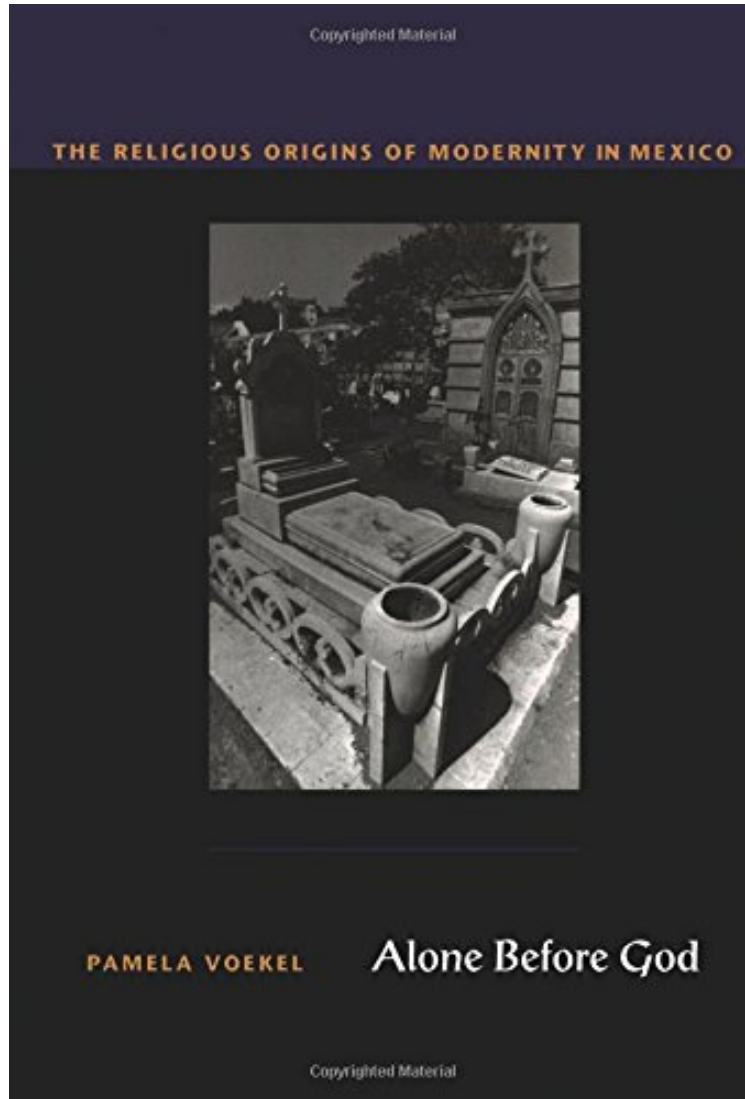


[Online library] Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico

Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico

Pamela Voekel

*audiobook / *ebooks / Download PDF / ePub / DOC*



 Download

 Read Online

#1637190 in Books Duke University Press Books 2002-08-30 2002-08-30 Original language: English PDF # 1
9.00 x .86 x 6.13l, 1.28 #File Name: 0822329433344 pages | File size: 72.Mb

Pamela Voekel : Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Flim-flam a la MexicanaBy Sam DiegoFor certain historians, the intensive study of nineteenth and twentieth century topics would appear to mask a subconscious hostility to its reality--and a cloying desire that it be different from what it was. An inclination rather like this would appear to have animated this curious work on the history of the Roman Catholic Church's relations with elites and masses in Mexico. The author

posits the existence in the 1800s of an unexpectedly liberal Catholicism that promoted an inclusive, warm-handed relation with Mexicans high and low. This bizarre assertion challenges, but never comes close to overthrowing, the standard depiction of the Church, which holds that the Mexican clergy defended a bastion of reaction unequalled even by Rome itself. To argue otherwise would seem to offer a novel contribution to the topic, and it is thus unfortunate that the author fails to make her case. Sadly, it is not difficult to see why. Whenever the empirical evidence cannot be twisted into supporting her broader thesis, Voekel takes refuge in the many *culs-de-sac* of postcolonial jargon, an approach that will perhaps dazzle some readers but will confuse everyone else. In the end, her effort to project the reforming zeal of Vatican II back into the early 1800s, and to find a sweet-soulfulness among ultramontane Mexican Catholics looks like wishful thinking. And it is more than simply far-fetched: it is sad. It strips from adamantine reactionaries all the hardness that they strove so hard to construct in themselves, and seeks to replace their ardor with an unconvincing moderation. The Mexican Catholics of the nineteenth century would never recognize themselves in such a depiction, and no amount of doublespeak --and de-contextualized archival citations-- can turn their character from obsidian black to powder-puff blue.³ of 4 people found the following review helpful. An engaging and much needed work on Bourbon Colonial Society

By A Customer

Voekel uses crisp prose and clever nuance to craft a much needed book on piety and modernity in Bourbon Mexico. The importance of the Bourbon era is underdeveloped or misunderstood in strictly economic terms by current authors, and Voekel shatters that type. The author takes a mundane item like burial reform and creates a sharp, well documented and clear argument about piety, reform, modernity and power. Five well-deserved stars to Voekel for this work

Focusing on cemetery burials in late-eighteenth-century Mexico, *Alone Before God* provides a window onto the contested origins of modernity in Mexico. By investigating the religious and political debates surrounding the initiative to transfer the burials of prominent citizens from urban to suburban cemeteries, Pamela Voekel challenges the characterization of Catholicism in Mexico as an intractable and monolithic institution that had to be forcibly dragged into the modern world. Drawing on the archival research of wills, public documents, and other texts from late-colonial and early-republican Mexico, Voekel describes the marked scaling-down of the pomp and display that had characterized baroque Catholic burials and the various devices through which citizens sought to safeguard their souls in the afterlife. In lieu of these baroque practices, the new enlightened Catholics, claims Voekel, expressed a spiritually and hygienically motivated preference for extremely simple burial ceremonies, for burial outside the confines of the church building, and for leaving their earthly goods to charity. Claiming that these changes mirrored a larger shift from an external, corporate Catholicism to a more interior piety, she demonstrates how this new form of Catholicism helped to initiate a cultural and epistemic shift that placed the individual at the center of knowledge. Breaking with the traditional historiography to argue that Mexican liberalism had deeply religious roots, *Alone Before God* will be of interest to specialists in Latin American history, modernity, and religion.

This arresting study couples substance and style to transform what could have been a dry treatise on internecine clerical debates about dogma and inner spirituality into an intriguing and lively examination of the character of Mexican modernity sure to complicate our understandings of nineteenth-century liberal thought. Allen Wells, Bowdoin College