

into the rigour of modelling of financial theory, it has some useful references for further readings.

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**The Dominican Friars in Southern Africa: A Social History, 1577-1990,**  
*By Phillipe Denis*, Leiden, Boston, Massachusetts, Brill Academic  
Publishers, 1998, 322 pp, ISBN 0-924-9389, \$53,92.

Studies on the work of the Dominican friars in Southern Africa abound. They range from specific works such as Mudenge,<sup>1</sup> to general works such as Axelson<sup>2</sup> and Mudenge.<sup>3</sup> This is in addition to numerous works in Portuguese. Each of the above studies, however, focuses only on specific periods and areas of Southern Africa; none covers the entire Southern African region as a whole. In contrast, Denis sets out to provide a more comprehensive coverage of the region and over a longer period than any of the above studies. In his words, he sought to gather "in a single narrative the disparate stories of Dominican friars in Southern Africa over the past four centuries" (p. ix). This is a daunting task by any standard, particularly since the Dominicans who worked in Southern Africa belonged to no less than five different entities: the Portuguese, Irish, English and Dutch and the Southern African vicariate. Moreover, four centuries is an awfully long period to cover in one volume and may easily lead to superficial treatment of some periods and themes. These problems are somewhat mitigated by the fact that Denis is a member of the Dominican Religious Order. As an "insider", therefore, he was able to access information that would otherwise be unavailable to lay researchers.

The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the Portuguese Dominicans in Southeast Africa. It argues that the beginning of the Dominican enterprise in South-eastern Africa was facilitated by the close relationship between the Crown and the Cross. Dominicans acted as agents of the Portuguese Crown in facilitating Portuguese imperial policies, in return for financial assistance and military protection. This co-operation lasted until the nineteenth century, when a conflict developed over the extent of the state's jurisdiction over Dominican affairs. Over the years, the Dominicans had become increasingly independent. This

<sup>1</sup> S. I. G. Mudenge's (1976) "The Dominicans at Zumbo: An aspect of missionary history in the Zambezi Valley, c. 1726-1836" in *Mohlomi* I.

<sup>2</sup> E. Axelson (1973) *Portuguese in South-East Africa 1600-1700* (Johannesburg, C. Struik).

<sup>3</sup> S. I. G. Mudenge (1988) *A Political History of the Munhumutapa c. 1400-1902* (Harare, ZPH).

alarmed the state which then decided to replace them with "secular clergy" and thus expelled the Dominicans from South-eastern Africa in 1834; marking the end of 260 years of Dominican presence in the region. Also explored in this chapter were the conflicts between the Dominicans and the Jesuits as they fought for spheres of influence. The chapter ends with a discussion of the reasons for the failure of the Dominican enterprise in South-eastern Africa.

The work of the Irish Dominicans is the subject of Chapter 2. Through a biographical study of Bishop Patrick Griffith, the author examines the establishment of the Catholic Church in the Cape Colony. He points out that, although Griffith's strategy of concentrating only on the white settlers resembled that of the Portuguese Dominicans in South-eastern Africa, he was more successful in his venture. This was partly because he enjoyed a high degree of independence to devise and implement his own programmes and also was financially more stable because of the stipend that he received regularly from government.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the British and Dutch Dominicans, respectively. The English were the first to establish themselves in South Africa, to be followed by the Dutch when it became clear that cultural differences between the English Dominicans and the Dutch population of South Africa reduced the effectiveness of their ministry. As in the case of the Portuguese and the Irish, the thrust of the English enterprise was towards the white settler community. It was only in the 1920s that there was talk of extending missionary work to the indigenous people. Evidence that ministering to the indigenous South Africans was considered secondary was the fact that those missionaries who concentrated on work in this sector of the population were discriminated against. According to one source, "the white priest was a parish priest. He had a car. The priest serving the black lived with him, was fed by him and usually had a bicycle. If the former was away, the other was expected to drop his black people and serve the whites" (p. 119). The Dominicans thus practised a policy of "separate development" in South Africa long before the formal introduction of apartheid.

In Chapter 5, Denis argues that it was only after the introduction of apartheid when the problems associated with missionary work among blacks surfaced that the decision to train an indigenous clergy was taken. By then, the Group Areas Act was making it difficult for the Dominicans to continue to live with their flock in those areas designated as African locations. Also important was the growing political consciousness among African Christians, fuelled by such organisations as the Black Consciousness Movement, Black Sash, Catholic Students Association of South Africa and Young Christian Workers and the deportation of a number of Dominicans by the South African authorities. It was only in

1968, however, that the training of indigenous clergy commenced. Chapter 6 traces the activities and role of the Dominicans in Apartheid South Africa and argues that the Dominicans took long to join the fight against apartheid mainly because their Religious Order comprised only whites. In the 1970s, they concentrated their criticisms only on those apartheid laws that directly affected their work. By the 1980s, however, they had become one of the most vocal and militant groups in the fight against apartheid.

*The Dominican Friars in Southern Africa* is an impressive book except for a few shortcomings that could have been easily avoided. For instance, the chronological approach that the author uses falters somewhat in Chapters 3 and 4, for, although the English were the first to establish themselves in South Africa before the Dutch, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the two worked side by side. The author's treatment of the two groups within a chronological framework thus is not entirely appropriate. Also regrettable is the fact that the author uses some specialist terms without explaining to the non-specialist reader what these mean. A glossary of terms explaining the meaning of such words as "padroado", "tostao", "postulant", "aggiornamento", and "socius", among others, would have been useful. In addition, closer editing to eliminate a number of irritating typos and grammatical errors would also have improved the book. Finally, although the book claims to cover the history of Dominicans in Southern Africa, it, in fact, focuses only on the Zambezi Valley and South Africa and does not discuss experiences in the rest of Southern Africa. In that sense, therefore, it shares the same limitations as the studies listed at the beginning of this review.

These shortcomings, notwithstanding, Denis' book is a significant contribution to knowledge of the forces that helped shape the history of Southern Africa and provides a mine of information on the Dominicans' activities in those areas that it examines. It should prove particularly useful to historians of the missionary enterprise in Africa, scholars of religion, seminarians, university students and anyone who has an interest in understanding the dynamics of church, state and society in a colonial setting.

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