

Catholics and the Missions
Of the Pacific Northwest--1826-1853

by

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Doctoral Dissertation

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Abstract

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Extant accounts of regional Catholic history have largely overlooked two vital elements of the Catholic past: (1) the germinal period of the Catholic lay activity that preceded the arrival of the Roman Catholic missionaries in the Northwest (1826-1838), and (2) the interval of intense Catholic Protestant interaction that followed the arrival of Catholic missionaries (1838-1847). This three-part study explores these phases of Catholic mission history, asking the question, "What factors influenced the rise and development of the Catholic missions of the Pacific Northwest, 1826-1853?"

Part One focuses upon the rise of Catholicism in the Northwest, exploring the ways that the fur trade and its personnel affected the growth of Catholicism in old Oregon. This section focuses upon Chief Factor John McLoughlin, whose anomalous policies and practices created a favorable climate for the propagation of Catholicism in the Northwest.

The study examines the dual issues of settlement and occupation, and addresses the uses of religion and education in this early period of regional history.

Part Two explores the development of the Catholic missions in relationship to the Protestant mission campaign. The Methodist-Episcopal missionaries' impact upon the Catholic laity is examined. The theological aims of the Catholic missionaries are presented against the backdrop of Protestant history. The disparate educational, economic, and political agenda of the Oregon missions, and the events that led to the closure of the Methodist-Episcopal missions and to the fortification of the Catholic Church are examined in Part Two.

Part Three centers upon the missions in transition. The relationship between the Presbyterian and Catholic missions in the Oregon interior is explored. Their theological and educational aims, and their influence upon the whites and natives, are examined. Finally, the events that led to the closure of the Presbyterian missions, and to the suppression of the Diocese of Walla Walla are explored in Part Three.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

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We have carefully read the dissertation entitled Catholics And The Missions
Of The Pacific Northwest: 1826--1853.

George Leo Thomas submitted by
George Leo Thomas in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
and recommend its acceptance. In support of this recommendation we present the following
joint statement of evaluation to be filed with the dissertation.

The findings of this study represent a major reinterpretation of the history of Catholic mission activity in the Northwest. Current accounts, based on institutional and clerical points of view, have routinely ignored both the Catholic lay activity that preceded the arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries and the significance of the Catholic-Protestant interactions following the arrival of the Catholic missionaries. "Catholics and the Missions of the Pacific Northwest: 1826--1853" demonstrates that the Catholic laity played an impressive role not only in the settlement of the territory, but in the foundation of the Catholic Church in old Oregon as well. Similarly, the interactions between Catholic and Protestant clergy receive an illuminatingly balanced treatment, free of the unproductive limitations of partisan historical treatments. In short, this study makes evident that the sweep of the Roman Catholic mission experience in the Northwest has been largely unexplored.

This study also breaks new ground in its examination of the role of Catholic education in the Northwest. The uses of education and religion and their influences upon the local residents becomes clear for the first time. The educational activities of the Catholic laity are documented and set in appropriate contexts of settlement under the eye of Chief Factor John McLoughlin. The author also assesses McLoughlin's policies and practices, concluding that they created an atmosphere favorable to the schooling of Catholic children and the eventual propagation of the Catholic religion.

Effective use of archival material, government documents, printed primary materials, periodicals, and general works undergirds the judgments rendered in this study. The facts have been sought out carefully; and the writing--clear, precise, and graceful--followed the contours of the facts. This study breaks new ground in its analysis of the relationships among the Catholic laity, the Catholic missionaries, and the Protestants in the old Northwest.

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To My Parents