

be accomplished only through a spiritual renewal of Catholicism, along lines of Chilean Christian Democracy. Necessary preconditions for the Church's renewal include increasing the number of the religious, greater participation of the laity, and developing alternatives to the existing ineffectual parish organization. Even here the Church's obligation transcends the spiritual, for the authors justify its role in Latin America only if it is predicated upon a dynamic social action. The assessment of the Church is one of cautious concern; it is of substance and value to the reader.

For the Latin Americanist, sorely besieged by "crisis" books and journalistic accounts of revolutionary Latin America, this study provides a brief respite. Clearly written and ably translated, it is a thoughtful and provocative evaluation of change in Latin America, its origins and course of development. Its stress upon the religious nature of Latin America provides an insight into a relatively limited area of contemporary Latin American writing. In the words of the authors, from pre-Columbian times "the society and culture of Latin America have been impregnated with religious values and to ignore this fact deliberately would be to throw away a most valuable key to the understanding of the continent" (p. 76).

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The Law of the Americas. An Introduction to the Legal Systems of the American Republics. By HENRY P. DE VRIES and JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ-NOVÁS. Dobbs Ferry, N. Y., 1965. Oceana Publications, Inc. for the Parker School of Foreign and Comparative Law and the Inter-American Law Center, Columbia University. Tables. Appendices. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 339. \$15.00.

This is an excellent book but a surprising one in that there seems to be considerable discrepancy between title and contents. If the main title means "The Law of the American System," it is correctly descriptive, and the book is invaluable both as a historical review and as an analysis of the present network of treaties and international organizations that link the American republics with each other. But the subtitle, "An Introduction to the Legal Systems of the American Republics," led this reviewer to hope that here at last was the textbook we have all been wanting for our courses in Latin American law. It is not; the conclusion of the authors is that "The reader who plans to continue more specialized studies in Latin American law must take into account that beyond the point of generalization reached herein, the law in each country in the area must be

considered separately. In Latin America, the nation is still the largest effective unit of research and study in law and related social sciences."

The authors take us, as visitors, up and down the streets of the Inter-American community, describing the town council, the police and fire departments, and the P.T.A. They tell us a good deal about where the residents came from and how they think about things and why. This is history and sociology rather than law, but it is first-rate history and sociology, the best part of the book. It is penetrating and revealing and sometimes expressed in terms that Latin Americans ordinarily use only with each other, and most over-timorous North Americans are afraid to use at all. The authors tell us how the family in one house orders its relationships with the families in other houses. They let us look at the outsides of the houses and open the doors of one or two of them to let us see the general construction (e.g., "Techniques of Judicial Decision"). But when we are ready to go in and sit down for the promised "introduction" to how the families themselves *live*, they say that each family is so different from the others that there is not much point in studying any one as a sample of the whole.

There is much that is valid in this view. But the authors themselves have said: "In the United States there is a consciousness of underlying identity in law despite the existence of fifty differing bodies of private law. In the Hispanic-American countries too, a common background of law-language, legal concepts, and legal history, justifies a unified broad approach" (p. xii).

Professors de Vries and Rodríguez-Novás have given us an excellent discussion of Latin American legal history, sociology, public international law, and a little bit of constitutional law and judicial procedure. Perhaps we should urge them next to turn the same skill and insight specifically to the field of Latin American private law. Some of us sense the same "consciousness of underlying identity" there also and could want nobody better to analyze it for us and for our students.

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Diplomatic Asylum. Legal Norms and Political Reality in Latin American Relations. By C. NEALE RONNING. The Hague, 1965. Martinus Nijhoff. Appendices. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 242. Paper.

The question of diplomatic asylum, although from some points of view rather technical, is nevertheless on occasion a significant one for