



New Territories, New Perspectives: The Religious Impact of the Louisiana Purchase

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With the doubling of America's territory that came with the Louisiana Purchase, American culture was remapped in the bargain. The region's indigenous inhabitants had already been joined by Catholic missionaries, both French and Spanish, along with Africans brought as slaves to the Caribbean islands and North America; now all were met by a predominantly Protestant culture rushing westward.

New Territories, New Perspectives marks the first study to take the Louisiana Purchase as the focal point for considering the development of American religious history. The process of transforming the Louisiana Territory into U.S. territory meant shaping the space to conform to American cultural and religious identity, and this volume investigates continuities, disruptions, and changes relating to religion in this context.

The contributors ask what might happen to our understanding of religion in America if we look at it through the lens of this annexation. Initial chapters offer fresh perspectives on the new territory by those who settled it, primarily easterners, exploring such topics as the built environment of the region as seen in such settings as frontier camp meetings and communitarian societies, ideas of destiny amid the clash of cultural groups, and religiously significant aspects of African American life.

Subsequent essays take up the religious history of the region from the perspective of New Orleans and the Caribbean. They include an exploration of the roots of Pentecostalism in the mix of black and white cultures in the Mississippi Delta, the "vodou" link between New Orleans and Haiti, and the African-Creole performances of Mardi Gras Indians.

Together, these essays invite readers to consider intersecting histories that are too often neglected in our understanding of America's religious development, particularly issues that stand apart from traditional histories of religion in the Midwest. By exploring the unexpected, they also promote different ways of thinking about American religious history as a whole

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