



LATINO MIGRATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF U.S.A. CATHOLICISM: FRAMING THE QUESTION

Migração latina e transformação do catolicismo estadunidense: formulando a questão

Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ *

ABSTRACT: *This essay explores the link between Latin American migration northward and changes taking place in U.S. Catholicism. A major part of the article focuses on the deep and historic religious background that Latinos bring to the Church in the United States, a heritage markedly different from that of Anglo America. To the colonial background, however, must be added the profound changes that have taken place in Latin American Catholicism in the period after the Second Vatican Council. Latinos have been a conduit for communicating the dynamic vision of Medellín and Aparecida to a U.S. Catholic Church focused more on maintenance than mission. A final section looks at specific contributions of Latino Catholicism to the U.S. Church's contemporary life through renewed pastoral methods, the option for the poor, and Liberation Theology as well as in the area of prayer, worship and spirituality, concern for social justice, popular piety, and youth ministry—to name just a few. The election of Pope Francis, the first Latin American pope, highlights the emerging influence of Latin American Catholicism on the world stage and not only in the United States.*

KEYWORDS: Latin America Catholicism, Anglo American Catholicism, Religious Background, Church Contemporary Life.

RESUMO: Este ensaio estuda a relação entre a migração latino-americana em direção ao Norte e as mudanças que estão tendo lugar no catolicismo estadunidense. A parte principal do artigo concentra-se na profunda e histórica experiência religiosa que os latinos trazem à Igreja nos Estados Unidos, herança marcadamente diferente da anglo-americana. Ao pano de fundo colonial, entretanto, devem ser acrescentadas as profundas mudanças que aconteceram no catolicismo latino-americano no período posterior ao Concílio Vaticano II. Os latinos têm sido um canal para

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comunicar a visão dinâmica de Medellín e Aparecida à Igreja católica estadunidense mais focada na conservação que na missão. A seção final trata das contribuições específicas do catolicismo latino à vida da Igreja estadunidense contemporânea através dos métodos pastorais renovados, da opção pelos pobres e da teologia da libertação, assim como no âmbito da oração, do culto e da espiritualidade, a preocupação pela justiça social, a religiosidade popular e a pastoral juvenil – para mencionar apenas algumas poucas. A eleição do Papa Francisco, o primeiro papa latino-americano, destaca a influência emergente do catolicismo latino-americano na cena mundial e não apenas nos Estados Unidos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Catolicismo Latino-Americano, Catolicismo Anglo-Americano, Experiência Religiosa, Vida da Igreja Contemporânea.

Introduction

In a 2008 memorandum to the Catholic Bishops of the United States, Robert Putnam, one of the more prominent sociologists of religion in the United States, informed them that “Latinos are the leading indicators of the Catholic Church’s future in the United States.” Putnam goes on to note that Latinos are already the majority of Catholics under the age of thirty-five in the United States and that they will constitute an absolute majority within the next ten to fifteen years (cf. PUTNAM – CAMPBELL, 2010, p. 106). This article provides an initial framework for placing Putnam’s remarkable observation in context. The first part of this essay focuses on Latinos and attempts to provide a sense of the depth and complexity of their cultural and religious roots. The story of Latino migration to the United States, at once the oldest and yet the newest migration in the nation’s history, occupies a central place in this analysis. What does the centuries-old movement of Latinos north from Mexico and the Caribbean into what is now the United States mean for U.S. Catholicism? A second, briefer part of this essay highlights some specific contributions of Latinos to U.S. Catholicism and begins to give an answer to the question regarding how religion in the United States is being transformed in the crucible of Latino integration and change¹.

¹ The word Latino is used interchangeably with Hispanic to refer to persons of Latin American origin in the United States. Some Latino/Hispanics prefer one or the other word. There is no consensus regarding which is more appropriate. In university circles Latino seems preferred; while in the Catholic Church the word Hispanic is more commonly used. When asked, a majority of Latinos/Hispanics actually prefer to invoke their national identity, not the umbrella word. Thus most persons from Mexico prefer to be called Mexican Americans; those from Cuba are Cuban Americans, and so on.

1 Sketching the Latino Cultural and Religious Heritage

Before Europeans ever set foot upon the American continent, the native peoples had developed powerful religious beliefs and practices that served to bring coherence and motivation to their lives. Indeed, the Christian missionaries were often astounded to discover the intensity of their religious beliefs and customs. While horrified by certain practices like human sacrifice and occasional cannibalism, some Spanish friars referred to the natives as *naturaliter christiani*, that is, “naturally Christians.” The Spanish missionaries identified their new discoveries in the Americas with the millennial kingdom proposed in apocalyptic literature and popularized in the Middle Ages by Joachim De Fiore. At the heart of the indigenous world was sacrifice which they experienced as central to all human striving (Cf. GONZALEZ – GONZALEZ, 2008, p. 25-31; PHELAN, 1970, p. 17-18).

These natives are the biological, human, religious and cultural ancestors of many U.S. Latinos, at least the ones of mestizo descent, who constitute the vast majority of the fifty four million U.S. Latinos. Some Latinos have roots in the Andean region of South America—Columbia, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. Others are of Caribbean descent. Most are descendants of native cultures much like the ones of Mexico in which religion was indeed the center of life in ways that made the Spaniards sometimes feel inferior about the depth of their own Catholic religious convictions. Centuries later, studies continue to demonstrate the importance that faith plays in the lives of Latinos today as the distinctive, popular form of Catholic Christianity that evolved from those ancient times continues to serve as the conduit for the religiosity of most Latinos today (Cf. PARKER, 1996; ESPÍN, 1997).

Three currents combine to create what has been called Latino popular Catholicism. The first is medieval Iberian Catholicism which provided a remarkably receptive framework for the integration of disparate elements of the native and African strains. Luis Weckman speaks of Latin American Catholicism as “the last great flowering of medieval Catholicism” with its emphasis on strong, localized symbols, rituals and religious narratives (Cf. WECKMAN, 1992). The medieval focus on miracles appealed to the native people, to a transcendental, mystical bent in their way of being which correlated with the powerful acts of their gods whose handiwork they saw in the cycles of history, nature and the cosmos itself. To the medieval inspiration of the first Spanish missionaries must be added the growing influence of the baroque sensibility that in the second half of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries permeated the spirit of Latin America’s flourishing Catholicism (Cf. RIVEROS, 2013). A baroque, Catholic penchant for drama, movement, music and the graphic merged almost seamlessly with the same qualities inherent to Pre-Columbian religions, especially those of Meso-America including Guatemala and the Andean Region. In both medieval and ba-

roque Catholicism one detects the power of the aesthetic to fascinate and appeal to the hearts and minds of indigenous communities.

The second current, the native Pre-columbian, shared certain characteristics with Iberian Catholicism, both of which held considerable sway over the collective lives of the people. Both Catholicism and the native religions were exceedingly rich in artistic, ritual and imaginative expressions. They were communicated in the form of powerful mythic narratives repeated orally by priests, shamans and in family and tribal circles. The abundant rituals and symbols of indigenous religion correlated and coalesced quite well with the highly sacramental nature of Iberian Catholicism. While violence, war and insecurity were frequent conditions in the lives of the indigenous peoples, there was perhaps in response to this gloom, a longing in the hearts of some for qualitative and not merely cyclic change. The Aztecs, for example, before the arrival of the *conquistadores* had already spread the narrative about the return of Quetzalcoatl who would save them and institute a new epoch called the *Quinto Sol*, the Fifth Sun. The arrival of the Europeans coincided with a sense of exhaustion and expectation of change that was overtaking the war-weary Mesoamerican world. Additionally there was considerable antipathy especially toward the Aztecs among the native groups. The Spaniards knew how to exploit this circumstance for their own advantage.

A third religious current came about as a result of the importation of slaves from West Africa as laborers in commercial, mining, and agricultural centers as well as in ruling class households. The Caribbean Islands and the coasts of Mexico, Central and South America possessed significant African populations as did commercial hinterlands like Zacatecas in Mexico and Potosí in Alto Perú where the slaves soon became the principal labor force for the largest silver and gold mining operations in the world during the Spanish imperial hegemony. In the case of Mexico alone it is estimated that during the three centuries of Spanish rule more Africans came to New Spain as it was called than Spaniards. The dangers and insecurities of migration to the New World were considered quite unacceptable for Spanish women and thus the Spaniards who sought to make a life for themselves there found indigenous and African women as sexual partners. Indeed, here one discovers a second way after the affinity of medieval Catholicism with native religions for explaining the considerable success of Catholicism's "spiritual conquest" of Latin America, namely the relative facility with which indigenous and African religions grafted themselves onto the Catholic tree. Once again the religion of the Africans was characterized by powerful rituals, narratives and symbols. The religious orientations of the slaves in the Americas were dynamic, rich and complex, despite the fact that the slaves were under considerable scrutiny by their masters. Over time strong African religious sensibilities about the reality of the spirit world together with styles of prayer, worship and music appealing

to the powerful aesthetic drive in the community, have taken root deeply in the imaginations and hearts of many Latin American peoples. These currents of religious sensibility often exist in tension with but often not in opposition to Catholic identity. These religions go by the name of Santería in the Latino world, by Voodoo in Haiti, and Candomblé, Umbanda and other designations in Brazil (Cf. DE LA TORRE, 2004, p. 1-30). They, like the indigenous religions, are highly expressive and appeal to affectivity. The African religions vigorously affirm the world of the spirits, the reality of miracles and the possibility of healing of every kind. As such they significantly reinforce Christian forms of popular religion in the Americas.

Consequently, powerful dynamics of miscegenation called *mestizaje* and *mulatez* created a complex blending of races and cultures that repeated a comparable, earlier process of the *Reconquista*, the seven centuries of war and long periods of peace between Christians and Moors on the Iberian Peninsula. Over centuries Christians of Roman, Basque, Visigoth, Celtic and other origins, mingled with Moors and Jews to create one of the most intercultural and inter-religious societies of the Middle Ages. Consequently, for the rulers of colonial Hispanic America an intercultural environment under the supervision of church and state was nothing new. Cultural, racial, and religious blending proceeded with remarkable dispatch beginning immediately on the arrival of the Spaniards. Just as out-marriage today accounts for some aspects of the transformation in identity occurring among U.S. Latinos, out-marriage and/or intercultural and inter-racial concubinage created a fascinating mixed identity for the majority of colonial Latin Americans, the ancestors of today's *campesino* and urban working classes who constitute the majority of Latino immigrants to the United States.

Medieval Spanish Catholicism, which was itself the product of a long process of inculturation, provided a framework for what was to become a stunningly hybrid form of Catholicism in the Americas, one that today accounts for almost forty percent of all Catholics worldwide (Cf. ALLEN, 2009, p. 17). By inculturation is meant a theological process by which the elements of native religion are transformed by Christian symbols, rituals and narratives. Realistically, however, it has been observed that the reverse can and does occur, namely Christian symbols are transformed or at least influenced by the native ones in a *mutual process* that more aptly can be called interculturalization (cf. MIRANDA, 2001, p. 38). What was characteristic of the experience of racial blending was its additional social, cultural and religious consequences. From their very origins, moreover, the native people of the Americas and their mixed offspring have undergone a remarkable process of substitution and/or conflation of Native American and African symbols, rituals and myths with the symbols, rituals and myths of Catholic Christianity. The encounter of Latinos with U.S. culture today, moreover, represents a new moment of *mestizaje* in which Latinos confront the culture

of U.S. modernity and secularity that offers new possibilities for them as well as for the host European American culture (Cf. ELIZONDO, 1988).

The process of inculturation explains the anomalies of Latin American Catholicism which can be understood as a vast continuum of popular religious expressions from orthodox adaptations to heterodox additions like spiritism or the horoscope (Cf. ESPINOSA – GARCÍA, 2008, p. 1-14). Latin American popular Catholicism, the species of Catholicism that prevails among most Latinos in the United States, is generally considered orthodox, that is, its beliefs and customs fall within the range of acceptable practice within standard Catholicism as officially taught and sanctioned. Indeed, the Latin American bishops have singled out the importance of popular piety over the past fifty years in the documents of the Episcopal Conference of Latin America – CELAM – (n. 258-265), and Pope Francis writes eloquently about it in his first Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (n. 122-126).

Along with popular Catholicism, however, a continuum of religious practices co-exist which verge on heterodoxy from authoritative points of view. For instance, there is *Spiritism*, a curious practice regarding communication with the deceased that arose in France in the nineteenth century under the inspiration of Alan Kardec and took root in some Latin American countries. While not a hugely extensive phenomenon, it can be placed on the continuum of religious orientations of Latinos even today in the United States (Cf. DE LA TORRE, 2004, p. 176-179). Likewise, *Santería*, which has never been considered orthodox by the Catholic hierarchy, involves belief in a pantheon of African gods and is thus judged to be incompatible with biblical monotheism. *Santería*, however, is enjoying considerable popularity as U.S. Latinos of Caribbean origin settle in the U.S. Moreover, various forms of African religion blended with the outer expressions of Catholicism are flourishing in Latin America, but also in the United States (Cf. DE LA TORRE, 2004, p. 1-30). Latin American Catholics who practice these popular religious forms seldom consider them incompatible with their Catholicism. They co-exist in parallel with standard or official Catholicism and have done so for centuries, despite the occasional warnings and complaints of official Church leaders. In contrast, among Protestants of any hue these hybrid forms of religiosity and practice are usually unacceptable.

A significant element of Latino religion finds expression in *curanderismo*. These are practices and beliefs that combine the age-old use of herbs for well-being with rituals that have a healing physical and psychological effect. Certain persons in the local community are judged to have both special knowledge and a gift for healing. Healers called *curanderos* may be of either gender and are generally considered to be good Catholics who pay attention to the people, especially those who cannot or will not consult modern medical and/or counseling professionals, in search of relief for their human needs. However, people often combine modern medical approaches

with the traditional *curanderismo*. The healers usually adapt Catholic forms of prayer and ritual in their practice (Cf. TROTTER – CHAVIRA, 1997).

There are other forms of questionable but quite real religious practices that to a lesser degree influence the lives of Latinos today like witchcraft (*brujería*) and black magic. These shadowy practices merge with the timeless world of the occult and influence the lives especially but not exclusively of the poor and working classes. For a synchronic glimpse of the bewildering range of popular religious expressions among today's Latinos, all one need do is visit one of the dozens of *botánicas*, local religious goods and herbal stores, that invariably dot the landscape of Latino urban neighborhoods today (Cf. DE LA TORRE, 2004, p. 296-324).

In terms of the influence of this rich, hybrid religious orientation among U.S. Latinos, all one need do is look for an example to the Day of the Dead activities in many urban centers throughout the United States. The yearly celebration of the Day of the Dead in Los Angeles and San Francisco has been carried out for decades and attracts more participants year after year. While the leadership of these events remains Latino, many European, American and other local cultural communities join in the event (Cf. MEDINA – CADENA, 2002, p. 69-94).

The significant turn of Latinos to Protestantism in the latter part of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth when mainline, historic churches first reached out to Latinos, is a topic that demands growing recognition. While the historic Protestant churches had some success in recruiting Latinos to their congregations, significant movement did not occur until the Pentecostal and charismatic phenomenon of the twentieth century began to dramatically show itself, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century and increasingly into the twenty-first. Latinos, either in Latin America or the U.S., can certainly no longer be considered uniformly Catholic as in the past. Approximately fifteen to twenty percent of them in the United States identify as Pentecostals or evangelicals, a statistic that holds up more or less for Latin America. There are, however, places like Guatemala, Brazil and Puerto Rico where the percentage is somewhat higher. Nor should the movement to Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses be ignored, as Gastón Espinosa has demonstrated (Cf. ESPINOSA, 2003, p. 9-55).

To what extent does the flight of Latinos to evangelicalism and Pentecostalism affect Latino Christianity in its Catholic forms? This is a complex question that has not been fully answered yet. Christian Lalive D'Épinay, who studied Pentecostalism in Chile back in the 1960s, suggests that one way to understand the movement of Latino Catholics to charismatic Christianity and Pentecostalism is actually as an attempt to maintain continuity with the people's popular Catholicism in the face of mounting

modernity and secularization. Pentecostalism serves religious continuity in terms of its strong focus on subjectivity, affectivity and lay leadership as well as on spontaneity, expressivity, movement, miracles and healing—qualities that, as noted above, play a central role in popular Catholicism compared to the normative and drier “standard,” clerical Catholicism of the United States and Europe. Nevertheless, Pentecostalism may also be understood as a moment in the gradual movement of people toward modernity insofar as the Pentecostal emphasis on the encounter with Christ emphasizes personal responsibility for one’s faith that is often lacking in popular Catholicism, which puts most of emphasis on the community not the individual. The Catholic emphasis, moreover, favors an indirect approach to God—strong mediations like the sacraments, the Church itself and its clerics, and the saints, especially the Virgin Mary—rather than the more direct and personal experience of God speaking to one in the Bible (Cf. DECK, 1995, p. 461-477).

Yet the point has been made that Pentecostalism in its Catholic form, namely, the Charismatic Renewal, is perhaps equally or even more popular than in its Protestant form. In the United States and even in Latin America there are arguably more Latino Catholic charismatics than Latino Pentecostals, a much under-reported religious story (Cf. ESPINOSA, 2003, p. 18-21). A realistic assessment of the trend toward Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Renewal among Latinos, moreover, suggests the need for diachronic analyses that illustrate what happens to the Pentecostal or charismatic neophyte after ten or fifteen years. Some studies are showing that indeed the intensity of the initial conversion dissipates and people gradually work their way back to traditional Catholicism, but more frequently drift away from organized religion, perhaps joining the ranks of those who say they are “spiritual but not religious”².

Ongoing ecumenical experiences of Catholic and Protestant Latinos in contexts like the Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI) at Princeton University and the Hispanic Summer Program spearheaded in the early 1990s by Latino Methodist theologian Justo L. González, demonstrate the underlying and perhaps surprising communality among Latino Catholics and Protestants, particularly Pentecostals and evangelicals. Commonality refers to the shared emphasis Latinos, whether Catholic or Protestant, give to lived experience what María Pilar Aquino and others refer to as *lo cotidiano*, “the everyday” (Cf. AQUINO, 1993, 38-41). This tendency shows itself in a preference for matters that pertain not to doctrine or theories but rather to life itself. It is not that Latinos ignore, deny or dismiss the formulations of Christian orthodoxy. However, there appears to be a preference for the experiential, for matters of practice, or “orthopraxis” as liberation theologians have used

² Pew Forum, “Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion,” April 25, 2007, <http://pewforum.org/Changing-Faiths-Latinos-and-the-Transformation-of-America>.

the term. Consequently, a new kind of ecumenism may be in gestation, one based on a Latino orientation to everyday life, *convivencia* (getting along together), the struggles of the community and the common experience of racial/cultural dialogue and blending, rather than the often dry doctrinal controversies of Western Christianity.

2 Latino Northward Migrations

Latinos are both the earliest and the most recent immigrants to the United States. Peninsular Spaniards, but more often than not, mestizos and mulattos were in fact the first non-native peoples to arrive in what is today the United States. African slaves and Hispanicized indigenous people were often brought along on the expeditions from the interior of Mexico or the Caribbean islands. These pioneers forged the first non-native communities along the entire southern flank of the United States well before the arrival of the British on the Atlantic Coast or the French in the Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley. This reality is reflected at one extreme by the San Marcos National Monument in St. Augustine, Florida, and at the other by the Cabrillo National Monument on San Diego Bay in California. The foundational Latino presence spanned not only geography but also the histories of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It embraces the enduring Latino homelands of Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada and California. Indeed, for centuries much more of what is today the United States was part of Hispanic America, not the British Empire (Cf. JIMÉNEZ, 1994, p. 13-20).

Historian Herbert Eugene Bolton pointed out the geographic implications of the North American continent with the north to south orientation of its mountains, rivers and deserts. Correspondingly, the land beckoned the people of this vast region to move north and south which, as a matter of fact, they have been doing for centuries through explorations, trade and migration. The international border between the United States and Mexico is one of the most artificial boundaries in the world. The tide of history, economics, politics and culture totally work against it. Bolton enshrined his perceptive views in his school of borderlands history, which he and his disciples pursued as a corrective to the one-sided Frontier Thesis of Bolton's teacher Frederick Jackson Turner. To this day, however, Turner's thesis about the westward movement of Anglo Americans from the Atlantic seaboard, and the triumphant subjugation of the Native Americans and Hispanics whom these European Americans met along the way, has burned itself into the U.S. psyche. A more nuanced narrative of United States history requires a new national myth, one that deals with the past and current presence of Latinos and their ceaseless northward movement (Cf. DECK, 2012, p. 457-464).

Catholic Spain enjoyed a monopoly of geo-political hegemony in the Americas throughout the sixteenth century. During this period only a few settlers moved into the extreme northern reaches of the Meso-American hinterlands. The native peoples of the region tended to be nomads, in distinction to the aboriginal people of the Mexican heartland whose way of life was sedentary rather than nomadic. North America during those centuries of European exploration was much less populated than Meso-America, Central and South America. Nevertheless, important seeds of language, culture and religion were sown across an immense sweep of territory. The fabulous stories of Spanish exploration under the romanticized, colorful leadership of Spanish pathfinders like Ponce de León have been told many times. The follow-up to their prodigious efforts often took the form of military and missionary activities centered on the colonial institutions of the presidio and the mission, *doctrina* or *reducción*. The pioneer activities of missionaries like the Jesuit Eusebio Francisco Kino and his confreres in Northern Mexico, Baja California and southern Arizona in the late 1600s are legendary. Even more legendary but controversial are the eighteenth-century activities of the Franciscan Junípero Serra, whose exploits in California were the historic continuation of the missionary movement of the Jesuits a century earlier north from Mexico (Cf. JIMÉNEZ, 1994, p. 228-257).

A little-known fact is that there is a strong historical presence of Hispanics in Louisiana and a Cuban-born bishop, contemporary of the first Bishop of Baltimore John Carroll, was named to the new Diocese of Louisiana and the Two Floridas in 1793. Bishop Luis Ignacio María Peñalver y Cárdenas resided in Havana but visited New Orleans, and left a perceptive report on the condition of the church and society in that lurid, French, Spanish/Caribbean and black port city (Cf. MATOVINA – POYO, 2000, p. 30).

These Hispanic beginnings seemed to have faded from consciousness in the century of intense, westward Anglo-American migration after the Mexican American War, from 1848 to the mid-1900s. Nevertheless, San Antonio and several other Texas cities, especially along the border, never lost their strong Latino cultural underpinnings. Similarly, the Latino foundations of Florida, New Mexico, Southern Colorado, Southern Arizona and several historic places of California, beginning with the State's twenty-four Franciscan mission sites as well as major cities which preserve the Spanish place names, stand as powerful reminders of the abiding Latino roots of the United States (Cf. FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO, 2014, p. 3-149).

The Mexican American War of 1846 resulted in the incorporation of tens of thousands of formerly Mexican citizens into what had suddenly become the United States. This demographic change was not the result of migration or natural increase, but a political development. The international border crossed them, as it were, they did not cross it. The Treaty of Guadalupe

Hidalgo between the United States and Mexico that ended the Mexican American War in 1848 shifted the border overnight. Now the people of the most populated cities of the Southwest and California of the time—San Antonio, El Paso, Santa Fe, Tucson, Monterey and Santa Bárbara—came under U.S. control.

3 One Hundred Years of Sustained Latino Migration

These movements, however, were only a prologue. To them must be added the results of the past one hundred years of human mobility north from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America into virtually every state of the American Union, including Alaska and Hawaii. This movement began in the early years of the twentieth century and is the largest sustained migration of any group of people so far to the United States. The movement, moreover, is the product of a host of push and pull factors: political unrest in Cuba after the Spanish American War, economic depression in Puerto Rico in the early 1900s, the Mexican revolution of 1910, ongoing U.S. labor needs, especially during and after World War II, chronic shortages of workers in basic agriculture, manufacturing and service jobs, the upheaval of Fidel Castro's 1959 Cuban Revolution, civil wars, domestic violence, and grinding poverty, and even genocide in Guatemala. To this must be added the economically and professionally motivated migration on the part of middle classes from Colombia, Argentina, Peru and Ecuador, as well as Mexico (Cf. JIMÉNEZ, 1994, p. 281-319; OVERMYER-VELÁZQUEZ, 2011, p. xix-xlv).

As Tomás R. Jiménez argues, one of the more salient characteristics of the Latino presence--particularly the Mexican presence-- is the replenishment it experiences as a result of sustained flows over a century. Jiménez refers to the fact that Latino immigrants as well as first and even second generation Latinos are often found living together. Hence Latinos, unlike the Irish Americans and several other European immigrant groups, never emerged as "having arrived," that is, become a traditional, accepted, one-time immigrant group that "succeeded." Even though many have been in the United States for decades, if not centuries, and have acculturated and socioeconomically "succeeded," Latinos have simply tended to remain on the margins in the imaginations of many Americans (Cf. JIMENEZ, 2010, p. 1-31).

The emergence of Latinos, nevertheless, as the largest U.S. minority ahead of African Americans in the 2010 census, along with the somewhat unexpected defeat of Mitt Romney in the presidential election of 2012, a defeat that the press attributed among other causes to a huge Latino vote in favor of President Obama, spotlighted the still unfolding role of Latinos in U.S.

society and politics. This may create the conditions for further acceptance and a greater realization throughout the country that Latinos are no longer remaining on the margins (Cf. MATOVINA, 2012, p. 190-218).

3.1 *The Mexicans*

The largest and most deeply rooted U.S. Latino community is made up of persons of Mexican origin, sixty-five percent of the more than fifty-four million Latinos in the United States. The majority are native-born Americans but not by a large amount. More than half a century ago Carey McWilliams maintained that up to ten percent of the total Mexican population of the first half of the twentieth century migrated to the United States (Cf. McWILLIAMS, 1968, p. 162-190). Many Mexicans came as refugees at the time when the Latino populations of Los Angeles, Tucson, San Antonio, Detroit and many other places in the United States grew dramatically. World War II created a need for more workers as hundreds of thousands of young Americans went off to war. Mexicans had already well established themselves as reliable and productive workers throughout the Southwest. In addition, the U.S. government investment in Southwestern military installations stimulated the economy and created abundant job opportunities. This gained the attention of Mexican workers who saw an opportunity to improve their lives. There had already begun a movement north from the interior of Mexico sparked by the Mexican government's industrial development plan, which invested considerably in the modernization of infrastructures throughout the northern reaches of the country. In addition to agricultural activities in the American Southwest and the Mexican North, there arose new manufacturing jobs that had an appeal to youthful and industrious Mexicans. In 1942 the governments of Mexico and the United States agreed on the creation of the wartime farm worker (bracero) program which guaranteed that the United States would enjoy the benefits of a large, reliable workforce. In fact the program encouraged both legal and illegal immigration because U.S. employers discovered the resourcefulness of Mexican workers and their need and willingness to do whatever was necessary in order to put food on their families' tables. The rise of growing numbers of Mexican workers had a domino-effect: it was an important step in the upward mobility of mainstream U.S. woman out of certain basic forms of manual, service work into better-paying jobs for which English-language ability was essential.

From 1960-1990, *maquiladoras* or foreign assembly plants multiplied on the Mexican side of the U.S. border. Hundreds of thousands of workers, growing numbers of them women, entered into manufacturing rather than agricultural work, planting, picking and processing as had been the pattern up to this time. In the late 1990s and the first decade of 2000s, globalization created a less favorable situation for the Mexican *maquiladora*. China, Thailand, Vietnam and other developing world venues became

more attractive to businesses seeking to save on labor costs and employee benefits. Serious inflation in Mexico, the devaluation of the currency in the 1980s, a stagnating industrial development and a declining agricultural economic sector conspired to create a powerful “push-pull” phenomenon whereby growing numbers of Mexicans had to migrate from the countryside to the big cities or north to “the other side”, that is, the United States. Beginning in the 1990s and continuing into the new century, Mexico became the center of drug trafficking of the Americas. An ongoing conflict between the Mexican government and drug cartels ensued that to date has resulted in the death of 60,000 persons. Entire states of the Republic have effectively been commandeered by the powerful drug cartels (Cf. TUTINO, ano p. 1-35).

In the meantime rising concern about illegal immigration in the United States, fanned by a surge in nationalism in the context of the serious U.S. economic downturn after 2007, impeded the drive toward comprehensive reform of the immigration laws. Approximately eleven million unauthorized immigrants, the vast majority of them Latinos, were forced to live underground on the margins of society. The 2012 elections, however, in which Latinos played a crucial role in re-electing President Obama for a second term, created better conditions for reaching some resolution on immigration reform. From 2009 onward Mexican immigration to the United States slowed down and was even reversed. A larger percentage of the unauthorized immigrants coming across the southern border originated in Central America. Mexico in effect had developed its own undocumented immigrant problem³.

3.2 *Puerto Ricans*

The second largest Latino group in the United States are the Puerto Ricans, who constitute 9.5 percent of the Latino population⁴. Their story is unique because of their status as U.S. citizens since 1917, and in light of the role U.S. culture has played in their homeland, which enjoys commonwealth status. Almost five million Puerto Ricans have migrated to the United States, more than half the population of the Island. A nonbinding election in 2012 indicated for the first time that perhaps a majority of Puerto Ricans desire U.S. statehood for the Island, although this is questioned by others who deny the validity of the vote for various reasons.

Puerto Rican migration may be considered a form of internal migration, but one that involves profound cultural and emotional clashes. Like other

³ Pew Research Center, “Unauthorized Immigration,” Sept. 23, 2013, see <http://www.pewhispanic.org/topics/immigration>.

⁴ Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, June 19, 2013, <http://www.pewhispanic.org>, accessed March 4, 2014.

underprivileged groups whose plight became more visible in the 1960s, there has been considerable socioeconomic movement among Puerto Ricans who initially migrated to the New York area beginning in the 1940s. Indeed, there exists an upwardly mobile Puerto Rican professional and middle class that has moved away from New York and can be found in several areas of the nation.

A report in the *New York Times*, however, points to a serious challenge posed by the persistence of a Puerto Rican underclass that has fallen below other Latino communities, even the undocumented, specifically in New York. The *Times* reports that Puerto Ricans have the lowest rates of school attendance and employment, and the highest rates of poverty among Latino New Yorkers. Immigrant Latinos fare much better than Puerto Ricans in terms of school attendance, employment and poverty rates. This situation is not easily explained, but it is speculated that citizenship and Americanization have had the unexpected effect of stripping some Puerto Ricans of the entrepreneurial spirit typical of many immigrants, while the absence of a fully developed sense of nationality, since the U.S. take-over of Puerto Rico from Spain in 1898 effectively deprived the Island of national sovereignty, has had a negative impact on the self-image and cultural psychology of some members of this community (Cf. DOLNICK, 2010, p. A21). Medical sociologist David Hayes Bautista, moreover, has discovered elements of a “downward mobility” pattern associated with the Americanization of children born to Mexican immigrants in the United States. He discovered that in key indicators like infant mortality rates, average weight of newborns and medical pathologies, U.S. born Latinos do more poorly in contrast to the foreign-born who are generally more healthy and actually live longer despite their lack of access to medical care, and in the case of some, lack of authorized immigration status. Hayes-Bautista calls this an epidemiological paradox (Cf. HAYES-BAUTISTA – HURTADO – VALDEZ – HERNÁNDEZ, 1992, p. 21-26).

The Puerto Rican community in the United States is well rooted. Earlier generations struggled but succeeded in producing many leaders in the area of business, education, schools, political organizations and in the churches. This is particularly true in the East Coast and Chicago, where the Puerto Rican population until recently was in the ascendancy. Recent years have witnessed a movement of Puerto Ricans to other areas of the nation.

The U.S. presence on the island going back more than one hundred years, the greater exposure to English in school while on the island and other acculturation opportunities, have given Puerto Ricans an edge in terms of engagement with U.S. culture. Emblematic of this is the selection of Sonya Sotomayor, the daughter of New York Puerto Rican immigrants, as first Latina Justice of the Supreme Court. Perhaps related to the higher level of engagement of Puerto Ricans with United States culture, moreover,

is the fact that among U.S. Latinos they have the highest percentage of Protestants (Cf. SÁNCHEZ KORROL, 1994, p. 281-299).

3.3 *Cubans*

The Cuban presence in the United States did not begin with the sudden exile of hundreds of thousands in the early 1960s in the wake of Fidel Castro's revolution. There had been a coming and going between Cuba, Florida and Louisiana going as far back as the sixteenth century. The opening of English ports to Cubans after the British conquest of Havana during the Seven Years' War in 1762 began what was to become a long history of commerce between the island and United States destinations like New Orleans, New York, and Philadelphia. In the nineteenth century Cuban political dissidents found inspiration in the United States for their struggle against Spanish colonial rule, which did not end until 1898 when the United States took possession of Cuba after the Spanish American War. In the second half of the nineteenth century Cuban immigrants began to settle in the Tampa, Florida area and a few other places in the United States where the cigar industry was thriving due to prohibitive tariffs placed on Cuban-made cigars by the U.S. government. Historian Gerald Poyo points out that even then Cubans were able to establish a "genuinely Cuban industry within the United States" (POYO – DÍAZ-MIRANDA, 1994, p. 302-319). This is the origin of Cuban communities of the Key West, Tampa and New York areas that antedate the large Cuban presence in Miami-Dade by several decades.

The Cuban exile of the 1960s, however, brought an unprecedented number of Cubans, most of them of the middle and upper social classes, to the United States, especially to Southern Florida but also to Los Angeles, New York and several other locations. This was a physically and emotionally traumatic exile that left its mark on the Cuban presence in the United States. The exodus continued on and off for more than twenty years, and by 1980 approximately 700,000 Cubans had emigrated. These immigrants were among the cream of the crop of Cuban educated social class, and even though most came in conditions of dire economic need they quickly became one of the most successful, upwardly mobile refugee groups ever to step foot in the United States. Among them several business leaders like the late Roberto Goizueta, CEO of Coca-Cola, and other professionals in the arts, the academy, law and politics. The last group to come in large numbers was the so-called *Marielitos*, so named because they embarked from the Port of Mariel. For Florida the entire Cuban immigration was undeniably a boon with historic socioeconomic, cultural, political and religious consequences. In less than a generation Florida passed from being a rather phlegmatic, pleasant haven for snowbirds, vacationers and East Coast retirees to one of the fastest-growing states of the American Union and a thriving inter-American hub of communications, commerce and banking.

3.4 Central and South Americans

This thumbnail survey of U.S. Latinos must also include Central and South Americans. The Central Americans began their immigration northward in large numbers in the 1970s in the context of the internecine wars that raged in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Hundreds of thousands of political and economic refugees displaced by war and in search of a safe haven applied for refugee status and made the dangerous trek north through Mexico to the international border. Large numbers settled in the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay Areas. Here they encountered not only U.S. culture but also the well-established Mexican American culture. Moreover, a new period of internationalization or pan-Latino experience was initiated. Many Central Americans were urban workers while the Mexican immigrants, but certainly not all, were agricultural workers, *campesinos*, from rural Jalisco, Zacatecas, Michoacán and Guerrero. Having lived in urban centers, the Central Americans often enjoyed a slightly higher level of formal education compared to Mexican immigrants.

Latinos from virtually every South American country form a significant part of the Latino presence in the United States. First of all there are the people of the Andean nations of Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, together with Venezuelans. Sometimes of the professional middle classes these groups are found in several parts of the United States, particularly in New York, New Jersey, Illinois, California and Florida. Accordingly, the South Americans often come from the professional classes which often do not find work in their native countries that corresponds to their levels of educational attainment (Cf. BURGALETA, 2013, p. 58-65; TAVARES, 1997, p. 275-281).

3.5 The Immigration Debate

The prospects for immigrants rise and fall in accord with political and especially economic fortunes. In the second half of the twentieth century the debate raged on in a cycle that began in the mid-1960s. This cycle came to an end in 1986 with the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act signed by President Reagan, which provided for regularization of approximately three million undocumented persons, the majority of them Mexicans. The question of maintaining better control of illegal migration was supposedly going to be dealt with by means of an employer sanction provision of the law, whereby employers would be fined for hiring unauthorized workers. For whatever reason, this provision was never enforced. Consequently the push-pull factors behind Latino undocumented immigration continued unabated throughout the 1990s, a period of considerable prosperity during the Clinton presidency. This set the stage for the rise of a second cycle of strong anti-immigrant sentiment and for the suspension in limbo of approximately eleven million unauthorized immigrants in the first decade of the 2000s (Cf. GOMEZ, 2013).

This underground population became the focus of a chorus of complaints as the economy declined and moved into the Great Recession in 2008. This anti-immigrant cycle, like others in U.S. history, turned rather contentious as right-wing politicians fanned the flames of nationalistic rhetoric and exploited cable networks and social media to communicate their message. Gradually, however, the U.S. public was won over to the idea that ways must be found to regularize this huge group of generally hardworking and law-abiding people who give more to the economy than they take from it. Human rights activists, religious leaders, and agricultural and high-tech businesses all complained about the “broken” immigration laws. The 2012 re-election of President Obama appeared to open the possibility that an accommodation could be made among the various points of view on unauthorized immigration. Latinos flexed their political muscle as never before as seen in the election results, and survey after survey showed that the U.S. public favored finding a path for legalization for the millions of undocumented. Powerful business interests complained that they could not find appropriate workers in agriculture and other areas of manual labor, as well as for many high-tech jobs requiring advanced education and expertise.

These and other factors pointed to a new political landscape conducive to immigration reform. Nevertheless, President Obama was unable to forge the necessary coalition to pass an immigration reform law as of this writing in 2014. In the meantime, however, the movement of Latin American and other immigrants into the United States experienced a dramatic down-turn after 2008, as the anti-immigrant rhetoric heightened and Homeland Security under President Obama stepped up border control measures as well as deportations of undocumented felons. A sustained period of economic growth in Mexico and most of Latin America even during the worldwide recession of 2008 helped explain the decline in migratory flows from several Latin American nations, where in the first decade of the 2000s salaries have risen, schools are more plentiful and political progress has been made through socioeconomic reform and democratization⁵.

This brings to an end the brief sketch of Latino migration and engagement with the United States over the centuries and in more recent years. Now this essay turns to a brief review of some notable effects of the Latino presence on the Church in the United States.

⁵ VARDI, Nathan. The Mexican Miracle: despite Drug War, Economy Is Booming,” *Forbes* magazine on line, Oct. 15, 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/nathanvardi/2012/10/15/The-mexican-miracle/>, Last accessed on March 4, 2014.

4 Latino Contributions to U.S. Catholicism

For the past sixty years the relationship between Catholicism in the United States and in Latin America has grown significantly. Indeed, a kind of hemispheric Catholicism took root in the period of renewal after the Second Vatican Council. Pope John Paul II acknowledged the reality of inter-American Catholicism in his opening discourse at the Fourth Meeting of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in Santo Domingo in 1992 (Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, 1993, p. 820). The spirit of Medellín and Puebla was vigorously communicated to the United States, and specifically to the Latino Catholic communities, by the Secretariat for Hispanic Ministry established in the 1960s at the Bishops' Conference in Washington, DC. A series of four *encuentros* took place between 1972 and 2000, with a fifth planned for 2016. The *encuentro* processes taken together became the conduit for the communication of the spirit of Latin American Catholicism as envisioned by the the General Conferences of the Latin American Bishops from Medellín in 1968 to Aparecida in 2007. Specifically, five pillars of contemporary Latino American Catholicism have made an impact on U.S. Hispanic ministry: 1) the option for the poor, 2) basic ecclesial communities, 3) the Church as the People of God in history, 4) the central importance of popular piety, and 5) the social gospel as expressed in Catholic Social Doctrine. Beginning in the 1960s, U.S. Latino leaders, including a new group of bishops, began to learn about the distinctive pastoral orientation of the local churches of Latin America. That orientation is now enshrined in normative documents of the episcopacy such as the *National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry and Encuentro and Mission*⁶.

An entire generation of U.S. Latino theologians and pastoralists was formed from the early 1970s onward under the leadership of Father Virgilio P. Elizondo at the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) in San Antonio, Texas, and Father Mario Vizcaíno at the Southeast Pastoral Institute (SEPI) in Miami, Florida. The first visits to the United States of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Enrique Dussell took place at MACC. Classes by Latin American pastoral/theological leaders like Ricardo Antoncich, Alejandro Londoño and Marcello Azevedo were often offered at SEPI and thus an entire generation of Latino leaders—priests, women religious and laity—was born (Cf. BURGUÉS, 2008). Pastoral innovators like José Marins, Teolide María Trevisan and Carolee Chanona spread the word about basic ecclesial communities throughout the United States. In 1988 the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS) came into existence. ACHTUS explicitly acknowledges its inspiration in Latin

⁶ *A New Beginning: Hispanic/Latino Ministry—Past, Present, Future*, Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012.

American Liberation Theology, while noting that U.S. Latino theologians are reflecting on a reality considerably different from that of their Latin American brothers and sisters (Cf. FERNÁNDEZ, 2009, p. 87-180; DECK, 1992, p. ix-xxvi). Another source of Latin American influence on pastoral life in the United States came from scores of U.S. missionaries who returned from Latin America in the 1970s and 80s. Speaking Spanish and longing for the creative pastoral initiatives they had experienced in Latin America, these men and women helped construct vibrant parish and social ministries among Latinos throughout the country.

Some of the results of this extraordinary pastoral and theological ferment can be seen in the contributions Hispanic ministry is now making to the wider Church in the United States. In the final section of this essay which follows, three contributions that find much of their inspiration in the spirit of Latin American Catholicism are singled out.

4.1 Worship and Popular Piety

Timothy Matovina's *Latino Catholicism*, published in 2012, is the most comprehensive assessment so far of the Latino legacy to Catholic Christianity in the United States and its promise for the future. He identified several ways in which the Latino presence has influenced U.S. Catholicism (Cf. MATOVINA, 2012, p. 162-189). Given the central importance of prayer and worship in the life of the Church, especially in the period after the Second Vatican Council, Matovina shows how Latinos upheld the importance of respecting the popular wisdom and practices of the community. Latino Catholic communities are found throughout the United States and their worship is characterized by a level of spontaneity and regard for popular devotions in the form of processions, novenas, posadas, as well as music with a broad range of instruments and styles. Of particular note is the role Latinos have played in maintaining the place of the Virgin Mary in the life of U.S. Catholics. The strong role of Mary in Latino popular Catholicism, particularly in the form of devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, has powerfully renewed Mary's presence in U.S. Catholicism. Interestingly enough, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe has become the single most popular Marian feast day in the United States, surpassing even holy days of obligation like the feast of the Immaculate Conception in the number of faithful attending Mass⁷. In addition, public rituals inspired by Latino Catholic traditions like those of Good Friday have caught the attention of the non-Latino church community, as have many aspects of the devotional imagery, music, joy, and communal focus of the Latino sense of *fiesta*.

⁷ PALMO, Rocco. "The Super-Bowl Begins: In L.A. A Morenita Mass and Procession," in <http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/2011/12/big-week-begins-in-la-mass-and.html>, accessed Feb. 23, 2014.

This emphasis stands in sharp contrast to a concurrent drive officially sanctioned by the hierarchy that is perceived to circumscribe prayer and worship within an exaggerated, joyless formalism and solemnity. In contrast, the Latino sacramental ethos, according to Matovina, is “a communitarian understanding of the human person that shapes their lives, faith, and modes of participation in the Eucharist” (MATOVINA, 2012, p. 467). The strong emphasis on relationships and community is a powerful antidote to the individualism of the autonomous person so characteristic of U.S. culture, including that of European American Catholics.

4.2 Spirituality

A second area of profound influence by Latinos on U.S. Catholicism and Protestantism is in the area of spirituality. This has occurred mainly by means of the methodology introduced in the United States in the 1950s by the Cursillo movement. Many movements of spiritual renewal such as Marriage Encounter, Search, Kairos, Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) and the Protestant Walk to Emmaus—to name just a few—are some of the highly successful movements that were inspired by the methodology of the Cursillo. Central to this approach is a focus on affective conversation, personal testimony and small faith-sharing group activity. In various ways this formula has been fundamental to the growth of many forms of spiritual renewal in Catholicism and U.S. Christianity in general. In most cases the methodology was enthusiastically received by Latinos, who became the backbone for many of these efforts in Spanish and English as they gained popularity. Arguably, this dynamic, which owes much if not most of its success to Latinos is the single most influential spiritual trend of the past sixty years in United States, touching literally the lives of millions across denominational divides (Cf. MATOVINA, 2012).

Linked to the spectacular success of the Cursillo methodology is the rise of Pentecostalism in both its Protestant and Catholic expressions. Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Renewal (as Catholics prefer to call it) have captured the fancy of considerable numbers of Latinos throughout the United States and Latin America. Indeed, one of the largest collection of Pentecostals/Charismatics in the world is Latin American (Cf. JACOBSEN, 2011, p. 202-224). As mentioned earlier, in the United States it would appear that there are more Latino charismatic Catholics than Latino Protestant Pentecostals. This phenomenon is the source of considerable growth and vitality within various Christian denominations. As in the case of the Cursillo, what recommends Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Renewal are four distinguishing characteristics: 1) an emphasis on affective conversion, 2) taking responsibility for one’s relationship with God, 3) greater familiarity with the Bible, and 4) greater access to community and small group faith-sharing. Latinos stand out among U.S. religions and denominations for their palpable interest and loyalty to these practices that are

among the most distinctive and engaging of trends in spirituality today in the United States.

4.3 Transformative Action

The focus of the U.S. Catholic Church and other Christian churches on the reality of socioeconomic and political injustice has been significantly impacted upon by the Latino presence. This is so not only because Latinos represent a large proportion of persons in poverty and/or struggling with unauthorized immigration status, lack of access to medical care, inadequate education for youth and many other social needs, but because Latinos themselves have been protagonists in many under-reported efforts to bring about social change. One example is the role of the Latino Catholic parish in Postville, Iowa in defending the rights of immigrants and powerfully advocating for them. St. Bridget's Parish mobilized itself as a sanctuary for women and children caught in the raid of four hundred workers at the Agriprocessors Inc. slaughterhouse which occurred on May 12, 2008. The resistance of Catholic communities like St. Bridget's together with the advocacy on behalf of immigration reform by Catholic bishops, especially Latino bishops, has raised the bar on social awareness throughout the United States (Cf. MATOVINA, 2012, p. 468).

Even more significant is the extraordinary success of community organizing in the tradition of Saul Alinsky, which has been pioneered by Latino faith-based communities throughout the United States. The work of Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) affiliated organizations such as Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) in San Antonio, United Neighborhood Organization (UNO) in Los Angeles, or similar organizations affiliated with the Pacific Institute for Community Organizations (PICO) in more than twenty urban centers throughout the country, provide outstanding examples of how Latinos have struggled in multicultural and ecumenical efforts to bring about local, statewide and even national change in matters of public policy. Often supported by seed grants from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), community organizations have been a school of leadership for a rising generation of public servants, among whom Latinos have played a central role. This has created a place for political participation different from partisan politics that continues to have a strong basis in Catholic parishes and other faith-based communities. This has created an approach to advocacy that highlights empowerment and the active participation of Latinos as citizens in the civic arena (Cf. MATOVINA, 2012, p. 469). The cumulative effect of the three areas of influence of Latinos on the life of the churches highlighted here is the revitalization of the churches. Latinos are bringing new life to society and the churches, religious communities and organizations in the United States.

Conclusion

The reality of globalization means that the relationships between the United States and Latin America traced in this essay will only continue to extend and deepen. The election of a Latin American Pope means that Latin American Catholicism is assuming a new role in worldwide Catholicism, not just in U.S. Catholicism. Pope Francis is at least in part a product of the history and pastoral developments of the past fifty years in Latin America, especially of the experience of sociopolitical and economic injustice and violence, as well as of pastoral renewal in the spirit of Medellín, Puebla, Santo Domingo and Aparecida. The pastoral vision of Latin American Catholicism has now become part of the larger patrimony of the universal Church, as Pope Francis on a worldwide stage continues to raise concepts like pastoral conversion, missionary discipleship, continental mission, and popular piety--concepts which first gained currency in the pastoral laboratories of Latin America. To properly understand the sources of the growing impact that Latinos are having on U.S. Catholicism it is necessary to dig deeper into the remarkable trajectory and future promise of Latin American Catholicism, as lived and adapted by them. This essay was a modest attempt to contextualize such an inquiry.

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Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ. Doutor em Teologia pela Pontificia Universidade Gregoriana (Roma). Atualmente é professor de Teologia no *Loyola Marymount University*. Co-fundador da Academia de Teólogos católicos hispânicos dos Estados Unidos (ACHTUS) e seu primeiro presidente (1988-1990). Publicou dois livros e foi editor de outros quatro. Seu livro *The Second Wave: Hispanic Ministry and the Evangelizations of Cultures* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989) ganhou o primeiro lugar no prêmio oferecido pela *Catholic Press Association*, em 1990. Publicou ainda cerca de 50 artigos sobre fé, cultura, ministério, espiritualidade e Ensino social da Igreja. Em 2009 ele foi agraciado com o *Aggiornamento Award of the Catholic Library Association* por sua contribuição em favor da renovação da Igreja no espírito do Concílio Vaticano II.

Endereço: *Loyola Marymount University*
1 LMU Drive
Los Angeles, Califórnia, 90045 — USA
e-mail: Allan.Deck@lmu.edu