

The competing major history of the Latin American Catholic Church was written by Enrique Dussel, an Argentine scholar, largely trained in Europe and working for most of his professional life in Mexico. While serving as head of the Comisión de Estudios de Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina (Commission for the Study of the History of the Church in Latin America), Dussel published a one-volume history of the Christian Church in Latin America. For some historical scholars, especially in the British and North American traditions, Dussel's work was too ideological, in the sense that it was deliberately pitched to provide a view of ecclesiastical history, Catholic and Protestant, written on the side of the poor and marginal. Nothing wrong with that, perhaps, but readers and scholars will do better by perusing Schwaller, whose small-scaled and accurate details about the poor and marginal peoples as well as the elite end up being more satisfying than Dussel's summative and pre-judged statements. Just as final judgments ought to be left to judges in a court of law, in the matter of books, final judgments should be left to readers, at least adult and mature ones.

Schwaller's history is not the final word. A great lacuna among Church historians has been the portrayal of the Latin American Catholic Church in the nineteenth century. Not nearly enough attention has been given to the great weakness that overtook the Church in the events that followed Independence from Spain (1810–25), as the Spanish clergy left the region in exile and remained incommunicado from the Holy See for a prolonged period. Bishopsrics remained unoccupied, seminaries emptied out, and some national churches became moribund. Schwaller presents some of the elements of this great decline, without fully developing them. His attention is too tightly focused on the Church–liberal conflicts of the period, with a consequent neglect of the details of the institutional devastation taking place in cathedral chapters, parishes, and missions.

Other themes also await future authors to develop them more fully. One of these is the contemporary dialogue among indigenous religions, such as Mayan Catholics, Mayan Protestants and what are called Maya-Maya (or non-Christians) in Mesoamerica, including the Yucatán, as well as the Andean region. Similarly the dialogue between black Catholics and Afro-Brazilians will need further academic historical accounts beyond the ethnography of John Burdick and others.

By many measures, such as the increased numbers of priests, seminarians and lay catechists, Latin American Catholicism is enjoying a significant religious revival in the twenty-first century. John Frederick Schwaller provides essential background for understanding the long journey that has led to that revival.

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*The editors and staff of the JLAS have been deeply saddened to learn of the death of Professor Edward Cleary OP since this review was submitted for publication.*

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Ingrid Wehr and Hans-Jürgen Burchardt (eds.), *Soziale Ungleichheiten in Lateinamerika: Neue Perspektiven auf Wirtschaft, Politik und Umwelt* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2011) pp. 334, €19.90, pb.

This German-language collection brings together a number of contributions by scholars working both in the Americas and continental Europe with the common purpose of providing, as the book's title suggests, new perspectives on social inequalities in Latin America. Even those who do not read German can gain important insights from

some of the cutting-edge contributions and debates represented in the volume. To facilitate such a transfer of knowledge, after a short discussion of the collection as a whole, this review will focus in greater depth on some specific chapters.

The core topic of the book is, as Ingrid Wehr sets out in her introduction, the tense relationship between deeply entrenched social inequalities on the one hand and the long democratic and welfare state traditions of Latin American countries on the other. This tension poses considerable challenges to established theories in politics and economics because the stubborn persistence of such inequalities, despite the return to liberal democracy in the region, gives the lie to the explanations advanced by today's mainstream transition studies and institutional economics. In contrast to those approaches, the volume thus puts at centre stage perspectives that stress the politics behind the ongoing (re)production of social inequalities.

On the whole, the book presents a series of well-informed, mainly convincing and often genuinely inspiring discussions of different dimensions of inequalities and the political structures and processes that sustain them. It is a valuable contribution to studies of social inequalities in Latin America, particularly when its authors strive to promulgate central insights beyond the rather narrow German-language debate.

The potential of approaches focusing on politics, power and contestation is illustrated well by Wehr's own chapter. Understanding welfare states as institutionalised forms of power relationships, she shows how actually existing social policy institutions in Latin America have not only failed to reduce inequalities but have often even exacerbated them because of their regressive funding structures, coupled with low degrees of universalisation. She shows how at the heart of these entrenched deficits is an unwillingness and/or lack of capacity of most governments to discipline capital and economic elites effectively enough to create the fiscal basis for a broadening of the groups of beneficiaries.

There are specific merits in the chapters that successfully transcend the bias of much mainstream research towards economic issues and the formal political system, approaching social inequality instead as a multifaceted phenomenon, including various interrelated economic, political, cultural and ecological dimensions. Tanja Ernst, for instance, deploys insights from the Latin American *Modernidad/Colonialidad* research programme to shed light on the historical roots of ethnic discrimination in the 'coloniality of power' (to use Aníbal Quijano's term), a 'racialisation' of societal relations which has remained powerful until the present. Against this background she presents an interpretation of indigenous visions of democracy and social equality, which have gained political relevance in recent decades, as expressions of an independent and long-standing, but marginalised, tradition of democratic thought. Consequently, she closes with a call to 'think democracy in plurals'.

Kristina Dietz's chapter, in turn, seeks to address the nexus between society and nature which has remained underexplored in its relation to social inequalities. To overcome this deficit, she proposes the notion of 'socio-ecological inequalities', denoting, for instance, the unequal distribution of chances for the social use of the natural environment and of capacities to deal with changing environmental circumstances. Drawing on debates about the 'political ecology of Latin America' (Héctor Alimonda's term), she proposes a conceptual framework for studying these inequalities; the latter incorporates not only a perspective on material relations of force, but also post-structuralist approaches in the tradition of Arturo Escobar focused, for example, on the long-standing marginalisation of allegedly 'irrational' indigenous views about nature.

Another strength of the volume stems from contributions which take a step back from analyses of existing inequalities, opting instead for powerful macro-historical studies of the underlying politico-economic and discursive structures. These are perhaps best exemplified by Olaf Kaltmeier's chapter on the significance of the hacienda. The author interprets the hacienda as a dispositive, in the sense of Foucault, which has historically played a central role in the 'management' of indigenous populations, particularly in the Andean region. Thus he can show how the hacienda, as a form of social organisation of production and exploitation, and as a tool of political domination, had its high point only in the 1860s and 1870s, led by governments intent on political modernisation, and that it shaped the specific forms of indigenous marginalisation decisively, even after its formal abolition about a century later.

A potential weakness of this chapter and other theoretically and methodologically innovative contributions to the volume is that they often fail to drive their points home empirically. Thus the evidence mustered often appears somewhat selective, of limited reach beyond specific historical and/or local instances, and with often merely illustrative value. In a more positive reading, of course, this critique may point to the fact that these chapters represent mere stepping stones for promising future research programmes.

Another group of chapters, including those by Andreas Nölke, Ben Ross Schneider et al. and Sebastian Karcher, seeks to develop explanations for the persistence of social inequality based on the emblematic 'Varieties of Capitalism' (VoC) approach. Their central argument is that problems such as informality of labour, weak economic associations, and the dominance of domestic conglomerates and multinational firms over areas such as corporate governance and inter-firm relations form a web of 'negative complementarities' that perpetuate a reliance on low-wage/low-skill/low-quality production and prevent a transition to a more benign regime. This highly parsimonious analytical narrative sits somewhat at odds with those advanced in most of the other chapters, in that it emphasises structural features of the institutional environments of the Latin American 'variety' of capitalism. In the light of the earlier chapters, it suffers from a number of important omissions related, not least, to issues of political and economic power, transnational asymmetries and the historical emergence of the Latin American 'variety' of capitalism. The inclusion of this perspective in the volume makes sense, however, given the considerable popularity of this paradigm. In this context, the criticisms just formulated signal the necessity to analyse both socio-economic structures and political dynamics, if we are to improve our understanding of social inequalities, their origins, and the reasons for their persistence in Latin America.

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Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph (eds.), *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Cold War* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. x + 443, £74.00, £17.99 pb.

With this book two prominent historians at the top of their game seek nothing less than 'to provide a new agenda for the study of revolutionary change and political violence in twentieth-century Latin America' (p. 397). In other words, they propose to revise a big chunk of what historians of Latin America have been doing in the past few decades.