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The New Latin American Mission History. Edited by Erick Langer and Robert H. Jackson. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. xviii + 212 pp., introduction, tables, notes, index. \$35.00 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)

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Over the past two decades a shift has taken place in the way that historians approach the study of missions in the vast regions colonized by Spain and Portugal in the New World. Prior to this shift Latin American mission history consisted primarily of narrative chronologies, typically apologist in tone and intent, written by clerics and ex-clerics (whose works are characterized in this volume as “church self-history”) and by some secular historians, most of whom were students or students of students of Herbert E. Bolton. Their histories, focused on the activities and perspectives of the missionaries rather than on those of the people missionized, emphasized the institutional and organizational dimensions of the missions, often viewing them in isolation from the larger colonial projects of which they were a crucial part.

In the 1980s an alternative approach emerged. Labeled the “new” Latin American mission history by its proponents, it was inspired by the more analytic and theoretically sophisticated social and cultural history that had begun to transform historiography in the 1960s. Devoted to examining Indian responses to mission programs; to evaluating the impact of the missions on Indian societies and cultures; to providing a balanced account of Indian and missionary relationships and praxis; to analyzing the missions as social, cultural, political, economic, and demographic processes; and to linking missions to encompassing structures and systems, the new Latin American mission history represented a radical departure from the old. Yet, as the editors of this volume note, scholars in disciplines outside history—mainly anthropology, geography, and demographic history—have produced new-style mission histories for decades. As an approach to understanding the mission phenomenon, the new mission history is new primarily for historians.

The eight essays in this collection all examine missions on the frontiers rather than in the core areas of Iberian New World colonization. The features that distinguish the new Latin American mission history from the old are discussed primarily by Robert H. Jackson in the introduction and Erick Langer in the conclusion. David Sweet also explores this theme in his analysis of the constraints and opportunities that affected Indian agency within missions across Latin America. The remainder of the volume consists of five case studies of particular missions or mission systems from disparate times and places. Langer focuses on the changing role that missions

played in the frontier economy of the Chiriguano region of Bolivia between 1845 and 1930. Paul Farnsworth and Jackson, relying primarily on detailed data from a single mission, analyze the evolving relationships among political, economic, demographic, and cultural processes in the Alta California missions during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In separate essays Susan M. Deeds and Lance R. Grahn examine Indian responses to the colonial Catholic mission programs in northern Mexico and the Guajira peninsula of northwestern South America and appraise the consequences of Indians' actions for the success of these programs and for the reproduction of their own societies, cultures, and identities. Thomas Whigham pursues many of the same issues in his study of the composition and functions of Guaraní *pueblos de indios* in Paraguay between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The editors have succeeded admirably in providing a sample of outstanding new work in mission history, although they fail to reveal their rationale for bringing together this particular set of studies. One wonders why these places and times were chosen and why only the work of scholars affiliated with universities in the United States is included. Nevertheless, the contributors are leading scholars with extensive experience in mission studies, and their essays, clearly written and impeccably researched, exemplify the highest standards of historical scholarship.

These essays yield exciting new insights into life in the missions of colonial and republican Latin America and into the fundamental connections between the missions and the world beyond their boundaries. They are well-reasoned analyses of the complex factors that affected the interaction of Indians and Europeans on the frontier and the outcomes of their competition for social, political, economic, and cultural dominance. The authors clearly demonstrate the rewards of a sophisticated approach to mission history, grounded in contemporary social and cultural theory, and provide thoughtful and at times sobering evaluations of the challenges that must be overcome to reach a more profound understanding of missions and their histories. Their essays offer excellent models for studies of mission history at other times and places in Latin America. With some minor adjustments, the questions they address and the methods they use can also be profitably applied to analyzing and interpreting the missionary endeavors of both Catholicism and other proselytizing religions around the world.