

Dear NARW,

Thanks so much for taking the time to read this piece. This is the first draft of the first dissertation chapter I wrote.

I did my best to streamline the chapter, but it is on the longer side (54 pages, including 6 pages of images). It is partly because I decided to include some background and even historiography that, in the final product, will likely be in the introduction and earlier chapters. I thought it would help you understand the chapter better. If you don't have much time to read the piece, skim some of the details of the 2nd section "French-Style Education."

This chapter will be one of the last two chapters of my dissertation (either chap. 4 or 5). My dissertation is (tentatively) entitled, "The Forgotten French: Catholicism, Colonialism, and Americanness on the Early Trans-Appalachian Frontier." It examines French Catholic influences in the Midwest (mostly Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, Michigan and Kentucky) between 1790 and 1860 and demonstrates that these influences grew over the period, even as the number of Francophones decreased in the same time compared to other populations. This chapter is developing this argument through the lens of female education.

The main, interrelated reasons why French Catholic influences grew are the French Revolution and the subsequent missionary awakening in France. One key thing to understand is that most French missionaries (over 300 came before the Civil War) worked in the West, not on the East coast, because the first Catholic Bishops in the West were themselves Frenchmen and because this territory was still populated by French-descended settlers (who along Native Americans were a majority of the population into the 1810s and 1820s and even beyond in some places).

My dissertation mostly contributes to the historiography on the making of the new US nation by looking at the West and showing that the United States never was a fundamentally Anglo-Protestant nation. I examine how French-descended Catholics and French-born missionaries contested this definition of the US identity. I am trying to determine what nation French Catholics helped built and might argue that, just like Anglo-Protestants, they helped entrenched white Christian supremacy.

The **first chapter** introduces the émigré priests who sought refuge in the US in the 1790s and their encounter with French-descended, Native, and black populations up to the War of 1812. It shows that the West was more a Francophone Catholic than Anglo-Protestant region and explores the characteristics of this frontier Francophone Catholicism.

The **second chapter** analyzes the flow of French-born missionaries to the Midwest after 1815 and how they literally reshaped the religious landscape with their buildings, their noticeable presence (habits), etc... and how Protestants reacted to this more visible Catholic presence.

The **third chapter** is devoted to Catholic missions among Native Americans of the western Great Lakes. It will probably argue that, while French missionaries genuinely sought to help Natives retain their land in the context of Indian Removal, they were nevertheless inspired by the colonialist ideology of (white?) Christian supremacy.

I welcome any feedback, of course. Here are, however, a few issues I would be interested to hear about.

- 1) Any thoughts regarding the organization of the chapter? Does the overall structure of the chapter make sense and help build my argument? Are there unnecessary passages? Etc.
- 2) I would like to introduce more gender analysis, but I don't know how to do this or where in the chapter. I state in the introduction that French missionary nuns were major builders of the new United States who were engaged in the imperial project with their ideology of civilizing/refining the allegedly underdeveloped West, but I don't think I successfully support this claim in the chapter. If you have any bibliographic suggestion or idea about how I could emphasize the role of nuns in settler colonialism, that would be welcome. One of my concerns is that French priests shared the same ideology and also built fine academies and colleges (Notre-Dame, for instance, was founded by French priests), so I need to come with a good argument to justify excluding priests from the chapter.
- 3) I only researched the archives of two sisterhoods, those discussed in the chapter. However, as I suggest at some point in the chapter, other French sisterhoods created schools in the West too (the Sister of St Joseph of Carondolet, the Sisters of the Holy Cross, the Ursulines of Cleveland, etc). Do you have any recommendations about how I could include them in this chapter? I doesn't have to be long, but I want to demonstrate that the two sisterhoods I analyze are just one part of a broader trend.

Lastly, I wanted to warn those who don't already know it that English is my second language. While I worked with the grad students of the writing center on this piece, we could not cover everything. There are probably awkward phrasing or grammar mistakes here and there.

Thank you. I am looking forward to our discussion!

Gabrielle

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