CHAPTER 8

Religion

The Enduring Presence

It's 1:00 p.m. on a Sunday and the Spanish-language Mass in Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church in Miami is about to begin, but the devout keep arriving in large numbers, delaying the start of the ceremony. Despite the church being packed, the choir is feeble, numbering only five women and no men. Its weakness is more evident because they sing the chants alone, without the rest of the congregation joining in. When the time comes for the sermon in Spanish, the young Cuban American priest, Father Tomás, alludes vaguely to the gospel of the day but uses it primarily as an allegory for what he really wants to tell his parishioners. He chides them, in no uncertain terms, for their lateness and their lack of participation in the Mass. He reminds them that, though that may have been the custom in their countries, now they are in America, where things are done on time and where Mass is not an individual, but a collective, experience. So strong is his sense of disappointment that a parishioner is moved to speak up, promising in the name of the congregation that this will not happen again.

Three weeks later, the same church. It is packed by 1:00 p.m., and the Mass begins on time. The few laggards settle in the last pews, timidly. The choir is now fifteen strong, including five men. Most parishioners join in the chants or, at least, pretend to do so. Father Tomás is pleased, and so should he be for he has succeeded in instilling a sense of Catholic order and propriety in this congregation made up mostly of recent immigrants. Less obviously, but more important, he has given

them a powerful lesson in acculturation, one that will inevitably carry over to other spheres of life.[1]

What Father Tomás did at St. Rose of Lima has been done innumerable times before. A rapidly growing literature tells us that religious affiliation and participation have been prime vehicles for many immigrants to cope with the challenges of their new environment and to learn its ways. As Charles Hirschman notes, evoking the classical historical accounts by Handlin and Herberg, in America many immigrants and their offspring became acculturated and eventually accepted not by joining some abstract "mainstream" but by becoming regular members of religious congregations, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish.[2] Not all immigrants have followed that path, to be sure, but religion has never ceased to be a crucial presence in the process of incorporation. So long as the likes of Father Tomás continue to preach to packed houses of newcomers coming to church to seek succor and guidance, that presence will not end.

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

The historical and sociological literature on the interface between religion and immigration has become increasingly abundant of late and has been summarized a number of times before. It would be redundant to do likewise in the following pages. Excellent reviews and syntheses of this literature, as well as comparisons between historical and contemporary experiences, have been published during the last decade by, among others, Hirschman, Levitt, Alba and Raboteau, Ebaugh and Chafetz, Warner and Wittner, and Wuthnow.[3]

Our intention is not to cover the same terrain but to use material from these essays and our own empirical data to explore systematically the interactions between religious affiliation and the other theoretical and practical aspects of immigration examined in prior chapters. These include the modes of incorporation of different immigrant communities, the development of linear and reactive ethnicities, the construction of transnational organizations and communities, the road to citizenship and political participation, and the process of segmented assimilation in the second generation.

A fundamental point is that religion seldom causes emigration and seldom determines the structural contexts of reception awaiting immigrants in a new land. There are exceptions to this rule in the experience of some refugee groups escaping religious oppression and in the pro-

active stance of some religious agencies in sponsoring and structuring their resettlement. But, as seen in earlier chapters, the vast majority of immigrants to America belong to other types—labor migrants, professionals and entrepreneurs, and political refugees. More commonly in all these instances, religion has *accompanied* the process of migration as a means of seeking to ameliorate the traumas of departure and early settlement, to protect immigrants against external attacks and discrimination, and to smooth their acculturation within the new environment. The actions and initiatives of religious communities, while not determining the onset of migration or its general mode of incorporation, can affect the influence of these factors, leading to outcomes different from what would otherwise be expected. So important is this mediating and ameliorative role that when a church, temple, mosque, or synagogue is not there to receive the newcomers, they have commonly organized in order to build one.[4]

Sociologically, this significance of religion is not difficult to understand. It is compatible with the role of sociability in avoiding the danger of *anomie* and, by doing so, to sustain moral cohesion and normative controls, as emphasized in the classic studies of Emile Durkheim. It also agrees with the prime role of religious conviction and religious charisma in guiding human action and promoting major processes of change, as investigated by Max Weber.[5] Weber also pioneered the analysis of the unexpected economic consequences of religious belief at the individual and societal level, a theme that has become a staple in sociological analyses of religion to our day.[6]

Yesterday and today, many newcomers in America have felt the need to reaffirm their religious roots or, alternatively, to find new ones, with consequences that have been momentous, both individually and collectively. Individually, Hirschman summarizes the social functions of religion in the "three Rs": refuge, respect, and resources.[7] The first function refers to the early, frequently traumatic stage of arrival and resettlement, where a church, a temple, or a mosque may be a key source of comfort and protection; the second addresses Durkheim's problem of anomie and the associated loss of normative orientation and a sense of self-worth; the third is compatible with Weber's analysis of economic consequences of religious affiliation, as one group of newcomers after another has discovered that, by reaffirming their religious traditions, or embracing new ones, they can do well by doing good.

As we saw in chapter 1, the long-term impact of migration on social

and cultural change in America has been due, in large part, to the institutionalization of foreign religions. The process has both reaffirmed the importance of religiosity for American culture and opened new spaces for diversity. The social and cultural consequences of immigrant religions are readily evident in an American landscape dotted with temples of the most varied sort—from churches to synagogues to mosques; in the institutionalization of the Catholic Church, along with its vast system of schools, universities, and hospitals; and in the entry of Judaism into the social and cultural mainstream, redefined to reflect a "Judeo-Christian" tradition.[8] Relative to the rest of the developed world, the United States remains today a profoundly religious country. This was not always the case, and the difference has been largely a result of the interplay between faith and the process of immigrant incorporation.[9]

The world's historical record shows that, over time, religious convictions have been a source not only of comfort and protection but also of violent conflict between adherents of diverse faiths. These include the centuries-old confrontation between Christianity and Islam and the post-Reformation European wars between Catholics and Protestants.[10] The threat of similar conflicts also arose in Protestant North America, with the nineteenth-century arrival of Irish Catholics and, subsequently, of Russian Jews and other non-Protestant foreign groups. Yet the freedoms of religion and speech enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights were sufficiently strong to prevent a reenactment of the European religious wars on this side of the Atlantic.[11] While xenophobic attacks were common, as notoriously exemplified by the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, the main story was that sufficient legal and social space was created for nonhegemonic religions to gain a foothold in North America and to flourish. The history of American Catholicism and Judaism and the protective role that they played for their respective immigrant flocks exemplify this central trend.

RELIGION AND MODES OF INCORPORATION

One of the most compelling recent stories about religion and immigrant incorporation is that narrated by Zhou, Bankston, and Kim about the construction of a Buddhist temple in the midst of the sugarcane fields of Iberia Parish, Louisiana. The Laotian refugees responsible for this feat began moving to Louisiana in the early 1980s under the sponsorship of the federal government and to take advantage of new occupa-

tional opportunities in the area. With funds from the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), the men trained as welders and pipe fitters and promptly found employment in the construction of off-shore oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. The women had brought embroidery skills from Laos that served many of them well in finding employment in a textile mill north of New Iberia.[12]

With two working-class incomes per family, Laotians were soon able to move out of the housing projects and dangerous neighborhoods where they had initially settled. The problem was where. The majority of these refugees were Theravada Buddhists, and there certainly was no Buddhist temple in New Iberia around which they could congregate. How they solved the problem is remarkable, although it corresponds well with what other immigrant groups elsewhere have also done: they built the temple themselves and a Laotian village to boot, to which many of the families then moved. The struggle to find the funds to buy the land, pay a resident monk, build the temple, and lay out the adjacent streets (named after provinces in Laos) are narrated in elegant detail by Zhou, Bankston, and Kim. The first important lesson to take from their story is the significance of modes of incorporation in the course of adaptation of immigrants and refugees. As escapees from a communist regime, Laotians were the beneficiaries of a generous program of federal resettlement assistance. With that assistance they were able to rejoin families, move in search of opportunities, and find occupational training that laid the basis for their economic success and the reconstruction of their community.[13]

The colorful and incongruous temple in the midst of the Louisiana cane fields illustrates well the Durkheimian theme of the power of community cohesion against anomie, as well as the Weberian emphasis on the latent economic consequences of religious practice. For the erection of the building not only allowed these refugees to reenact their religious rituals and traditions but also endowed them with a renewed sense of pride and place in a strange land. Not surprisingly, economic consequences flowed out of the temple, in the form of support for members in search of employment and housing loans. In the course of the study researchers interviewed the human resources director of a company constructing offshore oil structures in the Gulf of Mexico. Upon remarking on how many Laotian workers the company employed, the man responded, "One of our foremen is the financial manager of that Buddhist whatchamacallit. . . . People go to him for a job, and he just refers them here."[14]

In chapters 2 and 4 we saw that modes of incorporation—composed of governmental reception, public reaction toward newcomers, and the preexisting coethnic community—represent the fundamental structural factors affecting the long-term adaptation of immigrant groups. As we noted previously, religion does not determine by itself any of these contextual elements, but it can *interact* powerfully with them, generally in the direction of softening their edges: it does not dictate state policy but helps implement it or, alternatively, resist it when seen as inimical to the welfare of its members; it does not create the social context confronted by newcomers, but it seeks to ameliorate it by facilitating the integration of immigrants and protecting them from the worst consequences of discrimination; it does not determine the emergence of ethnic communities, but it can be a powerful rallying point for them, to the point that—as in the case of the Laotian Buddhists—when a religious shrine does not exist, it has to be built. Figure 28 depicts graphically this dynamic interaction between religious institutions and structural modes of incorporation.[15]

Of these interactions, arguably the most important is the role of religion in the development of ethnic communities and the reassertion of national cultures and language. On the whole, religious institutions have been guided in this respect by a logic entirely at variance with stereotypes commonly held by the native population. That logic is well captured in Hirschman's observation that "immigrants became Americans by joining a church and participating in its religious and community life."[16] In other words, the road to successful integration has passed through the creation of ethnic communities and the reenactment of elements of the immigrants' culture, with strong religious undertones. By contrast, a widespread view among the native-born population and among many politicians and academics as well, is that immigrants' vigorous assertion of distinct ethnic identities and foreign cultures undermines the unity of the nation and the preservation of its cultural integrity.[17]

Thus, as we saw in chapter 5, prominent intellectuals have railed recently against the "Hispanic challenge" and the cultural diversity brought about by immigrants that, in their view, conspire against the integrity of the nation. In their time Irish and Italian Catholics and Russian Jews were targets of similar hostility, with the "Popishness" of the Irish, the superstitions of the Italians, and the Semitic clannishness of the Jews denounced as un-American and corrosive of national unity and values.[18]

JFK Kennedy

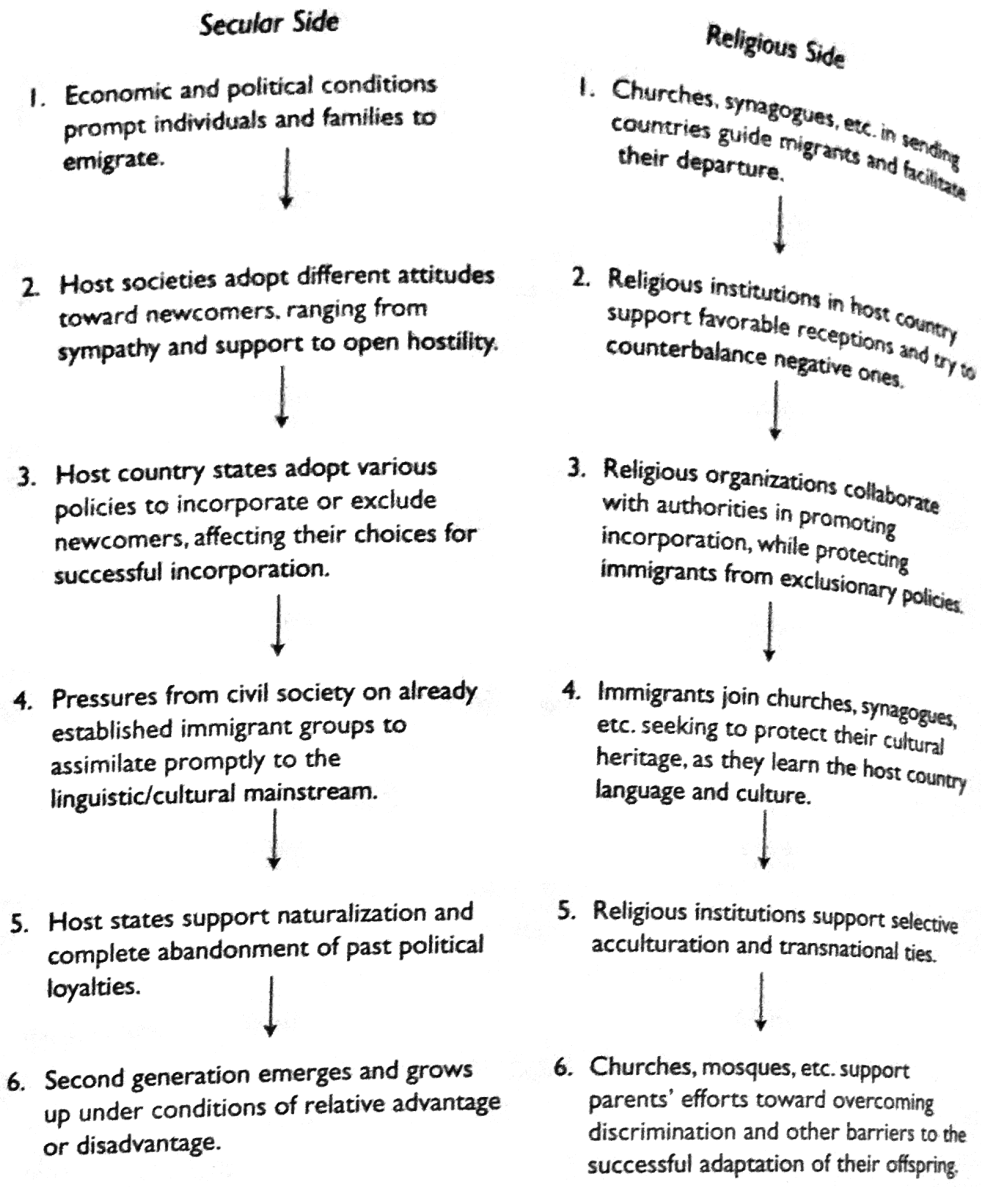

FIGURE 28. Religion and immigrant incorporation: Interaction effects.

As we have noted, American constitutional freedoms and the country's legal system were strong enough to prevent xenophobic sentiments translating themselves into public policy. Instead, the state stood back, allowing immigrant groups to develop their own social and cultural institutions, including their own parishes, schools, hospitals, temples, and synagogues. The long-term results of that permissive stance are celebrated today as the "success stories" of European immigrant groups in the United States and of the American ability to assimilate them. That ability was grounded in the state's doing rather little and religious insti-

tutions doing a great deal. The lessons of religiously imbued ethnic communities and institutions providing a first leg up on the way to successful integration has somehow been lost by today's nativists who continue to rally against the "foreign element."

These activities, exemplified by the Spanish-language Mass in St. Rose of Lima and the construction of the Buddhist temple in Iberia Parish, are not exceptional but are proliferating. According to Warner and Wittner, by the early 1990s there were thirty-five hundred Catholic parishes where Mass was celebrated in Spanish and seven thousand Latin Protestant congregations, most of them Pentecostal or evangelical. There were, as well, upwards of twenty-six hundred Korean Christian churches, between fifteen hundred and two thousand Buddhist temples, and about one thousand mosques and Islamic centers. More recently, Wuthnow puts the number of mosques and Islamic centers at three thousand, two-thirds of which were founded after 1980.[19] According to another recent study, there is one Korean church for every four hundred immigrants of that nationality, an extraordinarily high figure.[20] Given the continuation of immigration, these numbers will grow. Overall, they can be expected to play the same support and integrative functions that religion has always played for migrant newcomers to America.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND CHANGE

On one Sunday in 1999, as reported by the *New York Times,* Hindu worshippers paraded down Bowne Street in Flushing, New York, with the bust of Lord Ganesha, an elephant-headed deity who symbolizes auspicious beginnings. The Hindu temple that organizes the annual procession draws $2 million in annual revenues from some three thousand worshippers who come into the sanctuary for prayers, language classes, and lessons in Hindu scripture every weekend. Nearby is another Hindu temple, opposite a once-bustling Orthodox synagogue that now rents its parking lot to members of a Chinese evangelical church. Half a block up, music emerges from a storefront that serves as a Sikh *gurdwara.* Still farther north, English-speaking parishioners of a 150-year-old Protestant church empty out to make room for the Chinese-language service that follows. Just off Bowne Street sits the thirty-five-hundred-member Korean American Presbyterian Church (one of the largest among the more than one hundred Korean Protestant churches in

Flushing alone). Simultaneously, as older residents have moved out of Flushing, some places of worship have seen their memberships plummet—like the Kissena Jewish Center, no longer what it was in the early 1960s when Orthodox Jews lived in the neighborhood and could walk to it. Meanwhile, the Free Synagogue of Flushing, a Reform temple on nearby Kissena Boulevard, rents out its worship hall to a Korean Presbyterian congregation on Sundays.[21]

That religion has always been a vital part of immigrant life is one of the reasons the United States remains one of the most religious nations in the world. A forty-four-nation survey of more than forty-thousand adults conducted in 2011 by the Pew Global Attitudes Project shows stark global differences in the personal importance of religion. Religion is far more important to Americans than to people living in other wealthy nations. More than five out of ten (55 percent) people in the United States say religion plays a "very important" role in their lives—twice the percentage of self-avowed religious people in Germany and Spain, and an even higher proportion when compared with Japan and France.[22]

Americans' views are closer to people in developing nations—in some instances more religious than those expressed, for example, in Mexico, although less than the very high proportions in predominantly Muslim countries such as Indonesia and Pakistan (over 90 percent). Figure 29 plots the national-level data on the importance of religion for the twenty-one countries surveyed in the last Pew project against their annual per capita income. The negative correlation between religious attitudes and national wealth is very strong: the poorer the country the greater the importance of religion, while the wealthier the country, the less importance is given to religion—with the notable exception of the United States.

Despite the new religious diversity and its tradition of religious pluralism, the United States remains an overwhelmingly Christian nation—although one that has changed substantially since the 1950s, when virtually the entire society consisted of Protestants and Catholics, with a proportionately small Jewish population. The U.S. Census Bureau by law does not collect data on religion, but in 1957 it carried out a national survey that provided a snapshot of a population that was more than 95 percent Christian.[23] Since 1972, however, the General Social Survey has been conducted annually (or biannually) with nationally representative samples of the adult population, including items on religious identification, participation, and beliefs, that make it possible to sketch a portrait of religious change in the United States during the

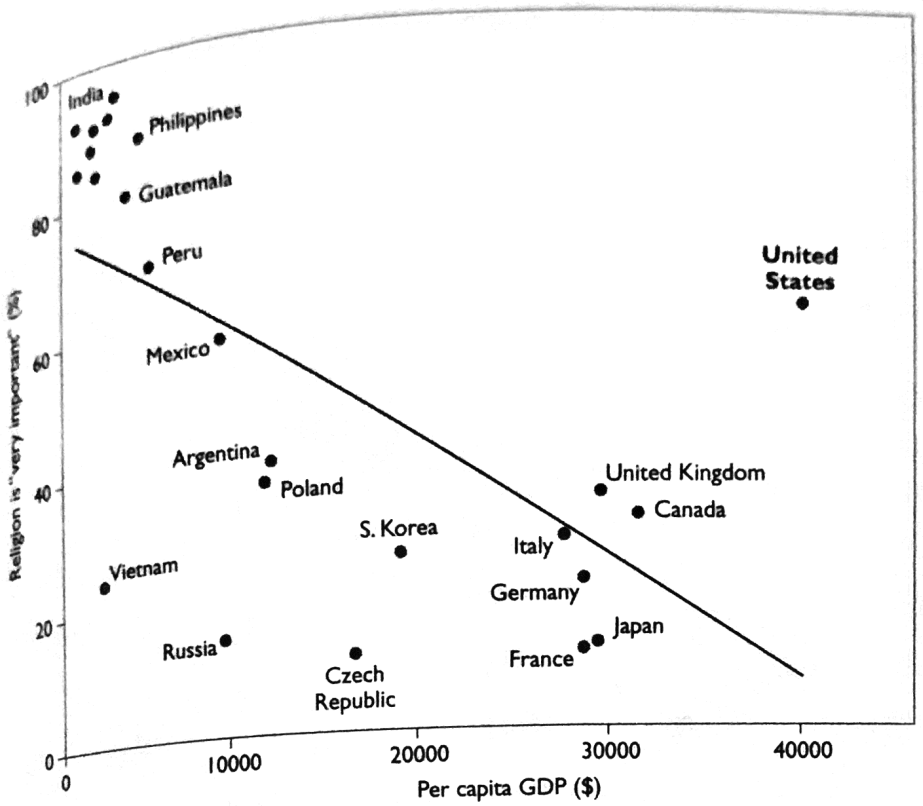

FIGURE 29. Religiosity of selected countries and per capita gross domestic product. *Sources:* Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Among Wealthy Nations;* and Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook, 2004.*

forty-year period from 1972 to 2012—precisely the years encompassing the current wave of immigration.[24]

GSS results are presented in table 43. It provides a breakdown of current religion (about three out of four adults adhere to the religion of their childhood) and shows key correlates of religious identification and change over time, age cohort, generation, and education. Four main trends are discernible in this table:

- The "Protestant majority" is vanishing. By 2005 the Protestant population of the United States overall fell below 50 percent for the first time—a decline that is sharper still among younger people, in more recent years, and among the first and second generations.[25]
- Catholics remain stable in their relative national proportions. They have composed about a fourth of the population for decades now, but this figure disguises a secular decline over time, which is being more than compensated by new influxes of immi-

TABLE 43 RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION IN THE UNITED STATES, 1972–2002: CURRENT RELIGION BY PERIOD, COHORT, GENERATION, AND EDUCATION

	Current Religion					
	Protestant (%)	Catholic (%)	Jewish (%)	Other (%)	None (%)	N (43,698)
Period of survey						
1972–1978	64.3	25.3	2.4	1.3	6.8	10,652
1980–1987	64.7	24.5	2.1	1.7	7.1	11,223
1988–1996	61.1	24.5	2.0	3.3	9.0	13,409
1998–2002	53.9	24.6	1.9	5.5	14.0	8,414
Birth cohort						
Born pre-1930	70.4	22.5	2.6	1.0	3.6	12,088
1930–1949	62.8	25.0	2.2	2.2	7.7	13,364
1950–1969	55.9	26.1	1.7	4.1	12.2	15,426
1970 or after	46.1	25.6	1.8	6.5	19.9	2,820
Generation						
1st (foreign-born)	27.8	43.8	4.3	13.2	10.9	2,290
2nd	35.4	44.8	6.5	3.8	9.4	3,778
3rd	49.0	35.3	3.2	2.5	10.0	9,469
4th+	75.1	13.4	0.4	2.2	8.9	20,115
Education						
0–8 years	70.3	22.6	0.9	1.3	4.9	4,732
9–12 years	64.2	25.1	1.0	2.0	7.7	20,376
13–16 years	57.1	25.5	2.9	3.8	10.7	14,652
17–20 years	51.8	22.5	6.3	5.4	14.0	3,799

SOURCE: Davis and Smith, *General Social Surveys, 1972–2002.*

grant Catholics from Latin America, as well as from the Philippines and (to a lesser extent) from Vietnam.

- There has been a sharp increase in the proportion of people who indicate "No Religion" to the question on religious identification, doubling from 7 to 15 percent over the first decade of the 2000s. In part, as seen from its correlation with education, this reflects a small but growing secularization trend. By 2008 the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey also found that the proportion of religiously unaffiliated adults had increased to 16 percent, more than double the number who had not been affiliated with

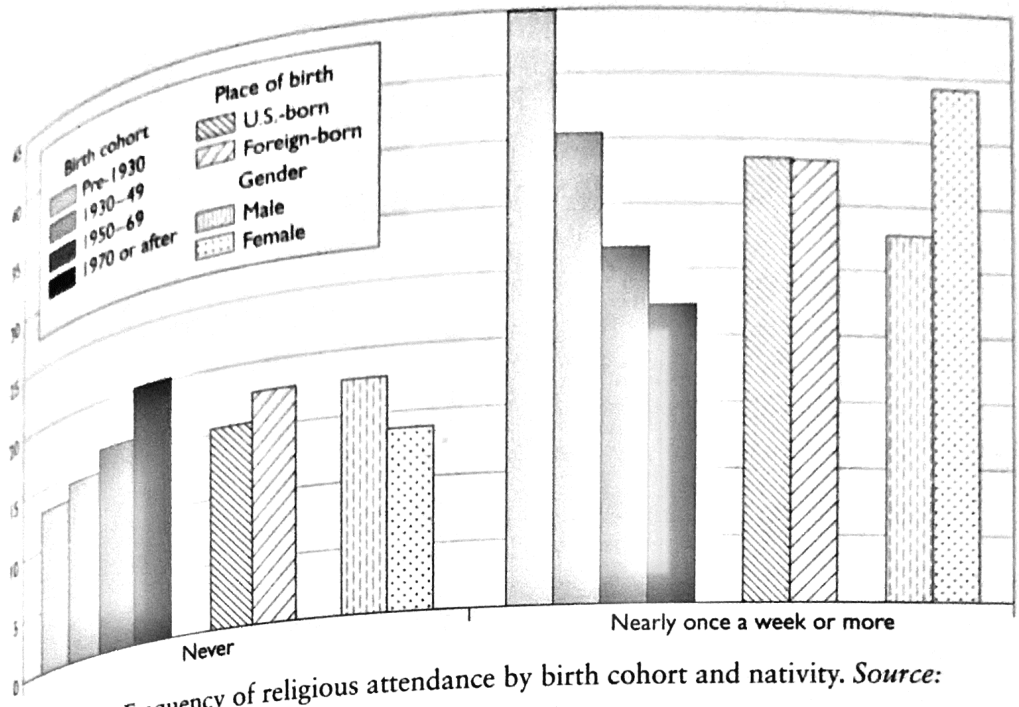

FIGURE 30. Frequency of religious attendance by birth cohort and nativity. *Source:* Davis and Smith, *General Social Surveys, 1972–2002.*

any religion as children.[26] However, many respondents who no longer identify with organized religion nonetheless profess a belief in God and occasionally attend religious services. Thus, the explanation for this trend is not reducible solely to a secularization thesis.[27]

- Finally, as reflected in the opening *New York Times* story, there is an increase in non-Christian religions, notably Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. Despite small relative proportions, the GSS trend data show that all other non-Christian religions increased from about 1.5 percent of the adult population in the 1970s and early 1980s to more than 3 percent in the early to mid-1990s and to 5.5 percent in the 1998–2002 period (each 1 percent represents more than two million adults).[28]

Figure 30 summarizes GSS data on frequency of religious attendance by birth cohort, nationality, and gender. These nationally representative figures indicate a monotonic decline in attendance with younger ages, significantly greater participation by females, and insignificant differences between the foreign-born and native-born. Exactly the same trend is shown by GSS data on belief in God, with males and the young being significantly more likely to declare no such belief and the native- and

foreign-born showing no major differences. These general trends provide a broader framework for examining the role of religion among contemporary immigrants. We focus first on the religious ties linking the foreign-born with their countries of origin, next on religion and adaptation in the second generation and the role of religion in linear and reactive ethnicity, and finally on the specific cases of the Mexican and Muslim populations. Reasons for selecting these groups for special attention are explained in their respective sections.

RELIGION AND TRANSNATIONALISM

In an impoverished quarter of Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, lies the convent of the Vicentine Sisters of Charity. The modest but ample and comfortable space is the headquarters for a number of projects implemented by the nuns to help the poor in the nearby community and beyond. From it, Sor Irene, a vigorous middle-aged nun, operates a refuge for the homeless of Bogotá, dubbed "inhabitants of the street," mostly mentally disturbed or retarded persons and drug addicts. Every night, Sor Irene and her brave helpers roam the dangerous quarters surrounding the convent in search of the inhabitants of the street. The refuge offers them not only food, shelter, and clothing but also rehabilitation through professional counseling and various occupational therapy programs. All the equipment for learning new work skills—from manufacturing paper out of recycled waste materials to baking bread—has been purchased with donations from Colombian immigrants in the United States.[29]

In the same convent lives Sor Matilde, another nun who has operated for fifteen years an asylum and schools for orphan children in the nearby city of Tunja. The funds for purchasing the land for the asylum and building the dormitories and the school were donated by the Foundation of the Divine Child (Fundación del Divino Niño), a charity established by a Colombian priest, an immigrant journalist, and a group of immigrant volunteers based in a parish in Passaic, New Jersey. Computers for the school were donated by IBM, following a request from the foundation. A new training school for the indigenous population around Tunja is currently being planned.[30]

The examples are many. While the literature on religion and immigration has focused overwhelmingly on the adaptation and successful integration of migrants in a new land, the fact is that they seldom

forget where they came from and that ties with the homeland, at least in the first generation, remain strong. Most immigrants come from poor nations and communities. As their economic situation abroad improves, it is natural that many feel the impulse to help those left behind, going beyond their immediate kin. That impulse has a natural affinity with the general charitable orientation of church-led activities and, certainly, with the needs of churches and congregations in the home countries.

The study of transnational participation among Latin American immigrant heads of family, described in chapter 5, found that approximately 10 percent of the 1,842 transnational organizations in which members of this representative sample took part were of a confessional or religious character. A more recent study of the universe of transnational organizations constructed by Colombian, Dominican, and Mexican immigrants in the U.S. East Coast region found that 3.4 percent were of an explicitly religious character. These figures may not seem like much, except that many of the activities of the most common organizations, such as "civic-cultural" groups and especially "hometown committees" identified in the same study, have clearly religious undertones.[31] These range from the repair and embellishment of the hometown church to the channeling of assistance following a natural disaster through the local parish or a religious congregation.

This is, for example, how the municipal president of Xochihuehuetlán in the State of Guerrero, Mexico, whose hometown committee in New York City formed part of the transnational immigrant organizations study, described this collaboration:

> More or less in 1985, works began that benefited our town. . . . They were of a religious character to improve the Sanctuary of San Diego de Alcalá, which is the most respected patron saint around here; then we bought street lights for the *calzada* leading to the sanctuary . . . the avenue where the procession takes place. Today and with the help of migrants in the U.S., public works are very advanced: the church is in good shape, redecorated and with gold leaf in the altars; the atrium has new benches and the avenue is repaved with tile. . . . Now we are looking at rebuilding the school with support from the municipality and the people that we have in the United States with whom we always have had good relations.[32]

When a river flooding caused the death or disappearance of seven hundred persons in the town of Jimani, Dominican Republic, the Dominican immigrant community in New York and New England quickly mobilized

to provide assistance. Particularly prominent were Alianza Dominicana, the largest social service organization of this immigrant community in New York, and the hometown committee created by Jimani immigrants in Boston and environs and known by its acronym ASOJIMA. Their aid was directed to the local parish priest, in part out of fear of corruption among state officials. According to the priest, those fears were justified: "I had conflicts with the provincial government because the governor wanted to manage the external aid and was robbing us blind. I denounced him publicly and, in response, the government removed the military from Jimani as well as the police protection of our warehouse. On July 11, the provincial government left and never came back. With very little money, we had to work out ourselves the logistics of distributing all that foreign assistance."[33]

First-generation immigrants have always looked backward, and when the economic situation has permitted, they have sought to provide assistance not only to their families but to their communities. Much of this impulse was religiously inspired or channeled through religious institutions. In that sense there are close parallels between the Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the Mexicans, Filipinos, Koreans, Chinese, and other immigrants today. A recent study of Vietnamese immigrant organizations in the U.S. West Coast region found that 35 percent of those involved in transnational activities were of a religious character—mostly Buddhist and Catholic associations. The reason for this high number is the ability of religiously denominated groups to obtain government permission to carry out philanthropic activities in a communist-ruled country like Vietnam. More overtly political or civic groups are routinely denied this authorization.[34]

Religious transnationalism is not limited to immigrant philanthropic contributions, however, because it also includes the influence of home-country religious institutions on their expatriates. Thus, if monetary and other economic resources flow in one direction, moral guidance and often religious personnel flow in the other. The story of how Irish clergy literally built the American Catholic Church from the ground up has been recently summarized by Hirschman, drawing on the classic studies by Handlin and Higham and more recent ones by Larkin, Archdeacon, and others.[35] So abundant were Irish priests and nuns in the late nineteenth century and the twentieth that they staffed other "ethnic" parishes until the Italian, Polish, and other Catholic migrants could get their own clergy.

Today, the story repeats itself but with greater religious diversity.[36] Catholic priests still come from abroad. For instance, the Scalibrini, an Italian order devoted to ministering to migrants, trains priests at its seminaries in Latin America to be sent to Latin migrant congregations in the United States. There they are joined by Jewish rabbis, Middle Eastern imams, Buddhist monks, and Hindu swamis coming to tend their various flocks in a foreign land and, in the process, reaffirm community and identity. Thus, Laotian Buddhists in Louisiana and Vietnamese Buddhists in Houston, the first being followers of the Theravada branch of the religion, the second of the Mahayana tradition, had to trek home in search of monks to staff their new temples.[37] In another study Jacob and Thakur tell of the construction of the beautiful Jyothi Hindu temple in suburban Houston and of the pilgrimage of well-heeled immigrants from southern India to their homeland in search of competent swamis to staff it and conduct its rites in ancient Sanskrit. When a move was afoot to include women in the temple's governing board, word had to be sent back to India requesting authorization from Hindu leaders there.[38]

As with other transnational forms of exchange, what is new at present is not the existence of these activities but their intensity, rooted in innovations in communications and transportation technologies. Today, instant exchanges of information and fast and increasingly accessible air transportation link immigrant communities with their hometowns and countries as never before. For the most part, and despite some downsides, dense transnational ties tend to benefit places of origin as they channel to them an increasing flow of otherwise unavailable information and material resources. The opposite flow of ideas, culture, and even religious personnel from the home country is the one opposed by nativists as undermining American cultural traditions. As we noted above, these attacks follow a "secular" logic, according to which immigrants should leave everything behind upon arrival and seek to become indistinguishable from other Americans.

The alternative "religious" logic sees the reaffirmation of national identities, cultures, and languages as positive insofar as it helps newcomers regain their balance in a foreign land and provides them with information and resources to move ahead in their new environment. In this sense transnationalism, religious or otherwise, and successful incorporation to the host society are not at all opposite. The available empirical evidence strongly supports this position.[39]

Menjívar has shown how both Catholic churches and evangelical ones seek to strengthen a sense of ethnic community among their

Latin migrant flocks as a basic step in their adaptation to American society. In this effort evangelical churches have the upper hand because they are built around immigrants of the same nationality (for example, Salvadorans) and support their strong concerns and specific ties with localities back home. The pastors themselves take part in this transnational circuit, traveling back and forth between places of origin and of settlement, ministering to congregations in both and sponsoring projects that bring them together.

By contrast, Catholic churches attract larger, but more diverse, congregations. Their attempts to merge immigrants of different nationalities into a single pan-ethnic or "Hispanic" flock focused on their present U.S. lives are often resisted by migrants whose thoughts and actions remain oriented to families and communities in their particular countries of origin. For first-generation immigrants at least, these ties are fundamental as the immigrants seek to adapt and move ahead in a different and challenging environment.[40]

RELIGION AND THE SECOND GENERATION

As shown in figure 28, the interplay between religion and immigration does not stop with the first generation but extends to its descendants. If for recently arrived immigrants, the first of the "three Rs"—refuge—has been a key function of religious affiliation, for their offspring, the other two—respect and resources—become paramount as they seek to move ahead in what is now their country. Alba and Raboteau have noted that American society has traditionally pressured immigrants to shed their language and most elements of their culture but not their religion.[41] The latter takes on, however, different meanings and roles across generations.

While fostering transnational ties may be important for first-generation migrants, for their children issues and concerns tied to their present American lives become paramount.[42] The same Catholic Church struggling today to integrate new and diverse immigrant flocks from Latin America and Asia did succeed rather well with the earlier European second generation. It did so by offering children of Irish, Italian, and Polish migrants a great deal: it educated them and their descendants in good schools, gave them respectability and status as churchgoers, and took care of their health needs through an extensive hospital system. No wonder that these second- and third-generation ethnics, whose fore-

bears had been relatively indifferent to religion or practiced a folk variety of Catholicism, became serious Catholics, well instructed in the canons of the faith.[43]

More generally, as several scholars have noted, the American republic was not a particularly religious country at the time of its foundation. It became increasingly so over the next two centuries, in part out of the interplay between successive waves of immigration and their religious needs and practices. The strong and widespread religiosity that makes the United States an outlier among developed nations arose largely out of competition between Christian denominations and then other religions for the minds and hearts of successive migrant waves and their progeny.[44] Today, Latin and Asian immigrants are spawning a new second generation destined to become a very significant component of America's population. Like their European forebears, they need and want the means to move ahead. As we saw in chapter 7, they face an environment that, while offering multiple opportunities for success, also confronts them with serious challenges. Religion plays a complex role in this environment, isolating and protecting second-generation youths from such threats and, at other times, offering those who have fallen a second chance to rebuild their lives.

As we have also seen, *selective acculturation,* where children of immigrants learn the language and culture of the new country while preserving elements of their parents' own culture, offers the best means to fend off challenges to successful adaptation and educational achievement in adolescence. Naturally, immigrant religions play a central part in this process. When second-generation children continue observing the faith of their parents, certain benefits associated with selective acculturation become apparent: there is a common universe of meanings shared across generations, channels of communication between the two generations remain open, strengthening beliefs and norms antithetical to downward assimilation.

In their study of the poor Vietnamese community in the Versailles section of New Orleans, Zhou and Bankston identified the construction of the new Catholic parish, Mary Queen of Vietnam, as a central element in the high levels of educational achievement of Vietnamese youths, despite the poverty of the area and the modest human capital of their parents. Church attendance and participation in church-sponsored activities effectively insulated these youngsters from neighborhood gangs and helped reinforce parental aspirations for educational

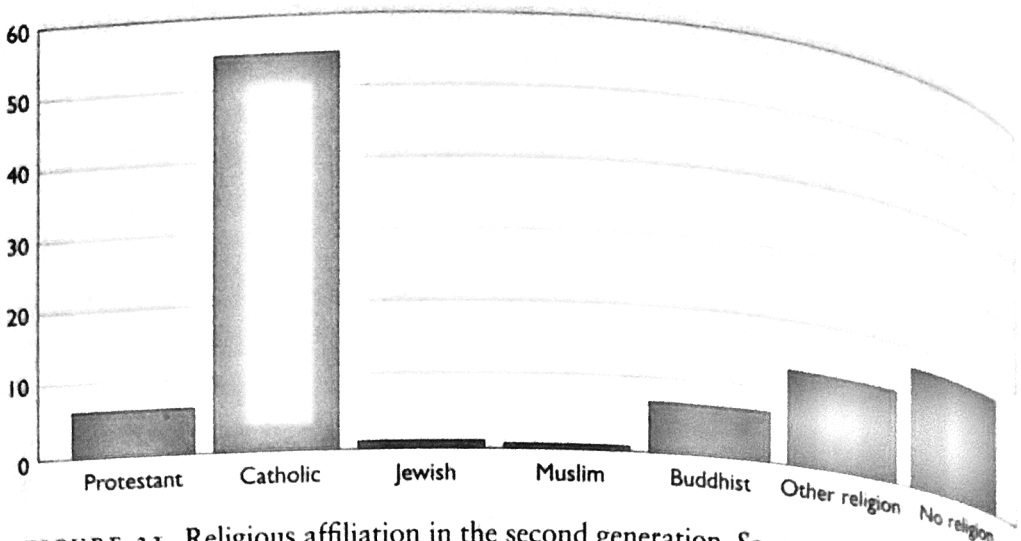

FIGURE 31. Religious affiliation in the second generation. *Source:* Portes and Rumbaut, Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study, Third Wave (CILS-III, 2002).

achievement: "The degree of integration into the group is reflected in the behavioral patterns of group members. . . . Because the norm of individual families stem[s] from the ethnic community, the behavior expected by parents and by others around the children are essentially the same, suggesting that young people receive little competition from other desiderata when their social world is restricted . . . to the ethnic group."[45]

To the contrary, Vietnamese American youths who abandoned the church were viewed as undergoing dissonant acculturation and at risk of assimilating downward. As a youth counselor, himself of Vietnamese origin, told the authors about this group of youngsters: "They have become Americans in their own eyes, but they do not have the advantages of white Americans. So they lose the direction that their Vietnamese culture can give them. Since they do not know where they are going, they just drift."[46]

Those Laotian mechanics and welders building a Buddhist temple in the midst of the Louisiana cane fields knew well what they were doing. The temple and its associated rituals were not only for themselves but mainly for the children—a symbol of their origins, a rallying point for their cultural pride, and a springboard for their successful adaptation to school and society. Although these refugees may not have known it, they were reenacting, in a different time and place, the actions and achievements of millions of immigrants before them. Although, as we will see shortly, the role of religion is not limited to selective acculturation, this still represents a dominant path for successful adaptation in early life.

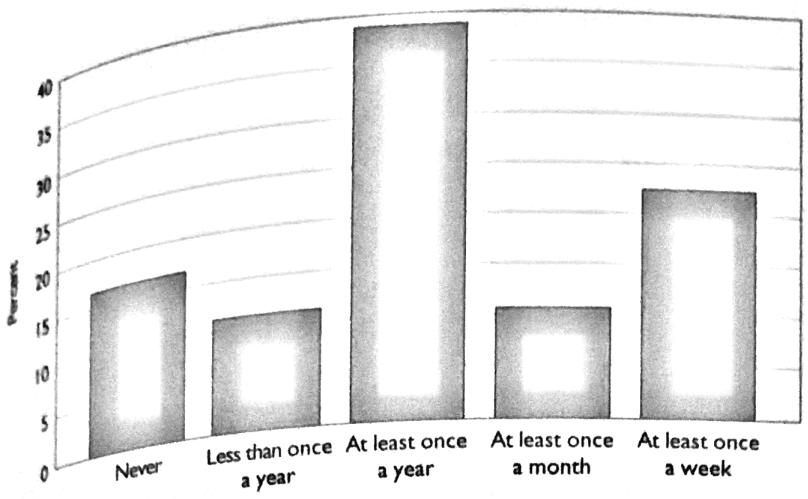

FIGURE 32. Religious attendance in the second generation. *Source:* CILS-III.

The third wave of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) (see chapter 7) collected data on the religious affiliation and participation of young adults at an average age of twenty-four. Results for the entire sample and for its principal nationalities are presented in figures 31 and 32. Three points are apparent from figure 31: first, many different religions were represented in this sample, although Catholics were the absolute majority; second, greater than 80 percent of these young adults were affiliated with a religion; and third, a sizable minority had no religious attachment at all.

The dominance of the Catholic faith in these data is partially a consequence of the way that the CILS sample was designed. It also reflects a real fact, however—namely, the large number of Latin American, Filipino, and Vietnamese immigrants that profess this religion and, hence, the preponderant role of Catholicism among the contemporary foreign-born and their offspring. Strong majorities of all second-generation Latin groups profess to be Catholics. The same is true of Filipinos. And although the dominant religion among the Vietnamese is Buddhism, about one-fifth of these youths also declared themselves to be Catholics. This dominant position of the Roman faith poses both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is to provide for this young population a level of support and educational resources comparable to that which was available to earlier European Catholics. The opportunity lies in that, by doing so, the Roman Catholic Church can consolidate its position as the dominant faith in America. As we will see below, however, there are indications that Catholicism is not rising to

this challenge or, at least, not as much as it did during the period of classic European immigration.

The finding that close to 20 percent of the CILS sample declared no religious belief in early adulthood is due to this being the dominant position among second-generation Chinese (53.2 percent) and to its being endorsed as well by one-third of other Asians. These are offspring of families coming from a primarily secular tradition whose parents are endowed, on average, with superior levels of human capital. Immigrants from China were raised in a society where religion is not encouraged, to put it mildly. The absence of strong afterlife beliefs among these immigrants and their lesser need for religion as a platform for upward mobility partially explain the lack of strong religious convictions among their offspring.

Data on religious attendance, presented in figure 32, confirm this picture. Again, nearly 20 percent do not take part in any religious services, and to them must be added another 10 percent of "nominal" believers who frequent churches or temples fewer times than once a year. They are counterbalanced by about one-third of the sample who are regular churchgoers, with the rest in between. Complete absence of religious participation is most common among the Chinese (41 percent) and other Asians (39 percent), with youths from "other" nationalities (primarily of European and Canadian origin) close behind. The most devout groups in this sample are young adults of black Caribbean origin, particularly Haitians. Among this group nonattendance or infrequent attendance drops to the single digits (3.3 percent), while among Jamaicans and other West Indians it is less than 15 percent.

Overall, these data suggest three trends: first, greater religious affiliation and participation among second-generation Latin Americans than Asians, except the (mostly Catholic) Filipinos; second, the predominance of Catholicism (most Catholic groups are more participatory in this sample); and third, a tendency among black second-generation youths, often in greater need of external assistance, to be religiously active (Haitians, West Indians). Part of the explanation for the very high levels of religious affiliation and attendance among second-generation Haitians in Miami has to do with the successful role of the Catholic Church in promoting the integration of their group, an experience to which we will return.

It is possible to demonstrate the existence of an association between religion and adaptation outcomes in the second generation. For this

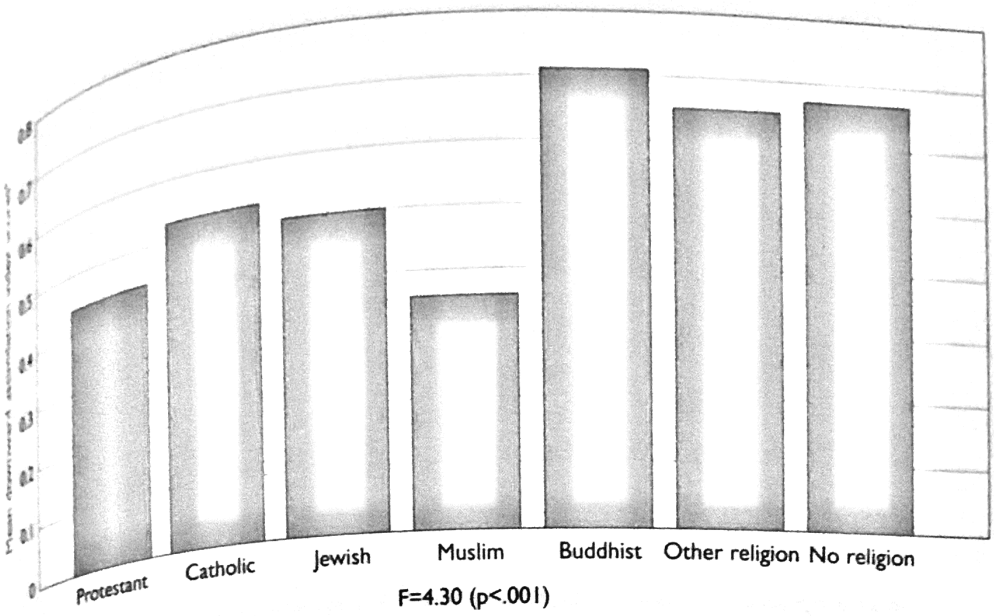

FIGURE 33. Downward assimilation by religion in the second generation. *Higher scores indicate higher propensity toward downward assimilation. Sample DAI mean score is .579 with a range from 0 to 6. *Source:* CILS-III.

purpose, we first constructed a Downward Assimilation Index (DAI) composed of the sum of six indicators of negative outcomes in early adulthood—from unemployment to arrest and incarceration.[47] Higher scores in this index indicate a greater propensity toward downward assimilation. As shown in figure 33, all second-generation youths who profess a religion, with the exception of Buddhists, have lower scores in the DAI than those without any religion. These differences are statistically significant at the 0.001 level. The exceptional case of Buddhists is arguably due to the poverty and difficulties in the labor market experienced by a relatively large number of Laotian and Cambodian youths. For the CILS sample as a whole, approximately 60 percent register no indicator of downward assimilation at all, while the figure drops to 51 percent among Laotians and Cambodians. Note as well the relatively high DAI score among those professing "other religions." We will return to these points below.

More telling still is the relationship of frequency of religious participation with DAI. As shown in figure 34, the association is monotonic and inverse, with more religiously active youths having lower indications of downward assimilation. The association is significant at the 0.01 level. Yet these bivariate associations do not "prove" that religion

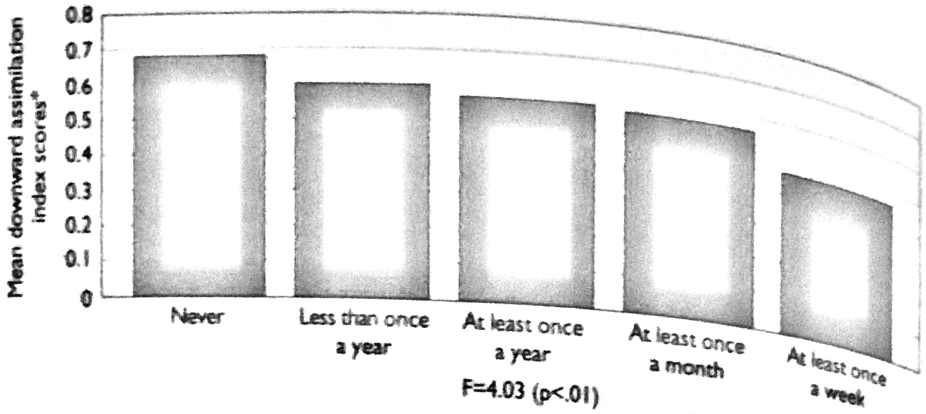

FIGURE 34. Downward assimilation by frequency of religious attendance. *Higher scores indicate higher propensity toward downward assimilation. Sample DAI mean score is .579. *Source:* CILS-III.

prevents negative assimilation because the causal effect can run, at least in some cases, in the opposite direction and because no controls have been introduced for other variables. What the evidence shows up to this point is that the two variables correlate in the way that theoretical expectations anticipate.

An examination of the individual components of the DAI also indicates a general tendency for religion to be associated with positive adaptation outcomes but with several notable exceptions. Figure 35 shows that youths professing affiliation to a standard religion tend to be arrested or incarcerated significantly less often than those declaring "other religion" or having no religion at all. Similarly, we see in figure 36 that respondents who "never" attend church are more likely to have been arrested and slightly more likely to have been incarcerated than others. But relationships of frequency of religious attendance with arrest or incarceration are not linear, nor does the relationship between early childbearing and religiosity show a clear-cut pattern, except that young women professing "no religion at all" are the most likely to become early mothers.

The anomalies we have just observed are due to the presence of other factors that also affect and thus confound these bivariate relationships. To clarify what is actually taking place, we conducted a series of statistical analyses that control for other possible predictors of adaptation outcomes. These include age, sex, length of U.S. residence, parental socioeconomic status, single-parent versus two-parent families, and national origin. All of these variables are included in models used in the past to predict major outcomes of second-generation adaptation.[48] With all of them controlled, we find that both religious affiliation and religious

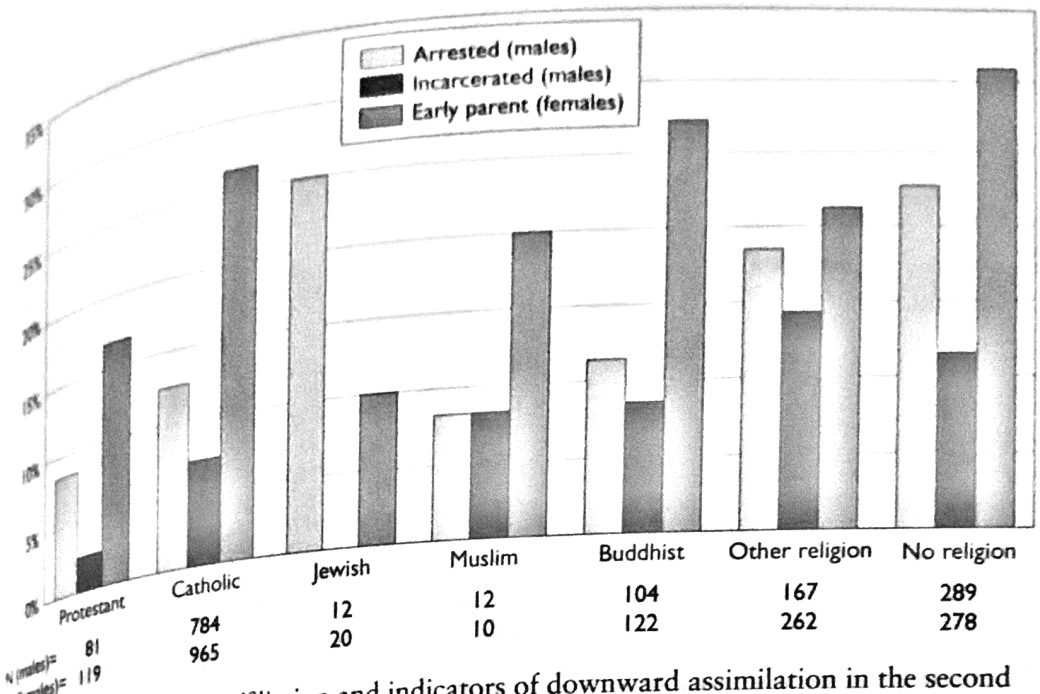

FIGURE 35. Religious affiliation and indicators of downward assimilation in the second generation. *Source:* CILS-III.

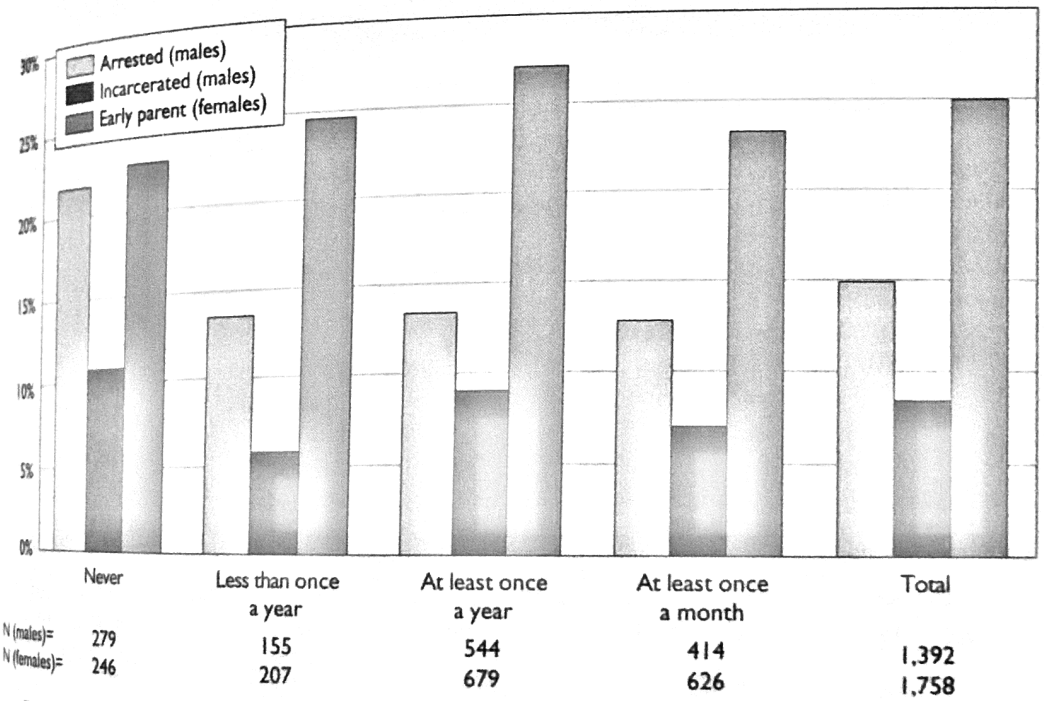

FIGURE 36. Frequency of religious attendance and indicators of downward assimilation in the second generation. *Source:* CILS-III.

TABLE 44 NET RELATIONSHIPS OF RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND PARTICIPATION WITH MAJOR ADAPTATION OUTCOMES IN THE SECOND GENERATION

	Education (years)[a]	Occupational status[b]	Downward assimilation[c]
Religious affiliation[d]			
Major religion	.311 (4.1)***	1.331 (2.3)*	−.099 (2.6)**
Other religion	−.048 n.s.	.121 n.s.	−.045 n.s.
Catholic	.276 (3.4)**	.951 (1.5)##	−.093 (2.3)*
Protestant	.389 (2.9)**	2.548 (2.4)*	−.152 (2.2)*
Jewish	.774 (2.6)**	4.533 (1.8)#	.015 n.s.
Religious participation[e]			
Attends at least once a month	.314 (3.5)***	1.845 (2.7)**	−.081 (1.9)#
Attends at least once a year	.265 (3.03)**	.893 (1.5)##	−.060 (1.5)##
Attends less than once a year	.121 n.s.	.167 n.s.	−.046 n.s.
N	3,293	2,590	3,168

SOURCE: Portes and Rumbaut, Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), surveys 1 through 3.

[a]Ordinary least squares regression coefficients controlling for age, sex, length of U.S. residence, parental socioeconomic status, single vs. two-parent families, and national origin.

[b]Ordinarily least squares regression coefficients controlling for all the preceding predictors. Dependent variable is measured in Treiman occupational prestige scores.

[c]Negative binomial regression coefficients controlling for all the preceding predictors. Dependent variable is a count of events or conditions indicating downward assimilation (arrest, incarceration, premature childbearing, etc.).

[d]"Major religion" includes Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist. "No religion" is the reference category.

[e]"Never attends" is the reference category.

***Probability of a chance relationship is less than one in one thousand.

**Probability of a chance relationship is less than one in one hundred.

*Probability of a chance relationship is less than five in one hundred.

#Probability of a chance relationship is less than ten in one hundred.

##Probability of a chance relationship is less than fifteen in one hundred.

participation have resilient and significant effects. For this analysis we included the DAI as an indicator of downward assimilation and, in addition, educational achievement and occupational status as indicators of the opposite "upward" assimilation. Results are presented in table 44.

With other predictors taken into account, being a member of an established religion is strongly and positively associated with higher educational achievement and higher occupational prestige. It is also significantly and negatively related to incidents of downward assimilation.

Based on the scales used to measure each outcome, religious affiliation increases education by a net 0.7 years, elevates occupational prestige by approximately 1.3 status points, and leads to a decline in indicators of downward assimilation of 10 percent. Note that these modest but resilient effects are not associated with affiliation to "Other Religions," which has no effect on any indicator of adaptation. Additional analyses show that the significant effects associated with "Major Religion" are due, almost entirely, to Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish affiliations. As shown in table 44, all three religions have strong and positive relationships with educational achievement and, with one exception, more modest but still significant associations with occupational status and the DAI.

The story is quite similar when we consider the net effects of religious attendance. Relative to youths who "never attend" religious services, those who do attend have a higher probability of educational and occupational achievement and a lower one of following a downward assimilation path. An important finding is that these relationships are strengthened by frequency of religious attendance. Thus, among young adults who go to church but do so fewer times than once a year, the coefficients are of the expected sign, but all are insignificant. Stronger and more consistent relationships are found among those who attend religious services at least once a month. Among them, for example, the count of incidents indicative of downward assimilation declines by a net 9 percent.

Because religious affiliation and participation and the various adaptation outcomes were measured in the same survey, it is not possible to say with certainty that one always "leads" to the other. In some cases, at least, it is possible that the causal relationship runs in the other direction. For example, educational and occupational success may lead to reinforcement of religious convictions; alternatively, a downward assimilation path may be accompanied by rejection of the religious traditions inherited from parents. At a more theoretical level this pattern of mutual influences is compatible with the role of religion outlined in figure 28: just as at the macrolevel religion *interacts* with other social forces charting the path followed by different immigrant groups, at the individual level it can also interact with various adaptation outcomes, influencing them at some moments and being influenced by them at others. We examine next the forms that such interactions can take.

RELIGION: LINEAR AND REACTIVE

In chapters 2 and 5 we saw that ethnic identities and affiliations can be linear or reactive, representing either a continuation of the cultural traditions brought from the home country or an emergent product, created by the confrontation with different and frequently harsh realities in the host society. As an integral component of immigrants' culture, religion follows a similar course. In the majority of cases, the religious beliefs and affiliations of the foreign-born are *linear.* If immigration is a "theologizing experience"[49] because of the challenges and psychological traumas that it poses, the tendency for most of those who confront them is to hold tight to what they already have—reaffirming traditional beliefs and rituals as a source of comfort and protection. For this reason immigrants and their children generally stay with the religion of their forebears.[50] This is what the pattern of religious affiliations discussed in the prior section clearly shows.

There are instances, however, where religion becomes reactive, signaling a break from the past. In the first generation this can happen because of the failure of religious traditions brought from the home country to meet immigrants' needs and the presence of more attractive alternatives. As Pierce, Spickard, and Yoo argue for the case of Japanese and Korean immigrants, many embraced Protestant Christianity, in part, because of its greater cultural affinity to their new environment but also because of its greater capacity to protect and assist them than the more passive and distant Buddhism of their ancestors.[51] While pre–World War II Japanese migrants also affiliated with and supported Buddhist temples in California, many others turned to Christianity, seeking, in various ways, to merge Christian beliefs with their strong Japanese identities. Among post-1965 Korean migrants, Pierce, Spickard, and Yoo estimate that upward of 40 percent converted to Christianity in America, which, added to the significant number of those who were already Christians in Korea, made this tradition—especially Protestantism—the dominant religion of the first generation.[52] Chinese immigrants raised in a nonreligious environment have also been reported to convert to Protestantism in sizable numbers.

Not only Eastern religions, weakly institutionalized in America, have been subject to the challenge of congregational Christianity. Evangelical Protestantism has also made deep inroads among traditionally Catholic Latin immigrants. As López notes, the hierarchical character of Catholicism and the failure of some Catholic churches actively to

respond to the emotional and economic needs of poor immigrants in the contemporary period have led them to join evangelical congregations.[53] Charismatic Catholicism emerged, in part, as a movement to counteract the appeal of the more democratic and socially cohesive Protestant churches. But even then, Catholicism failed to retain the allegiance of a significant number of Mexicans and other Latin Americans, especially in the Southwest. According to González, fully 25 percent of Hispanos in New Mexico, both native-born and immigrants, had converted to Protestantism by 1960.[54] More recent data point in the same direction, showing that greater than 20 percent of Mexican Americans have become Protestant, doubling the average among recent immigrants.[55] The pattern is consistent with the more adaptable role of evangelical churches in response to immigrant transnational concerns and activities, as we saw previously.

Reactivity in the second generation is more complex because it may include dissatisfaction with home-country religious affiliations, in the model of some first-generation parents, but also dissatisfaction with the parents themselves and attempts to move away from their traditions. This latter behavior indicates dissonant acculturation. Thus, while first-generation immigrants may or may not remain loyal to the religion of their forebears, their offspring can still explore other alternatives more consonant with their emotional needs and their attempt to create distance from the parents. The 13 percent of respondents in the CILS sample indicating affiliation with "other" religions exemplify this trend since the alternative beliefs that they profess are seldom found in the first generation. They include Rastafarians, Wiccans, and followers of assorted sects and cults, both Christian and non-Christian. Fernández-Kelly has labeled this reactive pattern "dialogical," noting that the free marketplace for religion offered by American society has provided these youngsters with the opportunity to explore alternatives other than those learned at home.[56]

That exploration comes at a cost, however, because it can sever the young from their family moorings, reducing chances for selective acculturation. In addition the sects and cults that they join seldom fulfill the traditional functions of religion, as they are accorded little respect and commonly lack the social and economic resources required for upward mobility. Still, for some young people they offer a chance to escape what they see as a stifling home environment and to gain a better understanding of themselves. Consider the case of Marina Solares López, daughter of a strict working-class Cuban family, reinterviewed in Miami at age

twenty-four as part of the CILS sample. During adolescence she repeatedly clashed with her parents because of their insistence that she be chaperoned on dates. The parents also adhered to the fierce brand of conservative anticommunism common among their ethnic group (see chapter 5). As Marina entered the university and started to study social science, she began to see things differently, distancing herself even more from her parents' political views. During the Elián González episode she publicly defended the right of the child's father to take him back to Cuba. "They almost hung me from a tree," she recalls.[57]

Her deepening sense of difference prompted her to join the Wicca sect, after a visit to Salem at the age of twenty-one. She defines Wicca as "a neo-pagan faith, very nature oriented. Celebrations take place every six weeks, following cycles of nature, changes of season." As part of her changed identity, she ceased to see herself as "Cuban," adopting the broader term "Hispanic." Her recent marriage to a Chilean reinforced her views as he also opposes the political ambiance of Miami and, though himself an agnostic, finds her adopted religion "curious and exciting." In cases such as this, parting company with the beliefs and traditions of the parents may have liberating effects.

In the prior section we saw, however, how affiliation to "other religions" does not produce the same positive associations with successful adaptation as membership in the major denominations. Part of the reason is that these "dialogical" affiliations are commonly reactive and do not contribute to selective acculturation. There is, however, another trend partially accounting for this result. Religious reactivity can also be a way to climb back after a major life setback. Among second-generation youngsters this reactive variant commonly includes "finding God" after being thrown into prison or becoming destitute because of drug addiction or single parenthood. Fernández-Kelly labels this pattern "redemptive," noting that these religious rebirths may take the form either of reembracing the parents' faith or adopting a new one.[58]

Rastafarianism among West Indians and evangelical Protestantism among Latin Americans are common vehicles for this reactive alternative. Cases of this variant identified in the CILS sample were commonly accompanied by a self-definition as "a new man" or "a new woman" and a serious attempt to rectify the errors that led to the crisis. Thus, Johnny Carballo, the twenty-three-year-old son of a Mariel Cuban refugee, culminated a highly successful career as a drug dealer in Miami with a stiff five-year sentence for trafficking. He served three years in an adult correctional facility where he met Ramón Ruiz, a lifer, who took

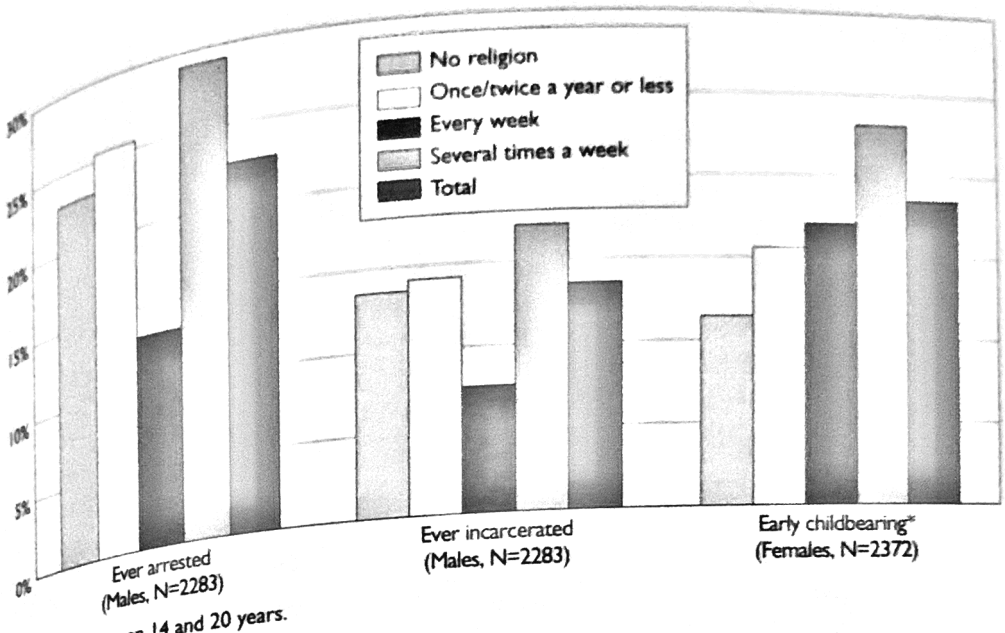

FIGURE 37. Frequency of religious attendance and indicators of downward assimilation in Los Angeles. *Source:* Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA).

him under his wing. From Ruiz, Johnny said, he learned "family values, then self-respect." He came from prison a deeply changed, religious man. He now does electrical work and brings home $800 a week, a far cry from the $8,000 or more he grossed as a dealer. But he says he is now on the right path guided by his new faith.[59]

The recent Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) survey, described in chapter 6, yields some revealing insights on this form of reactive religion.[60] Though the survey is not strictly limited to the 1.5 and second generations, as it also includes native-parentage youths, the relationship between frequency of religious participation and indicators of downward assimilation is telling. For the most part the association is modestly negative, with greater frequency of participation associated with better outcomes. But the association reverses dramatically when we consider the *most frequent* category of attendance: several times a week.

As shown in figure 37, episodes of arrest and incarceration were most frequent for males who go to church or temple *several times a week* rather than for those who never attend. The same is true for early childbearing among females. It is implausible that a fervent religious life would lead to early jail or premature parenthood; it is far more likely that such serious setbacks in the path to successful adaptation would

lead young people to find solace and guidance in religion. Evangelical Protestantism and, to a lesser extent, Charismatic Catholicism plus non-orthodox religions are the favored choices for such "redemptive" conversions. They offer the promise of a "second chance" for those who, in one way or another, have deviated from an upward path.

A second trend uncovered by the IIMMLA survey is that, along with another positive association between dropping out of high school and the most fervent religiosity, the lowest dropout levels and highest levels of college graduation were found among young persons' professing no religion. The significant presence of Chinese and other Asians in this Los Angeles sample is largely responsible for this finding. Among the Chinese the proportion of college graduates is a remarkable 71 percent and among other Asians 46.3 percent; these groups are also heavily represented, as in CILS, in the category declaring "no religion."

Linear beliefs and traditions brought from the home country are those more commonly featured in canonical accounts of the functions of religion for immigrant adaptation. But first-generation reactive affiliations, like those adopted by Korean, Mexican, and Central American Protestant converts, can be every bit as capable of providing the "three Rs" and are indeed commonly embraced for this reason. Second-generation reactive religiosity compromises selective acculturation when it is pitted against the beliefs and norms of parents, although it may offer to some the chance to find the meaning and direction that, for some reason, they do not find at home. Last, downward assimilation may be *positively* associated with religious beliefs and practices when the latter become a means of salvation for those who have suffered serious reverses early in life. In such cases the causal order of the expected relationship between religion and second-generation adaptation is reversed. These variants are the reason the association between religious affiliation and positive adaptation, while significant, is modest and registers several exceptions. Figure 38 summarizes the various types of situations leading to this conclusion.

In sum, historical and contemporary case studies and our own data show that religion continues to be an enduring presence in the lives of most immigrant communities and that its influence persists across generations. The evidence warns, however, against too uniform or too celebratory an account of the role of religion. Not all migrants or their children follow the traditional path of embracing the beliefs of their ancestors and using them as a means for mutual support and a platform for upward

	Linear	Reactive
First Generation	Irish and Italian immigrants before World War I; most Catholic. Buddhist, and Muslim immigrants today	Korean and Chinese converts to mainstream Protestant churches; Mexican and Central American converts to Evangelical sects
Second Generation	Cuban, Colombian, and other U.S.-born Latin Catholics; Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and other U.S.-born Asian Buddhists	Converts to Wicca and other cults; converts to Rastafarianism and Evangelical sects after episodes of downward assimilation

FIGURE 38. Religion and its types across generations.

mobility. Alternatives exist, individually and collectively, that undermine the prediction of a unilinear relationship and point to the complexity of the interactions between religion and immigration in the real world.

THE MEXICAN EXPERIENCE

Mexican immigration, as we know, is by far the largest and most enduring foreign inflow into the United States. It has been influenced, at every step, by the presence of religion.[61] This is evident in the fervent prayers addressed by migrants to the Virgin Mary prior to crossing the border clandestinely. In the collection of immigrant *retablos* assembled by Durand and Massey, we find moving instances of the trek to *El Norte* being indeed a "theologizing" experience. These paintings relate the tribulations of migrating peasants on crossing the border and pay homage to the virgin or patron saint who saved them:

> On this date, I dedicate the present *retablo* to the Virgin of San Juan for the clear miracle she granted me on the date June 5, 1986. Re-emigrating to the United States with three friends, the water we were carrying ran out. Traveling in such great heat and with such thirst, and without hope of drinking even a little water, we invoked the Virgin of San Juan and were able to arrive at our destination and return to our homeland in health. In eternal gratitude to the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos. *Braulio Barrientos.*[62]

> We give thanks to the Virgin of San Juan for having saved us from the People of the Migration (the Border Patrol) on our way to Los Angeles. From León, Guanajuato. *María Esther Tapia Picón.*[63]

Recall, as well, the words of the municipal president of Xochihuehuetlán concerning the projects funded with immigrant contributions from the United States. First and foremost in these migrants' minds was San Diego de Alcalá, the local patron saint, whose church and sanctuary had fallen into serious disrepair. These words find echoes in hundreds of similar migrant-sending communities.

However, the Mexican experience simultaneously departs from the canonical "three Rs" functions of religion for immigrant adaptation. Mexican American sociologist David López minces no words: "The Church may or may not be successful in its attempt to secure the loyalty of its flock but, in contrast to the religious institutions that serve many other contemporary immigrant communities, it is contributing little to the integration and upward mobility of Mexican and other Latino immigrants in the United States."[64]

López contrasts the Italian immigrant experience of a century ago with that of Mexicans today. Despite the initial resistance of the Irish-dominated hierarchy, Italians were eventually incorporated into the Catholic mobility machine of elementary and high schools, universities, and hospitals. Mexicans, on the other hand, were largely excluded from these vital services and were never sufficiently integrated into the priesthood or the church's hierarchy. Their Catholicism continued to adhere to the traditional practices of processions, masses, and prayers, but without connecting effectively to the church-linked secular initiatives that provided a "lift" in the past for ascent into American society. If anything, transfers went the other way as the traditional religiosity of migrants in the United States subsidized the upkeep of Catholic parishes and schools in Mexico.[65]

Reasons for this outcome are a complex story that has to do with the historical development of the Catholic Church in the United States and its eventual encounter with masses of migrants coming from an alternative Spanish tradition. The mobility machine that the Irish clergy constructed for its own group and, later, for southern and eastern Europeans was centered in the East. It was there, and subsequently in the Midwest, that the system of national parishes and parochial schools evolved to counter the hostility and disadvantages of living in a Protestant-dominated society. While the stern brand of Catholicism preached by the Irish clergy had difficulty absorbing the folk beliefs and superstitions of Italian and Polish peasants, it eventually prevailed by taking advantage of several key factors. These included the diminishing cultural hold of home countries, an ocean away, the Irish clergy's own dominance in

places of settlement, and the great "bargain" that it offered to newcomers and their offspring in terms of education and health.

As the American church moved to the Southwest, accompanying the displacement of its European ethnic flock, it came face-to-face with a very different religious tradition. The Catholic Church was hegemonic in Mexico and, hence, did not have to provide a range of services to compete effectively with other religions. Mexican Catholicism adhered closely to the Spanish traditions of hierarchy, strict separation between the clergy and the laity, and spirituality. At the popular level, Catholic teachings had mixed thoroughly with pre-Columbian traditions giving rise to a folk religiosity of quasi-magic rituals, patron saints from whom favors were demanded and repaid, and earthly processions and festivities. In its quest for respectability in a Protestant world, the American church could not very well accept the religious traditions of these migrants. In its efforts to absorb them, as it had done previously with Italian and Polish peasants, it ran into two serious barriers.

First, the short distance from places of origin made Mexican migration highly reversible. Without an ocean to cross, Mexicans could go back and forth and, in the process, replenish their traditions. They did not need an accented Irish priest to succor them when they could always return to their reliable hometown *cura*. Second, Mexican migration into the Southwest and later the Midwest never ended. World War I, followed by restrictive laws, the Great Depression, and World War II, effectively terminated mass Italian and Polish migration and thus reduced contact with places of origin, facilitating the acculturation of migrants into American practices. No such things happened to the Mexican flow, which continued uninterrupted for more than a century. Not only could migrants return home with relative ease, but those who stayed were constantly receiving fresh arrivals who nourished and reinforced their religious traditions.

The end result of this clash was a stalemate between two ways of being Catholic in the Southwest. The diocesan system of the region was inherited from Spanish colonial days, and the Mexican church never relinquished its hold on members of its flock "returning" to where they had belonged prior to the American military takeover. In turn, the Irish American church regarded its southern counterpart with barely disguised condescension and treated its followers accordingly: "There is a 'Secretariat of Hispanic Affairs' within the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, but its Pastoral Plan, dating from 1987, reads like a missionary

plan to evangelize some exotic tribe, not the largest and oldest group in the American Catholic Church."[66]

The stalemate, coupled with the continuous back-and-forth movement across the border, had a dramatic outcome: the mass underserving of Mexican American youths by the Catholic educational system. There are no precise figures for the proportion of Irish American or Italian American children who attended Catholic schools, but if we are to believe most historical accounts, this path became, at some point, the norm for the second and third generations. No such thing happened to Mexican Americans. The system of parochial schools that served Catholic European ethnics so well was only feebly extended to the Southwest and then mainly to serve the needs of the Irish and other European-origin Catholics who had migrated to the region. Mexicans were a thing apart. According to López, even today, of the 2.6 million students who attend Catholic elementary and secondary schools nationwide, about two-thirds do so in the East and Great Lake regions. Only about 18 percent are found in the entire "West," which includes all of California and the Southwest.[67]

Thus, the largest immigrant group in the nation and the one that forms, along with its descendants, the fastest growing component of the American Catholic population, has not had access, yesterday or today, to the mobility escalator that served other Catholic groups in the past. In the contemporary period, the Mexican experience can be fruitfully contrasted with that of Cuban exiles who arrived in South Florida in the 1960s and 1970s. Cuban parishes were promptly established in the archdiocese of Miami, and Cuban priests and bishops quickly found their way into the U.S. Catholic hierarchy. Schools run by such orders as the Jesuits and the Christian and Marist brothers were transplanted from Cuba to educate the offspring of the exiled middle-class population. As shown in the previous chapter, as well as in a number of prior studies, this education yielded impressive results in terms of fostering both academic excellence and educational achievement, as well as preserving bilingual fluency among Cuban Americans.[68]

Nationwide, about one-quarter of children of Catholic families attend parochial schools today, while children of Latin American (mostly Mexican) families do so at the rate of only 4 percent. This figure is probably a high estimate for the number of Mexican American children who attend Catholic schools in Los Angeles, the largest archdiocese in the nation, whose membership of Mexican origin now exceeds 50 percent.[69] While the Catholic hierarchy of that city has spoken repeatedly

in defense of immigrant rights and while American bishops nationwide have given unmistakable signs that they are aware of the decisive role of Latin American immigrants and their descendants for the future of the church, that awareness has translated so far into mostly symbolic gestures. The resources and services made available by Protestant churches to foster the educational success of immigrant groups, such as Koreans, have been largely absent from Catholic parishes serving the Mexican American population. This absence may have something to do with the loss of close to a quarter of this population that has left the church to embrace various Protestant denominations.

The American Catholic Church was built by immigrants and consolidated its institutional strength by promoting their integration and social mobility. Its future may well depend on overcoming the historic stalemate with the Mexican Catholic tradition and becoming, once again, an effective agent in the incorporation of these migrants into American society. The growth and consolidation of particular churches in the American religious marketplace have been closely linked, yesterday and today, to their success in confronting the needs of the newest members of society and opening doors for their adaptation and success in a foreign land. While masses in Spanish, like the colorful Sunday rituals at St. Rose of Lima, do attract large numbers of Latin immigrants, they will not suffice by themselves to retain these migrants' loyalty to the Catholic tradition.

ISLAM

Most contemporary writings on religion and immigration in the United States stop short of the question of what to do with the new player in the religious marketplace—the growing presence of immigrants from Muslim countries. In part, this reluctance is because of the relatively small number of such migrants that, according to the best estimates, represent well under 1 percent of the adult American population; in part, because of the dearth of empirical studies about it; and, in part, because of the sheer difficulty of tackling the issue. For unlike the canonical story of linear religious affiliation leading to respectability and eventual upward mobility, the rise of mosques and the presence of a population that prays in them has been viewed with alarm, if not downright hostility, by a large part of the surrounding population.[70]

One could say that the same was true of Catholic churches and Jewish synagogues at the time that they were originally established in

America, but there is a vital difference. Neither of these religions had a history of frontal confrontation with Christianity, where the fate of both depended on the outcome of the clash. At least since the ninth century, when the conquest of the Mediterranean by the "Saracens" encapsulated the Christian world and emptied its cities, the ups and downs of this confrontation have marked the course of much of world history.[71] No wonder, then, that conservative Western intellectuals describe recent events as "the Clash of Civilizations" and that the most radicalized Muslims denounce the Western presence in the Middle East as "the new Crusades."[72]

Public hostility toward Islam reached a climax after the coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001 and has remained at a high pitch ever since, in the wake of new bomb attacks in various parts of the Western world and the ever-present threat of new ones in the United States.[73] In the public mind *Arab, Muslim,* and *terrorist* have become almost synonymous, without making allowance for the facts that most of the Arab American population is not Muslim (only about a quarter is; the rest are mostly Christian); not all Muslims are Arabs (seven of the eight countries with the largest Muslim populations in the world, from Indonesia to Iran, are not Arab; in the United States more Muslims originate in Asia than in Middle East countries); and only a small minority of either group are fundamentalists. Even the federal government has contributed to this confusion by targeting the Arab population as a whole for special surveillance and by restricting entries from Middle Eastern countries as part of the effort to defend the nation against terrorist attacks.[74]

In the long run the question is what policies can best address the integration of the Muslim immigrant population into American society. The question is complicated by the global character of this religion and its effects. Like other world religions, Islam is a *multinational* institution that, in turn, supports the *transnational* grassroots activities of its members. Unfortunately, the latter include not only those of the vast majority of peaceful believers but also the conspiracies of a fundamentalist minority bent on radical opposition to the United States and the West. Islamic fundamentalism is driven by a profound sense of *ressentiment* for the historic defeats suffered by this civilization and its relegation to a marginal place in the evolution of the modern world system.[75] The trend culminated in the creation of the State of Israel by the summary expedient of subordinating or expelling the Palestinian population from the area. It is safe to say that this historic development triggered the rise of

Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East and that the global threat that it now poses will not disappear until some form of peaceful accommodation is found between the Jewish state and its Arab neighbors.

For the settled Muslim American population, the central issue is whether affiliation with this religion will yield the same benefits that Catholics and Jews reaped in the past or whether it will be a source of continuous conflict and marginalization. The typology of linear and reactive religion in figure 38 becomes problematic in the case of Islam. On the one hand, linear adherence to the religion of migrant parents may perpetuate estrangement from the American social mainstream, especially if parents subscribe to the more oppositional and resentful strand of this religious ideology. All evidence indicates that this linear pattern is quite exceptional. On the other hand, second-generation Muslims may still react to perceived discrimination and lack of mobility opportunities by embracing the preachings of radicalized imams. This trend has been painfully exemplified by the repeated presence of second-generation Muslims in terrorist attacks in Great Britain, France, and the United States. The 2013 Boston Marathon bombings were staged by two second-generation Chechens after undergoing precisely such a process of radicalization.[76]

Complicating matters further is that Islam, unlike Christian denominations, is nonhierarchical and noncongregational. Mosques are autonomous from each other, each following its own particular brand of the faith. In addition there is no requirement for believers to "go to mosque" (as in "going to church") at set times. As Ann Chih Lin and Amaney Jamal note, "Islam is a non-institutional faith. . . . The rituals of faith are lived through daily life and personal practice. . . . For many Muslims then, mosques do not play the organizing role that churches played for American Catholics . . . nor do other organizations substitute."[77] This decentralized, fragmented character of the religion makes it difficult for government authorities and mainstream social institutions to engage with Islam and explore alternative means of accommodation and integration. While many imams and individual believers may readily respond to these overtures, there is no overarching authority that would enjoin others to follow suit.

On the positive side, Islam is a monotheistic religion with considerable affinities to Judaism and Christianity. As Alba and Raboteau note, all of these religions partake of the Abrahamic Tree, and they share prophetic traditions, with Jesus Christ being recognized as a prophet by Islam.[78] In addition, there is the encouraging precedent of other non-Christian

religions, such as Judaism, that after a difficult start did manage to gain legitimacy and integrate followers successfully into American society. Jen'nan Read notes that, in the American context, many mosques have reorganized themselves to be more like churches, providing a range of services for Muslims. The Islamic Society of Greater Houston, for example, founded in 1968, developed the first U.S. zonal service system for Arabs and non-Arabs alike in this metropolitan area.[79]

In addition, and unlike the impoverished Muslim population in Great Britain and Continental Europe, American Muslims have done rather well economically. According to Ishan Baghy, the average mosquegoer in the United States is a married man with children who has a bachelor's degree or higher and earns about $74,000 a year.[80] If this estimate is accurate, it would place the Muslim American population at a considerable distance from the unemployed and angry young men so common in Europe today. As for Arab Americans, the vast majority are secular, and they are also doing rather well. As of 2010 their median household income was $59,000, and they had a high intermarriage rate with other Americans, suggesting a steady process of integration. Even in this favorable situation, a minority of second-generation Muslims can become disaffected and radicalized, as demonstrated by the Boston Marathon bombings and earlier events. The situation at present may be characterized as a tense impasse.

As Lin and Jamal point out, organizations such as the Council on Arab-American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the Arab American Institute (AAI), and the American Muslim Council (AMC) have been doing all they can to foster the process of integration and seek social legitimacy for their constituents. As other religious minorities before them, different Muslim sects need to find strength in numbers and are ironing out internal differences, a process that seems to be gradually homogenizing them into a distinct American identity. Politicians of Arab origin such as James Zogby, leader of the Arab American Institute, and Spencer Abraham, former U.S. senator from Michigan, have sought to speak for the minority as a whole, defending its common interests.[81]

American Muslim and Arab organizations are doing their best to show their strong opposition to terror and, by the same token, establish their legitimate place in the American religious mosaic. In July 2005, the Fiqh (religious jurisprudence) Council of North America (FCNA) issued a *fatwa*, or religious ruling, against terrorism and extremism that was promptly endorsed by more than one hundred American Muslim

groups. At a press conference to present the text of the fatwa, the executive director of CAIR, Nihad Awad, introduced it as follows: "United, we can confront the terrorists and frustrate their goal of sparking an apocalyptic war between faiths and civilizations. . . . The presence here today of American Muslim leaders indicates the willingness of our community to strengthen national security and to work with policymakers to gain victory over this international menace to humanity."[82]

It takes only the actions of a few extremists to discredit the constructive efforts of the majority and question the viability of Muslim integration into American society. It is vital, in order to prevent this outcome, that Muslim American organizations reinforce their cooperation with authorities and continue to delegitimize terrorist acts conducted in the name of their religion. On their part, American institutions and the public at large must refrain from a blanket imputation of blame, lest such a stance turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The best long-term course of action toward Islam is the one that has yielded so many instances of successful incorporation to America in the past: respect for the rights of all in the marketplace of ideas and a hands-off policy from all *peaceful* religious institutions and groups, allowing them to seek the best course of adaptation for themselves and their members. No need to command young Muslim girls to take off their head scarves. Given due time, those scarves will come off or be replaced by others worn with a distinctive American flair. Despite the serious challenge posed by fundamentalist Islam, there is no necessary "clash of civilizations" between followers of the different Abrahamic faiths. As in the past, the strength of American civil and legal institutions can be expected to prevail, adding followers of the Qur'an to the country's religious mosaic.

CONCLUSION

In her study of the role of the Catholic Church in the adaptation process of Haitian immigrants, Margarita Mooney calls attention to the decisive role of sociopolitical contexts in determining the scope and effects of church action. Haitians come from the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. As we saw in chapter 4, they are heavily discriminated against by the native population because of their race and poverty and thus need considerable external assistance. Since Haitians are overwhelmingly Catholic, the church is in a privileged position to extend a helping hand and, in the process, reinforce their faith. Yet the extent to

which it is able to do so varies greatly with the culture and politics of the host nation.[83]

In France, for example, the national state does not support distinct ethnic cultures and seeks to incorporate immigrants into a homogeneous French population as quickly as possible. The state does provide education and social services on a universalistic basis but opposes channeling this assistance through religious charities because of its secular ideology and the strict separation between church and state. Accordingly, Catholic support for the Haitian immigrant community is much more restricted in scope, taking the form of celebration of a few Masses in their language (Creole) at a designated parish. Since national culture and state policy do not support the emergence of distinct ethnic groups, the church is heavily constrained in promoting the adaptation of Haitians through the creation of vibrant ethnic institutions: "Even though Haitians in Paris have similar cultural resources as Haitians in other cities . . . these cultural resources have not encountered much institutional support, either from the Catholic Church or the French state. Although family and social networks support Haitian migrants' initial settlement, several contextual factors make it difficult for Haitians to adapt by relying on ethnic networks and institutions. . . . Few material and financial resources have moved from the Catholic Church in France to Haitians."[84]

In contrast, the more tolerant attitude of the American state toward most ethnic groups, plus its willingness to channel social assistance through religious charities, creates a much more favorable environment for effective church action. As we have seen in the case of Mexicans, such determination may be compromised by other contextual factors, but none of these existed in the case of Haitians. Relative to Mexicans, Haitians are a small minority; the American territories to which they migrate were never part of their nation; and they are cut off from that nation by the sea. In Miami, Catholic leaders saw the need and the opportunity. Strongly supported by the archbishop, they set out to create a wide array of Haitian ethnic institutions that went well beyond those of a purely religious character. A Creole-speaking priest, Father Thomas Wenski, was at the heart of this enterprise, persuading the archdiocese of Miami to cede a ten-acre former Catholic school and convent in the midst of Little Haiti for the creation of what, in fact, became a national parish, Notre Dame d'Haiti: "For Haitians in Miami who encounter stringent race and language boundaries, Notre Dame has become a cultural resource to re-create their ethnic identity. . . . Even

those who regularly attend another church refer to Notre Dame as 'the heart of the Haitian community' and 'our home in Miami.' Beyond its religious functions, Notre Dame has become the symbol of Haitian culture and a welcoming place for Miami's most discriminated group."[85]

Like Mary, Queen of Vietnam, in New Orleans, Notre Dame d'Haiti fully meets Hirschman's description of the functions that religion can play in the adaptation and progress of new immigrant groups. Not incidentally, it also shows that, despite the apparent demise of Catholic schools as a mobility vehicle for these minorities, the church can still play a vital role in promoting their successful incorporation. The extremely high levels of Catholic affiliation and church attendance detected among second-generation Haitian youths in Miami by the CILS survey can now be traced to the creation of this national parish and its effective promotion of linear religious devotion and cultural pride.

Mooney's comparative study returns us to the theme sounded at the start of this chapter: religion seldom triggers international migration movements in the contemporary world, and it does not determine their modes of political and social incorporation. But it interacts with them, giving rise to novel and important consequences. The best known of these—described at length in the classic literature on European immigrants and exemplified today by Catholic Vietnamese and Haitians, Laotian Buddhists, and Indian Hindus—is the strengthening of the coethnic community drawing on the transplantation of the religious traditions brought from home. But other variants exist, as exemplified by Mexican and Central American Protestant converts, by redemptive evangelicalism following episodes of downward assimilation, and by the distinct and still-unfolding experience of Islam.[86]

Since religion has proven to be one of the most resilient elements of immigrants' culture across generations, the beliefs and organized activities carried on by different foreign groups in this realm can be expected to be a trademark of their long-term incorporation into American society and, simultaneously, a key force guiding the process. With a majority Catholic immigrant population, the church faces a challenge that has been met successfully in the past but that eludes it in important ways at present. Asian Protestants, Buddhists, and Hindus will continue adding diversity to the American religious marketplace, fostering community and socioeconomic mobility in seemingly unproblematic ways. Efforts to stamp out Islam will fail, given the resilience of all religions, and will probably encourage the very same reactions that they seek to suppress. The only long-term solution, despite present views to the contrary, will

be to add the small Muslim minority and its mosques and institutions to the religious marketplace, on condition of mutual respect for the interplay of ideas. As evidence cited in this chapter indicates, this process appears to be on its way and can be expected to continue unless blocked by homegrown believers in the "clash of civilizations"—fanatics on the other side.