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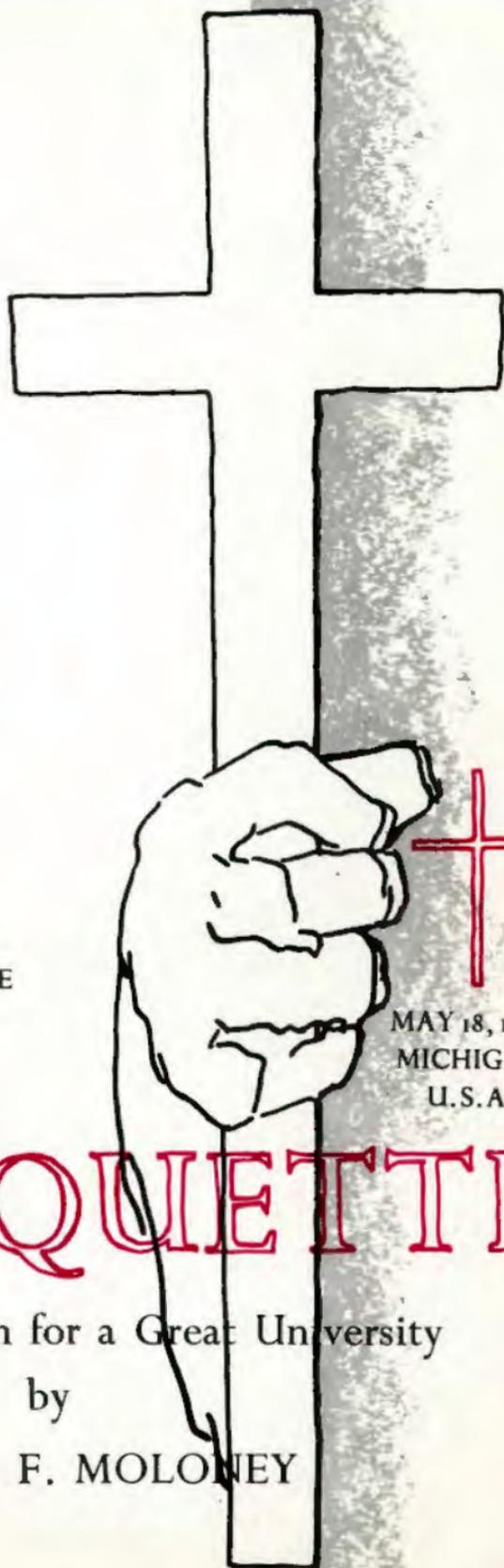
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Pere Marquette - The Inspiration for a Great University

Michael F. Moloney

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JUNE 1, 1637
LAON, FRANCE



MAY 18, 1675
MICHIGAN
U.S.A.

PÈRE

MARQUETTE

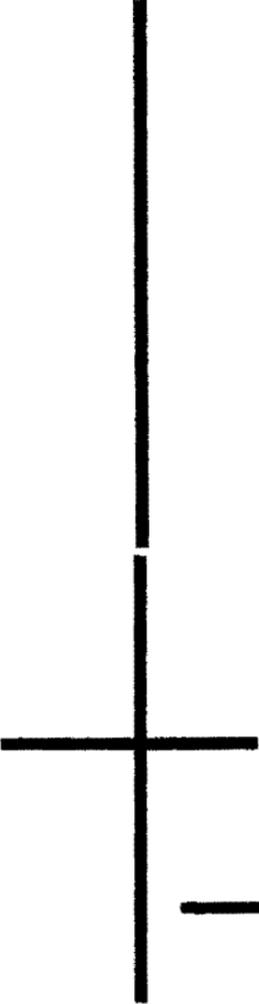
The Inspiration for a Great University

by

MICHAEL F. MOLONEY

Père Marquette *The Inspiration*

for a Great University



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PÈRE MARQUETTE *The Inspiration
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Foreword

*A*S A souvenir of its 75th anniversary, Marquette University publishes this tribute to Père Marquette, especially written for the occasion by a member of its faculty, and distributes it to its friends and special guests. The University does this in the hope that this booklet will bring about a proper appreciation of the life and spirit of the young French missionary who spent himself for his Faith in a strange, new land. From this it hopes will flow a fuller understanding of Marquette University, itself, for it has been the pioneering spirit and sense of dedication of Père Marquette, which, since its founding, have inspired the University which bears his name.

Père Marquette *The Inspiration* *for a Great University*

THE seventeenth century of which Père Jacques Marquette, S.J., was a part has been called by A. N. Whitehead, "the century of genius." Whether it actually was any more a century of genius than numerous others is a debatable point but Whitehead's choice of the men who, to his mind, most integrally represent it is illuminating. Francis Bacon, Harvey, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Huyghens, Boyle, Newton, Locke, Spinoza and Leibniz constitute the "sacred number" of twelve (which Whitehead confesses is arbitrary) and it is noteworthy that all were scientists or mathematicians. That some of them were also philosophers is indicative of the ways the philosophic winds were blowing.

For the seventeenth century, whatever else it may have been, was a pivot upon

which the history of western man swings. The sixteenth century with all of the immense perturbation which it brings yet faced toward the past. That is to say its intellectual orientation was at one with the classical and Christian traditions. Its major intellectual disciplines were still metaphysics and theology. It still held that the domain of the thinker was primarily the world of abstractions and essences, of spiritual realities first of all and only secondarily of phenomena. The seventeenth century brought a striking change. It was no accident that Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* was published near its beginning (1605), Hobbes' *Leviathan* in its exact middle (1650) and Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* near its end (1693).

Francis Bacon has been called, with good reason, the first modern man. His genius has doubtless been overestimated. His vaunted scientific method contributed little if anything to scientific advancement. But he had the peculiar greatness, which history seems sometimes to bestow gratuitously upon favoured individuals, of sensing the drift his age was taking and lending the prestige of his eloquent voice to the acceleration of that drift. Even the apocryphal story of the

experiment in refrigeration which supposedly led to his death is symptomatic.

Hobbes' *Leviathan* helps us to measure in relation to Bacon's *Advancement* and *Novum Organum* the speed with which the century was moving away from its ancient classical and Christian moorings. Bacon doubtless felt a profound contempt for the Greek and mediaeval philosophers who pursued their abstract speculations with all too little concern (as he thought) for the solution of the more practical problems of human life. What was needed in his own age, he insisted, was the subduing of nature to the positive needs of man. Yet Bacon did not, at least formally, reject metaphysics. He merely announced that his concern was with material rather than final causation. Moreover, while Bacon's spirituality will probably not impress many of his readers he maintained a tenuous relationship at least with religion, even translating some of the psalms.

The *Leviathan* brings a different atmosphere. The unwary reader may take at their face value Hobbes' multitudinous scriptural allusions but it ought not be forgotten that the seventeenth century in England, with all of its scientific interests, was also the century of the greatest glory of the Anglican Church

—of Bishops Laud and Andrewes, of Jeremy Taylor and of the most eminent of St. Paul's literary deans, John Donne. It was also for England the century of the great civil war which was in part a religious war. Consequently, even so boldly unorthodox a thinker as Hobbes, especially when he happened at the same time to be a very timid individual, did not voice his ideas without the proper hedging of divinity. Still, lower the mask Hobbes did in many places in the book but in one passage in particular which has been frequently quoted:

The universe, that is, the whole mass of all things that are, is corporeal, that is to say, body, and hath the dimensions of magnitude, namely length, breadth, and depth; also, every part of body is likewise body, and hath the like dimensions, and consequently every part of the universe is body, and that which is not body is no part of the universe: and because the universe is all, that which is no part of it is nothing, and consequently nowhere.

John Locke is no less representative of his century than Bacon and Hobbes. The fame of the political philosopher of the "Glorious Revolution" has been dimmed somewhat by the insistence of a reputable

school of modern historians that property rights bulked unduly large in his theorizing. It is an undisputed fact of philosophical history that his famous *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* delivered to the skeptic Hume the elements for the latter's denial of the existence of the spiritual soul. Yet significant as these aspects of his thinking are, he is no less representative of his age in his theory of pedagogy. In the wake of Bacon, Locke fathers the theory of practical education. In his *Idea of a University*, that most eloquent defense of the concept of liberal learning, Cardinal Newman makes Locke the patron of all later exponents of "utility" and subsequent attempts to remove that onus have hardly been successful. Like Bacon, Locke was the voice of the *Zeitgeist*. Through him spoke the now accelerated emphasis of the age on things, on practical affairs, on pragmatic achievement as opposed to the classic-mediaeval insistence that acclimation in the rare atmosphere of noumenal reality is the highest dignity to which man's intellect can aspire.

This then was the century into which Jacques Marquette was born June 1, 1637, for intellectual cross-currents are no respectors of national boundaries and for the names

of Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke, French names with equal relevance could be substituted. Indeed, that of René Descartes more universally even than that of Bacon has been taken as synonymous with the prevailing spirit of the seventeenth century, which is the spirit of modernism.

The little city of Laon, Marquette's birth-place, had had a multiple renown in the Middle Ages. As early as 515 A.D., St. Remy, the "Apostle of the Franks," built there a church which later became a cathedral and with it the village was raised to the dignity of a bishopric. In the twelfth century the earlier church was replaced by a noble Gothic structure. Eighty-seven bishops ruled at Laon from the time of St. Remy to the outbreak of the French Revolution, four of whom—Genebaud, Latro, Canoald and Serulphe—were, after their deaths, raised to the altars of the Church. In addition, from her rocky environs three of Laon's sons proceeded to the dignity of the papacy. One of them, Urban IV, who had been a chorister in the cathedral, accompanied the great St. Louis to the Holy Land, shared his captivity in Damascus, and afterward was proclaimed patriarch of Jerusalem. As was inevitable in a mediaeval cathedral city, Laon became a

center of learning. Students flocked there from every corner of France. Figures famous in the great philosophical and theological disputes of the twelfth century adorned her schools. Anselm is said to have attracted to his classroom so many scholars that their numbers exceeded those of the city itself. William of Champeaux, the rhetorician, and Abelard, his future opponent and center of the nominalist controversy, were educated there.

Aside from its renown for religion and learning, the early Laon had a distinguished history. A Roman outpost, its inhabitants apparently profited greatly from the martial example of the legions. In any event long after the legions had departed, they forced back the invading Vandals and from their fortified heights held back the savage hordes of Huns. If in the endless ebb and flow of the Hundred Years War its story was less heroic it contributed significantly in the later Middle Ages to the rise of civic freedom. No city, Agnes Repplier writes, “. . . fought harder than did Laon for the communal charter, so dear to the burgher’s heart, so necessary to his manhood and his well-being. The immemorial quarrel between feudal lord (in this case a lord bishop) and rebellious

commoner assumed its gravest aspect in this warlike town; and the final victory of the burgher brought him long years prosperity."

In this famous cathedral city the family of Jacques Marquette was an eminent one. The first Marquette named in the annals of Laon was one Vermand, a follower of the ineffective Louis VII. Another was ennobled for his loyal service to King John, captured at the disastrous battle of Poitiers. Nicholas Marquette, the father of the future priest, was an astute magistrate who espoused the case of Henry of Navarre, and was banished by his fellow-citizens, but returned with added wealth and honours after the triumph of that great but controversial king.

When Jacques Marquette was born, Henry IV had been in his tomb for twenty-seven years. Louis XIII ruled France and his able minister, Richelieu, was laying the foundations of the empire of the Grand Monarch. The tide of French nationalism was rising and in such a time it would have been natural for the scion of a wealthy and influential family, allied by marriage to the nobility and distinguished by the personal favor of two kings, to turn to a career in the military or diplomacy. The decision of Jacques Marquette was otherwise. "What

magic bolts, what mystic bars" had to be shattered in reaching that decision we do not know. But there was a religious as well as a civic tradition in the Marquette family. Through his mother, Rose de la Salle, Jacques was related to the famous Jean Baptiste de la Salle, founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, a society devoted to the furtherance of Christian education among the poor youth of France. His own sister, Françoise, was to found the Marquette Sisters, designed to provide free education for girls.

There would seem to be no doubt that the young Marquette read with avidity the *Jesuit Relations*, those magnificent historical records published annually from 1632 to 1673, which provided, in letters and diaries sent by missionaries to their superiors, a vivid picture of the new world of America. They told of climate, soil, and trade, described intimately the life of the Indians, recounted the pitiless story of the torture and death of French priests by the hostile natives, and appealed for younger and stronger hands to take up the burden of the Cross.

Accordingly, in October, 1654, Jacques Marquette, then seventeen, entered the Jesuit college in the neighboring city of Nancy to prepare for his future labours. In accordance

with the Jesuit rule, his own classical and philosophical studies were followed by several years of teaching before the climactic theological studies and ordination to the priesthood. Evidence of his burning missionary zeal is found in the fact that his two initial appeals to be sent to the new world were refused by his superiors before, having been ordained sometime early in 1666, he left France for Canada in June of that year. A laconic entry in the records of the Canadian Jesuits indicates under the date of September 20 that "Père Jacques Marquette arrived in good health . . ."

Less than a decade of life remained to Père Marquette from the time of his arrival at Quebec. They were years of immense and varied activity. Three weeks after the young missionary's arrival Père François Le Mercier, Jesuit superior at Quebec, noted in the *Relations* his first assignment: "Père Jacques Marquette goes to Three Rivers to be a pupil of Père Druillettes in the Montagnais language." The language barrier was the first obstacle to be cleared by the prospective missionary, a not unformidable task even for a young man trained in the classical languages and in his native vernacular. The Indian tongues had to be mastered without

grammar and without dictionary. Moreover, the existence of multiple words for a single meaning, besides the characteristic employment of words for group relationships which had no aural association with terms designating the individual objects, made the problem of vocabulary maddeningly difficult for the stranger. Two years Père Marquette spent in preparatory study, the fruit of which is seen in his subsequent mastery of six Indian dialects.

But there were more difficult problems. For the rugged wilderness life he was to lead, Père Marquette was physically ill-equipped. Short and slightly built, his natural cheerfulness, his love of adventure, and his iron will enabled him to meet the difficulties of extended travel with high courage, but the toll was inevitable. The Indian conventions required that all share equally the labours of the trail which meant that the frail Frenchman would find himself matching his sinews against savages capable of paddling a canoe from sun-up to sundown without relief, of shouldering the burdens of a portage without effort, and of tramping tirelessly for endless hours through tangled forests or pathless plains. Even more trying was the problem of food. The Indians went from gluttony to

strictest abstinence as the fortunes of the hunt or the seasons of the year dictated. A bowl of pounded maize mixed with water would sustain a brave for a full day and if even that were not forthcoming, the incredible reserves of strength built up by patient discipline would enable him to carry on indefinitely with no food at all. But even when food was available, the squeamish stomach of a European experienced difficulty in coping with the smoke of the Indian lodges and the filth that was an omnipresent accompaniment of Indian cookery. Jean de Brebeuf and Isaac Jogues, the Jesuit saints of the preceding generation, had been men of iron constitutions who endured incredible tortures at the hands of their Indian executioners before achieving martyrdom. For Père Marquette was reserved the gentler but perhaps no less agonizing martyrdom of the gradual but uninterrupted overtaxing of his strength.

His apprenticeship at Three Rivers completed, Père Marquette was sent to Montreal in April, 1668, to await an opportunity to enter the Ottawa country, made hazardous now by the enmity of the Iroquois. Eventually, after a torturous ten-weeks' journey, with his little party of two lay assistants and a young Canadian boy he arrived at Sault

Ste. Marie. Here he spent the relatively uneventful winter of 1668. In a strongly-built forest hut he said his daily Mass. Here, too, he preached and taught, baptizing eighty infants.

The winter at Sault Ste. Marie, however, was to represent only a final moment of calm in Père Marquette's life. Already the tide was gathering that would sweep him to his final destiny. In 1665, Père Allouez, a fellow Jesuit, had been sent from Quebec to La Pointe du Saint Esprit (now Ashland, Wisconsin), a fur-trading port established some years earlier on a remote, landlocked harbor of Lake Superior's Chequamegon Bay. Here Père Allouez, old and feeble, had wearied of ministering to the needs of a half-dozen Indian villages populated by Ojibwas, Pottawattomies, Kickapoos, Hurons and Ottawas and here the young and zealous Marquette was sent to replace him.

Significantly, within a month's journey of La Pointe lay two great villages of the Illinois Indians, comprising some eight or nine thousand souls. The Illinois lived a relatively stable life, farming their fertile fields with reasonable efficiency and taking abundant game from the forests. Although they were proud of their military prowess they lacked

the fierce cruelty of the Iroquois and wandering hunters from the tribe called upon Père Marquette to ask him to visit their people. From the Illinois and the Illinois' old enemies, the Sioux, Père Marquette heard of ". . . a great river which is nearly a league in width," flowing from north to south and of such great length that the Indians had heard no one speak of its mouth. For Père Marquette the establishment of a mission among the Illinois became a primary ambition, but he was a Frenchman, a subject of the now reigning Louis XIV, who knew his country's ambition to spread her colonies westward and southward and the story of the great river was not forgotten.

Events moved quickly. The Ottawas had aroused the anger of the mighty Sioux and along with the Ottawas, the Hurons, among whom Père Marquette had many converts, fled from La Pointe. The Hurons returned to their old home on Michillimackinac Island and thither with them went Marquette. On the island itself or on the adjacent mainland (historians are unable to decide) he built his log chapel, doubtless a replica of those at the Sault and at La Pointe and roundabout the Huron village sprawled. Here, according to Marquette's journal on December 8, 1672,

came "Monsieur Jolliet" with orders from the Count de Frontenac, governor of New France, to undertake the discovery of the mighty inland river. Just why Jolliet's commission should have named Père Marquette as his associate is unknown. Ordinarily a priest accompanied every such expedition and Marquette's name may have been suggested by the fathers of the Jesuit house in Quebec with whom he was in close touch before his departure.

On May 17, 1673, the exploring party left St. Ignace. It consisted of two birch bark canoes and seven men including Marquette and Jolliet. Yet, although the expedition was meagre in numbers, the preparations had been careful and detailed. Such information as could be gleaned from Indians was organized, the unknown country was crudely mapped, the rivers to be navigated and peoples to be encountered carefully noted. To the Blessed Virgin, on whose feast of the Immaculate Conception Jolliet had arrived at St. Ignace, Père Marquette dedicated the expedition.

The journey itself was one to associate the name of Marquette for all time with country served by the university which bears his name. At Green Bay the adventurers were

received by the friendly Folle-Avoine, so-called because of the wild rice which grew abundantly upon their land and upon which their guests feasted. Thence their route lay through the Fox river, past the De Pere rapids and into Lake Winnebago, and eventually, after difficult portages into the Wisconsin river. A stop was made at a village of the Mascoutens, believed by modern geographers to be near the present cities of Berlin and Princeton.

The rest of the journey is history. On June 17, Père Marquette records, the little party entered the Mississippi “. . . with a joy that I cannot express.” A month later, having encountered imposing perils from the great river and from hostile tribes of Indians, Marquette and Jolliet decided to turn back, convinced now that the Mississippi emptied into the Florida or Mexican gulf and unwilling to risk capture by the Spaniards. The reascent of the river was begun July 17. Green Bay and the Jesuit mission of St. Francis Xavier, to which Père Marquette was now assigned, were reached at the end of September. The hardships of the expedition had left Père Marquette's health in a perilous state. Throughout the winter of 1673-74 and the following summer he was incapacitated.

In November he rallied his remaining strength and accompanied by two aids set out once more for the Illinois country. On November 23, 1674, Père Marquette and his two companions landed at the site of the present city of Milwaukee, remaining there for more than a week because of bad weather.

Travel was agonizing but early in April, 1675, he arrived at an Illinois village to establish the long-promised mission which, characteristically, he called the Immaculate Conception. But Père Marquette was now dying. He set out shortly on the long return journey to St. Francis Xavier mission to the regret of the faithful Illinois, who, according to his superior, Père Dablon, “. . . chose to escort him for more than 30 leagues on the road, vying with each other in taking charge of his slender baggage.” He did not reach his home mission. On May 18, near the site of the present city of Ludington, Michigan, he died, “. . . in the midst of the forests and bereft of all human succor, his companions intoning the words, ‘Jesus, Mary,’ as he had instructed them.”

Such was the brief life of Père Jacques Marquette. At first glance it might seem strange that a university should commemorate his achievements. He was not himself a

scholar in the academic sense, although a respectable master of that liberal education of which the Society of Jesus has, since its inception, been an untiring advocate. Instead of scholarly seclusion he chose deliberately a life of action and in this it may not be idle to suspect a symbolic as well as providential import. Marquette was primarily a priest whose zeal for souls drove him like numbers of his fellows into an adventure almost certain to end in early death in a strange land. He was of the race of those who literally spend themselves for Christ.

But one need not accept literally Francis Parkman's assertion that after 1668 the epoch of the saints and martyrs was replaced among the Canadian Jesuits by that of the explorers, the men of science, and the politicians to recognize the reality of the dual vocation. Parkman has spoken with admiration of the profound achievements of the Jesuit missionaries. Their map of Lake Superior, published in 1671, he has called ". . . a monument of . . . hardihood and enterprise." Their yearly reports sent to France contained careful commentaries on the winds, currents and "tides" of the Great Lakes, observations on climate and on flora and fauna, accounts of mineral resources, and, to be sure, speculation on the

great river which flowed southward, "perhaps to the Gulf of Mexico, perhaps to the Vermillion Sea." Their lives, declares the same historian, ". . . attest the earnestness of their faith, and the intensity of their zeal. It was a zeal bridled, curbed, and ruled by a guiding hand. Their marvelous training kindled enthusiasm and controlled it, roused into action a mighty power, and made it as adaptable as those great natural forces which modern science has learned to awaken and to govern."

It is difficult, as Miss Replier notes, ". . . to think of Père Marquette, so sensitive, so alive to pleasure and to pain, as resembling a natural force . . ." It is perhaps less difficult to think of him as an instrument in a Divine Plan. The visions of a Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, of Erasmus, of St. Thomas More, which would buttress the soaring mediaeval metaphysical thrust by completing the fusion of Christian faith and classical culture, found its fullest realization in the baroque world of the Counter-Reformation. In its magnificent achievements and in its disturbing failures as well, the baroque effort was to synthesize the natural and the supernatural. The Jesuits who were the schoolmasters of that epoch did not forget that man is a

citizen of two worlds—that of time and that of eternity. The things of eternity are the ultimate concern but man's nature being what it is, he comes to a knowledge of the eternal only from a knowledge of the temporal. First the natural then the supernatural is a profound maxim of the spiritual life.

Hence in the Jesuit system of thought there was place for consideration of the strange wonders of a new land—of mines oozing pure copper, of lakes inexhaustible of fish, of mighty rivers flowing toward unknown seas. In his exploration of that new world, as well as in his missionary labours, Père Marquette exemplified the unchanging principles of his order. He wrote no scientific encyclopaedia such as Bacon's. He did not limit his universe to the phenomenology of Hobbes. He did not measure education by the "utility" of Locke. But he earned a place in the history of a century proud of its exploitation of the terrestrial present as one of its most intrepid explorers and he demonstrated the "utility" of Christian humanistic learning by laying down his life for his red brothers in the spirit of the Master to whose company he belonged. By this two-fold achievement he effected in his own person a fusion of the citizenship of the earthly and of

the Heavenly City which is the objective of Christian education. By his life as heroic as it was humble he planted the Cross on the boundaries of an unknown universe in token of the eternal truth that on whatsoever adventures of mind or heart or sinew man may embark these can find fulfillment only in the concomitant illumination of the spirit. Accordingly, a great university is honoured to bear his name.

