

Continental Ambitions: Roman Catholics in North America: the Colonial Experience

Kevin Starr



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Kevin Starr has achieved a fast-paced evocation of three Roman Catholic civilizations--Spain, France, and Recusant England--as they explored, evangelized, and settled the North American continent. This book represents the first time this story has been told in one volume. Showing the same narrative verve of Starr's award-winning *Americans and the California Dream* series, this riveting--but sometimes painful--history should reach a wide readership.

Starr begins this work with the exploration and temporary settlement of North America by recently Christianized Scandinavians. He continues with the destruction of Caribbean peoples by New Spain, the struggle against this tragedy by the great Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas, the Jesuit and Franciscan exploration and settlement of the Spanish Borderlands (Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Baja, and Alta California), and the strengths and weaknesses of the mission system.

He then turns his attention to New France with its highly developed Catholic and Counter-Reformational cultures of Quebec and Montreal, its encounters with Native American peoples, and its advance southward to New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. The volume ends with the founding of Maryland as a proprietary colony for Roman Catholic Recusants and Anglicans alike, the rise of Philadelphia and southern Pennsylvania as centers of Catholic life, the Suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, and the return of John Carroll to Maryland the following year.

Starr dramatizes the representative personalities and events that illustrate the triumphs and the tragedies, the achievements and the failures, of each of these societies in their explorations, treatment of Native Americans, and translations of religious and social value to new and challenging environments. His history is notable for its honesty and its synoptic success in comparing and contrasting three disparate civilizations, albeit each of them Catholic, with three similar and differing approaches to expansion in the New World.

"These accounts of a human drama heroic and villainous, saintly and sanguineous, are a feast for the historian and, more importantly, food for our generation starved of the story of its own past. The romantic whose knowledge is airbrushed and the cynic whose knowledge is cobbled together with clichés will jointly be challenged. For everyone, reading this book could be a transforming experience, and a delight as well." **Fr. George Rutler**, Author, *He Spoke to Us: Discerning God in People and Events*

Kevin Starr's enthralling *Continental Ambitions* meticulously narrates the history of Catholicism as North America s first form of Christianity vividly present centuries before the waves of immigration that we typically associate with the formation of the American Catholic community. **Charlotte Allen**, Author, *The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus*

To see in one book the history of Catholics in the New World, its glories and its tragedies, is almost like reading a secret history of a lost tribe. Kevin Starr s magisterial narration of European Catholic presence in North America the Norse, the Spanish, the French, the English, plus a few others is a contribution of the first order to our understanding of the whole foundation of this land of the free. James V. Schall, S.J. Professor Emeritus, Georgetown University

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