

*Race Mixture in the History of Latin America.* By MAGNUS MÖRNER. Boston, 1967. Little, Brown and Company. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xii, 178. Paper.

Following his recent excellent article on the state of research into the history of Latin American race relations (*Latin American Research Review*, I, 3), Magnus Mörner now comes forward with a compact book on the history of race mixture in that culture area, using a great variety of secondary works and printed sources. In short chapters he engagingly discusses such topics as the racial policies of State and Church in colonial times, the rise and decline of "caste" society, the conditions of Negro slavery, and the recent developments in race relations, with emphasis on regional variety and change in time. Mörner both avoids and attacks oversimplifications. With a wealth of convincing data he explodes popular theses that slavery has been more benign in Latin America than in Anglo America, and that racial prejudice and discrimination in Latin America have been and are negligible.

Factual errors are scarce, as far as this reviewer can judge, but two are worth mentioning here. It is incorrect to say that nowhere in the Guianas did Asiatics replace Negro labor on the plantations (pp. 131-132). Also Mörner's suggestion that "the systematic 'slave breeding' in Virginia and South Carolina . . . seems to have had no counterpart in Latin America" (p. 121) is contradicted by what Gilberto Freyre writes about the eagerness of Brazilian masters to augment their gangs (*The Masters and the Slaves*, 1946 edition, p. 395).

As an orthodox historian, Mörner prefers concrete description to a higher but riskier level of abstraction. He likes to unmask daring generalizations but not to replace them; he "is no friend of the prolific use of learned words and concepts" (p. 8). Consequently the theoretical tools which he uses are few, perhaps—even for his limited purposes—too few. One might ask, would it not have been useful to delimit the field of racial relations more clearly and distinguish race mixing as one specific aspect of it? Should he not have split up the phenomenon of race mixing into two different processes with different sociological relevance? Racial miscegenation not only has significant consequences for the socio-racial structure insofar as it leads to the formation of a racially mixed middle group. It also has significant consequences, since it may lead to biological homogenization, if inter-racial sexual relations on the basis of mutual social acceptance are sufficiently frequent, and if no racial group on any social level is

excluded. This latter form of interracial contact must be clearly distinguished from sexual relations between owner and slave, master and servant; for the results of these relations do complicate the social structure without breaking down the racial exclusiveness of the upper social layer.

Although Mörner does pay some attention to this distinction, especially with regard to the early colonial period, it would have been illuminating if he had elaborated the historical evolution of both social forms of race mixing in Latin America. In that case the reader could more easily appreciate the significance of a statement by Marvin Harris which Mörner quotes approvingly—that “even prior to Negro slavery there were many poor whites in the North American South, and the emancipated Negroes had to compete with them. In Latin America, the corresponding stratum was the result of three centuries of miscegenation” (p. 137). This is not an *explanation* of milder race relations in Latin America than in North America, but a description of the *result* of a greater inclination toward racial mixing on the basis of social acceptance in the former area than in the latter. In historian Mörner’s modest opinion the study of these different inclinations lies within the social psychologist’s domain.

The last chapter of the book analyzes racism, *indigenismo*, and “Afro-Latin Americanism” with critical cleverness and sets forth an “agonizing reappraisal” of *mestizaje*. Here Mörner expresses rather abruptly his belief that “the individual’s racial characteristics are beginning to lose their importance in society” (p. 149), as if the healthy skepticism which accompanied him while he undermined cherished beliefs about Latin America’s racial paradise had left him as he wrote the last three pages. They do not diminish the value of this book, however, as an erudite historian’s collection of often rare materials, ably organized in well-written chapters evincing admirable mastery of a complex subject.

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*Hipótesis para una historia de la iglesia en América Latina.* By ENRIQUE DUSSEL. Barcelona, 1967. Editorial Estela. Charts. Tables. Notes. Appendices. Bibliography. Pp. 219. Paper.

Heinrich Dussel (Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz, Germany) poses the interesting proposition that the history of the Church in Latin America remains to be written. So far the works that have appeared in great volume dating back to the early colonial period, and represented as church history, should be called only the “*corporalidad*” or objective facts of church history.