



# Chapter 4 Spanish California

## Scope and Sequence

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### **Life in the California Missions**

- The Golden Age of the Missions
- Fray Fermín Lasuén
- Mission architecture

### **Alta California Grows**

- The development of *ranchos*
- The *Californios* and *rancho* culture
- Russian settlement in California

### **The Last Years of Spanish California**

- Revolution in Mexico
- Effects of the revolution on California
- The San Joaquin Valley
- Expeditions into the San Joaquin Valley
- The pirate raids of Hippolyte de Bouchard

## Chapter Goals

The instructor may need to help students understand the missions in a balanced way, given the criticisms leveled against them today.

No one can ignore the real evils that befell the California natives on account of the Spanish settlement. The native population did dramatically decrease on account of the spread of diseases for which the natives had no immunities. Spanish soldiers could be cruel to the Indians, or use them for their pleasure. Not everything the Franciscan missionaries did was wise or even just. None of these facts should be mitigated in discussing this period.

Nor should the difficulties that attended life in the missions. In Chapter 2, we saw how different native Californian lifeways were from the culture of 18th century Europe. By inviting the Indians into the missions, the friars were introducing them to a way of life that must have seemed bewilderingly foreign to the native mind. European culture was extremely complex in contrast to California native culture. European religion had benefited from association with ways of thinking characteristic of a very high level of philosophical and religious culture. It was thus very difficult for the missionaries to translate the concepts and practices of the Catholic faith into forms and terms the natives could understand. Nor did the missionaries entirely understand the ways of thinking of the natives to whom they ministered. It may have been for this reason, in part, that they looked upon the neophytes as children who needed the missionaries' paternal guidance

Since mission life was attended with disease, death, and cultural dislocation, someone may wonder if it had been better had the missions never been established. First, to avoid the myth of the "noble savage," it is important to see that California Indian society, like any human society, was not pristine but suffered from cultural and material problems. Secondly, one must weigh the real evils of the mission system against its benefits, such as initiation into the Catholic faith, which brought

not only spiritual benefits (incorporation into the Body of Christ) but cultural benefits as well, such as a firmer establishment of the institution of marriage and an end to such practices as infanticide and abortion. Agriculture, too, would provide the Indians with a firmer and more predictable material base, preserving them from frequent periods of famine. It must be remembered, too, that European settlement of California was all but inevitable, and so a humane system whereby the Indians could be introduced into European culture was necessary if they were not merely to be pushed aside or, worse, exterminated.

Finally, it is important to help students understand the regime of punishments found in the missions. Though there were harsh missionaries, most of the Franciscans did not indulge in harsh punishments gladly or even frequently. Punishments such as flogging, too, were common in the 18th century and thought unremarkable. This does not mean that flogging is innocent, but it puts in perspective the ideas and practices of people who thought it a proper and just form of punishment for certain offenses. While we might not condone the customs of previous times, we must use historical context in judging the subjective intentions and character of those who operated according to such customs.

## What Students Should Know

- It was very difficult for the California Indians to learn the religion and culture of the Spaniards who settled their land. The Franciscan missionaries had come to California not only to teach the Indians the Catholic faith but to prepare them to live in a Spanish society. The religion and culture of the California Indians were very different from the religion and culture of Spain. California Indian religion was based on magic. Indian culture, too, was far simpler than Spanish culture.

Learning the new Spanish religion and culture thus required very great changes in native life.

- Baptized Indians were required to leave their native villages and live on the missions. The Franciscans feared that if the Indians lived in their native villages they would easily forget their Catholic faith and return to pagan ways. The missionaries did not force the Indians to join a mission. Instead, they invited them to come to the mission, gave them food and clothing, and taught them about the Catholic faith. Once an Indian decided to be baptized, he was not allowed to leave the mission, though he might visit his family in his native village from time to time.
- Mission life was fairly regimented. Every day began with prayer. The missionaries led the neophytes in prayer and then gave them religious instruction. Following religious instruction, the Indians had a breakfast of *atóle* and then went to work in the fields or with the cattle or in a workshop. About noon, the neophytes had a dinner of *pozóle* and then rested until about 2 p.m., after which they worked for three more hours. Following work, everyone gathered in the church for prayers and teaching. At about 6 p.m., they had their dinner—usually *atóle*—and then were free to do as they liked until bedtime. On Sundays and Holy Days, the neophytes did no work. They went to Mass in the morning, rested for most of the day, and then said prayers in the evening.
- The California Indians were very quick to learn the arts the missionaries taught them. They learned how to farm, build buildings, do carpentry, make tools, weave cloth, and do other crafts. They learned to play European musical instruments, such as the violin, the cello, and the trumpet. They sang in choirs. The music the Indians choirs and musicians performed was often very difficult. Neophytes also learned how to paint pictures and murals.
- The missions were good for the Indians in many ways. The natives learned the Catholic faith and became members of the Church. They learned many arts they never knew before. The food they produced on the mission farms kept them from the hunger they had often experienced in their ancient way of life. But mission life was not all happy. The Spanish unintentionally brought several diseases to California. Because these were new diseases to the Indians, they did not have ways of resisting them. Thousands of Indians died from sickness. The missionaries tried to find ways to protect the Indians from such diseases but were not very successful. Many of the Spanish soldiers who came to California abused the Indians, sometimes cruelly. The actions of such soldiers made it difficult to attract “gentile” natives to the missions.
- When Indians ran away from the missions, the friars would send out soldiers or other neophytes to fetch them back. The missionaries thought of the natives as children who do not know what is best for them. The missionaries thought that because the Indians had promised never to leave their mission, they should not be allowed to run away from it.
- Like Serra, Lasuén often had disagreements with the Spanish governor and the military. When military commanders in the presidios claimed that the friars were cruel to the neophytes, Lasuén wrote a long defense of himself and his fellow Franciscans. The friars did have neophytes whipped if they ran away more than once or when they committed crimes or did very immoral things. (In those days, whipping was a common punishment for everyone, not just Indians.) Lasuén, however, said that most of the Franciscans were gentle with the neophytes and only used whipping for serious offenses. Lasuén said that it was not to help the Indians that the military commanders

complained about the missions. Instead, the commanders were upset with the missionaries because they protected the Indians from being used like badly treated servants in the presidios.

- The king of Spain wanted Spanish subjects from Mexico to settle California alongside the Indians. His government established pueblos such as Los Angeles and San José to attract Spanish settlers. Since California's wide lands were good for cattle raising, the Spanish governor of California began granting lands called ranchos to some of his soldiers. Because California had so much land, ranchos could be very large, even enormous.
- Spanish settlers in California called themselves *gente de razón*, meaning "people of reason," because they wanted to make clear that they were different than the Indians, who did things that made no sense to the Spanish. However, eventually these settlers found it more important to show they were different from the Spaniards who lived in other parts of New Spain. This led them to begin calling themselves *Californios*.
- Beginning in the late 18th century, ships from the United States began coming to the California coast to hunt sea otters and fur seals for their hides and fur. They would take these hides and fur and sell them in China. On the way to California, American ships would stop off in Alaska (which then belonged to Russia) to pick up native Aleut hunters. The Aleuts were very skilled at hunting otters and seals. They would paddle out to sea in their kayaks and kill hundreds of these animals at a time with harpoons and line.
- In 1812, a Russian named Ivan Kuskoff with 80 Russians and 50 Aleuts came to northern California to hunt fur seals. On bluffs overlooking the sea near the Russian River and Bodega Bay, Kuskoff established a Russian settlement called Fort Ross.
- The revolution in Mexico against Spanish rule had important effects on California. Ships that had brought supplies to California stopped coming. Though the missions supplied the basic foodstuffs, Californios could not get other goods, except by trading with ships that came from England and Boston. The soldiers could no longer get their pay from Mexico. The revolution placed new hardships on the missions. The governor of California demanded that they send food and supplies to the military garrisons. This meant that the neophytes had to work harder than ever before, but not for their own benefit. Because they lacked support from the Spanish crown during the period, the Franciscans were unable to found new missions in the Central Valley.
- Students should be able to identify where Mission Santa Barbara, Mission San Fernando Rey de España, Mission San Luis Rey de Francia, Mission San Juan Capistrano, and Mission San Carlos de Borromeo de Carmelo are on a map.
- Students should be able to identify where San José, Fort Ross, the San Joaquin Valley, the Sacramento Valley, the Cascade Mountains, and Tulare Lake are on a map.
- Identify:
  - *Fray Fermín Francisco de Lasuén*: Fray Fermín was the third president of the missions. At first, he was unhappy in California and asked Serra for permission to return to Mexico. Lasuén did not think of himself as a good missionary. When Serra told him that without missionaries, the native Californians would have to live without the Church and without Christ, Fray Fermín decided to stay in California. As father president, Fray Fermín did much to strengthen the California missions. From 1785 to 1803, he founded nine missions— more even than Serra had

founded. Like Serra, Lasuén encouraged farming on the missions and the raising of cattle, sheep, and horses. Lasuén brought artisans from faraway Mexico to teach the neophytes such trades as carpentry, masonry, and blacksmithing. Indian women learned how to weave cloth on a loom. Under Lasuén, the missions became prosperous. They had tens of thousands of cattle and produced clothing, shoes, and other items. Lasuén replaced the old mission buildings with newer, stronger buildings made of adobe or stone. Some of the mission churches that people so admire today were built under Lasuén's direction.

- *Hippolyte de Bouchard*: the French commander of two ships who claimed he was fighting to free the peoples of Spanish America from Spanish rule. In 1818 he seized and sacked Monterey, setting fire to its buildings. He attacked the rancho house belonging to José Ortega, but was repulsed. After sacking Mission Juan Capistrano, he sailed from California waters never to return.

## Chapter Checkpoint

1. **What were the two things Franciscan missionaries were supposed to teach the California Indians?**

The Franciscan missionaries were to teach the California Indians how to be true Catholics and how to be good Spanish subjects.

2. **Why were unbaptized Indians allowed to come and go from the mission, while baptized Indians were required to stay?**

Franciscan missionaries did not force Indians to join the mission, but instead would invite unbaptized Indians to visit and learn about the Catholic faith. However, once Indians were baptized, the Franciscans would not let them leave too often because the missionaries feared they would forget their new faith if they lived in their old villages.

3. **How were Holy Days and Sundays different from other days for the Indian neophytes at the California missions?**

On Holy Days and Sundays Indian neophytes were not required to work, while on other

## Some Key Terms at a Glance

**gente de razón:** [HEN-tay day rah-ZOHN] the name Spanish settlers in California called themselves. It means “people of reason.”

**Californio:** the name for Spanish settlers in California

**neophyte:** [NEE-oh-fite] a new convert or member of a religion

**pozóle:** [poh-ZOH-lay] a stew made from grains or beans and meat

**atóle:** [ah-TOH-lay] a stew made from grains or beans, without meat

**Aleut:** [AH-loot] the name for a native person who lives in the Aleutian Islands and the western part of Alaska. Aleut culture is very similar to Eskimo culture.

**mestizo:** [meh-STEE-zoh] a Spanish word that refers to people who are both Indian and European

**vaquero:** a Spanish word for a man who herds cattle. It means something like “cowboy.”

days they had to work in the morning and late afternoon.

4. **Name two European instruments the missionaries taught Indian neophytes to play.**  
*Possible answers:* violin, cello, or trumpet.
5. **Why were Indians so harmed by the diseases Spanish settlers brought to the New World?**  
The European diseases particularly harmed the Indians because the diseases were new to the Indians. Their bodies did not have any resistance to those types of germs and bacteria.
6. **Why did Fray Fermín Francisco de Lasuén at first want to leave California, and who changed his mind?**  
At first Fray Fermín did not like the hard life in California. He did not think of himself as a good missionary. However, once Fray Junípero wrote Fray Fermín a letter reminding him of the importance of the missions to the salvation of native peoples, Fray Fermín decided to stay.
7. **Military commanders accused the Franciscan friars of being cruel to the native peoples. How did Lasuén respond?**  
Lasuén wrote a letter arguing that the Franciscans were generally gentle with the native peoples and only whipped them when they committed crimes or did very immoral things. He also argued that the commanders made these accusations because they were angry with the missionaries for protecting the Indians from servitude or enslavement.
8. **Why did U.S. ships begin coming to the California coast in the late 18th century?**  
The U.S. ships began coming because their crews hoped to hunt sea otters and fur seals for their hides and fur. They could then sell those hides and fur in China.
9. **Why were Franciscan missionaries unable to found new missions in the San Joaquin Valley during the Mexican revolution against Spain?**

Because there was no support for California coming from Mexico City, the friars were unable to found new missions.

10. **Who was Hippolyte de Bouchard?**  
Bouchard was a Frenchman who commanded two pirate ships that sailed to California from Hawai'i. He claimed to be setting people free from Spanish rule, but he actually attacked *presidios* and *ranchos*, and sacked them.

## Chapter Activities

1. **Cultural differences between the Spanish settlers and the native California Indians caused a lot of problems. Think about modern situations in our country and world. How do cultural differences still cause difficulties? In what ways has the Catholic Church worked to include people from many cultures?**  
The teacher can lead students in a discussion of their personal experiences with cultures different from their own. How should we as Catholics use charity in those types of situations? In what situations might there be no way around cultural differences, and what should we do then? If students are interested, the teacher could encourage them to research other examples of Catholic saints and missionaries who have found ways to share the faith within various world cultures. How can we learn from their examples?
2. **Research to find some visuals of the ornamental, original high altars that still exist in some California missions. Reform the groups in which you created model missions (Chapter Activities, Chapter 3). If your group has not yet completed the mission, or if the model mission has a church building with a removable roof, find a way to incorporate artwork resembling the style of the**

**researched visuals. Otherwise, as a group create a design of a high altar that imitates the style seen in the researched visuals.**

Students began creating models of California missions in one of the Chapter 3 activities. It is possible that student groups will not yet be finished with these models and should continue working on them. The teacher can help students search for images of historic California mission church high altars by looking online or in books. Students need not copy these images when incorporating artwork into their models or when creating a drawing of a high altar; the teacher should encourage them to simply take inspiration from what they have seen. Students might also want to consider the symbolic nature of these decorations and make their own choices based on saints or ideas that they think would be well honored in such artwork. Groups can then explain their creations and the reasoning behind them to the rest of the class.

## Chapter 4: Sample Quiz I (pages 51–57)

*Please answer the following questions in complete sentences.*

1. Explain why newly baptized Indian Catholics were called neophytes.
2. What is the difference between *pozóle* and *atóle*?
3. Describe one new art or craft the California Indians learned from the missionaries.
4. How did Spanish soldiers make it difficult for Franciscan missionaries to attract new Indian converts to the missions?
5. Compare and contrast the food situations the Indians faced in their native ways of life and in the mission system.

6. How many missions did Fray Fermín Lasuén found?

### Answer Key to Sample Quiz I

*Students' answers, of course, need only approximate the following.*

1. Newly baptized Indian Catholics were called neophytes because a neophyte is someone who is a new convert or member of a religion, and these Indians had only just become members of the Catholic Church.
2. *Pozóle* is a stew made with grains or beans and meat, while *atóle* is a stew made with grains or beans but without meat.
3. Student should describe one of the following: farming, construction of buildings, carpentry, tool-making, cloth-weaving, music with European instruments, singing in choirs, or the painting of pictures and murals.
4. Many of the Spanish soldiers were cruel to the California Indians. This caused some Indians to be suspicious of the missions as well, and hurt the cause of the Franciscans.
5. In the mission system, Indians generally had enough to eat, while in their native ways of life, they had often suffered from hunger.
6. Fray Fermín founded nine missions.

## Chapter 4: Sample Quiz II (pages 57–62)

*Please answer the following questions in complete sentences.*

1. Why did Spanish settlers in California first call themselves *gente de razón*, and why did they later call themselves *Californios*?
2. Explain what a *rancho* is and why the Spanish king began granting *ranchos* to soldiers.

- How did Aleut hunters help the otter- and seal-hunting expeditions in California?
- Why did Ivan Kuskoff come to northern California? Who was with him?
- What does the term *mestizo* mean?
- Where did *Californios* get non-food supplies during the Mexican revolution against Spanish rule?
- Explain what *vaqueros* are and how they helped defend José Ortega's *rancho* from the pirate, Hippolyte de Bouchard.

Ortega's *rancho*, a group of 30 *vaqueros* were waiting for Bouchard's men, and they captured three of the pirates. Bouchard burned Ortega's house, but left the area.

## Chapter 4: Sample Test

Please answer the following questions in complete sentences.

- Identify which of the following place names belong with numbered places on the map above: Mission Santa Barbara, Mission San Fernando Rey de España, Mission San Luis Rey de Francia, Mission San Juan Capistrano, Mission San Carlos de Borromeo de Carmelo, San José, Fort Ross, the San Joaquin Valley, the Sacramento Valley, the Cascade Mountains, and Tulare Lake.
- Give two reasons why it was difficult for the native peoples of California to live like the Spanish.
- Describe a neophyte's typical day at a mission.
- Why did friars send out soldiers or other neophytes to find neophytes who ran away from the missions?
- Explain one way in which Fray Fermín Lasuén improved the missions.
- What non-European founded the settlement of Fort Ross in Northern California?
- How did the Mexican revolution against Spain hurt the Spanish settlements in California?
- What did Hippolyte de Bouchard claim to be doing in Spanish California?

### Answer Key to Sample Quiz II

Students' answers should approximate the following.

- Gente de razón* means "people of reason." Spanish settlers in California first called themselves this because they wanted to make clear that they were different than the Indians, who did things that made no sense to the Spanish. However, eventually these settlers found it more important to show they were different from the Spaniards who lived in other parts of New Spain. This led them to begin calling themselves *Californios*.
- Rancho* is a Spanish word for "ranch." The Spanish king began giving *ranchos* to soldiers because the king wanted California to be settled by Spanish subjects, and much of California had land that was good for raising cattle.
- Aleut hunters from Alaska were very skilled at hunting otters and seals. With their help the ships could kill hundreds of animals at a time.
- Ivan Kuskoff came to hunt fur seals. With him were 80 Russians and 50 Aleuts.
- Mestizo* describes a person who is both European and Indian.
- The *Californios* bought non-food goods from ships sailing from England and Boston.
- Vaqueros* are men who herd cattle—a kind of "cowboy." When Bouchard attacked José

### Answer Key to Sample Test

Students' answers should approximate the following.

- Answer key to map:
  - Fort Ross
  - San José



- 3 – Mission San Carlos Borromeo
  - 4 – Tulare Lake
  - 5 – Mission Santa Barbara
  - 6 – Mission San Fernando
  - 7 – Mission San Juan Capistrano
  - 8 – Mission San Luis Rey
  - 9 – Cascade Mountains
  - 10 – Sacramento Valley
  - 11 – San Joaquin Valley
2. One reason it was difficult for Californian Indians to live like the Spanish is that their culture was very different from and simpler than Spanish culture. Another is that their religion was based on magic, which made it very different from Catholicism.
  3. A neophyte's typical day would begin with prayer and religion instruction. This was followed by a breakfast of *atóle*. Then they would work in the fields. At noon they would eat a dinner of *pozóle* and then rest for a couple hours. They would then work for three more hours, gather for more prayers and teaching, and then have a dinner of *atóle* at 6:00 p.m. After that they could do what they liked until bedtime.
  4. The friars feared that if neophytes left the missions, they would go back to their old ways of life and would not make it to heaven. The friars also thought that since the Indians had promised to stay on the missions, it was important for them to do so.
  5. *Possible answers:* Fray Fermín brought Mexican artisans to teach neophytes trades like carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, and

weaving. Fray Fermín's work led missions to produce many goods, such as clothing, shoes, and other items. Fray Fermín's churches were much more beautiful with many decorations, and when he replaced churches, he used adobe or stone rather than sticks and mud.

6. A Russian named Ivan Kuskoff founded the settlement of Fort Ross.
7. When Mexico revolted against Spain, supply ships stopped coming to California. Soldiers in California no longer got paid. This led to the governor insisting on missions sharing supplies with military garrisons.
8. Bouchard claimed to be fighting to free people from Spanish rule.

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*For a free electronic file of all tests and quizzes included in the teacher manual, please contact [sales@CatholicTextbookProject.com](mailto:sales@CatholicTextbookProject.com).*

## Resources for Further Student Reading

*See previous chapter for reading material on the missions*

*The Story of California and Her Flags to Color, Book I, Spanish Era, Bellerophon Books*

*Dos Californios* (a story, in English and Spanish, of the Bouchard raid), Bellerophon Books

*Sea Otters*, by Marianne Riedman

*Seals and Sea Lions*, by David G. Gordon