

Catholic Higher Education and University Affiliation in Alberta, 1906-1926

by Alphonse DE VALK, c.s.b.
*St. Joseph's University College,
University of Alberta*

At first sight, the story of Catholic higher education in Alberta appears the most simple of affairs: one might almost ask, "Is there a story at all?" There are no independent Catholic universities or colleges such as exist, for example, in the Maritimes or Quebec. There are no Catholic liberal arts colleges federated or affiliated with universities, as in Ontario or Saskatchewan. On the other hand, there is St. Joseph's College on the University of Alberta campus in Edmonton which dates from 1926, but its teaching role has been so modest that until recently very few people were aware that it was anything more than a Catholic residence for University students. As late as last year, the current Dean of Arts on the Edmonton campus, in what was clearly a first attempt on his part to understand both the present and past position of St. Joseph's College in relation to his own Faculty, could write in a letter to the Secretary of General Faculties Council:

The original agreement (of the formal affiliation with the University in 1926) provides for the College '... to teach the Roman Catholic students the subjects of history and philosophy (including ethics).' However, the main offerings of the College have, since 1926, been courses in Christian Apologetics, which are not mentioned in the Agreement, with only an occasional course being offered in Philosophy ...¹

¹ [In the original article, note 1 is preceded by an asterisked note that reads: The author published an earlier paper on the same topic in Saskatchewan, "Independent University or Federated College?: The Debate Among Roman Catholics During the Years 1918-1921," *Saskatchewan History*, Vol. XXX, Winter 1977, pp. 18-32.]

July 27, 1979. The reference to "Roman Catholic students" is due to the circulation of an incorrect version of the original 1926 Agreement. The original simply reads: "... to teach the subjects of history and philosophy (ethics) ..." It also continues: "... (and) (4) such additional subjects from the curriculum of the Faculty of Arts and Science ... as shall be agreed upon between the College and the Senate from time to time ..."

Compare this statement with the views of Archbishop O'Leary, the founder of the College, expressed in a memorandum to the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1932:

The importance of St. Joseph's University College in Canada is paramount if we consider the necessity of joining religious life and instruction to our university education. Already efforts are being made to copy it in Winnipeg, Saskatoon and Vancouver. It is the first college of this kind to receive permission for its functioning from the Holy See. Inquiries as to its functioning and its arrangements with the University have come from these places and from many parts of the United States. Delegations from the provinces of Canada have come to visit it and study its operation. We feel that its success is of the utmost importance to the whole system of affiliations in Canada and the United States. We have no fear for it otherwise than financially ...²

Here, then is our puzzle: who is right and who is wrong? Is it possible that there is truth in both accounts and that St. Joseph's College is at once of "paramount importance," to use the words of the Archbishop, and yet appears to have done little in the way of actual teaching, as the Dean thought in 1978?³

² *St. Joseph's College Archives* (SJCA), File: Carnegie Corporation, O'Leary to Keppel, March 1932.

³ The situation of Catholic higher education in Alberta today is as follows: First, as of May 15, 1979, St. Joseph's University College offers a total of 28 one-semester courses in Philosophy, Theology, and Church History – some of them with several sections – to undergraduates of all Faculties at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. In 1978-1979 almost 600 students registered in one of these courses. While this program is hardly comparable to a full-fledged liberal arts College, its program in Christian culture is as respectable a program as any offered to undergraduates at Universities elsewhere in Canada. Second, since 1978 Alberta has a "Faculté St. Jean," the French liberal arts college of the University of Alberta – the only such college in western Canada. Although this is not now a church-related institute, it is the direct successor to the Church-sponsored classical College, the "Collège St. Jean," which in turn, was the successor to the attempted classical colleges run first by the Jesuits, then by the Oblates. (See paper.) Third, since 1968, Edmonton has seen the growth of Newman Theological College. This is an independent Catholic institute for the study of Theology. It is a continuation of the much older Archdiocesan Major Seminary, though now it provides courses for the laity as well. Because of the closing of seminaries elsewhere, it is the diocesan theologate for all of Western Canada. Although it is an institute of higher education, it will not be discussed here because it is not affiliated with the University.

BISHOP EMILE LEGAL

The first diocese to be erected in what is now Alberta, then still part of the Northwest Territories, was that of St. Albert on the Sturgeon River nine miles from Fort Edmonton on the North Saskatchewan, in 1871.⁴ It was, in fact, the Oblate missionary headquarters, founded by Bishop Taché who chose its advantageous location high on the river bank overlooking the broad valley in both westerly and north-easterly directions. Father Lacombe built the first church there in 1864. Its first Bishop, the saintly Oblate, Vital Grandin, guided the new diocese for more than three decades, a period during which the coming of the railroads began the transformation from open prairie inhabited by the native Indian hunter to a prairie dotted with the agricultural settlements of white colonists.⁵ On his death in 1902 Bishop Grandin was succeeded by his Coadjutor, Bishop Legal, o.m.i.

Emile Legal was born in Brittany, France, in 1849 and was ordained a priest in 1874. After a teaching career he joined the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (o.m.i.) in 1880 and was sent to their Novitiate in Lachine, Quebec, Canada. From 1881 onwards he laboured in the Northwest among the Blackfoot Indians, especially on the Peigan and the Blood Reserves at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, until his appointment as Coadjutor Bishop of St. Albert in 1897.⁶

Bishop Legal was a zealous administrator and builder, fluent in English as well as in his native French. During his period Alberta experienced a rapid expansion in all respects. In 1901 Edmonton's population was only 3,167; however, a card census taken in May, 1914 showed it to be 72,516.⁷ When in 1908 Bishop Legal counted the faithful in his diocese of St. Albert, which at that time included all of southern and central Alberta, he calculated that almost 20% of the population was Catholic, with one-third French speaking,

⁴ See M.M. Côté, "St. Albert, Cradle of the Catholic Church in Canada," *CCHA Report*, 1965, pp. 29-35.

⁵ In 1914 Archbishop Emile LEGAL published his compilation, *Short Sketches of the History of the Catholic Churches and Missions in Central Alberta*. In it he arranged Chapters 5, 6, and 7 respectively as recent Parishes and Missions along the CPR, the CNR, and the GTP (Grand Trunk Pacific).

⁶ See note on LEGAL in his *Short Sketches*, p. 134. Also, R.A. McLEAN, *The History of the Roman Catholic Church in Edmonton* (unpublished M.A. Thesis), University of Alberta, 1958, 166pp.

⁷ George M. HALL, "Edmonton, Present Prospective," in LEGAL, *Short Sketches*, p. 168.

for a total of 52,000.⁸

It was Bishop Legal's task to safeguard the educational rights of the Catholic community when the Province of Alberta was founded in 1905. He succeeded so well that Alberta Catholics, unlike their counterparts in Saskatchewan whose Province was formed at the same time, won public status for their schools for *all* grades, elementary as well as secondary.⁹

With respect to higher education, the Bishop's first reaction was to consider sending Catholic university students east. He knew that the University of Toronto was willing to accept Alberta high school graduation as fulfilling their entrance requirement. In 1906 he sought the same consideration from the University of Ottawa because "of course we would prefer to have our Catholic pupils graduating from a Catholic university rather than from a Protestant one."¹⁰ Acceptance of Alberta Catholic high school graduates by an existing Catholic bilingual University seemed to be the ideal solution. But the Bishop soon realized that a University 2,000 miles distant was no solution at all. A sense of greater urgency developed when in the same year, a Bill proposing to establish a provincial university in Alberta was introduced at the first session of the first legislature.

NICHOLAS BECK

The Bishop of St. Albert had first rate support and advice on all aspects of the school question from Nicholas D. Beck, a layman. Born in Cobourg, Ontario, educated in Peterborough where his father was Rector of the Anglican Church, Beck received his law degree from the University of Toronto. After moving to Winnipeg in 1883 where he practiced law, he entered the Catholic Church, briefly edited the Catholic weekly, the *Northwest Review*, and rep-

⁸	Catholiques de Langue Française	17,370
	“ “ Anglaise	14,290
	“ ” Allemande	3,170
	“ d'autres langues	12,680 (incl. Ukrainians
	“ de Langue Indienne	<u>4,490</u> and Poles)
		52,000

Legal Papers, Legal to Langevin, Letterbook 1908-09, June 1908, #60. Quoted in S. RUSZAK, *Relations in Education between Bishop Legal and the Alberta Liberal Government 1905-1920*, 1966. Unpublished M.Educ. Thesis, University of Alberta, 1966, footnote 30.

⁹ Saskatchewan Catholics won support only for the elementary grades. It was not until 1961 that they won equality for secondary schooling.

¹⁰ *Legal Papers*, Legal to Murphy, Rector, University of Ottawa, Letterbook 1906-07, August 22, 1906, #48. Noted in RUSZAK, *op. cit.*, Chapter 4, footnote 29.

resented St. Boniface on the Senate of the University of Manitoba. In 1889 he moved to Calgary then to Edmonton in 1891. Here he became Crown Prosecutor as well as City Solicitor, a position he maintained until his appointment to the bench in 1907. From 1893 to 1905 he also headed the emerging Edmonton Catholic School Board. In 1905 he was retained by the Dominion Government to advise on the Autonomy Bills for Alberta and Saskatchewan, especially the educational clauses. As one historian of Archdiocesan affairs has pointed out, Beck “represented Bishop Legal in Ottawa in the struggle for Separate Schools, and he deserves a large share of the credit for their establishment in this Province.”¹¹

CATHOLIC COLLEGE

It was Beck, soon to be Judge Beck, who while in Ottawa drew the Bishop’s attention to the fact that the Jesuits appeared interested in opening a Catholic College in Alberta.¹² Before approaching them, however, the Bishop decided to consult first with the headquarters of his own Congregation in Rome. He soon concluded that his own Congregation would not even ‘dream’ of the idea.¹³ Thereupon Bishop Legal approached the Jesuit provincial in Montreal, Fr. Lecompte, in March 1906, only to discover that the Jesuits were rather cautious about coming to the West. In fact, two years later, in June 1908, they still were not prepared to accept the invitation, to the deep disappointment of the Bishop. “I had so much hoped that you would come to start an institution,” he wrote the provincial in June, 1908, “one which would start small but which ... would grow increasingly more important!”¹⁴

One of the difficulties in getting the Montreal Jesuits to come was that, just then, the Bishop could not allot them a parish (presumably a French one) for which they had asked and which would have given them some financial stability. As for the nature of the College-to-be, at the beginning of his contacts with the Jesuits the Bishop had mentioned the possibility of its being a “University College” though at the time he did not think that it necessarily would have to be situated near the provincial University. In fact,

¹¹ MACLEAN, *The History...*, p. 102. See also RUSZAK, *op. cit.*, and LEGAL, *Short Sketches...*, “Hon. Nicholas D. Beck,” p. 143.

¹² S. RUSZAK, *op. cit.*, p. 51, Section 5, “A Roman Catholic University College...”

¹³ *Legal Papers*, Legal to N. Dozois, Letterbook 1905-07, March 29, 1906, #453.

¹⁴ *Legal Papers*, Legal to Lecompte, June 3, 1908, Letterbook VI, September 1907-December 1909, #57.

he thought it more advantageous if they moved to the Edmonton side of the river rather than to Strathcona.¹⁵ However, in the same letter mentioned earlier, the one of June, 1908, he was positively encouraging them to establish their institute near the University, noting that he “continued to be of the opinion that in Edmonton you will find yourselves much freer and less inhibited in using, in some way, the vicinity of the University.” He made the matter more explicit by adding that

what I believe is most urgent is to accept the offer of a site on the grounds of the University in Strathcona in order to build your College there. That offer is definite ...¹⁶

Clearly, the offer of a site had introduced a new element in the question of establishing a College. It remains to be seen how and why.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The first Premier of the Province, Premier Rutherford, was anxious to push a University Bill through the Legislature as soon as possible. The University, of course, was to be strictly nonsectarian in principle.¹⁷ The Premier believed that speedy passage of the Bill would make it easier to avoid what he considered the ‘sectarian’ conflicts about federal land grants such as had taken place in Ontario.¹⁸

The Premier’s worries about federal land grants (which never materialized) were joined to the adverse view of denominational colleges held by the University President-designate, Henry Marshall Tory, a McGill man and a Methodist minister. In a long confidential letter to the Premier written in March, 1906 before the University project had been dealt with by the Legislature, Tory had explained his opposition to denominational colleges or universities. He had stated that he regarded the “denominational spirit” as one of the “greatest dangers to good educational work.”¹⁹

¹⁵ *Legal Papers*, Legal to Lecompte, March 28, 1906, #450 and idem, February 1907, Letterbook V, 1905-07.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* “Je continue à être d’opinion qu’à Edmonton vous vous trouveriez plus libre et moins exposé à utiliser de quelque façon le voisinage de l’Université.”

¹⁷ *Statutes of Alberta*, 1906.

¹⁸ See S. RUSZAK, *op. cit.*, footnote 48, – 44.

¹⁹ U. of A. Archives, from *Rutherford Papers*, Tory to Rutherford, private and confidential, file no. 11, March 5, 1906.

What is clear from the attitude of both men is that their objections were not to religion itself, but to the possibility of multiplying colleges and universities on a denominational basis in a province which stood at the beginning of its educational work. Indeed, Tory's entire six-page letter was about what he considered the inability of small, inefficient church colleges in English Canada, especially the Maritimes, to offer the scientific education needed in the twentieth century. He believed that their tax-supported presence prevented the building of large central universities.

Whether Tory and Rutherford were right or wrong in thinking that the public secular university should come before all else, or whether they would still hold to the same opinions in view of to-day's supermarket universities, is not at issue here. Let us observe only that at the time their views were shared by such men as President Murray of the University of Saskatchewan, President Falconer of the University of Toronto, and Frederick Haultain, Premier and Commissioner of Education for the Northwest Territories during the years 1897-1905. When Haultain heard a rumour that the Methodists were interested in establishing a College for higher learning in Edmonton, he had a Bill passed in 1903 providing for the establishment and incorporation of a University for the North West Territories just to pre-empt the field until the provinces were formed.²⁰

Definitive proof that opposition to the "denominational spirit" was not directed against religion itself is to be found in the offer to make university grounds available for sites of denominational colleges. This offer dates from the very beginning of the University of Alberta. No records are available about the origins of the idea which had a parallel development in Saskatchewan and in Toronto. However, it must be remembered that this was an excellent way of strengthening a fledgling institution which, in 1912-13, for example, still had only thirteen professors, counting the President. At the same time the offer weakened the desire to start rival institutions elsewhere in the province. That this motive was uppermost in the minds of University administrators is beyond a doubt. The lack of written records at the beginning is made up for by evidence from a later period. In Alberta, the University's reasons for establishing St. Joseph's College as an affiliated College under Roman Catholic auspices on the campus in 1926, for example, are plain and straightforward. Dean Kerr, seconder of the motion to that effect, was reported in the May, 1926 Minutes of the Senate as having drawn attention to

the fact that the Roman Catholic Church had been recognized throughout Canada as a strong factor in education. The alternative to the proposed

²⁰ *N. L. McLeod*, Calgary College 1912-15, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1970, p. 6.

new College would be the establishment of a Roman Catholic University in the West and it seemed to him that a movement of this kind, which tended to consolidate education under the one State institution, was to be commended.

In Saskatchewan, it was a similar kind of pressure among various groups in the province that led President Murray of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon to adopt the same policy of offering sites to denominational Colleges from 1906 onwards. As for the Catholics, Murray did his very best to attract them to the Saskatoon campus, first in the abortive attempt of 1919, then again in 1926, by a chair in Thomistic Philosophy, and finally by means of a federated Arts College in 1936.²¹ I will return to this point a little later on.

In Alberta, the fourth meeting of the University Senate on June 10, 1909 accepted the idea of sites for denominational colleges in principle. In its meeting of November 19 of the same year, the Senate discussed and accepted the application of the Methodists for a site and noted a request from the Presbyterians. Subsequently, Alberta College (Methodist, later St. Stephen's College) went up in 1910 and Robertson College (Presbyterian) some years later. It is true that both denominational Colleges were for the *theological* training of students *for the ministry* and not for regular undergraduates taking their Arts courses at the University, although they did tie in with the University as student residences. But the possibility of denominational Colleges teaching Arts subjects was definitely contemplated. This is seen in President Tory's comment to Principal Dyde of Robertson College that

the property should be granted for the purposes of a Theological College or for a College in affiliation with the University. In the latter case, should the College at some future time wish to undertake teaching other than that required for a Theological School, it would do so in agreement with the University Senate, that is, if such work were to be of University grade.²²

We must remember that just at this time the University of Toronto was in process of completing federation agreements with the third and last of its three denominational Arts Colleges. St. Michael's College had entered the

²¹ For the Saskatchewan side of this development, see my paper, "Independent University or Federated College ...," *op. cit.*

²² U. of A. Archives, *Affiliated Institutions*, Robertson College, Tory to Dyde, October 9, 1911.

Federation for the first time in 1906 and was to graduate its first students under this new arrangement in 1910.²³ The arrangement, of course, was that students would take some courses at the College and the remainder at the University. Was the Toronto model the source of the Alberta offer for denominational Colleges to settle on University property? It is hard to say. Apparently the discussions and reports on Affiliated Colleges were either oral or, if there were written reports, they are no longer in existence.

Not only did the University Senate offer sites to various denominations, but the Senate itself had a strong representation of such denominations among its members, including the heads of Alberta College and Robertson College. The Catholics were represented by Mr. Justice Beck of Edmonton and Mr. J. B. Nolan of Calgary. The Senate was a small body of some fifteen men who determined every aspect of the new University. Beck was elected a member of the Executive Committee as well, and became Vice-Chancellor.²⁴ Other members were Premier Rutherford in his function as Minister of Education and President Tory as a member ex-officio.

CATHOLIC HALL

Beck was one of the most active members of the University Senate. It was he who suggested some kind of Catholic presence on the campus to Bishop Legal in November 1908, eight months before the Senate resolution of June, 1909 approving the sites. At that time he wrote the Bishop that a University "Hall" or "College" on the plan of Oxford or Cambridge would be more suitable than an independent Catholic university. This would enable Catholic students, he said, to be university students, yet remain assured of a Catholic environment under ecclesiastical supervision. The Legislature, he thought, would never permit the establishment of a rival degree-granting institution to the University of Alberta nor would such an institution be able to compete successfully with a University supported by public funds.²⁵ Six months later, in April 1909, Bishop Legal noted in his diary "Mr. Beck ... shows me a voluminous correspondence concerning the University and the manner of how to handle our students. Should we allow them to follow courses at this University? Is it possible to open some boarding house or college for these young men while giving them lectures on religion, history,

²³ See Lawrence SHOOK, *Catholic Post-Secondary Education in English-Speaking Canada, A History*, University of Toronto Press, 1971, pp. 149ff

²⁴ U. of A. Archives, *Senate Minutes*, First Meeting, March 30, 1908, pp. 3, 10, 12.

²⁵ AAE, *Legal Papers*, Beck to Legal, File #26, November 5, 1908, RUSZAK, *op. cit.*, footnote 28, p. 59.

and philosophy? It is an important question on which I am not yet ready to make a decision.²⁶

Within another six months, in October 1909, Bishop Legal seemed to have made up his mind but somewhat uncertainly if we are to judge from his letter written to Mr. Justice Beck from Quebec:

As far as the 'University Hall' is concerned *I believe* (my italics) I am of the same mind with you. I hope I may be able to find the suitable man for the position even if he is obliged to comply with the Diocesan Regulations about the wearing of the cassock. Another difficulty will be, however, the funds to be provided for the building required and the salary of the principal and his assistants, if some are needed. I do not know that anybody has made any suggestions on the subject ...²⁷ (remainder of letter unreadable).

This letter was a reply to another long letter from Nicholas Beck in which he had further developed the idea of a University Hall which, he said, could also be a residence under the guidance of a competent and qualified priest who, he had argued, should *not* have to wear the soutane. The latter would serve only as a hindrance in establishing academic contacts.²⁸

I think we now have enough evidence to warrant drawing some conclusions which will help explain subsequent events. First, the Bishop's earlier invitation to the Jesuits to use University ground did not mean that he envisaged a College integrated with the University. That idea was suggested to him later on. Secondly, by the end of 1909, Bishop Legal, while not opposed to the concept of an integrated University operation, was not prepared to embrace it wholeheartedly or promote it as an ideal. Third, the two language communities to be served, English and French, would make a unified approach to Catholic higher education very difficult. When we bear these conclusions in mind, the subsequent events will not appear strange. Bishop Legal was anxious to do something for Catholic higher education but what he was to accomplish depended very much on what Congregation of priests he could get. It so happened that he got two Congregations at once.

BENEDICTINES

²⁶ Oblate Archives (Provincial Archives), *Legal Papers*, Diary D-1-624, April 30, 1909.

²⁷ AAE, Legal to Beck, October 9, 1909, Letterbook 1907-09, #387. The letters to Beck were always in English.

²⁸ AAE, Beck to Legal, September 23, 1909, File 8, *Legal Papers*.

In December, 1909 Bishop Legal renewed his invitation to the Jesuits, once again expressing his desire that it should be *they* who should come to occupy this important position near the University. Apparently some group had opposed their coming because the Bishop went on to say that he not only wanted the Jesuits because they were the best qualified but because he himself had absolutely no objection to their Congregation nor could he understand anyone who did.²⁹ We may surmise, with some confidence, that the opposition was most likely directed not against the Jesuits as individuals but against the fact they were French speaking.

While Bishop Legal kept placing his hopes on the Jesuits, in March 1910 Judge Beck again took the initiative, this time with the Benedictines of Downside, England. Abbot Butler responded to his letter positively, writing in April that the Benedictines could send one priest. He indicated that the house should be provided for and should carry no future financial liabilities.³⁰ Although this letter was given to Bishop Legal, the latter returned it without comment, merely expressing his continued hope that the *Jesuits* would come to Alberta.

Still, the Bishop could not wait for the Jesuits forever. While on a trip to Toronto in the late summer of 1910, he visited the Basilians at St. Michael's College. In a letter to them dated October 21 he refers to some subjects being "recognized by the University." This reference gives us the first conclusive evidence that Bishop Legal now fully grasped the implications of a teaching College on University grounds. Although there were then only three Catholic students at the University, the Bishop suggested that the Basilians "have a complete plan of a building to accommodate 100 boarders and to execute it by parts ..."³¹

It was only after the Basilians declined the invitation because they could not spare the men, and after the Bishop could not think of any other Canadian group to approach, that he decided to act upon the initiative of Judge Beck. The date was November, 1911. Probably influenced by information received from Cardinal Bourne during his visit to Canada for the Eucharistic Congress the year before, Bishop Legal wrote the Benedictines of Ampleforth – not Downside – and received the first positive reply from a teaching order in six years of negotiations and letter writing. The Abbot wrote that he was ready to send two delegated visitors without delay, or if the Bishop thought it more

²⁹ AAE, Legal to Lecompte, Letterbook 1907-09, December 11, 1909, #387. "Nous désirons et moi en particulier, je désire sincèrement que ce soit vous qui veniez occuper ce poste si important auprès de notre Université Provinciale."

³⁰ Calgary Diocesan Archives (CDA), Butler to Beck, April 5, 1910.

³¹ AAE, Legal to Powel, October 21, 1910, Letterbook 1910-11, #808.

prudent, to send them after the end of winter.³² The Bishop immediately suggested April as the more appropriate time for a visit. In commenting on the possible acquisition of property either at Strathcona or across the river in Edmonton, he concluded his letter with:

But there is the proposition of the University people offering the use of their ground to the extent of seven acres, for educational purposes. But of all of this we will talk when you will come ...³³

Years of negotiation seemed to be crowned with success. The possible arrival of a first-rate educational order at the University meant the basis would be laid for a Catholic College of high standing in Alberta. Then things took a strange turn.

The Abbot and his companion arrived in St. John, N.B., on Palm Sunday, March 31, 1912 after a rough journey. There they found a letter from Bishop Legal directing them to meet him in *Calgary* instead of Edmonton. Following this direction they arrived in that city, and after investigating other offers decided that Calgary was indeed a good prospect for a boys' school. Thus they secured the option of a suitable site before returning to England where the Benedictine Council approved the project in the fall of 1912, sending two men to Calgary to start it. It should be noted that obviously the Benedictines had reverted to "a boys' school" rather than a University College, although at the time there was some talk about a University in Calgary. In fact, the Benedictines located in the general direction of the rumoured university.

Be that as it may, just at the time of their return in 1913, the St. Albert diocese was divided into two, with the creation of a new Diocese of Calgary in the southern part of the province. Construction had already begun on the College before the Benedictines learned that the newly appointed Bishop John McNally, who arrived in Calgary in July, 1913, seemed more interested in an ordinary high school downtown than in a boys' college in the traditional manner of English Benedictine schools on the outskirts of the city. Subsequently, the Calgary Bishop prevented the Benedictines from raising funds for what he considered to be essentially a school for the rich while refusing to be pinned down as to what exactly he *did* want. Frustrated, the Benedictines

³² The story of the Benedictines coming to Calgary has been told by M.B. Venini BYRNE in *From the Buffalo to the Cross*, Calgary Archives, 1973, Chap. 5, pp. 87-102. One will find texts of the correspondence there. The originals are to be found in Bishop Legal's Letterbooks in AAE.

³³ AAE, Legal to Smith, December 10, 1911, Letterbook X, 1911-12, #473. Also BYRNE, p. 90.

abandoned the project and returned to England early in 1914 despite Archbishop Legal's attempts late in the previous year to advise them by letter in the hope of preserving their project. Judge Beck angrily placed full blame for this disaster on Bishop McNally – apparently somewhat unjustly.³⁴

The obvious question for this paper is: why were the Benedictines sidetracked to Calgary when the original intention had been a foundation in Edmonton and one most likely associated with the University? Abbot Smith gives us some insight in the long report he made to his Council upon his return to England in 1912.

The reason for this change became fairly obvious from conversation with the Bishop himself and with others, especially the Provincial of the Oblates of M.I. and Judge Beck. The reason evidently was that the Bishop had been influenced by French opinion, and was afraid that the French Catholics would rather resent our coming as hostile to their traditions and sentiments, and an intrusion upon their sphere – in a word, as an anti-French move...³⁵

It should be recalled that in Ontario anti-French feeling had reached a high point in 1912 with the Ontario Department of Education issuing Instruction No. 17 – an order designed to limit the teaching and use of the French language in Ontario schools. Naturally, this had embittered the entire French-Canadian population. It would seem quite possible under these circumstances, therefore, that pressure was exerted on Bishop Legal between the time of his December 1912 invitation to the English Benedictines and their arrival on March 31, 1913. This, at any rate, would explain how, after allowing three months to pass without action, Bishop Legal wrote Fr. Lecompte, the Superior of the Montreal Jesuits once more, on March 10, 1913, only weeks before the expected arrival of the Benedictines. The Bishop not only invited, but indeed appealed for reconsideration of the Jesuits' earlier refusal (of December 30, 1909) to come to Alberta. In his letter he mentioned the coming of the Benedictines and suggested that it would be best for *them* to locate in Calgary and for the Jesuits to come to Edmonton or Strathcona, nothing that

in view of the more or less general agitation among the French Canadian population throughout Canada, we think that a single college will not satisfy everyone. Among the general public your college passes above

³⁴ Interview with Msgr. Anderson, Archivist of CDA.

³⁵ AAE, Report of the Journey of Enquiry of Father Abbot and Fr. N.V. Wilson to Canada, March 22 to May 3, 1912, p. 4.

all for being French or at least of French sympathetics.³⁶

What changed everything for the Benedictines was the sudden affirmative reply from the Jesuits, received by the Bishop on March 22, that they were ready to come after all. The very next day Bishop Legal wrote two letters, one to Abbot Smith (which the latter found waiting for him in St. John, New Brunswick, directing him to Calgary); the other to the Montreal Jesuits telling them that a corporation was ready to buy two lots for them in Edmonton.³⁷ Thus the Bishop threw in his lot with the Jesuits, Canadian and French, as opposed to the Benedictines, foreigners and English.

JESUITS

The French Jesuits did not move onto the University grounds in Strathcona. This is not surprising. Why should a basically French language college seek an English environment? Thus they located it instead in Edmonton, across the river from the University. In theory bilingual, the College was to remain French in practice and the physical separation ruled out the Toronto model of taking some courses at the College and the remainder at the University. If there was to be affiliation, it had to be of a different kind, namely an affiliation whereby the University would recognize all the courses taught at the College as together worthy of a Bachelor degree. This the University was not willing to do.

The record tells us that the Jesuit College sought affiliation with the University of Alberta on several occasions, first in 1915, then again in 1917

³⁶ “... I am writing you again in view of the request made by the Benedictines from England to engage them to establish an institute here. Naturally, I cannot ask for more than to see the Benedictines establish such a foundation here, but in view of the more or less general agitation among the French Canadian population throughout Canada, we think that a single college will not satisfy everyone. Among the general public, your college passes above all for being French or at least of French sympathetics. The other one passes for being (basically?)... (unreadable) English and (perhaps less friendly?) to the French. To satisfy everyone, we would need two colleges.. (This is both inconvenient and ... (unreadable). This would allow both of them to begin small and to expand according to increased need. The Benedictine College would be best in Calgary, yours in Edmonton or Strathcona. The Reverend Father Abbot of Ampleforth is coming to study the situation in the first days of April. Could you not make a decision in the interval and communicate your views to me?..” AAE, *Legal Papers*, Legal to Lecompte, March 10, 1912, #853. Translated from the French. Text incomplete.

³⁷ AAE, *Legal Papers*, March 23, 1913, #911 and #915.

and 1919. In each case negotiations went on for some time but then petered out without coming to a conclusion. The basic reason for the lack of progress was the unwillingness of the Jesuit Fathers to adapt their classical college program to the mode of University teaching prevalent in English Canada. Father Bellavance, the rector, left no doubt in the minds of anyone, including University people, that the classical college system was much preferable for a proper humanistic education than the University system. The latter system, he wrote President Tory, while

suitable to scientific and mathematical specialists, they deemed ... lamentably inadequate for the basic formation of the vast majority of minds naturally capable of developing administrative skill in all practical departments of business, legal, political, and social life where moral certitude, due to the cultivation of judgement by the weighing of conflicting evidence, takes the place of physical and mathematical certitude ...³⁸

Fr. Bellavance may not have realized it, but his tone and attitude was hardly conducive to achieving affiliation and recognition. His logic may have been correct but, as the future was to show, no real institutional growth would be possible without University recognition.

In November, 1919 President Tory received a letter from the Dean of Arts of Western University in London, Ontario. Enclosed was a copy of the new affiliation agreement between Western University and two Catholic Colleges, the Ursuline College of Chatham and Assumption College of Sandwich (Windsor) which, the dean said, will bring these two colleges to London in a very short time. He had heard from President MacLean of the University of Manitoba that the University of Alberta also was negotiating with a Catholic College in reference to possible affiliation and thought that President Tory might want to peruse the agreement he had enclosed.³⁹ President Tory thanked him for his thoughtfulness, but noted:

The matter is not quite as easy with us, however. The people with whom we have to deal with are the Jesuits who are not so flexible in their arrangements as other organizations of the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁰

³⁸ U. of A. Archives, *Affiliated Institutions*: Jesuit College.

³⁹ U. of A. Archives, File: *Affiliated Institutions* – Jesuits, 1201-2, Fox to Tory, November 3, 1919. In actual fact, the Ursulines did move from Chatham to London but Assumption stayed in Windsor.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Tory to Fox, November 21, 1919.

Let it be noted that eventually, the Jesuit College became affiliated with Laval in Quebec City. It never had more than a handful of university students. After struggling along for two decades, the Second World War brought the end. In 1942 the few students were transferred to a new high school and college operated by the Oblates as Collège St. Jean in Strathcona. The Jesuit College buildings were sold to the American Army who, in turn, sold them to the Canadian government for a tuberculosis hospital for Canadian Indians.

ARCHBISHOP O'LEARY

At Archbishop Legal's death in February, 1920, an English and a French effort for a Catholic College on a University Campus had failed in Alberta. It had failed despite the fact that in Ontario the idea was spreading. With the new Bishop, however, a new commitment to the "Catholic College-Provincial University model" was noticeable from the beginning, if not perhaps as an ideal, then as the only practical course to be pursued in Edmonton.⁴¹

Henry Joseph O'Leary was the right man for boom-town Edmonton. Born in New Brunswick in 1879, he attended St. Joseph's College in his native province for his Arts, and for his Theology the Grand Seminary in Montreal. A brilliant student, he went to Rome where he received no less than three doctorates (Philosophy, Canon Law, and Theology). In 1913 he was appointed Bishop of Charlottetown, P.E.I., and from there he came to Edmonton in 1920. He unsparingly devoted his many energies to the spiritual and material needs of his exploding diocese. He built some 50 churches and chapels, brought to the Diocese almost a dozen new religious Congregations, enlarged hospitals, opened new parishes, homes and halls, not to mention new schools and a seminary, and started a diocesan paper, *The Western Catholic*. When in Eastern Canada he was always on the lookout for new priests for his western diocese.

One of the most noteworthy features about Archbishop O'Leary was his tremendous optimism and faith in Alberta. As a diocesan historian puts it

From the time of his arrival in 1920, he spoke of the golden opportunities in the West, and particularly in Alberta. He claimed this to be the land of the future; he reiterated this fact many times, and even the depression failed to dampen his enthusiasm for the future development of this province.⁴²

⁴¹ R.A. MACLEAN, *The History...*, p. 92.

⁴² R.A. MACLEAN, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

As far as higher education is concerned, the Archbishop wasted no time. In January, 1921 he heard that the English Holy Cross Fathers of St. Laurent's College, P.Q., had separated from the French and that they wished to establish an English-speaking institution elsewhere. He wrote them right away with the invitation to come to Edmonton. When this did not bring immediate success, he turned to the Basilians in Toronto. His ebullient spirit is evident in his letter to Father Nicholas Roache of St. Michael's College:

I am considering the establishment of an English College in the city of Edmonton. The prospects of such an institution are excellent, in fact, the best I have seen in the Dominion of Canada ... I may say to you privately that I have been promised a million dollars to build and endow this institution, part of which amount should be forthcoming this fall, if the work is begun. I believe that even a greater sum could be obtained if necessary. Our idea is to make it the big institution of the Northwest, even with University possibilities ... If your Fathers feel like considering the proposition, no time should be lost.⁴³

This was an offer that couldn't be refused. Although the Basilians had considerable doubt about the million dollars,⁴⁴ after some further correspondence which also brought to light that the Archbishop was thinking, first of all, of a high school, Fr. Vincent Murphy, c.s.b., came to Edmonton in July of 1921. A meeting was arranged with the Archbishop, President Tory, and Dr. Kerr, Dean of Arts. As noted, the University people had their own reasons for attracting the Catholics to their campus. As for the Archbishop, he shared Mr. Beck's views that "the establishment of a Catholic University is not a practical issue owing to the immense cost involved."⁴⁵ Thus he disagreed with some of his fellow bishops.

From this meeting there issued a memorandum which laid down regulations for a Catholic College affiliated with the University of Alberta in the same way St. Michael's College was affiliated with the University of Toronto. It reserved Philosophy, English, Classics, Modern Languages, and History as areas which could be taught by the College while all *other* subjects were to be taught by the University.⁴⁶ When the definitive agreement was drawn up five years later, in April 1926, it reflected the original intention of

⁴³ AAE, *O'Leary Papers*, File: Basilians, February 14, 1921.

⁴⁴ Interview with Kevin Kirley, c.s.b.

⁴⁵ AAE, *O'Leary Papers*, O'Leary to Bishop McNally of Calgary, August 22, 1923.

⁴⁶ *Memorandum of Conversation*, University Archives, Tory File: *St-Joseph's College*.

1921 even though the wording, by then, had been changed somewhat.⁴⁷

As for the Basilians, correspondence with them in the Archdiocesan files comes to a complete halt with this memorandum. As we know, they did not come to Edmonton. With their General Chapter of June 1921 they had entered upon a major crisis of their own leading to a separation of the French mother province from its North American offshoot. The latter, moreover, went through a loss of members by adopting the third religious vow, the vow of poverty. Under these circumstances, Edmonton was no longer in their purview.

Archbishop O'Leary was never a man to stay down long. By 1922 he had engaged a fellow Maritimer, Fr. John R. MacDonald, to see if he could move the idea of a college closer to realization. Fr. MacDonald's personal story and involvement with St. Joseph's College has been told in our proceedings. It concerns principally the involvement of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.⁴⁸

In the early twenties the Carnegie Corporation was attempting to sponsor a new educational venture based on cooperation between state and religious denominations. As its experimental terrain it had selected the Canadian Maritimes, the very area which President Tory in his March, 1906 letter had held up as the best illustration of how "denominationalism" and "separatistic" tendencies could hold back educational progress. The Corporation had set aside three million dollars to promote this project of regrouping, resettling and reorganizing the various universities and colleges. Not surprisingly, the debate about the pros and cons of such a re-organization became quite intense in the Maritimes and from there spread outwards to other parts of English Canada. For example, the Archbishop of Toronto, Neil McNeil, a former Rector of St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, who had St. Michael's College within his archdiocese, was in favour of the project. Bishop Morrison of Antigonish, however, vigorously opposed it.⁴⁹

While this debate kept emotions heated in the Maritimes, western Canada had its own debate. The Archbishop of Regina, Msgr. Olivier Mathieu, undoubtedly the leading Catholic churchman in the Canadian West, had been shocked to read the April 1917 pastoral letter of his colleague, Bishop Pascal of Prince Albert, Sask., announcing the decision to locate a Catholic college on the campus of the University of Saskatchewan in

⁴⁷ See Appendix A for a fuller discussion of the details.

⁴⁸ Peter NEARING, "Rev. John R. MacDonald, St. Joseph's College and the University of Alberta," *CCHA Study Sessions*, 1975, pp. 70-89. Since that date Father Nearing has published a biography of John R. MacDonald who later became Bishop of Antigonish, N.S.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 77ff.

Saskatoon. The Archbishop expressed his state of mind in letters to Quebec, Rome, and Archbishop Legal; the last mentioned – as we have seen – had doubts himself in 1909 about building a College right on the University campus while, in 1910, he had warned the Benedictines that this was:

delicate ground, and everything would have to be arranged and regulated with the full consent and approbation of the Apostolic Delegate ...⁵⁰

Archbishop Mathieu's reaction was considerably stronger. "I read it (the pastoral letter)," Mathieu wrote to Legal, "I read it, I found it more than dangerous and beseeched God to give me the heart to go and tell him what I thought of it." Which he did.⁵¹

When a little later on, the Abbot of Muenster, Saskatchewan, thinking that the Archbishop of Regina only objected to affiliation, restated the case for a Catholic College on the Saskatoon campus once more, His Grace replied that he did *not* object to *affiliation*. The affiliation of St. Boniface with the University of Manitoba, for example, was fine with him. Rather, he objected to colleges in the immediate *vicinity* of state universities. "We should have all Catholic Colleges," he repeated, and "eventually a Catholic University."⁵²

Let us return to the puzzle projected at the beginning: How was it possible for Archbishop O'Leary to claim in 1932 in a letter to Carnegie Corporation that "the importance of St. Joseph's University College in Canada is paramount"? Simply this: First, what the Carnegie Corporation could not do in the Maritimes, it did in Edmonton. It gave Fr. John MacDonald the promise of \$100,000 for a Catholic College on the campus of the University of Alberta on the condition that the Catholics would raise another \$150,000. This they did and, as a consequence, St. Joseph's University College was built.

Second, in the face of the controversy about whether or not Catholic colleges should be built on the campus of "secular" universities, a controversy which was also raging in the United States where the Jesuits strenuously objected to the building of "Newman Halls" on the premises of state universities, Archbishop O'Leary had the matter settled for Canada. Obviously, he had not studied Canon Law in vain. Rather than asking for permission to build a Catholic college on the campus of the local state

⁵⁰ AAE, *Legal Papers*, Legal to Very Rev. Smith.

⁵¹ A. DE VALK, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

university, he asked whether it was permissible to protect and strengthen the religious faith of Catholic students attending the University for which purpose he would need a Catholic College. In the terse language of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office, the reply was put as follows:

Your Reverend Eminence:

This Holy Congregation has examined the doubts proposed by your Eminence June 6 last, No. 89/26 on the question of the project of the Archbishop of Edmonton for the erection in said city of a College uniquely Catholic, for the protection and the defense of the faith of Catholic students who attend the provincial University:

1. Is it possible to permit or tolerate the affiliation of Catholic Colleges with state universities on the condition that the students have college courses in religion, history and other matters considered necessary for the safeguarding of the faith while at the same time attending University courses?
2. Is it possible to admit occasionally a non-Catholic to the said College, if he is disposed to conform himself in everything to their laws and regulations?

In the plenary session of June 16 last, their Eminences the Cardinals Inquisitors General, my colleagues, have decreed to answer the above mentioned doubts, as follows

To No. 1: Affirmatively. According to request.

To No. 2: Negatively, without the permission of the Holy Office in each particular case.

The Holy Father, in ordinary audience conceded to the Rev. Assessor June 17 last, has approved the resolution of their Eminences the Cardinals.

(Signed) R. Card. Merry del Val

copy: Cardinal Bisleti
Prefect of the Congregation
of Seminaries and Universities⁵³

The answer to question two was astonishing, at first sight almost incredible. Did it mean that the Holy Office in Rome would have to vet the application of every Protestant student who applied for residence at the

⁵³ St. Joseph's College Archives (SJCA), File: *Rome*. Translated from the French.

College? As it can hardly be assumed that this was what was really meant, the answer to two must be interpreted as, in fact, a prohibition. It was to lead to a blow-up in 1929 when an official visitor from the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, a Jesuit from New York, reported that the ruling had been ignored completely. But this is for some other paper.

What interests us in this paper is the answer to question one. Archbishop O'Leary not only built himself a College but in the process he also vindicated the other Catholic colleges on provincial universities throughout Canada. As he put it himself in a 1926 letter to the Carnegie Corporation:

Our present University College was made a test case in Rome. Many Archbishops and Bishops protested it. I had to write a lengthy report on it and the whole matter went before the highest ecclesiastical tribunal in Rome and we received a clear cut decision permitting our University College. This decision is of the utmost importance as it legalizes institutions of this kind such as St. Michael's College of Toronto and many many others ...⁵⁴

In addition to legalizing the Catholic institutional presence on the grounds of provincial universities, Archbishop O'Leary's University College also squashed any further talk about a Catholic University of Western Canada. The immediate effect of the announcement that the University of Alberta was to get a Catholic College was the collapse of episcopal opposition in Regina and Prince Albert to a Catholic college on the University of Saskatchewan. In 1926, on hearing of the decision in Edmonton, Bishop Prud'homme of Prince Albert/Saskatoon gave his approval for a "Newman Hall" on the Saskatoon campus after he had opposed it in deference to his metropolitan, Archbishop Mathieu of Regina.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ SJCA, File: *Carnegie Corporation*, October 5, 1926. The reference to the "many Archbishops and Bishops" who "protested it" was no doubt an exaggeration. On examination of the correspondence with other Canadian bishops shows no protest letters. During the years 1921-26 Archbishop O'Leary mentioned his University College project in passing to Sinnott of Winnipeg (1921); Fallon of London (1922 and 1924); McNally and Kidd of Calgary (1923 and 1926), and Neil McNeil of Toronto (1921). All these bishops supported him

⁵⁵ In 1926, immediately following the arrangement in Edmonton, the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon arranged for a Chair in Thomistic Philosophy. Ten years later, in 1936, this was complemented by an arrangement which allowed for the general liberal arts college of Thomas More. Unlike its sister College in Edmonton, the Saskatoon College developed the broader stream of courses envisaged in the Edmonton agreement.

As for the second half of the puzzle: why did St. Joseph's College teach so few courses and why did it not develop as a liberal arts College as it surely was meant to have done, the answer is long and complicated and should be reserved for another occasion. Suffice it to say that by 1924 Archbishop O'Leary succeeded in retaining the services of the Christian Brothers of Toronto, first in the fund raising drive to get the College built and then to provide the personnel to run it. The formal opening and solemn blessing of "St. Joseph's University Catholic College" took place on November 6, 1927.

APPENDIX A

(Footnote 47)

In order to show what kind of College was envisaged, it is necessary to call to mind some further details. These details are based on the two drafts of Agreement (August 13, 1921 and March 20, 1926) plus the final Agreement of April 28, 1926 as found in the Tory Papers, University of Alberta Archives.

August, 1921

To be noted first is the fact that Father Vincent Murphy represented the Basilians of St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. Second, the August 13, 1921 Memorandum of Conversation reflects faithfully the arrangement then in use in Toronto. The key clauses are three and four. The first of these reads:

3. That Philosophy as a subject of study in the Catholic College would be regarded as a subject of instruction and examination by the Faculty of that College ... (provided that standards ... be consistent with the standards established by the University.)

The second one states:

4. With respect to Classics, English, History, and Modern Languages, either of two models of procedure were agreed upon as feasible:
 - (a) that suitable members of the staff of the Catholic College might be attached to the staffs of the University departments concerned and that instruction might be given in either the College or the University,

or

- (b) that courses in the subjects named above might be given in the Catholic College by the staff of that College.

Finally, under 5 it reads:

- 5. With the exception of the subjects named above, all other subjects would be taught by the University these being open on equal terms to the students of the Catholic College.

This memorandum of 1921 reflects faithfully what had been arranged for St. Michael's College in relation to the University of Toronto. St. Michael's College taught philosophy as well as the ancient and modern languages on its own premises, while for History, it was represented by a member attached to the History Department. In Philosophy (mentioned in 3) it set its own examinations while for the languages (mentioned under 4) it collaborated in setting examinations common to all the Colleges across the University of Toronto. All *other* courses (clause 5) were taught by University departments.

March 30, 1926

Following the five year delay in getting personnel for St. Joseph's College, the next draft of Agreement comes dated March 30, 1926, one month before the final Agreement of April 28 was drawn up. A rough typewritten copy with handwritten notes in the margin is in the Tory files, University of Alberta Archives. In this document Clause 3 has been enlarged to include not just Philosophy but also History and Ethics. It reads:

- 3. Philosophy, History and Ethics, are subjects of study in St. Joseph's College, (and) shall be regarded as subjects for instruction and examination by the Faculty of St. Joseph's ...

Clause 4 has been enlarged with Psychology, Education and Economics, and now reads:

- 4. With regard to Classics, English, Psychology, Education, Economics and Modern Languages, either of the two methods may

be decided upon by the authorities of St. Joseph's ... (remainder is identical to 1921.)

Clause 5 is the same as in 1921, namely that all subjects not named in 3 or 4 were to be taught by the University.

April 28, 1926

When we come to the final document of April 28, 1926 duly signed by the respective authorities, we find the following:

Clause 3 of March 30, 1926 is incorporated as such under section 4, para 3, reading:

4. (3) The College shall have the right, should it so decide, to teach the subjects of History and Philosophy (including Ethics) ... (remainder is the same with respect to standards, etc.)

Clause 4, however, has undergone a further change. It no longer mentions any courses by name – presumably on the grounds that after adding Psychology, Economics and Education one could lengthen the list indefinitely. Instead, it now presents a completely generalized permission. It reads:

4. (4) Such additional subjects from the curriculum of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences may be taught by the professorial staff of the College as shall be agreed upon between the College and the Senate from time to time, in either one or other of the following ways ... (remainder the same as 1921 and March, 1926.)

In agreement with the change in (4), clause 5, too, no longer refers to “all other courses” but simply reads:

4. (5) With the exception of the subjects taught by the College as herein provided, all subjects of study taught by the University shall be open on equal terms to the students of the College.

President Tory's copy of the April 28, 1926 draft has written into the margin opposite clause (4): “Broader than memorandum of 1921. Agreement of March 30, 1926 more specific.”

The meaning of the above is very clear indeed. St. Joseph's College was

meant to become – as time went by – a full-fledged Liberal Arts College with the possibility of teaching a broader stream of courses than its original model, St. Michael's College of Toronto.