

H-Net Reviews

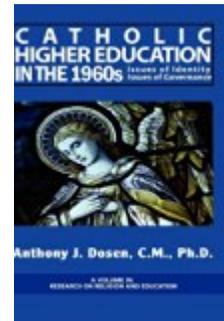
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Anthony J. Dosen. *Catholic Higher Education in the 1960s: Issues of Identity, Issues of Governance*. Research on Religion and Education Series. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2009. xv + 264 pp. \$45.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-931576-30-7; \$85.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-931576-31-4.

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Commissioned by Jonathan Anuik



Anthony J. Dosen's *Catholic Higher Education in the 1960s* is the latest volume in the Research on Religion and Education series and it probes Catholic universities' varied administrative responses to the upheavals of the 1960s. According to Dosen, the 1960s were a "watershed" for American Catholic higher education, and the institutions that he chronicles "quickly outgrew the family-like governance that was the hallmark of religious community ownership and evolved into new models of governance and administration" (p. 1). While the book has some interesting insights for historians of American Catholicism, the case study approach tends to limit the scope of the author's conclusions.

Catholic Higher Education in the 1960s contains ten chapters: the first two attempt to trace the development of American Catholic identity and higher education, respectively, while the six that follow explore the histories of individual institutions. The book concludes with a chapter on "lessons learned" and another that explores Dosen's final reflections. While I am a supporter of the case study approach to history (my own work is largely built around case studies), Dosen's choice of institutions seems idiosyncratic; certainly including DePaul University and St. John's University (the two largest Catholic institutions in the United States) makes sense, as does including Notre Dame, the iconic American Catholic institution of higher education. However, Dosen does not devote a chapter to the Catholic University of America (CUA); this seems an odd choice, given that the CUA is the only pontifical university in the United States, and therefore, the institution occupies an important place in American Catholic higher education. Similarly, Dosen fails to explore Georgetown University's history, which

is the oldest Catholic University in the United States. Furthermore, with the exception of St. John's University (which is located in New York), all of the institutions that Dosen has chosen are located in Missouri, Indiana, and Illinois; this is a fairly narrow focus for which Dosen offers no explanation.

In terms of strengths, the book is well written and accessible. In addition, Dosen clearly knows the history of the institutions that he chronicles and is able to fit them into the wider narrative of the history of American Catholicism. Moreover, Dosen is clearly conversant with the latest work on the history and sociology of American Catholicism. Perhaps most important, he does an excellent job exploring the perennial tension facing American Catholic colleges and universities: are they Catholic colleges and universities or universities and colleges that are Catholic? As Dosen illustrates, these institutions responded to the challenges of the 1960s in a variety of ways that were heavily influenced by factors like administrative leadership. As such, the book is a welcome reminder that the image of monolithic Catholicism so evident in the "top-down" histories of a generation ago is largely fictitious.

In sum, *Catholic Higher Education in the 1960s* is a well-written and thorough regional study of Catholic institutions of higher education. While the conclusions are limited by the primary focus on a small number of geographically proximate institutions, the exhaustive research ensures that this book will be a welcome addition to research libraries and the bookshelves of those interested in the history of Catholicism in the American Midwest.

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