

Latin America and the Caribbean

pp. 532-548

Ninian Smart., (1998) The world's religions Cambridge University Press

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Trwyddedwyd i'w ddefnyddio ar gyfer y cwrs HPRS5007 - Exploring Religions in Latin America

Teitl: The world's religions

Enw'r Awdur: Ninian Smart.

Enw'r Cyhoeddwr: Cambridge University Press

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The Spirit of the Conquest

Although the original aim of sailing west from the Iberian peninsula was to reach Asia, and it was not until about 1520, nearly thirty years after Columbus' first landing, that the Spaniards were fully convinced that what they had found was really a New World, the discovery of these vast lands and their exploitation were taken up with a kind of crusading zest. The expulsion of the Muslims from Spain had been an arduous business, but it fired the Spaniards, and to a lesser degree the Portuguese, with a Catholic zeal. And to complicate matters, there was the Reformation, causing Europe to disintegrate religiously but reinforcing the value of commitment to the Catholic cause. The fact that the Spaniards acted in the New World with great cruelty and greed should not blind us to the fact that they thought themselves to be doing God's will. The Church followed on the heels of the Conquistadores, and there was held up before the eyes of the faithful the prospect of a great extension of Christ's work.

The general attitude to indigenous religions, such as the Aztec and the Inca systems, was one of horror and disdain. The Aztec practice of human sacrifice was not easy to take. But the true horrors lay in the general idolatry of the New World's inhabitants. The gods were often seen by Catholics as creatures of the Devil. So much, therefore, of the native culture had to be rooted out. Disentangling culture from religion was itself a problem, and so much of the indigenous literatures and creations were simply destroyed.

The spirit of the conquest was one of dedication to a sacred cause at the same time as the opportunity for hugely exploiting the conquered population. And because of the advent of the Counter-Reformation the Church had the

motivation and the apparatus to carry orthodox Catholic faith to the New World. The conquest was then in its own way a crusade.

The astonishing ease of some of the conquests was uncanny. It lay in the fact that the two great empires the Spaniards encountered were so centralized. The Spaniards struck at the brain of these empires and paralyzed their bodies. Their superiority lay in their horses and muskets, and their ships and cannons. The rapidity and glory of the conquests boosted the self-confidence of the victors and their belief that their civilization and religion were immensely superior to those of the peoples they had come to dominate.

By 1700 the Spanish domains in the New World were immense, running from California and Texas to Patagonia and from Ecuador to the Caribbean. The Portuguese ruled over the huge area of Brazil, after some fighting with the rival Dutch (who kept a base in Surinam). But certain areas were highly important and others thinly populated and marginal. The rich and densely populated places were Peru and Mexico (known as New Spain), together with part of the Caribbean. It was during the period leading to the consolidation of power over so great an area that the way of life of the New World was worked out and in this the Church played a leading part.

Disputes Over the Treatment of the Indians

For better or worse the natives were called *indios*, or Indians, because the theory was that Columbus and his successors had reached India. Indians the native populations would remain. There was indeed some question as to how they should be treated. Were they to be regarded as fully human? The effect on the Indians of the conquest and its aftermath was to be devastating. This was not merely because so many were virtually enslaved, and worked in unspeakable conditions in the silver mines of Peru and elsewhere. It was also because of the incidence of European diseases, and above all smallpox. Estimating populations from the data available is not an easy job, but it may be that by 1700 the population of New Spain was only a tenth of what it had been in 1500. An important question was how the Indians were to be treated, both by the Church and by the civil powers.

In this debate a crucial role was played by Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566). He had been born in Seville and gone overseas to take part in the subjugation of the large island of Hispaniola (now divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic). He became a priest, but went on to take part in the bitter conquest of Cuba. In both islands he got lands under the *encomienda* system. It was a kind of feudalism, in which land with villages would be acquired by a Spaniard, usually as a reward for campaigning and conquest. At the age of forty, however, he was converted to a deep concern over the plight of the Indians and from that time on became their unwavering defender, speaking out boldly and plainly against the atrocities being committed against them. He gave up his own estates. His energies were considerable, and he was involved in various struggles and projects, including a colony in Venezuela that unsuccessfully tried to blend Spanish and Indians in agricultural work.

Opposite The mythic dimension: a narrative of significance for Indians focused upon the Virgin of Guadalupe who spoke in the indigenous language, Nahuatl, and thus became a reminder of how the Divine speaks to the Indians as well as to the Spaniards. Here she is seen returning after being taken in procession through Sucre, Bolivia.

Las Casas was successful in his advocacy of Indian rights at the court, and agitated against a number of abuses. He was a force for adopting the New Laws in 1542, which in some measure protected Indian rights. He passionately advocated the equality of all human beings, and in his great *History of the Indies* he catalogued some of the major cruelties and hypocrisies that had been used in the extension of the faith: for him, mission should be a matter of preaching and gentle exhortation, not of violence and enslavement. There were those who argued, on a nakedly racist basis, that the Indians were inferior and as one put it "almost as monkeys to humans." He with vehement passion argued that the Indians had souls as much as the Whites. His career, and his tireless hostility to the abuses of colonialism, helped somewhat to mitigate the plight of the indigenous peoples of the New World.

A Religion for Both Peoples

The New World was a place for many Spaniards to settle. It gave vast opportunities for them. It was also of course the place of the Indians, and much of later history concerns the relations between these parties. But there was also a growing class of people of mixed descent. These *mestizos* were differentiated from the Whites, who held control over much of Latin American history. The latter themselves were divided into *criollos*, that is, those who were born and raised in the New World, and home-born Spaniards. Essentially, the liberation of the New World from Spain at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a *criollo* revolt against metropolitan control, and largely left the institutions in place.

The pattern which emerged in much of Mexico and Peru was that the Indians were organized into their own villages, where missionaries from various orders—Franciscans, Dominicans, and others—would labor, teaching them by means of vernacular languages. The secular priests (that is, ordinary priests not belonging to any of the orders) would minister to the Whites, and, after a generation or two, to the *mestizos*. So a form of segregation was practiced. It had the advantage from the colonists' point of view that the Indians if settled into villages were easier to control. They could also be the more easily incorporated into the system of *encomiendas*, and so into the pattern of forced labor. In outlying areas priests and monks would wander from village to village preaching Christianity, and this corresponded to the Church's growing ideal of mission work, following the prescription of Las Casas.

Much in the conversion of Indians was forced, and little compunction was shown in uprooting indigenous religion and destroying the gods of the conquered. In some degree the Catholic cult of saints helped to cover the reemergence of some of the old gods, however: or at least to provide alternatives to them. The most important saint in Mexico came to be Our Lady of Guadalupe: here, just outside Mexico City, the Virgin had appeared to an Indian and spoken to him in the native language of Nahuatl. She became a symbol of a religion which was now itself *mestizo*: the Mary of the Spaniards also spoke the language of the Indians. Throughout the great



regions of Latin America there remain pockets of indigenous culture and religion which have not much been touched by the missionary enterprise; but it is remarkable, even so, how wide the net of Catholicism was cast. Much of the conversion took place after the Council of Trent, so a kind of reformed Catholicism could work with greater effectiveness, and it was a highly ornate baroque style of art and architecture which was brought to the New World. Some of the great edifices of Catholic cathedrals in the many cities were built over pre-Christian sites, such as the site of the Templo Mayor in Mexico City, where once the Aztec emperor had performed his human sacrifices.

The Indians came to perceive that, great as was the catastrophe of the arrival of the Spaniards, it was not the end of the world. Were the old sacrifices really necessary? The invaders seemed to trample the gods with impunity. In the second half of the sixteenth century the Inquisition was also at work in the New World, rooting out idolatry, heresy, and Judaism. It was able to deal with captured Protestant seamen among others, and initially was somewhat directed at backsliders among the Indians; but a more paternalistic spirit later prevailed, for they were reckoned to be too naive to be held fully responsible. For a long period, indeed, it was impossible for non-Spaniards to be priests, so that what was institutionalized was a thoroughly paternalistic system.

Paternalism in Paraguay and California

This paternalism can be illustrated by a Jesuit and a Franciscan example. The Jesuits had been admitted to the New World from the mid-sixteenth century on, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they began to organize what were called Reductions, or regimented villages, on great estates that had been given to the Order either by royal grant or in some other way. In these settlements the Indians were taught useful crafts and skills. Schools were opened and the local languages preserved and reduced to writing. It was a kind of benevolent dictatorship: complete obedience to the Jesuit fathers was enforced, and for the rest the Indians shared everything in common, on a basis of equality. It was religious communism. The Indians were there, not by choice on the whole, but because they had been born into the system or put there in recompense for some wrongdoing.

The great discipline of the Jesuits was matched by their devotion to education, but this was very narrowly conceived. In their universe education was a matter of hierarchy. The Church had the *magisterium* or teaching function. As soldiers of the Pope, they would hand down the truth. It was not a mode which in any way encouraged self-reliance, independent judgment, or free expression. Consequently, when the Jesuits were expelled from the New World (for European political reasons), the Indians of the Jesuit Reductions were at a great loss and the whole system fell apart. The most famous part of that system was the area of modern Paraguay, which had been a mini-State handed over to the Jesuits in deference to their marvelous method of control.

In California a chain of mission stations, from San Diego in the south

through to beyond San Francisco, was set up from the late eighteenth century onward, on the initiative of a Franciscan, Junípero Serra (1713–84). These mission stations gathered in the local Indians, such as the Chumash, in order that they should pursue agricultural and other pursuits. The missions would often have a place for a small garrison of troops, who would help to keep order and pacify the regions of Alta California which had hitherto been scarcely occupied by the Spanish. With independence for Mexico in the early nineteenth century, and the subsequent takeover by the United States, the system fell apart. The concentration of Indians, and their exposure to White people's diseases, had a devastating effect on Indian life, as did also the destruction of their traditional culture.

One of the ironies of the Franciscan mission chain is how in the Spanish-style churches (which are in their own way pleasing) there is fake marble painted on by Indians who did not know what it was they were imitating. But Our Lady of Guadalupe is also present here and there: a symbol of the inherent worth of Indian life, though that life was culturally despised by the Whites.

The Layering of Latin America

The net effect of the population and religious policies of the New World was that the people were arranged in three or four layers. There were the two kinds of Spaniards, European-born and *criollo*, on the top; then a swathe of *mestizos*; then the Indians. In parts of the area the Indians had virtually gone, from some islands of the Caribbean for instance, and slaves from Africa had been introduced. Much of the importation of Blacks was in the nineteenth century: slavery was not abolished in Brazil until 1888. We may also note that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there was massive migration from Europe in some countries.

This has produced a variety of racial patterns. The classic pattern is an ascending scale of population between Whites, *mestizos* and Indians, of roughly the proportions 1:2:4 or 1:2:3. This applies in Mexico, Central America, and Peru. Then there are areas where the larger number are *mestizos*, as in Colombia and Venezuela. Then there are countries with a predominance of Blacks, such as Brazil and Cuba (the latter has lost its Indian population, however; and in Brazil it is the smallest section of the population). Then there are countries, notably Chile and Argentina, which are overwhelmingly White. In Argentina, more than half the migrants were from Italy, but there are significant Spanish, French, and other groups; while Brazil has a fair number of Germans and a significant group of Japanese descent: of all the countries of Latin America Brazil is the most colorfully variegated. In some areas, such as Amazonia, part of Central America, central Argentina, and southern Chile, there are extant unconquered Indian populations. In (formerly British) Guiana, a substantial population was brought in from India as indentured laborers in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and there are East Indians elsewhere in the English-speaking Caribbean.

posite Africa meets
holicism in the
oodoo of Haiti.

Central America and the northern states of South America have the classic layered pattern, with the Indians at the bottom. This has given edge to economic and social struggles, as also in a different way in Brazil with its great Black population. This situation was not affected by the wars of independence, which lasted from 1810 to 1826. The resultant political pattern has with relatively minor changes stayed on till modern times.

The Liberation of Latin America

The revolts of the colonies were essentially a matter of the White elite. There had of course been independence wars on behalf of the Indians, but they had been crushed—most notably the campaign fought by the Inca prince Tupac Amarus (1742–81), who led a large Andean uprising which was put down with great cruelty. The motives of the colonial Whites in seeking independence were similar to those of the North American colonists a generation earlier. There was also strong influence from the liberal thinking of the Enlightenment, and the pervasion of British support for a new system which would widen the possibilities of trade and investment. But the change in government did not as yet involve any essential change in the system of land tenure, nor of the primary facts of a kind of race-oriented class structure.

In Brazil no war was necessary: a separate monarchy in Brazil was established in 1815, later turning into an empire, and giving way in due course to a republic in 1889. In Cuba independence from Spain did not arrive till 1888. In the British Caribbean the islands achieved independence only after World War II. In Haiti, however, a slave rebellion established Black rule in 1804. Panama was not created till 1903, mainly as the bread of a sandwich of which the Canal was the filling.

The dominant motif of the anticolonial struggle among the elites of Latin America was liberal, and often this involved some anticlerical sentiment. But mostly the Church still exercised its traditional functions, even if in some countries religious orders were expelled. In a number of constitutions the nominal separation of Church and State was effected. The growth of various forces, such as the influence of Freemasonry, the work of Protestants, positivistic philosophy from Europe, liberal theories of government, and the arrival of large numbers of migrants from Europe, put pressure on the Catholic Church, which remained remarkably conservative up to World War II. Because of population increase, Latin American influence also grew within the Catholic worldwide community.

Protestantism, which was often effective in proselytizing tribal groups, and had its footholds in many new immigrant communities, was sometimes looked on as alien and even as an agent of North American imperialism. There was indeed quite a lot of traditional hostility against the Yankees or Gringos, as they were called, both among the elite—because of aesthetic philosophies stressing the superior culture of the Latin South, such as the philosophy known as Arielism, at one time moderately fashionable—and





among the ordinary populations, because of the perceived exploitation of the masses by the forces of modern capitalism, emanating by the twentieth century chiefly from the United States.

Before World War II the Catholic Action movement, coming from France and Italy, stimulated new concerns for democratic action and service to the poor: a moderate social reformism spread its ideas through the creation of Christian Democratic parties. But many Churchmen wished to see a solidarity between Church and society, harking back to the old days: such dreams were helped by organizations such as Opus Dei, a new clerical and lay movement with extreme right-wing leanings. Such dreams of going back to a harmonious body of Catholic Christians (which may never have existed) were, however, interrupted by Vatican II. After this period there was an explosive period of doctrinal innovation and new social thinking, identified with what is known as Liberation Theology.

Liberation Theology

This set of ideas was heavily influenced by Marxism. It blended a Marxist analysis of the social situation with the Catholic and Christian values evident in the New Testament. Vatican II had given a great impetus to Biblical scholarship, and the new thinkers saw in the New Testament especially a revolutionary concern for the poor on the part of Christ. They argued that the Church's prime duty was to raise the life of the poor. They were often critical of older attitudes which glossed over present miseries because the faithful could be sure of the joys of heavenly bliss in the life after this one. The movement was thus very critical socially, revolutionary in spirit, concerned with altering the structures of existence, and anticapitalist. It led some priests into actively participating in revolutionary struggle, as in the case of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua.

The Liberation Theology movement also emphasized some other things, apart from the analysis of the present condition of the poor of the Third World. They were very keen on a practical approach (they used the Marxist word "praxis" here as a slogan for their commitment to realizing ideas in practice); and they were keen on starting at the grass roots, thus inverting the traditional Church approach, which was from the top down. They wanted to raise the consciousness of the poor (and this often meant the Indians), who too often were imbued with a kind of fatalism which traditional Catholicism did very little to puncture. So it was with "base communities" that the movement realized its ideas—the creation of small communities of lay and clerical people organizing social betterment, Bible-reading and the raising of local consciousness. Over two hundred thousand such communities have been set up in Brazil and elsewhere in the continent.

Liberation Theology has come to have a wide influence beyond the Latin American scene, being of some especial attraction in the Third World and also among those involved in the Church struggle in South Africa. Among the prominent exponents are Gustavo Gutiérrez of Peru, Juan Luis Segundo of

Opposite

Revolutionary impulses are important in much of Latin America as is indicated in this mural by Diego Rivera celebrating the Mexican revolution.

bishop Romero
ssinated in San
rador, March 24,
).



Uruguay, Leonardo Boff of Brazil, Hugo Assmann of Costa Rica, and (among Protestants) José Miguel Bonino of Argentina.

Protestantism in Latin America

Protestantism has had a spectacular increase during the twentieth century. Its three roots are, first, migrant Churches in such countries as the Argentine, Chile, and Brazil, with a large number of German and other European

immigrants; second, more important, Protestant missions especially out of the United States, who have worked both among Catholics and among Indian tribes, where Biblical evangelical preaching has made large inroads; third, spontaneously arising Protestant groups from within Latin America, especially Pentecostals. Pentecostalism has also had some prominence within Catholicism, as elsewhere in the world after Vatican II. There may be as many as eighteen million Protestants in the Latin American region, compared with a few hundred thousand a century ago. But the statistics are hard to find.

The success of Protestant preaching was worrying enough at one time to be put on the agenda for Catholic Bishops' conferences, together with the impact of Freemasonry and other matters: until fairly recently relations between Catholics and Protestants have often been bitter, with Catholics trying to hold on to old monopolies and Protestants often taking a severe evangelical line against Catholic superstitions (as they saw them). The reasons for Protestant success, in Latin America as elsewhere in the Catholic world, are varied. One is that the individualism of Protestant religion makes sense in a capitalist, urban environment. Second, Protestant emphasis on religious experience and conversion is direct, appealing and promising for togetherness, for feeling becomes the glue of new communities. Third, it is natural that people should awake to the essential pluralism of the religions and within the religions of the world. Catholicism can no longer claim to be the sole possibility.

All this is part of an increasing ferment in the Latin American scene. Among Catholics the meeting of bishops at Medellin in 1968 is commonly regarded as a turning point, when the voices which roused the social conscience of the Church were significant and loud, and when the Church seemed to acknowledge the need for new structures both in Christian life and in society. This call, with the attendant Liberation Theology, has made the Latin American Christian scene central to the religious history of the world.

Religion and Race

The Churches in the Caribbean Region

The islands of the Caribbean are culturally really a creation of the colonial era. The major part of the indigenous Indian populations in the region was wiped out by disease and oppression. Economically the islands came to depend on plantations, especially sugar, and to work the fields Blacks were imported from Africa. So in differing regions we have peoples of whom a rather small minority are settlers from Europe—Spain, France, Holland, Denmark, and Britain above all. The majority are Blacks; and there is a mixed-race intervening layer of folk. But as we have noted, some colonial powers also later imported Indians and Chinese as indentured laborers. On the mainland the colonial possessions of British Guiana, French Guiana, and Dutch Surinam were important too, and contained Indians too; and similarly with Belize (formerly British Honduras) on the Central American mainland.

Because the island populations were so much a creation of European colonialism, they are predominantly Christian: but there were other influences than settlement and mission at work. For one thing, in one or two areas, notably Barbados, it was for long illegal to try to convert the Blacks. In other areas there were African ideas and rituals mingled in with Catholic practices, as in Haiti. There was a large trend in the British dominated islands for Church of England (for a time established as the official Church) to be interested only in the White settlers, and from the 1800s on the void among the Blacks was largely filled by nonconformist Churches of varying kinds, Baptists, Methodists, and others. In the last twenty years or so the fastest-growing group in the Caribbean has been Pentecostalism, fired in part through fundamentalist American missionaries.

In Cuba, the victory of Fidel Castro (b. 1927) in 1959 led to pressures against religion. By 1980 only about a third of Cubans claimed to be Catholics, and there was a big overlap with the movement known as the *Santería*. This compares with a large majority claiming to be Catholic during the pre-Castro years. No doubt there is a feeling that certain answers are favored or expected in such polls: and the results reflect the change in ethos and regime. Castro's is the only genuinely successful Marxist regime in the Western hemisphere: though Nicaragua's Sandinista government, dating from 1979, may eventually attain like stability.

Black Religions in Latin America and the Caribbean

There are a number of religions in the Caribbean which serve to express some Africanness. In some ways the *Santería* in Cuba (and, since Castro, in various centers in the United States, among exiles) is the most interesting because it has imported so directly so many features of Yoruba religion and Yoruba rites. Its deities are Yoruba, but are also identified with Catholic saints: Shango, god of thunder, becomes St. Barbara; Orunmila, of divination, becomes St. Francis; Obatala is Our Lady of Mercy; Elegba is St. Peter. In this way the two religious traditions are integrated, and the Catholic saints no doubt provide a kind of cover for the other faith, which has persisted thus after the dislocations of forcible removal to the plantations. Similar remarks apply to the father like group of cults known as Shango (from the god) in Trinidad.

Interesting also is a kind of holding together of religious traditions, which however is not syncretistic in the proper sense, as represented by the system known as Winti in Surinam. It may be that because of the predominance of Protestantism, derived in part from Moravian missions, there was less ease in blending traditions. In any case, those who practice Winti most often behave in other contexts as straightforward Christians, whether Protestant or Catholic. Winti conceives the world as being shot through with various spirits and forces—gods of the air and earth and water, presided over by a High God—very much in the classical African way. Various rites both evoke and propitiate the varied gods, with spirit possession being a marked feature

of the religion: it deals with everyday affairs including illness, and involves shamanistic cures.

Two forms of spiritism have been powerful in Brazil. One is known as Kardecism, after the French thinker Allan Kardec (1804–69). He propounded a view that there are spirits who are in process of reincarnation, and one can have communication with them through mediums. There is a hierarchy of such spirits, who ultimately derive from God. Happiness and unhappiness are the result of previous actions. The greatest virtue is Christian love, and we should cultivate this and other means to spiritual perfection: we are free agents and can alter our destinies, therefore. The belief-system of Kardecism ruled out miracles and a magical view of the world: for Kardec it was all based on science. His ideas were introduced into Brazil in the 1870s and 1880s and began to attract a large following among the urban middle class. It continued to gain support, despite a Catholic campaign against it in the 1950s.

Kardecism came to have a lot of influence upon an earthier, more symbol-laden movement which started in Rio de Janeiro in the 1920s, the Umbanda religion, a loose, African-based conglomeration of cults led by shamanistic women and men with their own groups. There is a strong Yoruba admixture here also. The groups are especially important in the great and often squalid urban shanty-towns, because they give a sense of belonging. The gods often are identified with Catholic saints, and there is a strong overlap between membership of the Church and of Umbanda.

Before and during World War II the government made attempts to stamp out the cults, but without success. In the period after World War II some blending between Kardecism and Umbanda occurred, because Kardecism provided a good doctrinal and intellectual framework for the cults; while the latter helped to give color and force to an otherwise too polite religion.

A somewhat analogous system to the Santería of Cuba is Haitian Voodoo (so-called: it is a term applied by outsiders). In this belief system and practical way of ritual, Catholicism is not rejected, but used as a framework within which the African gods and spirits (some from Nigeria, others from Benin and Zaire) may be approached to help with the ordinary problems and tribulations of life. The Christian God, the Bondye in Haitian Creole, presides and sends down his angels, the spirits, nearer to human beings on earth: but generally speaking we do not seek for him to do anything. He functions therefore very much as the High God of classical African religion. More immediate concerns are taken to more immediate spirits. Rituals range from the simplicity of lighting candles to animal sacrifices, and in the cities small temples are available. Drumming and singing are designed to bring on spirit-possession, which is an important function, for it serves as a main means of communication between spirits and humans, and enables spirits to participate in the celebrations. In general this religious system was created by slaves out of African materials, supplemented by some of the categories of Catholicism.

All the systems considered here give Black people dignity, in so far as they

emphasize African roots. But some others also project connections to the future. Important among these is the Rastafari movement, which had some of its origin in the work of the Jamaican leader Marcus Garvey (1887–1940), in forming the Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1914. The coronation of Haile Selassie in 1930, coinciding too with the miseries of the Depression, helped to stimulate interest in a millennial return to the paradise of Ethiopia, a symbol of the riches of the Black tradition.

Rastafarianism by the early 1950s was strongly anti-White. It saw Whites as inferior to Blacks, thought of the coming of the Blacks to the West Indies as some kind of punishment, looked to the hope of return to Ethiopia, saw Haile Selassie as the living God, and believed that Blacks will soon be able to rule over Whites. Some of these beliefs have been modified: and some externals have been acquired since that time by the Rastafarians, such as the wearing of dreadlocks (which however, in a polite form, have become fashionable in a wider circle, as has the Rastafari music) and the smoking of marijuana. There came to be a greater emphasis on self-help among the Blacks of Jamaica, and less reliance on the actual help of Haile Selassie, especially as he was overthrown in 1974 and died in the following year.

Problems for South American Small-Scale Groups

In some areas of Latin America—in Nicaragua, for instance; but above all in the Amazon basin—the opening up of the areas to government control or commercial exploitation causes severe distress to the independent groups of Indians still subsisting outside of Latin culture and society. Logging and mining in Amazonia, and its development for pasturing cattle and growing crops, have had a severe impact on the environment of tribal peoples. Also, there are widespread evangelizations by Protestant groups which are changing patterns of life. It is doubtful whether many tribal communities will long survive in the present ways of life. On the other hand many who were long ago loosely integrated into Catholicism, such as the Quechua speakers of the high Andes, retain much of their preconquest culture and religion, but with a Catholic superstructure.

Reflections on the Latin American and Caribbean Scene

The dynamism of this highly varied region of the world is evident. There remain social problems which are most severe in those countries which have a high number of Indians. But some of the stratification into race-based classes has been overcome. Thus, in Mexico, the Revolution of 1910 harked back to leaders who were themselves Indians, most of all Benito Juárez (1806–72); and it commissioned the great murals of Diego Rivera (1886–1957), which combined a vision of indigenous liberation with Socialism. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (a nice contradiction, some think) has provided Mexico with stability and a secular anticlerical State, despite the Catholicism of most of the population. But poverty remains.

The role of the Catholic Church has bifurcated between its old conservative support for established regimes and elites to the new revolutionary cast depicted by and encouraged through the new Liberation Theology. In many areas, Protestant evangelization is making progress, while Black populations have devised religions which in one way or another link to African roots. In the great republics of the far south, White societies have struggled with political problems and options, but the desire for pluralistic democracy seems stronger than ever after the dreadful killings of the military regime in Argentina in the 1970s and the violence and militarism of contemporary Chile, the Pinochet regime in Chile after 1973.

Dimensions of Caribbean and Latin Religion

We can perhaps single out some of the most significant items from the different developments as a sampling of the Latin American and Caribbean spirit. In regard to *doctrine*, the most vital contribution has been Liberation Theology; but it may also turn out that Kardecism too will spread, because "Spiritismo" is also well developed among Mexicans and Hispanics in the United States. As to *myth* and the narrative dimension, there is a growing sense of Latin America as having a special part to play in human civilization; and there is the great popularity of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who supplied a mythic missing link between the religion of the conqueror and that of the conquered.

In regard to the *experiential* dimension, there is as elsewhere an emergence of emphasis on Pentecostal experience and the religion of being "born again." We may note, too, the persistence of shamanism at the level of the small-scale societies; and this also wells up in the concern with mediums among the Black religions. The interest in hallucinogens also continues, for instance in the use of coca among Andean Indians and in the employment of marijuana among the Rastafaris. As to the *ritual* dimension, the greatly simplified Catholic rites after Vatican II, and the use of the vernacular languages, represent a great shift away from the older colonial Baroque style. The setting up of "base communities" under the influence of Liberation Theology has revived the use of the Bible as a central element in the *practical* dimension of religion.

As to *ethics*, there is too a growing sense of identification with the poor, as in the preaching of John Paul II, and through the more revolution-oriented aspects of Catholicism. Protestantism imports a more individualistic ethos, which is encouraged too by the growth of capitalism and the beginnings of consumerism in the southern republics and elsewhere. *Organizationally*, there are greater conflicts in some areas between Church and State—latently in Mexico, more overtly in Cuba and Nicaragua—and a general weakening of the authority of the Church in a period of more obvious pluralism; but again, Liberation Theology's concern with the grass roots gives a vivification of Church organization from below.

Indian waits in line
to meet Pope John
Paul II in Guatemala
City in 1983.



At the *material* level, the gradual diminution of the external signs of Counter-Reformation Catholicism does not remove the vast church buildings which are a glory of the Spanish colonial period, brooding over the cities which the Spaniards above all loved to found, to bring their own version of Christian civilization, in a highly confident period, to a whole great continent. It is this Spanish and Portuguese architecture, and that of the dusty towns in the plains and the Andes, on river sides and by the great oceans, that stands as the largest testament to the colonial spirit which is now beginning to fade.