

The Two Churches



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著者:Michael L. Budde

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The single most important change now well under way within Catholicism is its transition from a First World to a Third World entity. How this enormous shift will affect the Catholic church's role in the world economy is the subject of Michael L. Budde's book, the first world systems study of the mutual interaction of religion and political economy in the 1990s.

Budde's argument here is twofold. He contends that world Catholicism, led by its Third World majority (most notably in Latin America), will continue to develop in an increasingly anticapitalist direction; and he suggests that once-dominant First World Catholic churches (exemplified by the U.S. Catholic church), are poorly placed to respond in solidarity with their coreligionists from the Third World.

Covering a wide range of theoretical and substantive matters, *The Two Churches* examines religion as a source of both social legitimation and social rebellion. It demonstrates the importance of ecclesiology, a branch of theology dealing with "theories of the church," and it highlights the effect of capitalism on world Catholicism, as well as the latter's influence on the development of the capitalist order.

In his original, far-reaching analysis of the Catholic church's role in world affairs, Budde revises current views of religious institutions as subordinate social phenomena. By relating developments in the world political economy to material conditions in the Third World and in turn to the practice of Catholicism, he reveals how the Catholic church functions as a worldwide institution. He also shows how core-periphery conflicts within the church affect transnational capitalism.

As the Third World becomes more and more volatile, and as its relations with the First World further complicate the politics of the Catholic church, the questions addressed in The Two Churches demand attention with increasing urgency. Timely, thoughtful, and lucid, this book will inform and enhance our understanding of this complex, pressing issue.

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