



# **The Catholic Church and Power Politics in Latin America: The Dominican Case in Comparative Perspective (Critical Currents in Latin American Perspective Series)**

*Emelio Betances*

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Since the 1960s, the Catholic Church has acted as a mediator during social and political change in many Latin American countries, especially the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Although the Catholic clergy was called in during political crises in all five countries, the situation in the Dominican Republic was especially notable because the Church's role as mediator was eventually institutionalized. Because the Dominican state was persistently weak, the Church was able to secure the support of the Balaguer regime (1966–1978) and ensure social and political cohesion and stability. Emelio Betances analyzes the particular circumstances that allowed the Church in the Dominican Republic to accommodate the political and social establishment; the Church offered non-partisan political mediation, rebuilt its ties with the lower echelons of society, and responded to the challenges of the evangelical movement. The author's historical examination of church-state relations in the Dominican Republic leads to important regional comparisons that broaden our understanding of the Catholic Church in the whole of Latin America.

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