

therefore stand out. Ecuador, Brazil, and the Central American states also are discussed at some length. The treatment elsewhere is briefer. Unfortunately, the text contains an uncommonly large number of factual errors, some of which lead in turn to questionable interpretations. This is particularly true for Venezuela, Rafael Caldera, and COPEI; for Costa Rican politics and the role of both Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia and his son Calderón Fournier; and for Ecuador, especially as concerns León Febres Cordero and the Partido Social Cristiano. All of this proves frustrating to the reader who knows these countries well. Those who are particularly concerned with Christian Democratic philosophy and politics in Latin America, then, should read the book with considerable caution. A far more insightful work, although no longer current, is Edward J. Williams' *Latin American Christian Democratic Parties* (1967).

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Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Evolution? By PAUL E. SIGMUND. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. Appendixes. Notes. Indexes. viii, 257 pp. Paper. \$15.95.

The central argument of Paul Sigmund's book is that since its birth, Latin American liberation theology has developed two main political positions, a democratic and an undemocratic one; and that it must now choose between them. From its inception in the late 1960s until the mid-1970s, Sigmund argues, liberation theology was marked by uncritical devotion to socialism and revolution, and hence was inherently undemocratic. In contrast, since the mid-1970s, in response to moderate critics, some liberation theologians have come to emphasize "grassroots populism," associated with the Christian Base Communities, which Sigmund applauds as inherently democratic. Despite this growing emphasis, however, liberationists' continued unwillingness to denounce revolution (as in Nicaragua), and the presence of unreconstructed socialists in their ranks, press on them the urgent choice of "democracy or revolution."

Sigmund's point that liberation theology's emphasis has shifted is valuable: since the late 1970s the theology has clearly become more concerned with spiritual, pastoral, and even liturgical matters, and discussion of the Christian Base Communities has grown increasingly central (although Sigmund overlooks the ever-spiraling competition with the Protestants as a factor in this shift). His claim that the shift represents the emergence of a more "democratic" theological option as opposed to an older "undemocratic" one, however, is highly questionable. To accept this argument, the reader must assume that a commitment to socialism is inherently undemocratic (in which case the book preaches to the converted), or at least must be willing to accept Sigmund's claim that liberation theologians who see the main problem as capitalism and the main solution as socialism are therefore unconcerned with democracy.

This claim rests on a superficial reading of the theology. Gustavo Gutiérrez has long seen socialism as creating the context in which the poor will gain “an effective share in the exercise of political power” and thus forge “a truly democratic society” (*The Power of the Poor*, 1983, p. 49). Meanwhile, Sigmund’s narrow conception of democracy—apparently any country with a constitution qualifies—places Duarte’s El Salvador in the family of democratic nations. Sigmund makes much of Juan Luis Segundo’s declaration that revolutionary violence “does not frighten me” (quoted, p. 62), and concludes that this view is tantamount to “a blithe dismissal of a concern for human rights” (p. 77). Yet the currently official (not just liberationist) teaching of the church is that violence is justified in the case of extreme and prolonged tyranny; and in any event the vast majority of liberationist writing calls for the restructuring of society without violent means (see Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics* [1989], p. 187). Overlooking this kind of complexity, Sigmund’s study becomes, unfortunately, yet another in the line of antiliberationist polemics that fail to do justice to the object of their criticism.

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Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice. By FRANCESCA MILLER. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1991. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Bibliographies. Index. xv, 324 pp. Paper. \$16.95.

A comprehensive view of the history of Latin American women in the twentieth century has been sorely needed for some time, and now Francesca Miller has provided Latin Americanists with a readable account of several key trends in the political history of these women. As its title suggests, this work seeks to emphasize the role of women as active participants in public affairs. The core of the narrative is the history of women’s organizations, conferences, and drives for several political causes of the Right and the Left. While not totally triumphalist in tone, this work is intent on casting a positive and vindicatory light on women, so as to make possible their inclusion in general histories of the area.

The interlocking themes of feminism and political participation are abundantly illustrated throughout the work, but especially in the chapters covering the period between 1938 and 1990, which highlight the role of women’s organizations in promoting social, economic, and gender-view change. Recent studies of the origins of feminism in the early twentieth century and in the 1980s have helped to establish that despite all the internal conflicts this ideology has posed, it has nourished important expressions of female political activism. Miller’s study makes clear that the promotion of women’s causes by women’s organizations has been as partisan and self-conscious as that of other interest groups, and that women have deftly used the tools at their disposal to generate interest in their public roles. Suffrage loomed large on the agenda of the female groups organized in the 1930s; but it is evident from the data that the concerns of women’s organizations expanded into