

EDUCATION AND TRANSFORMATION: MARIANIST MINISTRIES IN AMERICA SINCE 1849

CHRISTOPHER J. KAUFFMAN. CROSSROAD PUBLISHING COMPANY, 1999.

Reviewed by John Augenstein

As the century and millennium come to a close, many religious communities find themselves in a “time of parenthesis, the time between eras” (Naisbitt, 1982, p. 249). The Society of Mary, or Marianists as they are known, is in such a time. It is celebrating 150 years of service in America and as part of that commemoration it commissioned Professor Christopher Kauffman to research and write the history of those years.

Dr. Kauffman, Catholic Daughters of America Professor of American Church History at The Catholic University of America, eminently qualifies for such a task. Among his numerous works are the histories of the Alexian Brothers, the Sulpicians, and Catholic health care in the U.S. His most recent contribution to American Catholic history is *Education and Transformation: Marianist Ministries in America since 1849*.

The themes emanating from the book are foundation, immigration, enculturation, expansion, tension, transformation, and contribution—themes that may be found in the history of many American families and religious communities.

The opening chapters address the foundation of the Society by William Joseph Chaminade in France as well as its American inauguration. Chaminade played a “role in the battle to restore religion in the French culture” (Kauffman, 1999, p. 44).

Chaminade founded the Society in 1817 as an outgrowth of a lay sodality. Its first constitution was approved a year later by the local archbishop and its official name was Institute of Mary. It was unique for many reasons, but particularly because of its “secular appearance” (Kauffman, 1999, p. 23) and its egalitarian approach. The organization was designed to have a lay-clergy mix and include more lay brothers (teaching and working) than priests, with the brothers having positions of authority. This structure was nearly denied when the Society sought papal approval from Pius IX in 1864. A Roman office wanted the number of priests to be increased and insisted that priests serve as house superiors. Fortunately a compromise was reached.

The Society’s ministry was to be:

Engaged in all phases of education.... Students represented as classes; the wealthy would be attracted to private boarding schools; the middle classes

to Marianists' business-education; and prep-professional groups to the traditional classical curriculum; the artisan class and peasant families cherished the Society's emphasis on elementary education, moral formation, and improvement in social behavior. (Kauffman, 1999, p. 32)

Thirty-two years after their founding, the Marianists answered a call from Cincinnati to minister in America. They were responding to the requests of German-Americans and their national parishes. This began their immigration and enculturation.

Father Leo Meyer, who became the first American provincial and wanted to take the community to America, led the initial group. He faced many challenges in addition to the culture and climate. Negotiating terms for the community's services was not an easy task as he noted in a February 11, 1851, letter to Father Chevaux, the third Superior General. "These gentlemen [the pastors] like many others think religious live on air and fine weather" (Kauffman, 1999, p. 60).

The community established its home in Dayton and began to flourish. St. Mary's Institute (1871) in Dayton became St. Mary's College (1912), and in 1920 the University of Dayton (Kauffman, 1999). By 1900, missions included Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Brooklyn, New York City, Rochester (NY), San Antonio, and Baltimore. The members served parish schools, high schools, and colleges.

The community continued its expansion in the 20th century. In 1908 the St. Louis Province was formed. Following World War II, growth in the West and Hawaii warranted the establishment of the Pacific Province in 1948. The New York Province followed in 1961. Also during this time there was new missionary activity in Latin America, Africa, and Korea.

Tension was not unknown in the Society, and in the 1945-1960 period racism was confronted in the Society and its schools. But the Society provided the American Catholic Church one of its African American leaders in the person of Brother Joseph Davis (later Father Davis) who became the first executive director of the National Office of Black Catholics.

As in other religious communities, there was periodic tension between the monastic and apostolic lives of the Society's members. Some saw the formation and interior life of its members being destroyed by too much contact with the world through their apostolate.

The tumultuous 60s and Vatican II brought new tensions. It was no longer monastic versus apostolic but school versus the social apostolate. The Society wrestled with this as it examined and renewed itself as required by the Council's *Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life* (*Perfectae Caritatis*).

Tension also surfaced between the traditional and pluralistic lifestyles and apostolates at Chaminade-Mineola, NY. By 1970 Chaminade was

removed from the New York Province and placed directly under the Society's general administration, and in 1976 the Province of Meribah was established.

Since the 1960s and Vatican II, the Society has been and continues to be in a period of transformation that Kauffman labels "Between the Times." As do other communities, it has declining numbers, from 1372 in 1965 to 764 in 1995 and an increase in the average age of its members. The gap in the ratio of brothers to priests has also narrowed.

The contributions of the Marianists to American Catholic education are significant. They staffed and operated parish schools, diocesan and community high schools, and colleges. In the 1920s they were at the forefront of establishing high schools in the American educational scene. In 1899 Brother Kim developed the *Manual of Pedagogy*, an adaptation of the Christian Brothers' *Management of Christian Schools*, that provided "methodologies for parish school curricula" and "formation and essential qualities of the teacher" (Kauffman, 1999, p. 128).

Marianists were involved early in the Catholic Educational Association (CEA, later the National Catholic Educational Association) and the National Catholic Welfare Conference's Bureau of Education. Brother John Waldron, the St. Louis Province's first inspector of schools, was a member of the CEA Parish School Department's Executive Committee, the Association's Executive Board, and an original member of the Superintendents' Section (Augenstein, 1996). Brother George Sauer, too, was an active member of the Superintendent's Section (Augenstein, 1996). Brothers Waldron and Bernard O'Reilly assisted in the establishment of the CEA's Secondary Department.

The reader will find that Kauffman weaves the story of the Marianist family around themes, significant ecclesial and societal events, and influential Marianists. He shares the Society's trials and tribulations but equally importantly its contributions to the Church and Catholic education. The book is a valuable contribution for Catholic educators at all levels and in many ministries. As Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M., writes in the foreword: "Christopher Kauffman has once again written history with a difference" (Kauffman, 1999, p. xvii).

REFERENCES

- Augenstein, J. J. (1996). *Lighting the way: 1908 to 1935 the early years of Catholic school superintendency*. Washington, DC: National Catholic Educational Association.
- Kauffman, C. J. (1999). *Education and transformation: Marianist ministries in America since 1849*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co.
- Naisbitt, J. (1982). *Megatrends: Ten new directions transforming our lives*. New York: Warner Communications Co.

John Augenstein is associate professor in the School of Education of Marquette University and cochair of the National Catholic Educational Association Centennial Project.

Copyright of Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice is the property of Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry & Practice and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.