

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

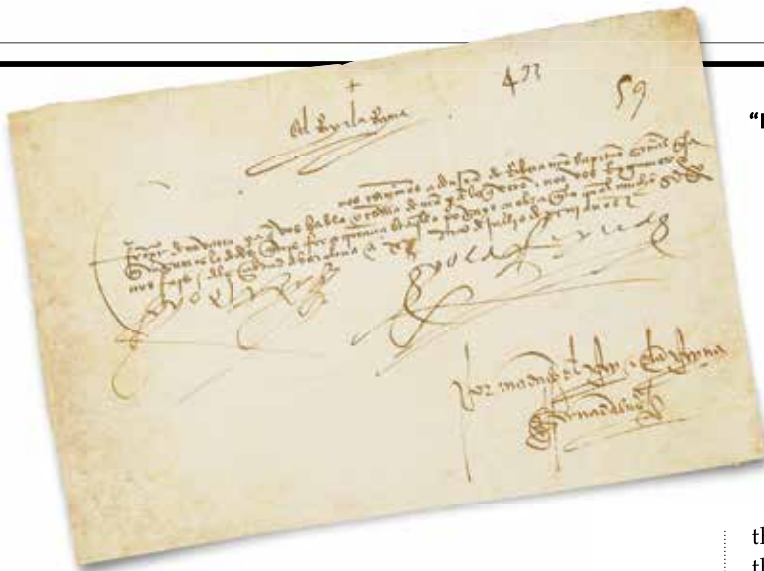
Issue 130

Latin American Christianity

Colorful, complex, conflicted



ChristianHistoryMagazine.org



"I THE KING ... I THE QUEEN" This 1493 letter signed by Ferdinand and Isabella, "Yo el Rey" and "Yo La Reina," appoints an agent to act on their behalf in the colonies.

Did you know?

MISTAKEN IDENTITY, APOSTOLIC NUMBER, THE TENTH MUSE, AND CALVIN'S HOPE



NOT THE INDIES

Columbus did not sail to prove the world is round—this was already widely accepted by the educated European elite—but he did believe that he had reached the Indies and so called those he met there "Indians." He was actually in the modern-day Bahamas.

More than 350 indigenous groups lived in Latin America when Columbus arrived (see map, p. 16). We know the most about the Maya, the Aztec, and the Inca. The Mayan language had a written form, but the the Aztec and the Inca administered their

empires without a written language. Both Nahuatl (the Aztec language) and Quechua (the Inca language) were first put into writing for missionaries to use in preaching and catechizing, but use of them was later suppressed.

NEW APOSTLES?

Between 1493 and 1820, Spain sent 15,000 missionaries to the Americas, fully funding most of them. Among the first was a group of 12 Franciscans that arrived in Mexico in 1524, chosen to equal the number of the apostles. Frequently Franciscans conducted mass baptisms, at one point claiming to have baptized over five million indigenous people.

DEEP THOUGHT

The first non-European printing press was established in Mexico City in 1539 by printer Juan Pablos.

The first book printed was *Breve y mas compendiosa doctrina Christiana en lengua Mexicana y Castellana* by Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, which explained basic doctrine in both Spanish and Nahuatl. It was based on a work by Constantino Ponce de la Fuente of Seville, later condemned by the Inquisition as a Lutheran.

Carmelite nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695; see p. 44) was one of Latin America's most renowned thinkers. She wrote secular and religious plays and poetry—in Latin, Nahuatl, and Spanish. Some called her "The Tenth Muse" and "The Mexican Phoenix."

THE ROLE OF CASTE

The Spanish developed a caste (*casta*) system over time. *Peninsulares* were those born in Spain; *criollos* were Spaniards or other Europeans born in the "New World"; *indios* were the indigenous people;

mestizos were of mixed indigenous and European ancestry; *mulatos* were mixed African and European; *negros* were sub-Saharan African; *cholos* had indigenous and *mestizo* backgrounds; and *pardos* had European, African, and indigenous ancestry.

Laws governed the taxes, occupations, and marriages of each *casta*; the priesthood was reserved for those of "pure" (European) blood.

PORTENT OF DOOM? Above: Montezuma II, Aztec emperor at the time of the Spanish conquest, watches a comet in a 16th-c. chronicle.



FIND YOUR PLACE Above: This 18th-c. painting illustrates the different *castas*. Juan Diego's vision of the Virgin of Guadalupe was controversial in part because Juan (above right) was an *indio*.

FROM CALVIN TO THE PENTECOSTALS

The first Protestant missionaries arrived in Latin America in 1556—and they were sent by John Calvin! Pastors and seminarians from Geneva came to serve the spiritual needs of a group of French citizens who had settled in Brazil, but the mission was a failure. British, French, and Dutch Protestants continued to settle in Latin America in small numbers, but major immigration was not encouraged until the nineteenth century. Protestant clergy and church workers were, at first, ordered only to serve their own immigrant people and not to try to convert Latin American Catholics.

The first Protestant groups to grow strongly in Latin America in the nineteenth century were Waldensians, Lutherans, Methodists, and Mennonites. Growing out of the work of Methodist missionary Willis Hoover (see p. 47), Iglesia Metodista Pentecostal became the first independent Pentecostal church established in Latin America in 1909. Over 100 Pentecostal denominations exist in Latin America today.

A HELPFUL GLOSSARY

Here are some terms you'll find in this issue that may be unfamiliar to you. Feel free to flip back here if you can't remember the definitions!

Base communities: Groups of Christians who meet for discussion and Bible study; associated in 1960s Latin America with liberation theology

Cofradías: Catholic brotherhoods (confraternities) that provided their members support and an opportunity to exercise devotion

Conquistador: A Spanish or Portuguese conqueror of Latin America

Crown: The usual term for the Spanish or Portuguese monarchs

Encomienda: A grant from the Spanish crown that gave the grant holder the use of the labor of a certain number of indigenous people

Hacienda: A Spanish estate

Huacas: Objects or locations considered sacred in traditional Inca religion

Iberian: Pertaining to both Spain and Portugal, which are located together on the Iberian peninsula

Liberation theology: A twentieth-century movement developed and spread by Latin American theologians emphasizing political and social as well as spiritual needs of the poor

Mesoamerica: The region from central Mexico down through Costa Rica; called Central America today

Maroons: Africans who were free or had escaped slavery who built settlements away from the dominant civilization where they could live in peace

New Spain: Spain's colonies located in what are today the southwestern United States, Mexico, and much of Central America (see map, p. 16)

Patronato real: A privilege from the pope allowing the Spanish crown to appoint bishops and priests in all Spanish colonies

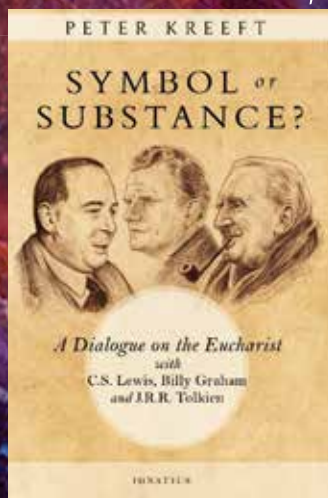
Pre-Columbian: Culture, art, religion, and history in the Americas before the arrival of Columbus

Santería: One of the most famous Latin American religions combining Catholic and traditional African religious practices



SUN'S UP This 17th-c. illustration shows 15th-c. Inca ruler Pachacuti worshipping the sun god.

WORKS THAT INSPIRE, INFORM & ILLUMINATE



◆ SYMBOL OR SUBSTANCE?

Peter Kreeft

In this engaging fictional conversation, Kreeft gives credible voices to **C. S. Lewis**, **Billy Graham** and **J. R. R. Tolkien** as they discuss one of the most contentious questions in the history of Christianity: Is Jesus symbolically or substantially present in the Eucharist? These widely respected modern Christian witnesses represent three important theological traditions. Graham, a Baptist minister, represents evangelical Protestantism; Lewis, an Oxford professor, was a member of the Church of England. And Tolkien, also an Oxford don, was author of *The Lord of the Rings*, and a Roman Catholic.

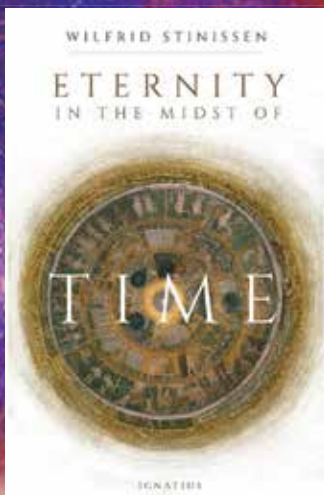
SSP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$16.95

"In this wonderful book, Kreeft allows us to listen to an imaginary conversation between Lewis, Tolkien, and Graham on the thorny topic of the Eucharist. Their imaginary presence enlightens our minds on the Real Presence."

—**Joseph Pearce**, Author, *Catholic Literary Giants*

"In our contentious cultural climate, reasonable, friendly dialogue on important issues is a lost art. Kreeft offers a thoughtful, fair-minded exploration of the differing views on the Eucharist among Anglicans, Catholics, and Protestants."

—**Holly Ordway**, Author, *Not God's Type: An Atheist Academic Lays Down Her Arms*



◆ ETERNITY IN THE MIDST OF TIME

Wilfrid Stinissen, O.C.D.

Daring us to see time with new eyes, Stinissen's insight that eternity is written in the depths of our hearts helps us to live in time in a way that leads us deeper into God's joy. We should rejoice that everything around us is great and mysterious and that we can live in eternal wonder. He shows us how to see time from different perspectives and to discover how rich and multifaceted it is. Above all, he demonstrates how we can make use of the tremendous possibilities that time offers to us.

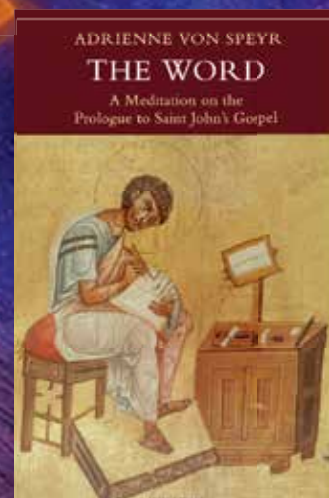
EMTP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$16.95

"The important truths taught here are well served by the simple beauty with which he explains them. The ultimate understanding must be revealed by Christ, who entered chronology from eternity and graciously gave us clues."

—**Fr. George Rutler**, Author, *Calm in Chaos: Catholic Wisdom for Anxious Times*

"Fr. Stinissen's many references to Scripture, his wide-ranging use of saintly thought, and his love for St. Augustine's engagement with the perplexity of passing time make this book a wonderful spiritual experience."

—**Fr. Donald Haggerty**, Author, *The Contemplative Hunger*



◆ THE WORD

A Meditation on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel

Adrienne von Speyr

After writing a four-volume series of meditations on St. John's Gospel, the mystic von Speyr presents her reflections on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel. Her insights embrace the whole Christian revelation and life; the Church and the Sacraments, Faith, Love, Hope, attitudes towards revelation, acceptance and rejection of the Word. This work is spiritual meditation of the highest quality by an extraordinarily gifted woman.

WORP . . . Sewn Softcover, \$16.95

"Adrienne von Speyr is a theological genius! Her insights into the Prologue of John's Gospel are edifying and fascinating. Her mystical insights are on par with the greatest scripture scholars."

—**Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC**, Author, *10 Wonders of the Rosary*

"If the reader emerges without having been crushed by this work, he will find himself strengthened and exhilarated by a new experience of Christian sensibility."

—**T. S. Eliot**, Renowned Poet and Writer



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Letters to the editor

Readers respond to *Christian History*

MÜLLER AND DARBY AND FRIENDS

I recently finished reading cover to cover issue #128 and chose it as one of my top 10 *CH* magazines. I have been a long-time subscriber and learned much from this issue. George Müller was a name I had heard in passing but I was unaware of the depths of his service and walk with Christ. . . . John Nelson Darby almost took the spotlight away from Müller. I was surprised how much my faith today and practices stem from the Brethren. Darby, I came to realize, had a profound impact way beyond the Rapture philosophy. I suggest a magazine on Darby, Scofield, and Ryrie. . . . Please remember to keep in your prayers the incarcerated “brethren.”—*Stephen Jonas, Fort Dodge, IA*

Thank you! We continue to hear from people who were impacted greatly by issue #128.

My husband and I have enjoyed your magazine for years. I wondered if Pietism might be a subject to pursue in the future. I recently inherited a book about a group of German Pietists led by Michael Hahn (1758–1819). Would one of your scholars have some suggestions about how to find out any information on this group?—*Sally Shell, Sevierville, TN*

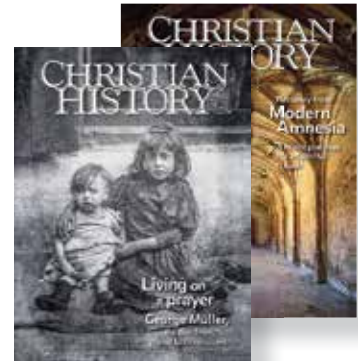
We did touch on Pietism in #128 and more extensively in issue #10. It's probably about time to revisit the topic. The Pietist group you referred to goes under the name Michael Hahn'sche Gemeinschaft (Michael Hahn's Community), Hahn'sche Brüder (Hahn's Brethren), or Michelians and is active mainly in Germany. Most scholarly sources on them are in German, but you can read a little at the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online.

A WAY OUT OF MODERN AMNESIA

Thank you so much for the good work of *Christian History*. I just got and read issue #129. It is really terrific! The work you are doing is so important. Glad to be associated with the big project. — *Curtis Freeman, Durham, NC (author, CH #126)*

I am reading #129 and loving it. I read Webber in the 1980s including *Common Roots* and the “Chicago Call” and I have the first issue of the *Renovaré* newsletter. I love the work of Oden; I have a hard copy of the whole ACCS and often use it when preparing lessons at my church. . . . [But] the church we are at is unable to grasp

any of it. It is a lecture-driven, performance-based church. . . . As the Gospel Coalition calls it, “The New Evangelical Liturgy” is practiced: sing some simple songs and listen to a sermon. I have tried for 10-plus years to patiently share some of these things but with no progress. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this and for publishing such a wonderful magazine. — *C. H. (name withheld)*



MORE TOPICS AND MORE BALANCE

I love your magazine. I just finished reading #12 on John Calvin. Excellent! I was a bit surprised when reading *Women in the Early Church* (#17) to find it . . . asserts women's leadership in the church without explaining the biblical reasons why some object to [it]. . . . But that observation is not a general criticism of most issues, which I feel are fair and well balanced. . . . Why not include issues on the history of Christian thought in the church, including doctrines such as the millennium, predestination, baptism, church government, the Trinity, etc. —*Richard Gehman, Minneola, FL*

We always strive to be fair and give all sides of an issue as we put together magazines today. Although many who put together those early issues are no longer with us, we are confident that they tried to present the facts as they knew them. (Issue #12 was published in 1986 and issue #17 in 1988.) As to history of thought, we agree we could do more, but do check out our issues considering Christian thought on money (#14 and 18), the end times (#61), Mary (#83), vocation (#110), heaven (#112), and creation (#119), and our short guide, “The History of Hell.”

A TIMELINE TO END ALL TIMELINES

I write with a suggestion. One of the best parts of *CH* is the centerfold historical atlas/timeline. Why not assemble all of these from past issues into a book? —*Jim Severance, Loganville, WI*

*This is an idea we will discuss! In the meantime, you can access our four-issue Reformation timeline online or order it from *CH* using the order form in the center of the magazine.*

Editor's note

THE STORY WE BRING YOU in this issue of *Christian History* is a story that has proved hard to tell.

For years we have longed to do an issue on Christianity in Latin America. As this narrative ranges over more than 500 years and more than 20 different countries, we soon realized one full issue simply won't be enough to tell it all—but we're beginning here. We'll return to the story in future issues and “zoom in” on some parts of the narrative we give you here from a “zoomed-out” perspective—missionary stories, the explosive growth of Pentecostalism, and more.

TROUBLING CASES

From the whirlwind tour in this issue, I've learned many new tales of faithful leaders, mystics, and preachers, and I've placed into a new context names that I'd heard before—from Juan Diego to Bartolomé de las Casas to Gustavo Gutiérrez to Pope Francis. But one thing I have encountered as we've prepared these articles and images for you is that, while there are many bright spots and instances of beautiful faith in this narrative, there are also troubling cases of cruelty, misunderstanding, and sin. Not all were perpetuated by those who claimed to be Christian, but many were.

For example: the earliest European conquistadors in Latin America rightly argued against human sacrifice and other dubious practices that formed a part of indigenous religions, but they continued the already established practice of slavery. Indigenous peoples remained enslaved until 1542, and captured Africans were enslaved and brought to Latin America until the nineteenth century, sometimes with the justification that this enslavement brought them the opportunity to hear the gospel.

I was also struck by how in so many different stories—whether of the earliest Catholic missionaries,

the Latin American republics' struggles for independence, the spread of Pentecostalism, or the growth of liberation theology—the desires, faith, and practices of elite colonizers, politicians, and church bureaucrats opposed those of the poor, enslaved, and oppressed. In the essay “The Two Faces of Hispanic Christianity” from the *Judson Bulletin*, Dr. Justo González, one of our issue advisors, explains this struggle:

Few North Americans are aware of the degree to which the Catholic Church in Latin America was an arm of the powers of conquest, colonialism and oppression. Even fewer are aware of the other reality . . . which repeatedly decried and opposed those powers.

FAITH OR CULTURE?

Debates arose over how many of the region's indigenous traditions should be preserved, but all too often it seems that many of those struggles centered on politics and power, or confused orthodox faith with European culture. So not all of this is easy reading.

As in previous *Christian History* issues on difficult topics such as the Crusades, US slavery, or collaboration with the Nazi movement, these stories ask us to think long and hard about where faith ends and culture begins. They remind us that Christians sometimes make terrible mistakes. They challenge us to learn so that we don't repeat those same mistakes. And they ask us to keep our focus on God's faithfulness and

not on the lures of human or demonic power—as we learn from those in this story who truly served Jesus, blessed the poor, and spread the gospel. ☩



Jennifer Woodruff Tait
Managing editor

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Don't miss our next issue, which will explore the extraordinary stories of some lesser-known women from the Reformation.

We thank the many readers who support this ministry, making it possible for us to provide *Christian History* in print.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY



Latin American Christianity

6 Christianity converted

The initial encounters between Europeans and Latin Americans
Brian Larkin

12 Dancing sickness, ancient gods

Religious traditions clashed frequently
Javier Villa-Flores

17 A long road

Slavery and Christianity in colonial Latin America
Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva

22 Making faith their own

Worship, devotion, and folk religion
Matt Forster

29 Strangers in a strange land

Protestantism and power in the nineteenth century
Joel Morales Cruz

34 “¡Llegaron los pentecostales!”

How Pentecostalism spread
Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi

37 Virgins, nuns, preachers

The many roles of women and how they changed
Evelmyn Ivens

41 A new Pentecost?

Medellín and liberation theology
Edgardo Colón-Emeric

44 Charity toward all

Stories of faith across 500 years
Charlie Self

48 Rooted and released

The diversity and complexity of today's church
Justo L. González and Ondina E. González

Also:

- Did you know?, inside front cover
- Letters, p. 3 • Editor's note, p. 4
- Maps, p. 16, 25, 28
- The Virgin of Guadalupe, p. 21
- Timeline, p. 26
- Balancing church and state, p. 32
- Recommended resources, p. 50

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Christianity converted

THE INITIAL ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN EUROPEANS AND LATIN AMERICANS

Brian Larkin

ON FRIDAY MORNING October 12, 1492, Christopher Columbus's (1451–1506) expedition made landfall in the Bahamas, and he recorded the events of that day in his journal. After observing “naked people” on the island’s shores, Columbus and a group of armed men disembarked from their ships. He immediately claimed the island for Ferdinand and Isabella, the Catholic monarchs of Spain who had sponsored his voyage.

Next his thoughts turned toward religion, and he observed that the inhabitants (the indigenous Taino people) could be “more easily converted to our Holy Faith by love than by coercion.” Columbus and his men traded glass beads and other items of small value with the Taino and attempted to communicate through signs.

Reflecting on the day’s events, Columbus came to several conclusions. He believed the Taino were “very poor people in all respects,” but would “make good servants” because they were intelligent, that “they would readily become Christians” because “it appeared to me that they have no religion,” and that he should take some captive to learn Spanish and serve as translators.

THREE-PART PLAN

In his brief journal entry, Columbus foreshadowed later Spanish intentions for the Americas. First, the Spanish

ANCIENT RITUALS Some of these ruins of Maya temples in Palenque, Mexico, date back to the 3rd c BC.

would claim already-inhabited land and extract its wealth for themselves. Second, they would incorporate indigenous populations into colonial society as servants, captives, and slaves. And third, they would Christianize them, not hesitating to use coercion as they deemed necessary.

The Spanish soon began to execute this implicit plan. On Columbus’s second voyage in 1493, Spanish explorers established a colony in Hispaniola and started to conquer Caribbean islands and enslave their populations. By 1511 they had invaded Cuba; soon after they started tenuous colonies in Panama.

By the end of 1521, Hernán Cortés (1485–1547) and his men, after helping to spark an indigenous civil war, captured Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec Empire, and renamed it Mexico City; by the mid-1530s, Francisco Pizarro and other Spanish adventurers had seized control of the civil-war ravaged Inca Empire in South America. Spanish dominion, abetted by waves of European diseases that killed about 90 percent of the indigenous population by 1650, slowly expanded after

WAR EVERYWHERE Right: The Tlaxcala allied with Cortés to defeat the Aztec; pictured here is a battle between Tlaxcala and Michoacán warriors in 1522.

CROSS AND SWORD Below: A 16th-c. German chronicle describes Columbus's landing for European audiences.



these initial victories—bringing much of the Americas, at least nominally, under Spanish control.

Even so the “easy conversion” Columbus had envisioned proved illusory. Although many indigenous peoples adapted to Spanish rule and worked as forced or free laborers on Spanish estates and in Spanish mines, indigenous cultures and religions remained resilient. Some groups and individuals simply resisted Christianization—a few dramatically and violently, others cautiously and secretly. More often, however, people adopted Christian beliefs and practices but understood them within an indigenous framework.

The Spanish monarchy embraced the evangelization of the Americas. Priests often accompanied conquistadors or were dispatched to convert the recently conquered. To recognize the monarchy's efforts and spur evangelization, Pope Julius II granted the crown the *patronato real*, or royal patronage, in 1508. This gave the crown the right to nominate all bishops and priests in its American territories, effectively giving Spanish monarchs unparalleled civil authority over the American church. Initially the Spanish crown sent Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustinian friars to missionize the Americas. After the Spanish colonies were more firmly



established and more Spaniards had immigrated, the crown appointed bishops to administer newly created dioceses and sent more priests as parishes multiplied.

Spanish Catholics labored in missionary fields that eventually stretched from Texas and California in the north to Chile and Argentina in the south. Many priests lived in indigenous towns and villages, learned indigenous languages, taught the catechism, performed the sacraments, and preached to their flocks. They also destroyed indigenous temples, desecrated indigenous religious images, burned indigenous codices, and harried indigenous priests and shamans, believing the devil had inspired indigenous religions.

All the while they monitored their charges and meted out punishments for religious infractions. Although a few priests denounced conversion through force, most early modern Spaniards were steeped in the history of the long Christian reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors—only completed in January 1492—and they naturally combined coercion and faith.

MANY GODS, ONE GOD

Contrary to Columbus's assessment that the “Indians” had no religion, the indigenous peoples of the Americas had well-developed, deeply rooted religious cultures. In Mexico, the Aztec built grand pyramids topped by temples dedicated to the many divinities who populated their religious cosmos. Twin temples to Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec tribal deity and war god, and Tlaloc, the rain god, sat atop the main pyramid of Tenochtitlan, known as Coatepec, or Serpent Mountain. At these and other temples, Aztec priests regularly sacrificed their own blood and human captives to nourish the gods so that they would keep the universe in balance.

In the Andes Inca priests and priestesses dedicated themselves to Inti, the Inca sun god; Illapa, the god of thunder; and Pachamama, the earth-mother, among



MARY OF EUROPE Left: The “Sistine Madonna” (1513) by Raphael shows how many Europeans imagined the Virgin at the time of conquest.

DESTROYING THE “OLD GODS” Below: Friars burn indigenous images in the 16th-c. *Historia de Tlaxacala* by Diego Muñoz Camargo.



be a fickle, foolish thing for us to destroy the most ancient laws and customs” of their people and warned:

Watch out that we do not incur the wrath of our gods. Watch out that the common people do not rise up against us if we were to tell them that the gods they have always understood to be such are not gods at all. . . . As for our gods, we will die before giving up serving and worshiping them.

The Aztec laypeople did not resist evangelization as dramatically as the lords and priests predicted, but other indigenous groups did, openly rebelling against both Spanish political dominion and Christianity. The most public early rejection occurred in Peru in the 1560s and is known as Taki Onquoy (dancing sickness).

Participants believed the spread of Christianity had angered the *huacas* into leaving the mountains, stones, and streams they had previously inhabited and possessing humans as their messengers. The possessed trembled and danced in circles and demanded that Andeans resume sacrificing food to the *huacas* and renounce the Christian God. They proclaimed the *huacas* would overthrow the Christian God, kill the Spanish, and return the land to indigenous control. At least 8,000 joined the movement, but Spanish colonials eventually quashed it.

This kind of collective indigenous resistance to Spanish rule and Christianity occurred throughout the colonial period (see “Dancing sickness and ancient gods,” pp. 12–15). The Pueblo revolt, the most prominent rebellion in northern Latin America, took place in 1680 in present-day New Mexico. Organized by

others. Besides these imperial-level deities, Andean peoples worshiped *huacas*, physical manifestations of divinities and spirits. *Huacas* could take many forms, including mountains, outcroppings of rock, stones, springs, and the mummified remains of ancestors.

Although these cultures were diverse, most shared three features distinguishing them from Judeo-Christian heritage. First, they were all *polytheistic* (worshiping many gods). Second, many were *monistic*—(balancing opposing sacred forces to achieve cosmic equilibrium). Last, they did not sharply separate the sacred and the mundane, so that aspects of the physical world, including the landscape, could be considered divine. These broadly shared religious features would complicate the Christianization of the Americas.

CORN, BEANS, AND RAIN

In 1524 the first officially sanctioned missionaries, a group of 12 Franciscans, arrived in Mexico to convert the defeated Aztec. The Aztec lords and priests received the 12 ceremoniously, listened to their preaching politely, and acknowledged that the Christian God had sent the Franciscans among them and that the 12 acted as “his own eyes, ears, and mouth.” But they explained to the Franciscans that their ancestors had taught them to honor their gods and keep their rituals and sacrifices and that their gods provided them with corn, beans, and rain. They protested that “it would



MARY OF THE AMERICAS Above: The 18th-c. painting *The Virgin Mary and the Rich Mountain of Potosí* (see p. 11) uses indigenous imagery to honor the Virgin.

NOT DESTROYED YET Right: This drawing of Tlāloc (the Aztec rain deity) in the *Codex Ixtlilxochitl* was made around the same time as the *Historia de Tlaxcala*.



generation or two after conquest when first-hand knowledge of pre-Columbian religions remained common. However we only know about those individuals who came to the attention of missionaries.

For instance Martín Ocelotl “Jaguar Warrior” (1496–1537) trained as an Aztec priest before the arrival of the Spanish and apparently served as a soothsayer for Montezuma—the Aztec emperor who greeted Cortés and his men and invited them into Tenochtitlan. Ocelotl survived the conquest and was baptized in 1525, one year after the Franciscan 12 had arrived in Mexico.

After his baptism Ocelotl continued to perform traditional rituals and prayers individually and for small gatherings. (Surely others did likewise, but their practices were not always recorded.) The Aztec paid him for his services as a healer and diviner and revered him for his reported ability to transform himself into a jaguar (*ocelotl*). More ominously for the missionaries, Ocelotl also preached against the friars and Christianity.

In 1536 the first bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumárraga, caught wind of Ocelotl’s activities and put him on trial, calling indigenous witnesses. Convinced of his guilt, the bishop exiled Ocelotl to Spain. But he never reached Europe; the ship carrying him went down at sea.

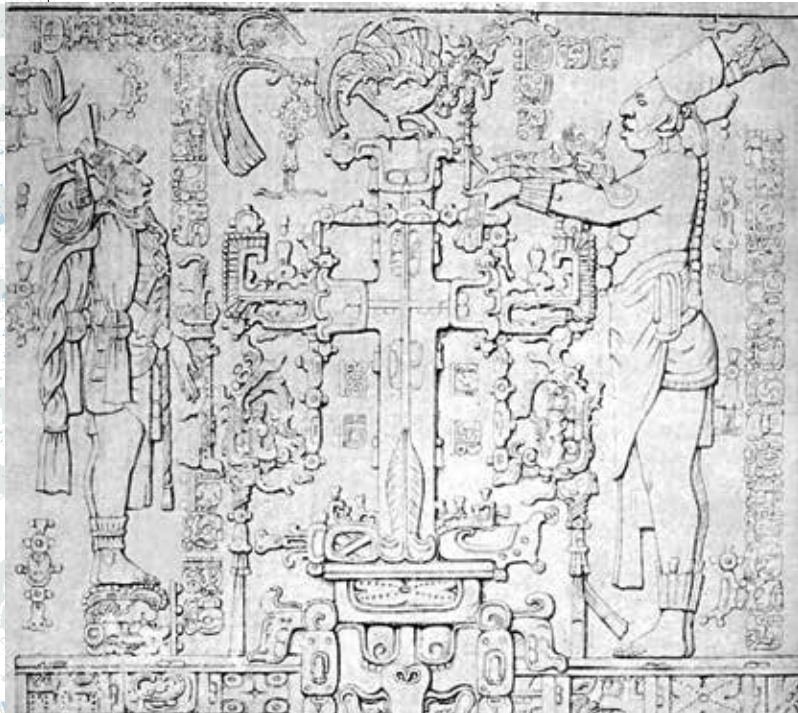
Somewhat later and a bit further south, the Maya people of the Yucatán suffered greatly once missionaries discovered their clandestine continuation of rites honoring traditional gods. Franciscans first began to missionize in the Yucatán in 1545, soon founding eight monasteries and baptizing countless Maya. But in 1562 missionaries in the province of Maní found evidence

indigenous leader Popé (d. 1692), it linked indigenous peoples of differing ethnicities who lived in *pueblos* around Santa Fe. Many factors contributed to the rebellion’s outbreak, not least of which was drought; but hostility toward missionary Franciscans’ prohibition of traditional religious practices and destruction of religious artifacts also stoked resentment.

Popé proclaimed the rebellion would bring back the traditional gods to bless the participants with health and wealth. The rebels unleashed their assault in August 1680, killing many Spanish settlers and 21 of the 33 Franciscan friars in New Mexico. They held the territory for 12 years until the Spanish reconquered it.

JAGUAR IN EXILE

Most resistance was not open and violent. Rather many indigenous people preserved traditional religious practices quietly and in secret. The number who consciously rejected Christianity and furtively continued ancient rituals must have been significant in the first



that baptized Maya maintained traditional sacred images and persisted in worshiping Maya divinities.

The friars questioned them, and they admitted that they still worshiped Maya gods and stated that others also participated in secret ritual practices. This information caused the Franciscans to launch an investigation, and they tortured those implicated into confessing their apostasy.

Upon hearing this news, newly elected Franciscan Provincial of the Yucatán Diego de Landa (1524–1579) intensified the inquisition and expanded it into neighboring provinces. Under his guidance the Franciscans tortured over 4,500 people, killing 157, and confiscated numerous Maya images. The Maya confessed under torture that they continued to practice human sacrifice—on a much reduced scale—behind the friars’ backs. But these reports are impossible to substantiate.

Why would the Maya so readily confess? Aware that missionaries sought to eliminate all vestiges of native images, codices, temples, and religious rites, they had practiced their ancient rituals in secret. But as polytheistic worshipers, they did not perceive a sharp distinction between old and new. Like other indigenous peoples, their religions easily accommodated new deities and added the gods of conquering states to their pantheons. They recognized the new gods’ powers and sought to harness them for their own benefit or at least to placate the gods to avoid harm.

For this reason most conquered indigenous peoples did not reject the Christian God—they simply added him to what they viewed as his divine indigenous counterparts. The fact that the Spanish had defeated them militarily testified to his might; so they deemed him



TREE OF LIFE? Above: The 16th-c. Acolman cross used indigenous imagery of the sacred World Tree (left, from the *Codex Fejérváry-Mayer*). The tree was thought to bridge earth, the celestial realm, and the underworld; from it humans emerged to populate the earth.

worthy of worship and began to worship the Trinity and venerate the Catholic saints introduced by the missionaries—even as they rejected Christian exclusivity.

THE SACRED TREE

After the first generation of evangelization, widespread conscious maintenance of indigenous religions declined significantly. Individuals and isolated groups continued traditional ways, but their numbers dwindled after decades of colonial rule accompanied by waves of Old World disease and years of extirpation campaigns.

By the early 1600s, most indigenous peoples in populace areas of the Spanish Americas accepted Christianity and its exclusivity and considered themselves good Catholics. Their parents and grandparents had no direct knowledge of ancient religions and temples; monasteries had stood in their towns since before they were born. They had grown up participating in Catholic sacraments and learned at least the rudiments of the faith since childhood. For them Christianity had become the given order of the world.

Despite this naturalization of Christianity, by the mid-seventeenth century, indigenous worshipers practiced forms of Catholicism that would have appeared



odd to Europeans. Most indigenous peoples over time submitted to the Christian God's demand for exclusive worship. But they thought about and honored him and his saints in indigenous ways.

A striking example of this is a magnificent stone cross carved by an indigenous artisan for the courtyard of the monastery of San Agustín in Acolman, Mexico. It clearly represents the crucifixion, and the artisan carved symbols of the Passion (nails, a rooster, a whip, and a ladder) into its shaft. At its base the Virgin mourns Christ's death. But unlike European crucifixes, the Acolman cross depicts Jesus's head emerging from the cross itself; floral designs cover the crossbar and buds sprout from its ends, as in the indigenous sacred World Tree.

SWEEPING UP FOR THE TRINITY

Similarly an unsigned gift of land written in Nahuatl in 1621 in Coyoacan, near Mexico City, notes that an unnamed (probably female) indigenous person had been "sweeping up [in her house] for [the image of] the Most Holy Trinity," an image that was to be moved to the school housed in the town's Dominican monastery. She donated her house to honor the Trinity and directed the school children to continue "to sweep for" the image.

The donation revealed this woman's long-standing devotion to the Christian God; but the demonstration of devotion by *sweeping* displayed something more. Aztec priests and priestesses had regularly swept their gods' temples for cleanliness and ritual purification; Aztec women also swept homes for the same reason. This unnamed woman, 100 years after the conquest of Tenochtitlan, served the Christian God through traditional Aztec practices.

CLAIMED AND RENAMED This is the first European map of Tenochtitlan and Lake Texcoco, made in 1524 just after its conquest and renaming as Mexico City.

In a final example, *The Virgin Mary and the Rich Mountain of Potosí*, painted by an anonymous indigenous artist in Bolivia around 1740, depicts the Trinity crowning Mary the queen of heaven in front of the king of Spain, the pope, and others. All this, except for the indigenous figures, would not have been out of place in a European painting. But the Virgin is shown as the Mountain of Potosí, the world's richest source of silver for most of the seventeenth century. In the ancient Andes, the mountain had been identified with Pachamama, the Inca earth-mother goddess. It is likely that the artist revealed here a persistent understanding that the landscape manifested sacred power.

In the end indigenous peoples of the Americas largely accepted Christianity after some early resistance; within a few generations of Spanish conquest, they also acknowledged Christianity's monotheistic exclusivity, a transition eased by early modern Catholicism's penchant for venerating saints. But although they readily adopted Christian ideas, they understood them within local frameworks. By and large they were good Christians by the early seventeenth century. But they were Latin American, not European, ones. **¶**

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Dancing sickness, ancient gods

RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS CLASHED IN LATIN AMERICA

Javier Villa-Flores

MODERN CHRISTIANS still tend to think of first-contact missions in tidy, complete, and rosy terms. But this vision hides a more complicated reality. As carriers of a new culture—not just a new religion—the first missionaries to the Americas disrupted native peoples' ways of marking time, living together, naming themselves and the world around them, and much more.

This was true for both indigenous Latin American groups and enslaved Africans. And to the dismay of colonial authorities, African and indigenous traditions gained acceptance among Spanish immigrants and others over time. Indigenous peoples tended to resist missionary demands to worship the Christian God alone, finding ways to combine this new faith with their own ancestral beliefs and rituals, weaving colorful—and sometimes clashing—threads into the colonial religious tapestry.

CONQUISTADORS IMPOSE A NEW GOD

From the early days of conquest, Spanish colonizers saw Christian evangelization as the most important

COLONIAL POWER Charles V of Spain and his wife, Isabella of Portugal, were painted here c. 1579 dining with their relatives—some of Europe's most powerful nobility.

reason to be there. No clergy accompanied Columbus on his first voyage to the Caribbean, but he was convinced that the conversion of natives to Christianity would be swift and thorough. A misguided but similar optimism suffused other early expeditions.

Hernán Cortés brought two priests in the early 1500s, but it was not until Franciscans arrived in 1523–1524 that evangelization hit its stride. Convinced the end of the world was coming, the Franciscans sought to hasten the Second Coming by converting the natives. Although other conquistadors rejected this apocalyptic vision, all saw themselves as God's chosen instruments to expand Christianity at whatever cost.

In Peru Dominicans organized the first missionary expedition accompanying Francisco Pizarro González (c. 1471–1541) in 1524. Mercedarian and Augustinian religious orders later joined the tumultuous first



THE OLD BALL GAME Above: Pre-Columbian religious practices included this spiritually and socially significant Maya ballgame.

SPANISH AT WORSHIP Left: In *The Madonna of the Catholic Monarchs*, Ferdinand and Isabella worship with their children and with St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Dominic, and several inquisitors.

decades of colonization in the Andes. In Brazil Jesuit Manuel de Nóbrega (1517–1570) led the first missionary efforts in the area of Bahia from 1549 on; until expulsion from Brazil in 1759 and the Spanish colonies in 1767, Jesuits played a decisive role in expanding Christianity into the remotest regions.

FRIARS IN CHARGE

Resistance from native peoples was only the first of a bevy of conflicts. In the early decades of evangelization, the Spanish priests' own ranks were divided. Heated disputes broke out between secular clergy (diocesan priests ministering to everyday people in the *secula*—the hurly-burly of “this age”) and regular clergy (members of orders following a *regula*, or rule).

European ecclesiastical and political leaders muddled the waters further. With the blessing of Pope Adrian VI's edict *Omnimoda* (1522), King Charles V granted regular clergy the ability to perform all sacraments in the New World, a task normally restricted to secular clergy in Europe. Friars were elevated to bishop status because of the lack of qualified secular clergy. Placed under the direct authority of the pope, these mendicant friars operated with relative autonomy.

In 1574, however, King Philip II issued a series of decrees, *Ordenanza del Patronazgo*, that shifted crown support to the secular clergy and ordered the replacement of missionaries by diocesan priests. As seculars increased in number in the late sixteenth century, they gained control of the bishoprics and fought the

mendicants over diocesan boundaries, access to indigenous tithes, and control of other resources.

As so often happens, power inflamed the conflicts. Regular clergy competed with the *encomenderos*, Spaniards allowed to exact tribute and labor from the Indians provided they cared for them materially and spiritually in exchange. The ideal was to accelerate conversion to Christianity and European culture while protecting the natives; but in practice it turned into brutal exploitation of unpaid Indian labor.

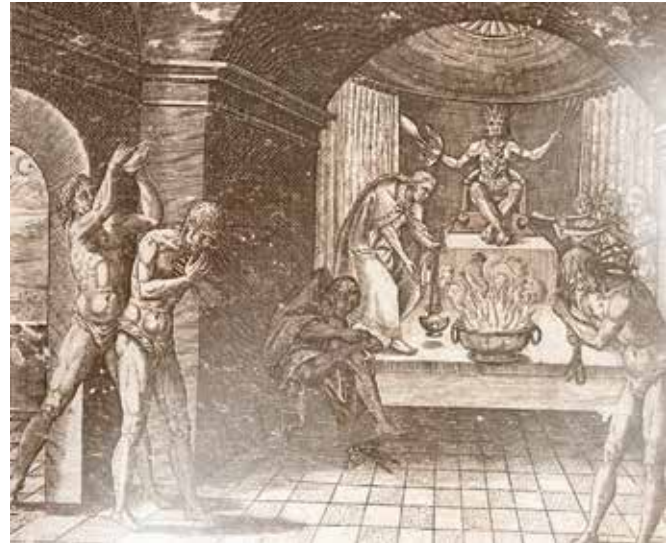
In “Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies” (1542), Bartolomé de Las Casas presented the king with horrifying details of Spanish cruelty and urged him to abolish the *encomienda*. His denunciations apparently led King Charles V to issue the New Laws (1542), which among other things prohibited *encomienda* inheritance. As expected this proved extremely unpopular. In Peru strong resistance triggered a bloody civil war.

Although the Franciscans did not oppose the *encomienda* system, they denounced Spanish violence. Seeing the natives as children, they were convinced that only segregation could save them from moral corruption and physical extinction by the Spanish. Partly responding to these concerns, the crown enacted a system of physical and racial separation that kept Indians and Spaniards in different administrative and fiscal orders known as *repúblicas* (commonwealths).

But it was already too late to separate in any lasting way. The Spanish continued their demands for native labor; the two groups were already intermarrying; and



VANISHED RITUALS Colonizers left descriptions of indigenous worship, such as these engravings of an Aztec temple interior (*below*, 1602) and of the temple in Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City (*left*, 1770).



natives had a hard time keeping Spaniards out of their towns. In Brazil bands of slave-raiders attacked Jesuit missions with distressing regularity, and local landowners and government officials complained about Jesuit monopoly over Indians. By the 1750s relations between the Jesuits and the Portuguese soured, resulting in their expulsion from the empire.

In spite of missionary enthusiasm, Indian conversion to Christianity proved short-lived at best, with years of numerous baptisms, casual instruction in dogma, and perfunctory supervision. As the euphoria of the early years waned, disappointed missionaries resorted to coercion and corporal punishment. Acting as inquisitors they brutally chastised Indians in Acolhuacan (1522), Tlaxcala (1527), and other regions in Oaxaca and Yucatán. In 1539 Bishop Juan de Zumárraga famously sentenced Don Carlos Ometochtzin, a noble from Texcoco, to be burned at the stake on charges of heresy.

Indigenous acquiescence remained elusive, however. In 1562 Zumárraga's fellow Franciscan bishop, Diego de Landa, conducted a violent three-month campaign against idolatry in Mani, Yucatán, overseeing the savage torture of more than 4,000 Maya. Hundreds died in the interrogations, and many others killed themselves in despair.

About the same time, a pan-Andean rebellion known as Taqui Onqoy (dancing sickness) announced the imminent defeat of the Christian god by the powerful *huacas* (see "Did you know?," inside front cover) and urged natives to reject collaboration with the colonizers.

A GOLDEN AGE

In 1680 a medicine man named Popé told Pueblo Indians that the Spanish were to blame for the horrible drought, famine, pestilence, and deaths they had endured for years; only killing the colonizers would make the *katsina* (ancient gods) return and bring a golden age of prosperity. On August 10, 1680, an army

of 8,000 Pueblo Indian warriors razed churches and pillaged Spanish settlements, killing more than 400 within hours. Not until 1692 did the Spanish finally rout the rebels.

In 1712 a pan-Maya coalition known as the Cancuc Rebellion inaugurated a new era of indigenous revolts. In contrast to its predecessors, it did not aim at revitalizing ancient religion but at defying Spanish control of Catholicism. It occurred during the era of the Bourbon Reforms, a period of crucial changes for Iberian America that tried to nationalize colonial exploitation, strengthen colonial links to the mother countries, improve tax collection, and revamp bureaucracy.

The reforms also discouraged popular expressions of piety and devotion as unnecessary and extravagant. When a 13-year-old Indian, María de la Candelaria, claimed to have seen the Virgin Mary in the outskirts of Cancuc, the local priest dismissed the apparition; but María's father and others built a chapel on the spot.

Followers of the cult refused tribute to Spain and rejected the authority of king and bishop. A rebel confederation of 32 Tzotzil, Tzeltal, and Chol villages attacked Chilán, Ocosingo, and other towns. Internal differences and growing numbers of Spanish attacks weakened the movement, and it was finally crushed in November 1712.

The rebellion of Túpac Amaru II in Peru and Bolivia in the 1780s represented the climax of an impressive number of uprisings. Combining utopian Christianity with a cyclical worldview of renewal and destruction (*pachatui*) taken from traditional practices, Túpac Amaru II imagined a golden era of justice and harmony free of Spaniards, Creoles, and their allies and ushering in the return of the Inca king (the



PRAY FOR RAIN Nearly 300 years after Columbus's arrival, people still claimed their traditional gods, pictured in this pre-Columbian temple artifact of rain god Tlaloc (left) and in the *Codex Yoalli Ehecātl* (below).



Inkarri). He commanded an army of 40,000 Indians, *mestizos*, black slaves, and even whites; but the Spanish defeated them within six months. Túpac Amaru II and his family were brutally executed in 1781, but his relatives continued rebelling for two more years. Rumors of the return of the Inkari persisted through the colonial era.

STRIKE OFF THE CHAINS!

Colonial authorities frequently claimed that Christianizing African slaves would make them more docile and content, but Christian slaves still resisted, rebelled, and ran away. They even used Christian institutions such as confraternities (see p. 20) to organize uprisings.


In 1611 for example, an angry crowd of 1,500 belonging to the black confraternity of Nuestra Señora in Mexico City filed past governmental and Inquisition palaces carrying a female slave who had been flogged to death, then threw stones at the home of her master, Luis Moreno de Monroy. Later they selected an Angolan couple, Pablo and María, as king and queen and planned an ambitious rebellion for Holy Thursday of 1612 with the financial support of several black confraternities.

Portuguese merchants, learning of these plans by accident, reported them to the colony's High Court, which ordered leaders arrested and tortured. Seven women and twenty-eight men were publicly hanged in the main square. Authorities quartered six of their bodies and scattered them on the roads, leaving their heads on display at the gallows.

Large-scale slave rebellions often created maroon communities known as *quilombos* (Portuguese), or

palenques, *manieles*, and *cumbes* (Spanish). Consisting of runaway slaves, they were strategically located in mountains, dense forests, and other inaccessible areas.

Maroons usually re-created African religious traditions but also incorporated elements of Christian worship. At Yanga in Veracruz, Mexico, for example, they built a small church with a bell tower, adorned its altar with lighted candles, and planted arrows on the ground in front. Portuguese troops found several churches with statues and saints in the abandoned villages of Palmares in Brazil.

Ultimately although Catholic authorities frequently reported on eager conversions, these conversions often represented a desire for the religious power of the colonizers—not a decision to abandon old rituals and beliefs. The colonized tended to endow Christian saints and the Virgin Mary with African and indigenous attributes (see “Mother of Mexico,” p. 21). Authorities objected to this syncretism and deemed diabolic and superstitious the widespread use of divination, healing, and witchcraft; but the conjurers and healers paved the way for forms of folk Catholicism with strong African and indigenous content—a process neither tidy nor complete. 

Javier Villa-Flores is associate professor of religion at Emory University and author or editor of several books on Latin American social history including Dangerous Speech and Emotions and Daily Life in Colonial Mexico.

AMERICA SIVE
NOVI ORBIS NO
VA DESCRIPTIO

INDIGENOUS CULTURES & PRINCIPAL GROUPS c.1500

Aztec

Maya

Dressée sur les Observations de M. de
l'Académie Royale des Sciences, & quelques
autres, & sur les Mémoires les plus récents
Par G. DE L'ISLE Géographe

A PARIS

chez l'éditeur Rue des Comtes près de
St. Jacques Aveu Privilege du Roy pour
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NOVA
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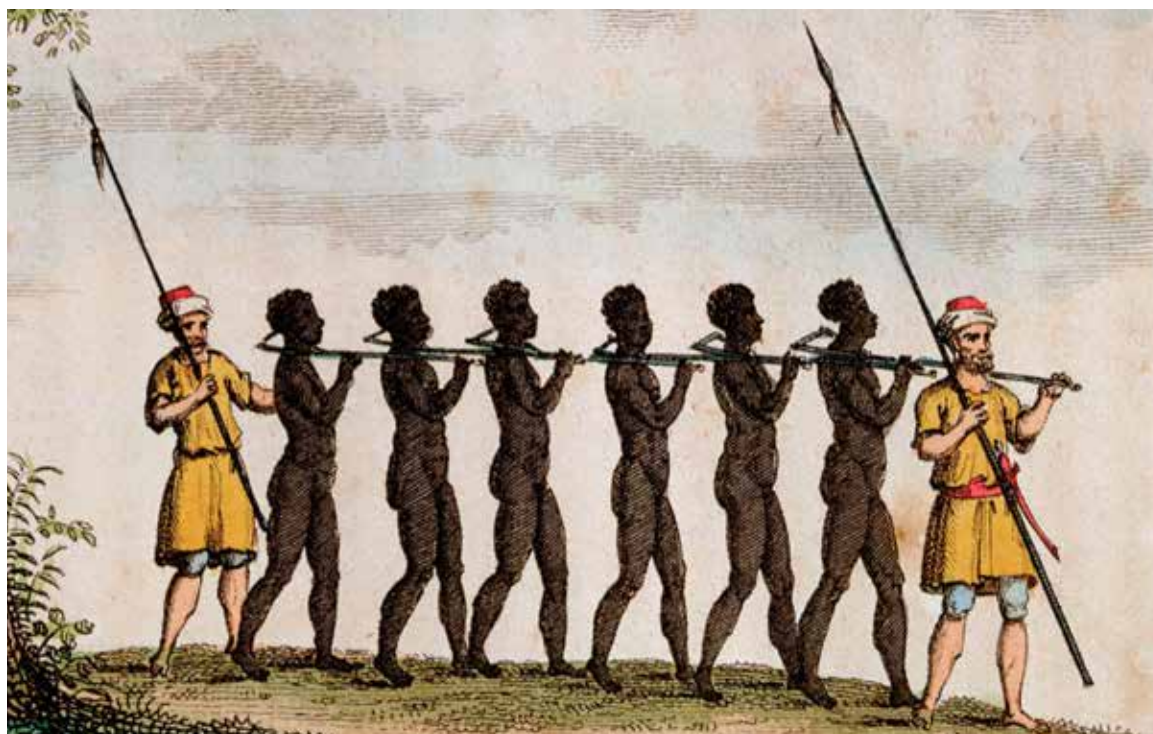
A
NEW MAP OF
From the best Observations
Made by J. de La Roche
St. Louis de Bourbourg &c.
By J. de La Roche &c.
TERRE FERME
AMERIQUE MERIDIONALE



AMERICA



Mompox Palenque
Guamontey Arauak
Chocó Guahibo Auaké Trio
Quimbaya Carijona Pauishana Apali
Quitu Yagua Macú Aruaki
Jivaro Waraícu Muu Maué Teremembe
Chimú Catukina Cayapó Carirí
Campá Urupa Cayabi Anoiyira
Movina Tupina
Siriono Acroá Tamoya
Aymará Guató
Tarapacá Zamuco Tupi Purí
Atacaméños Choroti Tupinamba
Diaguita Mocovi Caingang
Abipón
Connechingón Guarani
Huarpe Charrua
Araucanians Puelche
Het
Tchuelche
Chono Téuesh
Alaculuf Ona



A long road

SLAVERY AND CHRISTIANITY IN COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA

Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva

MALINTZIN WAS BORN in Coatzacoalcos, a town of Nahuatl and Popoluca speakers along the Gulf Coast of Mexico, during the early 1500s. While still a child, she was sold or pawned to long-distance slave traders bound for Potonchán in the Maya region. For several years she labored as a domestic slave and concubine in Potonchán, learning the local language and adapting to everyday life under the Maya.

When the expedition led by Hernán Cortés arrived and battled the men of Potonchán in 1519, Malintzin and several other native women were given as slaves to the conquistadors as a sign of peace. In the words of historian Frances Karttunen, “the women were summarily baptized and distributed to provide the [invading] men with sexual services.” This was their brutal introduction to Christianity.

Despite enduring this serial sexual exploitation, Malintzin, who possessed strong linguistic ability, quickly learned Spanish and became a key interpreter in the negotiations between Cortés and the agents of Montezuma II, the ruler of the Mexica Empire. She gave birth to two children: Martín Cortés, Hernán’s son; and María Jaramillo, daughter of another conquistador. But due to her association with the most influential

SAD JOURNEY This 19th-c illustration shows slaves being marched to the African coast for the slave trade.

conquistador in Mexico, they never suffered the fate of other enslaved people. Malintzin led an exceptional life given her role in the fall of the Mexica Empire, but her status as an indigenous slave-concubine was common—before and after conquest.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Slavery in the region we now know as Latin America preceded the arrival of Spanish and Portuguese expedition parties. It may be tempting to tie down the arrival of Christianity and slavery to the pioneering voyages of Columbus in 1492 and Pedro Álvares Cabral (1467–1520) in 1500, but to do so would be to erase historical complexity, political intrigues, and military ambitions from the relationship between religion and enslavement in colonial Latin America.

Before the arrival of the explorers, enslaved people fulfilled a variety of roles—as domestic servants, porters, and concubines, for instance. Depending on the social, political, and cultural organization of any given group, captive women and children might be gradually



GOOD WORDS Left: This image from a 16th-c. Tlaxcalan chronicle shows Malintzin standing behind Cortés and interpreting for him.

SAD DEEDS Below: A 19th-c. artist rendered the moment when the ruler (*cacique*) of Tabasco presented slaves to Cortés, including Malintzin.



incorporated as kin, or they might remain outside full membership in society.

The children of enslaved people did not automatically inherit their parents' condition. In Central Mexico, for instance, a person could be enslaved for committing a serious crime. In other cases especially impoverished families pawned themselves or their children into slavery. Throughout wide swaths of the Americas, indigenous people also ritually sacrificed enslaved warriors and other captives, either to maintain a cosmic balance or in homage to specific deities as part of a pre-established ritual calendar.

SLAVES FOR GENERATIONS

The arrival of the Iberian explorers at the end of the fifteenth century radically altered the practice of slavery in the Caribbean, Central Mexico, and Peru, and along the Brazilian coastline. The Spanish and Portuguese brought with them the concept of *partus sequitur ventrem*, originally a Roman principle that transmitted slavery through the womb of an enslaved woman. This enabled them to lay the foundation for generations of slavery as long as captive women reproduced.

The decimation of indigenous people on the islands of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico soon led to a large-scale slave trade from the mainland and the Lesser Antilles to replace those who had died from newly introduced diseases (smallpox, swine flu, influenza, typhoid, and meningitis) or from physical abuse and famine. Determining the free or slave status of any given indigenous woman became of paramount importance; her status determined the status of her children.

Branding "legitimate" captives—especially native women—became a common practice during the early sixteenth century. Very few Iberian women took part in these first European expeditions, and many Portuguese and Spanish men took native women as concubines. Some eventually married the mothers of their children in the Catholic Church, but most did not.

In territories colonized by Spain, the Catholic Church had a greater impact on slaving practice than in other regions. This was especially true of viceregal (colonial) capitals, such as Mexico City and Lima, or other cities where bishops' sees were established, like Puebla or Quito. Missionaries, such as the influential Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566), believed that indigenous people should be considered potential Christians, able to understand the faith and be baptized.

This soon led to fierce debates in the 1540s and 1550s on the incompatibility of Christianity with mass enslavement; religious orders had also held slaves and benefited from their labor. Las Casas was instrumental in the passage of the New Laws of 1542, by which the Spanish crown formally abolished indigenous slavery in its American domains and also officially ended the *encomienda* system (see "Did you know?," inside front cover). Exemptions were made when native groups resisted being colonized. By contrast the abolition of African slavery would not come until 400 years later.



AN EVER-ELUSIVE FREEDOM

Iberians associated Africans with the “Moors” (Muslims) of North and West Africa and considered them culturally and religiously inferior to Christian Europeans. Since the first slaving voyages from West Africa to Portugal in the 1440s, Portuguese and Spanish colonizers had normalized African slavery and proclaimed it compatible with Christianity. By the time of Columbus a half century later, the idea of the inferiority and rightful subjugation of African peoples was firmly enmeshed in the European imagination.

Portuguese slavers had a lucrative business selling African captives to slaveholders in Spanish cities. Whether these enslaved Africans eventually converted, married as Christians, or had their children baptized in no way altered their status as human property. The deployment of enslaved Africans to the colonies simply extended a slaving logic already in place. The demographic collapse of native populations from disease and the abolishment of indigenous slavery in 1542 cemented the association between blackness and enslavement in colonial Latin America.

Only a handful of religious men openly defied this mass enslavement. In a 1560 letter to the Spanish king, archbishop of Mexico Alonso de Montúfar (1489–1572) argued there was no legitimate reason for “blacks to be any more captive than Indians,” especially because

ALSO A EUROPEAN STORY *Left:* This enslaved African woman was painted by an Italian artist around 1580.

A GOSPEL OF FREEDOM? *Right:* Many African Latin American Catholics venerated Benedict of Palermo, a Franciscan friar in Italy whose parents were slaves.

Africans had shown time and again “their good will in receiving the Holy Gospel.”

Montúfar also rejected the alleged “spiritual benefits” enslaved Africans received while in Christian captivity. For example, he said, when enslaved Africans married in Mexico, they actually committed bigamy as they had been forced to leave behind “their natural and legitimate wives and husbands in their [home]lands,” which caused “great damage to their salvation.”

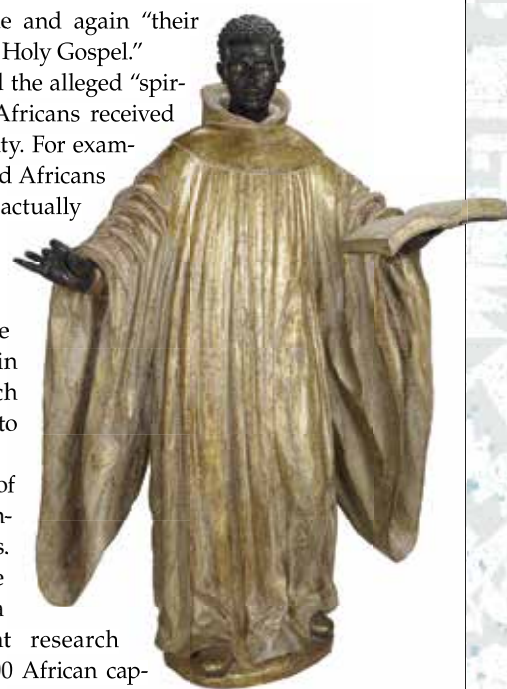
Despite the influence of his position, the archbishop’s pleas fell on deaf ears. The transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America only intensified. Recent research proves that at least 528,000 African captives disembarked in the Spanish colonies before 1641. A minimum of 250,000 captured Africans also fell victim to the early slave trade to Brazil.

The immensity of that captive population with its diverse cultural and religious composition resulted in myriad adaptations of African practice to Christianity in the Latin American context. The Cuban tradition of Santería resulted from a combination of the Yoruba religion from Africa with Catholicism; Candomblé developed in a similar way in Brazil.

Enslaved people experienced varying levels of interaction with the Catholic Church depending on where they lived, which also in turn influenced their practice of the faith. Those in rural areas typically were less exposed to Christian doctrine; urban slaves by contrast had access to local parish churches and to churches, schools, hospitals, and convents run by Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits (and other smaller competing orders).

With greater access to Christian teaching and concentrated religious networks, both free and enslaved urban blacks began to carve out a number of religious brotherhoods, commonly known as confraternities, or *cofradías*. As African populations grew in the cities of Cartagena, Quito, Puebla, and others, so did the number of black brotherhoods.

In some cases ethnically specific confraternities emerged; in Mexico City, people of the Zape nation





SPIRITUAL HOME This Franciscan convent in Puebla was a center of devotion to Benedict of Palermo.

(modern-day coastal Sierra Leone) formed their own brotherhood in the Hospital of the Immaculate Conception. Over time these would gradually change in membership as members of one specific ethnic group gave way to their American-born descendants. In this way a “Congo” brotherhood could gradually morph into a “black” or “Creole” confraternity.

Black confraternities incorporated people of African descent into Catholicism spatially, financially, and socially. Church leaders were willing to assign specific chapels or side altars to devotees of a given brotherhood—not an insignificant gesture to enslaved or recently freed people. The confraternities also pooled membership fees to pay for the funerals of deceased members or even to purchase freedom papers. This created community and allowed African-descended people to adopt alternative identities as members (*cofrades*) and leaders (*mayordomos*) of a specific brotherhood.

BENEFITS OF BROTHERHOOD

Like their indigenous counterparts, these African transplants often syncretized Christianity with traditional religions and expressed their faith in a particularly African manner. For instance in the late sixteenth century, the Franciscan convent of Puebla housed a brotherhood that venerated Benedict of Palermo, a black Sicilian holy man who would not be canonized until 1807. In Brazil the cult of the holy Ethiopian woman Santa Ifigenia was widespread among communities of African descent (and continues to be so).

As African populations venerated these black saints, they often neither fully accepted Christian doctrine nor abandoned prior religious beliefs, but used the multiplicity of Catholic saints as “stand-ins” for African deities. In Santería the figure of Saint George represents

Ogún, while the Virgin Mary can stand in for Yemanyá, goddess of maternal love and the sea. Similar associations can be found in other syncretic religious systems throughout modern-day Brazil, Haiti, Cuba, and other places where the descendants of enslaved Africans live. Yet for some further removed from African religious practices, the brotherhoods offered avenues toward a more orthodox engagement with colonial Catholicism, allowing them to shed the harshest constraints of generational subjugation.

Born into slavery in Puebla in the mid-seventeenth century, Felipe Monsón y Mojica, a *mulato* or *pardo*, a man of partial African ancestry, eventually gained his freedom. He married Juana María de la Cruz, an indigenous woman, in the 1660s, and she enabled him to purchase his freedom papers. Together the two managed an extremely profitable business, selling chile peppers and other agricultural products in the city’s central plaza. In 1664 records show that he went into debt to expand the business:

I, Felipe de Mojica, free mulato of this city of de los Angeles, owe and am committed to paying Ignacio de Orrega, merchant and *vecino* of this city, and to anyone who might hold his power 3844 pesos of common gold. He has lent and supplied me this money in *reales* to purchase chile peppers, beans, and other things to sell in the stand that I have in this city’s public plaza.

After satisfying his debt, Monsón y Mojica turned his attention to the confraternity of the Expiración de Cristo, whose chapel was located within a local hospital. Throughout the 1670s and 1680s, he and Juana invested thousands of pesos in the chapel, commissioning indigenous master artisans to embellish its altar and making sure its members were properly outfitted for their Easter celebrations. As the leader of a well-respected black brotherhood, Monsón y Mojica had transcended his former slave status to establish himself as a model of Catholicism for other people of African descent.

In some ways Monsón y Mojica’s story echoes Malintzin’s. But we must also remember that we know his name, and hers, because they were unusual; most enslaved people entered the historical record as human property, devoid of personhood. For millions who never achieved their prominence, slavery was an even harder and more horrifying road. ■

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Mother of Mexico

The Virgin of Guadalupe

This is how the story goes: Early in the morning of December 9, 1531, Cuauhtlatoatzin, a Mexican peasant in his fifties who had been baptized as Juan Diego, was on his way to catechism class at a church on the outskirts of Mexico City. His way took him over the hill Tepeyac, which before the Spanish conquest had been sacred to the earth goddess Tonantzin.

As he approached the hill, he heard singing like bird-song, but far more beautiful than the song of any birds he knew. When the singing stopped, he heard a voice calling his name: "Juan, dearest Juan Diego."

At the top of the hill, Juan Diego met a "maiden" with shining clothing who introduced herself as "the perfect ever-virgin holy Mary, mother of the one great God of truth who gives us life." She asked him to build her a house on the hill.

Juan Diego trotted off to the bishop to tell him what the Virgin had requested, but the Spanish bishop and his servants were reluctant to believe an "Indian's" testimony. The bishop asked for a sign, and the Virgin promised to give one, but on the day Juan Diego was supposed to meet her to receive the sign, his uncle became terribly sick and appeared to be dying.

Juan Diego set out for a priest, but on his way over the hill of Tepeyac, he met the Lady again. She promised him that his uncle would recover. She also gave him the sign the bishop had requested: his *tilma*, or mantle, filled with miraculously blooming flowers. When he unloaded the flowers in front of the bishop, there on the *tilma* appeared the image of the Virgin. The miraculous image is preserved to this day in the basilica built on the spot where the Virgin appeared to Juan Diego.

"THE HOLLOW OF MY MANTLE"

The earliest published version of this narrative dates from 1648, in Spanish, followed a year later by a Nahuatl version, the *Nican Mopohua*. Manuscript versions go back to the mid-1500s. There was a shrine at the Hill of Tepeyac, later known as Guadalupe, by the mid-sixteenth century; that much is clear from contemporary references (some hostile).

But some people, including a priest who was in charge of the shrine at Guadalupe for years, have questioned whether Juan Diego was a real person, as the earliest references do not mention him or the traditional origin of the image. One preacher in the 1550s claimed that the picture had been "recently" painted

SOURCE OF JOY The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is central to Latin American spirituality. You'll find it thirteen times throughout this magazine, including on the cover.

by "an Indian." The Spanish bishop at the time, Juan de Zumárraga, never mentions the appearance of the Virgin and in fact remarked once that Christ does not want any more miracles.

The Franciscans who dominated religious life in Mexico in the mid-sixteenth century were generally hostile to miraculous claims, which they saw as a form of syncretism with paganism. After the Council of Trent and the arrival of the Jesuits in Mexico, the church's attitude to the shrine became much more favorable.

Whatever the truth of the traditional story, devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe became a symbol of Mexican identity, and she is now the patron saint of Mexico. A devotion to a shrine in Spain called "Guadalupe" already existed but some have also described an Aztec etymology for the word *Guadalupe* meaning "She who crushes the serpent."

The dark skin of the Virgin along with the mixture of European and Mexican iconography in the image make it a symbol of the fusion of native and Spanish cultures. Since the nineteenth century, the image has been a focal point for Mexican nationalism, which emphasizes its native rather than its Spanish elements and the indigenous devotion to it.

Today many immigrants to the United States carry this image with them; its presence in a Catholic church is a sign of welcome to Latin American Catholics. Millions of the faithful take comfort from the words ascribed to the Virgin in the *Nican Mopohua*:

Am I not here, I, who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need something more?

—Edwin Woodruff Tait, contributing editor, *Christian History*





Making faith their own

WORSHIP, DEVOTION, AND FOLK RELIGION IN LATIN AMERICA

Matt Forster

IN 2010 *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC* published an article about Nuestra Señora de Santa Muerte, Our Lady of Holy Death. A personification of death itself, this Mexican “folk saint” is portrayed as a female grim reaper who offers her followers protection from earthly trouble and an easy transition to the next world. Her image is found in street-shrines and jail cells, and her popularity is seen as a response to the rise of drug cartels and their associated culture of violence.

The Catholic Church has condemned the cult of Santa Muerte; even so the number of those who venerate her grows. Stories of folk saints like Santa Muerte and the possibly mythical “generous bandit” Jesús Malverde dramatically highlight a number of complex threads woven through Christian worship and devotion in Latin America.

COMPEL THEM TO COME IN

Geographically Latin America is expansive, encompassing more than 7.4 million square miles, and it is home to about 640 million people today. When Europeans arrived a diversity of peoples, cultures,

DANCE ON A *sagra* dancer (an art rooted in indigenous Quechua tradition) watches a procession in Paucartambo, Peru, for Mamacha Carmen (Our Lady of Mount Carmel).

and religions already filled the land (see “Christianity converted,” pp. 6–11). Europeans also brought large numbers of enslaved Africans who added their own unique cultural and religious traditions to the mix—such as *orixás*, guardian spirits in the Yoruba religion who became associated with Catholic saints.

The Europeans, it is said, conquered with the sword and the cross; conquistadors arrived with priests, monks, and friars in tow. Many orders worked to bring the gospel to Latin America, including Mercedarians, Franciscans, Augustinians, Dominicans, and Jesuits. As colonies were established, Catholic ecclesiastical structures were put in place, and the church set out to convert the crown’s new subjects to the Catholic faith.

This evangelism often took place under the *encomienda*, which granted colonists land and allowed them to use the people inhabiting that land as forced labor. A priest was assigned to care for these



VISIONS OLD AND NEW The Virgin of Guadalupe remains a supremely important object of devotion (*left*). In the 1980s Argentinian housewife Gladys Quiroga de Motta claimed a vision of Mary as Our Lady of the Rosary of San Nicolás, leading to the rediscovery and restoration of this 1880s statue (*below*).

people—teaching them the faith, baptizing, and administering the sacraments.

The priest Bartolomé de las Casas, a part of this system, came to care deeply for the laborers under his care. Eventually he gave up his *encomienda* and urged others to do the same. Some itinerant priests charged with the care of those outside the colonies traveled to remote villages, suffering great hardship to serve those communities by offering pastoral care, preaching, and even defending them against colonial abuses. De las Casas himself contributed through his lobbying to the legal abolishment of the *encomienda* system.

THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF BAPTISMS

Reports from the period describe mass conversions of thousands of Maya, Inca, and Aztec people at the point of a sword, but the public denunciation of one's religious traditions did not necessarily reflect personal heart-felt conviction or genuine acceptance of the Christian God. In some instances the success of the Spanish in battle was a convincing display to indigenous people that the old gods had been defeated. But old beliefs and traditions lived on.

Eager European missionaries had to translate their message for a new audience and into new languages. In 1570, for example, the Aztec language of Nahuatl became the official language of New Spain, in part for use by the church. For the next century, the gospel would be presented in this native tongue, until the Spanish crown changed its mind in 1696 and made Spanish the official language of the entire empire.

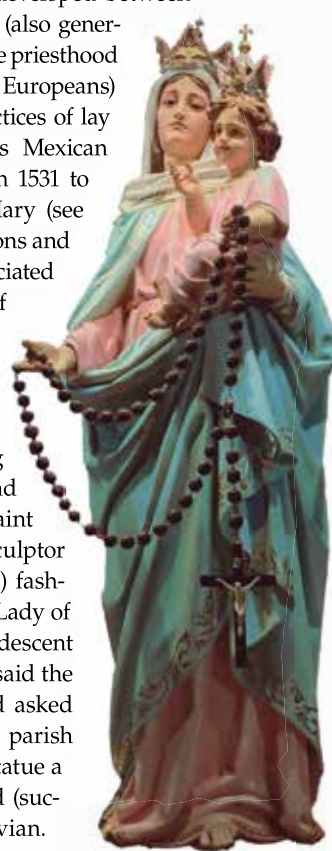
Missionaries couched their teaching in the metaphors and imagery of the people they were trying to reach. The cross might be described and pictured with Tree of Life imagery, for example (see “Christianity converted,” pp. 6–11), or its shape pointed out in the flight of a condor, a bird unknown in Europe.

Language barriers and the mistaken belief that indigenous peoples were not as intelligent as

Europeans led many priests to depend on “holy objects” such as rosaries, candles, and pictures. The ancient indigenous tradition of the *huacas* (see “Did you know?,” inside front cover) and the long-standing importance of the saints to lay Catholic immigrants combined to create something new—a calendar of saints replacing, yet not *quite* replacing, the sacred objects and gods of pre-Columbian religion.

As a result a constant tension developed between the orthodox doctrine of the priests (also generally the social and cultural elite, as the priesthood was reserved for “pure-blooded” Europeans) and the visions and devotional practices of lay Latin American Catholics, such as Mexican peasant Juan Diego who claimed in 1531 to have been visited by the Virgin Mary (see “Mother of Mexico,” p. 21). Such visions and images became increasingly associated with outcasts, the poor, and those of “mixed blood.”

For example in Cuba a slave boy and two indigenous men discovered a statue of the Virgin while caught in a storm, resulting in the story of the Virgin of Caridad del Cobre; she became the patron saint of Cuba. In Bolivia indigenous sculptor Francisco Tito Yupanqui (1550–1616) fashioned a statue of the Virgin as Our Lady of Candles. Yupanqui, who claimed descent from Inca emperor Huayna Capac, said the Virgin visited him in a dream and asked him to make the image. When the parish priest asked Yupanqui to give the statue a European look, the sculptor argued (successfully) that it needed to look Bolivian.



FAILED PROTESTANTS, EXILED JESUITS

Protestant colonies were also established, but they died out quickly and made little impact on popular devotion. A short-lived French Huguenot colony, for example, was established in Brazil in 1555. Decades later in 1630, a Dutch colony began in Brazil but lasted only 24 years. Yet changes—small but dramatic—were in the air. In 1767 a religious struggle between the Jesuit order and Charles III led him to expel them and confiscate their



property. (The order would be suppressed in Europe as well in 1773 and would reorganize in the nineteenth century.)

Much Jesuit property went to other religious orders, increasing their holdings and creating a new target for the king's authority. Some of those expelled were from the *criollo* *casta* and had to leave their birthplaces. Towns lost priests, and parishes lost confessors in the resulting leadership vacuum. The Jesuits had also been among the most sympathetic to miraculous stories and events.

A little over a hundred years later, the rejection of European political rule in the early 1800s created yet another crisis. Many local priests sympathized with revolutionary ideas, while church leadership often sided with the foreign monarchies of Portugal and Spain.

When new governments were established, the close relationship the church had maintained with the Iberian crowns came into question. Property was seized and sold. In some places tithes were abolished, and in others clergy lost certain rights and privileges. In Guatemala the Jesuits—back since 1801—were expelled again in the 1870s. The availability of worship, schools, and other services from Catholics or Protestants shifted with the political climate.

Protestantism took permanent hold in the early nineteenth century (see “Strangers in a strange land,” pp. 29–33); it too would become thoroughly Latinized. James “Diego” Thomson, who arrived in Argentina in 1818, visited nearly every country in Latin America and advocated for translating the Bible into indigenous languages. Other Bible societies saw Thomson's success and followed his example. It is estimated that 80 years later, two million Bibles had been distributed throughout Latin America.

Other missionary groups were also at work. Methodists established congregations in Argentina and Chile. African Americans seeking to escape racist policies in the United States immigrated to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, bringing the African Methodist Episcopal Church with them.

“THE CRAZY FATHER”

While some Protestant missionaries focused on converting indigenous groups practicing non-Christian traditions, others focused explicitly on converting Catholics. Ex-priests and ex-friars occasionally became missionaries. José Manuel da Conceição (1822–1873),

TRAVELING NORTH *Left:* The Virgin of Guadalupe has become important to Hispanic Catholics in the United States, as seen in this rosary created by a modern Los Angeles Latina artisan.

called by his former colleagues “the crazy father” and “the Protestant father,” hoped to spark a renewal within Catholicism from his new status as a pastor in the Presbyterian Church of Brazil.

The twentieth century saw even more immigration along with more directed missionary efforts. Mennonites, for instance, fled south to escape required Canadian military service. They ended up ministering to those caught in war between Bolivia and Paraguay; their nonviolent witness brought them over 8,000 new converts, although as late as the twenty-first century, German and indigenous language speakers still worship separately.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Pentecostalism—a charismatic expression of the faith that highlights the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in particular *glossolalia* (speaking in tongues)—arose in several places. In the United States, Pentecostal revival sparked at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906. Three years later at a large Methodist church in the city of Valparaíso, Chile, a Pentecostal revival began during a regular meeting. The pastor of the church was Willis Hoover, an American Methodist Episcopal missionary and founder of the congregation (see “Charity toward all,” pp. 44–47). Soon people began speaking in tongues in other churches across Chile.

Pentecostal revival meetings also arose in Brazil and Mexico. In Mexico the movement led to, among other things, the creation of the Iglesia Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús (Apostolic Church of Faith in Jesus Christ) through the work of Romana Carbajal. From humble beginnings the denomination grew to over a million members in less than a hundred years.

Pentecostal worship in Latin America, as in the United States, features not only tongue-speaking but prophecy, miraculous healings, extensive prayer, testimony (*testimonios*), and other ecstatic manifestations; there is a tendency sometimes toward preaching the “prosperity gospel,” which maintains that God will bless his followers with material wealth. Some groups, including those stemming from Carbajal's work, baptize in the name of Jesus only. Nearly all groups make heavy use of lay preachers and missionaries who raise their own support.

In the end the story of Christian devotion in Latin America is less about the straight line of Christian faith piercing old traditions and more about how faith in both orthodox and unorthodox ways becomes the faith of the people who hold it. ■

Matt Forster is a freelance writer living in Houston.

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA

NEW SPAIN

UNITED STATES

COLONIAL

LATIN AMERICA

c. 1800

CUBA

HISPANIOLA

BRITISH HONDURAS

YELLOW	SPANISH
GREEN	PORTUGUESE
ORANGE	BRITISH
BLUE	FRENCH
PINK	DUTCH
PURPLE	UNITED STATES

NEW GRANADA

GUIANAS

PERU

BRAZIL

LA PLATA

CHILE

PATAGONIA

AMERICA

GUATEMALA, SALVADOR, HONDURAS,

NICARAGUA & COSTA-RICA,

HAITI & NOUVEAU

ESPAGNE & SAINT DOMINGUE

THE ATLANTIC & PACIFIC OCEANS

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LATIN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

1492 Columbus lands on Guanahani, which he renames San Salvador.

1493 Papal Bulls of Donation give Portugal and Spain rights in the "New World."

1494 Treaty of Tordesillas divides the "New World" between Spain and Portugal.

1502 First Africans arrive as slaves in Haiti.

1508 Papal bull *Universalis Ecclesiae* gives control of the Spanish colonial church to the Spanish crown.

1511 Dominican friar Antonio de Montesinos denounces the enslavement of indigenous people.

1513 First Catholic diocese is founded in Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola.

1514 Bartolomé de las Casas begins his defense of the indigenous peoples.

1521 Hernán Cortés conquers the Aztecs and renames Tenochtitlán Mexico City.

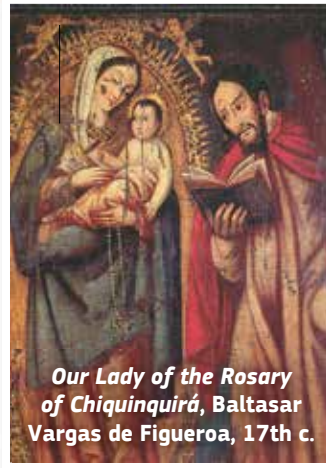
1524 First Franciscan missionaries come to Mexico.

1531 Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin sees a vision of the Virgin Mary near Villa de Guadalupe.

1532 Conquest of Peru begins.

1537 Papal bull *Sublimus Dei* declares the Indians to be fully human.

1542 De las Casas completes *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*.



Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá, Baltasar Vargas de Figueroa, 17th c.

1551 First Council of Lima organizes the Catholic Church in Latin America.

1570 Inquisition begins in Peru.

1609 First Jesuit mission is established in Paraguay.

1617 Famed mystic and Dominican tertiary Rose of Lima dies.

1619 English settlers bring African slaves to Virginia.

1620 Diocese of Buenos Aires founded.

1654 Pedro Claver y Corberó, Spanish Jesuit missionary to Colombia, dies. He may have baptized 300,000 slaves.

1693 Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a Mexican nun, defends a woman's right to study.

1767 Jesuits are expelled from Spanish colonies.

1780 Inca leader Túpac Amaru leads an unsuccessful revolt in Peru.

1789 Spain opens colonies to all slave traders.

1804 Haiti wins independence from France.

1810–1824 Spanish colonies revolt and become independent from Spain.

1818 James "Diego" Thomson arrives in Buenos Aires.

1822 Brazil wins independence from Portugal.

1823 US proclaims Monroe Doctrine.



Antonio de Montesinos Monument, Antonio Castellanos Basich, c. 1982



God Painting the Virgin of Guadalupe, Anonymous, 18th c.

*Christianity in Latin America has a rich and complicated, history encompassing many different countries, traditions, and political situations. This timeline offers a brief introduction to both **church** and **state**.*

Adapted from The Histories of the Latin American Church: A Brief Introduction by Joel M. Cruz © 2014 Fortress Press. Reproduced by permission.

1824 Guatemala is first Latin American nation to outlaw slavery.

1845 US annexes Republic of Texas.

1846–1848 Mexican-American war is fought, reducing Mexico's territory to the region south of the Rio Grande.

1858 Latin American Pontifical College opens in Rome.

1888 Brazil abolishes slavery, the final Latin American nation to do so.

1890 Pan-American Union is founded (later becoming the Organization of American States).

1898 The US takes Puerto Rico and the Philippines in the Spanish-American War.

1899 Latin American Plenary Council meets in Rome.

1909 Pentecostal revivals begin in Chile.

1910 Swedish Pentecostals bring Pentecostalism to Brazil.

1913 Committee for Cooperation in Latin America unifies Protestant mission agencies and churches.

1914 Panama Canal opens.

1926–1929 Government anticlerical policies in Mexico result in the Cristero Rebellion.

1929 At the Havana Congress, Protestant denominations speak in favor of "Latinizing" indigenous churches.



A Spaniard and his Mexican Indian Wife and their Child, Miguel Cabrera, 18th c.

1946 US Army opens the School of the Americas in Panama to train counterinsurgents. The SOA will be expelled from Latin America in 1984.

1949 Latin American Evangelical Conference is held.

1956 Five evangelical missionaries are murdered in Ecuador.

1959 Cuban Revolution installs Fidel Castro.

1962–1965 Vatican II convenes. Chicano movement develops Latino theologies.

1967 Argentine revolutionary "Che" Guevara is executed.

1968 Latin American Council of Bishops meets in Medellín, Colombia. Paulo Freire publishes *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

1969–1972 Jesuit priests spread the Catholic Charismatic movement in Brazil.

1971 Gustavo Gutiérrez publishes *A Theology of Liberation*.

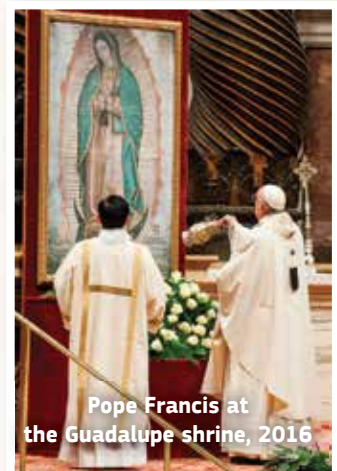
1973 Augusto Pinochet assumes power in Chile.

1978 John Paul II becomes pope.

1979 Sandinista government comes to power in Nicaragua.

1980 Salvadoran civil war begins; Archbishop Óscar Romero is assassinated while saying Mass.

2013 Jorge Mario Bergoglio, archbishop of Buenos Aires, is selected as first Latin American pope, Pope Francis.



Pope Francis at the Guadalupe shrine, 2016



Basilica of Santo Domingo, Lima, Peru, 2013



Santería dancer in Havana, c. 2014

Years represent the date independence was declared.





Strangers in a strange land

PROTESTANTISM AND POWER IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY LATIN AMERICA

Joel Morales Cruz

IN 1888 FRANCISCO PENZOTTI (1851–1925), a Uruguayan Methodist, began holding Protestant worship services in Peru. Word got around; in 1890 he was hauled off to jail for proselytizing, having violated Peru’s colonial restrictions on publicly exercising non-Catholic religion. As Panzotti starved in a dungeon, Peruvian elites heard of his case. The *New York Herald* took up his plight, and the whole world learned of Peru’s policies just as elites were seeking to encourage foreign investment and trade. By the time the case reached Peru’s Supreme Court, the climate was ripe for change. Peruvian Protestants and the Liberal political party’s leaders regarded Penzotti’s acquittal as a victory for religious freedom.

CONTINUED STRUGGLE

Protestantism in nineteenth-century Latin America involved competing and converging national, political, religious, and economic interests on the part of state leaders, missionaries, and ordinary people. Two dominant political factions emerged following nineteenth-century wars for independence from European control: Conservatives, who sought to preserve colonial struc-

REPUBLICAN HERO This monument in Mexico City celebrates Benito Juárez, 19th-c. Liberal president of Mexico who famously restricted Catholic power.

tures as much as possible; and Liberals, who worked to bring the emerging nation-states into the modern world.

Among other things they contended over religion. Conservatives favored maintaining the power of the Catholic Church, which paralleled their own power. Liberals challenged the traditional privileges of the church and took over maintaining its registry of births, marriages, and deaths and running schools and charities. Because the church remained one of the wealthiest landowners even after independence, both groups sought to exploit or control it and access its resources to support struggling governments or war efforts.

Early constitutions of the new republics upheld Catholicism as the state religion and sole legal religious institution. Conservatives thought the church created and preserved national unity and stability and bound people in a common worldview and morality—especially important in countries made up of people of



European, indigenous, African, and mixed descents, and ranging from very wealthy to very poor.

Liberals did not aim to abolish the church, but they did want to limit its power for the good of the nation. They thought the popular religion of the masses and elaborate Catholic rituals caused Latin American stagnation and believed Protestantism contributed to the commercial success of the United States and Great Britain. Toleration seemed necessary to establish trade and diplomatic relationships with Protestant countries. As a compromise, religious freedom when granted was limited to foreigners and often stipulated that Protestant worship remain inoffensive to Catholics.

TAKE UP AND READ

The first permanent Protestant immigrants to Latin America were British settlers taking advantage of an 1810 treaty between the United Kingdom and Portugal. Chaplains—Anglican, Methodist, and Lutheran—arrived at major ports and urban centers to serve expatriates. Initially they did not proselytize Catholics, but extended ministries to native populations who had never encountered Christianity. For example Anglican layman and British Navy officer Allen Gardiner (1794–1851) evangelized in the Bolivian Altiplano and later dedicated his life to spreading Christianity in Tierra del Fuego, founding the Patagonian Missionary Society in 1844.

Bible colporteurs (peddlers) also began to establish Bible societies and spread copies of the Scriptures.

AMERICAN PROGRESS This famous 1872 painting by John Gast pictures white Protestant North American civilization spreading from coast to coast.

The most famous and well traveled was James “Diego” Thomson (1788–1854). The Scots Baptist trekked from Argentina to Mexico to the Caribbean, often invited by political leaders who wanted to increase literacy through the Lancasterian system (a teaching method using the Bible as a text). Colporteurs encountered mixed responses. Many Catholic clergy opposed their efforts, arguing that the Scriptures they distributed lacked the explanatory notes to prevent the faithful from falling into error (i.e., Protestantism).

Early on a translation from the Latin Vulgate was used, but eventually Bible societies moved to the Reina-Valera, translated from the original languages by Protestant converts in sixteenth-century Spain. Sometimes the Apocrypha (considered canonical by Catholics) was omitted, adding to the suspicion that Bible societies were Protestant infiltrators. However some, including clergy, welcomed and aided the opportunity to disperse the Scriptures to the people.

Among them were Mexican statesman and priest José María Luis Mora (1794–1850) and Colombian bishop Juan Fernández de Sotomayor (1777–1849). They represented a reformist strand of clergy who sympathized with Liberal goals, often breaking ranks with their superiors on matters related to church and state, education, or the role of the church in society.



TWO PATHS The trial and release of Francisco Penzotti (above left) revealed Catholic-Protestant conflict; but some priests such as José María Luis Mora (above right) cooperated with Protestants.

MISSIONS AND MODERNITY

In 1823 the United States' declaration of the Monroe Doctrine essentially warned off European powers from colonial aspirations. Amid the United States' increasing presence in the hemisphere, Protestant missionaries began to take a greater role in evangelizing the region.

The revivals of the Second Great Awakening (1795–1835) had energized US Protestantism with an emotional and optimistic faith expressed in grassroots movements throughout the country's western frontier. Heir to Reformation theological debates and worried about increasing numbers of Catholic immigrants arriving on US shores, US Protestants were also stridently anti-Catholic and thought Latin Americans needed to be rescued from superstition. Missionaries brought with them an emphasis upon personal Bible study, justification by faith, iconoclasm, and the individual's unmediated relationship with God.

As agents of their culture, they freely mixed sociopolitical assumptions with their religious convictions—just as surely as Spanish friars had done centuries earlier. Evangelization also meant “Americanization”—and “America” meant the United States. “Freedom” translated into the socioeconomic sphere as individualism, the “Protestant work ethic,” and capitalism; in politics, “freedom” meant democracy and republicanism. Protestant mission churches generally benefited from the Liberal governments in Latin America that advocated for religious freedom, the disestablishment of the Catholic Church, public education, and increased economic ties with the United States.

This evangelistic faith found motivating energy in Manifest Destiny, the popular nineteenth-century attitude conceiving of the United States as divinely destined to expand throughout North America by virtue of the faith, morality, and justice of the American people and their institutions. More a general mind-set

The delicate balance of church and state in Latin America

Against the backdrop of an assumed union between the church and the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, conquistadors had colonized Latin America and a series of treaties had granted the Iberian crowns the right to appoint bishops. But as struggles for independence erupted in the early nineteenth century, the Catholic Church suffered internal division. Many ordinary priests were *mestizo* (mixed Spanish and indigenous) or *criollos* (American-born Spanish), identifying with the poor and marginalized. Meanwhile elite bishops loyal to the crown tended to oppose revolution; they either fled or were exiled as rebel forces pushed Spanish armies back.

Without bishops there could be no confirmations, no ordinations, no new priests; in the absence of royal authority, independent nations and the pope jostled for control. In exchange for official recognition and a limited national patronage, Latin American republics initially granted Roman Catholicism a spiritual monopoly over and against all other religions. But by the beginning of the twentieth century, most Latin American countries had legislated religious freedom for all, opening the door for Protestant churches.

Predictably Protestant believers experienced hostility from Conservatives (as in Colombia from 1938 to 1958); on the Liberal side, there were bouts of anticlerical legislation and systemic persecution of the Catholic Church (as in Mexico between 1926 and 1929). Brazil, Cuba, and Puerto Rico proved exceptions.

By the late 1950s into the 1960s, economic and social uncertainty ushered in conservative, staunchly anticommunist military dictatorships throughout the region, often supported by the United States. At the same time, the reforms of Vatican II inspired a generation of clergy and laypeople to call governments and economies to account for the marginalization and oppression of the poor (see “A new Pentecost,” pp. 41–43). Some church hierarchy remained complicit, but many Catholic leaders were jailed, tortured, and killed in witness to Christ's love for the poor, most famously Archbishop Óscar Romero (1917–1980) and missionary nuns in El Salvador in 1980. Many mainline Protestant leaders joined them in denouncing violence and oppression, but Pentecostal and evangelical churches tended to support the dictatorships because they were anticommunist. Pentecostal layman Ríos Montt became president of Guatemala in 1982; his scorched-earth policy included genocide against indigenous Maya rebels.

Since the return of democratic governments in the 1990s, the relationship between church and state has diversified. Conservative nations like Colombia grant privileges to the Catholic Church while more secularized ones like Mexico and Uruguay hold to a strict separation of church and state. Alongside popular devotions to Catholic saints and a growing number of Pentecostal congregations, other religious groups practice openly, from Afro-Caribbean faiths like Santería and Candomblé to New Age cults and those who profess no religion. Yet the role of religion in the public square remains strong, and religious voices on all sides can be heard amid current debates. —Joel Morales Cruz



WE BRING SOLDIERS Left: Mexico City falls during the Mexican-American War.

WE BRING BIBLES Below: James “Diego” Thomson was the first well-known Protestant colporteur in Latin America.



than policies, Manifest Destiny was used to justify the takeover of Native American lands and the Mexican-American War (1846–1848). This war swallowed over half the territory of Mexico, making roughly 100,000 Mexicans into US citizens overnight.

Evangelists followed the expanding United States westward, but only after the Civil War in the 1860s did missionaries move southward in greater numbers, as well as overseas to Africa and Asia. As a newly invigorated and industrialized United States flexed its economic and military muscles, it made natural partners of Protestant denominations seeking new converts. Post-Civil War prosperity, industry, and advances in transportation and communication greatly aided this effort.

When Spain lost Puerto Rico and control of Cuba to the United States in the Spanish-American War in 1898, major Protestant denominations divided up the islands between themselves to establish churches and “save” people from Roman Catholicism. These missionaries generally began working among the poor and laborers, but soon moved on to the emerging middle classes—who tended to be more critical of Roman Catholic clericalism and more receptive to republican values.

A READY SOIL

By midcentury Mexican president Benito Juárez (1806–1872) was proposing the anticlerical Reform Laws of 1855–1860. Surprisingly, progressive Catholic clergy supported such laws. In some areas Protestant missionaries worked among these Catholic reformist clergy and with religious groups such as Mexico City’s Iglesia de Jesús (Church of Jesus) and Puerto Rico’s Bíblicos. The Iglesia de Jesús was organized in the 1850s by progressive Catholic clergy in

Mexico City who supported the Reform Laws. Preaching a Christocentric message and rejecting clerical celibacy and papal authority, they eventually sought support from the Episcopal Church and in 1906 joined it.

In Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, the Bíblicos consisted of a loose arrangement of clandestine groups meeting to study the Bible. They were led by Antonio Badillo Hernández (d. 1889), who converted to evangelicalism after attending religion classes held by a Protestant merchant. Presbyterian missionaries arriving in the region after 1898 encountered these “Bible people,” who would form the nucleus of the Presbyterian effort in western Puerto Rico.

The rise of Protestantism was also connected to the rise of free-thought and radical societies. These societies formed in Mexico, Chile, Colombia, and Brazil in the 1850s. Their members tended to be miners, textile workers, and railway laborers; those in urban service industries such as clerks, bankers, and teachers; coffee producers of Colombia and São Paulo; and former soldiers and artisans of Mexico.

Neither the established middle class nor rural peasants, these groups were part of the burgeoning industrialization of cities and suburbs and keenly felt economic uncertainties. Agitating for liberal and democratic reforms and sometimes associating with Freemasons, some also expressed anti-oligarchical, anticlerical, anti-Catholic, or dissident religious opinions and activities.

As with the Iglesia de Jesús, which supported the Liberal 1857 Constitution and a vision of a reformed Christianity, these societies sought to create a non-Catholic religious alternative. When Protestant evangelists arrived, they built upon the efforts of these groups, eventually integrating them into missions.



"FOR ALL THE WORLD" Above: Young Patagonians, from the *South American Missionary Society Magazine*. The society's efforts began with Allen Gardiner in Patagonia.

ENGLISH AND DUTCH WELCOME Right: Vicente Rocafuerte, president of Ecuador, was one of many Liberal leaders who encouraged Protestant immigration.



Thus Protestantism did not necessarily represent an invasive, alien presence, but rather the evolution of a process already in motion—joining economic and religious demands of reformist clerics, religious liberals, and an anticonservative emerging middle class.

US Protestants also took advantage of aggressive Liberal regimes throughout Central and South America in the latter nineteenth century to establish missions, charities, schools, clinics, seminaries, and other resources. At this stage though, the US missionary enterprise tended toward paternalism and sometimes outright prejudice. Despite the development of native leaders, North American missionaries and their denominations maintained control and would do so until the mid-twentieth century.

EXPATRIATES FIND HOMES

Throughout the nineteenth century, Liberal governments encouraged European immigration to stimulate national economies and promote agricultural development; immigrants were guaranteed religious freedom. In his *Essay on Religious Tolerance* (1831), Ecuadorian Vicente Rocafuerte (1783–1847) argued:

The English, Swiss, German, and Dutch take with them an admirable spirit of order, of cleanliness, and of economy wherever fortune may take them that is worthy of imitation. . . . [This] exercises a benign influence upon the morality of the people, and one should not neglect the means of promoting it.

For example by midcentury British subjects had established Anglican churches in Argentina, Venezuela, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Peru.

German Mennonites arrived in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, while Russian Mennonites went to northern Mexico. Italian Waldensians found new homes in the Southern Cone. After the Civil War, African Americans, fleeing rampant racism, settled in Haiti and the Dominican Republic and established Methodism, while disaffected Confederates found homes in Brazil.

These communities tended to be isolated, forming their own churches and hiring pastors from abroad. Services were held in the mother tongue, and little evangelistic work was conducted outside the community. Only later did second and third generations identify more with the New World than the Old.

Clearly, emergent Latin American nations and new immigrants aided one another's goals. Immigration helped these countries expand and settle the hinterlands, though tragically at the expense of the native peoples living there. At the same time, the republics served as a haven for Protestants fleeing persecution or hardship. Today Latin America still draws people in search of opportunity. Denominations once "strangers in a strange land" now meet the spiritual and material needs of communities as different as Hungarian expatriates in Brazil and Chile, and Korean Presbyterian expatriates in Chile, Argentina, Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Bolivia. ☐

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“¡Llegaron los pentecostales!”

HOW PENTECOSTALISM SPREAD IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi

LA HERMANA SONIA (Sister Sonia) was a short, gray-haired laywoman among a group of predominantly male clergy from all over the world, including me. A Pentecostal hailing from Chile, she represented different Pentecostal communities in the Southern Cone of Latin America. The ecumenical and interdenominational conference we were attending addressed issues of worship, seeking answers from a diverse group of worldwide Christian leaders.

The small group meeting began with prayer. La Hermana Sonia stood up and raised her hands and arms to God. Quietly she joined in prayer. Yet it was evident that her embodied prayer caught the attention of some. A Russian Orthodox priest—in a kind, yet authoritative voice—asked Sonia: “Why do Pentecostals raise their hands and arms when praying? Have you considered that such behavior during prayer may distract others from praying?”

She looked puzzled and replied, “I would never want my actions to distract others from prayer and praise to God. We do not raise our hands and arms to

RAISED HANDS US Pentecostals worship in a Kentucky church in the 1940s. The movement took a similar yet independent path in Latin American countries.

call attention. We do it because we are like toddlers seeking to be picked-up and embraced by the tender and loving arms of a parent.” After *La Hermana Sonia*’s reply, you could hear a pin drop. That evening the priest from the Russian Orthodox Church led worship. Every time the group prayed, he had his hands and arms fully extended to heaven.

THE SPIRIT’S GIFTS

This story encapsulates the way the Pentecostal movement has influenced worldwide Christianity, particularly in Latin America. Briefly and most generally, Pentecostalism focuses its attention on the gifts of the Holy Spirit—especially, though not limited to, speaking in tongues as evidence of Spirit baptism. Historians often claim that Pentecostalism began in the early 1900s with William Seymour

(1870–1922) and the Azusa Street Revival (see CH #58, *The Rise of Pentecostalism*), but in fact similar revivals arose earlier and in other places, and as time went on, they connected with the generative work of the Azusa Street movement.

The arrival of Pentecostalism in Latin America does not follow a straight cause-and-effect trajectory. Our typical understanding of mission involves missionary work from a Christian region that converts and establishes churches in non-Christian locations; but this pattern is too limited to account for the movement and growth of Pentecostalism worldwide (see “Charity toward all,” pp. 44–47).

SPLIT TO GROW

In Latin America and the Caribbean, three models came to define emerging Pentecostal work. The first model could be called the *noninstitutional split-and-grow model*. In this model a noninstitutional missionary feels called to evangelize a region and joins a Protestant church—only to ultimately split from it and establish a new movement with churches under Pentecostal and charismatic experiences.

One example of Pentecostalism spreading in this way is the Congregação Cristã no Brasil (CCB), which began through the ministry of Italian American husband and wife Luigi Francescon (1866–1964) and Rosina Balzano (1875–1953). Originally Presbyterian but influenced by the Azusa Street revival, they left the United States in 1910 to work among Italian immigrants in Latin America, where they established CCB. Although the missionary zeal of Francescon and Balzano began with a concern for the evangelization of Italian immigrants in Brazil, with time they broadened their context for evangelization by shifting from the Italian language to Portuguese.

Dissatisfied with mainline Protestantism and drawn by the charismatic Pentecostal experience, Brazilian Christians flocked to CCB in its early stages. By the 1950s CCB appealed to Brazilians of all ethnic groups. It had also immediately begun training a national Brazilian clergy rather than depending on North American imports to be present to run churches. (Francescon never actually lived in Brazil, although he frequently traveled to the CCB’s various houses of prayer.)

An even more extensive example is what we know today as the Assambleias de Deus (AD) in Brazil, one of the largest denominations in the world. Though currently loosely connected to the Assemblies of



“ALABADO SEA JESÚS!” Above: Latin American Pentecostals worship in a 21st-c. Brazilian church.

A NEW REVIVAL Right: A Catholic priest in Brazil, Harold Rahm helped spread Pentecostal worship to the mainline in the 1970s through the “charismatic” movement.



God (AG) in the United States, it originated from Swedish missionaries Daniel Berg (1884–1963) and Gunnar Vingren (1879–1933) who, inspired by Azusa Street and called by God to Brazil, began their work in a Baptist congregation.

Berg and Vingren soon grew dissatisfied with the Baptist church and split from the congregation, bringing other dissatisfied mainline Protestants with them. They created a group called the Missão da Fé Apostólica (MFE) in 1911, while keeping an unofficial relationship with the Scandinavian Pentecostal movement. By 1918 they had changed their name to Assambleias de Deus.

The AD complicates the idea of simple cause and effect stemming from North American Pentecostalism. The AG in the United States claimed, and in some cases still claims, to have originated the Brazilian AD. But the AD considers itself an independent and national church. And from the late 1970s until the present, the AD itself has undergone splits and growth creating other small Assambleias denominations in Brazil.

GOODBYE, MISSIONARIES

Pentecostalism has also spread through the *non-institutional missionary to independent church model*. In this second model, Pentecostal national churches



PARTNERS IN CHRIST Church leaders Ernest Diaz (left) and Ruben Ortiz (right) bid farewell to Alice Wood (center), an early North American Pentecostal missionary to Argentina.

emerged through noninstitutional missionary work and leadership with no foreign influence. One such example is the Movimiento Misionero Mundial (MMM) in Puerto Rico, catalyzed by the missionary work of Luis M. Ortiz (1918–1996) in the Spanish Caribbean.

A member of a Pentecostal movement called the Iglesia de Dios MI, Ortiz claimed he received his call “by way of different revelations, where visions were simultaneously declared by different sisters and brothers of integrity and in communion” and that “God affirmed a great ministry of global reach.”

Ortiz’s passion for missionary work and fulfilling this mission led him to seek theological formation in the Instituto Mizpa, today the Universidad Pentecostal Mizpa, the oldest Iglesia de Dios MI Pentecostal school in Puerto Rico. In the 1940s he traveled to the Dominican Republic and Cuba where he worked among the poorest people and established non-denominational Pentecostal congregations.

After almost two decades of work, Ortiz returned to Puerto Rico having established many churches—and even more important, having established national leadership to continue the national work. In Cuba, the Iglesia Cristiana Pentecostal (ICP), a national Cuban Pentecostal church with a very loose partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, has roots that go back to the missionary work of Ortiz.

When he returned to Puerto Rico in the 1960s, Ortiz founded the MMM. Originally he had not planned on creating a denomination but rather a Pentecostal movement committed to evangelization. Yet Ortiz’s vision for national missionary work in Puerto Rico ultimately established congregations.

The MMM’s Pentecostal congregations were infused with a passion for missionary work in the Spanish-speaking Americas, and by the late

twentieth to early twenty-first centuries, local MMM congregations with national leadership had been established all over the world, particularly in Latin America.

NATION TO NATION

The MMM’s work today exemplifies the third and final model that describes Pentecostal origins in Latin America, which could be called the *noninstitutional national to national model*. In Latin America as well as around the world, the MMM sends lay

missionaries who lack education or US backing. With only prayer support, the leader travels to another country, usually in Latin America, and establishes a congregation, which is quickly put under the leadership of locals.

With time the new MMM congregation is grounded in its context, and the missionary might then be called to another Latin American country to evangelize. The outcome is not always a congregation, as MMM has multiple social ministries connected to evangelization. But the most usual result is a Pentecostal congregation with deep roots in its context that carries the name of an MMM church and is based on its missionary zeal to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Under this model the MMM has a missionary and congregational presence in almost all of the Latin American and Caribbean countries (some not even taking the MMM identity) and in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.

The origins of the Latin American Pentecostal movement are as elusive as the wind of the Spirit; they do not follow the missionary cause-and-effect pattern that we are so used to assuming. Just as its movement is elusive, so is its impact in its social, cultural, and political context.

Yet, with very little doubt, it continues to be a Christian expression grounded in a daily-life experience, closest to the poorest of the poor, and often evoking an intimacy with the Spirit that resembles the relationship of a vulnerable toddler with a loving and caring parent. ■

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Virgins, nuns, preachers

THE MANY ROLES OF WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

Evelmyn Ivens

JESUS UPSET THE EXPECTED NORMS of first-century Jews. He regularly ate with sinners and tax collectors, spent time with the despised Samaritans, and elevated women from third-class citizens to first-rate followers of The Way as the implications of his redemptive work became clear (Gal. 3:28). Yet women's place in the church had advanced little by the fifteenth century. The colonial enterprise in Latin America mirrored this when it gave men the primary responsibilities of the expanding Catholic Church.

VIRGINS OF HEALING AND SUCCOR

From the beginning of the colonial conquest, Latin American Christian women saw themselves through the lens of the Virgin Mary. The Iberian empires had already established this image as the feminine ideal of Christianity; they spoke of the Virgin as the ideal woman of God, representing her in art and architecture as an exceptionally beautiful European woman and also as the woman who led Christian warriors.

This mixed religious and political image formed a fundamental part of the conquest. For example Cortés in Mexico had a devotion to Mary under the name of the Virgin of Healing; when he conquered Tenochtitlan

NOBLE IDEALS This 17th-c. painting, *Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá with Female Donor*, shows both an idealized Virgin and an idealized upper-class Spanish matron.

and renamed it Mexico City, he had shrines to the Virgin and St. Christopher set up in the existing temple in place of statues of the Aztec gods.

Pedro de Valdivia, conqueror of Chile, is said to have carried an 11-inch-tall statue of the Virgin into Santiago in 1540. The image survived the fighting and was renamed the Virgin of Succor in 1544 after the Spanish conquerors prayed to the image and reinforcements arrived to quell an indigenous uprising. These and similar stories led the Virgin Mary to become not only a very significant religious figure but also a political symbol (see "Mother of Mexico," p. 21).

Above all the Virgin represented the religious ideal for noble women of the dominant class. These wealthy European women took the coveted spots in the first convents of the Spanish territories. Women could enter religious life just as men could, but unlike friars and priests, they spent their lives enclosed inside convent walls and were not allowed to evangelize.



“YOUR MOTHER” Eventually one of the most powerful images for women was the Virgin of Guadalupe, seen here in a 21st-c. home altar in Mexico.

Two types of convents soon emerged: relaxed and reformed. In the relaxed convents, a nun lived in luxury in her own rooms, with expensive furniture, maybe her own kitchen, and a private altar. She might even have servants or slaves (full-blooded indigenous and black women) to take care of her personal needs. In the reformed convents, nuns lived more simply—in small cells, eating plain meals in community, following strict routines, and worshipping frequently.

Eventually convents became places where orphans were abandoned, widows found shelter, and parents would leave young girls until they either married or chose to take their own vows. Even though nuns lived in enclosure, they remained closely connected to a colonial society that considered them an important part of the spiritual health of the community at large.

The ideal nun served as a model to follow in feminine virtues such as chastity, humility, obedience, and modesty; though it seems contradictory, nuns were also considered good models for virtuous wives. Many considered nuns’ prayers to be particularly effective as it was believed they could release souls from purgatory or help ease divine wrath.

The community perceived convents as fortresses that intervened for their well-being and prevented evil. Unlike priests, nuns didn’t receive payments for religious services; donations and dowries financially supported the convents. This resulted in very powerful financial structures that could lend money to members of the local community. Nuns also sewed and embroidered, and educated girls who lived with them.

Over time, especially in the relaxed convents, the life of a nun came to resemble more and more the life of an upper-class lady rather than a life of prayer and contemplation. These nuns gave elegant parties, purchased rich food, produced secular plays, hired many servants, wore extravagant jewelry, entertained visitors (including men), and traveled freely. In one convent in Lima, they were reprimanded in the 1750s for trading in habits for expensive secular clothing and staging their own bullfights on the convent’s grounds!

LIVING ALONE AND GIVING COUNSEL

Not every religious (or hopefully religious) woman lived in a convent. Another group of laywomen called the *beatas* took no vows or only simple ones; they lived alone without the formal supervision of a male confessor or a religious community. Believing that *beatas* received favors from God, people often sought these women out for counsel on sacred and secular matters, affording them an important role in the community at large. Indeed living as a *beata* appealed to many women

The first convents in “New Spain” were established in the 1540s; in Brazil convents were not founded until 1677. Though they were connected to European religious orders such as the Carmelites or the Poor Clares (Franciscan), each one operated as an independent institution with its own constitution and rules.

Many convents were founded exclusively for daughters and other relatives of the powerful, the wealthy, and the connected. The Most Holy Trinity convent in Puebla, Mexico, started with 17 nuns; 14 of them were related to the founding patrons. Only women of pure European blood and legitimate birth could join; Jewish, Muslim, or indigenous women need not apply.

While the Santa Clara convent in Cuzco, Peru, and the Corpus Christi convent in Mexico City made exceptions to this, they still did not admit the lower classes. Founded in 1551 for a particular type of *mestiza* (a woman of mixed race), Santa Clara accepted the daughters of noble indigenous women and Spanish conquistadors with the goal of ensuring that these *mestizas* would be culturally Spanish.

Later in 1724 the Corpus Christi convent was founded in Mexico City exclusively for the daughters of indigenous nobles. The applicants were required to be full-blooded indigenous and prove they came from good Christian families who had never worked selling *pulque* (a traditional indigenous alcoholic drink) because it was considered a shameful occupation.



because it was one of the few options for living alone as a respectable single woman. However Roman Catholic leaders looked with suspicion upon the appeal of this seemingly individualistic religious path. Trials for these holy women were rare, but still the Holy Office kept them under its watch.

Overall women experienced many forms of limitation while trying to live out their faith in the colonies. Nonetheless women such as Rosa de Lima (1586–1617), named the first saint of the Americas; Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695), writer, poet, and philosopher; and Catarina de San Juan (1607–1688), a Mexican lay holy woman of Asian descent, produced powerful testimonies (see “Charity toward all,” pp. 44–47).

LUTHERANS, KEEP OUT

The coming of Protestantism changed this picture in some ways, but not in others. During the Spanish Inquisition (which lasted from the sixteenth century through the nineteenth century), Protestantism was considered heresy, and tribunals banned Protestant books and any form of “Lutheranism.” But not long after the Latin American colonies became independent (see “Strangers in a strange land,” pp. 29–33), Protestantism began to make inroads.

After half of Mexico’s territory became part of the United States in 1848, US Protestants launched missions through the Southwest and Northern Mexico, maintaining that Spanish evangelization during the colonial period had not been effective at all. Believing that the former Mexican citizens needed a real conversion, Scottish immigrants flooded Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile, bringing Presbyterianism with them.

After 1870 Protestant missionary agencies—including female missionaries—from the United States began to actively engage in Latin America. Initially

SEEKING SHELTER Above left: Ironically even the Poor Clares accepted mainly wealthy women in Latin America (this mosaic shows their founding in Italy).

OLD WAYS Peasant women, like this one (above right) in Mexico in 1929, frequently preserved traditions of both food (right) and faith.



they concerned themselves mainly with the salvation of souls, but eventually Protestants became known for their work in education and medicine.

In the twentieth century, women moved into politics. By the end of the century, women had served as heads of state in Panama, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Argentina. Even so the mainline Protestant churches remained largely male dominated until the growing Pentecostal movement gave more freedom to female church leaders.

For example Romana Carbajal de Valenzuela (d. 1918) accepted the gospel during the Pentecostal movement on Azusa Street in Los Angeles. After her conversion she felt called to go back to her hometown in Mexico as a missionary. In 1914 she baptized 12 of her relatives in the name of Jesus only, becoming an evangelist, missionary, and founder of the Apostolic Church of Faith in Jesus Christ (Oneness Pentecostal). She died in 1918, and male pastors Rubén Ortega and Miguel García carried the church forward.

Leoncia Rosado Rosseau (1912–2006), known as “Mama Leo,” spread the Pentecostal gospel both in Puerto Rico and on the US mainland. Rosado was born




NEW ROLES? In the 20th c., some women questioned their place in church and society. Mexican artist Frida Kahlo expressed her protest in paintings like *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Leon Trotsky* (1937).

a mystic and founder of the first Central American religious order, Missionary Servants of Christ the King. Martinez was born in Managua, Nicaragua, in 1898 to a wealthy Christian family. In fact she was the granddaughter of the first president of Nicaragua and also related to national heroine Rafaela Herrera (1742–1805), who at age 19 had helped soldiers defend the Fortress of the Immaculate Conception in El Castillo.

Much of Martinez's work was inspired by Catholic Action, a collection of groups trying to encourage Catholic influence in society. They focused on missions in marginalized urban neighborhoods, schools, temporary parishes, and eventually missionary work in rural areas.

In 1942 the Catholic archbishop authorized Martinez and some young women to start their own association and devote their lives to development of Catholic Action programs. Nicaraguan writer Edgard Zúñiga remarked of her nuns: "*Sonaba como algo absurdo e impensable. Las Congregaciones religiosas se fundaban en Europa. No en un país pequeño, pobre y sin ninguna importancia.*" ("It sounded like something absurd and unthinkable. [Religious congregations] were based in Europe. Not in a small, poor and unimportant country.")

These women missionaries continued their work with much enthusiasm—distributing the sacraments, organizing missions to parishes, teaching the catechism, and visiting prisons, hospitals, and other charity centers. Sister Albertina died in Granada, Spain, after falling ill and leaving Nicaragua due to the Civil War there in 1979. After her death an all-male monastery was founded dedicated to the same mission, known as Religiosos Albertinianos. In 2001 her followers began to seek her canonization.

In the end the life and work of women in Latin American Christianity had a very complex history, containing much that is violent, tragic, and unjust. Yet history can also be redemptive; some of that redemption can be seen through the achievements of Latin American women in social, educational, and political spheres. At the same time, the Latin American church still struggles to recognize and promote the value and dignity of women. 

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in Tao Alta, the second of five children; she converted during a revival in the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico in 1932. She preached all throughout the island and in 1935 left for the mainland as a missionary to share the gospel with the Spanish-speaking community in New York City.

There she cofounded the Damascus Christian Church in Spanish Harlem in 1939 and in 1957 began the Damascus Youth Crusade drug rehabilitation program. Mama Leo was known for her remark, "*Nosotras las mujeres no trataban como soldado de 3ra clase.*" ("We women were treated as third-class soldiers.") After being saved from addiction and converted under her ministry, pastor John Gimenez wrote about her in his memoir *Up Tight!*:

All of us—directly or indirectly—trace our "delivery" to that little Spanish church at 861 East 162nd Street. It was God's house all right. He was there. . . . In the little parlor you see Mom Rosado sitting with the Bible in her lap and she's got two or three boys sitting around, listening to her explain the message of God. . . . And people come in—broken people, rotten people, no goods, unwanted. The misfits of society walk through those open doors to new life.

NEW NUNS AND NEW ORDERS

In the twentieth century, Roman Catholic nuns also experienced change. Seclusion became less common, and they were able to fully engage with the communities around them. One example of these "new nuns" was Albertina Ramirez Martinez (1898–1979),



“A new Pentecost”

THE STORY OF MEDELLÍN

Edgardo Colón-Emeric

IN 1968 the Council of Latin American Catholic Bishops (CELAM) held a conference in Medellín, Colombia, with Pope Paul VI in attendance. The event has been celebrated—and condemned—as a fountainhead of liberation theology. Recalling his experience Bishop Marcos McGrath (1924–2000) said: “We left Medellín inspired as by a new Pentecost.”

NOT JUST BUSINESS AS USUAL

Over half a millennium, councils of the Catholic Church in Latin America mainly disseminated the teachings of European councils. While a few Latin American bishops attended the Council of Trent (1545–1563), it was overall a council of Europeans and for Europeans. The Council of Lima (1582–1583) and the Council of Mexico City (1585) then brought Trent’s version of ecclesial reform in the wake of the Protestant Reformation to Latin America.

Likewise though 53 Spanish-speaking bishops and 7 Portuguese-speaking bishops attended when Pope Pius IX (1792–1878) convened the First Vatican Council (1869–1870) to address European crises arising from the European Enlightenment, the end result was a Latin

A PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR? At Medellín, the bishops questioned structures “which keep the majority of our peoples in dismal poverty.”

American church that looked more like Rome, not the other way around.

Three decades later Pope Leo XIII (1810–1903) saw a need to consolidate the Latin American churches, fragmented from independence movements (see “Strangers in a strange land,” pp. 29–33). Nearly half of the Latin American bishops attended his Latin American Plenary Council in Rome in 1899. A series of Eucharistic congresses followed, culminating in Pope Pius XII (1876–1958) approving the formation of CELAM. It first met in Rio de Janeiro in 1955; when a second conference convened in Medellín in 1968, people expected that it would proceed with business as usual, adopting policies put forth in the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). The moment however was ripe for change.

Even after their official political independence, Latin American nations had retained economic dependence first on Great Britain and then the United States. The year 1959 proved to be a watershed moment; the



DEFENDERS OF SOLIDARITY The writings of José Míguez Bonino (*far left*) and Gustavo Gutiérrez (*left*) spread liberation theology to the English-speaking world.

Kennedy administration responded by propping up Puerto Rico as a model of liberal democracy and capitalist investment.

Kennedy's Alliance for Progress offered similar benefits to all Latin America, hoping to prevent further leftist and communist revolutions, but lack of adequate funding and internal inefficiencies doomed it to failure. Hyperinflation, social unrest, and political instability spiked in the 1960s. Alliances between Latin American economic elites and the United States unleashed right-wing coups all over Latin America. The masses were caught in the crosshairs.

THE SURPRISE OF MEDELLÍN

At Medellín the bishops committed themselves to ecclesial engagement in the social changes already underway. They decided first, to champion in Latin America the human values of justice, peace, education, and the family; second, to evangelize through catechesis and the liturgy; and third, to adapt the structures of the church to new Latin social realities. One report recorded an emotional call for a church of the poor:

A deafening cry pours from the throats of millions of men, asking their pastors for liberation that reaches them from nowhere else.... The Latin American bishops cannot remain indifferent in the face of the tremendous social injustices existent in Latin America.... Christ, our Savior, not only loved the poor, but rather being rich He became poor. He lived in poverty. His mission centered on advising the poor of their liberation and He founded His

Cuban revolution had shown the possibility of a Latin America free from economic and political dependence on the United States. The

like? First, it identified the church as being united in solidarity with the poor; second, it committed to work for the liberation of the poor; and third, it preached true communion among all children of God, not just the hierarchy. Medellín encouraged the already emerging movement of base ecclesial communities—groups gathering to worship and discuss the Bible in solidarity with each other rather than in submission to the church hierarchy. It also promoted other parachurch groups committed to the transformation of Latin American society.

The Second Vatican Council had invited Protestant observers to attend; the only Latin American Protestant who came was Argentinian Methodist José Míguez Bonino (1924–2012). He later wrote, “For the first time in the history of Christianity a Council is convened with the specific purpose of opening lines of communication, rather than building trenches and walls for the protection of the Christian faith.”

At Medellín Pope Paul VI invited Míguez Bonino once more. Deeply moved by the council's call for Protestants too to end their “social strike” and engage the realities of the Latin American context, Míguez Bonino affirmed the questions posed: How does the church catholic serve the peoples of Latin America? How is ecumenism a liberating movement in the continent? What is Jesus Christ's vocation and mission here and now? These questions would prove to be divisive.

But Medellín did not initially trouble the sleep of US Protestants. Dow Kirkpatrick, pastor of Atlanta's St. Mark United Methodist Church, wrote 10 years later, “Most of us were unaware of [Medellín] when it was happening. The publication in English of Gustavo Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation* (1973) led to the discovery that five years earlier a major watershed in modern church history had occurred.” Gutiérrez (b. 1928), a theologian and Dominican priest, had spoken at conferences on these issues and consulted at Medellín.

The fact that most North Americans first heard of Medellín from Catholic sources such as Gutiérrez led to a mistaken belief that Latin American Protestants were idle bystanders in this movement. But Protestant theologians like Míguez Bonino actively participated in Catholic movements, and the term “liberation theology” itself appears to have been coined by Brazilian Presbyterian Rubem Alves (1933–2014). Currents running through Medellín converged with similar streams in Latin American Protestantism in the work of theologians like Julio de Santa Ana (b. 1934) and Emilio Castro (1927–2013).

MEDELLÍN AMONG THE EVANGELICALS

Like their Catholic counterparts, Latin American Protestants had been overlooked by the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. In 1949 the first Latin American Evangelical Conference (CELA I) defined Protestantism in Latin America as a single “evangelical” movement embracing all non-Catholic Christians. But when CELA II met in Peru in 1961, seams in its unity were already beginning to show.

One sticking point was evangelical engagement with ecumenism. The word itself sounded too close to “communism” and evoked specters of a modernist, liberal Christianity ill-fitted for the realities of Latin America. The formation of Church and Society in Latin America (ISAL) with the support of the World Council of Churches in 1961 brought even greater consternation; ISAL applied the “Theology of Revolution” of Presbyterian theologian Richard Shaull (1919–2002) and Marxist analysis to the Latin American struggle.


These theological currents had caused anxiety among North American Christians long before Medellín. They tarred CELA II in Peru in 1961 as pro-communist—one result was the brief arrest of some of the conference’s key leaders, like Míguez Bonino. By the time CELA III met in Buenos Aires in 1969, a few months after Medellín, opposition was fully mobilized.

The Evangelical Committee on Latin America (ECLA), an evangelical missions organization that had formed in 1959, boycotted CELA III and staged the first “Congress for Latin American Evangelization” (CLADE) in the same year. Míguez Bonino spoke at CELA III and was invited to attend CLADE I—for what many hoped would be an encore of his CELA III address—but he was not allowed to speak because organizers perceived his thought as too close to European theologians like Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann.

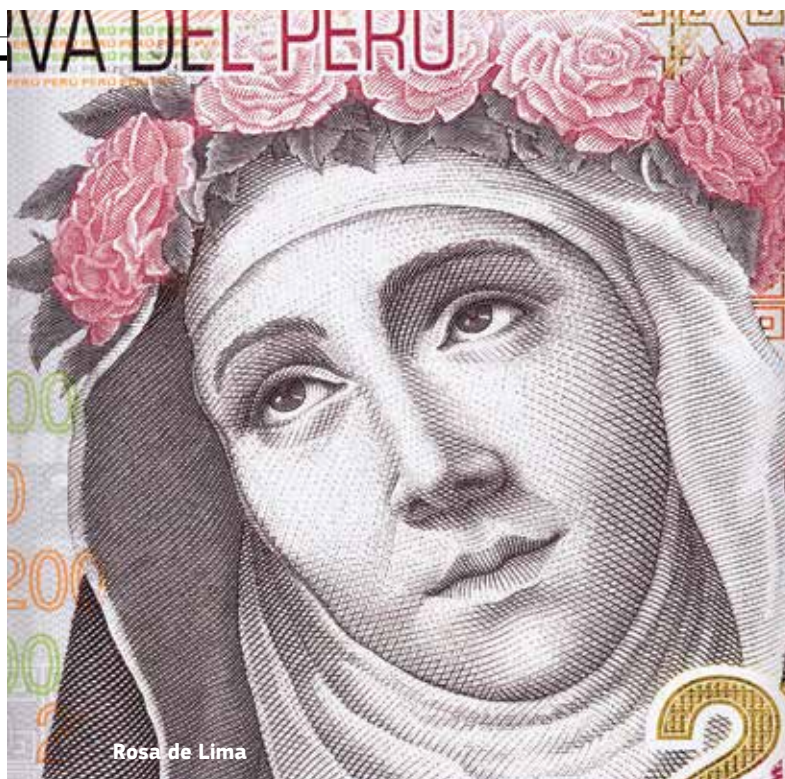
Yet at Medellín after many years and against all expectations, seeds of the gospel sown in soil bloodied by the swords of conquistadors, the bullets of narcotics,



POLITICAL PROBLEMS Critics of liberation theology linked it to the Marxism of revolutionaries like Che Guevara (pictured *top* between Mexican and Cuban flags). Proponents argued it was the best way to serve marginalized groups like these indigenous Catholics greeting Pope Paul VI at Medellín (*bottom*).

and the money of multinational corporations yielded fruit. The bishops proclaimed that we are called to be one so that the world—particularly the poor and marginalized—may believe that the Father has sent the Son, who became poor so as to make many rich. That idea continues to challenge the global church. And the question of whether liberation theology represented a compromise with political movements to achieve that goal, or truly was a new Pentecost, has not died away. 

Edgardo Colón-Emeric is Irene and William McCutchen Associate Professor of Reconciliation and Theology at Duke Divinity School, director of the Center for Reconciliation, and senior strategist for the Hispanic House of Studies. He is an ordained United Methodist minister.



Charity toward all

FASCINATING STORIES FROM 500 YEARS OF LATIN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

Charlie Self

MARTIN DE PORRES (1579–1639)

Martin de Porres was the illegitimate son of a Spanish grandee (nobleman) of Lima and a slave with African and indigenous blood. At age 12 he was apprenticed to a barber-surgeon and learned how to cut hair, draw blood, and apply medicines. He sensed a call to become a monk, but the institutional racism of the religious orders blocked him. He faced constant ridicule as a “half-breed” and someone with a “father unknown.”

When he was 15, he became a servant at the Dominican Convent of the Rosary, rising quickly from errand boy to administrator. He became known for his kind, patient temperament and at 23 took vows as a Dominican lay brother. He experienced harassment from fellow monks but refused to react. Once he violated the monastery’s quarantine to care for the very sick; when confronted he responded, “Forgive my error, and please instruct me, for I did not know that the precept of obedience took precedence over that of charity.”

Miraculous stories about de Porres grew to mythological proportions, including his taking flight, being bilocal (in two places at once), speaking words of knowledge, and healing the sick. What is sure is that he knew suffering and took situations that would make most people bitter as opportunities

ON THE MONEY Today Rosa de Lima and Martin de Porres are honored everywhere from currency in Peru (*left*) to a window in England (*right*).

for love. Canonized in 1962 as the first black saint in the Americas, he is considered the patron saint of Peruvian social justice, people of mixed race, barbers, and public health servants.

ROSA DE LIMA (1586–1617)

Rosa de Lima was born Isabel Flores de Oliva to a Spanish father and a *criolla* (Peru-born) mother, taking the name Rosa at confirmation. Her parents’ plans for her included a successful arranged marriage connecting them to another influential family and resulting in children to expand their fortune and influence.

But even as a little girl, de Lima felt called to the religious life; she engaged in daily adoration of the Eucharist, praying before the altar and contemplating Jesus’s sufferings. By all accounts she was physically beautiful and an attractive match. To ward off suitors, she rubbed her face with pepper and cut off her hair. From adolescence on she remained mostly cloistered in her room, sleeping only two hours a

HITTING THE BOOKS *Right:* "Have [women] not a rational soul as men do?," asked Juana Inés de la Cruz in defending a woman's right to study.

PREACHING THE WORD *Below:* Willis Hoover and Francisco Olázabal were both key to the electric growth of Latin American Pentecostalism.

night and filling her time with sacrificial prayer and fasting. In 1606 she became a Dominican tertiary—one who kept some rules of a religious order while living "in the world."

After that she often wore a heavy silver crown with spikes to remind her of the crown of thorns worn by Jesus and the discipline needed for earning the crown of glory awaiting the faithful. She lived this way for 11 years, dying at 31. Devotion to her grew quickly, and she was canonized in 1671 as the first Catholic saint from the Americas. She is considered the patron saint of Peru and of all indigenous people in the Americas.

JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ (1651–1695)

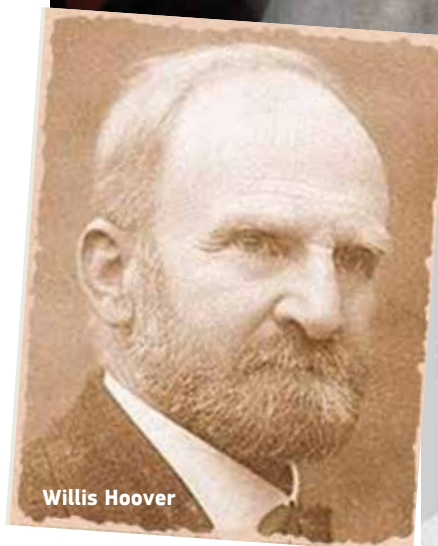
Juana Inés Ramirez de Asbaje, the out-of-wedlock daughter of a *criolla* mother and Spanish noble father, was born in San Miguel Nepantla, Mexico—now renamed in her honor. At 16 she took vows as a Discalced Carmelite, the more severe of the two major Carmelite orders—"discalced" means "without shoes"—and took on the name "de la Cruz" (of the Cross) as a sign of devotion. From 1669 until death, she lived in the cloister of the Convent of San Geronimo.

The prolific Juana was one of the last great writers of the Golden Age of the Spanish Baroque. In addition to scholarly works and spiritual reflections, she penned romances, sonnets, dramas, and comedies plus carols in Nahuatl and creole dialects. For several years she enjoyed governmental patronage for her writings: many featured brave and wise women as heroines. In the famed poem "Hombres Necios" ("Foolish Men"), she criticizes men for their illogical generalizations about women. Her most influential long poem *Primero Sueno* (*First Dream*) charts the soul's ultimately incomplete quest for perfect knowledge.

In 1690 the Bishop of Puebla, writing under the pseudonym of an anonymous nun, suggested that she should stick to traditional religious exercises befitting a female. In Juana's *Repuesta* (*Response*), a masterpiece of gentle rebuke, she declared, "One can perfectly well philosophize while cooking supper." But the last years of her life were less public, and she retreated into more traditional activities, even doing penance for some of her more controversial writings.



Juana Inés de la Cruz



Willis Hoover



Francisco Olázabal

WILLIS COLLINS HOOVER (1858–1936)

Willis Hoover, a Methodist Episcopal Church (South) pastor in Chile, knew about the Azusa Street Revival of 1906–1909, but it was not directly linked to his work. When revival came to his Valparaíso church in 1909, the resulting movement quickly became uniquely Chilean and spread to other countries through enthusiastic outreach. In 1910 the MEC(S) repudiated the revival; in response Hoover and others established the Methodist Pentecostal Church (MPC).

Rejecting the narrow evidence of speaking in tongues as the key sign of Spirit baptism and retaining Wesleyan-Holiness emphases, Hoover focused on transformed character and zeal. He was most excited when sharing the testimonies of people changed by the gospel—"felons and fearsome men" who were now productive members of church and of society.

Although he was unable to accept that Chileans could run churches as well as North Americans, Hoover *was* proud that the Spirit was moving independently of US missions that had rejected Pentecostal vitality. He could be separatist, refusing to join broad evangelical efforts that disagreed with his views on the Holy Spirit. But A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, once called him “the most successful missionary in Chile.”

After Hoover’s death in 1936, Chilean Pentecostalism continued to grow. When the MPC was invited to join the Assemblies of God in 1942, it politely declined. Today other Chilean Pentecostal groups call themselves “evangelical” to distinguish themselves from Hoover’s movement.

FRANCISCO OLÁZABAL (1886–1937)

Pentecostal evangelist Francisco Olázabal had a healing ministry that spanned decades and reached across borders. Aimee Semple MacPherson, founder of the Foursquare Church, called him the “Mexican Billy Sunday.”

He was born into a traditional Roman Catholic family in Mexico; when his mother became Methodist, his father left. At the age of 16, he rededicated his life to Christ and later enrolled at Moody Bible Institute. In 1911 he moved to El Paso to pastor a Spanish-speaking Methodist church; he soon married Macrina Orozco and was ordained as a Methodist.

Influenced by his mentors George and Carrie Montgomery, who had become “full gospel” Pentecostals and had to leave the Salvation Army, Olázabal received ordination with the Assemblies of God (AOG) in September 1916. He planted churches, pioneered a Bible college in 1922, and in 1923 founded the Latin American Council of Churches, the first independent Latin American evangelical denomination in the United States. In the midst of this, he also carried out extensive evangelistic work in the United States and Mexico. Staying in the AOG for just a few years, in 1936 he affiliated with A. J. Tomlinson’s Church of God movement (later the Church of God of Prophecy).

ROMANA CARBAJAL DE VALENZUELA (D. 1918)

In the early twentieth century, emerging Pentecostal

“MANIPULATED BY GOD” Óscar Romero (*below top*) waves to the crowd at his consecration as bishop in 1970. Ten years later he would be martyred.

REVIVAL PREACHER Oneness Pentecostals such as Romana Carbajal (*below bottom*) emphasized holy living, modest female dress, and avoiding worldly habits.



Óscar Romero



Romana de Carbajal

movements split over many issues; one, remaining to this day, concerns the Trinity. Millions of global “Oneness” Pentecostals do not affirm what they consider the unbiblical Nicene Creed. Instead they assert that God is one Person manifesting as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and properly called Jesus Christ. They also preach that assurance of salvation only comes through the sign of speaking in tongues.

Into this world came dedicated and fiery evangelist Romana Carbajal de Valenzuela. Born in the Chihuahua region of Mexico and raised Congregationalist, she lived for a season in California and was

deeply affected by the Azusa Street Revival. She moved back to Mexico in 1914, and the Iglesia Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús began when she converted 12 family members (see “Virgins, nuns, preachers,” pp. 37–40).

By 1916 Carbajal was part of a church in Ciudad Chihuahua led by Pentecostal Methodist Ruben Ortega. In that same year, she embarked on evangelistic missions in the south of Mexico. Her musical abilities, humility, and powerful communication skills made her a popular evangelist, and she soon identified

BLESS YOU, MY CHILD Pope Francis meets with children from around the world at the Vatican in 2018.

with emerging Oneness movements. This limited her access to some audiences but offered both Catholics and Protestants an alternative to staid ecclesiastical traditions, one that quickly spread. She died soon afterward, but Oneness Pentecostalism lived on.

ÓSCAR ROMERO (1917–1980)

Óscar Romero came from a working-class family in San Miguel, El Salvador, and learned carpentry from his father; however he wanted to be a priest. Ordained in 1942 he obtained a doctorate and devoted himself to a simple life—first serving as parish priest and rector of a local seminary and then serving the Bishop's Conference and overseeing a conservative newspaper.

As Marxist rebels grew in influence and their right-wing opponents brutally repressed rebellion, Romero sought to make peace. He was not an advocate of early liberation theology; he cared deeply for justice, but believed the movement fused Marxism and Christianity. In 1977 he was appointed an archbishop; conservatives and elites rejoiced at this “safe” choice.

Within weeks right-wing forces supported by the government (and the United States) murdered his dear friend Jesuit priest Rutilio Grande. Romero became a prophetic, nonviolent advocate for justice. He led public processions, wrote, spoke on the radio in broadcasts considered the only real news for many, and preached passionate sermons. After the military junta seized power in 1979, he wrote to US president Jimmy Carter, asking him to end aid to the junta, but no change came.

Base community leaders in Nicaragua admired Romero's ability to empower the poor and vulnerable. When some accused him of being manipulated by communists, church leader Ricardo Urríoste declared, “He was manipulated by God. He was a man of prayer, a Churchman who greatly loved the poor.”

On March 23, 1980, Romero gave a radio address calling on soldiers: “Brothers, you belong to our own people. You kill your own brother peasants; and in the face of an order to kill that is given by a man, the law of God that says, ‘Do not kill!’ should prevail.” The next day, he was murdered while celebrating Mass. A few weeks before he had proclaimed, “As a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If I am killed, I shall rise in the Salvadoran people.” In 2018 he was canonized. ☒

Charlie Self is professor of church history at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and director of city expansion at Made to Flourish. His books include Flourishing Churches and Communities, The Power of Faithful Focus, and The Divine Dance.



Pope Francis (b. 1936)

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as the oldest of five children. His father was an immigrant from Italy and his mother was the daughter of Italian immigrants. He once told an interviewer that he had worked as a nightclub bouncer, a janitor, and an assistant in a chemical laboratory before becoming a Jesuit novice in 1958.

After a period of time teaching literature and philosophy, Bergoglio obtained a theological education and was ordained a priest in 1969; he took his final vows to the Jesuits in 1973. He continued to teach while also rising in the leadership of the Jesuit order; at one point he considered getting a PhD, but never completed it. In 1992 he was named auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires; upon the death of his predecessor in 1998, he became sole (“metropolitan”) archbishop of Buenos Aires. In 2001 Pope John Paul II made him a cardinal.

In 2013 after Pope Benedict XVI shocked the world by retiring and becoming Pope Emeritus, Bergoglio was elected pope. Observers were surprised that the Catholic Church now had its first pope from the Americas; in fact, he is the first pope from outside Europe in over 1,200 years! Controversial but also popular among Latin American Catholics, Francis has made frequent official visits to Latin America in his six years as pope, including to Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Panama. —Jennifer Woodruff Tait



Rooted and released

DIVERSITY AND COMPLEXITY MARK TODAY'S LATIN AMERICAN CHURCH

WHERE IS LATIN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY today? We sat down with issue advisors uncle and niece Justo L. González and Ondina E. González, co-authors of *Christianity in Latin America* and *Nuestra Fe*. Ondina is an independent scholar and co-edited *Raising an Empire*. Justo, a United Methodist minister, has taught at the *Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico* and *Candler School of Theology* and has written many books including *A History of Christian Thought* and *The Story of Christianity*.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY: Is it even possible to make generalizations about Latin American Christianity?

JUSTO L. GONZÁLEZ: Like any other human situation, it is very complex. But the two faces of the church from the colonial period still exist—a focus on liberation versus a focus on institution—in every main expression of faith. Catholics are divided between those concerned about liberation theology and those interested in institutional power. . . . In mainline Protestant churches, there's a great deal of work in social service, social justice, and critique of the social order, but another branch of those churches says, "We're supposed to save souls, make people holy, and stay out of the temporal world."

In Pentecostalism there's been huge growth in the prosperity gospel, which preaches that God will give material prosperity as a sign of divine favor—as in Brazil with the enormously wealthy Igreja Universal do Reino

CHANGING HANDS La Misión San Xavier del Bac, a famed mission founded in Mexico in 1692, is in Arizona today because the United States bought the land in 1854.

de Deus, controlled by one man. But other Pentecostals are becoming more engaged in social movements.

ONDINA GONZÁLEZ: I recently met a couple from Mexico who have moved to Macon, Georgia, and started an Asambleas (Assemblies) church to minister to the local Latino population.

JG: There are Brazilian missionaries in Africa and Australia, and Korean missionaries in Argentina.

OG: Latin America received all these missionaries and now has turned around and is sending out missionaries. And among those are a lot of women.

CH: Say more about women in leadership today.

OG: In Catholic churches there are women in leadership but not at the top of the hierarchy. It's been that way for a long time.

JG: In most countries there's been a shortage of Catholic priests; maybe one for 50,000 believers. Laymen don't think the church is masculine. Women fill the gap. Whole parishes are run by women. They don't say Mass, but they preach. The priest comes occasionally and consecrates elements to be distributed later by the women, who also hear confession but don't give absolution.

OG: After the Mexican Revolution, the state turned against the church and the church suspended the administration of sacraments. Priests and monastics were run out of town, but laywomen held clandestine meetings and led clandestine Bible studies.

Later women were active in base communities. I think women have always been there; numbers aren't greater today, but woman leaders may be more visible.

JG: In Latin America leadership has to do with class as much as gender. Being a woman may be much less important than being rich and having prestige. The Catholic Action movement was led by *damas encopetadas* (ladies with fancy hairdos).

OG: Well-heeled, we'd say in English.

JG: Very often the conflict between parish priests and base communities is also a conflict of gender between male priests and women leading base communities.

OG: Women grapple very differently with poverty, public health for children, and education for children. When you're fighting for your children, you tend to fight a lot harder than for yourself, whether you are male or female; in Latin America females traditionally have had the most responsibility for children.

JG: Because of the freedom of the Spirit, many Pentecostal churches have been founded and led by women, but sometimes don't ordain women when they organize formally. In the United States, beginning in the 1970s, there was a great push to ordain women. My wife and I went to a meeting of Latin American bishops and noticed that in the US people argue women have a *right* to be ordained. [Catherine Gunsalus González is professor emerita of church history at Columbia Theological Seminary and a Presbyterian minister.—Editors] In Latin America they argue that people have a right to *ministry*, so we must allow women to minister. That reflects ideas of liberation theology.

OG: It also reflects the idea of community. The community has a right to be ministered to. . . . It's interesting to me that a growing percentage of the population is not affiliated with a church or has multiple religious affiliations. A Brazilian might practice Candomblé, but also belong to a Catholic church.

JG: [Yet] there are more deeply committed believers in every church. When I was growing up as a Protestant in Cuba, theoretically just about everyone was Catholic, but hardly anyone was a practicing Catholic. Today there are fewer Catholics, but they are *really* Catholic.

OG: In Cuba for a long time to be a member of a church was a serious political risk. But eventually the state turned to the churches to provide health care and aid during crises because churches had set up networks of care and support despite that risk. It's very similar to the early church. Christianity spread because early Christians saw people in need and helped them.

CH: What are some trends in modern worship?



COME, HOLY SPIRIT Ecuadorian Pentecostals worship.

JG: When I was growing up, my Catholic friends would say, "I'm going to hear Mass." The obligation was to *hear* it, not *participate*. I think that has changed, with Mass in the vernacular, and the cup returned to the laity. Now people often go to the *Protestant* church to hear and follow along with a band making some contemporary music. The active role of the laity in worship is diminished. There are even some leaders who give themselves the title "worshiper."

OG: Some churches are trying to reclaim pre-Columbian elements, using indigenous instruments in music or giving corn a prominent role. It asserts cultural identity by going back to a pristine Latin America—well, not pristine—

JG: Older? In Guatemala there are divisions between those who want to use corn and fire and dance and those who say "This is heathen" and give resistance.

OG: The colonial Catholic Church tried to extirpate anything that reminded people of past worship practices. But the second and third generations after conquest apparently didn't see contradictions.

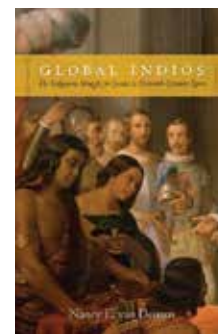
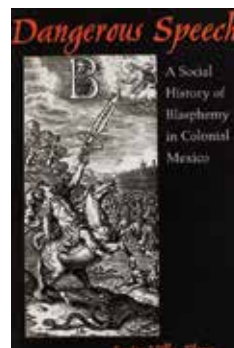
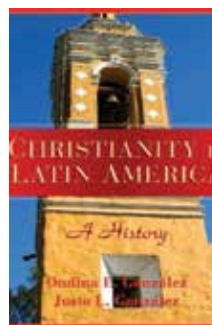
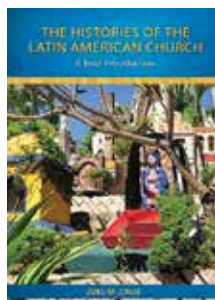
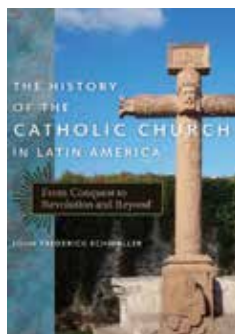
JG: There have been recent finds of little indigenous images hidden in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Catholic altars. So when people were kneeling, who were they kneeling to?

OG: When it comes to actual practices, there's still a high level of devotion to the saints, which has a long tradition and is also part of popular culture.

JG: This is how religions cross in Latin America. Every Voodoo, Candomblé, or Santería god is associated with a saint. Santa Barbara, patron saint of gunners and artillery, is also the Santería god of thunder. A saint may be associated with an Indian tradition, a Catholic tradition, and an African tradition. Sometimes this disturbs outsiders, even the same people who have egg hunts and bunnies on Easter Sunday. I think we all tend to mix traditions. We recognize it only when other people do it. ☐

Recommended resources

HERE ARE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CH EDITORIAL STAFF AND THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS THAT BEGIN TO EXPLORE THE COMPLEX SUBJECT OF LATIN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY.



BOOKS

Some **basic books about the history of Christianity in Latin America** include Enrique Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America* (1974) and (as editor) *The Church in Latin America 1492–1992* (1992); Justo and Ondina González, *Christianity in Latin America* (2007) and (as editors) the sourcebook *Nuestra Fe* (2014); Lee Penyak and Walter Petry, eds., *Religion and Society in Latin America* (2009); John Schwaller, *The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America* (2011); John Lynch, *New Worlds* (2012); and Joel Cruz, *The Histories of the Latin American Church: A Handbook* (2014) and *The Histories of the Latin American Church: A Brief Introduction* (2014).

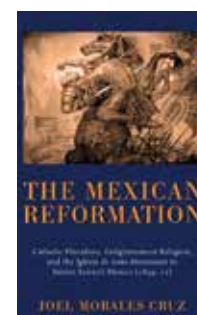
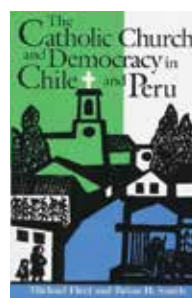
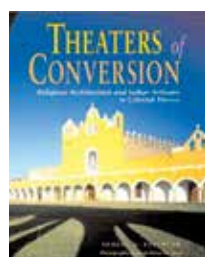
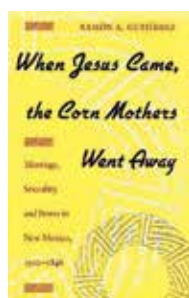
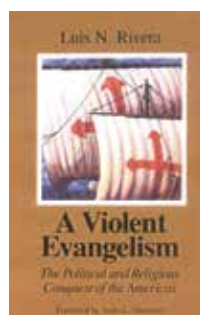
Gain an understanding of **pre-Columbian religion and society** in Gordon McEwan, *The Incas* (2006); David Carrasco, *Daily Life of the Aztecs* (2008); Michael Smith, *The Aztecs* (2012); and Michael Coe and Stephen Houston, *The Maya* (2015).

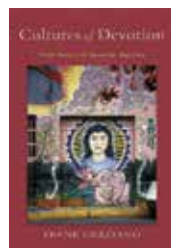
The **colonial period** is treated in David Sweet and Gary Nash, eds., *Struggle & Survival in Colonial America* (1981); Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests* (1987); Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went*

Away (1991); Kevin Gosner, *Soldiers of the Virgin* (1992); James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest* (1992); Luis Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism* (1992); Steve Stern, *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest* (1992); Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World* (1997); Susan Schroeder, *Native Resistance and the Pax Colonial in New Spain* (1998); Kenneth Andrien, *Andean Worlds* (2001); Samuel Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion* (2001); Kenneth Mills, William Taylor, and Sandra Lauderdale Graham, eds., *Colonial Latin America* (2002); Javier Villa-Flores, *Dangerous Speech* (2006); and Susan Schroeder and Stafford Poole, eds., *Religion in New Spain* (2015).

Slavery and Afro-Latin life form the focus of Nicole Von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers* (2006); Ben Vinson III and Herbert Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2007); Nancy Van Deusen, *Global Indios* (2012); and Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, *Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico* (2018).

Church and state relations and conflicts between Catholicism and Protestantism through the





nineteenth century feature in Jay Kinsbruner, *Independence in Spanish America* (1994); Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Protestantism in Guatemala* (1998); Anthony Gill, *Rendering unto Caesar* (1998); Michael Fleet and Brian Smith, *The Catholic Church and Democracy in Chile and Peru* (2000); Juan Kessler Jr., *Conflict in Missions* (2001); Hendrik Kraay, *Race, State, and Armed Forces in Independent-Era Brazil* (2001); Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion* (2001); Matthew Butler, *Popular Piety and Political Identity in Mexico's Cristero Rebellion* (2004); and Joel Cruz, *The Mexican Reformation* (2011).

Gain an introduction to **worship**, to the **Virgin of Guadalupe**, and to **folk religion** in Justo González, ed., *¡Alabadle!: Hispanic Christian Worship* (1996); William Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred* (1996); Frank Graziano, *Cultures of Devotion* (2006); Martin Nesvig, ed., *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico* (2006); Nora Jaffary, *False Mystics* (2008); Brian Larkin, *The Very Nature of God* (2011); Timothy Matovina, *Theologies of Guadalupe* (2018); William Taylor, *Shrines and Miraculous Images* (2019); and the coffee-table art book *The Virgin of Guadalupe* (2012) by John Annerino.

Read more about **women's roles** in Mary Giles, *Women in the Inquisition* (1998); Kathleen Ann Myers, *Neither Saints nor Sinners* (2003); Nancy Van Deusen, *Embodying the Sacred* (2017); Brianna Leavitt-Alcántara, *Alone at the Altar* (2018); María Del Socorro Castañeda-Liles, *Our Lady of Everyday Life* (2018); and Jessica Delgado, *Laywomen and the Making of Colonial Catholicism in New Spain, 1630–1790* (2018).

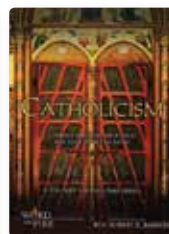
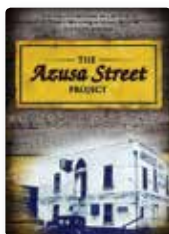
Finally, learn about **Pentecostalism**, **liberation theology**, and **other twentieth-century developments** in Todd Hartch, *Missionaries of the State* (2006) and *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity* (2014); Paul Freston, ed., *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America* (2008); Daniel Salinas, *Latin American Evangelical Theology in the 1970's* (2009); Justo González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (2010); Daniel Ramírez, *Migrating Faith* (2015); Miguel Alvarez, ed., *The Reshaping of Mission in Latin America* (2016); Edward Cleary and Hannah Stewart-Gambino, eds., *Power, Politics, and Pentecostals in Latin America* (2018); Lilian Calles Barger, *The World Come of Age: An Intellectual History of Liberation Theology* (2018); and Edgardo Colón-Emeric, *Oscar Romero's Theological Vision* (2018).



CHRISTIAN HISTORY ISSUES

Here are past issues on some topics related to this issue's themes. You can read them all online, and some are still available for purchase:

- 35: *Columbus and Christianity*
- 58: *Rise of Pentecostalism*
- 62: *Bound for Canaan*
- 109: *Modern Age of Persecution*



VIDEOS FROM VISION VIDEO

Videos on this issue's topic include *Azusa Street Project*; some episodes of the 5-DVD set *Catholicism*; and *Romero: Collector's Edition*.

WEBSITES

For the English-speaking reader, some places to begin include the [Modern History Sourcebook](#) (especially the sections on colonial and twentieth-century Latin America); a [Pew Research Report on Religion in Latin America](#); an issue of *Fuller Studio* devoted to the encounters between Europeans and indigenous Latin Americans; a [collection of links on Pentecostalism](#) by a professor at Drew University; and the somewhat quirky website [LiberationTheology.org](#) (which is not limited to Latin American forms of liberation theology). Search engines will also lead you to articles on many of the major figures discussed here. ¶

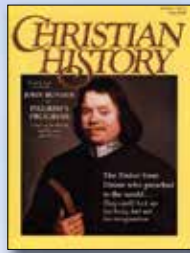


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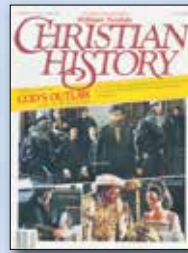
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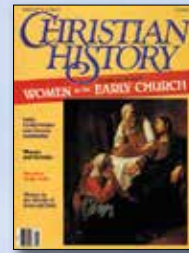
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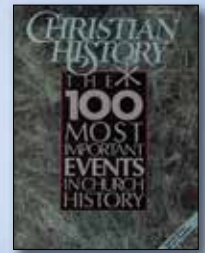
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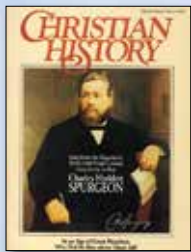
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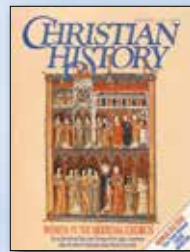
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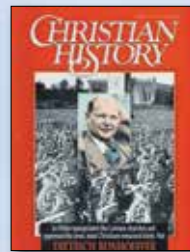
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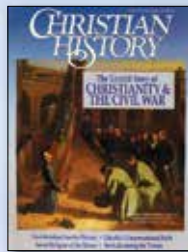
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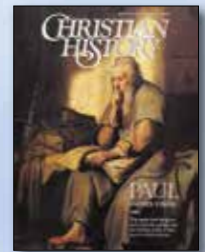
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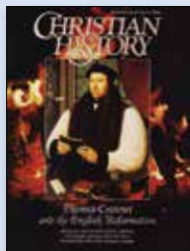
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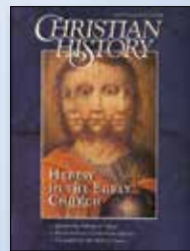
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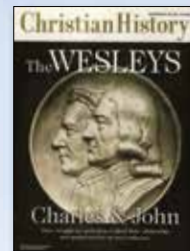
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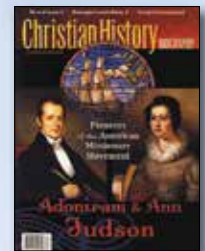
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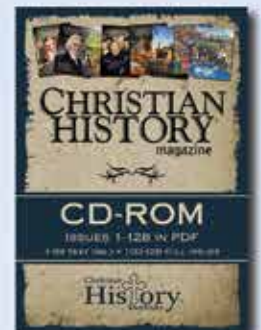
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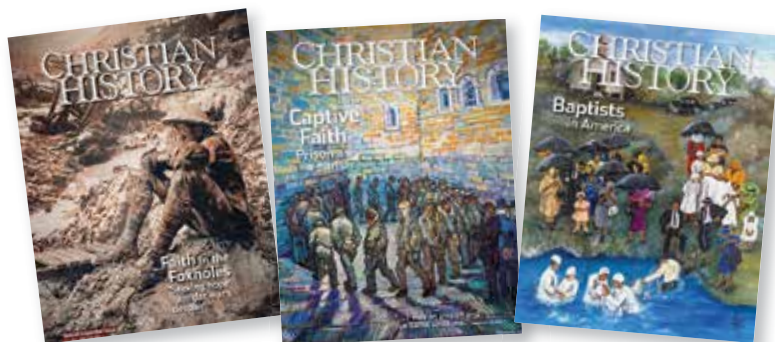
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