvation. In the twenty-first century
there are few reminders of missionary work left in the Upper Peninsula. Back in the
nineteenth century, however, the story was a bit different, and a few examples aptly
illustrate this.

**Naomikong**

Sault Sainte Marie was a major gathering point for Native Americans and whites alike. Missions centered there as well. The Methodists, along with other denominations, dedicated a great deal of time, energy, and money to the missionary enterprise. The Methodist Mission there included a farm, mission-house, and a chapel. As time progressed, the missionaries stationed there felt the operation would be expanded. However, there was a problem. The mission was located on a government reserve. But the Native Americans wanted to relocate to a place where they could build a permanent Ojibwa settlement. According to Pitezel, they wanted a place to call their own. They wanted to purchase land and “hold it in *fee simple*, without molestation.”³

During the winter of 1848-1849, the mission at Sault Sainte Marie offered regular preaching, religious exercises, a small class, and both a Sabbath and day school which enrolled twenty-four scholars. Rev. P.O. Johnson was the primary missionary, with Rev.

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Peter Marksman assisting. Seven children lived in the mission home. Things were progressing well, and, according to Pitezel, “It became apparent that a change must soon be effected.”\(^4\) The Native Americans were anxious to move, and they wanted the missionaries to move with them. They chose a new location to serve as their home: Naomikong. Naomikong is on Tahquamenon Bay, approximately thirty-five miles west of Sault Sainte Marie. Between 1848 and 1852, Peter O. Johnson, Salmon Steele, and Ebenezer Steele served as missionaries, with Peter Marksman teaching, preaching, and interpreting. The Methodist missionaries purchased sixty acres of land from the U.S. Government, and the Native Americans bought land all around the mission tract.

The new location rapidly grew. Within one year, the Native Americans built between eight and ten log houses. Furthermore, they slowed down their hunting in favor of agriculture and other “industrial pursuits.”\(^5\) Fishing was a major industry. However, Pitezel suggested that this had nothing to do with the particular economic acumen of Native Americans, but simply reflected local conditions. He stated, “From their proximity to the lake, and their superior skill as fishermen, fishing must always be one of the pursuits of this people, and one which, if properly followed, may be made lucrative. It must be to them what the farm and the trade is to many others.”\(^6\)

At Naomikong, there were Native American farms. However, some of them predated the arrival of whites. They cleared much of the land they purchased, and invested much time into farming it. However, prior to a white presence in the area, land


\(^6\) *Ibid.*
was not bought and sold to be held as private property. When they were not busy tilling
the soil, they worked on their dwellings, built a mission house and a schoolhouse from
logs, and then built a separate dwelling for the interpreter. In short, while the
missionaries helped expedite the land purchase from the government, the Native
Americans accomplished much on their own.

Missionaries could only do so much. While they were successful at making sure
camp meetings were organized, they could not stop the spread of microbes. A smallpox
epidemic broke out in the area around 1850. Astoundingly, none of the Methodist Native
Americans died. Pitezel felt that it was nothing less than the divine hand of God that
allowed some Native Americans to contract the disease, but not perish from it.7

Returning to the example of Rev. Peter Marksman, we can clearly see that
missionaries did matter. As Edmund Danziger stated, “Missionaries mattered.”8
They spent years living amongst Native Americans teaching and preaching. They
attempted to bring them into civilization and prepare them for salvation. The difficulties
they encountered along the way were numerous. Native Americans did not always
immediately welcome them. Where they were welcomed, most missionaries had to
overcome serious language barriers and were at the mercy of interpreters. Often qualified
and reliable interpreters were hard to find. In 1837 Henry Schoolcraft remarked,
“Nothing would improve and exalt the system of agencies more than raising the character

7 In 1849 cholera broke out at Sault Sainte Marie. While many white citizens perished, no Native
Americans did. Again, Pitezel thanked divine providence for this, as did Frederic Baraga on a similar
occasion. See Ibid., 125.

8 See Danziger, Great Lakes Indian Accommodation and Resistance, 156.
of its interpreters. We are dependent on them for the most important communications to and from the Indians.”

Marksman spent the first years of his life learning the traditional religion of the Ojibwa, but converted to Christianity when missionaries arrived. He then became a missionary himself, and in turn inspired many people, Native Americans and whites alike. During the four-year period between 1848 and 1852, there were four large camp meetings, where both white and Native American Methodists gathered to worship.

An elderly Native American woman attended one camp meeting. She happened to be Rev. Marksman’s aunt. She was in poor physical shape, and barely made it the one mile between her home and the meeting. Her nephew visited her on Saturday, and she fervently wished to attend Sunday services. “The expression of her face indicated a serene frame of mind and deep, devotional feeling.” During the service, people noticed her moving her lips silently, then using her handkerchief to wipe tears from her eyes. After several minutes, she stood, and bore witness to the worshipers present. She told them what God had done for her and her soul. The woman had to stop sometimes to clear her choked voice. Before falling to her knees at the close of her speech, she exclaimed that she did not possess the words to express her true, heartfelt feelings about God.

Those four years were good for the Methodist mission. Rev. Marksman frequently preached to good-sized audiences. Improvements continued on existing and

9 See Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1837.

10 Ibid., 126.

11 Ibid., 126-127.
new dwellings and buildings. Native American Christians participated in worship and were not afraid to endure hard conditions. At times both rooms of the mission house were full, and people took to sitting on the stairs. The Methodists even counted some Catholic converts in their midst. Worship services sometimes turned into prayer meetings because the spirit so moved the numbers present.

In addition to some of the stories discussed previously, missionaries looked to the dying to see the impact of the Gospel. As such, it stands to reason that missionaries would have taken comfort in seeing converted Native Americans pass from this world to the next, although they were in no hurry to send them there. Pitezel states,

> While the gospel was doing its benign work, to mold aright the plastic mind of childhood and youth and to bring sinners to the fountain of living waters, it was seen to be no less potent to soothe the sorrows of the dying and to open to their vision the portals of immortality.12

Pitezel and others kept death records of converted Native Americans. In one instance, Pitezel wrote, “One man, Henry O-ge-mah-be-nas, which signifies King Hawk, embraced Christianity about two years since, and we trust he now rests in Abraham’s bosom.”13 A longer story is related about a man who knew he was going to die, but wanted to ensure that he was surrounded by missionaries and Christians. Peter Marksman was present, and the dying man received communion. Upon doing so, his face brightened, and his pain visibly lessened. It took another four days for the man to die, but he continued to praise God. “It was as brilliant as it was brief – as constant in health as it was triumphant in death.”

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12 Ibid., 131.

13 Ibid., 131-132.
Feast of “The Tabernacles”

Rev. Pitezel wrote a lengthy report about an 1852 camp meeting that was eventually published in two leading missionary periodicals of the era: the Christian Advocate and Journal and the Missionary Advocate. The meeting began on July 15, and was held at Whitefish Point on Lake Superior. Missionaries and Native Americans cared little for arbitrary political borders, and the meeting was well attended by Native Americans and missionaries from both sides of the international border between Michigan and Canada. This may have been the first camp meeting held in the Upper Peninsula, but it would not be the last. As Pitezel noted, the 1852 meeting would not have been as large or as beneficial without the participation of Canadian missionaries and First Nations. The lands north of Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan, had many more Native Americans and missionaries working amongst them. One participant of the camp meeting, Rev. L. Warner, was chairman of a Canadian Indian district that included eighteen mission stations.

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14 A recent work that discusses this in more detail is Karl Hele, editor, Lines Drawn upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2008).

15 “First Nations” is the term generally used in Canada to collectively describe who people in the United States refer to as Native Americans.

Pitezel lauded the appearance and contributions of Rev. Warner, but he saved additional praise for Rev. Peter Jones, an Ojibwa preacher.\textsuperscript{17} According to Pitezel, Jones was “experienced, venerable, and much-beloved.”\textsuperscript{18} He was dignified in appearance and in speech, and an eloquent preacher. He married an English woman in New York, and Pitezel visited Jones on more than one occasion.

In addition to Jones, there were eight other Methodist ministers present at Whitefish Point. Pitezel said, “We had throughout the meeting a demonstration that Methodism is one, and Methodist preachers are one, the world over.”\textsuperscript{19} When the meeting started, there were twenty tents present, and approximately two hundred Indians. Pitezel was disappointed by the turnout. His explanation: “. . . many were providentially hindered.”\textsuperscript{20} For him, it was impossible to think that Native Americans did not show up simply because they did not want to, or because they were not true converts. That being said, four tents arrived from Kewawenon, a distance of over two hundred miles away from Whitefish Point.

Apparently it took the Native Americans present quite a while to get into the spirit of things. Pitezel felt that the camp meeting was a novelty to them, as they had never seen, only heard, about such events. However, as time passed, they joined in the festivities with as much vigor and enthusiasm as could be hoped for. Various sounds were heard, from the groans and cries of the sinners to the joys and laughter of the saved.

\textsuperscript{17} See Peter Jones, \textit{Life and Journals of Keh-ke-wa-gou-na-by [Rev. Peter Jones]} (Toronto: Anson Green and the Wesleyan Printing Establishment, 1860).

\textsuperscript{18} See Pitezel, \textit{Life of Rev. Peter Marksman}, 138-139.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}, 140. Emphasis in original.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}, 141.
The converted prayed over the unconverted in the hopes that they would see the light. At least thirty converted and were baptized. In addition, a wedding took place on Sunday evening. The bride had an infant with her, and both mother and child were baptized after the wedding.\textsuperscript{21}

A number of Native Americans also gave testimony about God’s presence in their lives. Pitezel counted thirty-three doing so. Rev. Peter Jones interpreted what was said. For example, Peter Marksman testified:

\begin{quote}
I will tell a little what God has done for my soul. I am happy in my heart. I love God and my brethren. I desire my Indian brethren to be converted. The day is clear. I know that trials are ahead, but I will overcome all through Christ. I hope to receive a crown of glory. It is a high day to us all. May God, in Christ, bring us all to meet in heaven!\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

Marksman’s words are moving, but at the same time sound rather preprogrammed and rehearsed. His testimony fits in nicely with the missionary narrative. The other Native Americans who testified at the camp meeting said similar things as well.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Ibid.}, 144-145. In addition to the festivities and events described, the missionaries attempted to take up a collection. As Pitezel indicates, not much was expected because of the Native Americans’ poverty. However, approximately forty dollars was collected and pledged. One Native American gave three dollars, and an elderly woman gave all she had. She said that although she was poor, she would do what she could. She donated fifty-six cents. Pitezel stated, “The widow’s mite will have its reward.”

\textsuperscript{22} Quoted in Pitezel, \textit{Life of Rev. Peter Marksman}, 145-147.

\textsuperscript{23} John Ogishta testified that he tried to serve God when he started listening to Pitezel, and then he converted under Marksman.
An interesting thing occurred at the close of the meeting. After the marching, singing, laughing and weeping concluded, the white ministers noticed the Native Americans gathering around them. Pitezel realized that the “rite of Indian christening” was about to happen. In it, a chief thanked them for their hard work and labors. The chiefs and the Native Americans wanted to remember them, but their European names were hard to remember. On this occasion and with these Native Americans, missionaries were clearly successful in building a strong relationship.

**Zeba Methodist Indian Church**

With the intensity of missionary work in the Upper Peninsula during the nineteenth century, one might think that there were a number of churches directed specifically toward Native Americans. In fact, only two remain active in the twenty-first century. Missionaries certainly impacted Native Americans, but religion was not the primary one.

John Sunday, a Native American Methodist convert, visited the southern end of the Keweenaw Peninsula around 1832. His name appears regularly throughout the history of this period, but many details of his life are difficult to find. He was born in Canada around 1795. He learned the traditional religion of his people, but in 1823 he experienced a religious conversion. A missionary named William Case visited Sunday’s

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24 In addition to the forthcoming story, a temperance meeting was called. A chief named Louis (Waubojig) Waishkee was named president. A pledge of total abstinence was signed by 105 Native Americans. Rev. Peter Jones was delighted because there would “be no more deaths by drowning in the water; no more burning to death; no more quarreling; no more bruised eyes; no more dragging the wife by the hair of her head; no more murders; and you who are husbands now say you will no more be jealous . . .”
area and his presence and influenced Sunday to the point that he converted. He spent most of the rest of his life preaching and conducting missionary activities among the Ojibwa of Canada, but spent some time in Michigan as well. Henry Schoolcraft witnessed Sunday preach, and said that he “produced a great sensation . . . and overthrew the loose fabric of their (Ojibwa) theology and mythology with a strong hand.”

While he was in Sault Sainte Marie, John Sunday travelled west to the southern end of the Keweenaw Peninsula. There, he held a camp meeting in the area that attracted a few Native Americans. The fact that Sunday was Ojibwa certainly helped stir up interest, but it did not convince the local chief or the council. He was told that his presence was not welcome, and that they did not want him to preach there. Nevertheless, he remained among the approximately 200 Native Americans of the area until his patience was rewarded. There is no record of how long he remained in the area, but he likely remained until the end of the year. Writer Dorothy Reuter states that the local Ojibwa did not want him to leave. “Expressions of sorrow at his leaving and anxiety as to whether there would be a replacement to teach their children and preach the Word filled the air.” They were in luck, because “one of their own, Thomas Fraser, followed Sunday.”

Sunday represented the earliest days of Methodist missionary activity in the area. Others followed, including John Pitezel and Peter Marksman. Their efforts lasted to the present day. After missionaries left the area, the Methodist Church made sure that a

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25 Quoted in MacMillan, 103-104.

26 Sunday’s given name was Shahwundais.

27 Reuter, 354.
minister visited as often as possible. As the population of the Upper Peninsula continued to grow, there were more ministers. In 1888 the present church was constructed. The church celebrated its 150th Anniversary in 1982 with a three-day celebration that included commemorative services, a parade, and a banquet. In addition, an outdoor chapel that was constructed in 1924 is still in use for annual camp meetings. The church holds services each Sunday, and while accurate numbers of parishioners were unavailable, previous data suggests that perhaps forty families belong to the parish. Sunday school services are conducted by Native American teachers. Although the current number of Native Americans that belong to the church is few, the fact that this area has been in continuous use as a mission and as a church since 1832 proves the lasting effect Methodist missionaries had among some Native Americans.28

Changes in Ojibwa Living Patterns

Missionaries wished to see major, nearly wholesale, changes in Ojibwa life. We have seen many examples of Baraga, Bingham, and Pitezel lamenting about the scattered

state of Native Americans in Upper Michigan and the difficulties their semi-nomadic, seasonal existence proved to their work. Furthermore, these men were able to convince at least some Native Americans to live in permanent dwellings near the mission stations. They were able to turn to other pursuits once that was done, including education, commerce, medicine, and farming.

Education has been discussed fairly extensively throughout this work. All three missionaries established schools and felt education was one of the best ways for Native Americans to achieve civilization. Changes in agriculture have not been discussed, however. The Upper Peninsula does not possess the best conditions for agriculture. Growing seasons are bookended by cold that comes early and stays late. Crops well on their way to a bountiful harvest are often destroyed by frost before they are ready. Nevertheless, with the help of missionaries, Native Americans saw their yields improve during the nineteenth century.²⁹

Native Americans in the Mackinac region had more luck agriculturally. In the 1837 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, it stated that those Native Americans “have advanced more in agriculture than any of the lake tribes; cultivate corn, beans, pumpkins, to some extent, annually; have fenced fields, and live generally in comfortable log houses.” In addition, they sold excess crops at market. In short, they lived a civilized life comparable to that of their white neighbors. In direct contrast were the Ojibwa in the Upper Peninsula. They cultivated corn and potatoes to “a limited

²⁹ For more information see Danziger, Great Lakes Indian Accommodation and Resistance during the Early Reservation Years), 31-95. Danziger discusses Canadian Indians extensively as well, which is useful for comparison.
extent, but devote most of their time in quest of food in the chase, or in fishing. They also manufacture sugar from the rock maple . . . This tribe exhibits no general improvement, or advance in civilization. They are warlike, indolent, and impoverished, with few exceptions, living in mat or bark lodges, which are transported in their migrations.”30

By 1839 Mackinac Agency agent Henry Schoolcraft reported improvements among the Native Americans in the Upper Peninsula in some of these areas. Missionaries and government-appointed farmers assisted them in clearing land, building fences, and plowing fields. Animals such as oxen, bulls, cows, and pigs were distributed as well. By 1842 the annual report indicated great satisfaction with missionary work and its effects. For example, the Native Americans at Sault Sainte Marie who “put themselves under the auspices of the missionaries seem to be comfortable and happy. There is quite a colony of them who have built houses and are cultivating fields around the Methodist establishment.” In addition, Abel Bingham reported that the Native Americans under his care continued to cultivate their own gardens. “There appears to be a growing impression on their minds of the importance of this branch of industry.” Furthermore, the Native Americans at L’Anse were seen as the most improved, due mainly to the influence of the Methodist mission. Many of the Native Americans there “made a profession of religion, and have become sober, docile, and industrious. They evinced great solicitude to have their children educated . . . .”31

30 Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1837.

31 Ibid., 1839 and 1841.
Even years of positive reports contained news that was not as pleasant. In 1843 it was reported that the previous year’s potato crop did not provide enough sustenance for the Native Americans at Sault Sainte Marie. In addition, they did not collect as much maple sugar.\(^{32}\) At the same time, they sold enough furs to traders that they were able to pay off much of their debt. Farming improved in 1844, as Abel Bingham reported:

In relation to the productions of our farm, I may add, we have between seven and eight acres of grain on the ground (rye and oats,) and rising of one acre of potatoes; all of which now look well for this country, and, should we be favored with suitable weather for harvesting, and be preserved from frost, bid fair for a good yield. In addition to this, we have a moderate supply of garden vegetables. In relation to stock, we have eight head of horned cattle – 3 oxen, 2 cows, and 1 heifer, and two smaller cattle; and 4 swine, 3 of which are spring shoats.\(^{33}\)

Bingham also recognized that his area was not the best for farming. However, his agricultural pursuits served a second purpose: “to train the boys to business and habits of industry.”\(^{34}\) The Methodist mission near Bingham’s focused on many of the same goals, and their 1844 report was similar. Their fences were in order, and their crops included oats, potatoes, and turnips totaling approximately fifty acres. In addition, each Native American had their own plot of land to farm. Gone were the days of communal village land ownership, and in its place was private property, capitalism, and the market economy.

By 1848 the concept of private property seemed to take even greater hold amongst the Ojibwa of Upper Michigan. *The Annual Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* stated that many purchased land the previous year, and that they expressed

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 1843.  
\(^{33}\) Ibid., 1844.  
\(^{34}\) Ibid.
a “great desire to have permanent homes.” Furthermore, the march towards civilization continued, at least in the eyes of missionaries. Abel Bingham reported his delight that proper windows and sashes were installed on many Native American homes in his area. In addition, word from L’Anse provided the following industrious figures: 3,000 bushels of potatoes; 500 bushels of turnips; $2,500 worth of furs; 500 barrels of fish; 1,400 pounds of maple sugar; 37 head of cattle; 60 homes; 10 boats and 40 canoes; all from a population of 257 Native Americans. Overall L’Anse had better agricultural yields than Sault Sainte Marie. Recall that Rev. John Pitezel lamented leaving Sault Sainte Marie because he felt there would be no agricultural prospects at L’Anse. Yet after a few years he discussed selling surplus produce to miners to make money for the Native Americans and his mission. Even if there is disagreement among people regarding missionary motives, personalities, or impacts, the evidence of the missionary’s abilities to improve Native American standards of living is impressive.35

Reports through the rest of the time period under consideration here provide information similar to the above. Many other patterns are evident as well. While Native Americans continued to progress, many of them progressed much more slowly than missionaries hoped for. The number of scholars at the different schools remained relatively small, and, especially for Bingham at Sault Sainte Marie, started to decline somewhat. In his case part of the problem was likely the shortage of funds he experienced immediately before closing his mission made actual teaching more and more difficult. Nevertheless, education helped Native Americans meet the challenges of encroaching white civilization.

35 Ibid., 1848.
Missionaries and Native Americans were at odds over medicinal practices. Missionaries felt nothing but disdain at the various traditional methods Native Americans used to treat disease, and felt that many of their methods did nothing but make matters worse. Lack of understanding on their part was rooted in narrow ethnocentrism. However, white medicinal practices that missionaries helped introduce certainly improved Native American health, but they did not rely on medicine alone. Sometimes missionaries stressed the need to believe in God to be in good health or to be healed of adversity. For example, in 1847 Pitezel visited a couple who were unhappy with their lives. The husband slipped into a fire while drunk, and cut off the burned toe. Pitezel regretted the incident, and told him that had he embraced Christianity, God could have protected him, and even if that was not possible a doctor could have helped.36

Other times Christianity had no medicinal benefits for Native American health. Smallpox, brought by Europeans, has a centuries-old deadly history among Indians. The government provided a vaccination fund to prevent smallpox. Missionaries helped facilitate the distribution of these vaccines among their charges, and while the disease did break out occasionally, its mortality rate was substantially decreased because of the vaccines. Schoolcraft praised the physicians for their assistance to Native Americans. He said that Native Americans “not only appreciate the medical art, and have great faith in it, but are pleased with the attention of physicians.” He added, however, that “Smallpox vaccinations continue, and Indians fear it greatly. Their term for it, Mum-muk-kizze-win, is a term of terror.”37

36 John H. Pitezel Journals, 27 February 1847, JHP, CHL.

37 See Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1837.
Missionaries fought mercilessly and unwaveringly against alcohol. Their writings are full of their hatred of hard spirits, and for good reason. They also detested the traders who provided it. Therefore, they were pleased when the Office of Indian Affairs passed orders that made it much more difficult for people to introduce liquor into Native American lands, and even authorized the use of military force to track down and apprehend those who did so illegally.\textsuperscript{38} Three years later alcohol was still an issue. Henry Schoolcraft felt that the presence of alcohol made Native Americans much less likely to listen to missionaries and to embrace either Christianity or civilization.

Missionary attitudes toward Native Americans that have been discussed throughout this dissertation are important to consider in order to achieve a more complete picture of their experiences. Furthermore, it is important because it helps us understand why so many Native Americans exhibit a cool attitude toward missionaries today. The available biographical works on Baraga, Bingham, and Pitezel are useful for their information but they do not tell the full story. Hagiography helps no one gain a fuller understanding of this history in question.

On March 10, 2010, Alexander Sample, Bishop of the Diocese of Marquette, held a press conference to present to the public big news on the Baraga canonization front. He stated, “We have, we believe, a true bona fide miracle that can be attributed to the intercession of Bishop Baraga. This is a significant step forward in this cause and we believe if this is upheld, we could be looking at a beatification for Bishop Baraga in the

\textsuperscript{38} See \textit{Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs}, 1837.
One hopes that the Diocese of Marquette and the Vatican will not avoid the hard issues that must be faced in assessing Bishop Baraga’s life.

Missionaries worked tirelessly to educate Native Americans about Christianity. Again, their methods differed greatly. Baraga baptized many, many more people than his Protestant contemporaries. As a result, many Native Americans did not fully understand what was asked of them. Bingham and Pitezel, on the other hand, insisted that Native Americans be instructed fully before baptism, and they had to exhibit understanding about Christianity as well. The latter was especially true with Bingham. These factors may help explain why Baraga complains about the backsliding of Catholic Native Americans much more than either Pitezel or Bingham did.

All told, if one ponders the lasting effects of missionary activity among the Ojibwa of Upper Michigan during the nineteenth century, conversion is not at the top of the list. Many Native Americans never fully converted to Christianity, and practiced syncretic religions in its place. They blended traditional beliefs with whatever they liked about Christianity. The lack of Native American churches today, Protestant or Catholic, provide evidence that missionary religious teachings did not have long-term impacts that they intended.


40 Beyond that, the paucity of Native American membership in white congregations in the Upper Peninsula further illustrates this. I was denied access to any parish records, so I cannot provide an accurate count of Native American membership in white congregations. However, my experiences while conducting my research, and the research itself, showed me that very few Native Americans are active members of white congregations. Furthermore, hard numbers are difficult to come by because some Native
In the third volume of his history of American Indian Catholics, Christopher Vecsey discusses what Catholicism and Christianity mean to Native Americans today. During the last century many Native Americans moved to urban areas. Some of those, like Sault Sainte Marie, have ministries that are geared toward Native Americans. However, as Vecsey admits, the degrees of success and commitment vary widely. Furthermore, prejudices against Native American clergy continue. There are very few Native American priests. Vecsey traces a pattern of racism and ethnocentrism from the earliest Jesuits through the middle of the last century against Native American clergy. This changed somewhat after Vatican II, as the church held various conferences to address the issue. However, only a dozen or so men were ordained between the 1960s and 1990s. Many Native Americans still feel an aversion to the church, and do not feel welcome enough to join white congregations, let alone the clergy.

An additional problem relates to serious differences and divisions among Native Americans themselves about the role of Christianity. These exist on the reservation and community level down to the family level. Vecsey cites the example of a Minnesota Ojibwa man named Larry Cloud-Morgan. Cloud-Morgan is, among other things, a playwright, and he blends Ojibwa religion and Catholicism into his work. However, he is the only person in his family who “has anything to do with Catholicism; they have moved Americans do not identify themselves as such. If their appearance is subtle enough, they sometimes identify themselves as white.

41 Christopher Vecsey, Where Two Roads Meet (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

42 Ibid., 146.

43 Ibid., 167-171.
on to evangelism, to nativism, to nothingism [sic].” There are other examples of this, and it is a profound hurdle to jump. Without community or familial support, there is a good chance that even those Ojibwa inclined to Christianity would defer to the majority.44

There are things in place to bridge the gap between Native American spirituality and Christianity. For example, at Most Holy Name of Jesus parish in Assinins, Father John Hascall held a three-day mission in 1993 in an attempt to stimulate “Indian Catholic religiousness.” At the time he considered the formation of an organization to “fulfill the task of spiritual syncretism.” He must have found that task too monumental, because there is no evidence he ever followed through. It is not surprising considering the legacy previous missionaries left in their wake.45

Recalling the negative attitudes missionaries had toward traditional Native American religion, culture, and life, the evidence is clear that they were prejudiced from the beginning, and that their ethnocentrism could not help but cause serious issues for their missionary work. Their scorn was not lost on the Ojibwa, who witnessed missionary reactions to their practices. For example, Bingham and Pitezel both stated that they felt an evil presence – the very presence of the devil, in fact – while they witnessed Ojibwa religious ceremonies. Baraga had nothing but contempt for them as well, and stated so on many occasions. I have always felt strongly that, for lack of a

44 Ibid., 254-256.

45 Ibid., 215-216. Things have not been any easier for the Protestants, either. While examples of Indian parishes like Zeba exist, Choctaw Methodist minister Homer Noley outlines difficulties his faith has with attracting and maintaining Native American parishes, while at the same time pointing out that Native Christianity is part of the religious landscape. See Homer Noley, First White Frost: Native Americans and United Methodism (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).
better way of describing it, that you cannot mess with someone else’s religion. True, deep faith and spirituality is something people are willing to die for. It is hard enough to approach a group of deeply spiritual people and ask them to consider changing; when you add scorn, ridicule, and criticism to that, you are fighting an unwinnable battle.

As a result, missionaries encountered difficulty even getting a chance to talk with Native Americans. Remember Baraga’s experience when he called at a village of Native Americans he had not previously visited. He spoke to the chief about religion, but the chief told Baraga emphatically that in no way did he want to become Christian.46 However, Baraga did not give up. He spoke with three others, again to no avail. “But these poor creatures said very positively that they do not want to accept the religion.”47 In a letter describing this trip, Baraga stated, “They were real savages who knew nothing about God and His Son, whom He had sent.”48 These examples, as well as what the missionaries stated about them, are what many Ojibwa remember today.

Baraga, Bingham, and Pitezel consistently lamented about backsliding among Native Americans. Even when they got their feet in the door, the messages and teachings did not always hold firm. Again, this could be an example of Native Americans simply humoring missionaries. On the other hand, it could have been a form of mockery as well. The validity of conversion numbers as reported by missionaries is always suspect for these reasons; furthermore, when we consider that the level of education given and comprehension expected varied so widely, it is no surprise that many Native Americans

46 Baraga Diary, 256.
47 Baraga Diary, 257.
48 Frederic Baraga to Leopoldine Society, August 30, 1862, Bishop Baraga Association and Archives, Marquette, Michigan.
abandoned a strict adherence to Christianity. Finally, Native Americans were fond of syncretism. They often borrowed elements of Christianity that they liked and blended it in with their own faith. In a sense, they could have been practicing at least a form of Christianity, but missionaries, with their ethnocentric blinders raised, would have only seen a return of savagery and paganism. The fact that missionaries were guilty of attempting cultural genocide cannot be denied. All missionaries, sometimes radically, but always ultimately, wanted to see wholesale changes in Native American life. In a sense they wanted to remove everything that it means to be an Indian. Civilization and conversion were intertwined, and there was no room for dirty savagism.

Missionary work in other areas of Native American life, on the other hand, had massive impacts. Their crusade against alcohol comes to mind. Furthermore, missionaries brought Native Americans out of their traditional economy and into a market economy. They also converted many of them to private property ownership. For better or for worse, this helped Native Americans survive in the changing world they found themselves in. A number of authorities demonstrate that Native American economic ideals were generally communal, and antithetical to the market economy and capitalism advocated by whites who sought to “civilize” Indians. Once they lost control

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over the land, they lost their independence.\textsuperscript{50} Without the assistance of missionaries, Native Americans may still have adapted to their new world, but it could have taken a great deal longer.

Native Americans found their worlds changing quickly in Upper Michigan from 1820 to 1868. Once copper was discovered their lands were overrun by whites. Had the Ojibwa remained away from white influence, missionaries likely would not have had the success they did, and might not have had any at all. Historian Edmund Danziger quotes Elizabeth Graham to provide more evidence of this. The decisions Native Americans made about missionaries and Christianity must be seen in terms of “the encroachment of white settlers on Indian hunting grounds and the disappearance of game, debilitating drunkenness which left the Indians in debt to the traders and bereft of all their possessions, the high incidence of sickness and death resulting from contact with the white population and liquor.”\textsuperscript{51} Since people of great faith tend to be deadly serious about their religion and beliefs, it stands to reason that had things been different, missionaries would have encountered a much more hostile group of people.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{50} For example, see Alfred A. Cave, \textit{Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); and Gregory Evans Dowd, \textit{A Spirited Resistance: the North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815} (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

\textsuperscript{51} Quoted in Danziger, \textit{Great Lakes Indian Accommodation and Resistance}, 183. His discussion of missionaries is located on pages 156-184.

\textsuperscript{52} Some historians argue that internal revival among Native Americans did not require the presence of whites. See Elizabeth Vibert, \textit{Traders’ Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846} (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).
Native Americans have been denied agency in many past works about their history, which could be why they are so hesitant to discuss the latter with white scholars. That is a sin which must be stopped, and thankfully is not as true today as it once was. Native Americans were not hapless victims that were always dictated to by others, even at the heights of despair. When a missionary approached them, they debated whether to accept them or not. If they allowed a missionary to talk to them, they spent time debating whether to accept his teachings or not. Missionaries, whether they wanted to acknowledge it or not, were at the mercy of Native Americans. If they universally closed the door, missionaries would have found themselves without a flock to tend to. Native Americans made the decision to accept or reject missionaries; missionaries were never allowed to dictate the terms. Stories of Native Americans always welcoming missionaries must be viewed with skepticism. Histories that give Native Americans agency and that present the range of missionary methods, ideology, and feelings about their charges need to push hagiography aside. Only then will the full truth of the experiences between missionaries and Native Americans have the chance to present itself.
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Appendix A

The Hagiography of Frederic Baraga

Prior to my falling out with the Bishop Baraga Association, I upset the Native American community at Northern Michigan University. In 2005 I was invited to give a lecture on Baraga that I called, “Bishop Baraga’s Indians.” It was a look at how Baraga actually described Native Americans, an issue that all of his previous biographers and hagiographers ignored. Marcus Robyns, the Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University archivist, who organized my visit, sent me an email prior to my arrival. The director of the Center for Native American Studies saw a flier that advertised my lecture, and emailed Robyns. She was upset, to say the least. In fact, her jaw hit the floor, due to the insensitive nature of my title. At the time I bristled at the reaction. I felt that it was unfair to criticize my work before even hearing it, and so I paid little attention. A few years and a great deal of research later, I understand how insensitive my title was, and although I stand by it, I fully understand how and why Native Americans were so upset.¹ I have since started to build a relationship with Northern Michigan University’s

¹ A copy of this email, with some of the names removed, appears in the appendix.
Center for Native American Studies, who have pledged their assistance in my future research if needed.

In the summer of 2009 I was invited to give a lecture about Frederic Baraga at Michigan Technological University. Since I have been asked to lecture about him several times, I have a somewhat “standard” lecture I present. It shows Baraga as an admirable, often selfless man, but a man nonetheless. I also talk about Baraga’s views on Native Americans, and why many Native Americans are rather cool towards him today. Apparently something was afoot, because I soon found out that the Diocese of Marquette and the Bishop Baraga Association was not pleased with me.² I planned a second trip to the Upper Peninsula two months after my trip to Michigan Tech. I contacted various archives to plan my visit, including the Bishop Baraga Association who, as in the past, welcomed me with the proverbial open arms. However, when I sent an additional email to confirm my visit, I received a much different response. The association was quite upset with me over my presentation at Michigan Tech. I was told how upset and surprised they were with me, because they thought, “I liked Bishop Baraga.” The best part of the email was the association telling me how they were committed to “present[ing] Baraga in a positive light.” I have serious issues with that, because it does such a disservice to history. Historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz once told me that I could change the world by teaching history, and while my goals might not be as lofty as that, I believe in the liberating potential of the discipline. I am committed to not conducting nor

² For the sake of this person’s feelings, and my hope that reconciliation is a possibility, I will not use the name of author of the email relating to this episode.
presenting thesis-driven research that leaves out massive, yet easily obtainable parts of the story simply because I do not like what it tells me.

Numerous articles and books have been written about Frederic Baraga.\textsuperscript{3} However, all of these studies have fundamental flaws. Many of these works, in fact, have nothing to mention of any real value in understanding the issues investigated in this dissertation. Most simply rehash established admiring biographical information about Baraga, while adding their unique hagiographical data and hero-worshipping style. However, a few have some points of value.

In 1996 Maureen Anna Harp wrote a dissertation at the University of Chicago entitled “Indian Missions, Immigrant Migrations, and Regional Catholic Culture: Slovene Missionaries in the Upper Great Lakes, 1830-1892.”\textsuperscript{4} It is a useful work on many levels, and it makes many solid contributions. Unfortunately, however, it is another in an unrelenting pattern of Frederic Baraga hagiography. Her goals in the dissertation include illustrating how Slovene missionaries established a Catholic institutional framework to accommodate and encourage settlement in the Upper Great Lakes by both American and European Catholics. Furthermore, she states, “This study . . . suggests that, although Native American conversions first drew missionaries into the region, the lasting impact of the missionaries was less one of conversion than of cultural

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\textsuperscript{3} The same does not hold true for the other two missionaries I focus on, John Pitezel and Abel Bingham. The few secondary sources that do exist for those two will be discussed in the chapters that focus on their work.

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Harp’s strength is her attention to both Catholic and Protestant missionaries. To leave out one or the other, as many do, is detrimental to the understanding of the subject. Also missing in many studies is an appropriate discussion of the religion of the particular missionary. Harp corrects this mistake as well.

Unfortunately, Harp’s discussion of Frederic Baraga’s missionary efforts reads exactly like the works that preceded hers. It is essentially nothing but up-to-date hagiography. Furthermore, many of her interpretations about Baraga not only leave something to be desired, but are contradictory. At one point, she states that Baraga did not “understand fully the social and political ‘place’ of the Native American in the expanding United States.” The evidence, in my reading, does not support this.

Harp also overexerts herself in her efforts to differentiate between Protestant and Catholic missions and missionaries in the Upper Peninsula. Granted, significant differences existed. However, her heavy-handed tactics do not stand up to intensive inquiry. For example, she states that Protestant missionaries insisted on “nothing less than a total rejection of the tribal pasts and total transformation of each individual Indian – a cultural destruction and religious regeneration – would satisfy these missionaries.” Many missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, demanded such changes, Baraga included. However, many missionaries, including Protestants, came to appreciate some

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5 Ibid., 9.

6 Many of these will be discussed later. However, one example relates to Baraga’s feelings that removal was the best thing for Native Americans.

7 Harp, 59.
aspects of Native American culture and life, and integrated those things into their missionary strategies.

Harp’s interpretation of Baraga’s answers to Henry Schoolcraft’s questions regarding the Ojibwa is erroneous. A close reading of the Schoolcraft responses shows that Harp is simply wrong when she concludes that, “Many of his [Baraga’s] answers betray not only a basic respect for the Ojibway [sic] but Baraga gladly points out where European-American knowledge explains no better than Ojibway [sic] belief the more complicated facets of life.”

Baraga worked alongside Methodist missionary John Pitezel at L’Anse. Pitezel, we have seen, was vehemently anti-Catholic, like most other Protestant missionaries, but he learned to respect Baraga. They joined forces to purchase land for their respective reservations when the government wanted to relocate the local Native Americans. As Harp states, “Baraga founded a mission at L’Anse, where significant antagonisms developed between him and the Protestant missionaries near his own,” but that Pitezel and Baraga ultimately developed a close relationship.

Joseph Gregorich’s treatment of Baraga is far less satisfactory than Harp’s. Gregorich wrote in a *Michigan History Magazine* article, “His [Baraga’s] success was

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9 See Harp, pages 76 and 155. Another example of a clear contradiction is her discussion of Catholic hierarchy in the Upper Great Lakes. She discusses at length how undeveloped the Catholic Church was in the region, but then states that the Catholic missionaries suffered under the oppressive yoke of the American Catholic Church. In addition to the numerous contradictions, she makes careless mistakes. One such example is her placement of Sault Sainte Marie on Lake Michigan. See page 121.
due to his great piety, tireless zeal, rare talents, pleasing personality, and unswerving loyalty to duty. However, other important factors have been glossed over by his biographers.”  

It is not clear what those factors might have been. The evidence suggests that there were many who did not find Baraga possessed of a “pleasing personality.”

Gregorich followed a long-standing Catholic tradition in Baraga hagiography. Writing in 1901, Rev. Walter Elliot called Baraga “a very saintly Indian missionary.”  

He described Baraga in the following way:

In appearance Baraga bore a striking resemblance to the great Fénelan. He was grave and dignified, refined in manners, a model of a cultivated Christian; but ever kindly and sympathetic in demeanor. Father Jacker told the writer of this article that when the saintly bishop lay in his coffin he was wonderfully beautiful, an air of holiness pervading his form and countenance. Several miraculous occurrences have been granted by God to attest his servant’s heroic virtue. We have no doubt that those who are officially concerned with this highly important matter will soon take the necessary measures towards instituting the process for his canonization.

Stories such as these are what modern Baraga scholars have to sift through to try and ascertain who the real man was.

Another priest, Reverend Richard R. Elliott, published a series of articles about Baraga in the late nineteenth century. One of those had some interesting remarks in which he put some of his own rather negative personal feelings about Indians into the article. One such remark was, “There is a cast of hopelessness on a full-blood Chippewa’s face which is more decidedly developed on the face of his squaw. Who ever

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12 Walter Elliot, 87.
saw a smiling or merry-faced Chippewa squaw?” However, there is hope, according to Elliott. That look of despair disappeared among Catholic Indians. He described Baraga’s piety, and how Baraga was closer than most men to the source of Infinite Power. He also discussed Baraga’s reliance and belief in Divine Providence. For Elliott, Baraga truly was the Native American’s only hope. He stated that when Baraga left a mission, it caused much sorrow among the Native Americans, for Baraga had been their consolation in their abject misery. He documents no evidence for his claims, however. In another article, he stated, “Can it be imagined, that the men and women he [Baraga] found in these lodges, could look upon him with indifference, when he, as poor as themselves, came to console and to teach them the truths of Christianity . . .?”

By contrast, a more objective assessment came from Bernard C. Peters, Professor of Geography Emeritus from Northern Michigan University. Peters was interested in the role of whiskey in the Lake Superior region. He wrote over half a century after Father Elliot:

Of all the disruptive and harmful impacts of European contact with Native Americans, none save disease was more destructive than the introduction of alcohol. Because of its power over the Indians, alcohol was commonly


14 Richard Elliott, 599.

15 Richard Elliot, 599.

used as a tool by government officials in treaty negotiations; many of these treaties resulted in the cession of Indian land.  

Peters was concerned with the question of who introduced alcohol to the L’Anse Indians in 1843. Some, including modern Lake Superior Chippewa, believe that Baraga may have been the culprit. However, Peters’s research on the subject cleared Baraga’s name. Using Baraga’s own writings, Peters illustrated that the L’Anse Indians were suffering from alcohol abuse before Baraga’s arrival. Another of Dr. Peters’s articles about whiskey and the Lake Superior region stated the following:

Whiskey was destroying the Indians, and while officials of the Indian Department blamed “immoral” traders, these same officials, particularly Lewis Cass and Henry Schoolcraft, themselves used liquor to get what they wanted from Indians. Although not written into official government policy, issuing whiskey to Indians was de facto policy. Much of the land acquired from the Indians by the Government was done so by using whiskey at trade negotiations.  

Because of circumstances such as those described by Peters, Baraga and other missionaries had an uphill battle getting Indians to abstain from alcohol. Their efforts and success in the face of such odds is admirable.

In his article about Reverend Leonard Slater, the Baptist missionary who was stationed at Grand River before Baraga, Robert Bolt stated,

Catholics sought to civilize, while Protestants sought to convert first, in the Grand River Valley. The Protestant missionary has aimed, in the first place, to convert the Indians, and is satisfied if he can see them praying and singing. He indoctrinates them in a theology . . . . The Catholic, on the contrary, shows the Indian the advantages of civilized life, of

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agriculture and the arts, and not by bold attack, but in a sidelong way, introduces his religion.19

While Bolt may have felt his synthesis was true in the Grand River Valley, we have seen that did not hold true elsewhere, particularly in the Upper Peninsula. The specificity of these interactions is a key to understanding missionary work in Upper Michigan during the nineteenth century. Baraga, Bingham, Pitezel, and others clearly felt that Christianization and civilization went hand-in-hand, and emphasized both. Baraga seemed to prefer to convert before civilizing, while Bingham and Pitezel emphasized both equally, although they both felt that Christianization led to civilization. Whatever path they took, the Upper Peninsula missionaries strove to make Indians live more like whites and abandon their traditional ways of life.

Unhappily, the four biographical books that have been published about Baraga in the English language are identical in their hagiographical tone and in the nearly total absence of an Indian voice and point of view. The first and largest of those published, *The Life of Bishop Baraga*, by Chrysostomus Verwyst, began with a sketch of the Indians Baraga worked with, and earlier attempts at Christianizing them, before getting into the life of Baraga himself. His sketch of the Indians reads very much like Baraga’s, which makes sense because he used Baraga’s letters and diary as the sources for his book.20 To Verwyst, the savage Indians owed their very survival and continued existence to Baraga.

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20 Verwyst, 1-9.
The next biography which was published was Joseph Gregorich’s *The Apostle of the Chippewas: Life Story of the Most Rev. Fred. Baraga, D.D.* Again, the book was exceedingly hagiographic, and lacked any critical analysis. He ended by stating,

> The study of his life should make our own faith more profound; it should create in us a desire to emulate his virtues; it should strengthen our own trust in God and turn our thoughts more to prayer. It should instill in our hearts a patriotic pride in this pioneer Catholic, the Apostle of the Chippewas, whose labors have been of inestimable value in the development of the country in the vicinity of Lake Superior. Let his name be revered, and may God grant that it may, some day, be enrolled canonically among those of His saints.  

This book was published in 1932, two years after the Bishop Baraga Association was first created in Chicago to promote Baraga’s cause.

The third biography published, James Jamison’s *By Cross and Anchor: The Story of Frederic Baraga on Lake Superior*, is interesting in its tone, but of little value to actual history. His book is novel-like, complete with assumed dialogues culled from what the author believed Baraga would have said. Although he listed Baraga’s letters and diary in his bibliography, he failed to cite them individually. His dialogue made Baraga sound nearly God-like, and the Indians he spoke to simple-minded heathens.

Bernard Lambert’s *Shepherd of the Wilderness* was the last biography published. Written in 1967, it is much more objective than the previous three works. Even so, it presented Baraga as greatly superior to the Indians he worked with. Lambert presented the Indians as somewhat feeble-minded people eager to learn from Baraga so they could throw away the chains of barbarism. Although his bibliography was full of primary

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21 Gregorich, 103.
sources, he, like his predecessors, failed to make individual citations throughout the book.\(^{22}\)

In addition to the hagiographic accounts discussed previously, there was one book written about Baraga that is an outlier to the rule – almost. *Frederick Baraga, A Portrait of the First Bishop of Marquette Based on the Archives of the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* was written by Maksimilijan Jezernik in 1968. He introduced the work by stating, “When we chose the missionary activities of Bishop Baraga as the subject of our historical analysis, we were fully aware of the difficulty we would have to face in not repeating what many others had already written about him. Baraga’s life has an unusually rich bibliography and, indeed, has been related and discussed from every possible angle [this current study not withstanding].”\(^{23}\) He used Vatican archival documents to present a narrow picture of Baraga. However, he presented his point of view very early on, referring to Baraga as “our hero . . . He left behind him [at his death] grief and edification and the reputation of a saint, which no document in the *Propaganda* archives contests.”\(^{24}\)

Regardless of the hagiographic tone of the book, the work has some value.\(^{25}\) In his discussion of Baraga’s missionary methods, Jezernik stated that “Baraga’s ministry was built on the one idea that he had not come to the missions to tend the flock, but rather


\(^{24}\) Jezernik, 12-13.

\(^{25}\) Jezernik, 17.
to found many mission churches. He considered it his task to create new missions that could be placed in the hands of other shepherds, just as soon as they were in running order.”26 When Baraga first reached a mission, his first step was to found a residence, build a church, his own home and a school, and then find someone to take charge of the school while he traveled on his missionary circuit.27 That was Baraga’s modus operandi. However, as Baraga’s diary points out, he did feel like was tending a flock, as he stated upon hearing the rumor of his possible elevation to Bishop.28

Whenever Jezernik uncovered a criticism of Baraga, he was quick to brush it away or gloss it over. He stated that Bishop Fenwick, the man Baraga first wrote to about coming to the United States, never had a word of praise for Baraga.29 Instead of investigating further or elaborating upon this, Jezernik turns to criticize Fenwick. This was the general rule throughout the work.

While discussing Baraga’s publishing, Jezernik said, “It seems unthinkable, as his opponents insinuated, that he sought his own glory in publishing these books.”30 This is an accurate sentiment. With the unimaginable and unthinkable amount of work Baraga put into his published works, particularly his books in Indian languages, there is no way he did it for himself. A man can find much easier ways to seek his own glory than to write a dictionary of an Indian language. His books preserved the knowledge of languages that are now extinct.

26 Jezernik, 44-45.
27 Jezernik, 46.
28 See above.
29 Jezernik, 44.
30 Jezernik, 51.
During his 1837 visit to Europe, Baraga went to Rome to have his Indian catechism published. He presented a copy to a priest named Thavenet, who knew Indian languages. Thavenet’s first problem with the book was that, although written in an Indian language, the *Imprimatur* was in English and French. Baraga explained that his bishop did not know the Indian language. However, Thavenet countered that he did not understand how Baraga’s bishop could approve the book without understanding it. To that, Baraga stated that his bishop relied on Baraga’s knowledge, and took him at his word.31

Father Thavenet found errors. Even though he told Baraga that he had not spoken the languages in over thirty years, he found an example of Baraga using a wrong word. In his report to the Vatican, Thavenet wrote, “I found it badly done, but I did not say this to him. There was one real error, in the words he used to express the difficult concept of *Transubstantiation*... I will only say, Monsignor, that there are many inaccuracies, many questions and answers poorly handled, superficial terms and even omissions of essential points, many inappropriate expressions, phrases, and propositions... In a word, I can say that the catechism is very badly done, but also that the missionary could not do otherwise than do it badly.”32 In response to these statements, Jezernik is adamant in his defense of Baraga. He posits that Thavenet would have forgotten the Indian languages, and that Baraga surely would have known them better. Furthermore, a good translator of a catechism must know the two languages very well, the genius of each language, and be well versed in theology. “Can we blame Baraga for not fulfilling these conditions?”

31 Jezernik, 67-68.

32 Jezernik, 68-69.
asked Jezernik. Baraga was an ordained priest, had been for many, many years, and had spent the past seven years of his life immersed in the Indian language. Jezernik absolved Baraga, yet one can assume that he could be blamed for not meeting those conditions. Finally, Jezernik emphasized the humility with which Baraga took his criticism. Baraga spent a great deal of time correcting every copy of the catechism by hand before distributing it, as Vatican letters state. His humility and hard work are admirable, but do not detract from the fact that a Vatican official felt Baraga’s Indian catechism was substandard. A by-product of this incident was a ruling passed down from the Vatican which made it requisite for all Indian translations to be sent to Rome to be carefully examined before being printed.

In addition to Vatican documents relating to Baraga’s Indian catechism, Jezernik looked at what they had to say concerning Baraga’s nomination as bishop. According to Jezernik, the documents stated,

He [Baraga] learned several Indian languages so perfectly, that he was considered a specialist. The priestly life of the missionary was untarnished, adorned with many virtues. Among these his singular piety emerged . . . Zeal was another of his characteristics . . . Baraga’s piety was neither placid nor slow moving; he was an ardent, tireless worker, thinking only of the salvation of the Indians. He was known and esteemed and loved by all, for his intellectual qualities and pure missionary spirit.

The bishop of Detroit proposed Baraga’s name to the Vatican as a potential candidate for bishop, and provided much of the testimony regarding his personality and doctrine. Others also provided testimony, including the bishop of Milwaukee, bishop of Chicago,
bishop of Louisville, and the bishop of Cincinnati. Much of what they said cannot really be brought into question, except the fact that he was “loved by all,” which too broad a generalization is to be true, in addition to the evidence presented earlier to the contrary.

The Vatican had a pretty thorough knowledge of the state of Baraga’s diocese, through his own testimony and the testimony of others. While each mission had one or more churches, they were not churches in the European sense of the word, but small buildings made of wood. In addition, each mission had a small residence for the missionary, and usually a school. The school was very important to Baraga, who was afraid of losing Catholic children to Protestant schools when a Catholic one was unavailable.37

The reports housed in the Vatican do not provide any mention of the spiritual life of white Catholics in Baraga’s diocese, but they do give excellent commendation of the faith and virtue of Indian Catholics.38 To achieve that end, Baraga needed priests, and the lack thereof was one of his chief preoccupations. Unfortunately, Baraga’s confrontations with the priests he did have sometimes led to their dismissal or the voluntary vacation of their post. After Baraga had an argument over the decoration of a chapel with Father Kohler, the head of the Jesuits in Sault Saint Marie, the Jesuits left the diocese.39

As was shown in his diary, Baraga was quite hard on his priests. Jezernik said, “The dominating trait of Baraga’s government was to exact a great deal from his clergy,

37 Jezernik, 112.
38 Jezernik, 113.
39 Jezernik, 114.
but he himself, gave them an example of great austerity.”\textsuperscript{40} He was strict, and even hard, with his collaborators, priests, and the faithful. In fact, the Vatican was very much aware of this, and noticed that Baraga “always became partisan to the most rigid opinions and judgments . . .”\textsuperscript{41} In the diocesan statutes Baraga laid out, he insisted that the prayers before mass in the missal were obligatory. In addition, he directed his priests to refuse absolution in the confessional to those who would not promise amendment.\textsuperscript{42} He also felt that people who drank and frequented dance and gambling establishments should not be absolved of their sins.\textsuperscript{43} All of this rigidity caused Baraga hardship. He had a reputation for being a very strict bishop, which caused two priests he had brought from Slovenia to abandon him once they learned of this.\textsuperscript{44} In the face of these issues and other valid criticisms, Jezernik simply brushes them aside by pointing to the fact that Baraga was just as hard on himself as he was on others. Although he was severe with his priests, he was never unjust, according to him.

It was left to Baraga’s successor, Ignatius Mrak, to sort out the issues Baraga left in his wake as Bishop regarding his priests, and the lack thereof. Mrak was critical of Baraga on several points, including the low level of the spiritual life of the clergy, candidates to the priesthood ordained too soon, and no native clergy.\textsuperscript{45} Mrak felt that of the fifteen priests in the diocese, only six were good, two had evil inclinations, and the

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\textsuperscript{40} Jezernik, 115.  \\
\textsuperscript{41} Jezernik, 117.  \\
\textsuperscript{42} Jezernik, 117.  \\
\textsuperscript{43} Jezernik, 118.  \\
\textsuperscript{44} Jezernik, 117.  \\
\textsuperscript{45} Jezernik, 121.  
\end{flushright}
behavior of the rest was not always what it should have been. Mrak stated, “The worst two had been expelled. Three Irish priests had been ordained too soon and were incapable of writing or preaching a sermon. Evidently, Baraga had them ordained too soon.” As to these claims, Jezernik finds absolutely no fault in Baraga. He felt Baraga was justified in ordaining priests early because of the urgent need in his diocese for them. Ironically, Jezernik had very little to say about the ordination of native priests, except to say that the first attempt apparently failed. In his opinion, if it failed once, it was doomed to failure forevermore.

Rather than dwelling on possible faults of Baraga, he preferred to emphasize the good, and forget and marginalize any bad. “Baraga was a saint and that is why his memory and personality are still alive amongst us,” Jezernik said. While Baraga had admirable qualities, the fact that he may one day be declared a saint by the Vatican is not the reason his legacy is still being written. First and foremost, he left behind a rich record for prosperity to study. In addition, his hagiographers have ensured that many romantic and stirring stories have been passed down about Baraga, which leaves it to future historians to piece together the true story, deconstructing Baraga and separating fact from fiction.

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46 Jezernik, 121.
47 Jezernik, 121.
48 Jezernik, 122.
49 Jezernik, 138.
Appendix B:

Selected Figures

Figure A.1: Most Holy Name of Jesus, Assinins (Author’s Photo)
Figure A.2: Ruins of Orphanage, Assinins (Author’s Photo)
Figure A.3: Ruins of Orphanage Western Wall, Assinins (Author’s Photo)

Figure A.4: Baraga Shrine (Courtesy www.michigan.org)
Figure A.5: Frederic Baraga’s Home, Sault Sainte Marie (Author’s Photo)
Figure A.6: Frederic Baraga’s House, Marquette (Author’s Photo)
Superintendency Indian Affairs
Detroit April 3rd, 1844

Sirs:

It having been represented to the Office of Indian Affairs at Washington that difficulties have arisen, and are likely to continue between the Missionaries and Teachers of different denominations within the Indian Country, the Department has instructed the undersigned to give notice to all Ministers and Teachers at the different schools and stations, that any interference on the part of one sect with the school or mission or another, cannot be tolerated. It is much to be regretted, and the Department cannot but deprecate the course pursued by different denominations of Christians, in their setting an example of strife before the Indians, to whom they should teach the blessings of peace. Whenever a Mission or school has been established, the Department cannot permit the interference of another sect, and especially among the same band of Indians. This is but doing justice to all denominations, and it is hoped will put an end to this bickering, and mistaken zeal for making converts to a particular sect, which too often influences the minds of those who should feel and know better.

Any attempt therefore at interfering with the school or Mission of one sect, by another, will be met by withdrawing that particular portion of the school fund which may have heretofore been paid, as well as all aid from the Mechanics and farmers employed by Govt.

I am respectfully Sir
Your Obt. Servant
Robert Stuart
Actg: Sup: In. Affairs
Rev. George M. Brown to Robert Stuart, Acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs, May 29, 1844

Dear Sir:

When I wrote my last I did not think I should feel under the necessity of writing another letter so soon. But circumstances seem to require it, and what follows may not be altogether uninteresting. Since Mr. Brockway left here, which was on the 21st inst., there has been a great excitement among the Indians across the bay, about the movement which the Ind. Dep. Has thought necessary to make in reference to missions and schools and among the Indians. Many different reports were circulated, and as the Gov’t men, at this place, had not as yet received any direct instructions from Mr. Ord, Mr. Baraga, and the Indians across the bay, became very desirous to know the contents of a letter which they understood I had received from you. Supposing it would do them no injury at least, we thought it would not be imprudent to let them hear the copy of the letter you had written to Mr. Ord. They came for that purpose on the 27th. Mr. B. wished to interpret the letter, and that I had my own interpreters. They could interpret it, and he could correct, if he saw anything wrong. He made no corrections. During the course of the council, quite a long conversation took place between Mr. B., the Gov’t men, Mr. Marksman, and myself, in which many things were discussed. He attached all the blame to yourself and to reports which he affirms were sent from this place last winter. He calls it all an act of persecution; and to increase, and strengthen, and settle the hatred against yourself and the Methodists, he keeps it continually before the minds of the Indians that we are the cause of all this, and that all this great movement was simply because he came here. It was maintained on the other hand that probably the Gov’t had long seen the evils arising from the contact of missionaries of different denominations, and that now it had thought to adopt a course that would tend to prevent it in the future, that the last regulation was based upon equal grounds, and equally applied to all, all over the Indian country; that as far as the regulation applied to him, the Gov’t, instead of wishing to persecute him because he was a Catholic, viewed his coming here as an act of injustice, and shaped its course accordingly. But nothing would do. It was all an act of persecution. It was dictated by yourself, and issued by the Secretary of War, unbenown (sic) to the President.
His call to this place. He constantly affirms that he was called here by the Indians. Last fall Mr. Marksman called a council and asked them all who it was that had sent for the Priest. They every one denied that they had sent for him. It seems Mr. Crebessa, the A.M.F.’s (American Fur Company) trader at this place had talked with a few of the Indians, and that they expressed themselves that they would like to see the Priest, when he came they must join the Catholics. Mr. Crebessa, then wrote to him that the Indians wished him to come here. From this has arisen all his claim to a call to this place. The Indians unanimously denied last fall that they called him, and I have not learned that they have yet contradicted that statement.

Mr. B. – says some of the Indians lived across the bay and that they did not like the Methodist’s religion. There did some live across the bay; but then they had all agreed to be in one settlement on this side of the bay, around the mission. As to some not liking the Methodists, this may have been the case; but this would have been but a very little thing, had there not been some one to stir it up and magnify it. We urged upon him that he had caused divisions, jealousies, and heart burnings, but he would as often repeat his call, and the affirmation that certain Indians did not like us. There were a few discontented (sic) Indians. They are principally relatives of the deceased chief. A short time before the chief died he set a very bad example to these Indians by getting intoxicated and visiting the conjurors. Some of the Christian Indians, in consequence, said they could not have him as their chief. This offended the old man and his friends, and at his death, he advised them to live separated from us. But this breach would all have been closed up, but for various influenced to keep it open. On this, I have no doubt, is grounded their dislike to us.

The half-breeds are not silent. By hard names and various talk, our trader spairs (sic) no pains to prejudice the minds of the Indians against yourself and the Gov’t. The Priest’s Indians are made to feel continually that they are persecuted by the Methodists. How the matter will turn out with us we cannot, of course, tell. Mr. B. says he will not leave here, and that if the Govt. Will not assist the Indians, he will (sic). He maintains that he was established here before the 18th May, the day that the regulations were received at this place, and that therefore they cannot apply to him at all, and should not be brought to bear against him.

From pretty good authority we have it that when he came here he determined, if possible, to get every Indian from this mission, and break the mission down. He charged lies with it. He endeavored to evade, but there is but little doubt but that he came here with that intention, and has been laboring to accomplish his purpose.

Mr. Johnson may have told you something about the sash that he made for the Indians on the other side. When Mr. B. was there the other day, he told Mr. Carrier that he would take the sash. Mr. C. said they were left with him with strict orders not to let them go until he heard from Mr. Johnson or the Agents. But Mr. B. said he should have take them. It was replied that he had said he had given the lumber to the Indians, and that it was theirs to dispose of and use in any way they thought proper. On this ground Mr. J.
made the sash. But he again affirmed that it was his lumber, and that he should take the sash. Mr. Carrier assured him as they were left in his charge, he could not have them. He has not yet attempted to take them.

I understand Mr. Baraga intends to visit Detroit. Whatever his exterior may be towards you, I believe that in his heart the most bitter feeling dwells. He often speaks of your “persecuting the Catholics most to death at Mackinaw” some years since. And he endeavors to infuse his own feelings into the hearts of those Indians who have been led away by him.

Probably I have said enough. It is a pretty trying time with us: But I endeavor to look to God as the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and confide in him in all events.

Most respectfully, I remain
Your Ob’t. Serv’t.
Appendix E

Rev. John H. Pitezel to his Mother from L’Anse, 28 October 1843

In regards to spiritual matters, We are endeavoring to make it our one aim and end to save our own souls and as far as we can as humble instruments the souls of others. There are many discouragements attending the work of a missionary in the Indian country. The advancement of the Indians from their old habits and superstitions is so gradual and slow that at times one is almost led to think they do not advance at all, at the same time they may be improving in most respects. But if their condition is lamentable with all the means used to Christianize and civilize them, what would be their fate if left to themselves. If you could see the picture of wretchedness which I saw at LaPoint (sic) this summer, among some of the heathen Indians, you would conclude if any people need the gospel certainly it is such. My friends frequently express an anxiety for my return. But somebody must preach the gospel to these poor souls. And who shall it be? We have many good preachers below and some of whom would be willing to come but the people will not let them. Most seem to think not any thing will do to preach to Indians. This is an entire mistake. We need the very best ministers among us for our mission stations. Especially when we see what efforts the Roman Catholics are making. Shall we abandon this field to them? And what is it that makes them so successful? Their superstitious forms and ceremonies do much, but not everything. They go and stay for years in the Indian country, learn the language so as to preach in it and thus they gain a command over them which no one can have who is with them only a short time and depends on an interpreter. Our Presbyterian missionaries if they go to a foreign post go for life. Here is a great sacrifice and cannot well be made only for the sake of souls.”
Appendix F

Rev. Frederic Baraga to Bishop Lefevere, June 15, 1848

Monseigneur (sic),

Inasmuch as you have signified in Your last letter that you wish to have a report on my mission, to send to the editor of the Almanac, I am sending you the following for this year, (or rather, for next year.)

L’Anse, Keewenaw (sic) Bay. The Most Holy Name of Jesus, - Very Rev. Frederick Baraga, Vic. Gen. – The condition of the Indians under the spiritual care of this Rev. gentleman, is continually improving. They are become (sic) entirely sober, and are all faithful members of the Temperance Society. They never suffer a drop of liquor to be brought into their village; and the fur-trader that lives amongst them, was obliged to bind himself by writing, never to keep ardent spirits in his house and store; or else they would not suffer him in the village. When pagan Indians from the inland, or Frenchmen and half breeds, happen to carry whisky through the village for their own use, they are sure to have their bottles and kegs broken to pieces, if these Indians discover them. Many instances of that kind are known. – They are also becoming more and more industrious; and they help each other, as much as they can, in their works. In winter they join together and chop wood for one house, enough for eight or ten weeks. The following day they chop for another house; and so on for all the houses in the village. They also follow the same plan in spring, planting their potatoes, turnips and other vegetables. They join all together, men and women, tilling and planting all day; and every day they finish three or four fields. – This at the commencement, The number of the catholic Chippeway families belonging to this mission, is now forty two. The missionary church is now too small to contain them all, although it was thought in the beginning to be rather to (sic) large for the place. On Sundays they are so crowded in the house of God that they can scarcely move, and many are kneeling and sitting on the floor between the two rows of benches. – The missionary school is regularly attended by all the children of the mission that are able to receive instruction.

This is all I have to report at present. If you find it suitable, you may have it inserted in the Almanac.

I have the honor to be, with the deepest respect,
Appendix G

Inventory of Bishop Frederic Baraga’s Assets, November 27, 1875

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Value (dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marquette</td>
<td>4 acres of land for Cemetery</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquette</td>
<td>4 Lots and Church</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negaunee</td>
<td>Various land parcels</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negaunee</td>
<td>1 Lot with foundation laid for church</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michilimakina (sic)</td>
<td>A lot with an old church and House</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michilimakina (sic)</td>
<td>An old cemetery now in use</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point St. Ignace</td>
<td>A Lot with a church and Cemetery</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houghton</td>
<td>Lot, Church, and Cemetery</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock</td>
<td>2 Lots and Church House</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple Grove</td>
<td>Lot &amp; Church</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontonagon</td>
<td>Lot, Church &amp; Cemetery</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockland</td>
<td>Lot, Church &amp; Cemetery</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota Mine</td>
<td>1 Acre land</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eagle Harbor</td>
<td>2 lots &amp; church</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliffs Mine</td>
<td>1 Acre land, Church &amp; Cemetery</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>2 Lots &amp; church</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sault Ste. Marie</td>
<td>Lot &amp; church house</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sault Ste. Marie</td>
<td>St. Joseph’s Lot &amp; church</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sault Ste. Marie</td>
<td>St. Marie’s River Indian Settlement Church</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishpeming</td>
<td>Lot &amp; Church</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escanaba</td>
<td>Lot &amp; church</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Anse</td>
<td>Indian Settlement, 15 acres of Land &amp; church</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Text of Email from Center for Native American Studies, Northern Michigan University, October 12, 2005

Personally, I cannot in good conscious promote this thesis presentation.

I was offended by the title. When I first saw it in Jamrich Hall, my jaw just dropped to the floor. While this presentation might be of historical value, the title is out there and promotes Native people as objects instead of human beings (who had/has a religion of their own). The title of the presentation was especially hurtful to KBIC (Keweenaw Bay Indian Community) members here at NMU (Northern Michigan University) and I don’t blame them for being upset – especially those who are non-Catholic Native people.

If you were not my friend, I probably would not have shared this with you to be honest – but I hope you understand where I’m coming from. However, our secretary did send it out to our CNAS instructors and office staff this morning. What other CNAS instructors do with it is up to them. I just needed to share with you my thoughts.

50 The title of the presentation was “Bishop Baraga’s Indians.”