

MARIANHILL MISSION AND AFRICAN EDUCATION, 1882 - 1915

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ABSTRACT

In 1880 a group of 31 Trappist monks arrived in South Africa for the first time. Two years later they founded the now famous Mariannhill mission in the vicinity of Pinetown, west of Durban. The purpose of this thesis is to trace the history of the Mariannhill mission, with particular reference to its contribution to African education. The thesis examines the policies of education at Mariannhill schools, and aims to illustrate the fact that despite the invaluable contribution that missionaries made to African education, their achievements were often marred by their usual practice of subordinating education to religious concerns. The study covers the period between 1882, when Mariannhill mission was established, and 1915, when St. Francis College came into being. The intended aims and goals of the missionaries at Mariannhill will be outlined, their obstacles investigated and their overall success and failure assessed.

NOTE ON SOURCES

It must be noted that the day to day records on African education in Natal, for the period being studied, remain elusive. Neither the Department of Education nor the Natal Archives has acknowledged the existence of evidence such as letters, memorandums and other correspondences among the Natal education authorities and the various missionary schools in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

However, the existence of official publications on African education and reports on individual schools, as well as the day to day press reports has enabled the researcher to put together a comprehensive picture of the state of African education for the period being studied. The Natal Colonial and Provincial Publications ' educational records were used extensively.

Crucial sources on Mariannahill schools from the first decade of the twentieth century also exist. These include log books, official correspondences and other reports. However, the denial of access to this valuable information by the authorities of Saint Francis School may, to quite a large extent, explain the limitations in this thesis.

INTRODUCTION

No history of African education before the 1950s would be complete without referring to the role of the early Christian missions in South Africa, because these were largely responsible for the provision of education for Africans in this country. The attitudes of the various colonial, and later provincial, governments to the question of African education ranged from apathy, ambivalence and determined opposition to attempts at providing Africans with the kind of education that would ensure for them an improved social and economic standing in society. Though a general feeling prevailed that Africans should receive "some sort" of education, legislators, policy makers and white settlers were not unanimous with regard to the level of education Africans should acquire. Some held the now discredited view of an African being "naturally" inferior, and thus Divinely destined to be

a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the white man. If you attempt to raise him from that position you interfere with God's plan, and bring trouble on yourself and him.¹

According to this view, if Africans were to receive any education it should not go beyond the elementary level of literacy, and should be primarily aimed at serving the interests of the white people, to which the will of all Africans should be subjugated. The educational curriculum in African schools should include

¹. C.T. Loram, The Education of the South African Native, (London, Longmans, 1917), p.17.

practical subjects with the emphasis on manual labour and strict discipline. Such training would render Africans willing to accept "the naturalness of their place of inferiority and to be equipped with an appropriately servile mentality."²

A small percentage of whites, however, believed in the equality of humankind, and insisted that equal education of Africans and Europeans would inevitably lead to the assimilation of the former to the (western) style of living led by the latter.³ Another group of whites was critical of attempts designed to entirely deprive Africans of education. At the same time, however, this group believed that the provision of education to Africans should be a slow and carefully monitored process; it should not conflict with white interests and need not necessarily be on the same lines as that of Europeans.⁴

One factor to which the apathy of the colonial and provincial governments to African education could be attributed was the high cost that such education would result in. For this reason the various governments of the Cape and Natal were content to give small grants-in-aid to a few selected mission schools. State aid to mission schools in the Cape and Natal commenced in 1841 and

2. M. Molteno, "The Origins of Black Education. The Historical Foundations of the Schooling of Black South Africans.", in P.Kallaway (ed), Apartheid and Education. The Education of Black South Africans, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1984), p.52.

3. Loram, Education, p.20-22.

4. Ibid, p.23.

1856, respectively, and this was to continue as an established pattern until the 1950s, when the passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 and its subsequent implementation barred most churches and missionary bodies from effectively carrying out their decades long responsibilities of educating Africans under their care.⁵ Attempts to establish state schools for Africans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had proved costly, and were quickly abandoned.⁶ Consequently, until the 1950s missionaries remained the principal and unchallenged benefactors of Africans as far as education was concerned. Emanuelson's thesis⁷ provides a mass of information on the history of African education in Natal from the 1880s to the third decade of the 20th century. Other notable works on the same subject include those of Christie,⁸ Loram⁹ and Hartshorne.¹⁰ All these provide a useful overview of the role that missionaries and the various colonial governments played in African education. According to Comaroff and Comaroff, the early

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5. A.L.Behr, New Perspectives in South African Education, (Durban, Butterworths, 1978),,p.160.
 6. See, for example, the failure of the Zwartkop Industrial school in Natal.
 7. See O.E.Emanuelson, "A History of Native Education in Natal between 1835 and 1927." (University of Natal, M.Ed thesis, 1927).
 8. P. Christie The Right to Learn. The Struggle For Education In South Africa, (Braamfontein,Ravan Press, 1985).
 9. Loram, Education.
 10. K. Hartshorne, Crisis and Change :Black Education 1910 - 1990, (Capetown, Oxford University Press, 1992).

interaction between European missionaries and African people bred a new form of consciousness among the latter, as attempts were made not only to convert them to Christianity, but also to persuade them to abandon traditional practices such as lobolo, polygamy, beer drinking, etc.¹¹

The purpose of this study is to examine the history of the Trappists¹² in South Africa, with special reference to their contribution to African education at Mariannhill, Natal. The thesis is divided into two parts. In Part one an attempt will be made to examine the order of the Trappists, who they were, their philosophical and religious beliefs as well as their general way of life. The first group of Trappists arrived in South Africa in 1880, at the invitation of Bishop David James Ricards of the Eastern Cape Vicariate. They came to South Africa for the purpose of establishing a mission among the Thembu people in the Eastern Cape.¹³ They were under the leadership of Father Franz Pfanner, the man who became the Prior of Dunbrody, the monastery in the Cape where the Trappists were first established. Due to difficulties that will be pointed out in

¹¹. Comaroff, J, Comaroff, J, Of Revelation and Revolution. Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1991).

¹². Though the Trappists belong to the Trappist Order, they are members of the Roman Catholic Church. In Chapter One, an attempt will be made to outline the major tenets of the their Order.

¹³. R. Kneipp et al, Mariannhill and its apostolate, (Reimlingen, Saint Joseph Mission Press, 1964),p.15.

chapter one, Dunbrody monastery was abandoned at the end of 1882, approximately two years after its establishment.¹⁴

The second Trappist mission in South Africa was established in the province of Natal in 1882. It was named Mariannahill, and was to become, in a period of five years, the largest Trappist abbey in the world.¹⁵ Part one will not focus only on the religious activities of the Trappists in their early years at Mariannahill, it will also look briefly at their activities in other fields, including agriculture, road construction, etc. This is essential because manual labour was not only the guiding principle of all Trappist monks, but also a means through which they hoped to attract neighbouring Africans to their activities.

Part two will look at the establishment of the first Trappist schools at Mariannahill and the general development of education at the mission. In 1887 a booklet written by one of the first teachers at Mariannahill was published by the mission's printing establishment. It was an account of religious and educational events as well as the general development of the mission.¹⁶

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14. See A. Weisswurm (comp), The Dunbrody Episode: The futile attempt to establish the Trappists on the Sunday's River Valley of the Cape Province, South Africa, A documentation, (Mariannahill, privately printed, 1975).
15. F. Schimlek, Mariannahill: A study of Bantu life and missionary effort, (Mariannahill, Mariannahill Mission Press, 1953), p.93.
16. See D. Bryant, Roman Legion in Libyan Fields: or The Story of the Trappist Missionaries among the Zulus in Natal, South Africa. The establishment of their

Other useful books on Mariannhill include Catholics in Natal¹⁷ and History of the Congregation of Mariannhill Missionaries in the province of Natal.¹⁸ Part two will also focus on the controversial education policies drawn up by Abbot Franz Pfanner for his schools. Some components of Pfanner's policies resembled, in several respects, those contained in the Bantu Education Act of 1953.¹⁹ These policies were to draw sharp criticisms from various sections of the communities in Natal, and were to bring the mission into conflict with the educational authorities. The responses of the African people and the white colonists in Natal to Pfanner's educational policies will be examined, and the success of their efforts assessed.

As mentioned, in the absence of active state involvement in

monastery at Mariannhill and the past and present condition and prosperity of their missions, (Mariannhill, Saint Thomas Aquinas Printing Establishment, 1887).

17. J. Brain, Catholics in Natal 2, 1886-1925, (Durban, Archdiocese, 1982), pp. 128-166 and 234-283.
18. M. Adelgisa, History of the Congregation of Mariannhill Missionaries in the province of Natal, (Mariannhill, Mariannhill Mission Press, 1982).
19. The Bantu Education Act No.7 was passed in 1953 in the wake of the Eiselen Report which was appointed in 1949 by the newly elected National Party regime. Described as "the watershed in the control of educational services for Blacks in this country", the Commission's recommendations did not result only in the transfer of the administration and control of educational services from provincial authorities to the Central Government, it also laid the foundation for the removal of all educational responsibility from the hands of missionaries. Behr, New Perspectives, pp. 168-169.

African education, the burden of providing education to Africans rested largely on the shoulders of missionaries. Notwithstanding the invaluable and unparalleled contribution that missionaries have made to African education, the missionary education system was far from being perfect. The role of missionaries in the history of Africans in this country came under fire from radical Marxist historians and writers. While Marxist scholars undoubtedly acknowledge the role that early missionaries played in the establishment of schools for Africans in the nineteenth century they, however, argue that we need to look critically at what missionaries achieved. Mission education was criticised for having failed to provide "mass" education to Africans. Missionary schools were not accessible to most Africans, and those who did get to such schools were transformed into an élite, a privileged group which, having imbibed European norms and values, began to look down upon uneducated Africans, and, like the white missionaries, began to refer to them as "heathens". Viewed from this perspective, mission education served to divide African people. Moreover, missionaries are accused of having played a role in the conquest of African chiefdoms. By co-operating with the colonial governments in the breaking down of African culture and imposing Western culture and work patterns, the Bible is alleged to have gone hand in hand with the gun in the conquest of African chiefdoms.²⁰

²⁰. See N. Majeke, The Role of Missionaries in Conquest, (Johannesburg, Society of Young Africa, 1952).

Liberal scholars generally hold a more sympathetic view of missionaries. While they do not deny that the co-operation that often existed between missionaries and the colonial governments was not necessarily beneficial to Africans, and that missionaries, like administrators and policy makers often did think in racist terms, they insist, however, that without missionaries, Africans would have received no education at all. Early missionaries, like government officials, should be seen as people of their time. They were part of an inequitable colonial society, and reflected and promoted ideas and values of their own time.²¹ Lambasting the implementation of Bantu education by the National Party government, Ken Hartshorne, in his recently published book, indicates that

The pre-1948 missionary institutions, in spite of their undoubted conservatism and paternalism - in this they were creatures of their own time - the poor conditions and limited facilities caused by inadequate funding, nevertheless provided a quality and style of education that South Africa could ill afford to lose in favour of what followed after 1948... They provided a leadership cadre in black communities.²²

Despite the problems that were associated with missionary schools in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, missionaries have been responsible for the establishment of famous institutions of learning such as Adams College,²³ Inanda

²¹. Christie, The Right to Learn, p.62.

²². Hartshorne, Crisis and Challenge, p.231.

²³. Unsuccessful attempts to frustrate the implementation of the Bantu Education Act forced the American Board of Missions to hand over the college to the government, on condition that the name "Adams

Seminary²⁴ and Saint Francis College. Chapter five of the thesis will trace the growth and development of the schools at Mariannhill from the 1880s to 1915, when Saint Francis College, then the largest Catholic Teachers Training Institution, came into being.

A central problem facing this study is an absence of day to day correspondence between the Mariannhill schools and the education authorities in Natal in the nineteenth century. This has led to a heavy reliance on official publications which give general information on the state of African education in Natal rather than detailed information on specific schools. Although correspondence and school reports on Mariannhill for the first two decades of the twentieth century do exist, lack of access to these have further handicapped the study. (See note on sources). Without these valuable sources, an adequate discussion on Father Huss's contribution to Saint Francis has also been made impossible.

College" should never be used. The college was renamed "Amanzimtoti Zulu College". S.du Rand, "From Mission School to Bantu Education: A History of Adams College", (University of Natal, Durban, M.A. thesis, 1990), p.155.

24. For general information on Inanda Seminary see H.Hughes, "A lighthouse for African womanhood: Inanda Seminary, 1869-1945", in C.Walker (ed), Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945 (Capetown, David Philip, 1990) pp.197-220.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ARRIVAL OF THE TRAPPISTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The first chapter, which is largely introductory, aims to provide a broad and general, yet basic background knowledge of the Trappist Order, which was established for the first time in South Africa in 1880. The chapter attempts to make a brief review of the Order in so far as its philosophy, ideas and beliefs were concerned. This will give valuable insight into the understanding of what the Order stood for, and will serve as a useful background to the chapters that follow. Familiarisation with the basic tenets of the Trappist Order is essential because this does not only help one to understand, and perhaps appreciate, some of the peculiarities which were associated with the Trappist monks in South Africa, but also serves to establish grounds from which one can extrapolate or interpret their actions. However, as we shall see, though the actions of the Trappist monks in South Africa could be explained to a large extent in terms of their overall religious Rule, the traditional Trappist mode of life was also influenced by local conditions.

In essence, chapter one attempts to address two fundamental issues. The first issue relates to the examination of the Trappists as members of a particular religious order, who they were and the kind of lifestyle they led. The second issue will focus, inter alia, on the settlement of the first Trappists in South Africa, the establishment of their first mission and the

problems they faced. This chapter covers the period between 1880, when the first contingent of Trappists arrived in South Africa, and 1882, when, in the face of numerous, enormous, and apparently insurmountable difficulties, they were forced to abandon their first mission in the Cape Colony and trekked to Natal.

The historical origin of the Trappist Order.

The Trappist Order has the Rule of Saint Benedict and the Order of the Cistercians as its fore-runners. The Order of Saint Benedict, which put strong emphasis on manual labour and a rigorous lifestyle, existed as early as the sixth century. However, by the eleventh century it had fallen into disrepute. Attempts were made to reform it and the resultant effect was the establishment of a new order, namely the Order of the Cistercians of Strict Observance.¹ This new order flourished for about two centuries before it in turn fell into disuse. This was due to the fact that as monastic wealth increased, manual labour was gradually exchanged for intellectual pursuits. Abbots and monks became increasingly involved in secular affairs. Extrinsic contributory factors that impacted on the monastic system included the Hundred Years War, the Black Death and the Western Schism.² However, during the long period of decline (1342-1790) various attempts were made to return to a

1. M.R. Flanagan, "Trappists", in New Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 14, 1967, p.55.

2. Ibid.

stricter observance. The most noteworthy reform occurred in 1664 when a Frenchman, Armand Jean le Bouthlier de Rance, attempted to revive the rigorous mode of life the Cistercians had led some six hundred years ago.³ This reform led to the establishment of a new order, the Trappist Order. The followers of this Order became known as the Trappists. They owe their name to La Trappe, the monastery in France where Abbot de Rance initiated his reforms. According to Schimlek, Trappists are "nothing else but twice reformed Benedictines".⁴

There are a number of characteristics that distinguished the Trappists from other religious orders in the world. Trappists followed the centuries old Benedictine system of cultivating in their monastery lands large productive farms before undertaking any direct evangelisation. Their method of evangelisation did not involve active missionary work for the salvation of souls for they believed that wide-scale agricultural activities would attract people around the monastery to join them, and considered this to be the first step towards the creation of a Christian community.⁵ The success of the Trappists' farming enterprise could be explained in terms of their extraordinary belief in the value of manual labour. The editor of the Natal Witness described the followers of de Rance as "capital agriculturalists ...generally men of iron will and rectitude".⁶ Following the

³. Natal Mercury, 2 December 1885.

⁴. F. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p. 11.

⁵. Ibid, p.12.

⁶. Natal Witness, 18 December 1885.

Benedictine motto, ora et labora, (pray and work), the Trappists juxtaposed their spiritual duties with their everyday manual activities. The life of a Trappist monk occupied the verge of human physical endurance. His working day started at 02h00 (or 01h30 on Sundays). It began with mass and other religious rites. Work proper began at 03h00 and comprised activities such as road construction, crop cultivation and farming. The working day of each monk was shared between prayer and manual work. The brothers spent nine hours on manual duties while the choir monks (ordained priests) spent six hours. The day ended at 19h00 (or 20h00 in summer). However, they were allowed to take an hour's rest after midday.⁷ As an act of penance, Trappists observed fasting. Their diet consisted of the bare essentials. They ate no meat, fish or eggs, and took neither tea nor coffee, no sweets or condiments. Furthermore, their Rule forbade them from consuming alcohol. Their staple diet thus depended principally on a supply of fresh fruit and vegetables, cereals and coarse brown bread.⁸

A special peculiarity of the Trappists was their perpetual silence. No conversations were allowed among members of the Order, neither could they converse with other people. Sign language was the only form of communication permitted. Every

7. Natal Mercury, 2 December 1885.

8. J. Brain "Mariannahill Monastery, 1882 - 1982", Natalia. Vol.12, 1982. A report in the Natal Advertiser (5 August 1893), contrasts Brain's claim that the Trappist monks took neither tea nor coffee. The report mentioned water, coffee and Tamarind wine among their permitted consumable liquids.

monk, however, was permitted to speak to the superior, but strictly on a condition of absolute necessity. Such conversations usually related to important business and spiritual matters.⁹ The only people exempted from the Rule of silence were those responsible for conducting business and attending to visitors.¹⁰ When a Trappist was about to die he obtained permission to break the seal of silence, and was allowed to have a final word with his brothers. Monsignor F.W. Kolbe, the founder and editor of the South African Catholic Magazine¹¹, attempted to dispel the mist of confusion which surrounded the law of silence. He stated that

It is not generally apprehended what is meant by that silence. It does not mean the stupid holding of the tongue per fas et nefas. It is simply refraining from unnecessary talking. If my readers were to become temporarily deaf they would soon discover how much talking it is possible to do without in the course of a day. The Trappists have found it out without being deaf. When it is necessary to talk for the purposes of learning and teaching, or for any object useful to their life, they obtain permission to talk... I can assure that there is enough talking for all intellectual needs: it is the unintellectual chattering of life that they deny themselves.¹²

Kolbe added that perpetual silence gave the Trappist monks more time to think, quarrelling was avoided and steady peace was

⁹. Natal Mercury, 2 December 1885.

¹⁰. Ibid.

¹¹. The South African Catholic Magazine (SACM) was founded by Msgr. F.W. Kolbe in 1891. It became an influential though unofficial mouthpiece of the Catholic Church in South Africa, and was an effective instrument of Catholic apologetics. Its print ended in 1924, when it was supplanted by the Southern Cross. See preface of the SACM Vol.9, 1925.

¹². SACM, Volume 5, 1895, pp.335-336.

created among them.¹³ The first abbot of Mariannahill, Abbot Franz Pfanner, was asked in 1889 if there were certain periods of intercourse permitted by tongue. His abrupt reply was "Never! Never! A Trappist! No! Never!".¹⁴ He explained that the vow was imposed for both spiritual and secular reasons. As an act of self-abnegation silence was spiritually beneficial. It was also secularly beneficial since there was no quarrelling when there was no talking, and much work was done. The editor of the Natal Mercury added that

The object of silence is to prevent frivolity, slander, lying, bearing false witness, gossiping, cursing, insinuations, and so on, and by silence they wish to bring about an inner union with God.¹⁵

Given this austere and ascetic lifestyle led by Trappist monks, it becomes obvious that not every candidate could meet all the prerequisites demanded by the strict Order. Consequently, a two-year probationary period was allowed to those entering the monastery, during which anyone was at liberty to leave if not at ease with the rules. The Abbot also retained the right to dismiss whoever he judged unfit and devoid of vocation.¹⁶ After this two-year probationary period, the monks were required to take three vows - those of poverty, chastity and obedience.

13. Ibid.

14. Natal Advertiser, 4 May 1889.

15. Natal Witness, 2 December 1882.

16. The Natal Mercury, (13 May 1884) cited a case of a certain Hermann Grueber, a Trappist who was dismissed from Mariannahill for intentionally breaking the Rule of silence, and for encouraging others to do so.

These were enjoined with strict silence.¹⁷

In the past, monasteries around the world were known to be institutions exclusively for men. Trappist monasteries were by no means an exception. The editor of the Natal Advertiser described the Trappists as "the most susceptible creatures to the charms of womankind, so much so that they dare not trust themselves to look up when a lady is passing."¹⁸ All women were prohibited from entering the Trappist premises and no shaking of hands with women was allowed. Schimlek claims that

The founder of the Trappist Order, de Rance...knew the significance of the saying Cherchez la femme... being a serious student of human nature,[he] knew that feminine influence would soon lead to a softening of their rigid and austere rules. Against this he had to guard and preserve the integrity of the Trappist tradition.¹⁹

In line with their strong belief in strict obedience and iron discipline, the Trappists' authority structure had a strong chain of command which effectively ensured the passing of orders from the senior to the junior members of the community. The hierarchical structure could be roughly segmented as follows: At the apex of the pyramid was the Prior or Abbot.²⁰ The Abbot was the most senior person and commanded overall authority over each and every member of the Trappist community. Below the Abbot were the fathers. These were priests proper, "men who have

17. J. Brain, "Mariannahill Monastery, 1882-1982".

18. Natal Advertiser, 23 August 1886.

19. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p. 84.

20. The Abbot was addressed as the "Reverend Father", Natal Advertiser, 29 December 1885.

taken the vow of the Trappist Order, and to all intents and purposes are dead to the world."²¹ Each father wore a distinctive dress - a white habit and a black scapula, to which was attached a cowl for covering the head. The fathers devoted much of their time to the spiritual needs of the monastery, visiting the church more than a dozen times every day. Below the fathers were the Brothers and novices. The Brothers could be distinguished by their dark brown dress and leather girdles. The novices were entrants and spent their first few years in training for the irrevocable vow of the Order. Perhaps the greatest difficulty that all Trappist monks experienced in their lives was the subjection of their own will to religious obedience and their life-long separation from their beloved relatives and friends.²²

The establishment of the first Trappist mission in South Africa

The establishment of the Trappist Order in South Africa owes much to a Catholic bishop, Bishop James David Ricards. Bishop Ricards of the Eastern Cape Vicariate had as early as 1875 begun campaigning in various European countries, appealing for Catholic priests and teachers to join his vicariate for the purpose of Christianising and educating the Thembu people. He also hoped to establish a community of nuns in nearby King William's Town. Between the years 1875 and 1879 Bishop Ricards's success was very minimal - he had succeeded in getting only three English-speaking Jesuit priests to the Cape Colony.

²¹. Natal Mercury, 1 August 1893.

²². Ibid.

Nevertheless, this trio was to be instrumental in the founding and subsequent development of the famous Saint Aidans' College.²³

Ricards's success, shortlived as it was to prove to be, came in 1879, when he travelled to England, at the invitation of a Jesuit priest, Father Weld. From England he moved to France, where a prestigious opportunity to address a packed General Chapter of the Trappist Order at Sept Fons was afforded him.²⁴ The bishop's earnest appeal for Trappist monks to come and establish a monastery and schools in his vicariate was greeted with a long moment of silence. At last, however, this silence was broken by 55 year old Father Franz Pfanner, the youngest among the capitulators present. "If no one is willing to go, I shall go!".²⁵ It is ironic that these words were uttered by Father Franz, the most unlikely candidate to volunteer to come to South Africa. He was the most unlikely candidate because the Monastery Maria Stern²⁶ in Bosnia, of which he was the founder, and in which he, and his close circle of hard-working and dedicated monks, had arduously laboured for a decade, had just been elevated into an abbey, and he had been appointed as its first abbot. The elevation of Maria Stern into an abbey was the greatest honour that could be bestowed by the Holy Church in

23. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.29.

24. B. Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannahill: A Short Biography of Abbot Francis Pfanner, (Mariannahill, Mariannahill Mission Press, 1948), p.29.

25. Kneipp, et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.72.

26. This means "Mary the Star".

recognition of the diligent work of the Trappists. Therefore, Abbot Franz's decision to come to South Africa to start a new mission came as a complete surprise, and baffled almost everyone present at the meeting. Yet the abbot had made his decision - it was final and he stood steadfastly by it. Gamble states that

With these few, simple words ["If no one is willing to go I shall go!"] he had committed himself wholeheartedly to an undertaking that was to become for him a long, hard and stony path in the wilderness.²⁷

According to Gamble, Pfanner's decision was to bring him, in later years, not only into conflict with the ancient monastic rules of the Trappist Order, but also personal disgrace and misery. She indicates, however, that on the positive side, the same decision was to make him revered as the founder of many Catholic missions in Natal and the Cape.²⁸

Pleased with Pfanner's decision to come to South Africa, Bishop Ricards announced that he had purchased a large piece of land at Dunbrody along the Sundays River - this he promised to hand over to the Trappists for the construction of a monastery and school buildings, as well as the cultivation of crops.²⁹ Having left Europe on 22 June 1880, Father Franz Pfanner and his band of 31 Trappist monks disembarked at Port Elizabeth approximately a

27. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.30.

28. Ibid.

29. The conditions governing the occupation of Dunbrody by the Trappists are outlined in Bishop Ricards's letter to Bishop Jolivet, dated 25 July 1882. See A. Weisswurm (comp), The Dunbrody Episode, pp.354-356.

month later.³⁰ However, once at Dunbrody, the monks realised that their new home was to be built in a desert-like environment, an environment which, according to Gamble, "was enough to undermine even the stoutest of all hearts."³¹ Even Dunbrody Abbey itself "was nothing more than a corrugated iron shack amid a desolate wasteland."³² The following is said to have been penned by Pfanner on this occasion:

I had to force myself to control my feelings and thoughts - it took but a few glances to realise that this was much worse than we had expected, even our realistic anticipation of the hardships of our future work... I found myself asking: what have you left behind Franz, and now what do you find?³³

For more than two years the monks struggled to establish themselves at Dunbrody. A harsh climate, scarcity of rainfall, unproductive soils and diseases were among the factors that worked against a successful establishment of a Trappist monastery at Dunbrody. Inevitably, it was only a matter of time before the whole scheme collapsed.³⁴

It might be pertinent to ask, at this point, the following questions: Given the nature of the Trappists, without turning a blind eye to the difficulties that faced them, was the exposure to such rigour and harshness not the way Trappists were

30. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p. 31.

31. Ibid, p.34.

32. Ibid.

33. Quoted in Gamble, Ibid.

34. For more information on the Trappist settlement at Dunbrody see Weisswurm, The Dunbrody Episode.

destined to live? Were these not the kind of tests they should face and withstand? It is not easy to give a definitive answer to the above questions. Suffice it to say that after two years of unrewarding labour, Franz Pfanner and his followers decided to abandon Dunbrody, and leave for Natal. Gamble remarks that "It was too much even for men who were conditioned to austerity and hardship..."³⁵ Realising the futility of the whole exercise, Pfanner left Dunbrody for Europe, in the middle of 1882, to confer with his superiors about these difficulties. At the same time he instructed two brothers to go to Natal to explore the possibilities of establishing a mission in that colony. This was a clear indication that Pfanner had finally conceded defeat and faced up to the reality that continued stay at Dunbrody was a waste of time, energy and human life: in essence, a hopeless task.

Pfanner's decision to abandon Dunbrody was endorsed by his superiors in Europe. As an added consolation was the receipt of the news that Bishop Jolivet of Natal had granted the Trappists permission to settle in his vicariate.³⁶ At Dunbrody in August 1882, Father Joseph Biegner received the following order from Pfanner: "Exi de Terra Tua" (leave your land!).³⁷

³⁵. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.34.

³⁶. The first meeting between Bishop Jolivet and the Trappists took place in July 1882. Two monks, sent by Pfanner, met the Bishop and explained to him the immense difficulties they were facing in the Eastern Cape, and asked for permission to settle in his vicariate. J. Brain, Catholics in Natal 2 1886-1925 p.128.

³⁷. Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannahill, p.32.

These words marked the closure of the Dunbrody chapter. Though the failure of the first Trappist mission in the Eastern Cape was no doubt a major setback, greener pastures were awaiting them in the colony of Natal, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Schimlek claims that the name of the abbey "has nowhere been preserved, except perhaps on the plates and cups, which so proudly bore its name if, of course, the last of this historic crockery has not been broken." ³⁸ The Dunbrody experience, however, was not easily forgotten, and to Pfanner Dunbrody always remained "the place of thorns."³⁹

To sum up , the Trappist mission at Dunbrody can be said to have failed mainly because of hostile climatic conditions in the Eastern Cape. Schimlek added that the failure could also be attributed to "the rigid method of Trappist farming. They attempted to apply Austrian agricultural methods to the sun-scorched semi-desert in the Sundays River, a method which of necessity had to fail."⁴⁰

38. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.25.

39. W. Brown, The Catholic Church in South Africa. From its Origins to the Present Day. (London, Burns and Oates, 1960), p.231.

40. Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FOUNDING OF MARIANHILL MISSION

The first chapter sought to familiarise the reader with the basic tenets of the Trappist Order. It also explored the establishment of the first Trappist mission in South Africa. As shown, their first mission collapsed at the end of 1882, approximately two years after its establishment. However, the failure of their first mission did not signal a death knell to the continued existence of the Trappists in South Africa. Consultations with their superiors in Europe and Bishop Jolivet in Natal led to a decision to move to the colony of Natal and establish a new mission there. This chapter, therefore, aims to investigate the activities of the Trappists in Natal. A particular focus will be on the establishment of the famous Mariannahill Mission Station, situated a few kilometres west of Pinetown. Mariannahill was to become, in a period of five years, not only a centre for industrial, religious and educational activities, but also the largest Trappist abbey in the world.

Amid bitter protests from Bishop Ricards, the Trappists left Dunbrody for Natal in the closing months of 1882.¹ Upon their

¹. Bishop Ricards was strongly opposed to the Trappists' move to Natal. In a desperate attempt to halt their move, he demanded a repayment of the £2 000 he had advanced to Pfanner shortly before he came to South Africa. This demand was later extended to Bishop Jolivet, who had allowed the monks to settle in his vicariate, and who was thus the beneficiary of their services. This issue was taken to a higher authority in Rome for a decision. In 1884 Pfanner was ordered to repay this amount. Schimlek, Mariannahill, pp. 23-26.

arrival in Durban, the monks were welcomed by Bishop Jolivet, and were directed to a mission station on the Bluff, where they stayed with the Oblate Fathers, while waiting for Pfanner to return from Europe.² The agreement reached with Bishop Jolivet was that they would establish their monastery at Saint Michael's mission, situated 130 miles inland³, a mission which had been an unsuccessful and worrying enterprise for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.⁴ However, upon his return from Europe, Pfanner politely brushed aside Bishop Jolivet's offer of Saint Michael's, and insisted on buying land not far from Port Natal and the sea.⁵ The frustrations, setbacks and disappointments the Trappists had suffered at Dunbrody explain, in no small way, Pfanner's reluctance to move to Saint Michael's. The Prior had realised that Saint Michael's was unsuitable for beginners. The long distance from the port would undoubtedly starve the Trappists of the basic necessities and supplies via the sea route. Furthermore, the cost of getting such supplies to this remote farm would be considerable. In addition, Pfanner had learned of the unsuitability of Saint Michael's for farming due to its unproductive soils.⁶ Pfanner's bargaining power was further strengthened by Chief Manzini's appeal for missionaries

2. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.36.

3. Ibid.

4. See J. Brain, Catholic Beginnings in Natal and Beyond (Durban, Griggs and Company, 1975), p.165.

5. Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannahill, p.36.

6. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.34.

to come and Christianize his subjects (the Shozi) and build schools for their children. The home of the Shozi had been at Mahlabathini in Zululand. The Shakan wars had forced them and their chiefs to flee Zululand. At first they settled around Port Natal, but gradually they moved along the Umhlatuzan River and eventually settled in the Pinetown area. Some of Manzini's people had settled within the boundaries of Zeekoeqat, the farm that was to be bought by the Trappists.⁷ The Trappists were eventually allowed to establish their mission anywhere near the sea, with no material or financial assistance to be given to them.⁸ However, an undertaking was made by Pfanner to move to Saint Michael's at a later stage. This undertaking was fulfilled in 1890.⁹

The purchase of Het Zeekoeqat.

Shortly before the Christmas of 1882, Pfanner bought Het Zeekoeqat, a large and fertile farm, from the Land and Colonization Company.¹⁰ The original farm land extended for about 2 000 acres, and was situated about six kilometres west of Pinetown in the direction of the Umhlatuzan River.¹¹ The farm was well watered and suitable for crop cultivation and stock

7. For more information on the Shozi people before the arrival of the Trappists see Brain, Catholic Beginnings, p.170 and Schimlek, Mariannahill, pp.48-49.

8. Brain, Catholic Beginnings, p.170.

9. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.36.

10. Brain, Catholics in Natal, p.132.

11. Natal Mercury, 22 December 1882.

farming. Pfanner added that the secluded spot was selected on account of its suitability for the observance of the Trappist rule of silence.¹² Passing into Trappist hands, the farm changed its appellations - It was renamed Mariannahill.¹³ At the time of occupation, the monks numbered 48, but many more were to arrive in the coming months.¹⁴ Among these were, inter alia, skilled tradesmen, including masons, blacksmiths, locksmiths, carpenters, tailors and shoemakers. The Trappists' unorthodox dress, perpetual silence and continuous toiling in the hot sun drew large crowds of admirers each day. Their arrival offered something new and alien to Natal colonial society.

12. Natal Witness, 23 December 1882.

13. Hoffman states that the mission was named in dedication to the blessed Virgin and her mother Saint Anne, to both of whom Pfanner was greatly devoted. See Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannahill, p.37. This interpretation is not fully supported by Schimlek. He insists that the name stemmed much more from filial reverence than from religious motives. He indicates that "Mary-Anne" was the name of Franz's beloved step-mother "who...had protected the little red-head from the insults of his schoolmates...." (See Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.42). Gamble does not only synthesise these two interpretations, she throws more light onto the historical origin of Mariannahill. While she agrees with Hoffmann that the mission was named in dedication to Mary and Anne, she further highlights the fact that "Maria Anna" was the name of both Pfanner's biological and social mothers. The green and silent hills which surrounded the mission shared in the glory of that dedication. Pfanner had thus named the mission Mary-Anne-Hills, the hills of Mary and Anne. (See Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.39).

14. The Natal Witness reported, for example, the arrival of 34 Trappist on 21 August 1883, nine on 26 November and eight on 28 April 1884.

Soon after their arrival, the Trappists set about building a monastery. No effort was spared in the implementation of the ora et labora maxim, emblematic of the Order. Within a relatively short period of three years, significant changes were evident at the mission. Numerous buildings were in place - among these were a small church, dormitories for the monks, a refectory and a chapter house.¹⁵ Added to this was a guesthouse and a multiplicity of workshops for carpenters, wagon-makers, blacksmiths, tailors and photographers. Overlooking all these mission buildings was the Priory, a house built for Father Franz, the Prior of Mariannahill. It was a simple wood and iron shack.¹⁶

Alongside these constructions went even more arduous activities such as road making, crop cultivation, and tree planting. Under the expert guidance of Nivard Streicher,¹⁷ several roads in Natal were constructed by the Trappists. The Natal Mercury wrote of the Trappists as

...thorough road-makers...they have already got miles of hardened roads, with stone bridges at every necessary spot, extending to Pinetown in one direction, Northdene in another, and towards the Richmond Road in the third. In fact the estate is environed with good roads. The formation is durable

15. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.37.

16. Ibid.

17. Brother Nivard Streicher, perhaps better known than any other brother at that time, was a brilliant engineer whose expertise in building earned him admiration and recognition among many people in Natal, including government officials. See SACM, Vol.5, 1895.

and effective. Where needed, a solid wall to form a bank is built at the side, and fairly large boulders are cast in to make the foundation. The soil and small broken stones are worked in to form the road. True, they are not as hard as the macadamised roads of Durban, but they are roads that will last a long time, and roads that can easily be repaired. The wagons of the Trappists pass over them, so that they are evidently made with a view to bear heavy traffic upon them.¹⁸

In recognition of their work, the Natal colonial government accorded all intending Trappists from Europe the privilege of a reduced rate of passage of £5.¹⁹ A large dam²⁰ was built on the Umhlatuzan River, and further down a mill was erected. The mill was a two and a half storey high building. It was 84 feet long and 42 feet wide, the first storey being 13 feet high, the second 11 feet and the third 9 feet. It had a large grinding machine and was worked by water power. The Natal Mercury remarked that

...the mill and its surrounding is the greatest achievement of the Trappists so far...a building which has not its equal in the colony for its class.²¹

Furthermore, large acres of agricultural land were brought under cultivation. This was partly because working in the fields complied with the Trappists' ora et labora motto, and partly because food had to be produced for survival since a monastery is a self-supporting community. The monks also ran large

18. Natal Mercury, 30 November.

19. Natal Mercury, 4 March 1884.

20. The 11 feet high dam was described as "a neat , solid construction that will withstand tremendous force." Natal Mercury, 1 December 1885.

21. Ibid.

productive gardens and plantations. Bananas, pineapples, grape vines, monkeynuts, tomatoes, beans, peas, etc. were among the crops and fruit trees planted.²² By 1884 more than 7 000 fruit trees had been planted. The silent monks worked all day long in the hot sun. The Prior had their heads shaved to get them better used to working bare-headed in the sun.²³ This strange practice of subjecting the monks' heads to direct sunlight was seriously questioned by the Natal Mercury. The editor's comment read as follows:

I am no judge on such matters, but I think it a great risk to walk and work in the hot sun bareheaded, as a sunstroke might ensue, from which one or two brethren are suffering already.²⁴

The Trappists possessed expert knowledge in animal husbandry. They farmed in cattle and horses, and used these draught animals for transport, ploughing and general farm pursuits. A thriving bee-hive was also in existence. It was run by a brother whom Pfanner described as a "scientific expert". Italian queen-bees were imported to improve the quality of the honey produced.²⁵ Mariannahill became renowned for its sweet honey, and many visitors to the monastery did not forget to mention the excellent honey served to them by the Prior. Finally, a weaving industry was established at Mariannahill to manufacture clothes for the

22. Natal Witness, 28 April 1884.

23. Natal Mercury, 11 February 1884.

24. Ibid.

25. Natal Mercury, 2 December 1885.

monks, as well as for the surrounding African community. A Natal newspaper claimed that the Trappists were the first people in the whole of South Africa to manufacture and sell woollen goods.²⁶

By 1885, the Trappists had established a strong foothold in the colony of Natal. Numerous buildings, including a church and two schools were in existence, roads and bridges had been constructed and the agricultural enterprise proved productive. Kneipp remarked that

The wilderness [had] soon yielded to well-tendered fields and pastures, to luxurious plantations, vegetable gardens and orchards.²⁷

The monks were given wide and generous press coverage for their painstaking and rewarding efforts. Hardly a day passed without a mention of the Trappists in the local press. The reasons for such attention are not difficult to find. By the time of the establishment of Mariannahill mission, the colony of Natal was still bleeding from the political and economic wounds inflicted upon it by the Anglo-Zulu War. The war had thrown Natal into turmoil, causing massive losses in human life and material. The British onslaught against the Zulu drastically weakened, and eventually led to the disintegration of the Zulu kingdom.²⁸ African family life and social organisation were severely disrupted, African land was encroached upon and large numbers of

26. Ibid.

27. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.17.

28. See J.Guy, The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom, (Capetown, Ravan Press, 1979).

their livestock were confiscated as war booty. The political and economic prospects of the British in South Africa appeared gloomy and uncertain. The First Anglo-Boer War was a humiliating affair for the British - their decisive defeat at Majuba and the subsequent granting of independence to the South African Republic (Transvaal) constituted a serious threat to British supremacy in South Africa. Furthermore, the diamond trade in Kimberley, where the British had invested much capital, had fallen short of expectations, and the sugar industry in Natal had not advanced because the importation of indentured labourers from India had failed to meet the required labour demands. As in many parts of South Africa, several districts in Natal were severely scorched by the drought. Putting all these factors together, the years following the wars can be said to have been harsh ones which left the scantiest hope of optimism.²⁹ Consequently, by way of distracting the attention of the public from the gloomy and melancholy prospects in the colony, newspapers in Natal focused on the arrival of the Trappists, whom they considered to present a new and alternative way of life. They focused on each and every thing that the monks did, including simple things such as

29. For a detailed discussion on the War's economic consequences see D. van Zyl, "The Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and its economic consequences for the colony of Natal", (University of Natal, Durban, M.A. thesis, 1985), pp. 46-62. On the positive side, however, the Anglo Zulu War triggered an influx of capital and goods. Though these were originally intended to maintain the British troops, they ended up benefitting the Zulu people as well. See also J. Laband, chapter 8, Natal and (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1989). P.Thompson, "The reduction of the Zululand", pp. 193-232, in A.Duminy, B.Guest (eds), Zululand. From Earliest Times to 1910, Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1989).

greeting patterns.³⁰ The public was invited to visit the "Trappist Colony" to see for themselves. However, the press cautiously added that the presence of the immigrant monks was still a matter of speculation and doubt among the African community.

For his part, the Prior of Mariannhill kept the public and his donors abroad informed of all events and developments at Mariannhill. In 1883 a monthly periodical, Fliegende Blatter aus Sudafrika, was introduced. It was published in German and advocated manual labour as the best way of converting Africans to Christianity. The periodical, which served the purpose of raising funds for Mariannhill, was described as "an interesting and creditable publication."³¹ Through this publication the Prior informed his benefactors and supporters overseas about developments and progress at Mariannhill. Other mission publications included a German magazine, Vergismeinnicht, the Natal Record³², a weekly journal and an annual Mariannhill

30. Their greeting salutations were comprised of touching one shoulder first, then the other, followed by strange embraces. See Natal Witness, 29 November 1882.

31. Natal Mercury, 16 October 1883.

32. The Natal Record was founded in the beginning of 1889. Franz Pfanner, by then the Abbot of Mariannhill, published controversial articles on the education of African girls in this journal. Beleaguered by financial difficulties, the journal ceased to exist in February 1890. See Natal Mercury, 7 January 1889, 14 February 1890, Natal Witness, 5 January 1889, 13 February 1890. Brain indicates that no copies have been traced in South Africa. See Catholics in Natal, p.142.

calender, "Forget-Me-Not".³³ Brain has indicated that "publications such as Vergismeinnicht and Mariannahill Kalender, the circulation of which had been increasing every year, had made Mariannahill so well known and so popular that the other Trappist missions in Europe were beginning to notice a marked decline in donations and even in novices."³⁴ Dischl added that "...the successful work of the Trappists... must be sought in the skillful handling and assiduous use of publicity."³⁵ All printing was done at the Mariannahill printing establishment. The South African Catholic Magazine mentioned that:

Printing of every description, as well as book-binding, is done [at Mariannahill]...All the books, prayers, hymns and school books are printed and bound here... .Trappists take orders for printing of every description from anyone that offers...they have their own type founding, the only one, we believe, in South Africa. They make their own type and stereotype, and in addition have a lithographic plant of the latest and most approved pattern.³⁶

It needs to be mentioned that while the Trappists aimed at converting Africans to Christianity through the example of hard work, their first settlement was surrounded not only by African people, but also by some white settlers, the majority of whom were English speaking. Both these groups, and the government, took a keen, and often suspicious, interest in their new neighbours and their esoteric activities. Mariannahill mission, at that time, was a successful Trappist establishment in the

33. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.60.

34. Brain, Catholics in Natal, p.160.

35. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.60.

36. SACM, Vol.9, 1899, p.40.

midst of a large number of Africans on one hand, and a handful of colonists on the other. As we shall see in chapter four, the existence of the Trappists in the region was perceived as posing a threat of some kind by some sections from each of these groups. The hard and tough task that awaited the Trappists was that of winning, by word and deed, the hearts and minds of Africans, their chiefs, colonists and government officials.

The elevation of Mariannhill into an abbey.

In recognition of the hard work and remarkable progress at Mariannhill, the Priory was elevated into an abbey at the end of 1885. The Prior, Franz Pfanner, became not only the Abbot of the institution, but also the first priest in South Africa to be consecrated to the high office of an abbot, one of the oldest ecclesiastical offices known to Christendom.³⁷ The consecration ceremony was conducted by Bishop Jolivet.³⁸ It was well attended, and lasted for three days.³⁹ Abbot Pfanner chose currite ut comprehendatis (Run that you may win) as his coat of

37. Natal Advertiser, 19 November 1885.

38. Natal Mercury and Natal Witness, 29 December 1885.

39. The consecration ceremony began on 27 and ended on 29 December 1885. Important guests invited included the Attorney-General of Natal (Gallwey) and the Colonial Auditor (Crowley). The procession consisted of 35 fathers, 61 brothers, 20 white boys, 48 African boys, 44 African girls, 12 sisters, six novices and about 100 Christianised Africans. In addition, the ceremony was attended by more than 300 Africans. This large number of Africans, according to press claims, could be explained less in terms of a growing interest in Christianity and more in terms of the meat provided. Natal Advertiser, 29 December 1885, Natal Mercury, 29 December 1885, Natal Witness, 30 December 1885.

arms.⁴⁰ Pfanner 's consecration gave him full jurisdiction over the Trappist community in South Africa. By then it comprised at least 90 members - thirteen of whom spoke Polish, three spoke English, five spoke one of the Balkan languages and the rest spoke German.⁴¹ In 1887 Mariannahill became the largest abbey in the world.

Under the leadership of Abbot Pfanner, Mariannahill expanded at a remarkably fast rate. Between 1886 and 1890 no less than eight new missions were founded by Abbot Pfanner. In October 1886 the Trappists acquired a large piece of land at Polela, at the foot of the Drakensberg mountains, 135 miles from Mariannahill.⁴² On the banks of the Umzimkulu River Mariannahill 's first outstation or daughter station was established. It was named Reichenau.⁴³ The mission was established in the region under the chieftainship of Sakayedwa.⁴⁴ Father Arsenius became the Prior of the new

40. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.53.

41. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.90.

42. Natal Advertiser, 7 October 1886, Natal Witness, 9 October 1886.

43. It was named after the famous monastery on the banks of the Rhine River. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.94.

44. Chief Sakayedwa had repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, appealed to the government to build schools for his people. When the Trappist monks bought land at Polela the chief immediately asked them to build ten schools for his people. See Colonial Secretary's Office (thereafter CSO), Vol. 1078, 1876/86, "The Abbot-Trappist Abbey, Mariannahill, asks what assistance the Government could render, and upon what conditions, in connection with the establishment of certain schools.", 26 April 1886.

mission, and together with twelve sisters and eight brothers, he set out to develop Reichenau into an educational and missionary centre.⁴⁵ In the same year another mission, Loretto, was founded in the neighbouring village of Pinetown.⁴⁶ Between 1887 and 1888 six missions were founded by the Trappists, and two more were added in 1890.⁴⁷ Thus, between 1886 and 1890 eight new Trappist mission stations had been founded in Natal and in the Cape colony. No more missions were established during Pfanner's period in office as abbot of Mariannahill. As we shall see, however, many more missions were to be established by Pfanner's successors.

Mariannahill mission, like most missions in the nineteenth century, was established primarily for the Christianisation of Africans in its vicinity. As we shall see, however, the element of Christianisation went hand in hand with the elements of westernisation and education. Education in particular, was effectively utilised by many missionaries to further the goals of Christianity.

The Mariannahill policy of education will be examined in Chapter Three. This will be done within the context of government

45. Natal Advertiser, 7 October 1886. Natal Witness, 9 October 1886.

46. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.58.

47. Saint Michael's was one of the missions taken over by the Trappists in 1890. The other was Maria Ratschiz. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.56.

apathy towards African education in the nineteenth century. Some historians argue that it was this apathy that had elevated the status of missionaries into that of being the chief benefactors of Africans in the field of education. While there is a grain of truth in this, it must not be forgotten that education, to most nineteenth century missionaries, was of secondary importance to, and served the primary goal of, Christianisation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MARIANHILL POLICY OF EDUCATION

In the preceding two chapters an attempt was made to outline the basic tenets of the Trappist Order. This was followed by a brief look at the activities of the Trappist monks in the Eastern Cape as well as in Natal. The monks, in both places, channelled their efforts and energies towards the realisation of the ora et labora credo, in which they held an unwavering conviction. This they hoped to achieve by active involvement in extensive crop cultivation, building, farming activities. By 1885, the Trappists had made remarkable progress in these respective fields. They were highly praised and commended for their work, and the press in Natal gave them wide and generous publicity. For their part, the Trappists founded their own newspapers and periodicals to inform their supporters more about themselves and their work as well as to raise funds for their mission.

The rigorous and austere activities of the Trappist monks at Mariannahill constituted a unique means through which they hoped to convert the Africans in the neighbourhood to Christianity. It clearly distinguished them from all the other religious societies in the colony, Catholic and Protestant. In due course, however, the Trappists came to incorporate in their method an element which in the late nineteenth century characterised most religious societies in their quest for proselytizing the African. This was the element of education. In the last few decades of the nineteenth century, most missionary societies in Natal, guided by events that had occurred in the Cape, strengthened the

relationship between education and Christianisation, the former being a powerful instrument with which to realise the aims of the latter. During this time, the Natal colonial government did not see it as its duty to provide education for Africans. This apathy inevitably bred a situation whereby African education became by and large the duty of missionaries. The government's only means of assistance took the form of awarding small grants-in-aid to deserving schools. The first schools at Mariannhill were among those in receipt of this kind of aid from the government. Franz Pfanner introduced in his schools educational policies that were not only unorthodox, but were so controversial as to spark outcries from various circles, as will be seen in chapter four. An outline of Pfanner's educational policy is the main focus of this chapter. But before unveiling the Mariannhill educational policy, it is essential to make an historical review of education in South Africa, from early times to the nineteenth century.

Education for the indigenous people in South Africa from early times to the nineteenth century, with particular reference to Natal.

"The history of Native education in South Africa is a history of South African missions, for it is due entirely to the efforts of the missionaries that the Natives of South Africa have received any education at all..."¹

This assertion was made by Dr. C.T. Loram, a prominent educationist and Inspector of Native education in Natal in the 1920s. In his book, Education of the South African Native, Loram

¹. Loram, Education, p.54.

examined the state of African education at its different stages of development, uncovering the attitude of the several colonial governments to the question. Loram was not alone in this endeavour. The same trend of investigation was to be followed by a range of educational historians and analysts. These included, inter alia, Behr, Macmillan, Rose and Tunmer, Christie and others. All these have made invaluable contributions to the understanding of the historical development of education in this country, the problems it faced, as well as ways and means introduced to address such problems.

Prior to the arrival of the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) in the Cape colony there were no schools in South Africa. One could not speak of the existence of formal education at that time. However, it would be incorrect to contend that during this period there was no education at all. The Khoisan hunter-gatherers and the Nguni subsistence farmers did have effective means of ensuring the inheritance of cultural norms, values and traditions from one generation to the other. This was achieved through informal education which formed an integral part of every child's daily life. Children learned from the older members of the community through experience and practical tasks reserved for them from an early age. Informal learning was a continuous process which prepared children to be mature and responsible adults. Initiation ceremonies and rituals were part and parcel of the informal learning and teaching process. The history and traditions were also carried over to the next generation orally

through songs, poems and folktales.² Given this wide variety characteristic of the pre-colonial learning and teaching process, it would be incorrect to argue, as some historians do, that the history of education in South Africa began only after the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck.³ It is important to make a clear distinction between schooling and education. While the former can be traced back to the arrival of whites in South Africa, the latter, informal as it was, had long been an integral part of the way of life of the indigenous people of South Africa.

The establishment of the DEIC in the Cape colony marked the beginning of formal learning, tentative as it was to prove to be. By its charter the DEIC pledged to spread, through education, the doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church among the inhabitants of the Cape. However, formal education proper was in its infancy during this period. Behr and Macmillan assert that "During the whole period of the Dutch regime, at the Cape, formal elementary education meant instruction in the doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church. The pupils learned prayers, passages from the Bible and the catechism. There would also be singing lessons in preparation for church services. Some of the abler pupils would also acquire the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic."⁴ It must be noted, however, that during this time education was not free, and not even all the white children went to school.

2. P. Christie, The Right to Learn, p.30.

3. Ibid.

4. A.L. Behr, R.G. Macmillan, Education in South Africa, (Pretoria, Van Schaik, 1966), p.89.

The years following the establishment of the DEIC witnessed a dispersion of white settlers from Europe to the Cape. Many of these settlers established themselves as farmers and traders and settled permanently. Others became trekboers and moved further inland in search of grazing land for their cattle and sheep. In the beginning, the first group experienced a serious problem of labour shortage. They solved this by importing slaves from West Africa, Java, Madagascar, and other parts of Africa, as well as the Far East. These slaves worked as unskilled labourers on the farms and towns.⁵ The very first formal school in the Cape (and in the whole of what subsequently became modern South Africa) was opened in 1658 for the education of adult slaves and their children. Though an attempt was made to teach them the three R's, namely, reading, writing and arithmetic, much emphasis was laid on religious instruction. The slaves' school lasted for only three weeks, because in spite of being bribed with brandy and tobacco the pupils ran away from the school and hid in the caves.⁶ In 1663 another school was founded in the Cape. It was the first multiracial school in South Africa. It started off with 17 pupils - 12 whites, 4 slaves and 1 Khoikhoi.⁷ It is worth noting that during this time a relatively harmonious racial climate prevailed at the Cape. It was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that whites began to object strongly

5. Christie, The Right to Learn, p.31.

6. M.E. Mckerron, A History of Education in South Africa, 1652-1932, (Pretoria, Van Schaik, 1934), p.2.

7. Ibid. See also M. Horrell, The Education of the Coloured Community in South Africa (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1970), pp.1-4.

to the existence of multi-racial schools, and vigorous and systematic attempts were made to establish separate schools for whites and blacks.⁸

The appointment of George Grey as Governor of the Cape in 1854 heralded a somewhat new era in African education. Grey regarded education as the most important factor in the peaceful subjugation of the indigenous population. He had also found in education an effective means of breaking up the African ethnic organisation.⁹ Seeing education as having a crucial role to play in the government 's policy of "border pacification", Grey persuaded the British Imperial Government to subsidise missionary institutions so that they could train Africans in industrial occupations, and "fit them to act as interpreters, evangelists and schoolmasters amongst their own people."¹⁰ In a parliamentary address he stated that:

If we leave the natives beyond our borders ignorant barbarians, they will remain a race of troublesome marauders. We should try and make them a part of

⁸. During this time there were no laws that prohibited the establishment of mixed schools. Inter-racial marriages were also in existence. In the case of marriage between the races, the only bar was religion. That is, indigenous and other non-white women could contract marriages with European men as long as they professed to the Christian religion. In fact, the first Khoikhoi woman to be converted to Christianity (in 1662) married a European man. The practice of miscegenation on a wide scale at the Cape in the early part of the nineteenth century explains, more than any other factor, the concentration of the Coloured community in that part of South Africa. However, in the twentieth century mounting racism led to the introduction of certain legislations that made inter-racial marriages a punishable offence.

⁹. Behr, New perspectives, p.11.

¹⁰. Ibid.

ourselves, with a common faith and common interests, useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue. Therefore, I propose that we make unremitting efforts to raise the natives in Christianity and civilisation, by establishing among them missions connected with industrial schools.

Grey added that "The native races beyond our boundaries, influenced by our missionaries, instructed in our schools, benefitting by our trade, would not make wars on our frontiers."¹² A conclusion which can be drawn from the above is that while the missionaries, on one hand, used education to further their own religious purposes, the Cape government, on the other, found in both education and religion a means of political stabilisation that would ensure long-term prospects of economic development in the colony. The government's hope was that the government-subsidised mission schools would produce "useful and obedient servants" by instructing Africans in religion, industrial subjects and the basics of the English language. In these schools Africans would be given the basics of elementary literacy, they would be taught the discipline of hard work and the habits of industry would be inculcated in them.¹³ Moreover, the practice of subsidising mission schools proved to be the cheapest means of government involvement in the rather costly task of educating the African. It must be emphasised that the government's indirect involvement in African education was an opportunistic stance, solely for its own benefit and

11. Quoted in B. Rose and R. Turner, Documents in South African Education, (Johannesburg, Donker, 1975), p.205.

12. Ibid.

13. Molteno, F. in Apartheid and Education. pp.51-52.

convenience. African education was never meant to be either for self-advancement or a vehicle for social equality. It was designed to produce an unskilled and semi-skilled docile labour force.¹⁴ This system was to continue, though on a much reduced scale, until the early years of the 1950s when the National Party government relieved all churches of their educational duties, and, by usurping responsibility, deprived missionaries of their duty of providing education to Africans.

The education of the African people in Natal took root only in the second half of the nineteenth century, though missions in the colony can be traced back to the 1830s. Politically Natal was, at least until 1845, part of the Cape. Despite the fact that the American Board of Missions exercised much influence in the colony, and had by 1850 established at least twelve mission stations among the Zulu people, very little had been achieved in the field of African education.¹⁵ In 1848 Natal became a separate British colony. From the onset the government policy towards Africans marked a radical departure from the Cape colonial policy. While it was a definite part of Sir George Grey's policy to break up the African ethnic organisation in the Cape, in Natal concerted efforts were made to nurture and

¹⁴. It must not be forgotten, however, that educated Africans in the Cape, in comparison with those in the other colonies, were in all respects far better off. This was evidenced, for example, by the fact that their right to vote remained unquestioned for a long time and was defended by the legislators.

¹⁵. Mckerron, A History of Education in South Africa, p.164.

strengthen these ethnic bonds. It was laid down that there should be no form of interference with the laws and customs of the Africans "except when these were repugnant to the principles of humanity."¹⁶ In essence, the Natal colonial policy aimed to preserve as far as possible the racial and ethnic characteristics of the Africans while the laws in the Cape aimed to assimilate them fully into the British system. The implementation of the Natal policy took the form of recognising and maintaining the authority of the African chiefs, the establishment of a separate code of Native Law and the creation of mission reserves for the setting up of African schools, where children would be instructed in their vernacular.¹⁷ All Africans staying in these reserves, or "tribal locations", were required to produce passes in all areas beyond the jurisdiction of the reserves.¹⁸

In the second half of the nineteenth century attempts were made by various missionary societies to set up schools for the education of African children. Adams College was the first mission school to be established in Natal.¹⁹ It was followed, in 1869, by a school for girls, Inanda Seminary, and by Mariannhill's Saint Francis School in 1884. The first legislation that dealt with African education was passed in 1856 by the

16. Behr, New perspectives, p.160.

17. Loram, Education, p.54.

18. Christie, The Right to Learn, p.42.

19. Adams College was opened in 1886 by the American Board of Missions. Research work done on the college includes that of S.du Rand, "From Mission Schools to Bantu Education: A History of Adams College" (Unpublished M.A.thesis, University of Natal, 1990).

Legislative Council.²⁰ The Ordinance stipulated that the government should establish and maintain schools for Africans, and give grants-in-aid to the missionary schools already established. All these schools were to be placed under the superintendence and management of missionaries, but were also to be regularly inspected and reported upon by a government appointed inspector. The subjects of instruction in these schools were to be religious studies, industrial training and English.²¹ The Ordinance of 1856, however, remained largely inoperative, and brought very little, if any, improvement, to the state of education.²² Nevertheless, the provisions of the ordinance might have played a positive role in stimulating an increase in the number of mission schools in the colony.

In 1877 a Council of Education was formed.²³ The Council was entrusted with the administration of education in Natal. However, the Council of Education remained an ineffectual body until 1884 when it was granted effective powers.²⁴ Its duties

20. This was Ordinance 2 of 1856. O.E. Emanuelson, A History of Native Education, p.43 and Loram, Education, p.56.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Law No. 15, 1877 was passed "to make better provision for primary or Elementary Education in the colony of Natal". It also provided for the creation of the Council of Education. The Council consisted of ten members, five of whom were to be members of both the Executive Council and the Legislative Council. Emanuelson, A History of Native Education, p.97.

24. The powers of the Council of Education were extended by Law 1 of 1884. Ibid, p.106.

included the appointment of teachers in the contemplated Government African schools, and the payment of grants-in-aid to all mission schools which conformed with the government set syllabus, rules and regulations as set by the Council.²⁵ The educational curriculum for missionary run African schools, as laid down by the Council of Education, had reading and writing, English and Zulu, arithmetic, elements of industrial training (for boys) and needlework (for girls) as subjects of instruction.²⁶ In addition to industrial activities, boys were engaged in agriculture. It is interesting to note that, in traditional African society, women as well as men were actively involved in the production process. The involvement of the latter in production met with disapproval from missionary circles, ostensibly on the grounds that it was a mild form of female enslavement by their men. In a study of the Christian community of Edendale, Sheila Meintjies has pointed out that despite missionary disapproval, women continued to be involved in agricultural production. One of the main reasons why active participation of women in this field was discouraged, argues Meintjies, was that "agricultural activities kept women away from chapel classes."²⁷

In 1885 the Council of Education appointed the first inspector of African education, and in the following year training courses

25. Loram, Education, p.57.

26. Emanuelson, A History of Native Education, p.107.

27. S. Meintjies, "Family and gender in the Christian community at Edendale, Natal, in colonial times", in C.Walker(ed), Women and Gender, p.135.

for African teachers were introduced in some schools.²⁸ The failure by the government-aided mission schools to provide effective industrial training, due to lack of funds, equipment and mounting opposition from African parents, was to force the government to establish the first state school for Africans in the colony. This was the Zwartkop Government Industrial School, which was built in 1886. The school was opened in 1887, with a total attendance of thirteen scholars -twelve boarders and one day scholar. By the end of the first year the scholars had completed a variety of industrial tasks. These included brickmaking (up to 40 000 bricks were made), the erection of a new workshop, the cultivation of more than twelve acres of land and the planting of more than 1 000 fruit and ornamental trees.²⁹ The expenditure for the first year amounted to £583 6s 9d.³⁰ By the beginning of 1889, the school had an average enrolment of not more than twenty scholars, and it was maintained at an exorbitant average cost of £22 18s 6d. per child per annum. By June 1891 the working expense of the school had reached an alarming rate of £600 24s 9d.³¹ Due to the extraordinarily high costs involved in the maintenance of the Zwartkop school, the

28. Emanuelson, A History of Native Education, p.107.

29. NA, ED, 5/2, "Report of the Inspector of Native Education on the Government Industrial Native School, Zwartkop Location", 1887.

30. Ibid.

31. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/4/2, "Report of the Inspector of Native Education on the Government Industrial Native School, Zwartkop Location", 1891.

poor rate of attendance and the general African antipathy³² towards it, the government decided to close down the school at the end of 1892, thereby ending its short life of five and a half years. The Inspector of Native Education reported that the school was closed on the grounds that

...it was not answering the purpose for which it was started. From the onset it was seriously handicapped by its unfortunate position, and that it had died out so soon will astonish no one who is acquainted with the facts of the case. It had cost a considerable amount of an experiment, but may have a distinct value as an object lesson.³³

The Zwartkop fiasco was to lead to a re-classification of government aided schools in the 1890s.

The Mariannahill system of education

In looking at the educational contribution of any missionary society in this country, it is essential to do so in the context of the goals of proselytization that missionaries hoped to achieve. That is to say that education and Christianity are two elements which are historically linked and interdependent. The former was used by most missionaries as an effective instrument to achieve the aims and objectives of the latter. The existence of such a close and intimate relationship between these two elements necessitates the analysis of an educational system of any religious society within the context of its religious objectives. Therefore, in looking at the Mariannahill system of

32. The antipathy could be explained in terms of suspicion among the local Africans of the school. Loram, Education of the South African Native, p.60.

33. NA,NCP, 8/1/7/4/4, "Report of the Inspector of Native Education on the Government Industrial Native School,Zwartkop Location", 1893.

education, it is essential to review the rapid growth and development of the mission itself and how it came to incorporate education as an instrument in its Christianisation endeavour.

It has been demonstrated in chapter two that the Trappists were, by 1884, well established in the colony of Natal. Their extensive operations in the fields of road-making, farming and agriculture earned them celebrated status in the colony. It can be argued that their arduous activities, as enshrined in the ora et labora maxim, constituted a rather unique means through which they hoped to convert the local Africans to Christianity. What is remarkable about the Trappists is that their method clearly distinguished them from all the other religious societies, both Catholic and Protestant. Yet, despite the numerous differences that separated the Catholic from the Protestant missionaries, both generally followed a similar pattern of development. The tendency was that most missionary societies, upon arrival in a given area, first chose a site where they erected their dwelling quarters and a chapel. Then an attempt was made to go out and persuade the chief and the people among whom the mission was established to attend the religious services. Next was the construction of a school building where the local African children were instructed in the rudiments of education, namely, reading and writing. These effectively served the purpose of preparing the children for formal instruction in the Christian faith, the long-term goal of which was to train indigenous evangelists and preachers who would have more credibility among their own people than did the white missionaries. In this

manner, the enterprise grew gradually into a Christian centre in the region. The Trappist method of evangelisation and development marked a radical departure from this general trend. A group of monks who initiated the work concentrated first not on the development of the mission site alone, but also of a large farm. This unorthodox approach was designed to attract the Africans in the neighbourhood to join the Trappists rather than the Trappists going out to the countryside to approach the Africans. Brain argues that the mission method of the Trappists, in the final analysis, took its origin from manual labour. The first few years were devoted to the establishment of a monastery, an institution which would enable the monks to carry on the traditional Cistercian way of life and provide the necessities of their somewhat Spartan existence.³⁴

Since Mariannahill mission adjoined the Shozi Reserve under the rule of Chief Manzini, the chief's subjects were naturally the first Africans to come under the influence of the Trappists. African men from the reserve were employed by the Trappists in road building.³⁵ Franz Pfanner felt it of utmost importance to get as many Africans as possible to Mariannahill, the aim being, he claimed, "to teach them how to work". In due course, however, this approach failed to yield the expected results. Consequently, Pfanner bought more land which he intended to lease to African tenants. Pfanner charged no rent during the first year of residence on the mission land, and this in itself proved

³⁴. Brain, Catholics in Natal p.132.

³⁵. See Natal Mercury, 4 March 1884.

to be a powerful incentive.³⁶ However, the Abbot laid down a number of stringent conditions that governed his tenants. One of these conditions was that by the end of their first year of residence, all tenants should have constructed at least one square hut, with "at least a door and a window, and a table and chair inside."³⁷ In an apparently determined attempt to stamp out the practice of polygamy among Africans, Pfanner insisted that any man living on missionary land had to have one wife only.³⁸ However, those men who had more than one wife at the time of coming to the mission were not turned away; they were allowed to keep all their wives, but strictly on the condition that no more wives be added to those they already had.³⁹ Dischl states that the Abbot believed that "it would be far more difficult to persuade an African, who had ten 'Eves' for wives, to dismiss nine rather than to take the eleventh one, than it would be to induce a man who had but one wife to be satisfied with only one and live with her according to Christian principles."⁴⁰ The conversion of polygamists had been an issue of protracted debate between Bishop Colenso and his missionary and settler opponents. Despite Colenso's abhorrence of the

36. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.36. Furthermore, Hoffmann indicates that it was one of the main features of Pfanner's mission program to buy as much additional land as possible and then rent it out to African tenants. This can be interpreted as a strategy to increase the number of converts. See also Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannahill, p.39.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Brain, Catholics in Natal, p.133.

40. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.76

practice of polygamy, described by one missionary as the "dirtiest, filthiest, nastiest subject",⁴¹ he, like Pfanner, felt that polygamists should not be excluded from the Church, or be accepted on condition that they dissolve their marriages, as this was likely to lead to destitution of their wives and children.⁴² Furthermore, Pfanner insisted on the wearing of European clothes by his tenants. These strict conditions could be interpreted as a deliberate attempt by the Abbot to forcibly westernise the Africans residing on his land. By introducing the Africans to the rudiments of the western style of living, the Abbot believed that they would be more favourably disposed towards conversion. Above all these considerations, Pfanner stressed the importance of work, and perceiving Africans as lazy people, he saw it as his duty to train them "to abhor idleness and appreciate the love of work."⁴³

The first baptisms at Mariannahill took place on 28 December 1884.⁴⁴ Within the next few years the number of converts

41. Quoted in J. Guy, The Heretic. A study of the Life of John William 4 Colenso 1814-1883, (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1983), p.74.

42. Ibid, pp. 74-75.

43. Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannahill, p.40.

44. On this day four African boys were baptised. They were Kantolo, Kaete, Tengisiwa and Popomo. Their indigenous names were done away with, and they were immediately renamed Dominic (or Schilgen), Bonaventure (or Engel), Anthony (or Raay) and Augustine (or Bosch) respectively. See Bryant, Roman Legion in Libyan Fields, p.88.

recorded on the baptismal register indicated a gradual increase.⁴⁵ Due to the high number of young people on the baptismal register, the Trappists soon came to realise that they could achieve far more success with the younger generation of children than with the adult population, a large portion of which seriously questioned and resisted the Trappist attempt to get them to abandon polygamous marriages, the practices of lobolo, beer drinking, etc. This point has been illustrated by Comaroff and Comaroff who, in their study of the Tswana have demonstrated the opposition of Tswana adults to Christianity, which they perceived to be "fundamentally antagonistic to their mode of existence" because of its explicit attack on the edifice of customary practice.⁴⁶ Comaroff and Comaroff further introduced the notion of missionary colonization of the indigenous people's consciousness. This, they argued, took place on two levels. While the first involved the conversion of these people through Christian teachings, the second was aimed at the complete "revolution in the habits of [these] people". It was at the second level, which took place during a long period of "conversation", that a new consciousness among the subject people emerged, and this manifested itself in the form of various

45. In February 1885 there were already fourteen converts baptised: eleven boys, two men and a woman. By the end of 1887 the total number was 144 and in 1890 this had increased to more than 500. In addition, there were 225 confirmed Christians and 24 Christian weddings had taken place. See Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.52.

46. Comaroff and Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution, p 237-238.

responses from the local population.⁴⁷ Though Comaroff and Comaroff conducted their research among the Tswana, their findings are applicable to the Zulu as well. The general resistance to Christianity by the adult Zulu population, a form of consciousness, forced the Abbot and his men to turn their focus more closely on the children. The Abbot stated that

We could not expect to root out paganistic beliefs and superstitions from the hearts and minds of the [adult] Zulus overnight. These beliefs have become so deeply ingrained in them, that we could at best hope for only a gradual victory against them. With the children we could expect more complete success from the very beginning, and so we did not spare any effort in building and developing our schools.⁴⁸

It is apparent, in the light of the above, that Pfanner's success in the early years was attributable to his incorporation of the elements of westernisation and education into his Christian apostolate, his target being the African youth.

The utilisation of education as an instrument of religion was neither an invention nor a preserve of the Trappists. It characterised most religious societies in the late nineteenth century. This was done out of necessity and convenience because Africans in general showed far more interest in getting their children educated than Christianised. Missionaries therefore attempted to exploit this thirst for "learning the book" to advance their own religious agenda. They began building schools for African children, not necessarily because they were intent on building an educated African community, but because a

47. Ibid, p.199.

48. Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannhill, p.39.

relatively literate African was far easier to convert than a completely illiterate one. The long-term goal of educating the African was to produce indigenous evangelists, preachers and catechists who would have far more credibility among their own people than their white counterparts. A great deal has been written about this link between education and religion, and the subordination of the former to the latter. Vilakazi, for example, argued that European missionaries came to Africa, not necessarily to educate the Africans, but rather to lead the African people, the "pagans", as they were called, from the darkness of "heathenism" into the light of Christianity.⁴⁹ Their overall goal was to establish African Christian communities, and in the case of Natal a Zulu Christian community. Discussing missionaries in general, Berman states that

Missionaries, as agents of European churches, constructed schools because education was deemed indispensable to the main purpose of the Christian denominations - the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Missionaries recognised that a school was, in the words of one commentator, "the nursery of the infant church."⁵⁰

He goes on to state that "...missionaries utilized their schools as inducements to lure Africans into the missionary orbit."⁵¹ Since education was seen as the most effective weapon in their missionary apostolate, most missionaries in the nineteenth century considered a dose of the four R's - reading, writing,

49. Vilakazi, A, Zulu Transformation: A study of the Dynamics of Social Change, (Pietermaritzburg, 1962), p.20.

50. E. H. Berman, "African Response to Christian Mission Education", in African Studies Review, 17,3 1974, p.527.

51. Ibid.

arithmetic and religious instruction - as appropriate education. Others insisted on vernacular teaching as this constituted a means of training African evangelists who would communicate far more easily with their own people without fear of being alienated. It was against the background of introducing to the Africans the rudiments of education convenient for furthering religious purposes that most missionaries in the nineteenth century were opposed to the notion of giving higher education to Africans. While most writers tend to explain the relationship between religion and education in terms of the former being simply a tool of the latter, Comaroff and Comaroff went further and demonstrated the interdependency of the two elements to each other. In their study of the Tswana and the British Nonconformists, they argue that

The legacy of didactic philanthropism in postenlightment Britain meant that...evangelism was inseparable from education. It was not merely that the school was the "door to the church". Schooling actually provided the model for conversion ; conversion , the model for schooling. Each aimed at the systematic, moral reconstruction of the person in a world in which individuals were increasingly viewed as capable of being formed and reformed by social institutions.⁵²

The education of boys at Mariannhill.

Brain argues that "At Mariannhill Franz Pfanner realised, as other missionaries had done, that it was through the schools that he would be most successful in building a Zulu Christian community."⁵³ Schimlek adds that

52. Comaroff and Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution, p.233.

53. Brain, Catholics in Natal, p.134.

By constructing schools the Abbot was beginning from the known and advanced to the unknown and unappreciated. They had to use the incentive of the book to lead the Bantu... to interest them in the affairs of religion. This was the reason why the "learning of the book", or education, found from the beginning a prominent place in the missionary method of Mariannahill.⁵⁴

The first school at Mariannahill was established in 1883. It was named Saint Francis, and was a school for boys. Its first scholars were four young boys, ranging between the ages of ten and twelve.⁵⁵ In the beginning the curriculum consisted of simple sums and letters of the alphabet. Numbers increased steadily, and by the end of 1884 the school boasted 24 scholars. One factor to which the success of the school was due was Chief Manzini's obsession with the notion of "ukufunda incwadi" (reading the book). He gave a peremptory order that two boys from every kraal falling under his jurisdiction be sent to Mariannahill.⁵⁶

The first teacher at Mariannahill's Saint Francis was Benjamin Makhaba.⁵⁷ Makhaba came from Basutoland, where he had received his education in the mission school of Roma. He was also trained as a saddler by the Oblate Fathers. It was in his latter capacity that he came to Natal where he learned Zulu and started some businesses. In 1884 he left the business world and entered

54. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p. 54-55.

55. Bryant, Roman Legion in Libyan Fields, p.39.

56. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p. 56.

57. Ibid.

the solitude of the Trappist monastery. The arrival of Makhaba marked the beginning of apostolic work proper at Mariannahill. His knowledge of the Zulu language proved valuable to the mission as none of the Trappists understood or spoke the language. Makhaba was immediately appointed catechist. He also instructed the Trappist priests and brothers in the rudiments of the Zulu language. Moreover, he translated Pfanner's messages from English into Zulu.⁵⁸ But the most important task that Makhaba was charged with was that of helping the Trappists to recruit African children to the planned school on the mission, a task that he successfully carried out after several visits to the kraals in the vicinity of the station. Alfred Bryant, who was to join him at Saint Francis school, wrote of Makhaba's venture as a great success, attributing the success to "his big, black face and sparkling eyes that stole the hearts of the people."⁵⁹

The second teacher at Saint Francis Boys' school was an Englishman, Alfred T. Bryant. Referred to as "one of the monastery's illustrious sons" Bryant was a distinguished scholar who had shown considerable interest in history and languages. He received his education at Kent and Birkby College in London.⁶⁰ In 1879, at the height of the Anglo-Zulu War, Bryant

58. Kneipp et al Marianhill and its apostolate, p. 67.

59. Bryant, Roman Legion in Libyan Fields, p. 42. This statement confirms the point mentioned above, i.e. indigenous evangelists and catechists were far more instrumental in the spreading of the Gospel than were most of their white counterparts.

60. Brain, Catholic Beginnings in Natal, pp. 171-172. (See also Appendix B).

read in London newspapers about the great Zulu nation for the first time. His imaginative interest in the Zulus was aroused by reports describing them as "ferocious savages decked in leather girdles and flowing plumes, brandishing cowhide shields and iron spears."⁶¹ It was in the same newspapers that Bryant was to read, three years later, about Father Franz Pfanner of Mariannhill in Natal, who was to visit London for the purpose of lecturing and raising funds for his mission. The interesting accounts of the Zulu people who lived in the very land where Father Franz had built his mission were still fresh in his mind. Though at that time he had no intention of becoming a missionary, his great interest in the Zulus and Pfanner's personality induced the young man to give up his studies, relinquish his native country and sail to South Africa.⁶²

Once at Mariannhill, Pfanner immediately admitted Bryant to the novitiate, and conferred upon him the name "David".⁶³ He was only 18 years of age. He was also appointed a schoolmaster at Saint Francis School. Since he could not speak Zulu he taught only the white boys at Saint Francis while Makhaba taught the black boys. Pfanner, the Principal of the school conferred upon David the somewhat awkward title of "Director of Education".⁶⁴

In the beginning, the educational curriculum at Saint Francis was

61. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p. 148.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid, p.49.

64. Ibid.

comprised of the four R's⁶⁵. In addition, the pupils were required to take an active part in manual, field and industrial activities. Father David introduced a new method of education at Mariannahill, whereby the mornings were confined to the teaching of academic subjects and the afternoons to manual and industrial work.⁶⁶ This was to become the format of education throughout all the Catholic missions in South Africa. According to Pfanner, the aim of education at Mariannahill was to build useful and industrious Christian families which he intended to settle in the vicinity of Mariannahill and its daughter stations. With this goal in mind, the Abbot insisted that the education of his pupils be not what he viewed as a mere mechanical book learning and superficial instruction, but rather "a development of the mind, body, the character of the soul - in short, an education for life."⁶⁷ Thus, from the beginning, manual labour and industrial training formed an essential part of the educational policy at Mariannahill.

At Saint Francis, the boys were divided into three categories, namely, the herdboys, the apprentices and the schoolboys.⁶⁸ Upon closer examination, one realises that this categorisation

65. Kneipp, et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.56.

66. The industrial training comprised of an assortment of workshops, each supervised by one or more skilled tradesmen, including blacksmiths, tinsmiths, carpenters, tailors, cobblers, masons, bricklayers, etc.

67. Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannahill, p. 39.

68. A. Balling, Abbot Francis Pfanner: A missionary who made history, (Mariannahill, Mariannahill Mission, 1953), p. 70.

was drawn from the hierarchical leadership of the Trappist Order.⁶⁹ The herdboys did not attend school because "they did not have time", according to Pfanner. In addition to receiving instruction in religion they spent the rest of the day with the oxtteams and wagons. The apprentices did not attend school every day, "they had either outgrown school or were interested only in learning a trade."⁷⁰ The scholars were the brightest children and were given more time in class than the other two groups. Nevertheless, even within this relatively privileged group, industrial training assumed primacy over the learning of academic subjects. This was evidenced by the fact that while the scholars spent two and a half hours in the classroom, five hours were set aside for industrial training.⁷¹ All pupils at Saint Francis received instruction, food, clothes, bedding, books and tools entirely free of charge.⁷² Preference was given to the very poor, especially orphans. However, sons of rich farmers were also admitted, but on the condition that their parents bear the

69. The hierarchical leadership structure of the Trappists Order could be roughly classified as follows: Besides the Abbot who was the head of the abbey, there were fathers, brothers and novices. The fathers, as indicated in Chapter Two, were priests proper, and dealt with the missionary and educational needs of the monastery. Below them were the brothers, most of whom were skilled tradesmen. At the base of the pyramid were the workmen. These were novices and catered for the agricultural welfare of the monastery. The three classes of pupils at Mariannahill, namely, the scholars, the apprentices and the herdboys, were drawn roughly from this hierarchy. See Natal Mercury, 2 December 1885, 1 August 1893.

70. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p. 70.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

full cost of their education. Pfanner saw himself acting in accordance with the biblical text: "The poor have the Gospel preached unto".⁷³.

It is significant that the first school at Mariannahill was run on a non-racial basis. Black and white children attended the same classes, ate and played together, slept in the same dormitories, and had equal access to all facilities provided in the school. Furthermore, in the beginning, the policy of admission to Saint Francis did not discriminate against pupils from religious backgrounds other than Catholic. Outlining the general policy of admitting pupils in his school, Pfanner stated that:

We make no distinction of colour or religion. All the boys in our institute receive lodging, board and instruction without distinction, be he heathen, Mohammedan, Protestant or Catholic, be he white or coloured, be he English, German, Italian or Native. They all sleep together in the same dormitory, they eat at the same table, get the same food and sit at the same desks at school. In South Africa one regards the natives, it would seem, only as half human beings, and believes they can be treated like cattle... We do not tolerate contempt or a disdainful attitude towards the Natives. Time will tell if our principles are sound!⁷⁴

While the Catholic pupils received instruction in the Catholic

73. Ibid.

74. However, the mixing of races was restricted to the boarding establishment. The African boys who returned home everyday were made to sit at different desks. The reason for this strange sitting arrangement, according to Pfanner, was that "it was rather difficult to watch over the cleanliness of their bodies sufficiently." Ibid, p. 72.

faith, the other pupils were given moral instruction.⁷⁵ The establishment of a non-racial school at Mariannhill prompted wide-scale response from the press as well as from the public. The editor of the Natal Mercury remarked that:

A peculiar feature of the government of the [Mariannhill] establishment - strange to the colonists of Natal - is that no difference is made between the white and black boys at dinner, at Church, at worship, or even in the dormitory. There are white boys from Durban, Kaffraria, Free State, Transvaal, and of English and German nationality. The prior can send any of them away when he likes, and the boys are free to leave when they like.⁷⁶

Pfanner's policy of mixed, non-racial education was outlined in the Mariannhill weekly, the Natal Record. He also wrote numerous letters to the press, sharing his views, appealing for support and urging racial harmony in the colony. In his article, Es Geht (It goes well), which was published in the Natal Mercury, he stated that:

Everybody knows that even cat and dog may be accustomed to live together in peace if they are placed one with another at an early age, why, therefore, should it be impossible to mix white and black boys, and to accustom them to each other? ...[P]uppies and kittens eat their milk out of one basin, play together and sleep on the same rug, but if they are always set loose upon each other just as the South Africans instigate their white children against the natives, then of course geht es nicht [nothing goes well].⁷⁷

In the same article the Abbot went on to demonstrate the desirability and feasibility of his programme by informing the

⁷⁵. In due course, however, this proved to be impractical, and this multi-denominational admission policy was discontinued. Preference came to be given to pupils whose parents were Catholics.

⁷⁶. Natal Mercury, 30 November 1885.

⁷⁷. Natal Mercury, 18 December 1885.

public how the boys at Mariannhill stayed, played and worked together without a single incident of racial conflict. Despite the fact that Pfanner was fully aware of the hostility that his educational programme was likely to draw from the colonial public, he nevertheless urged everyone - the English, the Dutch and the German, to support him and give up their prejudice against the Africans.⁷⁸

Pfanner's system of education, and his constant appeals to the community to follow his example, elicited numerous hostile responses, most of which were published in the local press. The colonists were outspoken in their condemnation of Pfanner's policy of education. The Natal Witness had correctly predicted that "This system is one which will not commend itself to the majority of colonists."⁷⁹, and mounting a severe criticism against the policy, the Witness warned:

The equality hoped for can never be attained so long as colours of races are dissimilar. Perhaps experience will teach the good fathers of the futility of any attempt to place blacks and whites on an equality, but we acknowledge the self - sacrificing zeal of the Brotherhood, and commend their efforts in setting an example of industry and energy to the colonists around them and for the amelioration of the condition of the homeless and poor.⁸⁰

The controversy which erupted out of the Mariannhill system of education will be examined, in more detail, in chapter four. From the above, it would appear as if Pfanner did not share the colonists' notion of white superiority and black inferiority.

78. Ibid.

79. Natal Witness, 20 August 1884.

80. Ibid.

While there might be a modicum of truth in this, a closer scrutiny of Pfanner's educational policies reveals different ideas the Abbot himself had concerning the education of the Africans. An examination of the education of African girls, more than that of boys, will perhaps provide ample evidence to support this contention.

The education of African girls.

The first school for African girls at Mariannhill was opened in 1885, two years after the establishment of that for boys. Abbot Pfanner named it Saint Anne, and appointed Maria Lassak as matron, catechist and teacher.⁸¹ Lassak was assisted by Father Hyacinth.⁸² Partly because of the need to have a permanent and trained body of teachers at Mariannhill, and partly because African parents refused to consent to instruction being imparted to their daughters by males, Pfanner began to make appeals, in Europe, for female teachers to come to Mariannhill for the purpose of running schools for African girls. The first group of women teachers to arrive in South Africa comprised five young German girls who arrived at Mariannhill on September 1885.⁸³ This marked the foundation of Pfanner's own society, a society

81. Bryant, Roman Legion in Libyan Fields, p. 67.

82. Ibid.

83. They arrived on the Howarden Castle, see Natal Witness, 4 September 1885.

of nuns, which he named the Religious Congregation of Missionary Sisters.⁸⁴ However, In 1887 this society was renamed the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood.⁸⁵ The sisters' attire consisted of a red habit, a black mantle and a white cap, described by Schimlek as a "somewhat extra-ordinary uniform even for South Africa."⁸⁶ The sisters were often referred to as the "Red Sisters", owing to their red habit. In due course, the sisters increased in number, and by early 1888 they numbered 45.⁸⁷ These sisters, according to Bryant, were

ladies endowed with a missionary spirit and calling for conventional life , somewhat experienced in the rearing and educating of the young, willing to deny themselves and joyfully accept all the unpleasantness and hardships a missionary life among the Zulus would involve, ready to give themselves and their lives for the love of God.⁸⁸

It is worth noting, however, that the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood were not Trappists, even though the overall authority that governed them was wielded by a Trappist Abbot.⁸⁹

84. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p. 86.

85. Ibid, p. 88.

86. Ibid.

87. The further transformation of this society into the Sacred Congregation for Religions resulted in the replacement of the red habit with a black veil, leaving only the ribbon from which the pectoral crucifix was suspended in its original red colour. See Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.88.

88. Bryant, Roman Legion in Libyan Fields, p. 67.

89. Their rules were comparably less stringent than those of the Trappists. They rose at 3h45 every day and retired at 20h00. Most of their day was spent in prayer, meditation, mass, recreation and reading. Their diet included a variety of foodstuffs that the

Under the leadership of their Sister Superior, Sister Philippine, the sisters were charged with the duty of running a school for African girls. Though the girls' school was run independently of the boys' school, Pfanner, being the autocrat of the mission, commanded the overriding authority over both schools. He decided on the admission policy, appointed teachers and drew up the syllabi used in both schools. The education of the girls at Mariannahill was modelled on completely different lines to that of the boys, at least in terms of content and aims. For example, while a certain percentage of the boys received, from the onset, instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic, religious instruction and English, the girls, were instructed in nothing other than catechism. In Mariannahill's Natal Record, Pfanner wrote:

In our schools for girls we teach initially nothing except the catechism. At first the children are instructed only in such matters as are required for baptism. Once baptised they are taught solely about the reception of the Sacrament of Penance which presupposes the knowledge of the Ten Commandments... To this end it is not necessary that they be proficient in reading, for faith comes from hearing, the hearing of the Word of God.⁹⁰

However, the grading system that Pfanner introduced in the boys' school applied also to that of the girls. Pfanner indicated that the girls who had by their work demonstrated their faith, and had proved to be "true and zealous Christians ... the most reliable

Trappists were prohibited from consuming, and the rule of silence was not imposed on them. See Natal Advertiser, 31 October 1889. Even the public vows that they took remained temporary for thirteen years, after which, if they so wished, they were admitted to the solemn profession which was binding for their lifetime.

⁹⁰. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.72.

and talented", were selected and admitted to the classes for reading and writing.⁹¹ These select few, however, were given instruction in the Zulu language, and none in English. In addition, they were taught gardening, sewing and cooking.⁹² Pfanner deemed instruction of the girls in English grammar and languages, and their preparation for academic examinations as inappropriate education. Even more than the boys, the Abbot perpetuated the notion that the girls' education should be a thoroughly practical development. Pfanner wrote long and detailed articles outlining what he believed was "appropriate" education for African girls.⁹³ In his view, the African girl should be given the kind of education that would comprehensively prepare her to be a faithful wife to her husband, an industrial housewife and a good mother.⁹⁴

The aim of educating the girls, therefore, was to build Christian families, as these girls would become wives of the male converts. Walker points out the missionaries' strenuous opposition to what they perceived to be "male indolence" and "female slave labour" prevalent among African societies.⁹⁵ Thinking along these lines, Pfanner drew a stark contrast between Mariannhill Christian training and African "kraal life", which he perceived

91. Balling, Abbot Francis Pfanner, p.70.

92. Ibid.

93. Some of these articles were published in the Natal Mercury, Natal Advertiser and Natal Witness.

94. Natal Advertiser, 2 September 1889.

95. Walker, Women and Gender, p.13.

as enslavement of women. He contended that

A girl's previous life in the kraal was anything but a family life. The woman obtained no protection there from a man, but was rather his slave. It was she who had to do the work, since manual labour was deemed unworthy for a fullblown man, and as for washing his dirty clothes and repairing his torn ones, that was entirely out of question.⁹⁶

While Pfanner excoriated the traditional life of an African girl on one hand, he argued ironically, on the other, that it served as a strong basis from which his aims would be realised. In the Natal Record, he wrote, "Experience teaches us that the girls like best to work, that they are most willing to obey, and most content, when they come straight from the kraal..."⁹⁷

The number of girls at Mariannahill had increased to 93 in 1889.⁹⁸ In the same year a spacious industrial school was erected for them. In his dedication, Pfanner described the school as a house of work, a place where older girls would perfect themselves in the different branches of manual labour. He emphasised that the school would be more an institution for industrial training and less an institution for book-learning. He further reiterated his belief that the educational curricula of girls and boys should be kept separate, arguing that it was neither good nor necessary for girls to make such an extensive study of book subjects as the boys. He summed up his beliefs in the Natal Record, when he wrote:

⁹⁶. Natal Mercury, 8 July 1889.

⁹⁷. Quoted in Natal Advertiser, 16 March 1889.

⁹⁸. Natal Mercury, 27 September 1889.

First teach the kaffir sound moral truths. Teach them religion ...without hypocrisy. Instruct only the boys in reading, writing and arithmetic, and train them in manual labour. Do not teach the girls any English reading, and very little Kaffir.⁹⁹

According to the Abbot, it was wrong to give higher education to the first generation of the African girls as their duty as mothers and wives did not require such standards. Neither should girls be allowed to take up employment in towns and European farms. He argued that "The first Christian Kaffir girls have no business in towns, their duties must be in the solitude of the Christian workman's home."¹⁰⁰

Touching on an issue that in today's world would elicit sharp reactions from feminist circles, Pfanner remarked that:

...it will be scarcely more profitable for your African man to be alone. He will require help. When he returns from his work there must be somebody who shall have prepared his dinner, and who shall arrange his bedroom, so that, when tired, he may betake himself to rest. When he comes home from his hard work, running with sweat, bespattered with lime and mortar, covered with dust and dirt, black from the cowls, wet through skin and rain, frozen by wind and frost, then it is this "help" who cleans his clothes and mends them and makes up a bright fire... . She considers what shall please her husband, and if she has little to cook, or has too little, she does not eat first, but contents herself with what remains from her husband's menu..."¹⁰¹

This confirms Walker's contention that the "the missionaries elaborated an ideology of female domesticity that laid stress on

⁹⁹. Quoted in the Natal Mercury, 27 September 1889.

¹⁰⁰. Natal Mercury, 8 July 1889.

¹⁰¹. Natal Mercury, 2 September 1889.

women's reproductive and nurturing roles above their autonomy and productivity. The attributes of the good Christian woman were obedience to the authority of husband and father, piety, decorum, thrift, and service to others."¹⁰² It needs to be mentioned, however, that women who had acquired skills from mission schools in the nineteenth century were in all respects far better off than those who never attended school at all. Attending mission schools brought several advantages. In these schools they were groomed as "Christian wives" and encouraged to marry educated Christian men. The knowledge and skills imparted to these women enabled them to become part of the African middle class or, in a few cases, the petty-bourgeoisie class. Other opportunities were provided for these girls. They could, for example, be employed as domestic servants in white homes. It is important to note that domestic service was also a suitable option for white working class girls from female industrial schools.¹⁰³ However, some mission educated women took great pride in house keeping, and therefore did not take up any employment after marriage. Therefore, notwithstanding its deficiencies, industrial education can be said to have made a commendable contribution to the general upliftment of girls in African society. Pfanner indicated, however, that the second generation of African women would be given a better education than their mothers.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰². Walker, Women and Gender, p.13-14.

¹⁰³. Ibid, pp. 14-15.

¹⁰⁴. Natal Mercury, 2 September 1889.

Pfanner also regarded the instruction of African girls in English as repugnant. He underestimated their intellectual capability and generally held them in low and contemptuous esteem. His sexist attitude was perhaps best reflected in his letter to the Christian Express, in which he stated:

Do not teach the girls any English reading, and very little Kaffir. Give them as little education as possible. The system of cramming is too much to the intellect of the Kaffir girls...the more they learn in school, the less they are inclined to work, and the more insolent and dissatisfied they are.¹⁰⁵

Mariannahill schools and higher learning.

The educational system at Mariannahill schools was drawn on sexist lines. The boys received a slightly better education than their female counterparts. For example, while some boys received instruction in English reading and writing, none of the girls were instructed in English. This, however, is not to say that the boys received what came to be referred to as higher education. Higher learning, Pfanner argued, was counterproductive to the ideal of inculcating in the mind of the African the idea of hard work as enshrined in the ora et labora maxim. The aim of education for African boys, argued Pfanner, was to train them to become industrious labourers and diligent agriculturalists to serve the colony of Natal. This end could be attained without instructing them in English, mathematics and

¹⁰⁵. Quoted in J. Cock, Maids and Madams: A study in the Politics of exploitation, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1980) p. 280.

science. Demonstrating his pronounced and uncompromising antagonism to higher learning in general, and English instruction in particular, Pfanner categorically stated that he had no wish to see African boys under his training able to answer "those grammatical questions which were used as principal tests by the educational authorities". He stated that:

the better the [African] boy speaks English, the more beautiful he pronounces it, and the more correctly he writes it, the less he thinks and the more my hope diminishes of their training as useful citizens and agricultural labourers.¹⁰⁶

Pfanner saw as "sufficient mental education" the ability to read catechism and English without proving every word grammatically. He warned the government not to attempt too much with the first generation of Christianised Africans by setting high educational standards.¹⁰⁷ Summing up what he believed should be the aim of education for African boys Pfanner stated that

A scientific explanation of the rules of English grammar as well as an infinite number of standards is totally unnecessary. We do not want the Kaffirs to be inspectors on the railway, or station masters, or officials on Sundry boards, but we do want them to be good artisans and trustworthy agricultural labourers.¹⁰⁸

Similar sentiments were to be echoed, several decades later, by Hendrik Verwoerd, when he was the Minister of Native Affairs in the National Party government.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Pfanner's education policies

¹⁰⁶. Natal Witness, 16 March 1889.

¹⁰⁷. Ibid.

¹⁰⁸. Ibid.

were to bring him into bitter conflict with certain sections of the society, including the parents of the children taught at Mariannahill, the colonists and the educational authorities.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF THE MARIANNHILL POLICY OF EDUCATION ON THE LOCAL POPULATION

Chapter three outlined the principal features of the policy of education at Mariannhill schools. It demonstrated the peculiarity of the mission's educational policy as drawn up by Abbot Franz Pfanner. The abbot's policy of education was destined to draw sharp and often hostile criticisms not only from some members of the Council of Education, but also from the different sections of the Natal population, including African parents whose children attended school at Mariannhill, a representative section of the colonists, and concerned individuals from the public, and concerted efforts were made to eradicate this policy. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the major areas of grievances that the community raised against the Mariannhill educational system. This will be followed by an examination of the various responses of the aggrieved parties to the mission's educational policies, and an assessment of their overall success and failure. Selected case studies will be used to illustrate the issues raised above.

The major areas of conflict between the Mariannhill mission authorities and the above-mentioned parties centred around a number of issues. Foremost among these were the running of the schools on non-racial lines, the practice of keeping children, especially girls, in the boarding establishments against the wishes of their parents, and the content of learning in these schools. A separate examination of each of these issues will perhaps highlight specific grievances that particular groups

raised against the general policy of education at Mariannahill. While the establishment of Mariannahill can be said to have created a new hegemony among the converts, the grievances raised against the mission's educational system, and Christianity in general, were to breed a specific form of consciousness among sections of the African community, as we shall see below.

A boarding school for African boys was established in 1884. It was followed, a year later, by the establishment of that for girls.¹ One of the main motives behind the establishment of boarding schools at Mariannahill was to ensure a complete separation of African children from their homes, and thereby secure maximum control over them without any external interference. Once registered, the children were confined within the boundaries of the mission, and were not allowed to visit their parents, even during school holidays.² The imposition of such restrictions needs to be understood within the context of the Trappists' determination to use boarding schools to further their religious aims. Almost all of the European missionaries who first came to Africa generally held the indigenous people in contempt. Their descriptions of Africans tended to be highly derogatory. For instance, Africans were referred to as "heathens", uncultured savages, and in some instances, were

1. M. Adelgisa, Saint Francis College, Mariannahill (Mariannahill, Mariannahill Mission Press, 1966), pp.4-5.

2. David Bryant, one of the first teachers at Mariannahill, derogatorily referred to the African villages as "horrible dens of filth and vice...", Bryant, Roman Legion in Libyan Fields, p.56.

perceived as cannibals.³ Their history, religion and culture were effectively undermined. It must be mentioned, however, that some missionaries, such as Colenso and Bryant, were better known for their paternalistic yet benevolent treatment of Africans. Subscribing to this general Eurocentric notion of Africans, Pfanner recommended that African children be barred from returning to their homes where they were more likely to imbibe "heathen" ideas from their "pagan" parents and tribespeople. Such ideas and practices, he argued, were incompatible with the new (Catholic) faith they had acquired at Mariannhill. Thus the pupils were kept all day on the mission premises, doing light manual work, learning lessons and playing games.⁴ As we shall see below, this practice of keeping children at Mariannhill for lengthy periods against the will of some parents, met strong opposition, not only from the parents of the affected children, but also from the educational authorities.⁵

It has been indicated in chapter three that African tenants at

3. For example, Father Francis Schimlek wrote about the Tuli People who lived in Natal in the late nineteenth century. He claimed that "These corpses were starved to the last stage of endurance, [and] they had at length succumbed, like so many other Natal natives, to the final resort of devouring human flesh. Corpses were plentifully strewn about the veld, and furnished with a savoury repast...". Schimlek, Mariannhill, p.47. It is of course true that cannibalism did exist in some parts of Africa. However, missionaries tended to write exaggerated reports about such practices in an attempt to gain more support and sympathy for their Christian ideology.

4. Kneipp et al, Mariannhill and its apostolate, p.78.

5. See report by the Inspector of Native Schools, Robert Plant. NA, CSO, Vol.1235, 1889/57/27.

Mariannahill paid no rent for their first year of residence. This powerful incentive attracted scores of tenants to the mission. However, from the second year of residence onwards, Mariannahill tenants were required to pay at least a pound tax per hut.⁶ Other conditions that governed Mariannahill tenants have been outlined in chapter three. Some of the conditions set by the Trappists were designed to coerce tenants into sending their children to the mission schools. The Resident Magistrate of Umlazi, Titren, indicated, in his letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, that most tenants at Mariannahill, and other Africans around the station, showed some willingness to send their children to the Trappist schools for few hours every day. They were, however, vehemently opposed to the newly introduced and unpopular system of taking their children away from them entirely, since the boys were needed to look after the cattle and the girls to help with house duties.⁷

The strategies used to fight Pfanner's new educational policies included a complete withdrawal of their children from Mariannahill, desertion, direct confrontation with the mission authorities and appeals to the courts for intervention.

The initial and most expected response to the establishment of boarding schools at Mariannahill was a withdrawal of children by

6. NA, Secretary of Native Affairs (thereafter SNA), Vol.1/1/142,760, "Statement of Tshelela, son of Vundisa, Chief Umanzini, taken down at the SNA office", 7 July 1891.

7. NA, SNA, Vol.1/1/101, 1887/622, "Respecting detention of female children by the Trappists in Umlazi Division", 15 July 1887.

their parents from the mission. However, the Trappists countered this problem by making it obligatory for tenants to "allow their children to reside, school and labour at the monastery and become Roman Catholics."⁸ Failure to comply was likely to lead to eviction from the mission land, as the following case demonstrates. A man called Tshelela made a sworn statement in the office of the Secretary of Native Affairs, complaining about his unfair expulsion from Mariannahill. He indicated that while residing there, as a tenant, he was asked to allow his son to attend the mission school. He consented to the request. He stated, however, that:

Later on they [the Trappists] demanded all my children and on my refusal to comply with this request I was ordered to leave their land. I then asked to be allowed to take my children with me to my new home but was refused the charge of them and told that they were now to live there.⁹

Repeated efforts to retrieve his children from the school proved fruitless. Upon confronting the Abbot of Mariannahill, his children were brought before the two men, and they expressed their wish to go home with their father. Nevertheless, the Abbot refused to free them, and ordered Tshelela off the mission premises.¹⁰

Desertion was also common. It was employed as a strategy to evade compulsory schooling on the mission. To combat it, the

8. Ibid.

9. NA, SNA, Vol.1/1/143, 760/91.

10. Ibid.

Trappists co-opted some izindunas (headmen) to help trace, apprehend and return deserters to the mission. Lambert has also noted the existence of similar practices in other places. He states that:

A major cause of friction between chiefs and missionaries was the appointment on many stations of Kholwa who were recognised as izinduna by the colonial government despite the fact that they were exempted from customary law... . Although these men only enjoyed authority over the station inhabitants and not over the Kholwa on the reserves, their appointment caused considerable resentment.¹¹

It is uncertain how the loyalty of these izindunas was ensured, but perhaps the Trappists exploited the tension that often existed between chiefs and their headmen.

In the above cited case, Tshelela's eldest son, Hlingwayo, deserted from the Trappist school on two occasions. On his first escape he sought refuge in a neighbouring kraal, but was subsequently apprehended by a headman called Umbovu and taken back to Mariannhill. It was only in his second escape that he was reunited with his father. The existence of this connivance between African headmen and the Trappists did not only pose a threat to the authority of certain chiefs, it also created tensions and conflicts between these chiefs and their subordinates (headmen).

The third strategy resorted to by disgruntled parents involved confronting, directly, the Mariannhill authorities. It is important to note that the establishment of the controversial

¹¹. J.Lambert, "Africans in Natal, 1880-1899:Continuity, Change and Crisis in Rural Society", (University of South Africa, Ph.D.thesis, 1986), p.126.

boarding schools at Mariannahill was to have a heavier impact on the lives of African girls than on those of the boys. Parents were more outspoken and showed far more determination to take decisive action against the Trappists in "detention" cases which involved their daughters. The simplest explanation one can give is that the parents' concern was raised by the real fear that girls who went to the Trappist mission were often encouraged to apply for exemption from the Native Law. This effectively ruled out any possibility for lobolo (bridewealth) payment (to the father) upon the girls' marriage. According to Schimlek, the fathers of some girls who resided on the mission and who were eventually exempted from the Native Law, demanded that either the girls themselves or the mission authorities pay them the lobolo cattle.¹² It must not be forgotten that lobolo was (and to a large extent still is today) an important social and economic institution in African society. Therefore, any attempt by the missionaries to undermine this institution met a tidal wave of resistance from African communities. There is therefore much truth in Bryant's claim that "the opening of the girls' school was the beginning of a veritable little war in the locality."¹³ The opening of the girls' school was followed by a series of confrontations between the mission authorities and irate African parents. The complaints and constant appeals by the parents to have their children returned were, at best, greeted with antipathy and intransigence, and, at worst, with threats and the use of force against them. This is amply

12. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.240.

13. Bryant, Roman Legion in Libyan Fields, p.75.

demonstrated by one of Bryant's accounts, which reads as follows:

The children would come to school, their fathers and... their mothers would have them back, and the monks positively would not give them... Many of the children had for days to be held in secret quarters for fear of being stolen. Vociferous, brawling mothers flocked in pursuit of their little ones, uttering most pitiful wails and cutting most antique figures, as they mourned and moaned for their lost children, and, as if in despair, threw themselves two feet high into the air and got landed with full-strength on mother-earth. Enraged fathers came too with ruffed brows and threatening mien, and stood, like their warrior grandsires, firm, fierce and silent, until a[t] length the clap of a discharged gun shook their boldness into atoms and considerably unloosed their nerves.¹⁴

Finally, African parents appealed to the courts of law to intervene in the on-going disputes between them and the Trappists. In a Legislative Assembly debate Hartley enquired from the Secretary of Native Affairs whether

it was within his knowledge that grave dissatisfaction existed among the native parents in the Umlazi Division owing to the alleged retention of female native children at the Trappist Monastery against the wish of the parents, and whether the Administrator of Native Law had refused to take action when appealed to by the Natives, on the ground that he could not interfere.¹⁵

The Secretary of Native Affairs confirmed that complaints had been received on the subject embodied in the question from an African chief and his people living on monastery land and he had referred these to the magistrate for a report. The Resident Magistrate, who was also an Administrator of Native Law, Titren,

14. Ibid.

15. NA, SNA, Vol.1/1/101, 1887/622. See also Natal Advertiser, 13 July 1887, Natal Mercury, 14 July 1887.

replied that besides the complaints lodged by the chief against the Trappists to his predecessor, Jackson, no other complaints had been made (to him) regarding the detention of female children at the Trappist monastery. He pointed out, however, that "complaints of some sort had been made."¹⁶

It is worth noting that the Trappist practice of isolating African children from their parents was not confined to the mother mission (Mariannahill) alone; it became a common practice in some of her daughter stations, notably Polela. The Prior of Polela, Father Gerard Wolpert, justified the actions of the Trappists by accusing the neighbouring chief, Chief Sakayedwa, of "stirring up his people against us, especially that they should take their children from school, and...other means are used to frighten the people...to keep them back from going to Church and religious instruction..."¹⁷. He also informed the Administrator of Native Law that "To our sister teacher at Polela school I gave the advice not to give up to parents any child...unless there be a judicial order and the child be taken

¹⁶. The Administrator of Native Law was specifically referring to one African chief who, together with 45 African tenants, lived on Trappist land. The chief complained to the magistrate that owing to the stringent conditions set by the Trappists on their land, and in particular the enforced Christianisation and education system, they (the chief and his subjects) were unable to continue to live there. He requested that other land be provided for them. NA, SNA, Vol.1/1/101, 577/87, and UD 221.

¹⁷. NA, SNA, Vol.1/1/111, 1336/1888, "A letter to the Administrator of Native Law", 12 December 1888. Ironically, the same chief (Sakayedwa) had earlier asked the Trappists to build ten schools for his people. See NA, Vol.1078, 1876/86.

by the police."¹⁸

Given the unsympathetic attitude of the Trappists to the grievances of African parents, the courts remained the last hope for the restoration of their children. It is interesting to note that the Trappist detention saga knew no bounds - even headmen's children fell victim to this system. For example, at a Branch Court in Pinetown a headman complained about his twelve-year old daughter who, after having been sent to Mariannhill, fell ill. The Trappists refused him and his wife permission to see their daughter. A child had died on the mission previously and the father requested that his child be restored to him as he feared she would also die there.¹⁹ The Administrator of Native Law ordered the Trappists to release the girl to the custody of her parents.²⁰

In another case an elderly man, Nyambose, complained to the Trappists about two of his granddaughters who resided and schooled at Polela mission without his permission. Prior Wolpert's unwillingness to let the girls return to their grandfather, despite repeated requests, led to a violent and bloody confrontation between the schoolboys from Polela and five

18. Ibid.

19. Natal Advertiser, 10 February 1888, Natal Mercury, 11 February 1888.

20. Natal Advertiser, 21 February 1888.

of Nyambose's sons.²¹ The case was reported to the Resident Magistrate and the belligerent parties were summoned to his office at Ixopo. On the one hand, Prior Wolpert laid a charge of assault on his pupils against Nyambose's children. He also petitioned His Excellency the Governor, requesting him to ensure protection to his mission, so as "to enable mission work at Polela Station to go on quietly."²² On the other hand, Nyambose's children accused the Prior of having instructed his boys to attack them. They also accused him of "inducing children to run away from their homes."²³ The verdict passed at the end was strongly in favour of Nyambose. In his letter to the Secretary of Native Affairs, the Resident Magistrate emphasised that in reaching his judgement he had "acted in accordance with the ruling of His Honourable the Chief Justice in a similar case."²⁴ An extract from the letter reads as follows:

...after reading the charges and counter charges made in the various depositions, and having considered the application by Nyambose for the return of his granddaughters I ordered the girls to return to their grandfather and guardian, at the same time warning Nyambose through his sons then present ...that he was to treat the girls kindly... . They [the girls] did not however tell me that any harsh measures were contemplated... . I apprehend that their natural guardian, Nyambose, had as much right legally to prevent them from becoming Christians, as I have to prevent my children from becoming Mohammedans... . I

21. For a detailed account on this confrontation see NA, SNA, Vol.1/1/111, 1145/1888, "Petition relative to the Trappist Mission station at Polela".

22. *Ibid.* See letter dated 12 December 1888.

23. *Ibid.*

24. See the case between Boshoff and Nobagede in Natal Law Reforms, Vol.2 Part 6, 1881, p.218.

think you will agree with me after receiving the papers now in my possession from the Attorney-General that the Native Nyambose has not in any way interfered with the work of the Trappists, or hindered his children or women from attending the station services, or receiving religious or secular instruction until they, the Trappists, unwarrantably, in my opinion, interfered with his domestic arrangements by depriving him of one of his wives and attempting to carry off his children by force against his expressed desire.²⁵

In addition, the Administrator of Native Law instructed the patrol police to inform the Africans that "there was no law to compel them to send their wives and children to be taught, but that having once done so they must think carefully before changing their minds, as the Trappists would have their children entirely under their control, or not at all." This case set a watershed precedent for other dissatisfied parents and guardians whose children were at the Trappist missions against their will to follow legal channels to get them back. The Administrator of Native Law reported that

Since the fight of November last the Natives have been anything but triumphant and several applications have been sent to me to send to the Trappists for children who are at the school but in all cases all have declined to interfere until a direction had been given in the matter of the two girls.²⁶

It must be noted, however, that a section of the female population around Mariannahill had found in the mission a place of refuge from the rigours of rural African life. Described by

25. NA, SNA, Vol. 1/1/111, 1145/1888, "Report of the Administrator of Native Law on Petition of Prior Gerard."

26. Ibid. See letter dated 2 November 1888.

Walker as "gender specific tribulations"²⁷, these included witchcraft accusations, polygamous marriages in the case of women and forced marriages in the case of girls. On the other hand, however, Beall, utilising Etherington's evidence, seems to suggest that African women often found themselves trapped between traditional and colonial patriarchy, and "only resorted to mission life in cases of extreme destitution or infirmity."²⁸ She pointed out the lack of sufficient evidence showing Christianity to have done a great deal to rescue African women from their position of servitude in society, and argued that mission stations and schools were in fact centres where domestic activities were taught and submission to male authority encouraged.²⁹ Yet, in their recent study, Comaroff and Comaroff maintain that gender inequality in the African society can be used to explain why more women than men preferred to live in mission stations. They seem to argue that the practices of denying heritage rights for women and their exclusion from positions of authority were so blatant that "wherever the egalitarian rhetoric of the gospel was heard in [such] communities based on gender inequality, it seems to have had a much greater and quicker impact on females than on males."³⁰

27. Walker, Women and Gender, p.15.

28. J. Beall, "Class, race and gender. The Political Economy of Women in Colonial Natal", (M.A.thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1982), p.72.

29. Ibid, p.74.

30. Comaroff and Comaroff, Revelation and Revolution, p.240.

The strong desire shown by some girls to live in the missions frustrated and defeated parental efforts to take them back home. Perhaps a few selected cases might illustrate this point further.

After a series of successful applications by parents for the return of their daughters who were "detained" at Mariannhill, which were followed by a number of judicial orders that restored the girls to their parents, Reverend Father David (then a senior teacher at Mariannhill), petitioned the Administrator of Native Law, seeking advice regarding a girl at Mariannhill's Saint Annes' School who refused to return home with her father.³¹ Father David wanted to know whether the law demanded from the mission authorities that they "use force to expel the girl from our school "³² In another case of a similar nature, a father, Nqaba, sought assistance from the Administrator of Native Law in getting back his daughter who was "detained" at the Trappist Monastery of Hlongozi.³³ Since this case fell outside the

31. NA, SNA, Vol. 1/1/150, 1402/1891, "Reverend Father David asks advice regarding a native girl at Mariannhill who declines to return to her father", undated. Another case of a similar nature involved a father, Umpindo, whose sixteen year daughter refused to return to him. See NA, SNA, Vol. 1/1/104, 120/88, "Umpindo, under Chief Manzini complains of the detention of his daughter Stopi at the Trappist Monastery, Mariannhill."

32. Ibid.

33. NA, SNA, Vol. 1/1/120, 649/1896, "Respecting application of Nqaba for the restoration of his daughter by the Trappists at Hlongozi".

provisions of Section 289 of the Native Law,³⁴ the Administrator requested some direction from the Secretary of Native Affairs. He indicated that

The father [of the girl] admits that he saw his daughter and that she refused to return home with him but denies having given his consent to the arrangement. It would [thus] seem to be a strange measure to arrest the girl and return her to her kraal, but on the other hand it seems to me that the father, the proper guardian, should have the custody of her. She is about 19 years of age, and has been for about three years an inmate of the Trappist Station and attending the school. Her father says he recovered her after she went to the school, but that she ran back to the Trappists...³⁵

In addition, there existed a difference of opinion between the Governor and the Resident Magistrate concerning judgement on some cases brought before the latter by African parents. In some cases, the decision by the Resident Magistrate to return the girls to their respective homes was overruled by His Excellency the Governor after a successful appeal by the Trappists, and the girls were allowed to return to the mission.³⁶ The reversal of the Magistrate's decision was severely criticised by the Natal Advertiser. In an editorial column entitled "Executive meddling"

³⁴. This section dealt with women who were regarded to be "leading immoral lives."

³⁵. NA, SNA, 1/1/120, 649/1896. A compromise was reached when the girl's father, realising the futility of his efforts, finally consented to let his daughter stay with the Trappists for as long as she wished.

³⁶. One case, for instance, involved two women, a mother and a daughter, who absconded to Mariannhill, after the death of the family head. A charge of desertion laid in the magistrate's office by the deceased's eldest son led to the return of the women to their home. However, a successful appeal by the Trappists to the Governor led to the cancellation of the magistrate's judgement, and the two women were allowed to return to Mariannhill. See NA, SNA, Vol.1/1/105, 157/1888.

the editor pointed out that

Executive interference in such matters is both unconstitutional and dangerous. His Excellency may not criticise any judge's decision and to set aside or amend it is wholly beyond the powers of his commission. Were such things possible, laws and legislature would become a farce in Natal, and personal despotism supreme... . Neither the Hon. Attorney-General, nor the Colonial Secretary, is in any way entitled to interfere outside their respective spheres of control. This evil, however, is one which primarily affects and humiliates the magistrates themselves and not the general public... . His Excellency may not as Governor, nor Judges and Magistrates sitting judicially, nor ourselves as journalists, in any way recognise any control over minors save that of their guardians.³⁷

In some circles the Trappists had become so much the object of popular animosity that they came to be used as scapegoats for almost everything that went wrong in the locality. As recently as 1913, for example, a complaint was lodged by an induna to the Chief Native Commissioner in Pietermaritzburg. The induna accused the Trappists of stealing his son, Uxifa. Upon investigation, however, it was discovered that the boy was not even known at Mariannahill.³⁸ The responses by the African parents and the kholwa from other missions to Mariannahill's educational system constituted a tacit form of consciousness described in the preceding chapter.

The policy of education at Mariannahill came under fire also from the Council of Education. The conflict between the Council and

37. Natal Advertiser, 3 February 1888.

38. NA, SNA, Chief Native Commissioner (thereafter CNC), Vol.149, 2056/1913, "Native Unduna Msomi ka Mgbobana complains that his son has been taken away from him by the Trappists". See letters dated 29 November, 4, 6 and 8 December 1913.

the Mariannhill authorities centred around two major issues. These were, first, the grants-in-aid given to all mission schools which conformed to all the rules and regulations laid down by the Council, and, second, the running of boarding schools by the mission.

The Trappist schools at Mariannhill were given their first grants-in-aid in 1887.³⁹ The Native Committee recommended a grant of £100 for the schools, which was unanimously approved by the Council.⁴⁰ In 1887, there were 54 African schools in receipt of the government grants with a total attendance of 2 943 and an average of 1 936.⁴¹ The total number of scholars at Mariannhill then were 167, 69 boys and 98 girls, with an average daily attendance of 47 and 89, respectively.⁴²

As indicated in chapter three, at Mariannhill schools practical training assumed primacy over academic learning. This was evidenced by the fact that of the 69 boys 50 received instruction in handicraft, tailoring, shoemaking, blacksmithing, wagon-making, masonry, stone-cutting, and composting, and 19 were employed in house and fieldwork. Of the 98 girls 89 learnt knitting, 80 were employed in house and fieldwork and 50 in

39. NA, ED 5/2, "Report of the Inspector of Native Education for 1887 on the Government aided Native Schools", 1887. Natal Mercury, 4 May 1887, Natal Witness, 27 May 1887.

40. Natal Witness, 27 May 1887.

41. NA, ED 5/2, 1887.

42. Ibid.

washing, ironing and cooking. Of the total number (167) only 33 pupils received instruction in English.⁴³ In both boarding schools the children received free education and lodging, a practice that was seriously challenged not only by the colonists, but also by educated Africans from other mission schools.

Upon closer scrutiny, the educational curriculum at Mariannahill schools reflected two diametrically opposed and barely reconcilable strands. While on one hand the curriculum fell far short of satisfying the academic requirements of the Council, on the other hand, it went far beyond the industrial requirements of the Education Law. On the basis of the extensive industrial work done, Pfanner petitioned the Council of Education, in 1889, asking for a £400 increase of the grant made to his schools.⁴⁴ An industrial branch had been established in each of the schools. The total number of boys and girls was 178. The high costs involved in maintaining the industrial school were cited among the reasons that justified an increased grant. The Abbot also stated that "When the boys and girls arrived at a proper age and were sufficiently advanced, we gave them all possible aid with regard to marrying, the assistance consisting of making grants of oxen for lobolo, which was required so long as the present laws remained in force."⁴⁵ The Abbot indicated his intention to give a small piece of land to each of these newly established Christian families. The Abbot's application for an increase

43. Ibid.

44. Natal Witness, 18 May 1889.

45. Ibid.

stimulated lengthy and often heated debates among members of the Council of Education. While the petition for an increased grant was supported by some, it was opposed by others on the grounds that "the grant asked for was [to be used by Abbot Pfanner] for ecclesiastical rather than for scholastic purposes",⁴⁶ and the Abbot was accused of wanting to make all Africans Roman Catholics. It was also argued that "...the Council had acted liberally towards these people [the Trappists] without regard to their religious persuasion... the £100 grant is quite sufficient in comparison to what is paid to other schools."⁴⁷ The threat that the intensity of industrial training at Mariannahill posed to the neighbouring white traders and craftsmen was also pointed out.⁴⁸ In response to the question "whether it could be shown that the £100 which was paid to these [Mariannahill] schools was little in proportion to what was given to other schools", one member of the Council suggested that the Inspector of Native Education should visit the schools and write a report on this question.⁴⁹

On 23 November 1889 the Superintendent Inspector of Schools and the Inspector of Native schools, namely, Robert Russell and Robert Plant, respectively, visited Mariannahill schools for an inspection. The visit was in accordance with the resolution of

46. Natal Advertiser, 1 June 1889, Natal Witness, 4 June 1889.

47. Natal Mercury, 2 September 1889.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid. See also Natal Witness, 30 August 1889.

the Council on the application of the Abbot of Mariannahill for an increase of the Council grant from £100 to £500 per annum, as indicated in Russell's report.⁵⁰ Russell's report showed the average attendance for boys and girls to be 84 and 93, respectively. Their ages varied from six to 22 years in the boys' school, and six to twenty years in the girls' school. All scholars were boarded, clothed and taught free of charge. There were at least eighteen white boys in the boys' school.⁵¹ The course of instruction in both schools complied with the terms of the Law "though hitherto but little attempt has been made to exceed the minimum requirements in the matter of book-learning."⁵² Russell praised Mariannahill for the "excellent manner and degree" in which they gave moral training to Africans. This, he argued, was not only because the Law demanded it, but because self-abnegation and manual work was a necessary part of a Trappist's life. He indicated that,

Every boy and girl spends at least five hours a day in the classroom, and four-and-a-half hours in the field, the workshop, or the kitchen. Twenty-five boys are masons and brick-layers under the charge of five Brothers, eight are carpenters and joiners under five Brothers, three are tinsmiths under two Brothers, four are painters under one Brother, eleven are tailors under two Brothers, eight are shoemakers under two Brothers, six are in the printing and book-binding department under twelve Brothers, and two are tanners under one Brother. All the girls receive instruction in needlework, knitting and cooking, housework of every kind, and fieldwork. Some are taught in addition shoe-making and straw-plaiting. Fifteen substantial buildings have been erected by masters and boys since September, 1887. A two-storeyed building,

50. NA, CSO, Vol.1235, 1889/57/27.

51. All the white boys and six "advanced" African boys were taught separately from the others. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

with bathrooms attached, has been built by the boys without help from the masters... .Since January 1888 the girls have made thirteen thousand different garments and pieces of house linen, have knitted 600 pairs of socks and stockings and have made 299 pairs of sandals and 34 pairs of shoes.⁵³

The Trappist school was further commended for the amount and variety of manual work done by its pupils, which "considerably exceeds that done by the children of all the native schools taken together."⁵⁴

Russell's report no doubt supported Pfanner's petition for the increased grant he had applied for. However, the report by the Inspector of Native Education, Robert Plant, suggested otherwise. First, as to the question whether the grant of £100 to Mariannahill schools was proportional to grants to other similar institutions, Plant reported that it was not, if the massive industrial activities were considered. Like Russell, Plant praised the schools for the industrial work done, arguing that

The variety, usefulness, and thorough character of the teaching imparted leave nothing to be desired. So far as the boys are concerned, it exceeds, both in quantity and quality the combined results in all the other Native schools in the Colony... . All the instruction appears to be given in a thoroughly practical manner... .Girls are taught a variety of useful work - dressmaking...washing, ironing, knitting, cooking and general cleaning...⁵⁵

Secondly, as to whether the teaching was in accordance with the "Education Law", Plant, unlike Russell, was critical of the academic content given in both schools, especially that imparted

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

to the girls, and of the general educational policy at the monastery. He remarked that

With respect to the school work proper in both schools very little has been done as yet, the avowed objection to anything like advanced education on the part of the Abbot has hitherto prevented satisfactory progress being made, more especially among the girls, none of whom have got through the English Primer, though several have been at school for three or four years, the boys are a little better, though still far from what they ought to be.⁵⁶

In other words, according to the report compiled by Plant, none of the Mariannahill schools conformed with the educational requirements of the Law as prescribed by the Council of Education. Plant argued that while the extensive nature of the industrial activities at Mariannahill schools, when compared with other schools, rendered the grant of £100 disproportionate on one hand, this disproportion ceased to exist if the question of the amount of a grant was to be determined upon the broader basis of "how far the children taught therein are fitted for future usefulness, and loyal service to the Colony at large, or in other words, of what advantage these schools are to the colony."⁵⁷ He cited two main reasons why he thought the grant was disproportionate, and should not be increased. First, he criticised the Trappists for their "bad" system of providing everything for the children free of charge as this was, in his view, "very harmful in its effect upon the native mind, being calculated to make them imagine that such provision is that to which they are entitled, and to regard a demand for payment for whatever they may wish to have as an injustice, and this more

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

especially in the direction of all taxation."⁵⁸ Secondly, the Inspector of Native Education joined voices with the African parents in excoriating the practice of keeping children at the boarding schools against the will of their parents, and viewed the "the practice of isolating the children from ordinary social life, forbidding them to visit their homes and the constant gaol-like supervision by the Europeans"⁵⁹ as objectionable and a calculated attempt to prevent self-reliance and personal forethought for their future.

Furthermore, Plant seriously questioned, and challenged, the Abbot's firm declaration that he would continue to keep children at Mariannahill, and his insistence that he would give them up only if the court ordered him to do so, as well as his obstinate refusal to allow his boys and girls to take service with the English colonists. The conclusion Plant drew from these given facts, the Abbot's view on the education of African girls as published on the Natal Record and his numerous controversial articles published in the local press, was that Pfanner and his followers were bent on establishing a "Native Trappist Settlement", and warned that "any compliance that may be made with the requirements of the Law in the direction of English education is made under protest."⁶⁰ Plant's report concluded as follows:

How far any institution is entitled to State support

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

which by its representative has openly avowed its distinct opposition to the lines upon which the state has declared that its work has been conducted, which claims for itself to be more to its scholars in authority and importance than the state, it is not for me to decide, but it seems to me that in estimating the amount of state support to which an institution is entitled, such opposition and such a claim would certainly be taken into account.⁶¹

Public opinion in Natal was also unsympathetic, not only to the proposed increase of the Trappist grant, but also to the general educational policy at Mariannhill. The opponents were drawn from a diverse background, and comprised English-speaking colonists⁶², the kholwa and women. It is important to note that Loram's classification of the colonists is by no means exhaustive. It has not, for example, made a distinction between rural and urban colonists, between farmers and speculators, etc.

As far as the English colonists in Natal were concerned, their animosity towards the Trappists dates back to the establishment of the first non-racial boarding schools at the mission. Pfanner had scarcely published his audacious programme when a veritable

61. Ibid.

62. Use of the term "colonist" is problematic. One cannot rightly speak of the colonists as a homogenous entity. However, Loram has classified the colonists into three broad categories. The repressionists believed that Africans should be taught nothing else except how to work. The equalists believed that Africans were equally capable as the whites, and if given the same educational advantages they would be easily assimilated into the western style of living. The segregationists recognised the right of Africans to develop, but believed that any such development should be a slow process, and need not be on the same lines as those of Europeans. See Education, pp.17-25.

storm of protest broke out against it.⁶³ Gamble states that "Perhaps the greatest bone of contention the colonists had with the Trappists was that the monks continued to teach black and white children side by side without any discrimination... ."64

Writing on the industrial habits of the Trappists, the editor of the Natal Mercury commented,

...the industrial methods of the Trappists appeal very forcibly to colonial sense...[but] certain parts in the picture are not so very attractive. The stern discipline of the order does not commend itself to Anglo-Saxon sympathies, nor is the co-mingling of white and black children on a footing of perfect equality a pleasing idea to most colonists.⁶⁵

The general sense of phobia displayed by the colonists against mixed schools was perhaps generated by the unfounded fear that Natal could evolve into a "black colony." In a letter to the Mercury, a correspondent expressed his fear for the future of the "white race" in Natal. He considered the intermingling of races in the classroom and the introduction of what he considered to be European educational standards to African schools as nothing else than "weaving a rope to strangle our own necks."⁶⁶ The wave of protest against the non-racial educational policy eventually forced Pfanner to confine himself exclusively to the education of Africans.⁶⁷

63. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.72.

64. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.61.

65. Natal Mercury, 22 January 1885.

66. Natal Mercury, 11 October, 1889.

67. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.72.

The pre-occupation of the Mariannhill mission with industrial activities and the training of African boys in various trades also constituted another arena of battle between the Trappists and the English speaking colonists. The possibility of competing with African traders and craftsmen haunted the thoughts of many white men and sent waves of shock down their spines. While the elements of Christianity and education were perceived to be important vehicles for African "civilisation", the growing number of the amakholwa bred a feeling of fear and insecurity among a sizeable section of the colonists. Meintjies points out that

the amakolwa in general became more conscious of a growing racism among white Natalians, who ignored their adoption of colonial life styles and Christianity and blocked their incorporation within colonial civil society. Their competitiveness in the carrying trade and in the market place only gained them the name of thieves and rogues from envious and less successful colonists.⁶⁸

This fear of competing with blacks was aggravated by Pfanner's application for an increased grant for his schools. A direct link was drawn between the grant and the shaky theory of competition. For instance, claims were made that "the Abbot had applied for the grant to enable the Trappists to compete better with the country traders"⁶⁹ While Russell's favourable report on Mariannhill schools and his recommendation that the Trappist grant be increased received minimal support, most colonists rallied behind Plant's recommendation that the grant should not be increased because the training of Africans in crafts at

68. In Walker, Women and Gender, p.130.

69. Natal Witness, 7 June 1889.

Mariannahill was not serving the best interest of the colony.⁷⁰ The opposition mounted against the grant needs to be understood within the context of firstly, the acquisition of large tracts of land by the Trappists and, secondly, the free educational policy practised at Mariannahill.

In 1889, Trappist land holdings in Natal alone were estimated to be more than 70 000 acres⁷¹ and this acquisition of large tracts of land did not commend itself to most colonists. Moreover, the fear of coming into what was perceived to be "unfair competition" with Mariannahill trained Africans was constantly cited as the main reason for white opposition to the mission. Advocating the scrapping of even the £100 educational grant given to the Trappists, a white trader complained that

They [the Trappists] profess to teach, but in reality are traders and storekeepers and having what they call brothers and sisters who work for nothing, they effectively undersell any storekeepers, and do work cheaper than any carpenter or other mechanic to try and start in business or get work where they are fully established, as they, working for nothing, can more than compete.⁷²

Writing on the question of "unfair competition", another correspondent argued:

A great deal has been said and written of Asiatic invasion. It has been said that Asiatics are, in many trades, competing unfairly with Europeans. Attention has not, however, been lately drawn to the fact that there is a class of fanatics in Natal who are, by teaching the natives various European handicrafts, creating competition still more unfair, unfair both in

70. Some colonists appealed for the scrapping of even the £100 grant to Mariannahill schools.

71. Natal Witness, 7 June 1889.

72. Ibid.

the case of the coolie and kaffir simply because any one of those people can live on a tenth part of the money required by a European... .These fanatics...are doing inestimable harm to their own brethren, by creating a competition, which has no right to exist, and which it is a mortal sin in the present condition of labour to call into existence.⁷³

By encouraging the acquisition of technical knowledge by Africans, the Trappists were even accused of being "a disgrace to the colony...moral criminals in the eyes of those who had the prosperity of Natal at heart."⁷⁴

By virtue of their monastic system, which for sustenance relied absolutely on unpaid labour, the Trappists were able not only to undertake the industrial training of Africans, but also to lodge, feed and clothe them, entirely free of cost. This was a lamentable situation in the eyes of many colonists, and suggestions ranging from direct taxation to forfeiture of the property owned by the Trappists were made.⁷⁵

The above was an attempt to crystallize the general attitudes of the colonists towards Mariannhill. It is important to mention that the term "colonists" has been used in a very broad sense. The study has not gone to any length in drawing distinctions among the numerous classes of colonists. There were, for example, planters, midland farmers, speculators, rural and urban dwellers and so on.

73. Natal Advertiser, 8 October 1890.

74. Natal Advertiser, 2 October 1890.

75. Ibid.

The opposition against the £400 grant increase the Abbot had applied for was joined by the kholwa from other mission schools. The kholwa grievances against the Trappists centred around several fundamental issues. One related to the mission's free educational policy. Many of the kholwa believed that this was nothing else but an attempt by the Trappists to "trap" people through their "kindness". Opposing the application for an increased grant, a kholwa man cited the mere fact of the Trappists being able to gratuitously teach, feed and clothe 177 scholars at no cost as evidence enough to render the application unjust.⁷⁶ The unlawful "detention" of children at Mariannahill, the devaluing of higher learning, the general poor standard of education, especially with regard to that of girls, and the overemphasis put on industrial training, were other areas singled out for criticism by the kholwa fraternity.

Pfanner's inferior educational programme for African girls also came under fire from African women themselves. For instance, the Abbot was taken to task for his flagrant claims that book learning would render African girls "proud, lazy, unfit for usefulness in their proper sphere" and "as wives and mothers entirely spoils them, making them to despise their husbands, and to neglect the care of their families". A kholwa woman who had received her education at Inanda Seminary, challenged this narrow-minded assertion, and cited her alma mater as an ideal model for a girls' school where African girls were instructed in

⁷⁶. See the letters from Nisane and Sokaya, Natal Mercury, 22 October 1889.

the different standards prescribed by the Council without despising manual labour. This, she argued, was evidenced by the hundreds of trees these girls had planted and the thriving gardens they had cultivated. In their families, she explained, these women, with rare exceptions, became "diligent and respectful wives, and earnest, careful mothers", a proof that "the book knowledge has not made them less anxious to cultivate their own gardens, to care for and adorn their homes, to clothe their children as neatly as possible, and to train them to be useful men and women".⁷⁷ Accusing the Abbot of living "two centuries behind the present times", the correspondent expressed many women's hope that

Her Majesty's Government, the Council of Education, as well as the enlightened Press, and the Natal colonists, will not give ear to such an echo from the dark ages, but will hasten forward the day when the now evident Zulu shall become enlightened men and women alike...⁷⁸

Though one cannot rightly talk of the existence of a structured feminist consciousness in the late nineteenth century South Africa, some of the ideas expressed in the press carried strong feminist sentiments. For example, a "colonist" woman contended that Pfanner's despising of the intellect of African girls/women should be seen as an attack on all women.⁷⁹ Interpreting the whole question of the education of African girls as a "woman

⁷⁷. See a letter from Mapumelo, Ibid.

⁷⁸. Ibid.

⁷⁹. She dismissed Pfanner's claims, and pointed out that the "excellent" schools and colleges for (white) girls in Natal amply demonstrated that ignorance was not, and should never be a desirable status for women, Natal Mercury, 4 October 1889.

question", and seeing herself as "speaking for those of my own sex, although being of another race", she expressed her optimism that

... a body of such standing and great importance to the colony as the Council of Education will not accede to the proposal of the Abbot, and lower the school standard for native girls...It would be ill become our little go ahead colony to announce to the world that it has come to the conclusion ignorant women make better wives.⁸⁰

The application for an increased grant by Pfanner had far reaching consequences. It stimulated debate, not only around this contentious issue, but also around other issues of controversy, including the "detention" of girls at Mariannahill, industrial training of African boys, etc. The overall impact was that existing tensions between the Trappists and, on the one hand, the African community, and, on the other, the colonists, escalated as these rather strange bedfellows were unanimous in their opposition to the grant applied for by the Abbot. The recommendation passed by the Native Committee, allowed the question of the Mariannahill grant to stand over until a new decision had been arrived at regarding the proposed grading of African schools.⁸¹ An influential member of the Council of Education "regarded the whole question as a political issue and considered it to be for the Government and Legislative Council to decide upon."⁸² A year later, Pfanner responded, stating that "As my application for an increased school grant has obtained no hearing with the government it has, we may assume,

80. Ibid.

81. Natal Witness, 28 October 1889.

82. Ibid.

been refused by them because we are Catholics."⁸³ The Abbot dismissed the report compiled by the Inspector of Native Education (Plant) as a deliberate attempt to discredit Mariannahill as a Catholic institution, and claimed that the refusal by the Council to increase the grant for his schools could be explained in terms of religious prejudice and bias against the Catholics. Towards the end of 1889, a petition from the head of Mariannahill schools, Father Ambrosius, was presented before the Council of Education. The Governor was requested that the end of the year (1889) inspection and examination be supervised by both the Superintendent Inspector of Schools and the Inspector of Native Education, and not by the latter alone, as was the usual practice.⁸⁴ The petition was dismissed by the Council as no justifiable ground was found to depart from the ordinary course for the conduct of the annual examination by the said inspector.⁸⁵ Four years later, (i.e. in 1893), 112 boys and 65 girls were dismissed from Mariannahill, an action which the Natal Mercury attributed to the refusal by the Council to give Mariannahill the grant applied for.⁸⁶

The government grants-in-aid given to mission schools were no doubt very small, given the substantial contribution by African

83. Natal Witness, 9 June 1890.

84. See NA, CSO, Vol.1240, 1889/6727.

85. His Excellency was informed that "the Council of Education sees no reason to doubt the impartiality of the Inspector of Native Education", Ibid, G451/1889.

86. Natal Mercury, 19 August 1892.

people to the revenue of the colony.⁸⁷ However, it must be acknowledged that these grants were increased over time, though at a very small rate. For example, at Mariannhill the two schools received a total amount of £100 in 1887. This was increased to £190 in 1893.⁸⁸ But as we shall see in the following chapter, the establishment of Responsible Government in Natal was to effect numerous changes in, among other things, the curriculum and grants-in-aid.

Chapter four has identified the major grievances against the controversial educational policy at Mariannhill. As we have seen, these grievances stemmed from the establishment of boarding schools, the withholding of African children against the expressed wishes of their parents in these boarding establishments, the industrial training of Africans and the application for an increased grant by the Abbot of Mariannhill.

87. For example, the contribution by Africans to the revenue of the colony in 1890 was recorded as follows:
hut tax - £74 000.
squatters' rent - £11 000.
dog tax - £6 000.
duties on blankets and beads - £15 000.
marriages - £2 000.
Taken together, African contribution was more than £100 000. Out of this huge amount only a small sum of £ 3 500 was reserved for their education. Thus the burden of educating Africans in Natal rested largely on the shoulders of the various missionary societies. For example, the American Missionary Society spent between £5 000 and £10 000 per annum on the education of African children under its care. See Natal Mercury, 1 March 1890.

88. NA, CSO, Vol. 1401, 1894/4914, "Superintendent Inspector of Schools. Information on Mariannhill Native Schools."

The concerned parties, notably African parents, the white colonists and the Council of Education, adopted several strategies to fight the problems that faced them. A mild degree of success was achieved. As far as the colonists were concerned, most of their obstacles were to be eradicated by the newly established Responsible Government in Natal.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SAINT FRANCIS COLLEGE

Chapter five focuses on the further growth and development of the schools on the Trappist mission of Mariannhill from the 1890s to 1915, when Saint Francis College, the first Catholic Teachers Training College in South Africa, came into being. The course of education in Natal, in the period covered in this chapter, was to be influenced and affected by a number of factors. Among these were the establishment of a Responsible Government (1893), the Anglo-Boer War (1899 - 1902), the Bambatha Rebellion (1906) and the formation of the Union of South Africa (1910). Three significant changes also occurred at Mariannhill. These were the suspension of Abbot Franz Pfanner from his position as the head of the Mariannhill Abbey (1892), his eventual resignation (1893) and the papal separation of Mariannhill and its daughter missions from the Trappist Order (1909). These events provide a background against which the overall educational developments, changes and problems at Mariannhill will be investigated.

The establishment of a settler regime in Natal in 1893, ushered in a new political era for most colonists. The new government was to introduce measures that were aimed at eliminating the imagined fear by many colonists (the new electorate) of a looming competition posed by the industrial training provided for Africans in Natal. Conversely, the establishment of Responsible Government was to impact adversely on the educational welfare of

Africans in the colony. Its immediate effect was the abolition of the Council of Education, and the establishment of the Natal Department of Education in its place.¹ Within this department a sub-department of Native Education was created. It was placed under the control of the Superintendent of Education, and the necessary funds for its maintenance were voted by the Natal Parliament. This system was to continue until 1910, when a new political dispensation, which took the form of the Union of South Africa, was introduced.²

The establishment of a settler regime in Natal marked a victory for the segregationist faction of the colonists. As mentioned in chapter four, the segregationists did recognise the right of Africans to education, as long as a tight reign was kept on providing it and that it never threatened or clashed with the interests of the whites in the colony. But as we have seen, the 1890s were years notable for popular discontent against the government system of granting financial aid to mission schools which provided industrial training for Africans. In the 1893 election campaign the danger of the white man being undercut by Africans was loudly proclaimed.³ This industrial bugbear was effectively addressed after the establishment of Responsible Government. The resultant reclassification of government aided

¹. The Council of Education was abolished by the Education Act No.5 of 1894. See Natal Witness, 6 May 1895 and Natal Mercury, 12 June 1898.

². Behr and Macmillan, Education in South Africa, p.161.

³. McKerron, A History of Education, P.168.

schools marked a shift of emphasis from industrial to manual education. While the former involved training in trades, and thus armed the pupils with useful skills, the latter focused only on activities that required little beyond physical effort. The educational report compiled by the Superintendent of Education in 1895 stated that

After the first July 1896, no native school will receive Government aid if the products of the industrial work in that school are allowed to be sold or disposed of in such a manner as to compete with the general trade, or if the school be in any way responsible for or associated with the printing and publishing of any native newspaper. The object of the Government in making grants to the native mission schools is to assist the advancement of simple rudimentary education among the native population... .⁴

By 1898, white prejudice had grown so strong that a law was passed prohibiting the sale of any work done by African boys from all industrial schools in Natal. This inevitably led to the dismissal of the teaching staff from these schools, the disposal in the best possible manner of the working plants and the consequent closure of the industrial workshops in these schools.⁵

As discussed in chapters three and four, Abbot Pfanner's scheme of education for Africans attached great importance to industrial and manual training at the expense of academic education or higher learning. However, it was never the Abbot's belief that all Africans be trained in industry and manual work. This was

⁴. Natal Witness, 6 May 1895.

⁵. NA, Natal Provincial Publications (thereafter NOP), 6/3/1/1/5, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for 1914".

evidenced by his classification of Mariannhill scholars into different categories.⁶ Thus by 1890 a high school for boys was established.⁷ According to the editor of the Natal Advertiser "The Abbot was urged on to this [the establishment of a high school] by the fact that many of his pupils were dissatisfied at not having higher educational opportunities than could be obtained at an ordinary school. This dissatisfaction was so pronounced that it was feared some would leave the mission if by so doing they would be able to get a higher education."⁸ The new high school commenced with ten African scholars, those whom Pfanner had deemed "intelligent".⁹ The total number of scholars was 182 (88 boys and 94 girls). The inspector of Native Education reported, in 1890, that

There was a decided improvement among the girls. More attention had been given to English, reading, writing and grammar, but there was a tendency to hurry to the advanced rule of arithmetic before the scholars had obtained a thorough knowledge of elementary rules. English had been commenced among the girls, though as yet elementary. The industrial work of both schools was most satisfactory, both in quantity and quality.¹⁰

The establishment of a high school at Mariannhill did not, however, mark a change of policy with regard to African education. Pfanner unequivocally stated that

6. This classification has been outlined in Chapter Three. See footnote 69, pp.64-65.

7. Adelgisa, Saint Francis College, p.8.

8. Natal Advertiser, 10 January 1890.

9. Ibid.

10. Natal Mercury, 9 January 1890, Natal Witness, 9 January 1890.

In establishing a High School I have not changed my principles with regard to the natives. My principles with the coloured people of South Africa were and still are the same, namely that these people are more adapted for manual labour than for the higher branches of sciences and learning, and this may be said particularly of the females... . But I admit there is one exception to the rule: so then I say it would do an amount of good among the natives to choose among them a few of the most intelligent and educate them in their higher branches...in order to get among them teachers and missionaries and doctors..."¹¹

According to Sister Adelgisa, the educational curriculum in the high school was to include subjects such as Religion, Church History, Zulu, English, Latin, German, French, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, History, Geography, Nature Studies, Music, etc.¹² Plans to build a similar school for girls never went beyond the stage of discussion.

Education at Mariannhill remained an issue of serious controversy, at least until 1893. The waning of this controversy after 1893 was perhaps due to one dramatic event: the suspension of Pfanner as the Abbot of Mariannhill. At the beginning of 1892, the General Chapter of the Trappist Order delegated Abbot Francis Strunk of Oelenberg to visit Mariannhill, the purpose being to investigate allegations of irregularities against the mission.¹³ The report of the visitator (an ecclesiastical official entrusted with an inspection) report was critical of

¹¹. Natal Witness, 31 January 1890.

¹². Adelgisa, Saint Francis College, p.8.

¹³. Abbot Strunk was described as a "stern and severe disciplinarian", See Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannhill, p.47.

Pfanner's practice of establishing pockets of mission stations in various parts of Natal and the employment of religious novices outside the monastery precincts. Not only did these constitute a gross violation of the Trappist Rule (which forbade active missionary work), but the novices' employment outside Mariannahill deprived them of their rightful sustenance and support, and their general spiritual and moral guidance were neglected.¹⁴ Furthermore, the establishment of the South African Mission Association and the Franziners by Pfanner was severely criticised by the General Chapter.¹⁵ Abbot Strunk's report on Mariannahill, which took more than five months to compile, was presented before the Chapter General in Rome.¹⁶ The head of Mariannahill was suspended from office for a period of twelve months. Pfanner's suspension effectively brought an abrupt end to his active career as missionary and educator in Natal, as he

14. Schimlek, Mariannahill, P.106.

15. Pfanner established the South African Mission Association for the purpose of assisting other (Catholic) missions in South Africa through prayers, financial support, etc. This arrangement was objected to by some of the Mariannahill benefactors. They argued that their funds were being channelled to purposes other than those originally intended for. By establishing the Franziners, whose members lived according to the Rule of Saint Assisi, Pfanner was seen to have attempted to establish a kind of "Third Order". Membership to this society was open to priests and laymen, who were not obliged to submit to the strict Rule of the Trappist Order. Schimlek argues that this society "did not come up to expectations, and the Trappists had to carry on at their many stations, with one foot in the world and the other not too seriously poised on the hard base of their Order..." Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.106.

16. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.67.

immediately withdrew from all activities and exiled himself at Lourdes in the Cape Colony.¹⁷ Father Amandus Scholzig was appointed as head of Mariannahill. Five months before the end of his suspension Pfanner tendered his resignation and retired to Emaus (an outstation of Lourdes), where he spent the last fifteen years of his life.¹⁸

Amandus Scholzig succeeded Pfanner as the second Abbot of Mariannahill.¹⁹ Unlike his predecessor, Scholzig was neither controversial nor autocratic. Furthermore, unlike Pfanner, he was never a vigorous press campaigner. He shunned publicity and kept minimal contact with the press. During Abbot Scholzig's short period in office (1894-1900) the clouds of controversy that blanketed Mariannahill mission and its schools cleared gradually. Though education at Mariannahill, like in many other missions in Natal in the nineteenth century, was slow to develop, the end of Pfanner's reign undoubtedly closed a long chapter of controversy

17. Lourdes was the thirteenth mission to be founded by Pfanner, and the first in the Cape after Dunbrody. It was situated in East Griqualand, and extended for approximately 30 000 acres. Pfanner had paid £9 000 for this large piece of land. See Natal Mercury, 10 February 1888.

18. Abbot Pfanner died on 23 May 1909 after a long illness. He was 84 years old. He was buried at Mariannahill.

19. Kneipp described Scholzig as a "quiet contemplative and likeable man of great learning... a staunch protagonist of monastic discipline and of the interior life.", Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.18.

that surrounded the mission.²⁰

By 1894, 93 African schools were in receipt of government aid. The sum of £4 440 6s 6d was expended for this purpose, and taking the average daily attendance of 3 913, an amount of £1 2s 8d was spent per child per annum. The total number of Africans attending school was 5 064 (2 125 boys and 2 139 girls). The boys' and girls' schools at Mariannhill received £109 11s 3d and £81 18s 9d respectively. The teaching staff was comprised of four brothers and two sisters. There were 113 boys and 98 girls with an average attendance of 100 and 78 respectively.²¹ Of the total number of boys only 80 were able to read English though 104 were instructed in the language. Nine boys were instructed in the Zulu language only. 98 were able to work with sums - 50 up to simple instruction only, 28 up to simple division only and 20 up to the compound rules. None was able to work with higher rules.²² The boys were also instructed in mathematics, grammar, and they received drawing and singing lessons as well. Industrial training still formed an important component of the Mariannhill educational system, with 43 boys receiving

20. The three English newspapers in Natal showed, after 1895, a marked decrease in the number of editorials, letters and articles on Mariannhill.

21. For a detailed report see NA,NCP, 8/1/7/4/4, "Annual report of the Inspector of Native Schools for 1893-94", 18 August 1894.

22. Ibid.

instruction in the various trades.²³

Though the education of the girls still lagged behind that of the boys in all respects, there was nevertheless a marked improvement. For instance, of the 35 girls who received instruction in English at least 18 could read it. 47 girls were able to work with sums - 35 up to simple subtraction only, 10 up to simple division and 2 up to compound rules. Furthermore, 24 girls were able to do plain sewing, 18 were instructed in geography and grammar and all took singing lessons. All the girls were trained in sewing, washing, ironing, cooking and general housework.²⁴ Christie has identified sexism and women's subordination as one of the three important aspects of mission education.²⁵ She rightly accuses missionaries of having brought to Africa Western ideas about the place of women in society. Most missionaries believed that women should be trained for domesticity, that is, as wives, mothers and servants. The educational curriculum was structured accordingly to enforce these ideals. For instance, while industrial education for African boys comprised a variety of tasks such as carpentry, blacksmithing, printing, etc., that of the girls was

23. Of these number ten received instruction in tailoring, three in shoemaking, two in carpentry, three in blacksmithing, seven in masonry, three in tinsmithing and eight in garden work. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. The other two were industrial and moral instruction, and racism and subordination. Christie, The Right to Learn, p.73.

orientated to instruction in cooking, laundry work, ironing, sewing, etc.: the kind of training deemed necessary for their moulding as good housewives and mothers. Cock succinctly summed up the whole situation as follows:

The education of black women was largely aimed at socialisation into domestic roles, both in their homes and as servants in other people's homes.²⁶

The educational curriculum for girls was essentially Eurocentric, and no attempt was made to adapt it to the local environment. This was evidenced by the fact that, for example, agriculture as a subject was never taught to the girls, though, ironically, cultivation had long been a woman's work in African society.²⁷ Thus, though African education in the nineteenth century was, on the whole, inadequate, African male scholars were given a slightly better education than their female counterparts. However, even for the boys the educational content was in all respects Eurocentric. In 1894, Abbot Amandus Scholzig mentioned "Example and precept" as the means used to encourage conformity to European habits of life.²⁸ The inspector's general remarks on Mariannahill schools, towards the end of 1894, were favourable. He stated that

Both the boys' and girls' schools have maintained their character for good work. Considerable progress has been made in the different subjects taught, and the most satisfactory discipline and order evident throughout. The class-rooms are fairly large and well-ventilated, the dormitories though rather crowded are clean and airy, and attention is paid to the

26. Cock, Madams and maids, p.288.

27. Christie, The Right to Learn, p.76.

28. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/4/4.

general health and comfort of the children. The industrial work is varied, useful, and well taught.²⁹

The natural disasters that swept throughout Natal, and the whole of South Africa, in the late nineteenth century were to impact adversely on the colony's educational structure.³⁰ A marked drop in attendance was evident in almost all missionary run African schools. For example, while the average daily attendance in 1896 stood at 6 452 by 1897 this had dropped to 5 789.³¹ This was due to "The incessant demand on the part of many of the parents for their children to be allowed to come home and help, or to go to work to earn money to buy food..."³² This situation was exacerbated by the Government's order that grants-in-aid to all African schools be put at a uniform rate of 15s per head.³³ The inspector of Native schools remarked that this had the effect of "reducing the very best of the scholars to the level of the very worst in so far as Government assistance was

29. Ibid.

30. These included the locust plague in 1894 and Rinderpest in 1896. For a detailed discussion on the impact of these disasters on Africans in Natal see Lambert, Africans in Natal, pp.346-377.

31. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/1/8, "Report of the Superintendent Inspector of Schools for the year ended December 31, 1897."

32. Ibid.

33. In the beginning of 1897 the Government's total expenditure on education in Natal was £45 457, with £38 007 spent on Europeans, £5 528 on Africans and £1 922 on Indians. This put the average cost of educating each child at £3 19s, 13s and 12s 6d respectively. Ibid.

concerned."³⁴

The Trappist schools at Mariannahill were also hard hit by these new changes and developments. Though they were among the 159 schools in receipt of financial aid from the government, the grants-in-aid received were drastically reduced.³⁵ On the whole, however, there was a slight increase in the grants-in-aid given to African schools. In 1898 grants had been raised to £5 568 17s, as compared to the £4 853 figure in 1897. It is important to note that these grants were purely for academic learning (at least up to standard 4) and for manual work, and never for industrial training.³⁶ The 1898 grants to Mariannahill schools totalled £130 1s 6d, with the boys receiving £69 7s 6d and the girls £60 5s. However, from the available statistical evidence, even this slightly improved figure fell far short of the 1894 figure of £190 30s 2d. In 1898 pupil enrolment at Mariannahill schools stood at 197, 113 boys and 84 girls, with an average attendance of 109 and 72 respectively. 70 boys and 37 girls received instruction in English. The Inspector of Native Schools noted a marked improvement in the boys' school,

34. Ibid.

35. For instance, while the boys' school was given £109 11s 3d in 1894 that of the girls received £81 18s 9d. These figures had by 1897 been reduced to £63 15s and £55 10s, respectively.

36. The law passed in 1898 indirectly prohibited grants-in-aid to industrial training in African schools as an embargo was placed on the purchase of any of the products from these schools. Eventually the workshops in all these schools were closed down and the teachers relieved of their duties.

especially with regard to grammar and arithmetic. A number of the boys had reached the maximum standard (Std 4) which qualified them for a government grant. The boys were further praised for the considerable amount of farm work done. As regards the girls' school, the Inspector expressed his concern at the lack of discipline in the school. He reported that

This school is not up to its usual work. There are evidences, particularly in the upper classes, of a want of control on the part of the Sister in charge. A little firmness on her part is much more needed, otherwise the work of the school is fairly satisfactory. A considerable amount of farmwork, needlework, straw plaiting, etc. is done regularly and well.³⁷

In almost all schools in the colony, the standard of Zulu reading and writing was good, and thousands of boys and girls were quite proficient in it. However, difficulties still lay with English. According to the inspector, this was because English was a foreign language and there was a lack of qualified teachers to teach it. Writing and arithmetic were the most popular subjects, and were taught fairly well throughout the colony. Another difficulty lay with reading in translation, grammar and geography - all these were poorly taught in most schools. The girls were, however, praised for the "good" and sometimes "excellent" manual work done in a number of schools and homes, as evidenced by their neatness, their display of fancy needlework, and their very good cookery. As far as the boys were concerned, the inspector was critical of the manual tasks performed, as they were of little

37. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/2/1/1, "Report of the Inspector of Native Education in the government-aided Native Schools for the year ending December 31, 1898."

practical value.³⁸ As mentioned above, training in manual skills is one of the aspects of mission education identified by Christie. Manual labour was incorporated into the educational curriculum partly because most missionaries misconceived Africans as lazy people, and saw it as their God-given duty to teach these people "how to work", and partly because it was encouraged by the government. In essence, however, manual education was aimed at nothing more than preparing Africans for low demeaning jobs. As D.D.T.Jabavu complained in 1918, manual labour in African schools was nothing else than sweeping yards, repairing roads, cracking stones, etc., the resultant ironic effect being that "the boys grow to hate all manual work as humiliating and 'skulk' from it whenever they can, and even avoid it at home ..."³⁹

The outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899 affected almost all spheres of human life in many parts of South Africa. Education in Natal was also dealt a blow by this war. There was an overall low attendance rate, and many schools ceased functioning altogether. Because of the War, no statistical returns were compiled for the years 1900 and 1901. When the War broke out (in October 1899), the statistical returns showed a marked increase of attendance in African schools. The total number of African children at school was 10 732, with an average daily attendance

38. Ibid.

39. Molteno, in Kallaway, Apartheid and Education, p.67.

of 8,042, as against 10 248 and 7 685, respectively, in 1898.⁴⁰ The average cost per each European, African and Indian child was £3 9s 5d, 11s 10d and 12s 8d, respectively. Mariannahill schools received an increased grant of £139 20s. The teaching staff had increased to eight, six Europeans and two Africans. The pupils numbered 196, 123 boys and 73 girls, with an average daily attendance of 121 and 67 respectively.⁴¹

During Scholzig's term of office, at least seven more stations were founded.⁴² He also had the good fortune of welcoming, in 1898, Edward Mnganga, the first Catholic African priest in South Africa.⁴³ It needs to be mentioned, however, that until his death, Scholzig, like his predecessor, had found it impossible to reconcile missionary work with the strict rules of the Trappist Order.⁴⁴

The period during, and after, the Anglo-Boer War proved to be the most difficult period for Mariannahill mission, in the spheres of

40. The average attendance in 1899 was 7% higher than that of 1898 and 22% higher than that of 1897. See NA, NCP, 8/1/7/2/1/2, "Report of the Inspector of Native Education on the government aided Native Schools for the year ending December 21, 1899".

41. Ibid.

42. These were Maryhelp, Maria Telgte, Citeaux and Clairvaux in Natal, and Hardenberg, Mariazell and Maria Linden in the Cape Colony. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.20.

43. Ibid.

44. Abbot Amandus Scholzig died of cancer in 1900. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.75.

both missionary and educational work. In 1900 Father Gerard Wolpert, the former prior of Reichenau mission, was elected as Scholzig's successor.⁴⁵ Two more mission stations were founded during Wolpert's term of office.⁴⁶ The ever-expanding missionary activities no doubt aggravated the conflict with the Trappist Rule, and unable to cope with these increasing difficulties, Abbot Wolpert resigned his office in 1904.⁴⁷

It was not until 1902 that normal schooling was resumed in many African schools. although at the beginning of the year 207 schools African schools were in receipt of the government grants-in-aid, 16 ceased working during the year, leaving only 191 schools in receipt of government assistance.⁴⁸ The amount expended in grants had been increased to £6 509 10s, an allocation of approximately 15s 9d per child, reckoned on the average daily attendance of 8 232 out of a total of 11 032.⁴⁹ Mariannahill Boys' School (Saint Francis) got £85 in aid, while

45. Gerard Wolpert was described as a "a man of culture and considerable ability. He was neither an optimist, nor was he a pessimist, but an eminently practical man..." Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.144.

46. Both were in the South Coast. They were Himmelberg and Maria Stella near Port Shepstone. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.77.

47. Schimlek argued that "these difficulties had proved too strong even for this capable and versatile priest." See Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.136.

48. This was due, in many cases, to the failure to comply with the government's requirements. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/2/1/3, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year 1902.

49. Ibid.

its sister school (Saint Annes') received £60. The two schools were staffed by eleven teachers, six Europeans and five Africans. The Superintendent Inspector's report on the two schools was favourable. The boys' school, according to the report, showed a "distinct improvement in school work... .The subjects are well taught and good progress has been made throughout..."⁵⁰

In 1902, the embargo imposed on the purchase of industrial products from African schools in Natal was lifted, thus opening up opportunities for missionaries to re-open the industrial workshops attached to their schools. Remembering, however, the sudden and unexpected prohibitory enactment in 1898, which had caused a considerable financial loss, most missionaries were reluctant to resume industrial training in their schools.⁵¹ Even at Mariannahill's Saint Francis School industrial training was done on a much reduced scale. For instance, of the 106 boys on the register, 32 received instruction in industrial subjects - four in painting, three in wagon-making, ten in saddlery, one in tinsmithing, one in shoemaking, seven in tailoring, one in masonry and three in tanning, while the rest received regular instruction in garden work. The girls' training continued to consist of needlework, crochet, knitting and lacemaking.⁵² In 1903 another attempt was made to establish a Government

50. Ibid.

51. NA, NOP, 6/3/1/1/5, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for 1914.

52. Ibid.

industrial school in the district of Driefontein. A sum of £1 500 was sanctioned for this purpose. Due to financial and other difficulties, however, this scheme also failed.⁵³

The stringent rules of the Trappist Order, which were totally incompatible with the missionary environment in Natal, were to plunge the mission of Mariannhill, in the first decade of the twentieth century, into a serious leadership crisis. This manifested itself in a number of ways, including the resignation of Abbot Gerard Wolpert from office in 1904. Reverend Edmund Obrecht was appointed in 1905 as the fourth Abbot of Mariannhill.⁵⁴ Often referred to as the "Reformer" Obrecht was sent to Mariannhill for the purpose of securing and retaining Mariannhill (the largest abbey in the world) within the Trappist Order. Once at Mariannhill Obrecht realised that whilst many African converts to Christianity were made through the steadfast endeavour of the Mariannhill Fathers, this was nevertheless incompatible with the spiritual ethos of the Trappist Order. In other words, the expansion of the Mariannhill mission could be explained to a large extent in terms of the diligent proselytisation work of the novices in the outstations, a

53. Ibid.

54. Obrecht was the former Abbot of Getshemane monastery in the United States of America. Dischl described him as a "...very strong disciplinarian, standing firmly for the Rule and spiritual Order of the Trappist way of life...[a] born leader and administrative organiser, a linguist and a tactful diplomat, combining dignity with authority and great intelligence...", Kneipp et al, Mariannhill and its apostolate, p.88.

practice that was contrary to canonical procedure, and which had resulted in the suspension of Pfanner in 1892. In Obrecht's view this was, nevertheless, a "happy" fault and he reported to his superiors that the community of the Trappists at Mariannahill had deviated so much from the traditional Trappist discipline that a solution could be sought in either allowing full missionary work or disbanding the community altogether.⁵⁵ A failure by the Chapter General to effect fundamental changes with regards to the Trappist Rule in South Africa led to Obrecht's resignation in 1907.⁵⁶

In the sphere of African education, the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906 was to have an indirect impact on schooling in many parts of Natal. This manifested itself in the low attendance rate recorded. Some of the schools were closed altogether. Due to this Rebellion no statistical returns were compiled in 1906. Though schooling was relatively normal in 1907, a marked drop in attendance was still evident in many schools. The total enrolment in 1907 was 12 246, as against 11 071 in 1906. However, the Superintendent of Education complained that "whilst the total has increased, the low daily attendance [which was 8 256] in the day schools is the cause of great regret. Even the localities where the community consists chiefly of Christian

55. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.142.

56. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.20.

parents, the attendance is most irregular."⁵⁷ The average daily attendance had dropped to 67%, as against 85% in white and 72% in Indian schools.⁵⁸ The total amount expended in grants-in-aid to African schools in 1907 was £7 327 9d. From this amount £202 3s 9d was given as special industrial grants to deserving schools. With regard to the industrial work done, the Superintendent's report read as follows:

With the exception of good laundry work at Inanda, and the extensive fieldwork at Inanda and Umzumbi, very little can be said in favour of industrial work in the boarding schools... .Fieldwork is insisted upon at Indaleni, Fair View, and Umpumulo, but only sufficient just to comply with the regulations. At Adams the useful work that was being done appears to be at a standstill... .At Mariannahill... very extensive and thoroughly practical agricultural work is taught both to boys and girls."⁵⁹

At Mariannahill schools the number of pupils in 1907 totalled 285 - 131 boys and 154 girls - with an average daily attendance of 105 and 101 respectively. The grant-in-aid reached a record of £211 3s 9d per annum, with £107 given to the boys' school and £104 to the girls' school. The teaching staff had dropped to ten, and comprised six Africans and four Europeans.⁶⁰

The total number of schools under government inspection in 1908

57. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/2/1/4, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended 30th June 1907."

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

was 524 - 304 White, 168 African and 31 Indian.⁶¹ The average enrolment in these schools was 3 088, 14 056, and 1 017 respectively. While white schools showed an attendance of 84%, attendance in African schools had declined to 66%⁶². The amount spent for each European, Indian and African child, calculated on the average enrolment, was £2 13s 9d, £1 7s 11d and 10s 9d, respectively.⁶³ These statistics reveal the existence of a great financial disparity in the financing of education for the different races in the colony. Despite the fact that Africans were in the majority, the least amount of money was reserved for them. The number of African schools in receipt of government assistance was 166, 30 of which were boarding schools. The grant amounted to a total of £7 599 19s 3d. From this amount £132 8s 9d was given as special industrial grants and £5 14s as grants in kind (e.g. as maps, charts, etc.)⁶⁴ The total number of pupils at Mariannahill schools was 370 - 219 boys and 151 girls -with an average daily attendance of 131 and 95 respectively. However, despite this increased enrolment Mariannahill boys' and girls' schools were given a reduced grant of £103 12s 6d and £74 2s 6d respectively. The Acting Superintendent of Education was critical of the industrial work done in Natal schools. He remarked that other than sewing, industrial work was wanting in

61. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/2/1/5, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended 30th June 1908."

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

variety, effectiveness and usefulness. Inanda, Umzumbi, Mariannahill, Centecow, Maria Rastschitz, Mariathal and Reichneau were identified as notable exceptions.⁶⁵ Mariannahill in particular was reported to have "an almost endless variety of useful occupations, in which children were instructed daily in carpentry, blacksmithing, tinwork, plumbing, shoemaking, general fieldwork, girls' sewing, fancy needlework, basket making and fieldwork."⁶⁶ Not less than four hours were devoted to industrial training each day. The Superintendent conceded that "Mariannahill deserves more financial assistance than the government was able to give."⁶⁷

Industrial grants-in-aid to African schools were increased to £260 6s 3d in 1909, an increase of £127 over the 1908 figure.⁶⁸ This was despite the fact that industrial training was of little practical value - it entailed nothing more than sewing, needlework, crochet, knitting, washing, ironing, housework and, in a few schools, cookery for girls and a variety of handicrafts for boys. It can be argued, however, that these skills enabled these women to achieve a relative degree of economic independence later on. In the case of Trappist schools in Natal, they were all

65. With the exception of Inanda and Umzumbi, the other four schools were owned by the Trappists.

66. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/2/1/5.

67. Ibid.

68. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/2/1/6, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended 30th June 1909."

reported to have gone far beyond the industrial requirements set by the government. Industrial training in these schools included ploughing, planting, manuring, pruning, grafting, fruit-drying, wine-making, etc., activities that were in line with the Trappist's ora et labora credo.

1909 was a significant year as far as African education was concerned. Despite the fact that the number of African schools in receipt of government grants remained static, records show an unprecedented rate of attendance at these schools. The total enrolment reached a record of 15 325, with an average daily attendance of 10 048, as against the 1908 figures of 14,056 and 9 234, respectively. For the first time in the history of African education the rate of attendance reached 80%. The Superintendent of Education reported that "There has been a considerable expansion in almost every school, and it will be noted that the increased average daily attendance of 824 is in connection with exactly the same number of schools as last year [1908], namely 166."⁶⁹ An amount of £353 17s 6d was granted to the two schools at Mariannahill. The schools boasted a total of 416 pupils.⁷⁰ 1909 was even more significant in the history of Mariannahill because it was the year in which the physical foundation of the present day Saint Francis College was laid. The college was to become a Training Centre for African teachers in 1915. Although Abbot Franz Pfanner saw the beginning of the

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

college building, he never lived to see its completion, as he died in 1909.⁷¹

The separation of Mariannahill from the Trappist Order.

The incompatibility between active missionary work and the stringent provisions of the Trappist Order, for which no compromise seemed possible, was to lead to a complete separation

of Mariannahill from the Trappist Order. As we have seen earlier, gross violation of the strict rules of the Order had led to the suspension of the founder and first Abbot of Mariannahill, Franz Pfanner. Furthermore, two of his three successors, namely, Wolpert and Obrecht, were forced to resign after making fruitless attempts to convince their superiors in Rome of the desirability of adapting the rules of the Order to local conditions. The resignation of the two abbots undoubtedly plunged Mariannahill into a serious leadership crisis. Father Isembard Leyendecker was temporarily appointed to lead Mariannahill after Obrecht's resignation. During this interim period, discussions were entered into with the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith regarding the future of Mariannahill. These culminated in a five-day plenary chapter of all Trappists in Natal in 1908, under the presidency of Bishop William Miller of the Oblates of

⁷¹. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.26.

Mary Immaculate of the Transvaal.⁷² A set of recommendations made were presented to the higher authorities in Rome for a decision. In 1909 a decree separating Mariannahill and all its daughter missions from the Trappist Order was issued by Pope Pius X.⁷³ Shortly thereafter the Mariannahillers became known as the Religious Missionaries of Mariannahill. By then at least 49 mission stations had been founded by the Catholic missionaries between the Cape of Good Hope in the South and the Zambezi River in the north. 57% of these (i.e. 28 missions) were in the hands of the Trappists.⁷⁴ The separation meant in essence that Mariannahill was now an independent missionary society with its own constitution and rules.⁷⁵ Since the constitution had not yet been drawn up, Gerard Wolpert, who had resigned as Abbot of Mariannahill in 1904, was appointed Provost of the Institute.⁷⁶ An attempt by the Procurator of the Trappist Order, Monsignor Szeghi, to bring about a reunion in 1912 was unsuccessful. In 1914 Mariannahill had its constitution finalised and published. This marked its final separation from the Trappist Order. From then onwards the Mariannahill missionaries became known as the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannahill (C.M.M.).

72. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, p.89.

73. Adelgisa, Saint Francis College, p.89.

74. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.135.

75. The papal decree was received at Mariannahill in June 1909, two months after the death of Abbot Pfanner. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.22.

76. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.143.

Provost Gerard Wolpert was made the first Superior-General.⁷⁷

As discussed earlier, the founding of Mariannahill mission in 1882 was in full conformity with orthodox Trappist Rule. There was no intention, at least in the beginning, to organize missionary work in the real sense of the word. However, conditions in Natal proved so favourable for successful missionary work that the Trappists, under the leadership of Pfanner, gradually, and in the Abbot's view justifiably, deviated from the Trappist tradition by engaging in active pastoral work. The founding of dozens of new missions bore strong evidence of this. Numerous efforts to reconcile orthodox Trappist contemplation with missionary zeal yielded no fruits. The founding of a new order within the Trappist Order resulted in the formation of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannahill. This unfolding sequence of events was aptly described as

a silent and inoffensive revolution within the Church, the story of the slow and painful death of a monastic system, the death of the Pelican, the legendary, self-sacrificing bird...⁷⁸

A closer scrutiny of the unfolding of events at Mariannahill- the evolution of the Trappist Order into a fully-fledged missionary body - validates the Comaroffs' theory of consciousness. Writing on the Tswana, the Comaroffs referred to

...highly ritualised meetings of Europeans and Africans- endowed alike with their own history, their own culture,

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid, p.13.

their own intentions- set the terms of the "long conversation" to follow. In this exchange of signs and substance, each party was to try to gain some purchase on, some mastery over , the other: the churchmen, to convert the Tswana to Christianity; the Tswana, to divert the potency of churchmen to themselves.⁷⁹

The Trappists, during this long period of "conversation", converted scores of Zulus to Christianity. It is notable, however, that the Zulus, for their part, did "divert the potency of the churchmen to themselves". This was demonstrated by the fact that at the end, due to the conduciveness of local conditions to active missionary work, the Trappists' strategies and goals were compromised, as evidenced by the founding of new missions. In essence, therefore, as much as the Trappists did have an impact on the local population, they were in turn impacted upon by local conditions, and the resultant effect was a complete change in their approach to mission work. This gradual process, as we have seen, culminated in the separation of Mariannhill from the Trappist Order.

The Union of South Africa and African education

The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 can be interpreted as an act of reconciliation, at least in theory, between the British and the Afrikaners. It ended a century-long animosity between these two nations, animosity which had

⁷⁹. Comaroff and Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution, pp. 11-13.

culminated in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.⁸⁰ Despite the fact that the Liberal Government in Britain was fully aware of the hopes and aspirations among the Africans (and other non-white people) - hopes for more political rights, land rights, improved education, etc. - after the defeat of the Boers, it was extremely cautious not to "offend" the racially sensitive Boers, and possibly derail the shaky process of reconciliation, by suggesting changes that would have given political and other rights to Africans.⁸¹ Thus the bid to establish peace between these two white nations in South Africa was largely at the expense of South Africa's indigenous people. The formation of the South African Native National Congress (S.A.N.N.C.) in 1912 was a direct response to the exclusion of Africans from the Union.⁸² On the whole, the African people derived less benefit from the Union than did the whites.

The South Africa Act of 1909, which laid down the constitution of the Union of South Africa, transferred the control of all matters affecting Africans, with the exception of education, to the newly established Native Affairs Department. The control and funding of African education became a responsibility of the

80. See L. Thompson, "The Compromise of the Union", in The Oxford History of South Africa, (London, Oxford University Press, 1971), p.325.

81. Ibid.

82. The S.A.N.N.C. later became the African National Congress (ANC).

provincial councils in the four colonies.⁸³ It is important to note that despite decades long missionary involvement in African education, by 1910 the overwhelming majority of Africans did not attend school at all. The Union Government drew up four categories of schools in South Africa. These were the primary, secondary, high and teacher training schools.⁸⁴ By 1910 most Africans who had attended school had not gone beyond the primary school level. Very few had acquired a secondary school education, not to mention high school education. Therefore, the contribution of missionaries to African education, in the absence of active government involvement, was confined to a very small percentage of the African population. The formation of the Union did not bring any significant and meaningful changes as far as African education was concerned. In Natal relatively meaningful changes came only after 1918, with the appointment of Dr.C.T.Loram as the Chief Inspector of Native Education in the province.⁸⁵

The statistical data from the Natal Provincial Publications (NOP)⁸⁶ show the Natal Education Department to have had a total of 578 schools under its control in 1910. Of this total 342 were European, 175 African, 36 Indians and 25 Coloured. The gross

83. Behr, New Perspectives, p.161.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

86. Before the Union, these were known as the Natal Colonial Publications (NCP).

enrolment in African schools reached 17 016, an increase of 1 681 over the 1909 figure. The average daily attendance had increased to 82%, and was only 2% lower than that in European schools.⁸⁷ While the number of European schools under government inspection showed a dramatic decline in 1911, those of Indians and Coloureds remained static. At the same time the number of African schools increased significantly.⁸⁸ The average daily attendance in African, European, Indian and Coloured schools was 87%, 85%, 79% and 83% respectively.⁸⁹ For the first time in the history of education in Natal the highest rate of attendance in the province was recorded among African schools. This average daily attendance reached 88% in 1913 as against 86% in European schools during the same period.⁹⁰

The grants-in-aid to African schools increased steadily over the years, though the increase was not proportional to the ever-growing number of these schools. The total grants in aid to African schools was £10 341 5s 1d in 1910. This had increased to £17 303 17s 7d in 1913 and to £21 574 4s 3d in 1914,⁹¹ while

87. NA, NOP, 6/3/1/1/1, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for the year ended June 30th, 1910."

88. The number of white schools in Natal dropped from 342 to 303. Indian and Coloured schools remained at 36 and 25 respectively, while African schools surged to 198 (an increase of 23).

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. To this figure Africans themselves had contributed at least £3 293 in school fees. NA, NOP, 6/3/1/5, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for the

the gross pupil enrolment was 17,016 in 1910, and had surged to 21 585 in 1914.⁹² The two schools at Mariannahill had their relatively fair share of these grants. The £337 22s 6d of 1910 had been increased to £573 5s 2d by 1914. By 1910 the gross pupil enrolment at Mariannahill schools was 548, 311 boys and 237 girls. However, the remarkably low daily average attendance rate of 198 boys and 122 girls renders this high figure illusive.⁹³ The gross enrolment for the years 1912, 1913 and 1914 was 536, 433 and 429, with an average daily attendance of 333, 266 and 330 respectively.⁹⁴ By 1915 302 schools in Natal received state grants. These grants amounted to a total of £21 587 6s 1d.⁹⁵

Saint Francis College at Mariannahill came into being in 1915. Until this time academic education at Mariannahill schools went up only to standard six. However, as mentioned earlier, in 1909 the foundation of the college was laid. When the college was completed in 1915, Father Bernard Huss was appointed as its first principal. When Huss assumed his term of office , the gross pupil enrolment at Mariannahill schools was 354, with an average

Province of Natal", 1914.

92. Ibid.

93. NA, NOP, 6/3/1/1/1, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for the Province of Natal", 1910.

94. See reports of the Superintendent of Education, 1912-1915, NA, NOP, 6/3/1/1/3-6/3/1/1/5.

95. NA, NOP, 6/3/1/1/6, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for the Province of Natal", 1915.

daily attendance of 259.⁹⁶ The establishment of Saint Francis College as a training institution for African teachers brought the total number of teachers training colleges in Natal to six.⁹⁷ The training and certification of African teachers in Natal commenced in 1887. By 1909 1036 teachers' certificates had been issued. Yet only 291 African teachers were involved in teaching. The Superintendent of Education remarked that

Where these teachers are, it is difficult to tell. Numbers are still teaching, many of the girls have married, a fair percentage of the young men did not follow the profession at all, but simply studied for the Teachers Examination to acquire more education and then went to Johannesburg or took up clerical work in lawyers' and other offices, several have died, and some have had to be disqualified...⁹⁸

It is worth noting that until 1911 certificates for African teachers were awarded solely on the basis of academic knowledge acquired. This poor system of teacher training was replaced by a new and improved system in 1912, a system whereby every African student teacher had to undergo a systematic course of training in the theory and practice of teaching at any of the existing colleges. The teaching courses comprised of Third, Second and First Grade Teachers Certificates, running over periods of one, two and three years respectively. By 1913, 339 teachers had been

⁹⁶. NA, NOP, 6/3/1/1/6.

⁹⁷. The other five teachers training colleges were Adams (under the American Board of Missions), Umpumulo (Swedish), Kwa Magwaza (Church of England), Edendale (Wesleyan) and Saint Chad (Church of England). NA, NOP, 6/3/1/1/7, "Report of the Superintendent of Education for the Province of Natal", 1915.

⁹⁸. NA, NCP, 8/1/7/2/1/6, 1909.

certificated under the new system. This had increased to 556 in 1915.⁹⁹ The Superintendent Inspector of Education remarked that "This new system of training teachers, though not perfect yet by far is a great improvement on the old plan , and its superiority is already effectively felt in the schools where these new teachers are employed, especially in the lower classes."¹⁰⁰

The first college staff at Saint Francis College was drawn from both the primary and secondary schools, and was comprised of Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, some of whom had had long service with the mission of Mariannahill.¹⁰¹ In 1916 Sister Ignatia was to become the first head teacher at the College.¹⁰²

Father Huss's assumption of the principalship at Saint Francis College was followed by a remarkable curriculum expansion. He reserved for himself the teaching of Religion, Psychology, Music and Agriculture.¹⁰³ It is important to note that upon its opening, the college adopted a flexible or open policy of admission - a policy which did not discriminate against students from religious backgrounds other than Catholic. However, for

99. NA, NOP, 6/3/1/1/6, 1915.

100. NA, NOP, 6/3/1/1/4, 1913.

101. For example, the two Armbruster sisters had been linked with the mission from as early as 1885. Gamble, A century of Prayer and work, p.163.

102. Ibid.

103. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.190. (See also Appendix C).

religious instruction the student teachers were divided into "Catholics" and "Non-Catholics". While Catholic students received extensive instruction in Catechism, Catholic dogma and Sacraments, the instruction of the other students was confined to moral lessons drawn from Bible stories.¹⁰⁴ Gamble states that Father Huss's "tactful way of non-interference and upholding of religious views other than his own earned him great respect amongst the non-Catholic students."¹⁰⁵ In Psychology lessons Huss, believing that few whites would ever learn "to think black", set for himself the most difficult, if not impossible, task of training his students to "think white, according to the psychological laws of the Western mind." Some of his lectures on Psychology were published in the Johannesburg African newspaper, Umthetheleli. He published a book entitled Psychology for everyday life for African Students.¹⁰⁶

Huss was a gifted musician. He introduced music lessons and began Drama and Choral societies at the college. Furthermore, numerous stories based on the Bible and on the Zulu history and traditions were performed by his students at the College.¹⁰⁷ Huss was also an Agriculture teacher at Saint Francis College. Group and individual plots were allotted to students, as an attempt to inculcate a sense of competition and team work among them. For

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid.

106. Kneipp et al, Mariannahill and its apostolate, p.100.

107. Schimlek, Mariannahill, p.190.

his endeavour in the field of agriculture Huss was to be highly commended by the then Chief Inspector of Native Schools in Natal, Dr.C.T.Loram. In 1921 Huss published a textbook which was to become a key text in many African schools in the province.¹⁰⁸

Having started and run Saint Francis College for a period of fifteen years, Father Huss's contribution to the development of the college was remarkable. However, detailed information on his work at the college is hard to come by. Historians and biographers tend to focus less on Huss's role in the Teachers College and more on his preoccupation with rural reform programmes, credit co-operative societies and the Catholic African Union (CAU)¹⁰⁹ from the 1920s. The CAU was founded in 1927 by Huss and two other Roman Catholic Fathers, E. Hanish and J.Sauter.¹¹⁰ Huss was among the first white missionaries to realise the desirability of restructuring the educational curriculum, which was largely European-oriented, in such a way as to actively involve the Africans themselves in determining what would be suitable to their everyday needs. He stated that

We are educating at present the children of the first scholars of our schools on which we made our first clumsy experiments in Native education. If we look at the present generation, we can certainly not be satisfied with the

108. See B. Huss, A Textbook on Agriculture, C.T. Loram (editor), (London, Longmans and Green, 1931).

109. For more historical material on the formation and activities of the CAU see L. Brouckaert, " 'Better Homes, Better Fields, Better Hearts' " : The Catholic African Union, 1927-1939." (University of Witwatersrand, B.A.Honours dissertation, 1985).

110. Ibid, p.20.

fruits of our labours... .A careful scrutiny will convince us of the necessity of a re-education, a social rebirth or renovation, and of laying more emphasis on the material and economic welfare of our Christians. When we educated the present generation for the first time, we did it ourselves in the light of our European experience, but we cannot undertake the re-education without the African... .We can only renovate our people with their help, with the help of social leaders.¹¹¹

The establishment of Saint Francis College in 1915 was indeed an historic achievement on the part of the Mariannhill missionaries. Despite the fact that, like many other colleges in Natal, it was to serve only a small section of the African community, its establishment was a culmination of 33 years of dedicated work by the Mariannhillers to African education.

111. Ibid, pp.34-35.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to trace the history of the Trappists in South Africa, with special reference to the establishment of Mariannhill mission and the contribution of the Trappists, who in 1909 became the Religious Missionaries of Mariannhill, to African education. Within a period of 33 years covered in this thesis, the Mariannhill missionaries had no doubt made some commendable contribution with regard to African education. However, any assessment of missionary achievement, or failure, in the above mentioned field needs to be made within the context of, firstly, the proselytisation aims and goals that missionaries set for themselves and, secondly, the limited resources that seriously hampered missionary efforts, given the minimal support provided to missions by the state.

The utilisation of education as a tool for furthering the Christianisation process was a common nineteenth century phenomenon. Following this general trend, the Trappists aimed at building, through education, African Christian families, families which would embrace European norms and values, and completely distance themselves from "pagan" practices such as lobolo and polygamy. Education at Mariannhill, as in many other missions, was never intended for African self-realisation and self-advancement. This was evidenced by the controversial educational policies drawn up by Abbot Pfanner for his schools. For instance, while the aim of educating girls was to make them good wives and mothers, the boys were expected to be "good and intelligent agriculturalists" after a few years of schooling.

Though a few boys were selected to proceed to a slightly higher (primary) level of learning in order to become priests and evangelists, higher learning for Africans, especially instruction in English and science subjects, was considered undesirable as it militated against the missionaries' agenda.

From the beginning Pfanner's educational policies were bound to fail, given the unrealistic ground on which they were founded. First, by "detaining" African girls on the mission, in the hope of getting them exempted from the Native Law, which recognised the payment of lobolo upon a girl's marriage, Pfanner invited the wrath of African parents whose appeals to the courts of law often led to the withdrawal of the children from the Mariannhill schools and their restoration to their legal guardians. Secondly, Mariannhill's dichotomist policy of overemphasising industrial training on one hand, while failing, on the other, to fully satisfy the normal academic requirements, not only put the mission at loggerheads with the Council of Education, it also met determined opposition and resistance from a large number of colonists in Natal who harboured strong fears of competition with Mariannhill trained artisans and craftsmen. The loud proclamation of the white man being undercut by African competitors during the 1893 general election was to lead to a drastic reduction in the amount of industrial grants. This was followed by a closure of the workshops in all mission schools that gave industrial training to Africans. Thirdly, the persistent and often justified public attacks on Mariannhill's educational policy, especially with regard to girls, by the

kholwa from other mission schools in Natal, other concerned parties and individuals boded ill for the educational welfare of the mission, and had the effect of further tarnishing the image of the mission. These factors can be said to have had the combined effect of undermining some of the goals and objectives set by Mariannahill mission at its inception.

Though the controversial Abbot of Mariannahill, Franz Pfanner, resigned in 1893, no fundamental changes in the educational system at Mariannahill were to be brought about by his successors. The quality of education remained generally poor, although it showed a gradual improvement over the years. Undoubtedly the number of pupils enrolled in mission schools increased over the years, but this increase was not proportional to the increasing African population. Only a small percentage of African pupils was at school. This was to constitute an élite group in the African community. The overwhelming majority of school-age children remained illiterate as mission education was inaccessible to them. Failure to provide mass-based education to Africans is perhaps one of the main weaknesses of missionary education.¹

While the subordination of education to religion explains to a considerable extent the general failure of mission education, minimal state involvement in African education constituted the other important factor that worked against missionary success.

¹. Christie, The Right to Learn, p.62.

Though state involvement in African education goes back to the early 1850s², the state's material contribution did not go beyond the giving of small grants-in-aid to selected schools. For instance, the grants-in-aid given to mission schools in Natal, on the recommendation of the Lieutenant Governor, totalled only £72 10s in 1855. This sum was reduced to £70 in 1857. Yet a sum of nearly £10 000 was derived from Africans every year from hut tax, which was collected for the first time in 1849.³

Though grants to selected mission schools were increased over time, the increase was not proportional to the number of schools and the children enrolled in these schools. The overall financial burden of educating the African was left to rest on the shoulders of missionaries. However, due to a lack of inadequate funding, equipment and competent teachers, the missionary could not do more than provide elementary learning to his pupils.

The main findings in this study can be summarised as follows. Firstly, they have confirmed the popular theory, as espoused by Berman, Vilakazi and others, that African education in the nineteenth century needs to be understood within the context of the aims and goals that missionaries set for themselves. In the light of the general apathy to early Christian teachings, which was contrasted by a growing interest in education, the building of schools as "nurseries for the infant church" characterised most missionary societies in the nineteenth century. Following

2. Emanuelson, A History of Native Education, p.59.

3. Ibid, p.72.

this general trend, the Trappists constructed schools at Mariannhill for the education of African boys and girls. As shown, Pfanner, convinced that it was difficult to "root out paganistic beliefs and superstitions from the hearts and minds of the adult Zulus", believed that with the young more success could be achieved.

The second conclusion drawn from this study is that despite the interest shown by Africans to education, they always displayed a determined sense of resistance against all attempts that undermined those institutions that constituted the basis of African life. For example, the opposition to the establishment of boarding schools for boys at Mariannhill can be explained in terms of the need by parents to have them look after the cattle, an important source of wealth among Africans at that time. An even more important grievance was the "detention" of girls, a practice which not only deprived the parents of household labour, but also posed a serious threat to the centuries old institution of lobolo, as encouragement was often given to these girls to apply for exemption from the customary law. It is interesting to note, though it was not discussed in detail in the thesis, that even kholwa men opposed the Christian onslaught against the lobolo custom. Lambert points out that

Although most missionaries frowned on the giving of bridewealth, few kholwa were prepared to abandon it. There were very real fears over the legal difficulties which might arise over the status of wives, even in marriages by Christian rites, in which lobolo was not given, but possibly of great importance was the fact that with their new-found wealth, many were attracted by the prospects of obtaining large herds through marrying off their

daughters.⁴

This brings us to the third issue, that of missionary adaptation to local conditions, which needs to be understood within the context of consciousness. The failure by missionaries to eradicate some of the traditional practices still clung to by their converts had led to the accommodation of these practices. Polygamy and lobolo are perhaps the two best examples. While polygamy was not condoned by any of the Christian missionaries, few attempts were made to get polygamists to abandon their wives. Payment of lobolo also came to be incorporated in many African marriages conducted according to Christian rites. In the case of Mariannhill, Pfanner, in addition to his attempts to convert polygamists to Christianity without forcing them to abandon their wives, even indicated his willingness to assist his scholars to obtain cattle for lobolo.⁵ As Comaroff and Comaroff have indicated, the long period of interaction between European missionaries and African people, each group with its own consciousness, had, given the prevailing specific conditions, often led to the absorption of ideas and concepts by each of these groups from the other. That is, while the local population accepted some of the Christian norms and values introduced by the missionaries, the missionaries had to adapt their approaches to suit local needs. One thus sees the emergence of a new modified form of consciousness among both groups. Having realised the impracticability of their methods in Natal, the Trappists, as an

⁴. Lambert, Africans in Natal, p.193.

⁵. See Chapter Four, p.95, endnote 45.

attempt to adapt to their new environment, acquired new mission stations and actively engaged themselves in missionary work, a clear diversion from the rules set by their Order. As we have seen, this culminated in the separation of Mariannahill from the Trappist Order.

Finally, the study has confirmed the theory espoused by Loram and others that, given the state's unwillingness to give education to Africans, without missionaries nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' Africans were unlikely to have been introduced to the educational benefits afforded to them by the missionaries. This was evidenced by the emergence of famous mission institutions such as Saint Francis, Inanda Seminary and Adams College. Christie and Hartshorne, among others, have demonstrated missionary achievements in the realm of African education. Therefore, given the conditions in which missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries worked, the completion of the Catholic Teachers Training Institution (Saint Francis College) by the Mariannahill missionaries in 1915 can be said to have been a remarkable achievement, despite the educational problems and controversies that had clouded the mission at an earlier stage.

APPENDIX A**Franz Pfanner (1825 - 1909)**

Abbot Franz Pfanner was born Wendolin Pfanner on 21 September 1825 in Austria. Wendolin cannot be said to have had a very happy childhood. His mother, Maria Anna, died in 1828, three years after his birth. Wendolin began schooling at the age of seven, at Bauerhof. When he was about ten years old, his father remarried. By coincidence, Wendolin's step-mother had the same Christian names as his deceased biological mother. (She was Maria Anna Horburger). Wendolin attended secondary school at Feldkirch, and it was during his schooling there that he developed a great interest in sport, especially, hosenlupfen, a form a wrestling. In 1844 he commenced studies in Philosophy at the University of Innsbruck, and completed these at the university of Padua, Italy, in the following year. In 1846 Wendolin began his theological studies at a Seminary in Brixten. He was ordained to the priesthood in his fourth year of study. He was then 25 years of age. He was thereafter appointed administrator of the parish at Haselstauden, known to be the most difficult in the diocese. He remained in the parish for a period of nine years. From 1859 to 1863 the young Pfanner served as chaplain to the Austrian Sisters of Charity at Agram in Croatia, Yugoslavia. While working with the nuns Father Pfanner made a decision to become a Trappist monk and applied to the Prior of the newly established monastery of Maria Wald in the Rhine Province, Germany. He was accepted in October 1863, and the name "Francis" was conferred upon him. At Maria Wald, the monks' activities comprised road construction, crop cultivation, building etc. Father Pfanner remained at Maria Wald until 1866. In 1867 he himself founded a Trappist monastery in Hungary. The new monastery was named Maria Stern. It fell under the Turkish Empire which was soon to be caught up in vast political unrest. It was only the occupation of Bosnia by Austria that ensured the continued survival of this Trappist monastery there. Maria Stern

was elevated into an abbey at the end of 1879, and Father Pfanner was made its first Abbot. However, Pfanner never served the monastery in this capacity. The coming of Bishop Ricards to Sept Fons in France, and his appeal to the General Chapter for Catholic monks and missionaries enticed him to give up his position and emigrate to South Africa where he was to establish the famous Mariannahill monastery in Natal. This was followed by the establishment of numerous sub-stations in Natal and the Cape, a practice which brought Pfanner into conflict with his superiors because of its incompatibility with the rules of the Trappist Order. Pfanner's suspension in 1992 marked the end of his active involvement in missionary activities. He tendered his resignation in 1893 and retired to Emaus in the Cape. He remained there until his death in 1909. He was buried at Mariannahill cemetery.¹

¹. See B. Hoffmann, The Founder of Mariannahill: A Short Biography of Abbot Francis Pfanner, Mariannahill, Mariannahill Mission Press, 1948.

APPENDIX B**David Bryant (1865 - 1953)**

Father David was born as Alfred Bryant on 26 February 1865. His father was a printer. He was educated at a private boarding school at Blackheath, Kent, before going to Birkby College in London for further studies. However, his interest in the Zulu people in South Africa induced him to give up his studies and leave for Natal, South Africa, where he became the first English monk to join the Trappists at Mariannhill. The name "David" was conferred upon him. He was appointed a teacher for the white boys at Saint Francis School. The system of confining the mornings to academic learning and the afternoons to manual labour was his brainchild. He also gave religious instruction to the Zulu children on Sundays, and earned the nickname "Hlobo sami", which is incorrect Zulu for Zihlobo Zami (my friends), the words he frequently used while addressing his African audience. Bryant showed great interest in literary work. He translated numerous Zulu works into English. In 1887, his first book, Roman Legion in Libyan Fields was published, and was written under the pseudonym "isihlobo sami" (my friend). He also founded two Zulu newspapers, namely, Izwi Labantu (The Voice of the People) and Umhlobo Wewsiminya. The publication of the former was soon to be discontinued, while that of the latter continued under various names. The paper is still printed today at Mariannhill under the revised name of UmAfrika. In 1893 Bryant was transferred to the Transkei where he worked among the Thembu and the Xhosa people for a period of three years, before he was transferred again to Zululand. During his stay in the Transkei and Zululand Bryant conducted intensive research on the cultures of the indigenous peoples of South Africa. He founded Ebuhleni (Place of Peace) in Zululand, a mission on which he was to stay for ten years, writing books and pamphlets about the Zulu people. His close association with the Zulu royal household enabled him to acquire the purest Zulu language. In 1903 his Zulu dictionary, containing 26 000 words, was published. This earned him the fame of being

one of the world's foremost linguists. Other works included Ukuphila kwomzimba, Imisembezi Yamapulazi, The Zulu Medicine Man, The Zulu foodstuffs and their Preparation. Bryant also wrote an English-Zulu "Word-Book" which contained about 11 000 words. Owing to his vast knowledge of the indigenous peoples of South Africa, Bryant was appointed lecturer in the Department of Bantu Studies at the University of Witwatersrand in 1920, and was to hold that post until 1923. In 1929 his book, Olden times in Zululand and Natal was published. It is an historical survey of the various ethnic groups in the province. His last, and greatest work, which constituted a cumulative effort of more than fifty years' work among the Zulus, The Zulu People - As they were before the White man came, was published in 1949. An honorary Doctors' degree in Literature was conferred upon him the same year by the University of South Africa. Bryant eventually returned to London, where he died in 1953, at the age of 88.²

2. See H. Gamble, Mariannhill: A century of prayer and work, 1882-1982, (Mariannhill, Mariannhill Mission Press, 1984), pp.146-154, and F.Schimlek, Mariannhill: A study of Bantu life and missionary effort (Mariannhill, Mariannhill Mission Press, 1953) pp.65-74.

APPENDIX C**Bernard Huss (1876 - 1948)**

Alexander Huss was born on 24 February 1876, in Württemberg, Germany. He was the son of a carpenter. He became an enthusiastic scholar, and showed great interest in Philosophy and Theology. In 1900 he came to South Africa to join the Trappist monks at Mariannhill. He was ordained into the priesthood and the name "Bernard" was conferred upon him. While at Mariannhill he developed an interest in agriculture. However, between 1901 and 1914 his efforts to convert Africans in Natal and the Transkei to Christianity and train them in effective farming techniques proved unsuccessful. In 1915 he was recalled to Mariannhill where he took charge of the newly established Saint Francis Teachers Training College. Agriculture, Psychology and Music were among the subjects Father Bernard Huss taught at the college. In 1921 his first book, Textbook on Agriculture was published, and was used as a standard text in many African schools in Natal. It was followed, a few years later, by Elementary Economics for Native Students. Huss was fluent in English, Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho. He delivered numerous lectures in Natal, the Transkei, the Orange Free State, Basutoland and the Transvaal about the need for Africans to establish Co-operative Credit Societies. A number of his articles were published in the African newspapers Indaba Zabantu (a forerunner of UmAfrika) and Umthetheleli. Huss was a co-founder of the Catholic African Union (C.A.U) in 1927. The founding of the C.A.U. was an attempt to counter the more powerful and better organised Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (I.C.U.). In recognition of his efforts in social service among the Africans, Huss was awarded the Carnegie Foundation Grant. This enabled him to study social conditions among African Americans in the United States of America and to familiarize himself with the working of credit societies in European countries. In the field of agriculture in South Africa Huss introduced the English head yoke that substituted the old-fashioned shoulder yoke. He also gave

lessons in contour ploughing, contour grass strips and pasture drains. Bernard Huss died on 5 August 1948.³

³. See L. Brouakert, "'Better homes, better fields, better hearts': the Catholic African Union, 1927-1939" (University of Witwatersrand, B.A. Honours dissertation, 1985), H. Gamble, A century of prayer and work, pp.155-177, and F. Schimlek, Against the stream:life of Father Bernard Huss, C.M.M., the social apostle of the Bantu, Mariannahill, Mariannahill Mission Press, 1949.

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