CHAPTER FOUR

THE MARITIME PROVINCES* AND THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS, 1772—1819

1. Father Joseph Bourg

Indian Threats and Their Result

After the death of Father Maillard, no priest resided in Nova Scotia for several years. Both the Indians and Acadians scattered throughout the territory had to keep their faith alive without the ministrations of a priest, while, at the same time, they were exposed to the proselytizing activities of the Reverend Dr. Wood and other ministers of the "Pure Gospel." As heretofore considered in detail,¹ the Micmacs would have nothing to do with the self-proclaimed evangelical successor of their apostle and demanded a Catholic priest. When this demand fell on deaf ears, they threatened to take reprisals against the British settlers.

One year after Father Maillard's death, Governor Montague Wilmot found himself forced to request from the Lords of Trade in London permission to allow three priests to minister to the Indians.² His petition, however, met with refusal, for the Lords opined that the ministers of the "Pure Gospel" would surely succeed "in weaning them from their prejudices."³ Exasperated by repeated refusals, the Micmacs finally made it clear that unless their demand was met at once they themselves would get a priest, with or without the government's consent, and that any attempt to stop them would result in full scale attacks on the British settlements.

Their threat, forwarded to London by Lieutenant Governor Michael Franklin, finally produced results.⁴

¹ This term indicates Nova Scotia (including Cape Breton Island), New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. The Magdalen Islands are a group of islands in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.
Although the Protestant pastor of St. Paul’s Church in Halifax wrote⁵ that the people supported the refusal of a priest by the home government and that soon the Micmacs would be coming to listen to the “Pure Gospel,”⁶ the local British officials convinced the Lords of Trade that “any attempt to convert the Micmacs by Protestant missionaries... will greatly exasperate them and prove fatal to the settlements in this Province.”⁷ Fearful of a possible Indian uprising, the Lords authorized Franklin to secure a priest at the expense of His Majesty’s government.⁸

Meanwhile British officers and traders established in Nova Scotia had addressed appeals to Bishop Briand of Quebec. "They pitied" the poor Acadian people “whose attachment to their religion forces them to give up all their possessions and to withdraw to places where they can receive spiritual succor. These officers and traders... offer to bear all the travel expenses of the missionaries and to pay for their support.”⁹ Two years later, in 1768, the Bishop was able to send Father Charles Bailly de Messein as an officially approved Catholic priest.¹⁰

If the officers and traders from England were friendly and well-disposed toward him, the same cannot be said of the Puritan settlers to whom successive governors had given the lands taken from the Acadians. They demanded the priest’s expulsion under the constitution of Nova

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⁵ Dr. Silas Rand, a Baptist missionary, managed to make a single convert, one Benjamin Christmas, among the Micmacs in the second half of the nineteenth century. This hard-drinking neophyte soon received a promotion to preach among his fellow-Indians, but had no more success than the white ministers. Christmas died in 1882, after calling, in vain, for a Catholic priest.⁶
Scotia and in general made his life so difficult that, after four years, Father Bailly withdrew from his precarious position.\(^{11}\) Meanwhile another priest had readied himself in Holy Ghost Seminary to take over the torch of faith.

**Two Little Deportees**

In 1755, an eleven year old boy, Joseph Bourg, and his twelve year old companion, John Brault, parishioners of Father Le Maire in Canard River, weeping followed their parents into exile, having been rounded up by Colonel Winslow for deportation from their prosperous farms. On a cold autumn morning, together with hundreds of other victims of the "Grand Dérangement," they set sail on crowded ships for an unknown destination.\(^{12}\) Eleven hundred and forty of them, including the Bourgs and their six children, were dropped on the coast of Virginia. The welcome awaiting the poor deportees there was colder than the icy waters of the Arctic seas. The local authorities forthwith decided to get rid of this disease-ridden, wretched mass of Popish sufferers. In the spring of the following year they shipped these "prisoners of war" to England, to be disposed of according to the pleasure of the Lords of Trade.\(^{13}\)

Very little is known about the Bourgs' sojourn in England. Along with the other Acadians, they remained there as prisoners, in wretched conditions, until 1763. Joseph's mother died there or in Virginia, as did many of the other deportees, including John Brault's father. In order to provide for the two families, the widower and the widow married and the two boys became inseparable companions.\(^{14}\) When, in the spring of 1763, the detention camps opened their gates, the Bourg family embarked for France and settled at Saint Servan, near Saint-Malo in Brittany.\(^{15}\)

Devotedly caring for the Acadian refugees, Father Le


\(^{12}\) Winslow, p. 175.

\(^{13}\) Lauvrière, *op. cit.*, II, p. 123; Melançon, *Vie de l'Abbé Bourg*, Rimouski, 1921, pp. 18, 28.

\(^{14}\) Melançon, *op. cit.*, pp. 28, 32 ff.

Loutre must undoubtedly have noted this family which, in the midst of all its troubles, had managed to carefully raise its children. At any rate the attention of the Abbot of Isle Dieu was soon drawn to Joseph and John as potential candidates for the priesthood. He saw to it that they pursued their classical studies and then, in 1767, made them enter Holy Ghost Seminary. Four years later, he sent them to Quebec, before they had received any major orders, reasoning, as he said, that "we are unable to send missionaries of French origin by virtue of the regulations and even most formal prohibitions of his British Majesty." By sending them before their ordination, the Abbot could truthfully claim that he was not sending any priests. However, he perhaps stretched the truth somewhat when he asserted that they returned to Canada to join their family, for at least their immediate family was not able to cross the Atlantic until three years after their sons.

Both young men were ordained in 1772. Father Brault's work among the Acadian deportees in Canada will be considered later; the apostolic labors of Father Joseph Bourg in the land of his birth, Acadia, comprise the first part of the present chapter.

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3 As well as to two other Acadian youths, John Bourg and Isaac Hébert, who also became priests but remained in France.
4 Father Bourg is often called the first Acadian priest, although the records assembled by Henri Tétu show that two other Acadians were ordained many years earlier — namely, Bernardin de Gannes de Falaise, a Recollect, in 1729; and Pierre de Gannes de Falaise, a secular priest, in 1731.
17 Ibid., p. 264.
18 L'Abbe de l'Isle Dieu à Mgr Briand, 19 février 1766 and 4 juin 1767: Arch. Qu. 1937-38, pp. 219 f. and 233.
"In Journeyings Often"

In the fall of 1773 Bishop John Oliver Briand of Quebec finally was able to send Father Bourg to the Acadians scattered throughout Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the Chaleurs Bay and Gaspé. The priest began by establishing his headquarters at Tracadieche (Carleton), where about two hundred Acadians lived, mostly through hunting and fishing. Soon after, he undertook the first of his numerous journeys throughout the immense territory entrusted to his care. One of his first wanderings took him to the Indians in the Chaleurs Bay and Restigouche, where, with surprising ease, he quickly learned their difficult language.

In the spring of 1774, he set out through the forest, accompanied by two Indians, toward the St. John’s River to visit both the encampments of the braves and a settlement of Acadians who had escaped deportation by withdrawing deep into the woods. Successively he visited all the other familiar places where Acadians had sought refuge: Peticodiac, Memramcook, St. Mary (Church Point), Cocagne, Baie Verte, Miramichi, and others. At each, he could stay only a short while; then he would set out again, alone or with an Indian, traveling through dark forests, paddling in frail canoes along rapid rivers, by snow shoe in winter, living, like the birds, on what a kind Providence would provide, sleeping lonely nights

Those on Cape Breton and Prince Edward Islands were cared for by a Scotch priest, Father James McDonald, who had arrived there in 1772 as chaplain of Catholic Scottish immigrants. He died in 1785.

This settlement had originated from the daring act performed by a group of Acadians aboard one of the deportation ships. When one of them, a two-fisted Acadian sailor, asked the captain where he was taking them, he received the reply, "To the first deserted island I will run across. That is what all you popish Frenchmen deserve." A moment later, the captain was sprawled unconscious on the bridge. Over-powering the crew, the deportees captured the ship and set sail for St. John’s River, where many of them managed to escape the roving bands of New England soldiers.


Melançon, op. cit., p. 59.

Ibid., pp. 44 f.

Casgrain, Pèlerinage, p. 125.
on a few boughs under a starry sky or sheltered behind a protruding rock. Mornings would find him on the go again, on to the next clearing in the forest or along the river where a few scattered remnants of Acadia tried to eke out their existence. "Fortunately," he said, "I have always been blessed with perfect health." 27

If the constant travel constituted a heavy burden, the situation was even worse when he arrived at the tiny settlements of the Acadians or the encampments of the Indians. People would come from great distances — up to ten leagues — to gather together at his arrival. After hearing everyone's confession, saying Mass, blessing marriages, and baptizing the new-born, he would spend the rest of the day instructing the children and preaching to the adults. They never tired of hearing the priest during the few days that he would be with them. Nearly all would stay until his departure at the place where he had set up his altar, eager to hear him over and over again. Then, after a final blessing on the last day, all would leave: the Acadians for their remote clearings, the priest for another settlement. 28

To secure the survival of the faith among the settlers during the long periods in which no priest was able to visit them, the most respectable elder of each settlement was appointed its lay apostle. 29 He would preside at prayer meetings, baptize the children, witness marriages, accord certain dispensations, and conduct funerals. On Sundays, people would gather a "wooden Mass," to sing together the trusted old chants of the Kyrie and Gloria, to listen to the reading of the Epistle and Gospel, and to hear the spiritual reading or sermon delivered by the elder. When death struck, they would gather for three days' wakes and then sing the Requiem Mass before the elder would conduct the corpse in solemn procession to their cemetery. Here and there the people began to call the presiding layman their "Bishop," 30 and in this way these Acadians never lost contact with their faith.

27 Melançon, op. cit., p. 61.
28 Ibid., p. 82.
29 Ibid., pp. 87 ff.
30 Ibid., p. 93.
Father Bourg Averts Indian Revolt

In 1776, when the American Colonies were in revolt against Great Britain, several colonists of Nova Scotia went to the Congress of New York and claimed that their colony was ready to join the movement for independence. Upon their return to Nova Scotia, they stirred the Indians and Acadians to revolt against England and to join their cause with the colonies to the south. Their efforts were unsuccessful among the Acadians, who remembered their sufferings at the puritanical hands of New Englanders much too vividly to be tempted to join them.

Moreover, it went against their conscience to violate the oath of allegiance which they had sworn to Great Britain. Straight-forward and unsophisticated as they were, they must have been astonished to see people who had insisted upon their taking the oath of allegiance now make every effort to have them disregard their sworn obligation and revolt against their legitimate sovereign.

The colonists were furious about the lack of cooperation shown by the Acadians. They tried to have Father Bourg and Father Le Roux persuade their flock to join the rebellion. When friendly efforts failed, they put a pistol to Father Le Roux's throat and threatened to kill him and Father Bourg as well, but not even this could induce either the priests or the Acadians to break their oath and join the rebels in their futile attack on Fort Cumberland. The situation, however, was different with the Indians. Never very kindly disposed toward Great Britain, they listened with considerable sympathy to the

7* Father Thomas Le Roux seems to have arrived in Canada shortly after Father Bourg. Bishop Briand assigned him to missionary work in the isthmus connecting New Brunswick with Nova Scotia. It is not certain whether or not this priest had come from Holy Ghost Seminary.

31 Arbuthnot to Secretary of State, 8 July, 1776: Can. Arch. 1894, p. 352; Murdoch II, pp. 575 f f.
32 Casgrain, op. cit., pp. 448 f.
33 Ibid., p. 283.
34 Murdoch II, pp. 567, 592.
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proposed rebellion. A wholesale Indian revolt in Nova Scotia (threatened from without by American "freedom fighters" and from within by considerable numbers of sympathizers) would very likely have placed the country in the camp of the separated colonies. For this reason, the acting governor, Colonel Mariot Arbuthnot, made strenuous efforts to restrain the Indians. When his attempts failed and revolt threatened to become more widespread, he hurriedly dispatched an appeal to the Governor of Canada, begging him to secure from the Bishop the services of Father Bourg, the only man who could save the situation. Meanwhile the Indians sent a formal declaration of war to the British commander.

It must have been humiliating for the proud colonel. Twenty years before, he had taken part in the capture and deportation of the Acadians and their priests. Now he had to appeal to one of them to save the colony. An express messenger from the Bishop soon notified Father Bourg of the situation and directed him to do his utmost to pacify the Indians. In this way, "the eleven-year-old, outlawed little boy, who on a bleak autumn morning in 1755 had tearfully followed his parents on the road to exile, twenty years later — back in his beloved country — became the arbitrator who was eagerly sought by his former persecutors."

As soon as he arrived at Fort Howe, where the Indian chieftains of the Micmacs, the Malecites, and Miramichi Indians had gathered for a meeting, he addressed them in their own language. Because of the great respect

37 Arbuthnot to Secretary of State, 8 April, 1778: *N.S., A, vol. 98, pp. 56 f. (*CO-217: 55, 54).
39 Cf. p. 78.
40 Paquet apud Antoine Bernard, La Gaspésie au soleil, Montreal, 1925, p. 164.
they had for their beloved blackrobe, and because of the priest’s profound knowledge of Indian customs and mentality, Father Bourg succeeded in convincing them that it would be wrong to violate the peace with the British which they had sworn to observe. He then induced the assembled chieftains solemnly and on their knees to renew their allegiance to the King of England. The meeting ended with the customary ceremonial burial of the hatchet.42

To show his gratitude to the priest to whom “we owe the success of the treaty,”43 Governor Richard Hughes, who had succeeded Arbuthnot in his interim assignment, made Father Bourg three substantial land grants: the Heron Island in the Chaleurs Bay, a four mile stretch on the mainland opposite the island,8 and an area in Carleton.44 In the years following, the priest held several additional “powwows” with other Indian groups along the St. John’s River to consolidate the peace. Needless to say, his success in pacifying the Indians during this critical period earned him great respect in government circles at Halifax.

Emancipation of Catholics in Halifax

After the foundation of Halifax, a small group of Irish Catholics had gradually settled there without having any right to practice their religion and to have a resident priest. In 1781, Father Bourg, who spoke English with some fluency as a result of his long detention in Great Britain, decided to make use of his considerable influence in government circles to obtain the emancipation of these

8 Was it just by carelessness or design that the legal title to the first two of these domains appears never to have been given to the priest?45 He was an Acadian, and most Acadians were considered mere squatters having no legal title to the land they cultivated. This unbearable situation lasted till 1796, when at last they received legal title to their farms.


43 Hughes to Secretary of State, 12 Oct. 1778: *N.S., A, vol. 98, p. 182 (*CO-217: 55, 144); Murdoch II, p. 596.


45 Bernard, op. cit., pp. 165 ff.
Catholics. On his advice a committee of the Irish addressed a petition to the government requesting the repeal of the articles in the 1758 laws directed against Catholics. Although the local reaction to this petition was favorable, the British Crown at first rejected it, because of certain technical difficulties in the formulation of the amended law. In 1784, however, it approved the new amendment, thus making it possible for Catholics to build a church in Halifax and to practice their faith without fear of official persecution.

In the same year, the Bishop of Quebec directed Father Bourg to investigate the possibilities of establishing a church and supporting a priest in the city. When the priest sent a favorable report, he named him pastor of Halifax. On his way to Carleton to collect his belongings before moving to Halifax, his vessel ran into a violent storm. "The entire crew," he related, "was put out of action save the captain. I was forced to act as a sailor to save my life." As a result of exposure and exhaustion, he became ill when at last the ship reached the harbor, and could only return to Halifax in the spring of 1785. Meanwhile the Bishop had also appointed him Vicar General of the entire territory, with jurisdiction "over all Catholic establishments, whether Canadian or English, Acadian or Indian."

Before the year was over, Father Bourg was surprised by the sudden arrival of an Irish Capuchin, Father John Jones. This excellent priest had been sent by the Bishop of Cork to minister to the Irish Catholics in Halifax, apparently in response to their pleas for a priest.

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46 Melançon, op. cit., p. 102.
47 Secretary of State to Governor of Nova Scotia, 24 June, 1783: Can. Arch. 1894, p. 405.
49 Lettres de M. Bourg, 11 févr. and 22 août 1785: *Arch. Archd. Qu., V.G. II, 4 and 6.
Although they expressed willingness to support both priests, Father Bourg realized that their resources were insufficient, especially since they were heavily in debt for the church which they had built. For this reason he decided to withdraw from Halifax. He realized, of course, that the Irish preferred to be served by a priest of their own country and that his departure was the only reasonable step to take. In the spring of 1786 Father Bourg withdrew from Halifax, after giving the Irish Capuchin full jurisdictional powers to be used at his own discretion. The following year the Bishop confirmed this action by putting Father Jones in charge of all the Irish and Scotch missions for which priests began to arrive.

Conflicts at Chaleurs Bay. Death of Father Bourg

By withdrawing from Halifax to the obscurity of the Chaleurs Bay Father Bourg had generously sacrificed a relatively easy post to resume again his exhausting missionary labor in the backwoods areas. Gradually, however, more and more Acadians returned from their exile, so that even these areas became more populated. The small chapel at Carleton no longer sufficed for their needs, and it became necessary to build a new and larger church. As often happens in rural areas with a scattered population, the people did not agree with their priest on the site for their church. Each family, it appears, had its own idea — as close as possible to its dwelling place. The bickering became so loud and troublesome that Father Bourg decided to take a radical step; he left Carleton and took up residence at Bonaventure.

Having been left the entire winter to think matters over, the people were greatly relieved when Father Bourg returned to them in the spring of the following year.

This time they readily agreed to build the new church on the site of the old chapel. 56

Meanwhile another difficulty continued to plague the valiant priest. 57 Most of his Acadian and Irish parishioners — some Irish had settled in the area — earned their living by fishing, a trade which somehow often goes hand in hand with heavy drinking. Determined to do his best to eradicate this evil, he adamantly refused Catholic burial to anyone who met accidental death while under the influence of liquor. The extent of the evil may be readily seen from the fact that in a single summer no less than three men lost their lives as a result of drunkenness.

If drink was causing ravages among the white population, its evil influence upon the Indians was even greater. 58 Although the government had prohibited the sale of "firewater" to the braves, unscrupulous merchants continued to supply them. Once drunk, the Indians became totally irrational and were ready to commit any crime. People began to fear their visits to the church on the occasion of great feasts. Around Christmas 1787, for example, about thirty drunken Indians fought with knives all night long in the streets. Father Bourg's influence on them can be readily seen by the fact that the fighting ceased when someone told them that he had called the priest to inform him of their disgraceful behavior and that the blackrobe was personally coming to stop it.

The efforts Father Bourg made to stop the excessive use of liquor and its sale to the Indians made him quite a few enemies. 59 These people did not hesitate to calumniate 9* him before his bishop. 61 They professed to be gossiping about their priests seems to have been a favorite pastime of the Acadians. As Father Maillard had already complained in 1738: "Even the most unselfish missionary in this country is inevitably subject" 60 to reproaches and calumny.

58 Melançon, pp. 144 ff.
59 Ibid., pp. 136 ff.
61 Melançon, op. cit., p. 163.
scandalized by the fact that the priest had a relative, a forty year old woman, as housekeeper. The prelate was wise enough not to attach any credence to the complaint which reached him, but counseled the priest to avoid anything which could even remotely give rise to gossip. Father Bourg promised to do his best, but had to point out that he could not guarantee success, because nothing is easier than to find scandal when one is looking for it.

As soon as the new church was finished, the small unruly clique among the parishioners managed to cause a new conflict with the priest about the placing and renting of pews, which they wanted to be done as they saw fit and not as was determined by diocesan regulations. When the priest refused to accede to their demand, they aroused the rest of the parish, elected their own churchwardens, and seized control of the church.

Soon after, the priest fell ill and provided the malcontents with an opportunity to remove another one of their grievances; namely, the fact that Father Bourg had a housekeeper. In their view he should not make use of the services of any woman, but use a man to do his cooking and cleaning — no matter that the custom of having a respectable older woman taking care of this task dated back to the times of the apostles. While the priest was confined to bed with high fever, they kidnapped the poor woman, sent her over the frozen waters of Chaleurs Bay to the opposite shore, and told her never to return.

Worn out by twenty-two years of incessant travel and labor under the most primitive conditions, and mentally broken by the constant difficulties with some of the parishioners at his place of residence, Father Bourg, in 1795, requested that the bishop transfer him to a less strenuous post. In compensation for his zeal, which had born the brunt of the labor almost unaided for such a long time, the bishop gave him the important and rela-

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62 Ibid., p. 137.
63 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
THE STATUE OF FATHER JOSEPH BOURG IN CARLETON
Courtesy Public Archives of Canada
tively easy parish of Saint Laurent, near Montreal, and sent two young priests to replace him in Chaleurs Bay. Father Bourg’s health, however, was too far gone to benefit from the change of scenery and the lightened work load. He died on August 20, 1797, at the age of fifty-three, shortly before he would have celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his priesthood. He was buried in the parish church of St. Laurent.

The wisdom, zeal, and self-sacrifice displayed by the priest in his difficult work among the Acadians at a crucial period of their history manifested themselves in the profound veneration which these people have retained for their apostle. A hundred and twenty-five years after his death this high regard expressed itself materially; in the presence of thousands of Acadians, three bishops presided over the unveiling of a statue, honoring Father Bourg, in Carleton.

2. Father Le Jamtel at Cape Breton and Father Allain at the Magdalen Islands

As has been related above, two Spiritans laboring in the Miquelon Islands, Father Allain and Father Le Jamtel, courageously refused to take the schismatic oath imposed by the French Revolution in 1792 and fled to Halifax. Father Jones, the Capuchin Vicar General, received them with open arms and Bishop John Hubert of Quebec soon added that “any priest who has refused to take the oath... is always welcome in Canada.” By this time, following the example of Great Britain, Nova Scotia had become less difficult in admitting Catholic priests. The two Spiritans took their oath of allegiance to the British Crown and obtained permission to stay in the country. Father Le Jamtel soon after received his

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68 Acte de sépulture, B.R.H. 1900, p. 41.
69 Bernard, op. cit., p. 179.
70 Cf. p. 104.
72 Du même à M. Lejamtel, 5 juillet 1793: ibid., 2, 62.
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appointment as missionary to Cape Breton with residence at Arichat. His confrere was assigned to the Magdalen Islands in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence.

The appointment of Father Le Jamtel gave rise to unexpected complications arising from the resistance offered by Father William Phelan. This Irish priest, who had been accepted upon the recommendation of the Bishop of Ossory, proved to be troublesome to such an extent that the Bishop of Quebec complained that “his conduct is more likely to render the Church hated than loved.” Father Phelan’s French-speaking parishioners disliked him bitterly and wanted the ministrations of a French priest. When Father Jones arrived with official orders of the Bishop of Quebec to install Father Le Jamtel as pastor of the Acadian refugees from Miquelon, Phelan refused to submit. Interdicted by the Vicar General, he appealed to Governor MacCarmick for support.

After hearing the arguments of both sides, the Governor’s Council decided that the Bishop had no authority in the case, but MacCarmick reserved the final verdict to himself. Since there was danger that France would attack Cape Breton, the civil authorities came to the conclusion that “a good French priest... would be worth more than two regiments in securing the obedience of the French Acadians and Indians” and that “the action of the Bishop of Quebec” would “secure peaceful behaviour in the Acadians.” For this reason Father Le

75 Du même à M. Allain, 29 juin 1794: *ibid., 2, 138.
76 Mgr Troy à Mgr d’Esgly, 5 août 1786: *ibid., Reg. D, f. 69r.
82 Secretary of State to Dorchester, 12 Nov., 1792: *Can. Arch.,
Jamtel was permitted to establish himself at Arichat as pastor of the local congregation.

Hence the priest saw himself charged also with the care of the Micmac Indians of whom Father Maillard had been the beloved apostle. Unfortunately, being the only priest on the island, he had so much work that it was not possible for him to study their language or even to spend much time among them. Eight days a year was all that he could allot them and, if they wanted the last sacraments, they had to transport the sick a distance of from six to eight leagues to Arichat. When the Bishop visited these distant missions in 1815, the Indians complained bitterly about their neglect: "We live like dogs, exposed to the danger of dying without the sacraments. Our children know nothing about their religion. There is no priest who speaks our language. Our old men have not heard a sermon in fifty years. What have we done to be so utterly abandoned?" All the poor bishop could do was to promise that in a few years time he would be able to satisfy their legitimate desire for a resident priest and that in the meantime Father Le Jamtel would spend two weeks with them every year instead of one.

It must have been heart-rending for the bishop to have to refuse a resident priest to these faithful Indians who continued to rely on Father Maillard's hieroglyphic prayer books to keep in touch with their religion. Until around 1820, when they finally got a priest, they wandered far and wide to find, at least from time to time, a priest to minister to them. They often traveled all the way from Newfoundland to Cape Breton or to the Miquelon Islands between 1815 and 1819 in search of the sacraments.

From 1792 to 1819 the zealous priest worked tirelessly

Ibid., p. 204.
Ibid.
at his difficult and obscure task among the poor settlers and Indians of his far-flung mission. Greatly beloved by his parishioners, he was held in high regard by his bishop as well. Unable to send the aging missionary an assistant, the prelate appreciated the selflessness of the priest who “sacrificed his well-being and worldly interest to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.”

Father Le Jamtel, he wrote, is a missionary “in whom everything commands respect and esteem. He is a very simple man, but possesses a rather broad knowledge of scripture, church history, positive and practical theology. His spirit of mortification reveals itself spontaneously, his zeal for the salvation of his flock is undismayed by the rigor of the seasons or the most exhausting journeys.”

In 1819, at the age of sixty-two, the tireless traveler finally had to admit that he was no longer able to carry this burden which would have frightened a much younger man. Not wanting to spend his declining years in idleness, he obtained appointment as pastor of Bécancour in the Quebec Province of Canada. It is there that he spent the remaining sixteen years of his life prior to his death in 1835.

Father John Allain, as has been seen already, went to work in the Magdalen Islands where a number of the refugees from the Miquelon Islands had gone after their escape during the French Revolution. For nearly twenty years he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the spiritual welfare of the poor fishermen entrusted to his care in these secluded islands. Although his name is mentioned frequently in the ecclesiastical correspondence of the

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89 See reference of footnote 83, p. 63.


91 Service et oraison funèbre: *Arch. Archd. Qu., N.E., VI, 102.


93 See his letters in *Arch. Archd. Qu., N.E., VI, 29-50 (passim) and I.M., 2-18.
time, nothing significant seems to have happened there
during a life filled with prayer, study, and the pastoral
care of his people. All of it may be appropriately summed
up in the statement of Bishop Plessis of Quebec in 1811:
"It would not be possible to find a better man than him
to preserve this sturdy Acadian stock in that laudable
simplicity, worthy of the first ages of Christianity, that
moral innocence, that unity, harmony, and unshakeable
probity which one can still admire there today among
them."94 In 1812, he finally received permission to with-
draw to Quebec, where he died in the general hospital,
a few weeks after his arrival, at the age of seventy-four.

94 David, art. cit., p. 439. Cf. Mgr de Plessis à Mgr de Québec,
81; Mgr Denaut à son coadjuteur, 11 juillet 1803: ibid., vol. II, fo. 
162; lettre de M. Mignault, 3 octobre 1815: ibid., N.E., vol 1, 
fo. 105.