

Jesuit Missionaries in the Northwest¹

By John Law

The record of the efforts made by the first Catholic missionaries on this Continent to substitute the mild and civilizing influence of Christianity, for the barbarous superstitions and demoniac worship of the savages who inhabited it—to flash the torch-light of truth on eyes so long accustomed to the twilight of error—to draw down, as it were, the lightning of Heaven to illuminate the darkness of Hell—to any one but a trained soldier of the Cross, might, under all the circumstances that surrounded so dangerous an enterprise, seem a species of religious fanaticism and folly, unaccountable for upon any system of human reasoning. But the venerable fathers who undertook this great and pious work, looked to no human praise for their reward—to no human sympathy for their toil or their suffering. The pioneers in this great and benevolent enterprise were like the first discoverer of fire, morally certain of bringing wrath on their own heads, and of being condemned to have their vitals gnawed by the flame of the funeral pyre that surrounded them in the solitude of the desert, with no eye to pity, no arm to save, and supported alone by that enthusiasm, courage, self-devotion, and patience under their sufferings, which so eminently characterized these

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