to ALL NATIONS from ALL NATIONS

A History of the Christian Missionary Movement

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Chapter 5

MISSIONS IN THE EARLY MODERN AGE

The second half of the fifteenth century, and the first half of the sixteenth, brought about a series of changes in the religious, cultural, political, and economic life of Europe. Although many of these changes had their roots in earlier events, the fact that they all converged in a relatively brief period justifies historians in claiming that a new age was dawning in European history. In 1453, the Ottoman Turks took the city of Constantinople and thus put an end to the long history of the Byzantine Empire. Although for several centuries Constantinople had been losing its importance as a missionary center, from that date on, that importance was practically nil. At the same time, explorers from western Europe, particularly from Portugal and Spain, began discovering new lands and new routes to lands that were already known. In 1492, Christopher Columbus reached what is now called the Americas. In 1497 and 1498, Vasco da Gama reached India by sailing around Africa. It was only twenty-four years before Ferdinand Magellan and his successor, Juan Sebastián del Cano, completed the circumnavigation of the Earth. These voyages opened new horizons for Europe, and particularly for Spain and Portugal. Such new horizons, joined with the fall of Constantinople, completely changed the geographic picture of

Christian expansion, which would now set out from the Iberian Peninsula toward both the Americas and Africa.

In Europe itself, there were social and theological changes that could have led one to believe that Christianity would not be able to undertake the vast missionary task that these new discoveries placed before it. The ancient political unity of Europe was being eroded as nationalism grew. The philosophical unity of the high point of scholasticism had disappeared under the attacks of nominalism. Ecclesiastical unity itself had suffered the consequences of a series of events that weakened the authority of Rome. First came the papacy's exile in Avignon, then the Great Western Schism, and finally the Conciliarist movement. The moral life of many of the leaders of the church was questionable, as many reforming voices in the fifteenth century had repeatedly stated. As a result, there were many in the universities and other centers of study and reflection asking themselves whether the church was being faithful to the gospel or, on the contrary, its theology and practice had perverted the Christian message.

All of this came to a head in the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, when leaders such as Luther and many others arose in protest against Roman theology and practice. The ensuing division is well known, and one would have wondered whether this would not weaken the missionary thrust of European Christianity as it faced new geographic horizons.

This was the time of the Renaissance in Italy and the growth of humanism in northern Europe. The Italian Renaissance tended to focus on classical antiquity, with the result that the period in European history during which Christianity had been dominant was often seen with disdain—for which reason it was dubbed the "Middle Age," as if it were an irrelevant time between antiquity and modernity. The work of humanists such as Erasmus and his many colleagues showed that the ancient Christian documents, including Scripture, had been corrupted

by the manuscript tradition and misinterpreted by the theological tradition. With the invention of the movable type printing press, it was easier for all of these new ideas to penetrate much farther than they could have done at an earlier time.

These changes in European life posed a great challenge for Christianity: would it be able to face the opportunities opened by the new discoveries and geographic horizons, or would it simply become a relic of times past?

During the early years of the Modern Age, most Christian missions were the work of Roman Catholics. Protestant missions came onto the scene later. Therefore, one could say that the time between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries is characterized by Roman Catholic geographic expansion and theological reflection on mission. As for Eastern Christianity, it continued existing in the same areas where it was already present, and it was only Russian Christianity that managed to extend into new areas.

A. Catholic Missions

1. Reasons for Catholic Preponderance and Protestant Limitations

The missionary task takes place within the geopolitical, economic, cultural, and religious conditions of nations. In the case of the Modern Age, several factors contributed to Roman Catholic preponderance:

(a) The geographical advantage of Catholicism

As a result of the Reconquista, in Spain and Portugal, the national identity of Catholic countries was closely related to Roman Catholicism. These two were the dominant naval powers during the early Modern Age. When they began losing some of that power, it was France that took the lead in Catholic missionary advance. It is not surprising that in countries that had constant exchanges with distant

areas in the Americas and the Far East, missionary interests would be awakened. Furthermore, both Spain and Portugal considered that the expansion of Christianity was one of the main reasons justifying their military and economic conquests. Protestantism, in contrast, was born in the center of Europe, in areas with no coasts or with very limited naval power. When it made headway in Holland, England, and Scandinavia, these were not naval powers. The high point of Scandinavian maritime expansion had past, and the time had not yet come for the British or the Dutch.

(b) Military and political advantage

The sixteenth century marked the beginning of the great colonial expansion of Portugal and Spain, which became rich with the gold and other products imported from their new colonies and therefore gained hegemony in Europe. Thus, although the colonial enterprise required vast human resources, these two Catholic powers were able to face wars of religion in other parts of Europe without their own existence being threatened and never saw the wars of religion as a matter of survival. In the case of Spain, the recently achieved national unity had a strong dose of a sense of mission, of a historic destiny to defend and expand the Catholic faith. The other great European power that by that time had achieved national unity and vied with Spain for hegemony over the continent was France, also a Catholic country.

In contrast, during its early years, Protestantism was threatened with annihilation by military and political pressure coming from all the great powers of Europe. Germany and Switzerland, the early centers of the Protestant movement, were not yet unified. At the beginning of the Reformation, the emperor was His Catholic Majesty Charles I of Spain, also known as Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire. The Netherlands had yet to gain their independence from the Spanish crown. The Scandinavian countries, which soon became Protestant, were too far away to intervene actively in the struggle, and it was only Sweden,

under the leadership of King Gustavus Vasa, that eventually was able to bring its military power to bear. As for England, the very survival of Protestantism in the kingdom was in doubt for a long time, and in any case, England was not yet one of the great European powers. For these reasons, Protestantism was constantly threatened by the wars of religion, while Roman Catholicism was able both to participate in those wars and to employ resources for missionary and military intervention in distant lands.

(c) Catholic unity

There is no doubt that one of Catholicism's advantages over Protestantism was its own inner unity. Although Catholicism was not the monolithic body that sometimes Protestants seem to believe, it did have the capacity to coordinate its action. Thus, on several occasions, Rome became the arbiter between Catholic powers seeking to establish their influence in one of the new territories. Also, although missionary expansion took place mostly through the work of the religious orders and of military conquerors, Rome was able to offer certain general directions and also to establish organisms such as the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*. The *Propaganda*—as it is usually known—founded in Rome in 1622, continued existing into the twenty-first century. Its function was to serve as an instrument overseeing all missionary work, addressing not only non-Christians but also Protestants and other non-Catholics. It soon developed a college where young men from various countries were trained as missionaries, and its printing press published books in a multitude of languages. This organization contributed much to the missionary work of the Roman Catholic Church.

In contrast, for centuries Protestants were not able to develop a coordinated approach to missionary work, for they were deeply divided among themselves. Furthermore, many Protestants were convinced that their mission consisted in reforming the church as a whole and therefore devoted their energies to combating Roman Catholicism and

often even to debating among themselves the nature of the reformation that the church as a whole needed.

(d) The continuation of an ongoing thrust

For Roman Catholicism, missionary work was simply the continuation of a movement that had existed throughout all its history and had gained impetus with the founding of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth century. There were many treatises showing the need and urgency of missionary work, and some dealing also with its methods. In contrast, Protestantism, in its eagerness to return to Scripture, was often forced to question all that it had received from earlier tradition and to rebuild all of its theology and practice. In consequence, the ancient arguments for missionary work were questioned. Luther himself even declared that the commandment of Jesus to preach the gospel throughout the world was given only to the apostles, who had already fulfilled it. It is true that as Protestantism began feeling more secure in Germany, Luther began thinking about missionary work among neighboring non-Christians, that is, the Turks and Jews. But even so, Luther believed that the Great Commission no longer applied. This greatly hampered the missionary task of Protestantism, until the political and religious situation in which Protestants lived began to change, and other leaders began offering a different interpretation of the Great Commission.

(e) Monastic orders

Luther and almost all Protestants rejected monasticism as a perversion of the gospel. Since Protestants insisted on salvation by grace and not by works, the very notion of the monastic life as a particular work for one's salvation was abhorrent to them. However, in flatly rejecting monasticism, the Reformation deprived itself of one of the most useful and tried missionary instruments. Throughout the entire history of the church, and particularly during the Middle Ages, monastics had

been the main agents in preaching the gospel to nonbelievers. Even in the case of those areas where Christianity was imposed politically or militarily, it was always the monks who followed the soldiers and who, with their instruction and preaching, turned what had been a forced conversion into a genuine one. By ridding itself of monasticism, Protestantism found it necessary to discover and create new instruments for mission. This would take centuries, and the eventual result would often show certain affinities with monasticism itself.

2. Spanish Missions

(a) The religious unification of Spain

Although the last area in Spain under Muslim rule disappeared in 1492 with the capitulation of Granada, this does not mean that all the population of the land was Christian. There were still large Jewish and Muslim minorities. That very year, 1492, the monarchs ordered that all Jews who refused to be baptized must leave Spain. Although many did accept baptism, this immediately raised the question of the sincerity of their conversion. This in turn increased the power and activity of the Inquisition, whose main task was to discover among the "new Christians" those who were still Jewish in their faith. The hatred of the Spanish Christian population for the *marranos*—literally, "pigs"—as Jews converted to Christianity were commonly called, increased and therefore many left for other countries in Europe or in North Africa.

The Muslim population was concentrated in the southern areas of Spain. According to the terms of the surrender of Granada in 1492, Islam would be tolerated. For some time this agreement was followed, but Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros, convinced that these concessions were an unforgivable weakness, began demanding the conversion of the Muslim population. Rebellions were mercilessly crushed. Finally, in 1524, Charles V expelled from Spain all Muslims who were not ready to accept baptism. Even so, the *moriscos*—as converted Muslims were

called—posed a similar problem to that of Jewish converts, and soon the Inquisition intervened. In 1567, Philip II issued an edict forbidding the moriscos to keep their particular customs, clothing, and language, and ordering them to adapt to Spanish custom. Furthermore, the Spanish crown issued laws prohibiting former Jews or Muslims from traveling to the Americas. After a series of rebellions and massacres, in 1609, those moriscos who clung to their traditional ways were expelled from Spain. Thus the kingdom was religiously unified, although the imprint of Jewish and Muslim culture would still be felt in the art and customs of the Spanish population, and this would often lead to suspicion and persecution from the Inquisition.

(b) The Americas

Surprisingly, even before the last Jewish and Muslim residues in the country were assimilated, Spain undertook the task of taking its power, faith, and culture to lands several times more extensive than Spain itself. The first half of the sixteenth century witnessed an unprecedented migration in which the Spanish population poured into the Western Hemisphere. The various factors leading to this are still debated among historians, but one may affirm that Spain moved into the New World under the impulse of three intertwined motivations that made it possible for the most dissimilar spirits to join in a common venture: glory, gold, and God. For those who sought glory and renown, the New World offered an opportunity to conquer empires never before imagined. Those who simply wished to become rich found in the "Indies" legends of great treasures. Finally, the existence of vast lands where the gospel had not been preached attracted those for whom religion was the main motivating force, and particularly members of the monastic orders—Franciscans, Dominicans, and others.

The speed and far-flung outreach of Spanish expansion into the New World during the sixteenth century are surprising. Columbus arrived for the first time to these lands in 1492. In 1496, he founded

the city of Santo Domingo de Guzmán on the island that he named Hispaniola. By 1500, Juan de la Cosa published the first map of the new lands. At the same time, the north of South America and a good part of North America were being explored. In 1508, Sebastián de Ocampo circumnavigated Cuba, thus showing it was not part of the mainland. The expedition of Vasco Núñez de Balboa, between 1509 and 1515, discovered the Pacific Ocean. In 1513, Juan Ponce de León landed in Florida, and two years later Juan Díaz de Solís reached the River Plate. There were numerous expeditions to the coasts of North America and into the interior of that land, but foremost among them is that of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, who between 1527 and 1536 traversed the entire continent from Florida to Mexico. Hernando de Soto went from Florida to the Mississippi in 1539 to 1541. At the same time, Francisco de Orellana was exploring the basin of the Amazon. These various explorations were inspired by the hope of finding a route to the East and also by the rich treasures that the native population was said to possess.

The irony of the early stages of the process is exemplified in the life of Christopher Columbus, who thought he had reached the "Indies." His was a "discovery" by means of serious navigational errors. For this reason, the continent does not carry his name but that of Americo Vespucio, who proposed that these lands were a new continent, thus changing the entire worldview of the times.

The explorers were followed by conquistadores. The Greater Antilles did not offer much resistance to Spanish conquest, and soon the entire population of these islands was subject to new rulers. Eventually, most of that population disappeared. As centers of operation for future conquest, the Spanish founded cities that still exist: besides Santo Domingo, which has already been mentioned, in 1508, they founded the city of Puerto Rico (now known as San Juan); in 1514, they established Santiago de Cuba; and a year later, Havana was founded. In 1519, Hernando Cortez landed on the coast of Mexico, and two years

later the conquest of the Aztec Empire was complete. After several failed attempts, Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro undertook the final conquest of Perú. After two years, they had taken the capital city of Cuzco. Although there was soon a civil war between the supporters of Pizarro and those who took Almagro's side, the conquest of the Incan Empire was already complete. By then, all the major centers of pre-Columbian culture and civilization, except the Yucatan, were in Spanish hands. The conquest of Central America and the Yucatan began in 1523 and took less than twenty years. This, and similar conquests in the River Plate, Paraguay, and North America, completed the vast process of Spanish expansion in the New World. Yet, all this did not take place without resistance on the part of the native population nor without philosophical and theological debate among Christians.

The discoverers and conquistadores were followed by the colonizers. These did not seek to find new lands, but rather to settle in population centers where they could benefit from trade, agriculture, and especially mining. It was the process of colonization that made the vast Spanish expansion permanent. Had Hernando Cortez and Francisco Pizarro not been followed by many men—and later women—who were willing to settle permanently on the conquered lands, one may well imagine that soon the indigenous population would have managed to cast off the Spanish yoke.

This colonization of the New World by the Spanish was one of the most significant events in the entire history of Christian expansion. The church was already represented in Columbus's second voyage. From then on, as was to be expected given the religious convictions of the Spanish crown and people, there were always priests present in the various exploring and conquering expeditions, as well as in the new colonies. Some of these priests—particularly those who did not belong to monastic orders—felt that their mission was limited to ministering to the spiritual needs of the colonizers. Some even wondered whether it was possible to convert the native population—whom they called "Indians" because

Columbus had thought that he had arrived at the Indies. But soon others responded by declaring that such conversion was not only possible but also the obligation of the Spanish church and crown and that the main purpose of the conquest and colonization of the New World was precisely the conversion of the indigenous population.

In order to fulfill this task, Spain counted above all on its profound religious spirit, grounded in an understanding of the Reconquista that gave the historic task of Spain almost messianic proportions. That religious spirit combined with the quest for riches and adventure to produce and support the vast missionary enterprise of the sixteenth century. At the beginning of that century, the mendicant orders, particularly Franciscans and Dominicans, were numerous in Spain. Spain was also the cradle of Ignatius Loyola, and the Society of Jesus—the Jesuits—had gained many members in that land. These orders—jointly with the Mercedarians—would be the main instrument of mission in the New World. Furthermore, from the very beginnings of the conquests, the Spanish crown had almost absolute control over the life of the church in its new possessions. The rights of the Spanish crown in this regard are called *Patronato Real*. In 1493, Alexander VI issued a series of five papal bulls granting the rulers of Spain religious and political authority over all lands that had been discovered or might be discovered beyond a line of demarcation that was drawn a hundred leagues west of the Azores, and as long as Spain would be sailing west and the discovered lands were not already in the possession of a Christian prince. This was not only a privilege granted to Isabella and Ferdinand and their successors—and, in a similar series of bulls, to the rulers of Portugal, as long as they remained east of the line of demarcation and sailed eastward—but also a missionary obligation that the pope decided to avoid by placing responsibility on the crowns of Spain and Portugal. The popes of the Renaissance who ruled at the time were more interested in politics and arts than in religion and had no time or energy to spare on distant lands.

Beginning in 1501, the Patronato Real allowed the Crown to receive all the benefits and tithes of the new churches but also made it responsible for all the expenses of the missionary enterprise. When the first episcopal sees were established, Pope Julius II gave the Crown the right to propose the names of those who would occupy them as well as other high ecclesiastical positions. Although the papal bulls spoke of a right of patronage over the new lands, soon Spanish theologians, both in Iberia and in the New World, began speaking of a *Vicariato Regio*—a royal vicariate—by which the king was the pope's vicar in the New World.

This merger between the interests of the state and the expansion of Christianity eventually proved to be problematic. Missions were employed as a means to extend Spanish culture and power. On occasion, a mission was founded not so much for the conversion of the indigenous population as with the purpose of preventing colonization by another European power.

Even so, for the Spanish crown, this union between church and state seemed so natural that the question was never asked, as it would be today, of whether the state was making use of the church or vice versa. For the Spanish crown, European culture—particularly Spanish culture—was a synonym for Christian faith. Therefore, the Hispanization of the original American population was for them the same as its Christianization. Nor should we leave aside the issues and debates that the Crown had to confront in the tasks of evangelizing that population. Repeatedly the Crown defended the rights of the Indians against those who sought to exploit and enslave them. If such official policies lacked success and if massacres of the native population went unpunished, this was due to the complex relationship between Spain and its representatives in the Western Hemisphere and to the enormous distance that made it difficult for the Spanish authorities to enforce their laws in the colonies.

Many Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, and other friars opposed the exploitation of the indigenous population by the Spaniards and sought the support of the Crown for more justice. It was frequently the secular or diocesan clergy that supported the inhumane practices of the conquistadores. We shall see some examples of this as we look at the life and work of people such as Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas and Fray Antonio de Montesinos.

Some of the greatest abuses were committed against the original inhabitants of the Greater Antilles, whose culture was relatively primitive. The Spanish did not come to these lands in order to cultivate or farm them with their own hands, and therefore they needed the labor of the native population. Although legally other names were employed, the new order turned out to be a form of slavery. All of this was covered by the mantle of a missionary goal, so that native people were "entrusted"—*encomendados*—to the colonizers so that, as they worked for the Spaniards, they would also be instructed in the Christian faith. The resulting institution, called *encomienda*, was a veiled form of slavery, made worse because the *encomenderos* (the colonizers) did not even have a financial investment that would encourage them to care for those who were entrusted to them. The encomenderos did not even try to learn the native languages and simply sought to force the Indians to produce to the maximum.

Although the encomiendas were established with the approval of the Spanish crown, they soon led to debates on the nature of evangelization, on the humanity of the indigenous population, and on their freedom. Unfortunately, the Crown was not always aware of the manner in which the encomiendas were abused. As far as we know, the first to protest against them was Father Antonio de Montesinos, of the Order of St. Dominic. Realizing that his preaching in the New World was ineffectual, Montesinos made certain that his complaints reached the Spanish court. The result was the Ley de Burgos, issued in 1512, which tried to guarantee justice for the indigenous population.

Although not abolishing the system of encomiendas, this law tried to make it clear that the encomendados were not to be used as slaves, that people entrusted to a particular colonizer could not be sold or given to another, and that Indian labor should be fairly paid.

As could be expected, the Ley de Burgos was never fully applied in the New World. Even so, it showed that authorities in Spain paid heed to the efforts on the part of the friars to humanize the colonial regime. Once again we are faced by the complex relationship between evangelization and conquest, for it is clear that the interests of the conquistadores, the colonizers, and some in Spain who were being enriched by the entire enterprise outweighed the efforts on the part of some religious leaders to develop a more just form of evangelization. This may serve as a warning that the missionary enterprise can be polluted by destructive ideologies.

Another defender of the Indians, better known than Father Montesinos, was Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas. Moved by the preaching of Montesinos, Las Casas decided to join the Dominicans. After giving up his own encomienda, he sold all his properties in the New World and returned to Spain, seeking more just laws in favor of the indigenous population. In Spain, he was granted the official title of "General Protector of the Indians," and armed with it he returned to the Antilles. There he was seen as a dreamer who believed that the Indians were people like the rest and that they could be pacified by loving means. Seeing that it was impossible to enforce the laws defending the native population, Las Casas returned to Spain, thus beginning a long series of comings and goings, constantly seeking to improve the life of the colonized. In the New World itself, he traveled to Mexico and Perú, always intervening to protect the native population. Finally, in 1542, the Consejo de las Indias—the body in Spain in charge of all colonial matters—issued a series of "New Laws" which granted certain rights to the indigenous population. Desperately seeking to defend the native population against an economic system that made its

exploitation practically inevitable, Las Casas suggested that slaves be brought from Africa so that the indigenous could be free. Serving as bishop of Chiapas, where his work was exemplary, Las Casas returned to Spain, where he recanted from his earlier suggestion that slaves be brought from Africa and wrote a series of treatises on the evangelization and colonization of the New World until he died in 1576.

The case of Las Casas—far from being unique in the history of the New World—is an example of an attitude that was relatively common. In Mexico City, Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, a man of vast humanistic culture, worked for the education and religious instruction of the indigenous population. It was through his efforts that the first printing press was established in the New World. Some other outstanding names that have survived among the hundreds who sought to ameliorate the life of the original inhabitants of the New World are Bartolomé de Olmedo, Eusebio Kino, Luis Cancer, Luis Beltrán, and Francisco Solano. There were also some civil authorities who followed similar policies regarding the indigenous population—foremost among them the famous Cabeza de Vaca.

Although the encomiendas continued, the main missionary method for the expansion of Christianity among native populations of nomadic customs was the *reducciones*. In some areas, the population lived in very small communities in the countryside and jungles—communities that were sometimes limited to a single family. This made their evangelization very difficult, and even more difficult was any attempt to supervise their morality, which the missionaries also felt was part of their responsibility. For these reasons, with the support of the Crown, the friars began bringing these families together into a larger community that they called a "reduction" or a "mission."

A reduction was a small village built around the church and the plaza in front of it. There the work was supervised by the friars, who taught their charges crafts and new methods of agriculture. At the same

time, they were instructed in the Christian faith, and their customs were supervised in order to bring them closer to what the friars considered Christian. There is no doubt that these missions were better than the encomiendas, whose only true result was exploitation. But the missions also left much to be desired, particularly because of their excessive paternalism and their attempt to Hispanicize people, uprooting them from their old means of life and not fully preparing them to survive independently in the new order that was being imposed. This left them in a cultural, existential, and religious vacuum that eventually became a form of genocide. The result was that most of the missions disappeared when the friars were no longer present to care for them. This was particularly true in Paraguay, where the Jesuits had established a vast network of missions reaching from the north of Argentina to some regions in southern Brazil. When the Jesuits were expelled from all Spanish lands in 1567—another instance of the complex relationships among the Crown, the colonies, and the Roman church—and the Franciscans, Dominicans, and other friars proved insufficient to fill the vacuum left by the Jesuits, the vast majority of the Paraguayan missions disappeared.

Before beginning that practice in Paraguay, friars from various orders—Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits—established similar missions in various lands where the native population had nomadic or seminomadic customs. Sometimes the missionaries were escorted by small groups of soldiers who protected their lives, but also on occasion missionaries went beyond the reach of Spanish power, for which then they served as a beachhead. Many of these missionaries died as martyrs, killed either by those whom they sought to serve or by others who invaded their lands and took their missions.

The theory was that once these missions were sufficiently established, the friars would leave them in the hands of the secular or diocesan clergy and would move on to new lands and found new missions. In practice, this rarely happened, for the friars were not ready

to abandon their missions, and the diocesans were not often inclined to take up parishes whose material benefits were minimal.

When conquering lands of high civilization such as Mexico or Peru, the Spanish followed a different missionary policy. The very act of conquest consisted mostly of taking the place of the ancient lords of the land—who often were also conquerors who oppressed and exploited those whom they ruled. When this was possible, the new rulers simply took the place of the old, and the already-established system of production and authority was continued. From the point of view of politics and economics, this sort of conquest had the great advantage of not disturbing the structures of production and administration that were already in existence. For missionaries, it also had the advantage—although perhaps a superficial and false advantage—that the conquered people, accustomed as they were to following the orders of their superiors, now seemed to be ready to accept baptism without major resistance.

First in Mexico, and then in Perú, hundreds of thousands received baptism without having the slightest notion of the meaning of the rite. At first very few Spaniards bothered to learn the native languages of America. But beginning with the work of Bishop Zumárraga in Mexico and Bishop Toribio Alfonso de Mogrovejo in Lima, Christianity began taking root among the earlier inhabitants of these two vast empires. The printing press established by Zumárraga published books in several of the native languages in order to teach the true meaning of Christianity. Universities were also founded in Lima and Mexico, as well as a number of seminaries whose purpose was to train mission workers among the native population. Still, vestiges of the ancient religion would subsist and eventually be revived late in the twentieth and early in the twenty-first century. As we shall see, today it is clear that the interaction between the native religions and Christianity was rich and complex. This has led historians and missiologists to reevaluate the history of the evangelization of the native peoples in Latin America,

discovering that the process of evangelization and Hispanization was also a process of religious and cultural interchange. This includes resistance as well as the creation of new religious symbols and practices.

African slaves were brought to the Americas in order to provide the labor that the Spanish colonizers refused to undertake. The tragedy of slavery is well known. Apparently, in spite of the growing number of African slaves brought to the New World, the church does not seem to have realized the importance of mission work among them. Very few made it their business to preach the gospel to slaves. This may be related to the overwhelmingly geographic understanding of mission that was then prevalent, which led many to think that what had to be done was simply to go to lands where the gospel was not yet known. There were, however, some Christians who were moved by their faith to work among slaves and people of African descent. In this regard, the work of Alfonso de Sandoval is significant, for he wrote an extensive book, *Instauranda Aethiopium Salute*, on the methods, problems, and challenges connected with the evangelization of people of African descent.

Most remarkable, however, was the work of Pedro Claver, a Jesuit born in Catalonia who went to the New World and in the city of Cartagena made it his particular mission to visit slaves as they were arriving from Africa. His work, besides preaching and instruction, included the physical care and the nurture of recently arrived slaves who were frequently ill as a result of the Atlantic crossing and the anguish of their captivity. His work was not grounded in any sense of condescension toward inferior beings, for he was convinced that Africans should be considered as equal in every respect to Europeans, and as able to take within the life of the church the same place as white believers. There is no doubt that his work alleviated many sufferings. But there is also no doubt that he and the handful of other Christians who became actively involved in the lot of African slaves were isolated within a sea of incomprehension as well as of political and economic pressures. If

eventually the descendants of the original slaves accepted Christianity, this was not due to any particular missionary work among them, but simply to the tendency of slaves to adopt some of the customs and faith of their masters. As in the case of the native population, the Christian faith exists in many communities of African descent and still bears the mark of ancient and of new African religious practices, with the result that even in the twenty-first century Christianity was searching for its identity within Afro-Latin American cultures.

Although the foregoing summarizes the main missionary methods employed by the Spanish in the New World, we must also look at the development of Christianity in each of the main regions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Antilles were the first lands "discovered" by Columbus, and therefore it was there that the colonization and evangelization of the Western Hemisphere began. The result was that the native population of the Antilles suffered the worst consequences of the Spanish presence, and it was there that the regime of the encomiendas was first implanted and most extensively employed. Since the original inhabitants of the West Indies were not accustomed to such a life, and since the colonizers did little to make it any easier for them, the result was the almost total disappearance of the original population, which survived almost exclusively in the descendants of Spanish men and the native women whom they forcibly took. Therefore, the Spanish presence in the West Indies, more than elsewhere in the Americas, was limited to the colonization of the area and had little to do with evangelization or enculturation. Generally, the African slaves who began arriving as soon as the native population declined posed a greater problem for the church than did the conversion of the Indians. But by then Spanish control of the islands was such that the slave population was converted simply through a process of adaptation to the Christian faith while at the same time preserving many elements of African religions.

In a territory as thoroughly colonized as were the Greater Antilles, an ecclesiastical hierarchy was quickly established. The first three dioceses were founded in Hispaniola in 1508. Similar steps were taken in Puerto Rico in 1511 and in Cuba in 1517.

From the Greater Antilles the conquistadores—as well as the missionaries—moved on to Florida, which had been "discovered" by Ponce de Leon in 1513. The first attempts to conquer the land were unsuccessful, and it was only much later, when the nearby presence of the French caused the Spanish to worry about the area, that the effective conquest and colonization of Florida took place. The Jesuits' encounter with the Calusa—sedentary hunter-gatherers who developed negotiation skills to face the Europeans—served as a starting point for a missionary strategy. Jesuit missionaries were dependent on the hospitality of the Calusa. The Calusa negotiated religious practices with Jesuits but never understood themselves as recipients of a new faith. While Jesuits Juan Rogel and Pedro Martínez taught and attempted to explain the mysteries of the faith to the Calusa, these took a "what fits we take" approach to the transmission of the Christian religion. Missionary work seemed to be a process of religious negotiation and persuasive conversation, with little success given the pragmatic spirit of the Calusa.

The story with the Franciscans is quite different, and yet it shows the expectations that the Calusa had in their religious negotiations. Under the Franciscans, some of the Calusa allowed their children to be baptized. However, frustration overwhelmed the Calusa, as they did not receive any benefits from their children's baptisms. As tensions increased, the Franciscans decided to destroy the native "idols," and the Calusa put an end to the missionary work. Documents show that the Calusa had knowledge of Christian concepts, ideas, and argumentation. It is evident that their hesitation toward the Christian faith developed as missionaries imposed the Catholic structures and attempted to destroy the Calusa's spiritual worldview.

During the time between the initial explorations and the final conquests, many Dominicans, Jesuits, and Franciscans who went to Florida as missionaries died as martyrs. From Florida, and as part of the same enterprise, the friars moved into what is now called Georgia and even as far as Virginia. Throughout these areas, missionary work was very difficult and came to an end in 1763 when Florida became British.

It was also from the Greater Antilles that Christianity reached into Mexico. Cortez, the conqueror of Mexico, was profoundly devoted to Christianity—as his Spanish contemporaries understood it. During the early years, mission activity in what was then called New Spain was led by the Franciscans, who settled in Mexico City and Puebla in 1524. From those two centers and during the next forty years, Franciscan missions expanded first westward and then northward, reaching as far as Durango. The Dominicans arrived in 1526 and at first were working also in Mexico City and Puebla, but then they moved south to the region of Oaxaca. The Augustinians came seven years after the Dominicans (1533) and settled in Mexico City, from which they also moved toward the north and the west, mostly occupying the spaces that still remained between various Franciscan and Dominican settlements. The Jesuits were the other great order that worked in Mexico, but they did not arrive until 1572. Then they became known for the many educational institutions they founded and for their missions in the north of New Spain. As in other parts of the world, they were expelled from Mexico in the eighteenth century. The Mexican hierarchy was established in 1530, when Fray Juan de Zumárraga was made bishop of Mexico. The diocese of Antequera, in Oaxaca, was founded in 1534, and soon thereafter there were also bishops in Michoacan, Chiapas, Guadalajara, and Cozumel.

Completing the transplantation of the Spanish church to New Spain, in 1569, by royal action, the Inquisition was established in Mexico as well as in Perú. Although before that date there had been inquisitorial processes in Mexico, the official establishment of the Holy Office

brought a new wave of repression both for the indigenous people and for the Spanish, but even more so for foreigners. Three years after it had been established, the Holy Office had more than 400 people under investigation or on trial. Even in spite of the Inquisition, and sometimes with the acquiescence of church authorities, the ancient religious practices continued under the mantle of Christianity. The most notable example may be traced back to the fertility goddess Tonantzin, whose devotion was closely connected with the Virgin of Guadalupe.

It was from Mexico, and only two years after Montezuma's empire had been overrun, that the Spanish, led by Don Pedro de Alvarado, began the conquest of Central America. This region was organized as a "General Captaincy" whose capital was Guatemala and included the provinces of Chiapas, Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, besides Guatemala itself. The area saw the labors of Franciscans, Dominicans, Mercedarians, and Jesuits. The first bishoprics founded were in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Comayagua, San Salvador, and Verapaz. The Inquisition in the area was under the jurisdiction of its offices in Mexico and included representatives in all the main towns in Central America. In general, the conversion of the native population was slow, and as late as the twentieth century there were still communities in Guatemala that practiced the ancient religion and followed the Mayan calendar. Late in that century, and into the twenty-first, there was a revival of some of the ancient religious practices.

The first Spanish settlements in what eventually became the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada were Darién—in what is today Panama—and Urabá. The early expeditions of Ojeda and Nicuesa included Franciscan friars. The first colony was established in San Sebastián de Urabá, and later moved to Darién, where in 1513, the Episcopal see of Santa María del Darién was founded. This was the center for missionary work among the native population. This work was superficial, and sometimes the conquistadores themselves, without even awaiting the arrival of missionaries, baptized the "converts." Throughout the

colonial period, Catholic missionaries from various orders continued working in the area, but even so by the twenty-first century there was still much work of evangelization to be done in Urabá.

Colombia was the center of the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada. Besides Urabá, the Spanish settled in the area of Cartagena, which had been conquered by Don Pedro de Heredia in 1533. A year later, the Dominican friar Tomás del Toro arrived in Cartagena, where he would serve as its first bishop. From that point on, supported by Dom Tomás and his successors, intensive missionary work was carried out mostly by Dominicans and Franciscans. The Jesuits did not arrive until 1598, but at that point they too undertook extensive missionary work.

From Cartagena, the Spanish moved toward the south, where they founded the city of Santa Fe de Bogotá, which became a bishopric in 1562 and an archbishopric in 1564. From a very early date, the Colombian church began producing its own clergy, which was an indication of its deep roots in the area. However, this clergy was recruited only among people of Spanish or mixed descent, and the ordination of the first person of pure Indian blood was long postponed.

Venezuela was also part of Nueva Granada. The first attempts to bring Christianity into the area ended in martyrdom. It was in the seventeenth century, thanks to the daring of Francisco de Pamplona, that the Capuchins finally settled in Venezuela. Six years later the Observant Franciscans followed them, while the Jesuits were entering from Colombia in the west. The work of the Jesuits was quite successful, but when they were expelled from the region, the other orders did not have sufficient resources to continue their work, which rapidly went into decline. The episcopal see of Caracas was founded in 1530.

The conquest of Ecuador, which eventually became part of the Viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, was undertaken from two different directions: by Pedro de Alvarado from the north and by Diego de Almagro from the south (Perú). Although at first there were rivalries