



PROJECT MUSE®

Latinos and the New Immigrant Church (review)

Allan Figueroa Deck

The Americas, Volume 63, Number 4, April 2007, pp. 669-670 (Review)

Published by Cambridge University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2007.0064>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/214834>

cludes, during the period between 1776 and 1870, Argentina moved toward a “more modern nationhood” at the same time that those living in Buenos Aires moved toward “a more modern family structure” (p. 141).

As may already be apparent, the interpretive framework adopted in this book is premised upon the juxtaposition of a series of dichotomous terms. Tradition confronts the modern; the real contrasts with the ideal; and continuity and/or change characterize the shift from old to the new. Although Shumway never proposes a simple linear transition from one of these terms to the other (he is interested in both what changed and what remained the same), such a framework nevertheless limits the kinds of conclusions he is able to draw. Distinguishing between the “real” and the “ideal,” for example, leads him to treat his sources—which include *disensos*, child custody cases, divorce proceedings as well as newspapers, paintings and other literature—as “windows” that present “better-than-fiction” stories about those whom he chooses to treat. Such sources, like perhaps most others, seem to offer a murkier and obscured glimpse of attitudes, beliefs and practices rather than the clear view of the open window posited by Shumway. What is clear, however, is that Shumway has taken great care not only in setting out and supporting his argument but also in crafting a highly readable and accessible book. The men and women—parents, children, friends and lovers—whose stories introduce each chapter, are more than narrative devices; they are the human faces through which the larger question of the relationship between family and nation in Argentina has been addressed.

University of British of Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia

WILLIAM FRENCH

LATINO/BORDER STUDIES

Latinos and the New Immigrant Church. By David A. Badillo. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Pp. xxvi, 275. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$60.00 cloth; \$22.95 paper.

Urban historian David A. Badillo has produced a fresh, new look at the Latino immigrant church in the United States. Underlying this effort is the author’s conviction that Latino historical identity has much to do with religion even though mainstream and Latino academia have tended to bracket issues of religion. This is a well researched, engaging work that responds to the need for more background knowledge on Latinos as they continue to emerge as the United States’ largest minority and indeed the majority within U.S. Catholicism.

The book’s method is original and effective. The author looks at the three largest Latino groups, the Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban. In each case he focuses on three factors, ethnicity, parish identity and the urban context in which the groups forge their identities. This is a revelatory method that produces considerable new

insight into the over-all development of these groups. This method does justice to the religious organizations that play an essential role in their acculturation and stability. Badillo reveals the well-kept secret, for instance, about the success of parish-based community organizations like the Industrial Areas Foundation in mobilizing Latino constituencies. The emphasis is on the role of Catholic parishes in selected urban contexts, San Antonio for the Mexicans, New York for the Puerto Ricans and Miami for the Cubans.

Badillo begins with a fine synthesis of the religious history of Latinos going back to medieval Spain and colonial Latin America. His synthesis is the best this reviewer has ever read of a complex story that includes the rich mingling of peoples that took place in Spain as well as the *mestizaje* and *mulatez*, the European's mingling with native peoples and Africans in the Americas. Of particular note is the attention Badillo gives to current scholarship on popular religion, what many thinkers today consider the most fruitful approach to Latino Catholicism. He covers the most relevant aspects of popular religion in a concise but thorough way using sources such as Orlando Espín, Jaime Vidal and Timothy Matovina. This chapter will be very useful for all kinds of courses in Latino studies, not just history but also other social sciences and religious studies.

The remaining seven chapters cover the Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban realities as mentioned above. Badillo pays attention to changes taking place in these dynamic groups. For instance, he points to a process of suburbanization that the 2000 U.S. Census confirmed, namely, that more Latinos live in suburbs than in urban centers or inner-cities. He also shows a considerable amount of familiarity with the history of church leadership among the various groups. He tells the story of U.S. prelates Archbishop Robert E. Lucey of San Antonio, Cardinals Francis Spellman in New York and Samuel Stritch in Chicago. The significant contributions of these churchmen and their particular responses to the Latino presence have been generally ignored up to now.

The final chapter focuses on changes like the transformation of popular religion in the face of contemporary urbanization and postmodernization. What impact will these changes, driven by globalization, have on the Latino future? The author points to the dynamism in all that is occurring and suggests that change is on the way. Various Latino groups encounter each other in a kind of pan-Latino experience no longer limited to their historical U.S. homelands but distributed throughout the nation. In this, Badillo's history goes a long way in providing the complex background and foundation for grasping the promise of Latino Catholicism. Even though Latino Protestantism, a significant development of the past fifty years, is not ignored completely in this work, it also demands much more attention than it received. Hopefully, Badillo will apply his excellent skills to that story as well.

Loyola Institute for Spirituality
Orange, California

ALLAN FIGUEROA DECK, S.J.