

The Jesuits and the Catholic University of Canada at Kingston

by
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When the Jesuits accepted the direction of Regiopolis College and its University Charter in 1931, they pondered the possibility of opening the Catholic University of Canada at Kingston.¹ The idea of an independent national Catholic university was not new to Catholics in central Canada. Ottawa College after it received a university charter in 1889 strove to fulfil this role, and St. Francis Xavier University at Antigonish in 1923 made “a firm commitment to become an autonomous, multifaculty university.”² Many Catholics were also aware that the Catholic University of America in Washington DC was founded in 1888 as an independent national university for American Catholics. Could a similar university be opened in Kingston for central Canadian Catholics?

Let me start this study of the Jesuits and the Catholic University of Canada at Kingston with a preliminary consideration of Catholic university education at the beginning of the 1930s. In addition to the two English-speaking Catholic universities mentioned above, there were sixteen Catholic colleges affiliated in a variety of different patterns: four in the maritime provinces, seven in central Canada, and four on the western prairies.³ Financially they were managed with little regular funding, and the renewal of their university affiliations was often difficult. In regard to one

¹ I wish to acknowledge those who read this paper and made helpful comments: Patrick Boyle, SJ, Frederick Crowe, SJ, Edward Dowling, SJ, Joseph Driscoll, SJ, Roger Guindon, OMI, Msgr. J.G. Hanley, Brian Hogan, CSB, J.M. Laporte, SJ, Carl Matthews, SJ, and Msgr. A. Welsh.

² Lawrence K. Shook, *Catholic Post-secondary Education in English-speaking Canada: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 87.

³ The Catholic colleges in the maritime provinces were St. Dunstan's, St. Mary's, Mount St. Vincent, and St. Thomas; in central Canada, St. Michael's, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, St. Patrick's, Loyola, Marianopolis (Montreal), Assumption, and Brescia; on the western prairies, St. Paul's, St. Joseph's, St. Thomas More, and Champion. Shook, *Catholic Post-secondary Education in English-speaking Canada*.

such institution, Regiopolis College of Kingston, which desired to rejoin the ranks of post-secondary institutions, I would like to discuss three points: the transfer of the College from the Archdiocese of Kingston to the Jesuit Vice-Province of Upper Canada; the Jesuit vision for the Catholic University at Kingston and the response to it; and finally, the steps taken to incorporate the Catholic University and to raise finances for its construction.

The Oblates in Ottawa and the anglophone Jesuits in Montreal had attempted to establish their own Catholic universities. For over 70 years the Oblates in Ottawa had made heroic sacrifices to establish the Catholic University of Ottawa, but for all their efforts it remained, as described by one internal report, two classical courses with a five-year commercial course and a seminary of about 450 English- and French-speaking students.⁴ The attempt to create a bilingual university had damaged it in the eyes of both the anglophones and francophones.⁵ In the early years it was judged by the French-speaking Canadians to be an English Canadian university in Ontario, and after 1915 by English-speaking Canadians to be a French Canadian university adhering to the model in language and culture of the *collège classique*.⁶

Since its founding at Montreal in 1896, Loyola College had aspired to serve as a university for English-speaking Catholics. Yet the prospect of a university in Montreal which was not specifically sanctioned by the Archbishop was to be firmly rejected.⁷ The Jesuit struggle to gain a university charter for Loyola College was begun by the first rector, Gregory O'Bryan. In 1899 the Quebec Legislature was ready to pass the legislation to make Loyola an independent college when Archbishop Paul Bruchési intervened. The Archbishop was struggling to acquire a charter for the future Université de Montréal against the opposition of Laval University and the Archbishop of Quebec who exercised complete control over the Catholic university

⁴ AUO (Archives of the University of Ottawa), Deschâtelets, Thomas Duhamel to Pope Leo XIII, 21 November 1888; Notes for Rev. Father Provincial's Report on University of Ottawa at General Chapter, 1908-8-5, [by Fr. William Murphy].

⁵ Shook, *Catholic Post-Secondary Education in English-speaking Canada*, 1971, p. 247-49; Robert Choquette, *La Foi Gardienne de la Langue en Ontario, 1900-1950* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1987); Roger Guindon, *Coexistence Difficile: La dualité linguistique à l'Université d'Ottawa. Volume 1: 1848-1898* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1989, and Volume 2 (to be published).

⁶ AUO, *Brief: Presented to the Royal Commission of Enquiry on Bilingualism and Biculturalism by the University of Ottawa* (Ottawa, 1964), pp. 15-16.

⁷ ASJUC (Archives of the Society of Jesus of Upper Canada, Toronto), Gregory O'Bryan File; Ledowchoski to Filion as mentioned in Hingston Diary, 16 August 1924, p. 360.

system in the province.⁸ In the face of the rejection by the Archbishop of Montreal to a university charter for Loyola College, the youthful Rector William H. Hingston sought help from Rome. He was the son of Sir William H. Hingston, the well-known professor of medicine at McGill University and popular mayor of Montreal. Fr. Hingston was raised by his parents in the spirit of *noblesse oblige* and was taught to be imaginative, professional, and loyal. He was a military chaplain during the First World War with the Irish Canadian Rangers and, after his return in 1918, was appointed rector of Loyola College in Montreal. He extended Loyola's physical plant and made a gallant effort to attain a university charter.⁹

By a secret trip to Rome in the spring of 1924 Hingston spoke with the officials of the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities. Living at the Jesuit Curia, he prepared a Memorandum pleading the case of a university charter for Loyola College. He had a private audience with Pope Pius XI, and visited Cardinals Bisleti, Merry del Val, Sbaretti, and de Lai.¹⁰ The well-known General Superior of the Jesuits, Fr. Vladimir Ledochowski, coached him for the interview with the pope.¹¹

At the Jesuit Curia Hingston was invited during the noon meal one day to sit with Fr. General Ledochowski. "Smilingly," the General announced to Hingston that Cardinal Bisleti had told him at dinner on the previous Saturday that an instruction had been sent to the Apostolic Delegate in Ottawa by letter rather than by cable, "& consequently," the General went on to say, "that I [Hingston] might leave Rome at once. I was stunned, but I had to sit through the recr[eation] and smile as if nothing had happened. Bitter feelings."¹² Hingston had asked Cardinal Bisleti that a cablegram be sent to the Delegate in Ottawa to speed up the proceedings for the charter. By the fact that a letter was sent, and his advice ignored, he understood that a

⁸ Archivum Romanum Societas Jesu, Prov. Can., 1007, fasc. 4, No. 38, O'Bryan to Mons. Merry del Val, 26 December 1898, and fasc. 9, No. 20, Hingston to Walmesley, 6 January 1920.

⁹ ASJUC, Hingston File; *Dictionary of Jesuit Biography: Ministry to English Canada, 1842-1987* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Jesuit Studies, 1991).

¹⁰ Cardinal Gaetano Bisleti (1856-1937) was Prefect of the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities; Cardinal Merry del Val (1865-1930), Special Envoy to Canada, 1897-1899, and Secretary to the Congregation of the Holy Office; Cardinal Donato Sbaretti (1856-1939), Apostolic Delegate to Canada, 1901-1910, and Prefect of the Congregation of the Council; Cardinal Gaetano de Lai (1853-1928), Secretary of the Consistorial Congregation.

¹¹ ASJUC, Hingston File, Roman Diary 355, 15 April to 16 May 1924.

¹² ASJUC, Hingston File, Roman Diary 355, 12-13, 19 May 1924.

negative answer was given to his proposal for a university charter at Loyola College.¹³

Several weeks later in Ottawa the Apostolic Delegate encouraged him to affiliate Loyola College with l'Université de Montréal.¹⁴ Later in 1924 Hingston stepped down as rector and for a time the issue of the University Charter for Loyola College was forgotten. Thus neither the Jesuits in Montreal nor the Oblates in Ottawa succeeded in founding an independent, English-speaking Catholic University in central Canada.

Kingston was a different story. In 1837 the Crown granted a charter to the "College of Regiopolis," which its founder Bishop Alexander Macdonell hoped would train clergy for the diocese. Five years later Regiopolis began classes as a liberal arts college to educate both the clergy and the laity in theology, letters, and business. The Legislature of Upper Canada in 1866 enhanced the college with university status, but owing to financial woes, the college was forced to close its doors three years later. In 1896 the college reopened its doors as a high school, and the campus was moved permanently in 1914 to its present site.¹⁵

Between 1915 and 1920 some Ontario Bishops had hoped to free the charter from Kingston to utilize it elsewhere in the province; however, Archbishop Michael J. Spratt and the university trustees refused to permit its alienation.¹⁶ Thus, since Confederation, there existed at Kingston the possibility of an English-speaking Catholic university.

A Jesuit vice-province for anglophones was created in 1924, and four years later Hingston, was appointed the Provincial Superior. He showed immediate interest in the issue of a Catholic University at Kingston. The Society of Jesus, or Jesuits as they are popularly known, have a four hundred year history of directing colleges and doing scholarly work in Europe and throughout the world. The Vice-Province of Upper Canada wished to be part of this heritage by taking an interest in Regiopolis College and its university charter. However, the maximum personnel resources of the Vice-Province for university teaching were sixty priests, half of which were already engaged in academic pursuits at Loyola College in Montreal, the Jesuit Seminary in Toronto, and Campion College in Regina. Undaunted by these obstacles, Fr.

¹³ Ibid., 335, 14, 20 May 1924.

¹⁴ Ibid., 355, 21, 6 June 1924, and Diary 360, 16 August 1924.

¹⁵ Louis J. Flynn, *The Story of the Roman Catholic Church in Kingston, 1826-1976* (Kingston: Archdiocese of Kingston, 1976), pp. 36, 51-52, 82, 96-97.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 96-97.

Hingston was now to transfer the struggle of the anglophone Canadian Jesuits for a university charter from Montreal to Kingston.

An opportunity arose in 1929 when the new Coadjutor Archbishop of Kingston, Michael J. O'Brien, offered Regiopolis College to the Jesuits in a conversation with Fr. Joseph Leahy, Hingston's secretary. If they accepted the Archbishop's invitation to assume the teaching and administration duties at the college, the Jesuits would gain possession of the coveted Catholic University Charter in central Canada. By excellent train connections, the Kingston campus was close to the principal English-speaking Jesuit college, Loyola of Montreal, which could then be affiliated with it.¹⁷

What would be the advantage to the Archbishop of committing the college and its charter to the Jesuits? And what would the Jesuits gain from accepting Regiopolis College? By late spring of 1930 Archbishop O'Brien was urging the Jesuits to accept Regiopolis College and to begin teaching classes in the fall of that year. The agreement was important to him because the archdiocese had a difficult time keeping the Regiopolis College open and, as a result, the pursuit of academic excellence was mainly an ideal. For lack of financial resources had closed the college in 1869. When it re-opened in 1896, it did so by the personal and financial sacrifices of the staff, students, and Archdiocese. But by handing over the college to the Jesuits, O'Brien gained for the Archdiocese a cash payment, the services of Jesuit teachers for ten years, and it was the Jesuits who bore the responsibility of the yearly operating cost.

Archbishop O'Brien wished to employ the five diocesan priests teaching at the college in one of the 42 parishes or 23 mission churches of the archdiocese. While the archdiocese embraced a large geographical area, the number of Catholics in eastern Ontario totalled only 45,000, many of whom lived in isolated farming communities. It was to the obvious advantage of the archdiocese to bring in a large international teaching order which had its own personnel, ideals, and finances. In the face of the established reputation of Queen's University, which was resident in Kingston for ninety years, the Catholic community needed to be bolstered by a religious order with a well-established teaching tradition to attract Catholic students to their own university. It was argued that Regiopolis College, under the direction of the Jesuits, could provide the English-speaking Catholics what the Oblate University of Ottawa was perceived to be providing for the French-speaking Catholic population—an independent Catholic university that they could call

¹⁷ Ibid., p.105.

their own. Thus there were many advantages for Archbishop O'Brien to relinquish control of Regiopolis College to the Society of Jesus.¹⁸

The English-speaking Jesuits were enjoying a growth in personnel, and at this time, were looking for other colleges to open and judged Regiopolis College to be a suitable institution. Hingston was in Rome during the summer of 1930 for the canonization of the Canadian Martyrs. After a conversation with Fr. General Ledochowski, Hingston, using the system of decision-making codified by the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius Loyola,¹⁹ jotted down reasons for and against accepting Regiopolis College. The principal reasons for accepting the College, Hingston listed as follows: the university charter had the widest powers; it offered the opportunity to open "a Catholic University of Canada"; it would help Loyola and other Catholic colleges by offering affiliation with a Catholic University; it opened the possibility to send Loyola high school students to Regiopolis College and leave Loyola College for university students only; generous pecuniary help from the Archdiocese was offered; a most friendly archbishop, by making a definite proposal and offering some teaching staff for the first years, wished the Jesuits to accept Regiopolis College at Kingston.²⁰

The principal reasons for not accepting Regiopolis College Hingston noted as follows: uncertainty that the university charter was valid; undesirable location because the city was small, bigoted, and had a limited Catholic population; two other Catholic colleges, North Bay College and St. Patrick's in Ottawa restricted the number of students available; the Catholic population in the region would be expanded by French-language settlements rather than by English-language settlements; accepting Regiopolis College meant not accepting a seminary or college in Toronto, Edmonton, or Vancouver. Under these circumstances Fr. Ledochowski advised Hingston not accept Regiopolis for a year.

During the spring of 1930, as negotiations proceeded, the Jesuits asked that the university charter possessed by the College be validated by the Ontario Legislature and that a satisfactory financial arrangement be agreed upon before they would accept Regiopolis College. The idea of accepting Regiopolis pleased Hingston greatly, and he excitedly explained to Fr. Welsby, the Assistant to the General, that "the coveted University Charter

¹⁸ Archbishop O'Brien was not a university man and preferred not to have to cope with the complexities of running a diocesan college or university. (Interview with Msgr. J.G. Hanley).

¹⁹ *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, transl. by Louis J. Puhl, SJ (Westminster: Newman, 1951), No. 175.

²⁰ ASJUC, Hingston Papers, Official Letters, Notes of Conversation with VRF General last night, 3 July 1930.

has been offered to us.” He went on to explain that the lawyers disagreed on its validity “on account of the non-compliance during a period of sixty-four years with the conditions implied in the act of incorporation.”²¹ Although some lawyers still considered the charter valid, it was decided to submit the charter to the Legislature of Ontario for revision and approval before acceptance.

In regard to the initial cost, it was estimated that it would not go beyond \$200,000.²² At the same time the Jesuit consultors were considering other possible colleges in Vancouver and Winnipeg, knowing that choosing one college would necessarily exclude others. Archbishop William M. Duke of Vancouver was anxious to have a college for his diocese but was slow to come to a permanent arrangement. In Winnipeg Archbishop Arthur A. Sinnott pressed the Jesuits to accept St. Paul’s College which carried a large debt of \$175,000.²³ The Vice-Province had already opened in 1930 the Jesuit Seminary in Toronto.

While in Rome for the canonization of the Canadian Martyrs, Archbishop O’Brien visited Fr. Ledochowski to give emphasis to the proposal that the Jesuits take over Regiopolis College before September 1930. Both O’Brien and the Canadian Jesuits were aware that the newly opened North Bay College and St. Patrick’s College in Ottawa were seeking affiliation with an English-language Catholic university and were expecting that Regiopolis University would soon be ready.²⁴ Fr. Ledochowski assured the Archbishop that if the charter was approved by the Province of Ontario, the Society of Jesus would furnish two priests by 31 July 1931 to direct the College. The General also accepted the offer that diocesan priests already teaching in the College would remain for up to five years.²⁵

²¹ ASJUC, Regiopolis Correspondence, Memorandum Re. “The College of Regiopolis” and “The University of Regiopolis” by A.W. Anglin, 4 February 1930 and W.L. Scott to O’Brien, 11 March 1930; Provincial Correspondence, Hingston to Welsby, 26 February 1930; Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 1924-1938, 18 March 1930, pp. 85 and 91.

²² The \$200,000 price for the college property was an assessed value. While some ten thousands of dollars was initially paid by the Jesuit Order to the Archdiocese of Kingston, most of the remaining \$190,000 was worked off by the Jesuits teaching the students of the Archdiocese without tuition charge for 20 years.

²³ ASJUC, Provincial Correspondence with Rome, Hingston to Fr. General, 26 March 1930; Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 25 April 1930, pp. 92-93.

²⁴ ASJUC, Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 2 May 1930, pp. 92-93 and 100.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3 December 1930, p. 112; Regiopolis Correspondence, Ledochowski to O’Brien, 8 July 1930.

In January 1931 Archbishop O'Brien petitioned the premier of Ontario for amendments to the Regiopolis Charter. The Legislature passed the relevant amendments on 2 April 1931.²⁶ Thus, with the purchase of Regiopolis College in the late spring, The Archdiocese of Kingston passed the University Charter and appointments on the Board of Trustees to the Vice-Province of Upper Canada.²⁷ The Jesuits, for their part, looked forward to opening a new school and having in their possession a university charter for central Canada.

What vision did the Jesuits have for the Catholic University at Kingston? The driving force behind the project was William H. Hingston who thought the institution should be called "Canada University." He hoped that the university would be granted a Pontifical Charter by the Roman Congregation of Seminaries and Universities and be incorporated by the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and by the Government of Canada. A large campus was to be prepared on the western edge of the City of Kingston, and in a speech to the Canadian bishops in Ottawa, Fr. Hingston expatiated on the academic and spiritual values which a Catholic university would bring to Canada.

A campus of 325 acres was purchased at the west end of Princess Street on Highway Two at the city line, and an elaborate plan was drawn up for the new university campus to house faculty, staff, and 6000 students.²⁸ A friend of Hingston's, an internationally-renowned architect and lecturer, Noulan Cauchon, drew up the plans as a gift to the Catholic university. The services of architect Culham of Kingston were donated by Col. J.B. MacLean. The Bishop of Calgary sent one of his priests, Rev. R.J. MacGinness, a trained architect, to contribute his professional services to the project.²⁹

The extensive campus was to be beautifully laid out.³⁰ There were to be separate facilities for 3000 men and 3000 women, including residences, gymnasiums, student unions, playing fields, and golf courses. Other structures would house the school of education, science, arts, an art gallery and museum, medicine and dentistry, engineering, geology, convocation hall, stadium, hospital, and household economics. The plans provided for a

²⁶ Legislature of Ontario, 21 George V, Chapt. 137, p. 496.

²⁷ ASJUC, Provincial Consultors' Minute Book, 14, 18, 30 April and 12 May 1931, pp. 132-33, 135, 138, and 146; Canadian Freeman, 18 June 1931 .

²⁸ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 23 July 1933, p. 714.

²⁹ AAK (Archives of the Archdiocese of Kingston), Archbishop O'Brien Papers, Hingston to O'Brien, 20 January 1931; ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 22 September 1933, p. 718.

³⁰ ASJUC, Regiopolis University Plans, unsigned and undated.

spacious garden style campus which included trees, gardens, and reflecting pools.

Who should own and be responsible for such a fine campus, the Jesuits or the Bishops? In a letter to General Superior of the Jesuits, Hingston outlined two arguments for ownership: one for Jesuit ownership and another for episcopal ownership. Jesuit ownership, Hingston argued, would provide the Upper Canadian province security from episcopal interference, greater student discipline, freedom for development, and the right to invite other religious institutes to the campus. Ownership of the campus was the traditional model followed by other Jesuit universities such as Georgetown and St. Louis. Hingston felt, however, that episcopal ownership was necessary in a country such as Canada if the Jesuits were to secure the involvement of the bishops and the sacrifice of the people. Only by owning the real estate would the bishops take responsibility for the development of the university.

From assessment of this, Hingston thought the Bishops should be the proprietors of the campus. Their ownership would not interfere with Jesuit academic control as the Jesuits possessed the University Charter. The campus could still be developed under Jesuit direction, but the Jesuits would be free of the material burden, and were the Jesuits to be expelled from the campus or the country, the university would continue. He recommended that the Bishops acquire the campus property from the Jesuits, ask for incorporation, form a committee to approve the property, solicit contributions, construct roadways across the campus, and choose a permanent architect and simple architectural style.³¹

With the question of ownership resolved in his own mind, Hingston, along with O'Brien, focused attention on the spiritual and academic values for the campus which would gain the support of other English-speaking Bishops. In the fall of 1933 the Canadian Bishops were meeting in Quebec City at the invitation of Cardinal Villeneuve. While they were gathered there, Archbishop O'Brien invited the English-speaking bishops to dine at the Chateau Frontenac on October 4th to consult them and to seek their support for the idea of the national Catholic University of Canada. All sixteen Bishops and Archbishops attended except for the Bishop of Hamilton who was ill, the Archbishop of Halifax who was in Europe, and the Archbishop

³¹ ASJUC, Provincial Correspondence, Hingston to Fr. General, 19 February 1933.

of Ottawa whose commitment to the Oblate university prevented his presence. The Apostolic Delegate gave his blessing to the meeting.³²

Archbishop O'Brien presided at the function, and when the dining was over, gave a short history of Regiopolis. He explained the recent agreement with the Jesuits, the consultation with "every English-speaking Bishop in Ontario," and their favourable responses. O'Brien then introduced Fr. Hingston as the main speaker who proceeded to make "a masterly exposé" of the proposal for a Catholic University at Kingston.³³

In his address Hingston outlined the spiritual vision for the Catholic University. At the new campus there would be departments of philosophy, history, classics, social sciences, economics, and the first two years of applied science and engineering. He quoted Cardinal John Henry Newman, Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI, and acknowledged his indebtedness to Msgr. Pace of Catholic University of America and Dr. McPherson, the Rector of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish. Like these two universities, the university at Kingston would be distinct and independent.³⁴

The Catholic ideal, as enunciated by the Holy See, called for Catholics of every nation to aspire to establish their own independent universities. Pope Pius XI wrote that "only in surroundings that are truly Catholic can the fullest measure of intellectual and moral development be achieved."³⁵ The Catholic Faith gives to teachers a deep conviction which is lacking to those who are not of the visible fold. Hingston affirmed that in the Pope's vision Catholic institutions produced a finer product, and in the Jesuit vision that the Catholic university embraced both the arts and the sciences to produce *mens sana in corpore sano*.

The response was overwhelming to the proposal for an independent Catholic university. The bishops unanimously approved by adding their own insights and desires. Archbishop Neil McNeil of Toronto, who generally defended the federated college system and St. Michael's College, moved a vote of "sympathy and good wishes" for its success. In his comments however, he expressed concern about the size of the undertaking and wondered "whether one [religious] order can do it or not." Archbishop Henry J. O'Leary of Edmonton, in seconding the motion, called for solidarity of the bishops in this undertaking. The bishops from across the country, he

³² ASJUC, Provincial Correspondence, Hingston to Fr. General, 5 October 1933; AAK, Acta Episcoporum of Archbishop Michael J. O'Brien, 1929-1943, p. 58

³³ AAK, Acta Episcoporum, 1929-1943, p. 59.

³⁴ ASJUC, Hingston File, Address to the English-speaking Bishops in Quebec City, 3 October 1933.

³⁵ Ibid.

believed, needed a Catholic University to which they could affiliate their own colleges and seminaries.³⁶ Archbishop Arthur A. Sinnott of Winnipeg marvelled at “this one chance of having a Catholic University [when] it is practically impossible to get another Charter.” Archbishop William M. Duke of Vancouver commented that “with Regiopolis we have a Catholic University and one that will give the hope of affiliation.” Bishop David J. Scollard of Sault Ste. Marie urged greater speed in setting up the Catholic University in Kingston in order that North Bay College be affiliated with it and thus be enabled to grant its own degrees. Bishop Joseph A. O’Sullivan of Charlottetown confessed that his “dream was to see Regiopolis College functioning, embracing all Catholic Institutions in Ontario with the Head Governing body in Kingston.” In his view he saw St. Augustine’s Seminary teaching theology and the London Seminary teaching philosophy and granting their degrees from Kingston. “I hope the Jesuits will give us a real Catholic University and that we all get behind the project.” He also expressed support that the university be given a Pontifical Charter.³⁷

Bishop Peter J. Monahan of Calgary hoped that the Catholic university which Fr. Hingston outlined in his talk would be created. “Now there should be some kind of an institution where we can send our Catholic Boys and from where they can be sent out as Catholic teachers so they can teach our little children, and it is with my whole heart that I endorse this project.”³⁸ The Mitred Abbot of Muenster, Saskatchewan, Severyn Gertkin, hoped “that some day there will be a Catholic University embracing all the sciences.... We hope for affiliation of our College of Muenster.”³⁹

Both the energy and detachment of Archbishop O’Brien gained him much praise. Hingston and O’Brien felt a major step had been taken to launch the Catholic University of Canada at Kingston.⁴⁰ Archbishop O’Brien’s account of the dinner concluded with the entry: “the meeting was therefore an unqualified success.”⁴¹

Here it must be pointed out that the Bishops were praising a different style of university from the one Hingston explained. They desired a university modelled after the University of London which constituted mainly

³⁶ *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 October 1933; AAK, Acta Episcoporum, 1929-1943, p. 59.

³⁷ AAK, Acta Episcoporum, 1929-1943, pp. 61-62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 5 October 1933, p. 719; Provincial Correspondence, Hingston to Fr. General, 5 November 1933.

⁴¹ AAK, Acta Episcoporum, 1929-1943, p. 63.

an examining and degree-granting university. In their minds students would be boarded and lectures would be taught at affiliated colleges across Canada. They spoke of a university which would have its central campus located at Kingston and its affiliated colleges and seminaries spread across Canada. Hingston, however, had preferred to think that the Catholic University at Kingston would be modelled after the University of Toronto with its faculty and students living on campus. At this early stage, however, no one addressed this contradiction.

The next step for Hingston was to know what official certifications could be gained from civil and church bodies. Could civil charters be gained from Canada, Ontario, and Quebec, and a Pontifical Charter from Rome? Knowing that the support of the Canadian English-speaking bishops was unanimous, Hingston visited Ottawa in November to confer with the barrister, W.L. Scott, about attaining a separate federal charter for Regiopolis University. It was decided to ask the Canadian Parliament for incorporation under the title, “Canada College and University Endowment Corporation.”

Charters similar to a federal university charter would be asked from the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. From Quebec a charter was desired because the charter originally granted by United Canada included in its jurisdiction both Ontario and Quebec, and it was hoped that students and benefactors from both provinces would now patronize the college.⁴² The letters patent for “Canada College and University Endowment Corporation” was granted by the federal government at the beginning of January 1934.⁴³

To win the support of the Catholic community and the bishops, Regiopolis University had to open immediately. Yet many fundamental tasks still remained to be completed: provincial incorporation, expansion of the charter, construction of the buildings, and faculty assembled. Since many colleges were seeking affiliation, it was felt that the university could not open any later than 1936.⁴⁴

At the end of November Hingston visited the Deputy Minister of Education, Mr A.H.U. Colquhoun, to talk about plans for a Normal School and College of Education at the Kingston University. The Deputy Minister recalled that in 1907 a Normal School for nuns had been offered to Catholics, but the Bishops of that time could not agree on its location. The Deputy Minister added that the time was right to pursue the idea again. He introduced Fr. Hingston to various members of the ministry, and it was

⁴² ASJUC, Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 16 November 1933, p. 224.

⁴³ ASJUC, Regiopolis Correspondence, Letters Patent from the Government of Canada, 4 January 1934.

⁴⁴ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 16 November 1933, p. 224.

suggested that Hingston see the Minister of Education and the Premier of Ontario. An appointment with Premier George S. Henry was arranged for 12 December.⁴⁵

At the first session of the Ontario Legislature in 1934, a bill was introduced to amend the Regiopolis Charter. In the document the procedures for affiliation, financial structure, and academic system were put forward. A change of name from Regiopolis to Canada University was proposed. The Archbishop of Kingston was to relinquish his place on the Board of Trustees, and the University of Ottawa Charter passed the previous year was to be the model for drawing up the new Charter.⁴⁶

As word spread that a new university was being founded, a number of professors wrote to Fr. Hingston offering their services. He also hoped to entice the former Chancellor of the German Weimar Republic, Heinrich Bruening, to come to Kingston. Bruening was anxious to leave Germany and was seeking a post as professor of economics in a Catholic institution. Reasoned Hingston, “he would be of very great help, and of course the prestige of his name would almost assure a good attendance and would make it easy to secure collaborators.”⁴⁷ The university seemed to be unfolding as it should, and Archbishop Sinnott wrote to O’Brien that although things “are heading for disaster” in Winnipeg, he will travel to Kingston “to inhale a few sniffs of your optimism.”⁴⁸

Into this tranquil environment came a devastating bomb that struck down Hingston and indefinitely postponed the Catholic University of Kingston. In a letter on 10 March 1934, Fr. General Ledochowski informed Fr. Hingston that his appointment as Provincial Superior of the Vice-Province of Upper Canada was due to be changed. Hingston confided to his Diary that “it was a shock though I said *a Magnificat* at once and felt elated by grace. So much left undone!”⁴⁹ At the next Consultors’ Meeting a list of three candidates was drawn up and submitted to Rome. With an anxious heart Hingston agonized about the future of the Catholic University at Kingston.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 30 November and 12 December 1933, pp. 731-33; AAK, Archbishop O’Brien Papers, Hingston to O’Brien, 12 December 1933.

⁴⁶ ASJUC, Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 18 January 1934, pp. 234-35.

⁴⁷ ASJUC, Provincial Correspondence, Hingston to Welsby, 27 January 1934. As a member of the Centre Party, Bruening led the Weimar Republic from 1930 to 1932.

⁴⁸ AAK, Archbishop O’Brien Papers, 9 January 1934.

⁴⁹ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 10 March 1934, p. 739.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 and 22, March 1934, p. 741.

Meanwhile, the Province of Ontario granted incorporation at the beginning of March to “The Canada University Lands Incorporation.”⁵¹ At the end of the month the Legislature also approved the amended Regiopolis Charter, but rejected the name “Canada” for the university.⁵² In Ottawa Hingston continued negotiations over the proposed amendments to the Regiopolis Charter. Approval was awaited from the Quebec Legislature, and from the Roman Congregation of Seminaries and Universities a Pontifical Charter.⁵³ Hingston was delighted when he learned that the Apostolic Delegate “recommended that St. Jerome’s, North Bay, Loyola, and St. Dunstan’s Colleges be affiliated to Regiopolis University.”⁵⁴

News arrived from the Jesuit Curia in Rome at the beginning of June that the list of Canadian Jesuits who might replace Fr. Hingston was rejected. Ten days later Fr. Hingston received an admonition from Fr. Ledochowski. Hingston felt anger that others were writing to Rome misrepresenting the policies of his administration. He admitted feeling resentment toward Fr. General and several other Jesuits and resolved to “carefully avoid temptation to arouse indignation against traducers.”⁵⁵

Another problem became evident. Hingston felt that his office as head of the Jesuit Province of Upper Canada was in conflict with his role as advocate for Regiopolis University. How could the Provincial Superior direct the various apostolates of the Vice-Province and at the same time be the principal organizer of one of those apostolates, the Catholic University? Clearly, a full-time officer apart from the Provincial Superior was needed to organize and establish the Catholic University at Kingston.⁵⁶ Hingston might have been suggesting that, once he was relieved as Provincial, he would then be available to head up the new university.

Word came from Rome that Hingston’s replacement would be Fr. Henry Keane, the former Provincial Superior of the English Province. His reputation was that of running a government of clarity, sobriety, and restraint. And, unknown to Hingston, Fr. Ledochowski had told Keane to be

⁵¹ ASJUC, Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 20 March 1934, p. 237-40.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 19 April 1934, p. 242.

⁵³ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 29 March and 7 April 1934, p. 741-42.

⁵⁴ ASJUC, Regiopolis Correspondence, A.F. Zinger, CR, to Hingston, 28 May 1934.

⁵⁵ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 1, 11, 14, and 22 June 1934, pp. 744 and 747-49.

⁵⁶ ASJUC, Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 13 August 1934, p. 254.

cautious with regard to the Catholic University project at Kingston.⁵⁷ Ignorant about these instructions and undeterred by the appointment of his replacement, or even by the growing Vice-Province debt, Hingston proceeded to resolve how the University project would be funded. In August 1934 he received his “first donation for University: services of Culham landscape architect donated by Col. McLean.” Two days later he received the first donation of \$1000 toward paying the property option, and he resolved to cultivate other potential donors.⁵⁸ With Architect Culham and the wealthy Frank O’Connor, he planned to gather some people together to consider the plans and needs for the university.⁵⁹

Hingston invited Mr. Samuel Stalford Jr. of Toronto, a professional fund-raiser, to assess the possibility of a one million dollar drive administered by the Vice-Province of Upper Canada.⁶⁰ The opinion rendered was that a drive would be successful. The provincial consultors, however, in a hung decision advised Hingston to wait until Fr. Keane arrived to make the decision to begin the drive.⁶¹ Hingston also prepared to visit Dr. W.S. Learned of the Carnegie Corporation in New York City to procure long-term funding for the university.⁶² In the Vice-Province, Hingston established the Jesuit Seminary Fund to provide regular funding for the training of Jesuit priests and brothers.⁶³

Since timing was so important for a successful beginning, and because a delay in opening the fund drive would put back the opening of the university for a year, Hingston resolved to write to Keane and explain that the Vice-Province needed him in Canada now to make the decision to go ahead with the fund drive. Otherwise he thought the university might be lost

⁵⁷ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 18 August 1934, p. 753; Provincial Correspondence, Ledochowski to Keane, 26 December 1934; Terence J. Fay, Dictionary of Jesuits in Canada, first draft manuscript for *Dictionary of Jesuit Biography: Ministry to English Canada, 1842-1987* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Jesuit Studies, 1991).

⁵⁸ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 27 and 29 August 1934, p. 753.

⁵⁹ AAK, Archbishop O’Brien Papers, Hingston to O’Brien, 3 September 1934.

⁶⁰ ASJUC, Regiopolis Correspondence, Preliminary Survey with Financial Analysis, Proposed Fund Raising Campaign of \$1,000,000 for “Canada” University of Kingston, Ontario, 1 November 1934. In the accompanying letter from Stalford to Hingston, the \$1,000,000 goal was crossed out and replaced by \$3,000,000.

⁶¹ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 24 September and 12 October 1934, pp. 756-58; Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 14 October 1934, p. 256.

⁶² ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 19 April 1934, p. 742.

⁶³ ASJUC, Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 19 April 1934, pp. 242-43.

by putting off the campaign.⁶⁴ Three weeks later both a cablegram and letter arrived from Fr. Keane indicating that “he is likely to shelve it for a time.”⁶⁵ Fr. Keane himself arrived in Canada on 16 November 1934 and was graciously received by Hingston.

The new superior discovered that the objective of the fund campaign was now \$3,000,000, from which Mr. Stalford would receive \$35,000 for a campaign of 15 months. Stalford had been paid a retainer of \$200. Keane discussed with his consultors the reasons for and against having the Regiopolis Charter registered in the Province of Quebec.⁶⁶ He also introduced a young treasurer from the English Province, Fr. Joseph Meskell, to organize the finances of the Canadian Vice-Province. With the consultors Keane decided that any attempt to start the university would be deferred for reasons of economy.⁶⁷

Fr. Keane gave Hingston a two month sabbatical, and then, sent him to give retreats in western Canada. He was to be based at the Jesuit parish of the Immaculate Conception in Vancouver. Meanwhile in Toronto, Keane considered the two major issues of the Vice-Province: the “impecunious nature” of the Vice-Province and the future of the Kingston University. Thus, it seemed to him “that the Vice-Province should be created, before we are able to consider a university.”⁶⁸

Upon hearing the news that Hingston had been replaced, Archbishop O’Brien wrote in the episcopal diary: “Here is hoping that the idea of a Catholic University in Kingston does not suffer as a result of this removal of Fr. Hingston.”⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Fr. Ledochowski urged Keane to take “a cautious approach” to the Kingston university project, which he thought would be understandable during an economic depression. He wished him, however, to give “reassurances” to the Archbishop that the college would be well run.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ ASJUC, Provincial Correspondence, Hingston to Keane, 14 September 1934.

⁶⁵ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 9 November 1934, p. 769.

⁶⁶ ASJUC, Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 17 November 1934, p. 262.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 27 November 1934, p. 263; Hingston Diary, 3 December 1934, p. 773.

⁶⁸ ASJUC, Provincial Correspondence, Keane to Ledochowski, 20 November 1934 (translation from the Latin).

⁶⁹ AAK, Acta Episcoporum, 1939-1943, 16 December 1934, pp. 76-77.

⁷⁰ ASJUC, Provincial Correspondence, Ledochowski to Keane, 26 December 1934.

As he became acquainted with the Vice-Province, Fr. Keane learned of three additional problems. He pondered over the spiritual health of the individual Jesuit houses; he feared for the worse in regard to the overall financial condition of the Vice-Province; and he felt uncertain about the submission of the Regiopolis Charter to the Quebec Legislature. In a letter to Hingston, he revealed that in his judgment the individual Jesuit houses were in satisfactory condition and that the House of Philosophy in Toronto, which Hingston had opened in 1930, was academically quite respectable. He complimented Hingston for his development of the Vice-Province with the opening of the Toronto Seminary, and in general, building “wiser” than he knew.⁷¹

Keane also pointed out in this letter to Hingston the gravity of the financial situation. It was unlikely that the Vice-Province would be able to pay the last \$17,000 for the option on the university campus. The \$50,000 already “paid is a dead loss. So the university recedes into the indefinite distance.”⁷² The university campus in fact did fade off into the distance. In 1939, the property was sold to the Aluminum Company of Canada. At the old Regiopolis campus in downtown Kingston, nevertheless, university classes were taught for three years from 1939 to 1942 and six students graduated with the Bachelor of Arts.

Fr. Keane next went to Archbishop O’Brien to acquaint him with “the serious financial state of Regiopolis College.” The Archbishop wrote that “this was a revelation to me, as I had seen no signs of difficulty ... prior to this meeting.” As a stopgap measure the Archbishop promised a Sunday collection for the benefit of the college and with sorrow recorded in his diary that “there can be no question of building fine buildings for many years.”⁷³ Keane went on to explain the difficulty of financing the daily operations of Regiopolis College as the boys from the archdiocese received a free education. He suggested a change in the arrangement.⁷⁴

A third problem that arose after Hingston’s replacement was the Regiopolis College Charter which had been submitted for approval to the Quebec Legislature. When Cardinal Villeneuve of Quebec and Archbishop Gauthier of Montreal learned that the Regiopolis Charter was before the legislature, they were greatly upset and presumed it had been purposely

⁷¹ ASJUC, Hingston Papers, Official Letters, Keane to Hingston, 15 February 1935.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Keane to Hingston, 15 February 1935; Provincials’ Consultation Minute Book, 12 March 1935, p. 275.

⁷³ AAK, Acta Episcoporum, 1929-1943, p. 79.

⁷⁴ ASJUC, Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 12 March 1935, p. 274.

submitted for approval while Gauthier was absent. In Vancouver Hingston confessed that he did not know that the bill was before the Quebec legislature.⁷⁵ Embarrassed and annoyed, Keane immediately had the bill recalled.⁷⁶ Somewhat mollified, Archbishop Gauthier wrote to thank Keane for his quick action, but also, complained that the Bill was introduced without his knowledge.⁷⁷

Meanwhile Hingston was enduring the pain of a person who had dared to do great things and had fallen short of this ideal. From afar he reflected, when he saw the Vice-Province panicking about its financial condition, that it brought about “an implicit condemnation of me and my administration. The abandonment of the plans for our University is another disappointment and humiliation.”⁷⁸ His pride burned within him at his own replacement and at the abandonment of the Kingston University, and it forced him to re-evaluate his good opinion of Fr. General.⁷⁹

Hingston’s feelings deepened from personal pain into guilt. He thought to himself that I am “not wanted in our houses. I am embarrassing to all except the scholastics and lay-brothers, who seem glad to have me.” By letter Keane let Hingston know that he had “enemies” in the Vice-Province. Although Keane softened the word to “critics,” it meant a great humiliation for Hingston. He wondered to himself whether “I have been greatly mistaken in my manner of pushing the University idea, as though I were more than the merest instrument [of God], having nothing of myself.”⁸⁰

However, the idea of a Catholic University did not die entirely. In the 1950s the Upper Canadian Jesuits reviewed the possibility of teaching university courses at Regiopolis College and re-activating the University Charter. Even in the midst of the buoyant economy, an independent Catholic University was judged to be too ambitious for the time and too isolated for the geography.⁸¹ The collegiate programme continued to be taught until 1971 when the Jesuit Fathers relinquished the property and the University Charter to trustees appointed by the archdiocese.

⁷⁵ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 28 February and 1 March 1935, p. 783.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 28 February and 1 March 1935, p. 783; Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 12 March and 9 April 1935, pp. 275 and 278.

⁷⁷ ASJUC, Provincial Consultors’ Minute Book, 9 April 1935, p. 278.

⁷⁸ ASJUC, Hingston Diary, 18 December 1934, p. 775.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 9 January and 17 February 1935, p. 777 and 832.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 19 August and 26 October 1935, and 12 June 1936, pp. 807-08, 824, and 837.

⁸¹ ASJUC, Regiopolis Correspondence, “University Project II.”

What conclusions can be drawn from this adventure into the world of a national Catholic University? What can be said for the ideal of an independent Catholic University of Canada? The federated college system, as Lawrence Shook has observed, dominated Canadian thinking in the 19th and 20th centuries in regard to university education for Catholics.⁸² Canadian Catholics endorsed the federated college system because they did not believe that student enrolments and financial resources were adequate for the founding of a separate and independent Catholic University. Non-Catholics supported the federated college system to avoid the threat of an independent Catholic University, and thus, to keep Catholic colleges within the liberal Canadian university system.

Attempts by St. Francis Xavier, Ottawa, and Regiopolis Universities to become independent were exceptions to the rule and would have achieved greater success had they received external support. For without the full support of the Canadian bishops and the Catholic laity to utilize and expand their facilities, these Catholic universities had a limited future from the start.

At Kingston in the early 1930s Archbishop O'Brien desired to put Regiopolis College on a sound academic and financial footing and invited the Jesuits to accept this undertaking. When Fr. Hingston talked to him about the possibility of utilizing the University Charter to expand the college into an independent and separate Catholic university, the Archbishop approved putting the archdiocesan resources together with those of the Jesuits to initiate this enterprise. Archbishop O'Brien at Quebec City rallied the Canadian English-speaking bishops to the idea of a Catholic University. It was reasoned that a student body could be assembled from Catholics in Ontario, Quebec, and Western Canada.

Having enjoyed a successful career as an army chaplain, a college rector, and Provincial Superior, and at 56 years of age very energetic, Fr. Hingston seemed to have the imagination, personal skills, and professional contacts to assemble all the disparate parts for the Catholic University. It would seem that even after he stepped down as Provincial, he might have been appointed the full-time organizer of the Catholic University at Kingston. But this was not to be!

Fr. Hingston remained at Vancouver and other western postings for twelve years. He felt that he was "cast aside when seemingly I could have been used to such advantage."⁸³ In 1946 he was called to Toronto to be spiritual director of the Jesuit seminarians. For the *Canadian Messenger of*

⁸² Lawrence K. Shook, *Catholic Post-Secondary Education in English-Speaking Canada, A History*, pp. 19-27.

⁸³ ASJUC, Fay, Dictionary of Jesuits in Canada.

the Sacred Heart he wrote numerous articles on Jehovah Witnesses and Christian Scientists until his death in 1964 at the age of 87 years. Although never appointed to office again, his vision for a national Catholic University at Kingston never faded, nor did his optimism for the growth of the Vice-Province weaken. His optimism was not always shared by others.

What then went wrong to abort the Catholic University at Kingston? First, the Canadian bishops gave their good will and moral support to the Archdiocese of Kingston for its enterprise, but not one bishop offered a financial donation or a staff member for the university. Some bishops had hoped to affiliate their regional Catholic colleges with Regiopolis University and other bishops had hoped to send their graduates to the Catholic University of Kingston, but only the Bishop of Calgary made a concrete offering, a priest-architect for a few months to assist in the layout of the campus. Truly the Catholic hierarchical system of self-supporting and independent dioceses militated against a combined effort of the bishops to launch and support a national Catholic University. The bishops had the desire for the university but not the will to pool their resources.

Moreover, the Vice-Province of the Society of Jesus changed its mind about this daring enterprise. At first it accepted Regiopolis College and agreed to the initiative for the Catholic University, but upon appointment of the new Provincial Superior, two of the four provincial consultors at Toronto voted against further investment in the university until new directives were provided. Again some of Hingston's critics had written negative reports to Rome about the over-expansion of the Vice-Province. In the midst of a worldwide economic depression, his critics feared his optimism and expansionism while believing he was not realistically concerned with the debt and the limited number of Jesuits available to meet these commitments. The anglophone Jesuits had the desire for the university, but as members of a recently founded ViceProvince, they lacked the resources.

Fr. General Ledochowski reinforced Keane's natural instinct to be cautious, especially with regard to the Catholic University. Keane, in turn, postponed the fund drive for \$3,000,000 while giving assurance to Archbishop O'Brien that the commitment to Regiopolis College would thus be better served. Hingston was assigned to ministry in western Canada and was not appointed to organize the Catholic University at Kingston.

A final point is that the timing itself condemned the independent Catholic University of Kingston. We now know from hindsight the extent of the paralysis caused by the Great Depression, and thus, we have to admit the economic timing of the Catholic University at Kingston could not have been more unfortunate. The financial and moral support that would have been

there in the years of average economic prosperity were not to be found under such traumatic circumstances.

The idea was right in that Canadian Catholics needed and still need a separate and independent university. Brian Hogan has pointed out that a Catholic student in Canada today has less opportunity of attending a Catholic college or university in his own nation than an American or an East Indian in their own countries.⁸⁴ Yet the timing, resources, and location of the Catholic University at Kingston, militated against the possibility of its survival. As it turned out the personnel and financial resources of the Archdiocese of Kingston and the Vice-Province of Upper Canada proved to be inadequate to initiate such a large and imaginative enterprise.

⁸⁴ Brian Hogan, "'The Word' in the University World," *Spiritual Roots: Historical Essays on the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto at 150 Years of Age*, edited by John Duggan and Terry Fay (Toronto: Our Lady of Lourdes, 1991), p. 67.