

The Indians believed that not only men and other animals, but all things have souls which are immortal; the souls are the shadows of the originals. The souls of men and of beasts after death go away to the far distant west, eating bark and old wood on their dismal journey, seeing by night but blind by day. They deemed the milky-way the path of the souls to that happy land where the souls of the men hunted the souls of beavers and porcupines, running over the soul of the snow upon the souls of their snow-shoes, shooting with the soul of their bow the souls of their arrows, and killing with the souls of their knives.

The burial customs were very touching; the dead body was swathed and tied up in skins, not lengthwise but with the knees against the stomach and the head on the knees. It was placed in the grave in a sitting posture. Biard says, (Vol. III) they bury with the dead all that he owned, such as his bow, his arrows, his skins and all his other articles, even his dogs if they have not been eaten at the funeral feast (and so sent on in readiness for the deceased). The survivors added to these a number of such offerings, as tokens of friendship. A man's grave was marked with bow, arrow and shield; a woman's by spoons and ornaments. The obsequies finished they fled from the grave, and from that time on hated all memory of the dead. Only the souls of the buried kettles and furs and knives went off with the soul of the dead man to be used by him in the spirit land. LeJeune recounts the burial of several little ones who died in the faith. One wee corpse was handed to him wrapped in beaver skins and covered with a large piece of bark. He tenderly placed it in a coffin and buried it with all possible solemnity. "The simple people were enchanted seeing five priests in surplices honoring this little Canadian angel, chanting what is ordained by the church, covering the coffin with a beautiful pall and strewing it with flowers. When it came to lowering him into the grave the mother placed his cradle therein with a few other things, according to their custom. Then she drew some milk from her widowed breast and burnt it that her babe's soul might have drink." After the funeral the Fathers gave a feast of Indian corn-meal and prunes to induce these simple folk to come to them in case of sickness. One child before being given up for burial had his face painted blue, black and red. Father Le Jeune, however, refused on