

liberale historici in Suid-Afrika sou die insig oor hierdie tyderp verbeter het. Hierdie boek is in wese 'n politieke geskiedenis en behoort daarom omvangryker vertolkings vir sy lesers te verskaf.

Ten spyte van kritiek dat hierdie werk nie genoegsaam uit resente literatuur put nie, en dat daar leemtes op terreine soos die sosiale en kulturele geskiedenis, asook omgewingsgeskiedenis voorkom, bly hierdie werk 'n stewige toevoeging tot die Suid-Afrikaanse historiografie.

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Anthony Egan: *The Politics of a South African Catholic Student Movement, 1960-1987.*

Centre for African Studies, Communications no. 20/1991, University of Cape Town, 1991. 150 pp. ISBN 0799213233. No price mentioned.

Egan's work is a study of the Theologico-political activities of the National Catholic Federation of Students during the period mentioned in the title. It has been most thoroughly researched and considerable use has been made of primary sources (particularly oral evidence) both locally and overseas. There is no doubt that it is an important work which has added considerably to historical insight into a hitherto unexplored topic and one which is relevant to contemporary South African political history in general as well as church history and the history of student movements.

Since the NCFS is a national organization, the book was not intended as a study in local or regional history. However, it provides valuable information on student activities at specific universities as well as important insights into the workings of student politics and cultural life in general. Apart from its more general value, this book would be of both methodological and content value to anyone interested in the history of South African universities and their student life. Apart from this, it is difficult to see how it could be of special interest to the local or regional historian.

The Politics of a South African Catholic Student Movement is a published MA. thesis rather than a thesis which has been rewritten for publication. As a result, it displays certain weaknesses. On the technical side, the lack of an index is an irritating omission which detracts from its value as a reference work. Unfortunately it also exhibits certain methodological weaknesses.

The most important of these is a lack of adequate contextualization, both as regards national politics and theological developments within the wider body of Christian churches. While attempts are made to relate developments within the NCFS to national politics, these are largely confined to those issues to which the Federation reacted or which directly concerned it. Little allowance

has been made for the relative nature of political groupings such as 'conservative' and 'radical' in society at large. As a result, the reader is not always in a position to judge whether the NCFS maintained its position relative to that of the rest of South African society or whether there were significant changes relative to each other.

Equally disappointing is the author's failure to place the NCFS within the broader context of South African theology. The impact of Liberation Theology, Black Theology, The Charismatic Movement and the like was not limited to either the NCFS or the Catholic Church. It would have been enlightening to have compared the impact which they had on the NCFS with that which they made on the South African theological and ecclesiastical scene in general.

While these omissions are pardonable, given the limited scope of an MA. thesis, a third is more problematic. This is the considerable emphasis placed on the radical side of NCFS activities and politics to the detriment of the conservative side. To judge from Egan's work, the NCFS was a radical organization plagued by a few dissenting conservative elements. However, the brief discussion of "The Pretoria Demonstration Incident" (pp. 27-28) as well as other references to the more conservative stance of the Pretoria Branch (e.g. p.32) and other branches and individuals (e.g. pp. 39, 39-40, 72, 74, 76-77) indicate that there was in fact a real conservative element present. However, both in the content and in the source list, little attempt is paid to this aspect of the NCFS.

A further problematic aspect of this work is the decision to analyze the subject in terms of class (p.vii). There is no doubt that the class analysis does shed important light on the nature and activities of the NCFS and thus forms part of the very genuine contribution this book makes. However it has certain limitations, especially when discussing the activities of a cultural grouping such as a religious organization and one is inclined to feel that it should have been supplemented by a culture analysis as well as a more profound consideration of the role played in the development of NCFS politics by prominent individuals and office-bearers, although in all fairness, neither is entirely absent from the work.

To summarize: Egan's work displays certain shortcomings, but despite these it remains an important contribution to contemporary South African history and students and writers of more general works on the political history of this period should certainly take note of it.

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R.A.U.

Dorian Haarhoff: *The Wild South West. Frontier myths and metaphors in literature set in Namibia. 1760-1988.* Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1991, 262 pp. Geill. R50.55. ISBN 868141187.