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978-0-521-68192-6 - Christianity in Latin America: A History

Ondina E. Gonzalez and Justo L. Gonzalez

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CHRISTIANITY IN LATIN AMERICA

From the arrival of the conquistadores in the fifteenth century to the spread of the Pentecostal movement today, Christianity has molded, coerced, refashioned, and enriched Latin America. Likewise, Christianity has been changed, challenged, and renewed as it crossed the Atlantic. These changes now affect its practice and understanding, not only in South and Central America and the Caribbean, but also – through immigration and global communication – around the world. Focusing on this mutually constitutive relationship, *Christianity in Latin America* presents the important encounters between people, ideas, and events of this large, heterogeneous subject. In doing so, it takes readers on a fascinating journey of explorers, missionaries, farmers, mystics, charlatans, evangelists, dictators, and martyrs. This book offers an accessible and engaging review of the history of Christianity in Latin America with a widely ecumenical focus to foster understanding of the various forces shaping both Christianity and the region.

Ondina E. González is an independent scholar who has been a visiting professor at Agnes Scott College and Emory University. She is co-editor of *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America*.

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To Karl and Catherine



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Preface

To write an introduction to Christianity in Latin America is no simple task, nor is it one we have undertaken lightly. As throughout the world, and in some cases more so, Christianity in Latin America is rich, varied, and complex. Its history includes hundreds of individuals who have been the object of careful monographs. Among such figures are devoted missionaries, fortune seekers, mystics, martyrs, charlatans, evangelists, dictators, visionaries, and many others. In the course of writing this book, we have often been tempted to delve more deeply and in more detail into the lives of many of these; however, we have constantly reminded ourselves that this is only an introduction to the subject. When we have singled out certain individuals or events for more detailed discussion, it often is because they illustrate a particular point that needs to be made and not necessarily because they are more important than others.

For similar reasons, we have refrained from giving bibliographical references to support every statement made in the book. When there is a direct quotation, the narrative and the information provided in the accompanying note should give the reader enough guidance to identify and find the source of the quotation. If a scholar's work is mentioned in the narrative without a corresponding note, full bibliographical information may be found at the end of the book in "Sources Referenced." Additionally, among the numerous materials that deal with various subjects discussed in this book, we have singled out some that may be particularly useful to the reader. These may be found in the section "Some Suggestions for Further Reading."

For us, writing this book together has provided an opportunity to work across generational lines – uncle and niece. Our PhDs are exactly forty years apart. Therefore, in general, one of us has brought to the table the more classical readings and concerns in the field and the other has brought the

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most recent scholarship. Thus, in our list of acknowledgments we must begin by expressing gratitude to each other. It has been an enjoyable experience!

As is always the case in a survey such as this, we owe much to scholars and researchers who have gone before us and on whose work we draw. To list them would be impossible. But we should always remind ourselves, particularly as historians, that each generation builds on the work of earlier ones.

Finally, our dedicating this book to our spouses is an insufficient acknowledgment of their support both in this project and in the entire business of living. Thank you again!