

graduate of one of Western Canada's universities or colleges will attempt such a work, peopling it with more than just the shadows of his or her ancestors, providing a full, living, breathing life portrait of this important tribe. While a book like Mandelbaum's *The Plains Cree* points the way, nearly half-a-century after it was written, we need to advance beyond it.

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**Louis "David" Riel "Prophet of the New World,"** by Thomas Flanagan. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979. 216 pp. \$15.00.

This is one more book in a long list of scholarly and not so scholarly studies dealing with Louis Riel. Viewed by some as a rebel, regarded by others as a hero, described by still others as a lunatic, Louis Riel is pictured by Thomas Flanagan as a Prophet of the New World, a "millenarian leader."

Flanagan ignores to a very large extent the historical events associated with the two rebellions. He chooses to provide a detailed analysis of Riel's religious ideology from his early childhood to his eventual execution.

Using Riel's own writing, Flanagan illustrates the impact of his upbringing in an extremely religious home, the influence of ultramontanism and the flaws in his character which led Riel to regard himself as a prophet, the founder of a new religion, God's gift to his people, the Métis.

Raised in a devoutly religious home, the young Louis acquired a fierce pride in his Métis heritage from his father. While relating yarns of noble lineage, the mother inadvertently convinced her impressionable son that he was a direct descendant of Saint Louis IX and thus directly related to the Duc de Chambord, the heir to the French throne.

Selected by *Monseigneur* Taché to train for the priesthood, the youth from Red River ventured to Montreal to pursue his studies at the *Séminaire des Sulpiciens*. Riel neither completed his studies nor entered the priesthood, because of a broken love affair. Nevertheless, the ideology which prevailed within the diocese of Montreal under the tutelage of Bishop Bourget and which permeated the entire curriculum of the seminary became the cornerstone of Riel's political and religious ideas. "Riel's political ideas were an exaggerated form of ultramontane thought." "His new religion was an exaggerated version of the ultramontanism that he had learned from the French-Canadian clergy."

From 1869 to 1875, Riel's "chief concerns were political, not

religious." His aspirations to reach fame, his "repeated disappointments in politics," the deep-rooted guilt he suffered for having abandoned the priesthood "eventually turned Riel's energies in the direction of religion."

Starting in late 1875, following a series of mystic experiences during which he communicated with God, Moses, David and the Virgin Mary, Riel gradually developed a conception of himself as a man with a divine mission, a prophet. Riel defined his religious ideology while incarcerated in the mental asylums of Longue Pointe and Beauport. The papacy was transferred to Bishop Bourget of Montreal and at a future date would be moved to St. Vital. Using Mosaic Law as a base, Riel advocated circumcision and certain family reforms: incest, polygamy and a married clergy. In his vision of the new world, liberalism would be eradicated and church and state would merge "in a true kingdom of the saints." Manitoba would become a haven for French Canadians and French Métis while the North-West Territories would be inundated by immigrants from the Catholic countries of Europe such as Ireland, Italy, Poland and Bavaria. The newcomers would intermarry with the Indians and create a new race of Métis.

As Flanagan states, Riel learned to keep his religious ideas to himself and even adapt his ideas to meet new circumstances. The painstaking analysis of the evolution of Riel's religious credo offers a picture of a shrewd, intelligent manipulator. On the other hand, Riel's behaviour and writings in several instances serve to substantiate the hypothesis that he was mentally disturbed. Was he both a lunatic and a prophet?

Flanagan's study provides the reader with a clearer understanding of Riel's inner thoughts, his religious ideology. Since, as the author states, Riel's "new religion was an exaggerated version of ultramontanism," a detailed analysis of the curriculum and the teaching staff at the *Séminaire des Sulpiciens* during the 1860s would have been useful to illustrate the direct correlation between the type of education he received and his new religion.

In addition, several questions are raised within the book but remain unanswered. How and why did Riel reach the pinnacle of power among the Métis of the Red River? As the author states, "certainly, neither he nor anyone else could have suggested that within a year he would be President of the Provisional Government of Red River."

How does one explain the *emprise* that Riel exercised on the Métis in 1884-85 considering the fact that there was a political emphasis among the followers but a religious emphasis for the leader? Did his behaviour simply enhance his magnetism among a very religious and superstitious people?

If Riel was "neither wholly white nor wholly Métis," what was he? The evidence provided throughout the book leads the reader to conclude that he was predominantly white, predominantly French.

Much new information is presented which does not appear in G.F.G. Stanley's biography of Louis Riel. The hypothesis that Riel was a genuine religious figure, not just a madman on the loose is convincing. However, a novice should first read Stanley's biography of Louis Riel to fully appreciate Flanagan's study of a "millenarian leader" who tried "to evoke the future of a people menaced with destruction."

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**My Tribe The Crees**, by Joseph F. Dion. Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1979. 194 pp. \$7.95, cloth.

**My People The Bloods**, by Mike Mountain Horse. Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute and Blood Tribal Council, 1979. 146 pp. \$7.95, cloth.

These volumes are collections of writings and papers left by two individuals who have led very significant lives. Both the authors were born in the year 1888 and they died only four years apart—in 1960 and 1964. The books are historical records based upon the personal experiences of the authors and the oral traditions in their respective tribes. As such they are not to be taken as formal histories of their people based upon conventional methods of documentation. Neither are they the written accounts of professional raconteurs. These books are collections of essays by two literate members of the Cree and Blood tribes, searching for the meaning of life by trying to understand the psychological, social, religious and economic impact on their homelands when they became part of the "frontier." The authors' approach is humanistic, their language is clear and their message is insightful. The books have been edited and introduced by Hugh A. Dempsey who has done a good job in handling this sensitive material.

Dion's book has sixteen chapters. A few deal with deep underlying cultural patterns like that of religious life while the others recollect significant events such as epidemics and forest fires that brought destruction and sorrow. Chief Poundmaker who influenced the destinies of a large number of people is also portrayed. Dion's own life experiences contribute material to many chapters and they provide a moving account of an individual growing up as a human being during times when the non-Indian society around him was most interested in classifying him and his people as "savages," "deplorable heathens," "hopeless primitives," "nature's innocent creatures" or at best con-