

4-1-2005

Book Reviews: Catholic Higher Education in Protestant America: The Jesuits and Harvard in the Age of the University, Kathleen A. Mahoney, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003

Kevin P. Quinn

Follow this and additional works at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations>

Recommended Citation

Quinn, Kevin P. (2005) "Book Reviews: Catholic Higher Education in Protestant America: The Jesuits and Harvard in the Age of the University, Kathleen A. Mahoney, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 27, Article 19. Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol27/iss1/19>

Book Review

Kathleen A. Mahoney, *Catholic Higher Education in Protestant America: The Jesuits and Harvard in the Age of the University.*

Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. x + 347 pp. \$42.95 (hard cover).

By Kevin P. Quinn, S.J.

The process of “negotiating identity”—Alice Gallin’s trenchant phrase—for American Catholic higher education is not new. It did not suddenly begin in response to the 1990 apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* or earlier with the 1967 Land O’Lakes statement on the nature of the contemporary Catholic university. In *Catholic Higher Education in Protestant America*, Kathleen Mahoney explains how a single event in 1893—the refusal of Harvard Law School to recognize the degrees of Jesuit colleges—was a defining moment in the history of American Jesuit (and by extension, most of Catholic) higher education, illuminating “on whose terms and on what bases Catholics and Catholic colleges would participate in American higher education in the age of the university.” The controversy between Harvard and the Jesuits is both the focus of this book and a lens through which Mahoney, the president of the New York City-based Humanitas Foundation, enters “the turbulent turn-of-century world of Jesuit higher education and the social, cultural, religious, and theological factors that shaped the Jesuits’ responses to the rise of a new academic order.” Those leaders of American Catholic intellectual life who

struggle to discern a Catholic identity in higher education appropriate today should remember the common sense of naturalist George Santayana—“Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it”—and read this book.

How the Jesuits—primarily those from the Maryland-New York Province—weathered the academic revolution in the late nineteenth century, wherein the age of the denominational college gave way to the age of the non-sectarian research university, is a fascinating story. Two interrelated crises in the late 1890s forced the Jesuits and other Catholic educators to reckon with the rise of this new academic order: the aforementioned Law School controversy and the decision by too many Catholic collegians to patronize non-Catholic institutions. (By 1893, Harvard enrolled more Catholic undergraduates (300+) than any Catholic college!)

Mahoney traces the Jesuits’ conundrum in America to an unresolved tension between two Jesuit resources: the *Ratio Studiorum* and the *Constitutions of the Society*. The *Ratio* of 1599 which remains the classic text was a well-developed pedagogical guide that “mixed elements of Renaissance humanism with aspects of medieval scholasticism; put another way, it mixed the sci-

ence of man with the science of God.” It came to define Jesuit education. Yet Ignatius of Loyola also wrote that Jesuit educators should always take “into account circumstances of times, places, persons, and other such factors, as seems expedient in Our Lord” (*Constitutions* IV, 351). To adapt to the new academic order with the world-affirming spirit of Ignatius or to maintain a world-suspicious attitude that condemned Protestant-inspired liberalism and modernism was the dilemma for American Jesuit educators as the age of the university opened.

Mahoney’s genius is to organize her account of reluctant adaptation around three of Ignatius’ words in the *Constitutions*—times, places, and persons—in order to argue for three broader challenges facing Catholic higher education at the turn of the century. The Jesuits’ problem of *time* was in the form of the “modern imperative” and its increasingly powerful sway in America that helped propel the university movement. Likewise, the problem of *place* was Protestant America

Kevin P. Quinn, S.J., is a professor of law at the Georgetown University Law Center and a member of the Seminar.



and the Catholic Church's campaign against "modernism" and "Americanism." By 1907 popes had condemned both, effectively ruling against adaptation to time and place. So it comes as no surprise that private requests from some American Jesuits for curricular updating and the relaxation of discipline over collegians were rebuffed by Luis Martín García, Jesuit superior general from 1892 to 1906. No friend of liberal Catholics, Martín was a valued confidant of Leo XIII and Pius X and an important figure in the Church's campaign. In short, "Martín was convinced that abominable liberalism had already claimed England and the United States, where Protestants dominated numerically and culturally."

The problem of *persons* was in the form of upwardly mobile Catholics whose aspirations

included attending secular research universities such as Harvard and Yale. For the nascent Catholic middle class, social class became more prominent than religion in the social organization of education and so Jesuit college enrollments showed it.

By the early 1920s, the old model of the *Ratio Studiorum* was largely undone. (The Maryland-New York Province ceased teaching philosophy in Latin in 1915!) The American system was adopted wholesale—separation of high school from college, semester credit hours, majors, electives, and even athletics. "[T]he Jesuits finally fit their colleges to the challenges of time, place, and person that they encountered in the age of the university." Mahoney concedes that the circumstances of modern American education required

adaptation but, in a familiar turn to any Catholic university leader, she queries whether the Jesuits of the twentieth century have ensured that "vital Catholic" institutions remain.

Her answer is reassuring. The spirit of the *Ratio Studiorum* lived on, with Jesuits strongly committed to humanistic undergraduate education rooted in morality and religion. For Mahoney, "the Jesuit and other Catholic educators remained committed to a 'counter-cultural' vision of education that aimed at the education of the whole student." And what is the future of Jesuit higher education? Jesuit educators and their lay colleagues must continue to secure "a vital place for religion in their academic enterprise." I agree with Mahoney. Let's get to work.

Ronald Modras, *Ignatian Humanism: A Dynamic Spirituality for the 21st Century*.

Chicago: Loyola Press, 2004. Xxi -341. pp. \$16.95.

By Patrick Howell, S.J.

This engaging study, which examines the influence of Renaissance humanism on Ignatian spirituality, begins with a summary of the well-known features of the life of Ignatius, explores the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and then creates five vivid portraits of Jesuits who profoundly exemplified Ignatian humanism.

Modras, a professor of theol-

ogy at Saint Louis University, skillfully summarizes familiar material. For instance, he deftly unfolds the daily examination of conscience, which lies at the heart of Ignatian spirituality: 1) a prayer for light to the Holy Spirit for insight into the mystery of God; 2) an attitude of gratitude; 3) a review of the gaffs we have committed; 4) attending to the welter of feelings arising through key events; and 5) and then a

look to the future for guidance from God.

Similarly Modras summarizes six distinctive features of Ignatian Spirituality: 1) Centeredness on a Christ with a Mission; 2) a panoramic Trinitarian view of salvation; 3) the liberality of Grace; 4) Faith as Trust; 5) Service in the world, which is closely interwoven with 6) Discerning God's Will. Modras makes clear that God's will and our deepest desires are