

Reading log #2: "We Are Well As We Are" An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions, By: James P. Ronda

This reading by James P. Ronda highlights the push to convert first nations people in pre-confederation Canada to Christianity. The first nations had their own religions and ways of life, but the missionaries were against their practices. Both parties were skeptical and did not trust one another. The author pushes the ideologies of each religion and tells us about how they clashed. If the first nations people did not push back against the attempted assimilation their entire religion and way of life may have been eliminated.

The European missionaries felt it was their duty to convert the first nation people in the "new world". "Because missionaries were dedicated, self-sacrificing people who truly believed in their task, historians have tended to see them as they saw themselves: as humble servants, saving souls from savagery and damnation, all for the greater glory of God"(Pg.66). They did not agree with the first nations religious practices and saw them as demons. The Europeans felt as though they were doing the first nations a favor by assimilating them. "Native Americans were required to become like Europeans in all aspects of life 0 in matters of sex, marriage, economy, and government, as well as religion" (Pg.67). The first nations were to be stripped of their identities. Much of their rich cultural heritage was lost through this attempted assimilation.

The first nations were hesitant and not accepting for this forceful change. They had their own religion and did not want to adopt another one. They were skeptical about the "white man's religion", and had many questions. "If I do that which is a sinne," asked one man, "and do not know it is a sin, what will God say to that?" (Pg.79). They had many questions for the Europeans

and disregarded some parts of their religion such as heaven and hell. "Most Native Americans found the concept of hell a meaningless fiction" (Pg.72). Sin and guilt were also another ideal pushed on first nations. They did not understand what the missionaries were preaching to them. "Most Indians simply dismissed the concept of personal sin and guilt. "It would be useless," insisted one Huron, "for me to repent of having sinned, seeing that I have never sinned" (Pg.69). The first nations were met with disbelief and did not understand these ideologies. They did not understand how guilt and sin played a part in religion.

The first nations had their own religion and their own practices. The Europeans did not agree with the first nations traditional practices. "Missionaries who observed such healing rituals uniformly condemned them"(Pg. 73). The missionaries felt that the more the first nations practiced their own rites and rituals they till posed power to resist their efforts. The Protestant and Catholic missionaries did not allow their converts to participate in any form of these ancient healing acts.

Ronda is attempting to tell this history from a more unbiased view. It is a provenly difficult task as most records from this time were recorded and translated by biased missionaries and Europeans. "Indian speeches were filtered through white interpreters, recorded by white secretaries, and ultimately arranged in the memoirs of white missionaries" (Pg.67). Ronda argues with the first nations against the Europeans to expose us to their forceful ways of inflicting religion. The Europeans tried to convert the first nations and uproot their culture.

