

CONCLUSIONS

It is not that the Gospel has changed, it is that we have begun to understand it better.

John XXIII¹

In brief these are the more general conclusions of the thesis, some of them emerging from individual studies and/or chapters, others from juxtapositions of several studies and/or chapters. The first two relate to the theoretical framework of the thesis, and mirror each other up to a point.

(1) In strictly sociological terms the Weberian account of charismatic authority, and the concept we derived from that of a charismatic social movement, while being deeply illuminative when applied to religious orders and their life-cycles, are at the same time expanded and challenged by that application. In particular, the Weberian account of the routinisation of charisma is challenged, and potentially greatly expanded, by noting both the charism-preserving features of religious orders, and their tendency to throw up 're-founding' and otherwise secondarily charismatic figures. It would seem to be open to Weberians to accommodate the case of the religious order either by treating it as an 'ideal type' in its own right, though one that relates to the ideal type of charismatic authority, or by modifying the account of charismatic authority.

(2) The already large and still growing theological literature relating to religious life, and the theological self-understanding of contemporary religious congregations which is both reflected in and shaped by that literature, would benefit from some detailed engagement with the Weberian literature on charismatic authority and movements - both at the conceptual level of improved self-understanding and the practical level of better policy-making. In particular such engagements would open up further the important questions of the relationship or tension between charism on the one hand and each of tradition and rational bureaucracy on the other.

The remaining conclusions are more practical in character and they draw upon broader swathes of the studies comprising this thesis.

(3) Marist Brothers are described as displaying, or aspiring to,

¹ Quoted in TAB, 1992k, p.1216.

- a) an enthusiasm for educating young people in professional, non-authoritarian and unpretentious ways
- b) an availability to, and love of, those being taught
- c) an understanding of Mary which sees her as a caring woman of faith
- d) a respect for and love of, Marcellin Champagnat as a man of action, always conscious of the presence of God, determined, sympathetic to uneducated youth especially slow learners, committed to the non-evangelised, a priest who enjoyed manual work and
- e) a relaxed attitude to any supposed tension between being authentic to Marcellin Champagnat's educational vision and prophetically relevant for today's educational needs.

(4) Marist Brothers and Marist Schools link evangelisation and education. Catholic schools continue to provide a viable, valid and important medium for their work in educational, Christian and Marist terms.

(5) It is possible to maintain a Marist ethos, or at least make a significant difference to the ethos of a school with different levels of contribution from Brothers. Successful models include having a) a Marist principal and a small group of Brothers on the staff, b) one Brother on the staff as, say, the Head of the Religious Education Department and c) a Marist principal with, say, a third of the staff Brothers.

(6) The defining of a school philosophy statement can be a helpful way of re-orienting a school provided the discerning process involves the majority of staff and representatives of the other major groups within the school community. A Development Group can contribute conceptual and methodological assistance to such a process.

(7) Marist Brothers acknowledge an option for the poor. Marist schools interpret this differently, while typically investing considerable energy and/or anxiety in re-evaluating their own interpretations. Some of the differences in question seem to result from the circumstances of the society in which they are working, others from more general differences of philosophy. New locations for Marist work often include poorer areas, sometimes in developing countries such as Liberia and Pakistan and dioceses which are new to the Congregation's work as was Marcellin Champagnat's wish.

(8) Marist Brothers give a high priority in schools to religious education, religious activities such as liturgies and retreats and guidance programmes.

(9) The Marist Brother/lay-teacher relationship varies considerably across the contexts studied but is a form of some attention in all contexts. Often lay staff working in Marist Schools speak of how they have been influenced by the Brothers. Here the study of the Society of Jesus suggests that Marist Brothers might also see the spirituality of their founder being incarnated in one way by Marist Brothers and in another by lay staff. Staff of Marist schools generally might be described as 'Champagnat Educators'. Since the Brothers know Marcellin Champagnat's spirituality through their initial and ongoing formation, they could assist lay staffs to become familiar with his life and his ensuing movement. New and re-edited studies of Marcellin Champagnat's life provide good resource material for such an exercise.² The recent formal launching of the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family offers a helpful backdrop for the increasing interest in the spirituality and educational vision of Marcellin Champagnat among lay people

I recommend that:

- (1) Marist schools seek ways of involving lay staff in the study of Marcellin Champagnat's philosophy. This could help avoid tensions which can arise between lay staffs and the Brothers when considering the goals of a school, Marist pedagogy and lay teachers' salaries;
- (2) Marist schools benefit more from the international nature of the Congregation and the different expressions of Marcellin Champagnat's philosophy which are evident in schools worldwide. This could involve the publishing of a journal which discusses the characteristics of Champagnat Education as experienced in different cultures; and
- (3) the Marist Congregation regularly co-ordinate an articulation of the theory of Champagnat education through worldwide consultation. An international commission could facilitate such a process.

I entered this research seeking a normative answer to the question 'What is Marist Education'. I emerge with some descriptive responses. The

² Three lives of Marcellin Champagnat have been published since 1984: Farrell, K. (1984) *Achievements from the Depths*; McMahan, F. (1988) *Strong Mind, Gentle Heart* and Furet, J. (1989) *Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat* (re-edited).

thesis has considered some fine examples of Marist Brothers at work, juxtaposed these with the inspiring work of Marcellin Champagnat, rich sociological and theological considerations and the enlightening experiences of other charismatic social movements. Ultimately, however - to make my own the words of a confrere - the call to Marist educators is synthesised community-wise and personally 'in the deepest places within us as each day we confront life in the world, in society, in the workplace, in the family' (Crowe, 1991, p.25).

Champagnat, 308, 309, 310