in 1806 and 1807. A large percentage of the donors consisted of the recently recruited militiamen, who gave small gifts in support of the state. Grieco argues that these militiamen saw their donations as part of their attainment of the status of vecinos, closely equated to citizenship. As such, these plebs were engaging in the 'politics of giving', donating in exchange for 'opportunities for exercising their newly acquired rights as vecinos' (p. 11). Their donations to the cabildo legitimised their status as vecinos, respected members of the community. Once again, individuals saw their donations as investments.

Grieco is less persuasive in her attempt to argue that the Spanish system of *donativos* was superior to the fiscal mechanisms utilised by the British or French monarchs. Scholars have long portrayed the British system of taxation as most effective in raising revenues for the modernising state. Grieco challenges this conventional wisdom pointing primarily to the American Revolution, an anti-tax movement. A fiscal system that led to the overthrow of colonial rule should not be seen as effective, she suggests. Because the Spanish monarch relied heavily on voluntary donations rather than involuntary taxes, she argues, the population viewed them as legitimate. A more complete discussion of the overall fiscal effectiveness, measured in terms of amounts collected, might have bolstered this argument.

An area that Grieco might have explored more fully is the link between donativos and corruption. In her introduction, she rejects any association between the two, suggesting that donativos were different from influence peddling because '… donativos were widely accessible to individuals and groups of different social statuses' (p. 11). However, Grieco also recognises that not all donors were equally capable of asserting their expectations to the Crown. Some gifts were more influential than others. Also, one cannot help but wonder whether the officeholders who made *donativos* had a real choice. Grieco might have examined what happened to those electing not to donate to the Crown's coffers.

These minor issues aside, Viviana Grieco's book is rich in detail, well documented with extensive numerical evidence, and very persuasive about the centrality of donativos in the politics of late-colonial Río de la Plata. It is an excellent book, highly recommended.

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Hans-Jurgen Prien, *Christianity in Latin America* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, revised and expanded, 2013), pp. xxii +670, €203.00, $282.00, hb.

The author of this book modestly presents his work as 'an introduction rather than a comprehensive account'. But despite the disclaimer, there is a visible effort to be comprehensive, in time if not in geographical or thematic coverage. The book begins at the beginning (conquest and importation/imposition of Christianity) and carries its story through to the late twentieth century. The first nine chapters address issues concerning Church, society and politics in the colonial period. This discussion includes background chapters on Spanish overseas expansion and on the development of the Catholic Church after Trent. The three concluding chapters (which take up almost half the text) bring the narrative to the present (or at least close). In these chapters, the author pays special attention to theological and political conflicts and their effects on the Church (positivism, nationalism, liberal-conservative disputes), to race

and missions, to the relation of the churches to revolutionary governments (Mexico, Cuba, Bolivia but not Nicaragua), and to evolving religious competition between the Catholic Church and newly energised Protestant and Pentecostal churches which get considerable attention. The volume itself is massive, with almost 700 pages of fine print: 14 pages of front matter (abbreviations and glossary), 558 pages of text, a 76-page bibliography and two indexes (names and subjects) that together run for 29 pages. Given the scale of this effort, it is not easy to imagine what shelf might hold a more comprehensive account.

The volume is replete with lists: names of individuals, groups, churches, regional organisations (Catholic and Protestant), meetings, and documents. No explicit rationale is offered for coverage (why this and not that?), and no particular unifying theme or themes are laid out. There is no general conclusion. On the next to last page the author effectively throws up his hands:

> In the end the historian can only note with astonishment that the message of the gospel has succeeded in putting down roots in Latin America and the Caribbean – in spite of all the perversions of the this message by its bearers, be it through conquest, compulsory conversion, the imposition of western culture with all its attendant ills such as slavery, forced labour, racial discrimination, and ethnocide, as well as all modern forms of exploitation and land theft amid the indigenous population, enslaved Afro Americans, and their descendants and mestizos. The gospel has indeed taken root and brought forth a broad spectrum of popular religiosity. The theologian can only explain this miracle by the action of the Holy Spirit, which of course always avails itself to human beings in all their frailties. (p. 557)

He concludes that an authentically Latin American Christianity firmly rooted in local culture, is 'a goal to which the churches could develop' (p. 558) but is pessimistic about the real prospects, at least for the Catholic Church, which is the central focus of the book.

With an effort of this scale, it is not easy to select particular points for comment, but a few may be noted here. The discussion of popular religiosity (Chapter 8) defines the issues in terms of heterodox practices and syncretism, all situated in contrast to sanctioned Church practices. This leaves out a good deal of interest, including social and political mobilisations, along with new leadership generations and new forms of organisation that emerge in force by the mid-twentieth century. The author's account of nineteenth-century conflicts (Chapter 10) gives particular attention to well-trodden issues of nationalism, positivism and liberal-conservative struggles in the formation and consolidation of nation-states. There is also discussion of Romanising influences and the slow emergence of regional unity in the Catholic Church. The last two chapters consider the Catholic Church's efforts to retain social and political influence in the face of liberal and Protestant challenges, and the general problem of ecumenism in the context of what the author labels a 'crisis' in the development of nation-states. This 'crisis' refers mostly to the collapse and overthrow of populist regimes in the 1960s and to the period of military rule and revolutionary upheaval that followed. The author works his way through a series of meetings and documents that record this process in all the churches (Catholic and Protestant) both regional and national, with Brazil getting particular attention. The implications of restored democracy for the churches as institutions and for religious life in general does not get comparable consideration. The same is true for questions of memory, rights and reconciliation, and increasingly visible contests over sexuality and gender in the post-military period.

The bottom line is that this book brings together a wide range of sources, cases and evidence and in this sense provides a useful reference, but in the final analysis does not present much that is new or surprising. The absence of an explicit theoretical or comparative focus makes it difficult for the author to assess the evolution of Latin America in a broader context.

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Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America since Independence* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3rd edition, 2014), pp. xxv +595, $110.00, $45.00 hb; $75.00, £29.99 pb.

The third edition of Victor Bulmer-Thomas's authoritative economic history of Latin America continues to illuminate our understanding of trends in regional growth. The story is complex. Bulmer-Thomas does not oversimplify broad trends; instead he teases lessons, often in counterpoint to popular perspectives, from the heterogeneous growth in the region. Although a shared colonial experience and a reliance on commodity exports create a common backdrop, diverse products and distinct policy environments differentiate growth profiles.

While the Spanish and Portuguese monopolised trade with their colonies, extracting gold, taxing subjects and creating royal monopolies, independence brought opportunities for policy variation. However, new governments did not dramatically alter the economic landscape. Although reliant on the external sector, nations did not enact Riparian free trade. Instead, fiscal policies were anchored to customs revenues, introducing a pro-cyclical macro bias. Paralleling today's trade with China, the region rode the strong demand for minerals and agricultural products created by the industrial revolution and its growing middle class in Europe. Independence left land tenure systems little changed, reinforcing the power of a small core of elites. Powerful domestic constituencies opposed realigning priorities; market interventions, including coercion of labour, kept rural sector wages low, masking price incentives to switch to capital intensive production in dual use agriculture. Other elites benefited from tariffs on import-competing industries, an important source of fiscal revenue for governments. The model remained intact.

Bulmer-Thomas suggests that export-led growth had promise. Despite volatility in the prices of resource based products, he contests the view that declining terms of trade dooms a country to stagnation. The region grew on the export platform, just not fast enough to keep pace with other western offshoots such as the United States. He calls our attention to the success Argentina built through product and market diversification prior to World War I, resulting in the tenth highest GDP in the world, outpacing France. Argentina was able to benefit from relatively open global markets, and experienced some success in transferring productivity gains from export to dual use agriculture. Alternative models would have faced constraints similar to those limiting export-led growth, spotty transportation networks, weak capital markets, labour scarcity, political instability and, with the exception of Brazil, small internal demand.

World War I changed the players but not the outcomes. The disruption of European trade routes repositioned the United States as the lead supplier for Latin America. American financing followed its firms. Oil won the commodity lottery,