

Toward a New Agenda for the Study of Religion in the Americas

Recent scholarly work on Latin American religion reflects the pluralism and fragmentation of both religion and civil society. What effect will religious practice at the local, “micro” level have on institutions and structures at the “macro” level—namely, the process of democratization? A deeper, simultaneously more foundational and more encompassing definition of democratic politics might be involved. In an increasingly global context, the study of religion and social change in Latin America and among U.S. Latinos needs to take a comparative, truly interamerican approach.

Churches as Winners and Losers in the Network Society

This essay argues that Manuel Castells’s explorations of networks and the emergent network society in his recent trilogy *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture* may offer useful clues to recent religious developments in Latin America. In this regard, Pentecostalism, by adopting a logic of horizontal integration, rapid response, and flexible production, might be more successful than the Catholic Church in attracting followers.

No Land of Milk and Honey: Women CEB Activists in Posttransition Brazil

Brazil’s *comunidades eclesiais de base* (CEBs) forged a generation of women leaders from poor communities who helped rebuild civil society and spurred the democratic transition. Fifteen years later, the CEBs and their women leaders have largely disappeared from politics. This study examines the reasons for their eclipse and the chances for their reemergence. New alliances with other Catholic progressives, Pentecostals, and feminist groups may enable these women to resume their activist role and may again help revitalize Brazilian civil society.

Religious and Social Participation in War-Torn Areas of El Salvador

The Salvadoran civil war destroyed local community life throughout the province of Morazán. Despite the peace accords, poverty, unequal land distribution, and a “culture of violence” demand structural and institutional transformations well beyond the individual moral regeneration offered by churches. Religion, however, supplies coping tools, especially for youth, women, and repatriated refugees. By focusing on local issues, furthermore, churches are fostering social participation among hitherto disenfranchised groups, a critical element in building an inclusive, robust democracy.

Believers and Neighbors: "Huaycán Is One and No One Shall Divide It"

Contrary to the argument that evangelical Christianity is inherently apolitical or conservative, evangelicals in a new pueblo on Lima's periphery extended political mobilization to negotiating with municipal authorities, Catholic neighbors, and even *Sendero Luminoso* to define political and ideological space in the new neighborhood. Yet differences within and among denominations kept them from permanently coordinating their political activism. This case highlights the nature of citizenship building and political participation for evangelicals in Peru.

Rethinking Transnationalism: Reconstructing National Identities Among Peruvian Catholics in New Jersey

Transnationalism has made significant contributions to the study of immigration, but it has failed to recognize the importance of the multiethnic, multicultural context of host societies in the construction of immigrants' identities. Two Peruvian Catholic religious brotherhoods in Paterson, New Jersey, illustrate individual and collective identities that transcend traditional notions of nationality through complex relations with Latino immigrants from other nations. Religion contributes to the articulation of a pan-Latino identity in the host society.

Popular Religions and the Building of Democracy in Latin America: Saving the Tocquevillian Parallel

Do Latin America's popular religions contribute to the formation of citizens and the development of civil society—the infrastructure of democracy—in ways that parallel the operation of the religious factor in the development of North American democracy as perceived by Tocqueville? Examining evidence prompting both negative and positive responses, this essay argues that Catholicism, Pentecostalism, and Afro-Brazilian Spiritism all contain tendencies that contribute to the development of pluralist democracy in the Latin American republics.