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Martinez's "The story of latino protestants in the united states" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Martínez, J. F. (2018). *The story of latino protestants in the united states*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 240 pp. \$28.00. ISBN 97800802873187

The Census Bureau estimates that Latinos will be approximately 28 percent of the US population by 2050. While many assume that all Hispanic Americans are Catholic, the reality is that there is a rich and complex Protestantism in America that is thoroughly Latino. Juan Francisco Martínez tells the story of the emergence of Latino Protestantism, from its beginnings within mainline Protestant denominations to a distinct identity that is largely evangelical and Pentecostal. Martínez, a professor of Hispanic studies and pastoral leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary and fifth-generation American Latino Protestant himself, is a recognized expert in this field. He argues that because of the increasing growth of Latinos in the population it is likely that Latino Protestantism in the United States will increasingly influence the characteristics of Protestantism as a whole in America.

With precision and clarity, the author frames recent US history through the lens of the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), the Spanish-American War (1898), the Mexican Revolution (1910), the Great Depression, World War II, the Immigration Act of 1965, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and the Presidential election of 2016 to delineate the rise of Latino Protestantism. It is a fascinating account of how these key events influenced the development of Protestant churches, missions, and parachurch organizations in the United States. Martínez argues convincingly that the story of Latino Protestantism is inextricably linked to the unique connection between the United States and Latin America. Indeed, the topic of migration is a consistent narrative thread through this work.

In the past 20 years, scholars have increasingly sought to tell the larger story of Latino Protestantism. Early efforts to document the phenomenon of Latino Protestantism consisted of denomination-specific histories of Latino ministries. Most of these earlier histories were written by non-Latinos. This book represents a significant entry to the literature of Latino Protestants telling their own stories. Martínez identifies three of these titles published between 1999 and 2016 at the conclusion of

his historical overview but curiously omits his own *Los Protestantes: An Introduction to Latino Protestantism in the United States* (2011) from this helpful bibliographic overview.

Despite this small omission, Martínez succeeds in demonstrating how Latino Protestantism has become an identifiable entity despite its inherent diversity. Martínez's historical overview of Latino Protestantism in the United States from 1848 to the present is required reading for anyone who wishes to understand the many facets of Protestantism in American life. It is an extremely well written and carefully documented history of a complex subject. This work is an essential acquisition for Christian libraries supporting undergraduate and graduate students and is especially important for theological libraries preparing students for ministry in an increasingly Latino landscape.

Reviewer

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