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HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGION IN BOLIVIA

Why is the Catholic Church advancing human rights?

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to shed a light on the factors that shape the relationship between the Catholic Church and human rights in the case study of Bolivia. Over the last decades, Bolivia has been affected by the emergence of a “mestizo and indigenous” democracy. The Bolivian Catholic Church has played a crucial role in the process. She has progressively integrated the human rights discourse on specific issues into her theological and religious framework, despite internal and external resistances. In particular, indigenous rights; economic, social and cultural rights; the right to a healthy environment and the protection of the environment have become the core of the Church's socio-political mission and action in the country. The thesis will show that, in contrast to other common interpretations, the Church's advancement of human rights (dependent variable) is better understood as the result of a process of organizational learning (independent variable). This process began in Bolivia thanks to the positive interaction between “local Catholic actors” and mestizo and indigenous communities at the grassroots level. More generally, this research aims to improve the crucial understanding of the interaction between human rights and religious paradigms at the empirical level, adopting a social scientific approach.

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