



The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia

Elizabeth E. Brusco

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The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia Elizabeth E. Brusco Protestant evangelicalism has spread rapidly in Latin America at the same time that foreign corporations have taken hold of economies there. These concurrent developments have led some observers to view this religious movement as a means of melding converts into a disciplined work force for foreign capitalists rather than as a reflection of conscious individual choices made for a variety of personal, as well as economic, reasons.

In this pioneering study, Elizabeth Brusco challenges such assumptions and explores the intra-household motivations for evangelical conversion in Colombia. She shows how the asceticism required of evangelicals (no drinking, smoking, or extramarital sexual relations are allowed) redirects male income back into the household, thereby raising the living standard of women and children. This benefit helps explain the appeal of evangelicalism for women and questions the traditional assumption that organized religion always disadvantages women.

Brusco also demonstrates how evangelicalism appeals to men by offering an alternative to the more dysfunctional aspects of machismo. Case studies add a fascinating human dimension to her findings. With the challenges this book poses to conventional wisdom about economic, gender, and religious behavior, it will be important reading for a wide audience in anthropology, women's studies, economics, and religion. For all students of Latin America, it offers thoughtful new perspectives on a major, grass-roots agent of social change.

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