



The Forgotten Awakening: How The Second Great Awakening Spread West of the Rockies

Douglas McMurry

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During the Second Great Awakening (1799-1830, the years of James McGready and Charles Finney), God was drawing our nation powerfully to Jesus Christ. What few people realize is that He was working to draw certain Western tribes to Jesus also, through tribal prophecies given to their most respected leaders. The Forgotten Awakening tells of the historical events that resulted from these early prophecies, and the Christian spiritual awakening that resulted among those tribes in 1828-30. Unfortunately, in 1830 came Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act, followed by the Trail of Tears, the Manifest Destiny ideas in the 1840's, and the false belief that Christianity is "the white man's religion." These developments eclipsed the more hopeful memory of what God did in the earlier years. Based on years of original research of trappers' and missionaries' journals and oral traditions of the Plateau tribes, Doug McMurry has pieced together the gentle story of the earlier years, in which both whites and Natives were earnestly seeking God and finding Jesus. Clearly from the evidence, God intended both groups to come together on an equal footing in mutual respect, exploring each other's strengths. The Forgotten Awakening is not a novel, but a historical narrative designed to convey real people and events. By restoring a forgotten piece of spiritual history, perhaps we can appreciate more accurately God's vision and purpose for America. To this end, Doug McMurry has studied published and unpublished journals, letters and oral histories, and has attempted to tell the story that emerges from them without adding fictitious characters or undocumented events. He traveled to the locales of these events to imagine them as accurately as possible-and the result is a story that will challenge our stereotypes of trappers, Natives, and missionaries-even of God. The story follows two men, the trapper-mapper Jedediah Smith; and the son of the chief of the Middle Spokanes, Slough-keetcha, who was renamed Spokane Garry by the English governor, George Simpson. Having received word of Jesus from Jedediah Smith, and guided by tribal prophecy about "leaves bound together that white men would bring," the great chief Illim-Spokanee surrendered his son to be educated about Jesus, the one whom the tribes called "The Master of Life." After three years under the tutelage of missionaries David Jones and William Cochran, he returned to find tribal leaders from hundreds of miles around gathered to meet him, all eager to hear what he had learned of Jesus, the Master of Life. Spokane Garry thus became the first Christian evangelist west of the Rockies, on a preaching tour in 1828-29. And the result was: a great spiritual awakening that has been entirely forgotten. Douglas McMurry believes that if we could do a better job of listening to the heart of God, we could yet achieve the vision of Jesus the Master of Life, who stands above all cultures and plays no favorites.

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