



More Than God Demands: Politics and Influence of Christian Missions in Northwest Alaska, 1897-1918

Anthony Urvina, Sally Urvina

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Near the turn of the twentieth century, the territorial government of Alaska put its support behind a project led by Christian missionaries to convert Alaska Native peoples—and, along the way, bring them into “civilized” American citizenship. Establishing missions in a number of areas inhabited by Alaska Natives, the program was an explicit attempt to erase ten thousand years of Native culture and replace it with Christianity and an American frontier ethic.

Anthony Urvina, whose mother was an orphan raised at one of the missions established as part of this program, draws on details from her life in order to present the first full history of this missionary effort. Smoothly combining personal and regional history, he tells the story of his mother’s experience amid a fascinating account of Alaska Native life and of the men and women who came to Alaska to spread the word of Christ, confident in their belief and unable to see the power of the ancient traditions they aimed to supplant.

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