
Examinations of church organizations and their involvement in Latin American politics are increasingly commonplace. Nevertheless, much of the attention to date has been paid to developments in but a few key national settings—most notably Nicaragua, Chile, and Brazil. Miguel Carter’s treatment of the lesser-known but nonetheless intriguing history of conflictive church-state relations in Paraguay therefore provides a welcome addition to the literature.

In terms of presentation, the work strongly resembles an advanced-degree thesis, but this does not detract from its overall worth. The book opens with a theoretical consideration of the relationship between religion, society, and politics, with particular emphasis on Roman Catholicism, Latin America’s predominant faith. Subsequently, it traces the rise and sociopolitical dimensions of both the Paraguayan church and the repressive and enduring Stroessner regime. It gives a detailed and extremely useful account of the regime’s demise in the late 1980s and of the specific role of the institutional church in achieving this end. The book concludes with a consideration of the church’s ongoing role in Paraguay’s transition to democracy.

While the work’s empirical content is excellent, the connection between theory and data is relatively weak. The opening theoretical review is surprisingly circumscribed, given the wealth of observation and analysis now published in this area. Also interesting is that, while leaning theoretically toward a dialectical conception of church-society relations (à la Maduro and Gramsci), Carter slips comfortably (and early) into a rather straightforward, one-dimensional, institutional analysis of church rhetoric and action, focusing on hierarchical planning and initiative. Indeed, he does not even give us any real assessment of those key social, political, or religious factors that moved the bishops to act precisely as they did and when they did.

Besides enhancing the overall thesis, greater care in linking theory to data would have certainly helped integrate the study’s findings into the larger literature. As it stands, however, the book is must reading for serious students of churches and politics in Latin America.

W. E. HEWITT, University of Western Ontario


This tightly written, sharply focused book constitutes another step in redefining the political scene in early national Mexico. Using quantitative methods and a prosopographical approach, Donald Stevens examines the backgrounds and