

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Competition for Souls

In the fall of 1838, when Reverends Francis Blanchet and Modeste Demers arrived at Fort Vancouver, they were greeted by James Douglas, the acting Chief Factor. Father Blanchet reported that a band of curious residents, and a delegation of Catholic settlers from the Willamette Valley, stood on shore to meet the Company boats. As they had done with the Methodist-Episcopal missionaries, Company officials lavished their guests with hospitality, and escorted them to the quarters prepared for their use. During their initial meeting, the priests assured Douglas that they were prepared to comply with the wishes of the Governor, who had insisted that they establish their permanent mission on the Cowlitz Portage. The next day, the blackrobed priests celebrated a sung Latin Mass for the seventy-six Catholic residents of Fort Vancouver. Neighboring Indians and other non-Catholic residents watched the curious outdoor spectacle in silence.

Unlike their Protestant counterparts, the Catholic priests came to Oregon country without having to face months of manual labor before commencing their ministry. The

officials of the Hudson's Bay Company had entertained high hopes that the Catholic clergy would help decrease the influence of the American missionaries over the French Canadian retirees. They therefore provided the French Canadian clergy with temporal assistance, all gratis. Since the Willamette Valley settlers also felt responsible for inviting the priests to Oregon country, they too provided for the material needs of the priests. Long before the clergy arrived in Oregon, the settlers had constructed a church which contained living quarters for their missionaries.

While they had been sent to Oregon country first to minister to the "savage tribes,"<sup>1</sup> the priests immediately commenced a ministry to the French Canadian residents, their Indian wives and children. The aim of their mission work was, in Blanchet's words, "the triumph of the holy Catholic faith throughout this vast territory...."<sup>2</sup> An air of urgency characterized the missionaries' early work. Upon arriving in Oregon, they saw first-hand that Protestant ministers were already well-established throughout the region. During the previous year, the Willamette Valley settlers had complained that they were now surrounded by "all most Every Religion but oure (sic) own."<sup>3</sup> The report was not exaggerated. Blanchet wrote that "twenty-nine regular preachers besides a retinue of agents, colporteurs,

and other members"<sup>4</sup> were ministering to the whites and Indians of Oregon when he and Demers arrived there.

By 1839, the Methodist-Episcopal mission in the Willamette Valley was firmly established, and a second mission at The Dalles was under construction. The official chaplain of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Reverend Herbert Beaver, had only recently vacated his post at Fort Vancouver, after two tumultuous years. Presbyterian ministers were working among the Indians near the Walla Walla River. Doctor Marcus Whitman and the Reverend Henry Spalding had come to Oregon in 1836, under the sponsorship of the Congregational-Presbyterian mission society. Doctor Whitman and his wife Narcissa had settled among the Cayuse Indians at Waiilatpu. Reverend and Mrs. Henry Spalding had founded their mission at Lapwai, among the Nez Percé Indians. At regular intervals, other "self supporting missionaries, and their ladies"<sup>5</sup> appeared in the area, hoping to establish independent missions among the natives. Few remained very long.

Before Blanchet and Demers arrived, the Board of Foreign Missions had also sent three separate reinforcements to missions in Oregon. Rumors abounded that more reinforcements would soon follow. Within weeks after their arrival, Blanchet and Demers assessed the strong Protestant representation as the most formidable obstacle confronting the establishment of Catholic missions in Oregon. From the

beginning, the priests quickly devised plans to counter and reduce the influence of Protestantism, which in their minds, was tantamount to "Satan's empire."<sup>6</sup>

Fearing that Protestant missionaries had already made significant inroads into the lives of the Catholic residents of Oregon, especially among the settlers' wives, the priests turned their attention first to the "Catholic settlers and their families."<sup>7</sup> In the eyes of Blanchet, some Catholics had been "exposed to the most seducing temptations of perversion."<sup>8</sup> From the onset of their mission work in Oregon, Blanchet and Demers set out "to bring back to the true fold the lost sheep,"<sup>9</sup> "to warn their flock about the dangers of seduction,"<sup>10</sup> and "to destroy the false impressions already received."<sup>11</sup> While the stated object of their mission was to work for the conversion of the natives, the priests instituted a mission designed both to strengthen the faith and reclaim the allegiance of the Catholic settlers. Moreover, the priests also set out to convert the Indian wives of the settlers. Like the Protestants, the priests felt that these women were natural bridges into the lives of the children and the Indian tribes of Oregon. The evangelization of the natives remained a secondary concern reserved for the day when the Catholic population was secure from the threat of Protestantism.

During their missions, the blackrobes resolved to undermine Protestant influence, and discredit the

"propagandists of Protestant error"<sup>12</sup> in the minds of whites and Indians alike. The Protestant ministers responded in kind, denouncing the papist priests for fostering ignorance, bigotry, barbarism and idolatry among the masses.

Protestant ministers redoubled their efforts to halt the "false doctrine"<sup>13</sup> of Catholicism from infecting their converts. As the priests arrived in Oregon, the Reverend A. B. Smith, Congregational minister at Kamiah, wondered what impact Catholicism would have on his ministry. "Catholicism is now making his appearance, and the errors of that church are beginning to be diffused among The people....How much influence this will have on the people we know not."<sup>14</sup>

Beginning at Fort Vancouver, the priests conducted intense missions "to teach the men their duties, the women and children their catechism, to baptize them, bless their unions, and establish good order and holiness of life everywhere."<sup>15</sup> Each Catholic mission was conducted against a backdrop of strong anti-Protestant sentiment. At every locale, the priests followed a similar pattern. At the onset of the mission, the priests conducted their own census of all the Catholics living in each region. (In 1839, they counted 76 Catholics at Fort Vancouver, 26 Catholic families in the Willamette Valley, and four Catholic families living in the Cowlitz Portage.) The clergymen made special note of the marital status of each adult and estimated the number of non-Christian Indians living in each region. A period of

instruction and prayer ensued at each of the three locations. The first mission at Fort Vancouver lasted four months and twenty days, ending April 15, 1839. During that period, Blanchet left his post long enough to spend nine days at Cowlitz, and thirty-five days among the Willamette Valley settlers. Fathers Demers remained at Fort Vancouver.

Each evening the priests gathered the Catholic men and their families of Fort Vancouver for prayer, "pious readings,"<sup>16</sup> and the singing of French canticles. The priests formed two separate choirs, one consisting of men, the other of women and children. Blanchet noted how much the families, the non-Catholic workers, and the non-Christian Indians enjoyed "the pleasant and harmonious concerts"<sup>17</sup> resounding from the gathering hall. The clergy also devoted a major portion of the day to the Indian women and children, the families of Catholic engages, some of whom had been baptized by Protestant ministers. The missionaries reserved each afternoon to teach these women and children "prayers and holy truths"<sup>18</sup> in order to prepare them for Catholic baptism. At Fort Vancouver, sixty women and girls and eighteen boys attended the first catechism class. Father Blanchet also paid considerable attention to the instruction of the older boys, those able to read English. He then selected some of these youths "to assist in teaching the prayers and catechism to others."<sup>19</sup> Blanchet attributed

the overall success of his first mission at Fort Vancouver to the longtime labors of Doctor John McLoughlin, who, for fourteen years had "saved the Catholics of the Fort and their children from the dangers of perversion,"<sup>20</sup> i.e. Protestantism. The Fort Vancouver mission culminated in fifty-three baptisms and twenty-four marriages.

Anxious to demonstrate respect for the agreement made between Governor Simpson and Archbishop Signay, F. N. Blanchet soon left Fort Vancouver for the Cowlitz Portage on December 12, 1838. Accompanied by his lay assistant, Augustin Rochon, Blanchet celebrated Catholic Mass at the home of Company employee Simon Plamondon. During this nine day visitation, Blanchet selected a 640 acre tract of land upon which to fix "the principal station of the Catholic Missionaries."<sup>21</sup> During the brief visit, the priest baptized seven people, instructed the Catholic men, and appointed another lay catechist, Mr. Fagant, "to teach the prayers and catechism to the women and children."<sup>22</sup> At the close of this brief visit, Father Blanchet left his hired man, Mr. Rochon, at Cowlitz to split timber, erect a house and barn, and fence a portion of the mission claim. The priest promised the Company workers and their families that he would return to the Cowlitz Portage the following spring to conduct a mission for the local residents. Father Blanchet, the Vicar General, departed for Fort Vancouver on

December 18, 1838, allowing plenty of time to prepare for the celebration of Christmas liturgy.

The Willamette Valley settlement, located in the stronghold of Methodism, was the next locus of Catholic missionary activity. While the terms of their contract with the Hudson's Bay Company prevented the priests from establishing a permanent mission there, Blanchet felt compelled to go there and rescue "the lambs of the flock..." [from the] "clutches of Wesleyan wolves."<sup>23</sup> From January 5 to February 14, 1839, Blanchet conducted his mission for the French Canadian men, their Indian wives, and children. During this mission, the priest first hoped to bolster the faith of professed Catholics, who for years had been "deprived of all the means necessary to practice the worship commanded by their faith...."<sup>24</sup> At the same time, Blanchet hoped to reverse the advances made by Reverend Jason Lee and his colleagues, who, in the words of Blanchet "had succeeded in bringing some of these [French Canadian settlers] to their Sunday meetings, baptized some women and performed marriages."<sup>25</sup>

Father Francis Blanchet took possession of the mission church built by the settlers in 1836 and celebrated the first Mass there on Epiphany Sunday, January 6, 1839. Virtually all of the French Canadian families turned out to meet the blackrobed priest "so long announced and expected."<sup>26</sup> Blanchet found his parishioners, who had



awaited his arrival for five years, well-disposed and "happy and willing to obey the Church...."<sup>27</sup> In the month that followed, the families who lived near the church attended early Mass, and remained the entire day for instructions in doctrine, scripture, prayers, and music. Others took advantage of the unseasonably mild weather and camped near the church in tents for the remainder of the month. Blanchet required that the men live separately from their wives "until their unions could be blessed,"<sup>28</sup> discounting the fact that some had already been wed in the presence of a Protestant minister.

At the Willamette Valley settlement, Father Blanchet conducted services and classes from morning to night for the next three weeks. He singled out the Catholic men, and reinstructed them in the dogma and prayers they had learned in their youth. Speaking in French, the priest explained "the most important truths of religion,"<sup>29</sup> along with instructions in prayer and singing. As he taught them their prayers, Blanchet reported that the men "were found to have retained them [their prayers] in a surprising manner."<sup>30</sup> The Indian women at each post, wives of the French Canadians, represented a special booty in the Protestant-Catholic competition for souls. Most at Willamette had already been catechized by Protestant ministers, who also viewed the women as liaison into the tribes of Oregon. In 1842, the Reverend W. W. Kone, Methodist-Episcopal

minister at Clatsop, commented on the loss felt by the Protestant missionaries when the Indian women changed allegiances. "At present one Roman Catholic Priest is doing more than all our missionaries. This is owing to the ready access he has to the native women, many of whom have married Canadians."<sup>31</sup>

At the Willamette settlement, the priest went to great lengths to undo the work of the Reverend Jason Lee and the missionaries of the Methodist-Episcopal Church. Believing that the conversion of the Indian women would lead to the conversion of their children, Blanchet invested a major portion of his day teaching them and their youngsters. Knowing that the women hailed from the Chinook, Colville, Flathead, and other major tribes, Blanchet also hoped that their profession of faith might facilitate the conversion of their blood relatives. The priest therefore employed the services of interpreters to translate his lessons into the native languages of the women. Attempting to undermine and destroy the work of the Methodist-Episcopal ministers, Blanchet characterized the Protestant missionary as a "false Prophet"<sup>32</sup> who had come to pillage and steal the lambs of the "true fold."<sup>33</sup> In the same vein, he represented himself as one who had come "to enlighten the ignorant, to recall wavering consciences, and to bring back to the true fold the lost sheep."<sup>34</sup> He admonished his catechumens to disassociate themselves and their children from all Protestant

gatherings, including their schools, prayer-meetings, and temperance society. He also pointed out the need to re-baptize and re-marry anyone who had consented to Protestant baptism or marriage. Blanchet reported that this latter admonishment "aroused all the ire of the ministers,"<sup>35</sup> who lodged a formal complaint with acting Chief Factor James Douglas. The Hudson's Bay Company, happy to see the French Canadians withdrawing from the American Protestant influence, refused to become involved. By October of 1839, Douglas informed the Catholic missionaries that the Hudson's Bay Company had "no further objection to the establishment of a Roman Catholic Mission in the Willamette...."<sup>36</sup> As in other places, Father Blanchet employed the services of another lay catechist to assist the people in the lessons and prayers. At the Willamette settlement, Blanchet found a young, literate Frenchman, Pierre Stanislaus Jacquet, who agreed to teach the children catechism and prayers in the absence of the priest. At the close of this mission, Blanchet baptized forty-seven children, along with twenty-five Indian women "in excellent dispositions."<sup>37</sup> He also solemnized twenty-five marriages, to the relief of all parties concerned. The priest promised to return to the Willamette Valley as soon as his other duties permitted.

On March 15, 1838, the Reverend Jason Lee returned to the United States, hoping to procure more personnel, money, and supplies for the Methodist-Episcopal mission. After his

presentation to the Board, the membership was convinced that the underlying purpose of the mission had remained uncompromised--"to convert the Natives to the Truth as it is in Jesus."<sup>38</sup> Lee advised the Board that more reinforcements were necessary to free the missionaries from the burdens of manual labor, to counter the advance of Catholicism, and to allow the missionaries freedom to begin the work of Indian evangelization. He assured the Board members that an infusion of capital and equipment was also required to emancipate the mission from economic dependence on the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Vancouver. In sum, Jason Lee and his fellow missionaries envisioned the Willamette Valley mission as a Christian colony, men, women, and children living and working in harmony with one another. They saw their mission as a living example of Christianity, a light for the aborigines to see and follow. The Board of Missions was duly impressed with Jason Lee's proposal, and quickly responded to his appeals for additional personnel, capital and equipment. On May 20, 1839, the Board reported to its constituents that "a foundation has been laid, and a beginning made which if followed up in the spirit of the Gospel, we doubt not will eventuate in great and lasting good to the inhabitants of that country."<sup>39</sup>

In 1839, while the Catholic priests labored among the white settlers and their families, the Methodist-Episcopal missionaries launched their first concerted effort to

evangelize the neighboring natives, the "Calapooyas"<sup>40</sup> Indians. Alloting "a very liberal sum of money"<sup>41</sup> (about four hundred dollars), the missionaries visited their prospective converts at their lodges, held regular meetings among them, and preached the gospel to them. They taught their prospective converts that faith in Jesus Christ alone could lead them to salvation. They admonished the natives to follow Christ, and to reject all that displeased the Great Spirit, including polygamy, superstition, gambling, and vice. In their spiritual work with the Indians, the missionaries enjoyed the widespread support of the American government. As early as 1818, Thomas L. McKenney, Superintendent of Indian Trade, commented on the need to moralize the Indians if they were to become "useful members of society."<sup>42</sup>

Put into the hands of their children the primer and the hoe, and they will naturally, in time, take hold of the plough; and, as their minds become enlightened and expand, the Bible will be their book and they will grow up in habits of morality and industry, leave the chase to those whose minds are less cultivated, and become useful members of society.<sup>43</sup>

The missionaries saw themselves as bearers of God's word, and teachers of Christian civilization, which they hoped to transmit by word and example to the "degraded red men."<sup>44</sup> At all places, the missionaries admonished the Indians "to use the means of grace"<sup>45</sup> brought to them by the word and example of the Christians. During this first mission, Lee

hired a man "to induce them [the Indians] to locate on a piece of ground, and till the soil, and to assist them in the building of comfortable houses."<sup>46</sup> Yet the investment of time and money yielded disappointing results. At the close of the year, Daniel Lee reported "so much apathy among them [the Indians], that, after having used various means for a year quite in vain, they abandoned the attempt."<sup>47</sup>

Jason Lee was alarmed at the outcome of the first Methodist-Episcopal mission to Christianize and civilize the Indians. Lee was also anxious that other tribes might prove equally resistive to the overtures of the missionaries. The recent arrival of the Catholic priests only exacerbated his anxiety. To further complicate his plight, he and his confreres were under increasing pressure from the Board of Foreign Missions to produce visible proof that the Oregon mission was winning Indian converts to Christianity. While the initial attempt at converting the Calapooyas was disappointing, Lee assured the Board that "the natives in that territory were generally prepared to receive the gospel."<sup>48</sup> At the same time, he and his confreres anxiously surveyed the area to locate more receptive tribes than the Calapooya Indians. Planning to expand the mission field, they told the Board that even "more help was needed to do the work."<sup>49</sup> In response to this appeal, the Mission Board consented "to send out a large reinforcement to this distant and rugged, though promising field of labor."<sup>50</sup>

In 1841, a third reinforcement was sent in response to Jason Lee's continued appeals. This costly infusion of personnel and money was amassed with a twofold purpose in mind. In accord with Jason Lee's beliefs, the Board held that this band of "mechanics, farmers, physicians, and school teachers"<sup>51</sup> would allow the missionaries "to pursue their appropriate work."<sup>52</sup> Concerned about finances, the Board was also convinced that if the people and funds were "judiciously"<sup>53</sup> managed, they would "ultimately prove a saving to the Society, by putting the means of support within their own power as the fruit of their own labor."<sup>54</sup> In their reports of 1840, the Board assured its contributors that the Oregon enterprise was enjoying the fruits of success. The mission farm and cattle were "furnishing the mission family with abundance."<sup>55</sup> The school already consisted of "upwards of thirty children, [and] was exerting a most salutary influence on the children themselves, and on the surrounding community."<sup>56</sup> Including the last reinforcement, the Board reported to its contributors that there were "sixty-eight persons connected with the mission...all supported by this society."<sup>57</sup>

At this time the Board wanted assurance that its investment was yielding dividends in the form of converts. The Board anxiously awaited to hear that

Instead of hundreds of Indians we hope soon to report thousands and tens of thousands gathered into the fold of Christ, when the fires of civili-

zation and the lights of Christianity shall everywhere illuminate the shores of the Pacific Ocean....<sup>58</sup>

Needless to say, the Reverend Jason Lee and his fellow laborers were unable to meet the grandiose expectations of the Board of Foreign Missions.

In the face of mounting pressure from the New York Board, the Methodist-Episcopal Church in Oregon expanded its missions in 1839 and 1840. The missionaries founded smaller stations at The Dalles and among the Indian villages along the Cascade Mountains. In addition to the Willamette mission, which remained the principal station, four stations were opened to serve the Indians of the interior. The second station, at the Willamette Falls, was attended by Mr. Waller and Mr. Willson, and served the 150-300 Indians of the region. Missionaries Kone and Frost and their families ministered to the Clatsop and neighboring Indians, 160 in number. The fourth station was at Nisqually. Mr. Richmond was stationed there. The fifth station was at The Dalles, where 500-1500 Indians gathered to hear Reverends Daniel Lee, Perkins and Brewer. This latter station provided the greatest promise of conversions among the tribes. In 1840, the ministers there reported that about 1200 Indians "from the Cascades, from Washam and Caclasco, and from the neighboring Wallah-Wallahs, and the Clickatats"<sup>59</sup> gathered "...to hear words by which they might

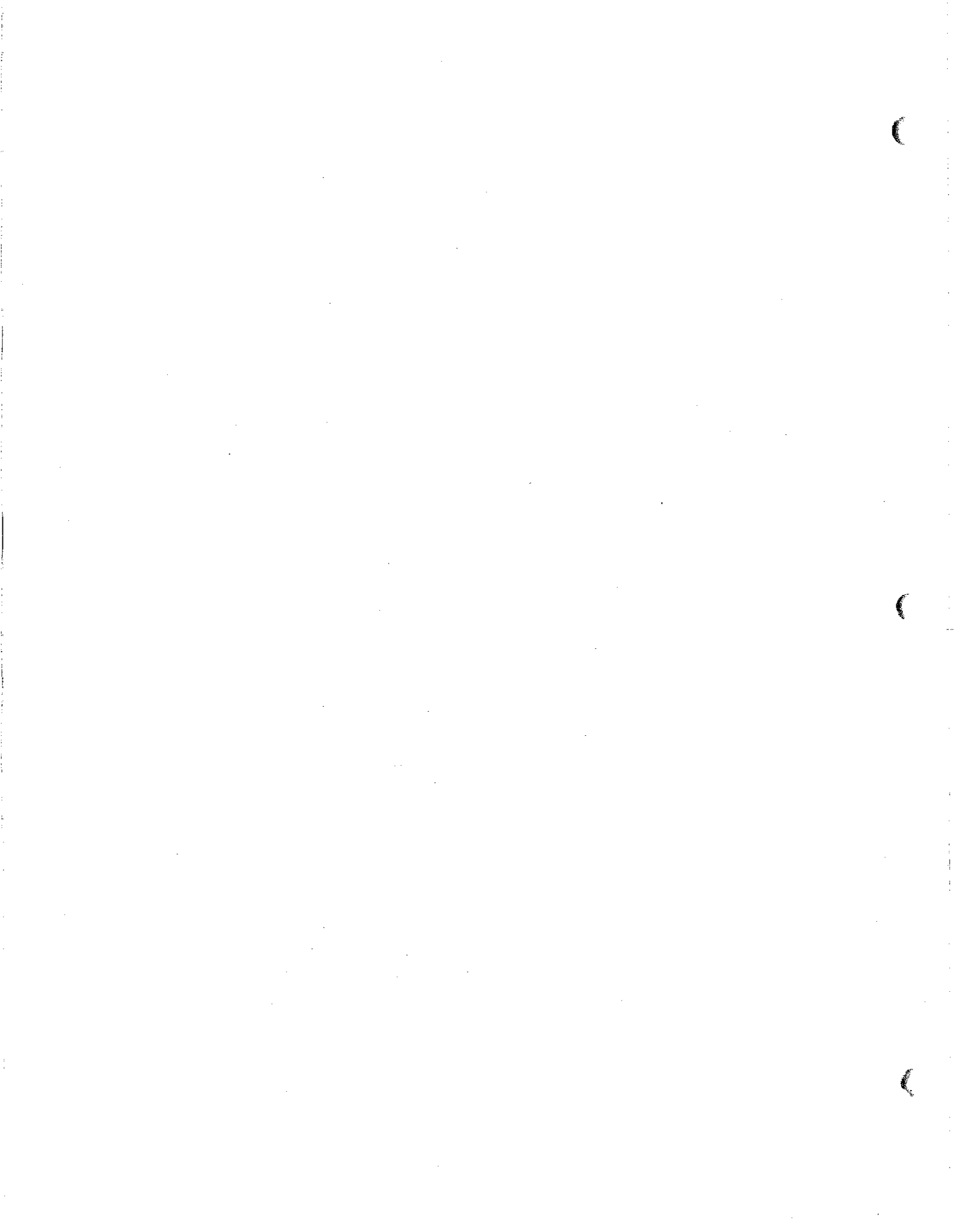


be saved."<sup>60</sup> The optimistic missionaries reported that the "solemn presence of God seemed to pervade almost every heart...."<sup>61</sup> On May 21, 1841, a relieved Jason Lee fired his report to the Mission Board, telling them that "five-hundred Indians have been converted during a single revival ...upward of a thousand of these sons of the forest assembled...all of whom have [embraced] Christianity."<sup>62</sup> The summer of 1840 had produced the badly needed sign that the fields were "ready for harvest."<sup>63</sup> But all too soon, the jubilation and enthusiasm was once again replaced by "disappointment and regret"<sup>64</sup> as the Indian converts "returned to their former vices."<sup>65</sup> By 1843, after a brief respite, the Methodist-Episcopal missions in Oregon were again in the throes of crisis.

Jason Lee had attempted to form a Christian colony at Willamette, a city on a hill,<sup>66</sup> that would not only supply temporal support for the smaller missions, but also serve as an example of Christian living for the natives. In the process of creating a Christian colony, he found himself inundated by criticism from his own colleagues and from outside of his mission. As the Methodists of the Willamette Valley cultivated larger tracts of farm land and formed an independent cattle company, their underlying motives were called into question. The Roman Catholic missionaries took advantage of the opportunity to assure suspicious whites and anxious Indians that Lee and his retinue were little more

than "land sharks" and "holy horse traders."<sup>67</sup> At the smaller stations, Lee's own missionaries complained that "it is a great drawback to the comfort of the other stations that the general supplies have to be drawn from the Willamette."<sup>68</sup> Others voiced concern that Lee and the Willamette families were living "better than they would at home."<sup>69</sup> During the 1840s, "Some of the Missionaries [claimed] land in their own name,"<sup>70</sup> a problem which undermined Lee's contention that the missionaries were solely concerned with the spreading of the gospel.

Other secular concerns added fuel to the flames of controversy. Catholic and Protestant settlers all agreed that a government was needed to adjudicate civil and criminal cases. But as details of the government were hammered out, the settlers began to align themselves with Lee or Blanchet, respectively. The Methodist-Episcopal missionaries characterized the Catholic priests as "foreigners" [in] "opposition to all American missionaries and all the American people...."<sup>71</sup> For their part, Blanchet and his followers refused to support any move that would increase the political or economic strength of the Methodist-Episcopal community. Blanchet publicly asserted that the country was too immature to establish a provisional government and withdrew his support and his constituents from the discussion.



The Methodist-Episcopal Board continued to press Jason Lee and his missionaries for "specific information"<sup>72</sup> regarding the number of conversions gained among "the poor benighted children of the forest...."<sup>73</sup> As the Board expressed its "deep anxiety [to] know more of its present conditions and prospects,"<sup>74</sup> Jason Lee systematically ignored the Board's requests for detailed information, holding fast to the belief that the natives would eventually convert to Christianity, and follow the example of the missionary families. As he waited, however, key Methodist-Episcopal missionaries succumbed to discouragement. Exhausted from trying to save the natives from their "wretchedness,"<sup>75</sup> and reclaim others "from a back slidden state,"<sup>76</sup> they watched the majority of natives continue on in their "heathenish practices."<sup>77</sup> Reverends Daniel Lee, J. Frost, and others began to articulate their belief that lasting conversion of the natives was an exercise in futility.

In 1843, Reverend J. Frost, who worked among the Chinook Indians, wrote, "It is acknowledged on all hands that the present prospects in respect to civilizing and Christianizing these natives are exceedingly gloomy...their habits are formed."<sup>78</sup> Daniel Lee, a central figure in the Oregon mission, added, "Three-fourths and more appear careless about the teachings of the gospel...and [persist] in

direct opposition to its commands.... Why?...because they hate good and love evil...."<sup>79</sup> Reverends Lee, Frost, Babcock, Kone, and other missionaries submitted letters of resignation, and prepared to return with their families to the United States. As his fellow missionaries resigned their posts, Jason Lee remained steadfast in his belief that the power of the gospel, and the example of the missionaries were sufficient to ameliorate the condition of the Indians in Oregon. The Board did not agree, and replaced Lee with Reverend George Gary of the Black River Conference. The Board charged Gary with the task of conducting a "thorough and impartial investigation"<sup>80</sup> of the Oregon Missions. His job led to the reduction of forces, a divestiture of property, and the ultimate closure of the Indian missions in Oregon. Jason Lee continued to insist "that perseverance is the best proof of fidelity, we must not halt nor linger in the way. We have put our hands to the plough which is to break up the fallow of heathenism...."<sup>81</sup>

While the Roman Catholic priests considered the ministry to the white settlers and their families as the primary object of their work, they also insisted that they had never entirely neglected the Indians. Blanchet held that only lack of time and personnel prevented him and Demers from converting the natives to Catholicism. In a letter of 1841, Blanchet wrote:

In the midst of so many adversaries, we try to keep our ground firmly; to increase our numbers ...particularly where danger is most pressing. We also endeavor to anticipate the others, and to inculcate the Catholic principles in those places where error has not found a footing, or even to arrest the progress of evil, to dry it up at its source. The conflict has been violent, but the savages now begin to open their eyes to who are the real ministers of Jesus Christ.<sup>82</sup>

Parallel to the Protestants, Blanchet believed that he and Demers bore the "words of eternal life,"<sup>83</sup> to which they added, "Heaven declares itself in our favor."<sup>84</sup> In a moment of rare accord, Protestant and Catholic missionaries agreed that the multiplicity of native languages, and the Indians' practices of polygamy and medicine were major obstacles to overcome. In addition, each denomination regarded the other as a serious barrier to the evangelization of Indians. From the priests' perspective, the Protestant missionaries, especially the Methodist-Episcopals, were once again regarded as "false apostles,"<sup>85</sup> and enemies to be routed, missionaries who preached only "the kingdom of this world."<sup>86</sup> In their work with the Indians, the priests sought to undermine the influence the Protestant missionaries had gained among the natives.

For the most part, the Catholic missionaries confined their early work with the Indians to those who lived in close proximity to the main Catholic settlements, Fort Vancouver, the Willamette Valley mission, and on the Cowlitz Portage. However, as the Methodists opened new

stations at more remote places, Father Demers set out to rescue those natives "which had been gained to Methodism for over a year, viz: those of Clackamas, and Cascades."<sup>87</sup> Blanchet also reported that sometimes the Indians sent delegations "from remote distances in order to see and hear the blackgown."<sup>88</sup> Since they lacked sufficient personnel, the priests instructed only the chief or his delegate in Catholic dogma, and relied on them to carry "an idea of religion...back with them to the tribe."<sup>89</sup> The instruction always contained a caveat, warning the tribes to beware of the "erroneous road of Protestantism."<sup>90</sup>

Father Blanchet took special note of the Indians' attraction to Catholic ceremony, processions, incense, music, and the external symbols of the liturgy. "The sight of the altar, vestments, sacred vessels, and great ceremonies were drawing their attention...."<sup>91</sup> They looked for ways to capitalize on the natives' interest in ritual, which, he wrote, captivated "the attention of the natives [more] than the cold and meaningless ceremonies of the minister...."<sup>92</sup> Conversely, the Protestant ministers responded, warning their converts that "It is not ceremonies...that save,"<sup>93</sup> but only faith in Christ and in his word.

In his quest to command the attention of the natives, and diminish the effects of Protestantism among the Indians, Blanchet devised a teaching tool, which the Indians called, the Sahale stick."<sup>94</sup> It allowed the priests to visually

represent the Judeo-Christian plan of salvation. The stick contained forty notches, representing "forty centuries before Christ," thirty-three notches, representing "the thirty three years of our Lord," including "the time of his birth, and his death upon the cross, as well as the mission of the Apostles."<sup>95</sup> When the Protestants expanded their mission stations among the Indians, Blanchet modified the stick, using a ten and one-half by two and one-half foot chart, which allowed additional details. The new chart contained not only essential Catholic dogmas, but also highlighted the "crooked road of Protestantism made by men of the 16th century...."<sup>96</sup> Soon thereafter, the Protestant leaders responded with their own version of the device, replete with references to popery, simony, corruption and other equally "flattering" representations of Catholicism.

During their missions to the Indians, the priests explained the fundamental dogmas of Christianity, including the fall of Adam, and redemption through Christ. To this, they added the need for the "medicine of baptism"<sup>97</sup> and the sacraments of the Catholic Church. Before baptizing their converts, they required each candidate to make a verbal profession of faith, in accordance with the requirements of Catholicism. "Yes, we believe in God who created all things. Yes, we believe in Jesus Christ, who came to redeem us. Yes, we believe in the seven medicines to make us good."<sup>98</sup> To these credos, the priests of Oregon included



their own addenda, which required the Indians to renounce Protestantism: "Yes, we promise to keep and follow the road of the blackgown, which is that Jesus Christ made. Yes, we reject all other roads, lately made by men."<sup>99</sup> This profession of faith was followed by the solemn ceremony of baptism.

As the competition for souls proceeded, both Protestant and Catholic missionaries conceded that the natives they had come to save were slow to embrace the teachings of their churches. For their part, the natives sometimes played the missionaries against each other, demanding "temporal gain,"<sup>100</sup> i.e. blankets, food, tools, etc. in exchange for their professions of faith. Both missionary groups complained that even after their converts had made a public profession of faith, and were baptized into their respective churches, they frequently returned to their former ways. This fact devastated Reverend Frost and his confreres, who, like the priests, maintained that the "grace of God"<sup>101</sup> should have been sufficient to convert the most "ignorant, superstitious, and barbarous"<sup>102</sup> Indians. As Daniel Lee and other missionaries grew increasingly frustrated with the recalcitrance of the natives, Father Demers warned, "Experience has taught us not to rely too much on the first demonstrations of the Indians, and not to rely much on the first demonstrations they manifested."<sup>103</sup>

Compared to their Protestant counterparts, the Catholic missionaries enjoyed the luxury of time. Without the pressure of an anxious mission board, which demanded an early return on its investment, the priests saw the need to move slowly in their work of evangelizing Indians. In a letter to the Reverend F. C. Cazeault, Secretary to the Archbishop of Quebec, Father Demers concluded,

You may see that progress has been very slow among them [the Indians] so far; their customs and habits are so inveterate that it will take a long time, for religion and the fear and knowledge of God, to unroot and destroy them entirely.<sup>104</sup>

While the Mission Board forced Jason Lee and his missionaries to withdraw from their work among the Indians, Blanchet and Demers delighted in the Board's decision, and began to plot a long term course for the Catholic Church in Oregon.

In the autumn of 1842, two additional priests, Fathers A. Langlois and J. B. Bolduc, were sent to Fort Vancouver from Canada, via Cape Horn. During the summer of '42, Blanchet had also learned that another priest, Jesuit Father Pierre DeSmet had been sent from St. Louis to work among the Flathead Indians (in present-day Montana). Demers learned that the Jesuit was en route to Fort Vancouver to purchase supplies for his mission, and to visit his fellow clergy.

As soon as DeSmet arrived at Fort Vancouver, the three priests spent eight days deliberating on "the great mission

of the Pacific Coast."<sup>105</sup> The priests examined both short and long term needs for the region, needs for which they made specific recommendations. While the Methodist-Episcopal missionaries had vacated their Indian missions, the Presbyterians were planning to begin work among the Indians of New Caledonia (present-day British Columbia). The three resolved to send Father Modeste Demers for the "long and hard mission to New Caledonia."<sup>106</sup>

Blanchet had long desired to build "a college, a convent, and schools"<sup>107</sup> in the Willamette Valley, a project that required an infusion of money and personnel. Above all else, Blanchet hoped that "one day a successor of the Apostles will come from some part of the world to settle, and provide for the spiritual necessities of this vast region...."<sup>108</sup> In short, he desired the appointment of a bishop for Oregon territory, so that decisions affecting the Catholic Church in Oregon could be made locally, instead of by the distant bishops of Canada or America. At the close of the meeting, Father Pierre DeSmet agreed to travel to the United States and to Europe and present the needs of the Catholic Church in Oregon to the appropriate officials--in particular, to the bishops and the Holy See.

After a two year hiatus, the meeting of 1842 began to produce the anticipated results. Father DeSmet returned to Fort Vancouver on August 6, 1844, accompanied by four priests, "some lay brothers, and six Sisters of Notre Dame

de Namur."<sup>109</sup> On December 1, 1843, two briefs were sent from the Vatican: the first raised Oregon into a Vicarate Apostolic; the other appointed Father Francis Norbert Blanchet as the first bishop of the region. Behind the scenes, the Archbishop of Quebec was pleased to be relieved of the burden and expense of his remote mission to Oregon, and, at Blanchet's request, had made his position known to the Holy See. Anticipating that the United States would soon gain sovereignty over the region, the Bishop of St. Louis, Joseph Rosati, was also pleased to dispense of potential responsibility for the Oregon mission. Rosati's coadjutor, Bishop Kendrick, consented to represent the needs of the Oregon mission to the assembled Bishops of the United States during their Fifth Provincial Council, meeting at Baltimore in 1843. The bishops, in turn, forwarded their recommendation to the Holy See asking the Pope to establish a Vicarate Apostolic in Oregon.

Because the question of sovereignty remained unsettled, Pope Gregory XVI agreed to establish a "Vicarate Apostolic in place of a bishopric,"<sup>110</sup> and named Francis Norbert Blanchet as the first bishop of the territory. While he publicly declared his "unworthiness"<sup>111</sup> for the office of bishop, Blanchet likely believed that none was better suited for the position than he. Consecrated bishop in Montreal on July 25, 1845, F. N. Blanchet quickly departed for

Europe "to obtain from Rome some assistant bishops, to look for new missionaries and new sisters, and collect funds...."<sup>112</sup>

At the Methodist-Episcopal mission, the Reverend George Gary, Jason Lee's replacement, arrived in Oregon in June of 1844, armed with orders to disburden "the Oregon Mission of the ponderous load that has been pressing her into the dust...."<sup>113</sup> In short, Gary "honorably discharged"<sup>114</sup> the secular members of the mission, dismantled its business enterprises, and set the mission on a "strictly spiritual"<sup>115</sup> course. Even though Jason Lee had departed protesting that "Oregon is still of infinite importance as a field of missionary endeavor among the Indians,"<sup>116</sup> Reverend Gary gave the Methodist-Episcopal Church in Oregon a new direction. Ending the era of missionary work among the natives of Oregon, Reverend Gary emphasized preaching and teaching the "Word of Life"<sup>117</sup> to the white immigrants and settlers of Oregon. Resolved that "Oregon will yet be released from the remains of Paganism and the gloom of Papal darkness,"<sup>118</sup> his missionaries redoubled their efforts to promote the "cause of God, the interests of the Church, [and] ...the welfare of the rising country...."<sup>119</sup> As Reverend George Gary and Bishop F. N. Blanchet pondered the future direction of their churches, an unexpected number of emigrants from America began to trickle into the Pacific Northwest.

V. ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Letter of Bishop J. N. Provencher to Dr. John McLoughlin," in F. N. Blanchet, Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon, originally published as a series of articles for the Catholic Sentinel, newspaper for the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon, (Portland, 1878), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>"Letter of F. N. Blanchet to Father Pierre DeSmet," September 28, 1841, in Ruben Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels, 1748-1846, Vol. XXVII, (Cleveland, 1906), p. 386.

<sup>3</sup>"Petition of Willamette Valley Settlers to Bishop of Juliopolis," copy in Manuscript Division, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>4</sup>Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>Daniel Lee, J. M. Frost, Ten Years in Oregon (J. Collard, 1844) reprinted by Ye Galleon Press (Fairfield, WA, 1968), p. 110.

<sup>6</sup>Carl Landerholm, tr., Notices and Voyages of the Famed Quebec Mission, V, (Champoeg Press, 1966), p. 80.

<sup>7</sup>Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 62.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 71

<sup>13</sup>"Letter of Asa Bowen Smith to Rev. D. Green," August 27, 1839, in Clifford M. Drury, ed., The Diaries and Letters of Henry H. Spalding and Asa Bowen Smith Relating to the Nez Perce Mission 1838-1842, (Glendale, California, 1958), p. 110.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 64.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 66

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Robert Gatke, ed., "A Document of Mission History, 1833-43," Oregon Historical Quarterly XXXVI, (March, 1935), p. 87.

<sup>32</sup>Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 64.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>36</sup>"Letter of James Douglas to F. N. Blanchet, October 9, 1839," in F. N. Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 98.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>38</sup>Robert Gatke, ed., "A Document of Mission History, 1839," p. 77.

<sup>39</sup>C. H. Carey, ed., "Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission, May 20, 1839," Oregon Historical Quarterly, (December, 1922), p. 313.

<sup>40</sup>Daniel Lee, J. M. Frost, Ten Years in Oregon, p. 150.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>"Report of House Committee on Indian Affairs, January 22, 1818," in American State Papers: Indian Affairs, II, pp. 150-151.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>"Diary of Jason Lee" in Oregon Historical Quarterly XVII, June, 1916, p. 142.

<sup>45</sup>Lee and Frost, Ten Years in Oregon, p. 261.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 150



<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>"Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission, 1842"  
p. 314.

<sup>49</sup>Lee and Frost, Ten Years in Oregon, p. 151.

<sup>50</sup>"Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission, 1840,"  
p. 314.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>"Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission,  
May 24, 1841", p. 318.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

<sup>59</sup>Lee and Frost, Ten Years in Oregon, p. 190.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>62</sup>"Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission, 1841,"  
p. 316.

<sup>63</sup>John: 4:35.

<sup>64</sup>Lee and Frost, Ten Years in Oregon, p. 234.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>66</sup>Matthew 5:14.

<sup>67</sup>Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup>Robert M. Gatke, "A Document of Mission History,"  
p. 88.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>71</sup>H. K. Hines, Missionary History of the Pacific Northwest, (Portland, 1899), p. 258.

<sup>72</sup>"Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission, 1842,"  
p. 319.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>75</sup>Lee and Frost, Ten Years in Oregon, p. 278.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>80</sup>"Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission, 1844,"  
p. 324.

<sup>81</sup>"Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission, 1843,"  
p. 324.

<sup>82</sup>"Letter of F. N. Blanchet to Pierre DeSmet,  
September 28, 1841," in Thwaites, p. 389.

<sup>83</sup>John 6:68

<sup>84</sup>"Letter of F. N. Blanchet to Pierre DeSmet, September 28, 1841," in Thwaites, p. 389.

<sup>85</sup>Carl Landerholm, tr., Notices and Voyages, p. 80.

<sup>86</sup>Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 14.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>91</sup>Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 121.

<sup>92</sup>Carl Landerholm, Notices and Voyages, p. 81.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>94</sup>Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 85.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Lee and Frost, Ten Years in Oregon, p. 206.

<sup>101</sup>2 Cor. 6:1

<sup>102</sup>Lee and Frost, Ten Years in Oregon, p. 283.

103 "Letter to F. C. Cazeault from Modeste Demers, February 5, 1840," in F. N. Blanchet, Historical Sketches p. 102.

104 Ibid., p. 104.

105 Ibid., p. 129.

106 Ibid., p. 130.

107 "Letter of F. N. Blanchet to Pierre DeSmet, September 28, 1841," p. 390.

108 Ibid.

109 Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 143.

110 "Letter of Bishop Turgeon to Blanchet, July 11, 1843," Archives of Archdiocese of Quebec. Also quoted in Letitia Lyons, Francis Norbert Blanchet and the Founding of the Oregon Mission, (Washington, 1940), p. 145.

111 "Letter of F. N. Blanchet, Vicar Apostolic-elect, to the Clergy and Faithful of the Vicarate Apostolic of Oregon, November 22, 1844," Archives of the Archdiocese of Portland, Oregon.

112 Blanchet, Historical Sketches, p. 155.

113 "Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission, May 18, 1846," p. 351.

114 Ibid., p. 348.

115 Ibid., p. 347.

116 "Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission, May 13, 1844," pp. 328-9.

<sup>117</sup>"Methodist Annual Reports--Willamette Mission,  
May 18, 1846," p. 352.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., p. 353.