

REASONS

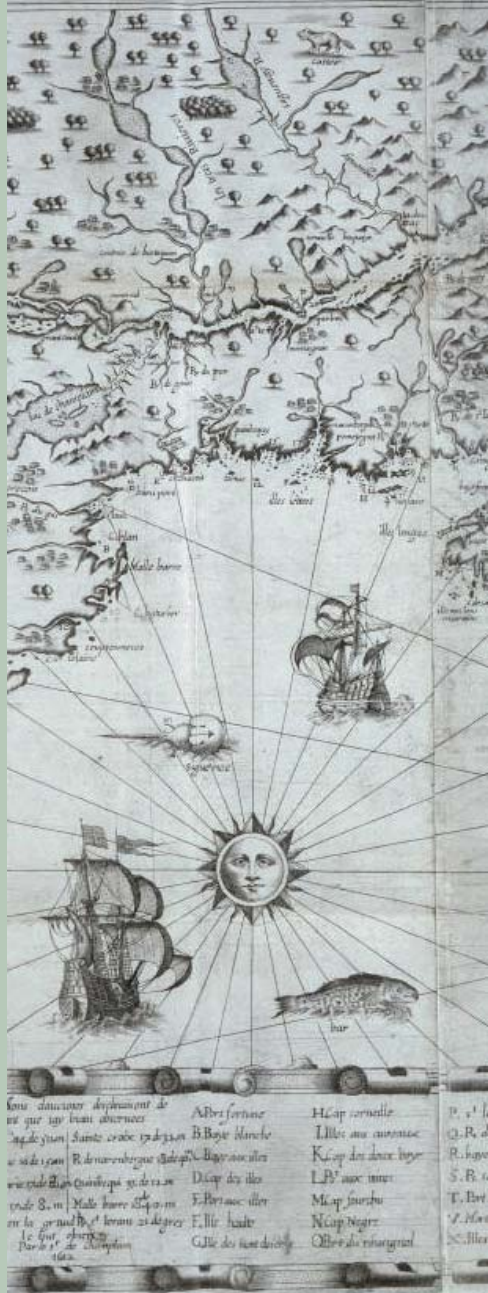
Why the Cultivation of New France Ought to Be Undertaken in Earnest

From Ch. 37 of Biard, *Relation of New France* [Jesuit Relations: annual reports of the Jesuit missionaries in New France], 1616.

HERE, before finishing, I am obliged to set down some reasons which agitate my soul, when I consider how we are letting this poor new France lie fallow, both as to the temporal and the spiritual, in savagery and paganism. I know well that I may accomplish much more by advancing these reasons to the ear of our Lord in earnest prayer, than by presenting them to the eyes of men in cold letters. Nevertheless, the more ardently I cry to God in considering them, so much the more I feel myself urged to specify them to men in writing.

1 And first, if the temporal is considered, this country is another France in the influences and conditions of the heavens and of the elements; in extent of country, ten or twelve times larger, if you wish; in quality, as good if it be cultivated, at least there is no reason why it should be worse; in situation, upon the shore opposite to ours, to give us the knowledge and mastery of the sea, and of navigation; I say there are a thousand blessings and advantages. In a word, as it were, another France and another Spain to be cultivated.

2 Next, the attempts which we have already made so many times for a hundred and ten years, oblige us to continue, unless we wish, to the scorn of strangers, to yet lose the fruit of so much time consumed, and to suffer the loss both of so many men and so much wealth, as has been necessary in acquiring a knowledge of these lands, coasts, gulfs and different places, which (thank God) we have obtained, as well as the good will and intimacy of the people, — a gentle people, who extend to us their hands with an incredible longing, and with a profound grief to see us defeated, — for no other reason than that the enterprises which have been undertaken up to the present, having been almost entirely sustained by private individuals, have sunk — and it is not to be wondered at — under the burden and the expenses, which such a work requires.



Samuel Champlain, Map of New France, 1612, (details)

“we are letting this poor new France lie fallow”

Excerpted, some spelling modernized, and images and footnotes added by the National Humanities Center, 2006, www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.html. In *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Co., 1897), Vol. IV: Acadia and Quebec: 1616-1629. Full text available online in French at Early Canadiana Online at www.canadiana.org/ECO/PageView?id=a833b803ef8314eb&display=07538+0001, and in English from Rev. Raymond A. Bucko, S.J., Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology, Creighton University, at puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations/relations_04.html. Complete image credits at www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/amerbegin/imagecredits.htm.



3

If we give up or become indifferent, we have before our eyes many others, who have shown us that they have courage. And certainly, in case we did not do our duty, there is nothing to prevent others from doing theirs.

Now let us consider whether it is very advantageous to lose the profit, which is brought from these countries every year by more than five hundred of our ships, which go there, either on whaling expeditions, or for cod and other fish, or for trade in furs of the Beaver, Elk, Martin, Seal, Otter, etc. For we must not expect to have any share in this, if others seize the property, as has been very clearly shown during these years by the disputes which occurred at Spitsbergen* and elsewhere.

4

So much for the temporal; but as to the spiritual, in which the inexpressible grace of God raises us to the surname and glory of “most Christian,” let us calculate and sum up the benefits which accompany and favor us continually after this first one, which is our calling to the

Holy Church and knowledge of our Savior, Jesus Christ; and then we shall be able to estimate how great would be our ingratitude, and how horrible the chastisement it would bring with it, if we do not try to enhance the value of this grace by communicating it to our fellow-men in proportion to our means and opportunities. . . .

But let it be enough to keep before our eyes the vision of these poor natives, these images of our God as we are, and as capable of enjoying him, these companions of our own species, and almost of the same quality as we, who are upon the edge of the horrible gulf of the fires of hell, many of them even precipitated every day into eternal torments, and profound depths of everlasting punishment, without hope of deliverance. O God! we are amazed at these frightful judgments, as there is much in them to cause our amazement; but we have not the sense to perceive, nor the understanding to appreciate, that the blood of this so cruel execution is upon our hands, who do not exert ourselves to prevent it; upon our feet, which do not move to remedy it; upon our houses, which we build so magnificently without caring for the eternal dwellings of our brothers; upon our purses, our possessions, our wealth, and our hearts, which are so little moved by such spectacles and contribute so little to that for which the Son of God, our Savior, did not spare even his life. May it please him to grant us mercy, and to receive from us and from all his creatures, praises and blessings forever and ever.

AMEN.



* Spitsbergen: Arctic Ocean islands, area of western European whaling industry beginning in the early seventeenth century.