



The History of the Catholic Church in Latin America and Liberation Theology

Curriculum Unit 82.05.07

by Gary Smith

The Christian era began in the New World in 1492. The Spanish introduced a different moral code, baptism, the Mass, new concepts of good and evil, the idea of Heaven and Hell, the Virgin and saints, a new constitution of the family and the concept of the crucified Christ. The arrival of the Church in the New World terminated human sacrifice and cannibalism. Christian concepts suffused native art, Indians were forced to occupy a secondary position in the social structure and eventually became servants of the Spanish king and members of the Church's "flock."

It is important that students recognize that the history of the Catholic Church in Latin America was not merely an adjunct to the conquest or a side issue in the later independence movement but, rather that the history of the conquest and the history of the Church, itself are completely intertwined. The Inquisition in Spain became a reign of terror in the New World. Temples were razed and idols were destroyed as aboriginal cultures were viewed as manifestations of the devil.

An examination of the history of the Church in Latin America is necessary for today's student to understand liberation sympathy in Latin America since the 1960's. The student must understand the long history of the Church in that area. He must understand the role of the Church in the eras of the conquest and independence. He must be familiar with some of the dominant personalities of those periods, the treatment of the Indians during and after those periods and why the Church is so heavily involved in liberation today.

The purpose of this unit is to provide the teacher with a course outline and a narrative extrapolation of one unit within the course outline. The outline provides a chronological overview of the history of the Catholic Church in Latin America. This course outline which details the history of the Catholic Church in Latin America before and after Independence and the effects of liberation theology. This outline will enable any teacher to teach a course using the organized information in the outline. An annotated bibliography for each section has been provided so that teachers and students can explore further any aspect of the course. The narrative provides an in-depth look at one aspect of Church history in Latin America, the Jesuit experience in Paraguay. This enlargement can be expanded to produce a coherent teaching unit.

Behavioral Objectives

1. Students must recognize the initial effects of the arrival of the Catholic Church on aboriginal

cultures in the new world.

2. Students must realize that the history of Latin America and the history of the Catholic Church are inextricable.
 3. Students must understand the relationship between the history of the Church in Latin America and the present day liberation theology.
 4. Students must understand the involvement of the Church in social action in the twentieth century.
 5. Students must understand the upheaval following Vatican II.
 6. Students will understand how various religious orders have influenced present day liberation movements.
 7. Students will understand how liberation theology has influenced United States policy toward Latin America.
 8. Students will recognize the influence of Karl Marx on Catholic intellectuals in the 1960's.
- I. The history of the Church and of the Conquest are intertwined.
 - A. The Spanish introduced a new religious system.
 1. The Spanish introduced a different moral code.
 2. The Spanish introduced the sacraments, new principles of good and evil, Heaven and Hell.
 3. The Spanish introduced the concept of the crucified Christ, the Virgin and saints.
 4. The Spanish introduced the nuclear family based on the Holy Family.

Arciniegas, German. *Latin America : A Cultural History* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, p. 50.

A good account of the impact of Christianity on native cultures in Latin America. Arciniegas also covers such topics as the Jesuit and Franciscan missions and the position of priests in relation to the native people. Arciniegas tends to balance the positive and negative effects of the Church on the native peoples.

- B. The Catholic Church brought profound changes.
 1. The Church ended human sacrifice and cannibalism.
 2. The Church replaced human sacrifice with the consumption of the host (body and blood of

Christ).

3. Christian ideas replaced native ideas in art, but the native style was retained.
4. Cathedrals were built on the sites of the old native worshipping grounds.
5. Native deities were replaced by Christian saints.
6. Polytheistic religion of the aboriginal peoples was replaced by the monotheistic religion of the Spanish.
7. Rituals and dances associated with previously existing gods were reapplied to Christian saints.
8. Indians became servants of the Spanish king and members of the Church's "flock."

Arciniegas, German. *Latin America : A Cultural History* . New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, pp. 50-53.

C. The Church in America was responding to an atmosphere of Catholic reform.

1. Spain attempted to crush the spirit of the Reformation and resisted reforms of the counter Reformation.
2. The Church kept its crusading spirit visible in Latin America.
3. Franciscan and Jesuit missions created a machine for the propagation of the faith, the school.
4. The Church took over many functions that belong to the state in the modern world, such as education, banking, hospitals and public charity.
5. The Church controlled customs and application and enforcement of immigration laws which were designed to exclude Jews and Lutherans.
6. The Inquisition became a reign of terror in America.
7. Intellectual movements were quashed.
8. The Church saw the expression of aboriginal culture as the work of the devil.
9. Idols were destroyed and temples were razed, especially by the Dominicans and Franciscans.
10. Native manuscripts were destroyed, but book burning was not unusual in those days.

Arciniegas, German. *Latin America: A Cultural History* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967 pps. 139-41.

D. In America, parish priests were on the “front line”.

1. Priests found it easier to learn native languages than to teach Indians Spanish.
2. Christianity, with all of its mysteries, was complicated enough without forcing the Spanish language on the Indians, too.
3. Native languages tended to be so localized that a priest would have to know several languages.
4. Sermons were often said in three or four languages.
5. Confession had to be heard in native tongue since an interpreter would violate the intimacy of the sacrament.
6. The convent became a center for language study.
7. Vocabularies and Grammars were compiled.
8. Most books remained unpublished.
9. The learning of the native languages hastened the interchange of culture.
10. Fray Montolinia staged mystery plays in native languages.
11. Plays were very popular with Indians and conversions multiplied.
12. Five million Indians were baptized in Mexico between 1524 and 1536.
13. Monks equated Christian symbols with native concepts; the four points of the compass became equated with the cross.

Arciniegas, German. *Latin America: A Cultural History* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967, pps. 158-9.

E. The Jesuits arrived in 1540.

1. Paraguay became the greatest Jesuit experiment.
2. The Jesuits created colonies and jealously guarded them against both Spanish and Portuguese authorities.
3. The Jesuits also guarded their charges against exploitation by the secular colonies.

4. Jesuits started communal societies where tools, seed and animals were owned in common.
5. Indians would work a certain number of days as a kind of tithe.
6. The Jesuits introduced the printing press and books were printed in the Guarani language.
7. The Jesuits were so paternal that when they were expelled in 1767, the Indians could not govern themselves.
8. In 1767 there were only twenty two hundred Jesuits in Latin America, but they had seven hundred thousand Indians in their care.

Arcniegas, German. "The Jesuit Experiment," in *Latin America: Yesterday and Today* , ed. John Rothchild. New York:. Bantam Books, Inc., 1973, pps. 67-8.

This collection of articles by Arcniegas covers various aspects of Latin American history.

Picon-Salas, Mariano. *A Cultural History of Spanish America* , trans. Irving A. Leonard. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966. p. 105.

Picon-Salas places the Jesuit order in the world, emphasizing its international character and its more worldly successes such as its wealth, social influence and intellectual endeavors in the New World. *A Cultural History of Spanish America* contains further information on the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767.

Crow, John A. *The Epic of Latin America* . Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971, p. 562.

In this large volume Crow argues that the Jesuits were inspired by St. Thomas More's *Utopia* and chose the jungles of the New World in which to fulfill More's prophesy. Crow believes that Jesuits failed to take into account the motives of the greedy and secular societies around them. Only after Portugal won independence from Spain did the Jesuits arm the Indians and forge them into an effective fighting force.

F. The Church was controlled by the Crown in America

1. Monarchs had Papal permission to review tithes in the colonies in return for promises to support the Church there.
2. All clergy were dependent upon and responsible to the Crown.
3. All bishops were appointed by the king.
4. All priests and curates were appointed by the viceroy.
5. The Church was an integral part of the government.
6. Cemeteries were under Catholic control.
7. The Church controlled all official registers births, marriages and deaths.

8. The Church provided services to the community such as schools, hospitals, insane asylums and aid to the poor.
9. Indians tended to respect the Church because they considered it a protector.
10. The Christian God was accepted by the Indians because the Conquest had proved that God to be the most powerful.
11. The Church proved to be a great influence for social stability.
12. The Church gave the colonies their men of letters and ablest government officials.

Munro, Dana Gardner. *The Latin American Republics: A History* . 3rd ed. New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1960. p.116.

Munro points out that the vast majority of the services provided by the Church in Spanish America went to Whites. He also points out abuses of power and maltreatment of Indians even by the priests. This is a good source from which to study the structure and hierarchy of the colonial Church in America.

- II. After Independence the Catholic Church was the state church in most of the republics.
 - A. No other sect was tolerated in the first years of independence
 1. Most of the higher clergy which had remained loyalist had been expelled.
 2. The Papacy refused to recognise new republican governments and therefore the Church was leaderless in Latin America.
 3. The Church still dominated the minds and consciences of the masses as it had in the colonial period.
 4. The Church still monopolized education.
 5. The clergy retained special courts and exemption from taxes.

Munro Dana Gardner. *The Latin American Republics : A History* . 3rd ed. New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1960, pps. 118-9.

B. The Church came under attack of 19th century liberals.

1. The Church tended to support conservative parties which served to increase the liberals' anti clericalism.

2. Liberals tried to seize Church property and bring education, marriage and burial underlay authority.

C. In Chile, in 1856, violent controversy erupted over the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts.

1. The Church joined the radical opposition to the president.

2. This forced a compromise where a new archbishop and a new president were installed.

D. In Mexico, Santa Anna was responsible not only for the Texas Revolution, but he instigated other revolts as well.

1. Creole priests had led a revolt against Spain in Mexico.

2. After 1821, the Papacy refused to recognize Mexico's independence.

E. After Independence, Church history fell into two phases.

1. First, the Church concerned itself with new political forces which emerged during and after the struggles for independence.

2. The Church concerned itself with political relations with the new governments.

3. In the second phase, after 1890, the Church reevaluated its role in society.

4. The Church was no longer privileged.

5. The Church turned inward and emphasized worship, devotion, personal salvation and good works.

6. The Church tried to divorce itself from national, political, economic and social life and sometimes succeeded.

7. By the mid twentieth century it had severed ties with the traditional political parties.

8. The Church emphasized rebuilding its position in society through appeals based on moral, social and spiritual doctrines.

Schmitt, Karl M. *The Roman Catholic Church in Modern Latin America* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972, pps. 182-3.

For further reading Schmitt discusses Church state relations in twentieth century, including state protection and special privilege and Pope Leo XIII's encyclical addressing the Church to the modern, industrialized world in 1891.

F. The period from 1830 to the present has been characterized by Church-state conflict.

1. Clericals wanted continuation of special rights.
2. The Church desired to control the registry of births and deaths, legal enforcement of Church laws, and the maintaining of Church courts.
3. Anticlericals supported free, secular, universal education.
4. Anticlericals desired civil registry and the state control of marriage.
5. Anticlericals wanted abolition of Church courts.
6. The Church was slow to respond to the industrialized world.

G. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII addressed the Church to the industrialized world.

1. He deplored laissez-faire capitalism, materialism, and the atheistic aspects of socialism.
2. Pope Leo's position received lip service from the upper clergy, but was wholeheartedly embraced by the lower eschelon clergy.
3. Radicals in the Church began tackling the problem of social reform.
4. By the 1920's and 30's, Catholic Action organizations flourished in Latin America.

H. Catholic Action organizations saw themselves as bulwarks against atheism, Communism, materialism and socialism, sometimes to the point of pro-fascism.

1. Catholic Action in Chile was abandoned by Eduardo Frei and Raymondiro Tomic who became political activists and overthrew dictator Carlos Ibanez.
2. In Argentina Catholic Action became associated with nationalism, anti communism, social reform and even became linked with Italian Fascism.
3. In Mexico most Catholic Action never got underway because of the Cristero revolt, but rural cooperatives were established and a plan was devised for landlords to give over land to the peasants, but this movement never got underway.
4. By 1930, the importance of lay leadership was growing.
5. Paternalism gave way to independent action by Catholic supported social organizations.
6. The idea of church and political life as one remained.

Schmitt, Karl M. *The Roman Catholic Church in Modern Latin America* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972, pps. 186-7.

I. Between 1945 and 1970, Catholic Action enjoyed renewed fervor.

1. The Church effected changes in liturgy.
2. The Church began rethinking problems of ecclesiastical authority.
3. Since World War II, the Church became more deeply involved in activities concerning social and economic affairs.
4. The role of the laity became increasingly important.
5. There was widespread and positive response to directives from the Holy See concerning man's material affairs.
6. There were deep divisions within the Church over questions of social and economic relations and ecclesiastical authority, morals and theology.

J. After the Second Vatican Council, younger priests ignored their bishops, "resigned" from the Church structure, but still acted as priests.

1. Conservative bishops failed to implement social programs.
2. In some countries, bishops still held traditional power.
3. In other countries, the clergy teamed with Christian Democrats.
4. Priests at the grassroots level became deeply involved in political action.

Schmitt, Karl M. *The Roman Catholic Church in Modern Latin America* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972, pps. 193-5.

III. In liberation theology the biblical motif of Exodus is mentioned frequently in relation to the process of liberation in Latin America.

A. The theology of liberation is linked to the process of conscientization, a jarring of moral wrong into awareness.

1. The plagues of Egypt were part of a conscientization process.
2. Supporters of the status quo must likewise be "jarred" into conscientization.
3. Exodus became a structuring principle which determined the logic of Israel's historical development.

4. The problem is that exodus from Latin America is impossible.
5. Liberation-salvation idea now takes over with the creation of the “new man.”
6. The “new man” integrates himself fully in the worldwide process of salvation.
7. Salvation is equated with liberation, the prelude to building God’s city on Earth.
8. Christ becomes identified with the poor, the “outsider.”
9. Christ is present in and animates history.

Assman, Hugo. *Theology for a Nomad Church* , trans. Paul Burns. London: Orbis Books, 1976, p. 87.

Assman contrasts concepts of theology in North and South America. He traces liberation themes in Christianity from the Old Testament to the 1970’s. Christians are searching for substance rather than structure in religion. Since theology has always had a social setting, then “strategy” and “tactics” are at once the language of theology and the language of revolution as well. Assman’s book is a good, but sometimes difficult, in-depth study of the interrelated concepts that make up liberation theology.

B. After Vatican II, the Church found it must make “positive acts of witness” in relation to the process of liberation.

1. The message of love must be made credible to the people of Latin America by a break with the unjust social order and an “an open commitment to a new society.”
2. Theology must be sensitive to the demands of history.
3. Theologians must become part of the “Third World” in order to understand it.
4. The liberation concept is linked to effective action.
5. Truth is dynamic and must be verified by history.
6. Christ is “true” because he laid down his life for his people; that is, he committed a positive act.
7. Like Christ, the new theologian must take the side of the oppressed as a gesture of genuine love.
8. Faith, too, becomes “true” through historical action.
9. The Christian participation in the struggle for liberation is a major act of faith.
10. God does not exist in fixed institutions.
11. Just as the prophets mentioned God in reference to particular events, the liberation

theologian defines God in terms of strategy and tactics.

12. The theology of revolution attempts to define the revolution to come.

13. The revolutionary theologian seeks to use theology to provide concrete elements of a revolutionary ideology.

Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and ed. by Sister Caridad Inda and John Easleson. New York: Orbis Books, 1973, pps. 76-7.

This is a good, comprehensive text in the study of liberation theology. Gutierrez draws together the many levels and facets of liberation theology, including the relationship between liberation and salvation. Gutierrez also discusses politics in relation to Jesus as liberator.

The Jesuit Order was founded in 1540 and came to Spanish America during the term of Thomas de Souza as governor between 1549 and 1553. ¹ At that time the Franciscan and Dominican monks were already established in the New World, but these orders were not destined to have the significant impact that the Company of Jesus or the Jesuit Order was to have on the indigenous peoples of Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Paraguay, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Guatemala and Haiti. Through their successes with the Indians taken into their care and the resulting conflicts, the Jesuits were finally expelled from South America in 1767. ²

The Jesuits were inspired to establish their own social order by St. Thomas More who published his *Utopia* in 1516. The fundamental idea of *Utopia* was to “restore society to its Christian bases, adopting as supreme guide the norms of natural rights.” ³ The Jesuits saw themselves as fulfilling Thomas More’s prophesy, and to carry out this work they chose the impenetrable jungles of the New World as their home and workshop. Here they felt that they could do their work undisturbed, armed with a self government grant from the king which protected them from other Spaniards. ⁴

Land was granted to the Jesuit priests as well as to other religious orders. What mattered, really, was not so much the land itself, but rather the number of Indians, or souls, that lived upon it. Agriculture was important in 1650, and the Jesuits eventually counted themselves among the wealthiest landowners. ⁵

Mariano Picon-Salas wrote that the Jesuits formed a link between the baroque age and the prerevolutionary

period, indicating their pre-eminence among several religious communities active in the Spanish holdings in the New World at that time. By the Seventeenth Century the Jesuit Order was the foremost cultural organization and one of the strongest economic and political forces in the entire colonial world. ⁶

The Jesuits were international in character and brought clergymen into South America from many foreign nations. Father Kino organized Hungarians, Poles and Germans into Jesuit missions in Paraguay. These foreign priests brought new currents of thought to the Spanish Company of Jesus. ⁷

The Jesuits were students of the geography and natural history of the areas in which they worked. Father Jose Gumilla's *The Enlightened Orinoco*, published in 1791, was "an excellent monograph on the Guianas that describes climatic phenomena flora, fauna and the ethnography of the interior." ⁸

By the Eighteenth Century the intellectual standards, economic power and social influence of the Jesuits was unmatched. Their economic power derived from enormous plantations in the central valley of Chile, ranches in the River Plate region and large city and rural estates in Peru and Mexico. There were Jesuit owned workshops in Paraguay, Peru and Ecuador, and mining interests in the Chaco area of New Granada, now Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama.

These vast holdings comprised the material aspect of what German Arciniegas calls the "largest Utopian experiment ever attempted." ¹⁰ The Jesuits established this "utopian empire" under adverse conditions. The first step was to pacify the local Indians. Father Gonzalez de Santa Cruz and Rodriguez y del Castillo were martyred in 1628 and were beatified by Pius XI. After the Indians were pacified the missions were often attacked by groups who were searching for Indians to use as slaves. ¹¹

In spite of these hardships the Jesuit Fathers set up model communities of indigenous peoples in the wilderness of Brazil, Colombia and Paraguay. These communities reflected the Jesuits' sense of organization and self-discipline. ¹² These "reductions" as they were called, were actually communal farms. The word, "reduction," derives from the Latin word meaning "to lead back" or "to reduce." The Jesuits were convinced that the Guarani people of Paraguay had once known the true faith, but had been led astray by Satan. These missions then, were to "lead back" or "reduce" the Guarani to Christianity. This feeling derived from observed surface similarities in Guarani and Christian symbols and practices. ¹³

The Jesuits found that the Indians often accepted conversion, sometimes by the thousands, but they tended to lapse into heathen practices, especially polygamy and cannibalism. The Jesuits were only partially successful in eliminating these "twin abominations" outside the missions for both were deeply rooted in Indian culture. For this reason only converted Indians were allowed inside the missions. The Jesuits felt that segregation was the only way to insure that the converted Indians would not be tempted by the pagan practices of the uninitiated. ¹⁴

In Paraguay the Jesuits gathered up to one hundred thousand Guarani into the reductions. By 1607 the number had grown to one hundred and five thousand. The Jesuits, by necessity felt that they had to isolate their community from the neighboring Spanish and Portuguese colonies. As long as the Crown sponsored them, the Jesuits avoided interference from the Spanish authorities but protecting the Indians from the encroachments of white laymen was another matter. ¹⁵

John A. Crow, author of *The Epic of Latin America*, believes that the priests failed to take into account the "unworthy yet natural reactions of the society which surrounded them." ¹⁶ For example, the Paulistas and

Mamelucos of Brazil viewed the pacified Indians merely as a slave “labor pool” for their own use and consequently destroyed several communities of converts. The Paulista and Mameluco attacks began in 1629 and continued until 1631 when the entire community escaped into the jungle. ¹⁷

Mameluco or “Mameluke” was a term coined by the Jesuits for the Portuguese. ¹⁸ The word is a corruption of an Indian word, “Mamaruca,” which was a term coined by the Indians to designate half-breed children. ¹⁹ To confuse the issue more, the Jesuits called the Paulistas “mamelukes” because their atrocities reminded them of those committed by the Mohammedans. The Paulistas were actually a giant clan descended from a man named Joano Ramalho and legend claims that this clan was the product of Ramalho and a harem of several hundred captive, Indian women. ²⁰

In 1640, after Portugal won independence from Spain, Philip IV granted the Jesuits’ request to arm the Indians. Under the command of the Jesuits the Indians became a formidable fighting force. In fact, in the ensuing struggle between Portugal and Spain, the Indian force often became the determining factor in Spanish victories. Without this force, great parts of Uruguay, Bolivia and Paraguay might even now belong to Brazil. ²¹

With the Paulista and Mameluco threat removed, the Jesuits were able to return with their Indian converts, but they were to encounter a series of new difficulties which grew, ironically, out of the success of the reduction missions and the tendency of the priests to overprotect their native wards.

The success of the communal reductions resulted from tight organization. Each mission was under the rule of two priests who were responsible for discipline, development and welfare. There was no capital punishment although flogging inflicted for such offenses as drunkenness. The worst punishment at these missions was life imprisonment, meted out only in the severest cases. ²²

The reductions were divided into the Fields of God and the Fields of Man. The Fields of God were worked by all of the Indians together. The Fields of Man, however, were parceled out for individual use by the Indians. The crops produced in the Fields of God were owned by the commune, whereas the crops gathered in the Fields of Man were kept by the individual farmers. ²³

All Indians on the reductions received pots and pans, needles, clothing and other necessities. The quantity of these goods increased as the collective wealth of the community grew. ²⁴

The government of the reduction was carried out by elected representatives. Again, this limited democracy did not stir admiration, but rather jealousy of the privileged Creoles. The Creole haciendas tended to be poorly managed, relying on slave labor. The reductions were perceived as political and economic threat and eventually were outlawed and the Jesuits were forced to leave New Granada. ²⁵

Once the Jesuits gathered the Indians into the relative security and isolation of the reductions, the process of conversion and reinforcement of Christian Doctrine took place. Sometimes the Jesuits resorted to trickery and appealed to the Indians’ idolatry to reinforce Christianity. In Paraguay, the priests exploited the Indian’s idolatry by standing inside of a wooden statue and shouting orders to them. ²⁶

The Jesuits also used the theater, already developed by Franciscan and Dominican monks. At that time the theater was an integral part of European religious festivals. It was used to attract and amuse the Indians. Dances of Indian and African origins were blended into the mysteries of the new religion. The purely African communities instantly accepted the school of the Jesuit theater and learned from it. ²⁷

Another device which the Jesuit Fathers used to make religion more believable to the Guaranis was to use yerba-mate, a tea brewed from the leaves of the yerba tree. The Guaranis believed that the yerba had magical powers since the yerba is actually a stimulant. Since the Jesuits could not persuade the Guaranis that yerba-mate did not have magical powers, they fabricated the story that St. Thomas had conveyed supernatural powers to the yerba and brewed it as a tea for his converts. The Jesuits eventually exported the yerba cultivated by the Guaranis. ²⁸

The Jesuits used their wealth, amassed from the workings of the reductions, by investing it in land, tools and draft animals. They were free with technical and scientific advice and allowed the Indians a voice in decision making. ²⁹ Jesuits used their wealth to direct and control seminaries and missions of great importance to the economic life of the colonies. They provided intellectual centers in small, provincial towns, providing banking facilities and forums for the resolution of local political problems. ³⁰

In Paraguay the Jesuit press printed books in the Guaranis language. These were printed from wooden fonts carved by the Indians, themselves. Although Guaranis was the spoken language, prayers and hymns were written down in Latin. ³¹

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Jesuits began to defend their Indian charges and their rights against the authority of Spain. This authority was present in the new elite and the landlords and the Jesuits were forced out of one city after another. Finally, after a last stand at Ilano, the Jesuits were forced out of New Granad altogether when Pope Clement XIV dissolved the order in 1773. ³²

Once in exile the Jesuits turned to writing. They wrote truthfully and objectively since writing was all that was left to them. The Catholic monarchy which had been effectively administered by the Jesuits then began to disintegrate. By the early eighteenth century the Jesuits' Paraguayan community was the most peaceful and prosperous unit of government in Latin America. ³³

From the point of view of the royal government, this was most beneficial. The Crown had allowed the missionaries to convert and pacify the Indians. After this was accomplished, royal officers and members of the secular ecclesiastical hierarchy replaced them. This was economical for imperial territory was expanded with a minimum of risk. The Crown government was ready to assume control after Indian hostility was past and before the missionaries could assume positions of power. The equilibrium between diminishing Indian strife and expanding missionary organization was carefully watched by royal and ecclesiastical authorities. The time designated between pacification and conversion and the time when the secular clergy would take charge was ten years. The period, however, was usually more than a decade and on the frontier lasted until the end of colonial times. ³⁴

The removal of the Jesuit influence brought on a series of local uprisings. The revolt at Asuncion grew into the Antequera revolution. Antequera wanted local control of local institutions in Buenos Aires and Peru. The execution of Antequera became the rallying point for both the upper classes and commoners and their new South American political consciousness which began an attitude of belligerence toward the Spanish monarchy. Without the Jesuits, dissatisfaction over military recruitment, ever-increasing taxes and the Indians' hatred for their Spanish magistrates came to the surface. In 1749 Juan Francisco Leon led a revolt of small cacao planters in Venezuela and in 1752 rebellions at LaRioja and Catamarca in North Argentina protested arbitrary military conscription of peasants. These were followed by large scale uprisings between 1749 and 1782. ³⁵

Francis Xavier Clavijero and other exiled Jesuits saw miscegenation as the only answer to the problem of the

racés. Other members of the order, however, disagreed strongly. Clavijero wrote in his *Storia Antica del Mexico*. "There is no doubt at all that the policy of the Spaniards would have been wiser if, instead of fetching wives from Europe and slaves from Africa...they had insisted on making a single people out of themselves and the Mexican Indians." ³⁶ Clavijero attempted to remove erroneous concepts of the Europeans regarding the Indians and bestow a universal character upon them. For example, he compared the Mexican word "Teotl" to the "Theos" of the Greeks. He then used "Teotl" to express a Christian-like monotheism, reflecting a widespread eighteenth century interest in creating a universal culture. ³⁷

Herbert Wendt believed that the Jesuits actually wanted to prevent the mingling of blood of the Whites and the Indians. Their motivation was not racial, but rather they wanted to prevent "the uprooting and debasement that were taking place in Latin America." ³⁸

Before the expulsion of the Jesuits, many of them were beginning to take a "benevolent attitude toward the ideas of separation and independence from Spain, which began to be bruited about in the eighteenth century. ³⁹ The interests of the order began to coincide "with those of the regional bourgeois that considered its rise in the economic scale as handicapped by Spanish monopolistic practices and by the excessive, French style centralization that the Bourbon dynasty was imposing." ⁴⁰

John Gunther states that the Catholic Church grew rich and decadent in America. In fact, Paraguay became practically a Jesuit colony. "Nowhere did the clergy, secular or regular, bestow upon the people anything like proper recompense for their inordinate position, though an effort was made in education." ⁴¹

In agreement with Gunther is Mariano Picon-Salas who wrote that even long before the expulsion the generally bad relations between Spain and the order were at their worst in Paraguay "where they held a virtual fiefdom." ⁴²

In 1754 the Paraguayan Fathers led their Indians in a revolt against a Spanish-Portuguese boundary treaty, and in Peru, Jesuits were accused of terrorizing Indians and depriving them of land, wages, women, children and personal freedom. The Bourbons also cited widespread smuggling, graft, cheating of Indians and a general tendency to ignore orders from Spain. ⁴³ This weakening of the bonds between the Old World and the new invited intervention by rival powers and this, too, became a factor in the expulsion of the Jesuits.

The expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 was part of a whole pattern of administrative reform both foreign and domestic under the Bourbons. As an official explanation, the monarchy cited the need to "bring local Jesuit power to an end and assert royal power in their stead." ⁴⁴ This explanation was related to the Bourbon attack upon the Jesuit society in Europe and the result of Enlightenment ideas, religious nationalism and resistance to papal authority. ⁴⁵

Some of the Bourbon reforms in the New World rang somewhat hollow. In Ecuador, for example, the expulsion of the Jesuits was linked to the abolition of slavery. This affected only a small minority of Negroes. The Indians were never technically slaves and therefore could not be freed. ⁴⁶

"The Bourbons probably numbered the expulsion of the Jesuits (1767) among their reforms; but whatever the virtues of this drastic measure . . . it was, so far as the colonies were concerned, perhaps an erroneous readjustment. The expulsion of hundreds of these padres from all parts of Spanish America may have pleased many of their rivals and enemies, but it could not fail to grieve thousands of Indians whom they had protected

and served. ⁴⁷

In 1767 there were barely twenty two hundred Jesuits in all of Spanish America, but there were some seven hundred thousand Indians under their care. They owned schools, hospitals, dockyards, workshops where Indians were trained to spin, tan and make pottery. They had built roads which led spokewise from the hub in Candalaria to all parts of mission territory. Jesuits established eighty postal centers complete with messengers, guards and constantly maintained horses. A large fleet of canoes and river boats carried goods to points where they could be sold. By 1767, the mission territory was exporting thirty thousand green hides and six thousand cured ones as well as eight thousand, five hundred pounds of horsehair, seventy five thousand pounds of tobacco, two hundred thousand pounds of yerba-mate and wood valued at twenty five thousand dollars per year. The missions owned seven hundred and nineteen thousand, seven hundred and sixty-one head of cattle, forty four thousand, one hundred and eighty-three oxen, twenty four thousand, two hundred and four horses and one hundred and thirty-eight thousand, eight hundred and twenty-seven sheep. Within two years after the expulsion, virtually all of this wealth disappeared. ⁴⁸

In assessing the accomplishments of the Jesuit fathers in Spanish America, it would be fair to state that the actions taken against the Jesuits were outgrowths of actions and changes of attitude on the continent. The Company had fallen into disgrace with monarchies and had lost the favor of the papacy in Europe. Other orders, jealous of the wealth and power of the Jesuits and physically closer to the papal ear conspired to have the Jesuit order suspended throughout the entire Catholic world. ⁴⁹

Separated by an ocean from European influence, Jesuit thought became bolder and more forthright. Some, like Vizcardo y Guzman and Poza y Sucre “swung far over to what we would call today the revolutionary left by participating in conspiracies to win independence fomented by Francisco de Miranda.” Miranda lead Venezuela’s struggle for independence from Spain. He became a dictator, but was unsuccessful and in the end surrendered to the royalists. ⁵⁰

It was inevitable that a static, medieval theocracy would come into conflict with the forward-looking empire of Charles III. John A. Crow believed that there was no possibility of compromise and that Charles felt that the missions were “at least a challenge” to his authority as he strove to devest the Church of its strong temporal power. ⁵¹

Unfortunately for the native peoples under the Jesuits’ care, the theocracy actually may have paved the way for authoritarian dictatorship. ⁵² The expulsion deprived the colonies of their best teachers and missionaries and furthermore left the colonies in a desloyal mood. ⁵³ The Jesuits tended to overprotect their communities and when they were expelled the missions could not govern themselves.

Notes

1. German Arciniegas, “The Jesuit Experiment,” in *Latin America : Yesterday and Today*, ed. John Rothchild, (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1973,), p. 150.

2. Mariano Picon-Salas, *A Cultural History of Spanish America* , trans. Irving A. Leonard (Berkeley

- and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 133.
3. John A. Crow, *The Epic of Latin America* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), p. 192.
 4. Crow, p. 192.
 5. Lilo Linke, *Ecuador : Country of Contrasts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 24.
 6. Picon-Salas, p. 131.
 7. Picon-Salas, p. 131.
 8. Picon-Salas, p. 131.
 9. Picon-Salas, p. 132.
 10. Rothchild, p. 87.
 11. Rothchild, p. 87.
 12. Crow, p. 191.
 13. Rollie E. Poppino, *Brazil : The Land and People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 81.
 14. Poppino, p. 64.
 15. Rothchild, p. 113.
 16. Crow, p. 194.
 17. Crow, p. 195.
 18. German Arciniegas, *Latin America : A Cultural History* , trans. Joan MacLean (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 114.
 19. Herbert Wendt, *The Red, White and Black Continent* , trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966), p. 331.
 20. Wendt, p. 331.
 21. Crow, p. 196.
 22. Crow, p. 197.
 23. Lionel Landry, *The Land and People of Colombia* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970), p. 52.
 24. Landry, p. 52.
 25. Landry, p. 53.
 26. Georgie Anne Geyer, *The New Latins : Fateful Change in South and Central America* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1970), p. 64.
 27. Arceniegas, *Latin America : A Cultural History* p. 116.
 28. George Pendle, *The Lands and Peoples of Paraguay and Uruguay* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1962) , p. 2 .
 29. Landry, p. 51.
 30. Picon-Salas, p. 132.
 31. Rothchild, p. 114.
 32. Landry, p. 51.
 33. Wendt, p. 334.
 34. Charles Gibson, *Spain in America* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966), p. 81.
 35. Picon-Salas, p. 135.
 36. Picon-Salas, p. 137.
 37. Picon-Salas, p. 138.
 38. Wendt, p. 333.
 39. Picon-Salas, p. 132.
 40. Picon-Salas, p. 133.

41. John Gunther, *Inside Latin America* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), p. 9.
42. Picon-Salas, p. 133.
43. J. Fred Rippy, *Latin America : A Modern History* , eds. Allen Nevins and Howard M. Ehrmann, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 99.
44. Gibson, p. 82.
45. Gibson, p. 82.
46. Linke, p. 24.
47. Rippy, p. 102.
48. Crow, p. 202.
49. Rothchild, p. 115.
50. Picon-Salas, p. 133.
51. Crow, p. 205.
52. Geyer, p. 63.
53. Rippy, p. 105.

Questions based on the narrative

1. Define the term “utopia.”
2. Give reasons why the Jesuits chose the jungles of the New World to establish their utopia.
3. Explain how the Jesuits were men of God and men of the world at the same time.
4. Why did the Jesuits isolate their community from the neighboring Spanish and Portuguese colonies?
5. State reasons why the Indians were so easily converted.
6. Explain how the Jesuits used the familiar as springboards to more complex Christian concepts.
7. Why did the Jesuits consider it necessary to arm the Indians and mold them into a fighting force?
8. Why did the reductions elicit greed in their more secular neighbors?
9. Define the term “reduction” as it is used in this narrative.
10. List the punishments meted out by the Jesuits in disciplining the Indians.
11. Name two groups in the New World who opposed the Jesuit community.
12. List the ways in which the Jesuits used their wealth after the reductions became successful.
13. Analyze the nature of the conflict between the Jesuits and the Spanish authorities in the New World in the 17th and 18th centuries.
14. Explain why the order and discipline imposed in the Paraguayan community made it a prime target for secularization by royal officers of Spain.
15. Give reasons why the repressed animosity on the part of both Indians and the provincial Spanish erupted into violence after the removal of Jesuit influence.
16. List the grievances lodged against the Jesuits prior to the expulsion.
17. Name the institutions and operations owned by the Jesuits prior to their expulsion.
18. How did the Jesuits lose the favor of the Spanish monarchy?
19. How did the Jesuits lose the support of the Papacy?
20. Why did some Jesuit thinkers in the New World become seriously involved in movements to win independence from Spain?

Reports

1. A student may report on the organization of the reductions.
2. A student may report on communal life in the reduction.
3. A student may report on the government of the reduction.
4. A student may report on the methods and devices used by the Jesuits to convert the Indians.

Terms to define (limited to bonafide English words with which the students may not be familiar).

1. beatify
2. bourgeois
3. cannibalism
4. elite
5. idolatry
6. miscegenation
7. polygamy
8. prophesy
9. reduction
10. secular
11. seminary
12. theocracy
13. utopia

Suggested projects

1. Students with some manual dexterity and artistic sense may want to create a model of a Jesuit reduction, including the fields of God, the fields of Man, buildings defenses etc.
2. Students may want to engage in a class debate on the issue of the expulsion of the Jesuits, giving evidence pro-expulsion and anti-expulsion.
3. A student may want to give a speech defending or condemning the Jesuit treatment of the Indians.
4. Students may write articles and/or draw political cartoons depicting various aspects of controversies surrounding the history of the Jesuits in Paraguay.

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