

The Relationship Between King's University College and The Diocese of London

PREAMBLE

In view of the presently undertaken analysis and assessment of the authority structures of King's College, an affiliate of the University of Western Ontario, and a Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of London, it seems obvious that one of the relationships which must be examined, defined and, if necessary, adjusted, is that existing between the founding authority and the present administrative and educational entity.

Under normal circumstances, as the Bishop of London, I would have found it necessary to conduct a very large consultation in regard to the basic principles of relationship which are in possession or being evolved at educational institutions of similar nature. Fortunately for our purposes, such an analysis has been carried out at considerable depth by an outstanding group of educators at the request of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. A Conference was held under the sponsorship of the North American region of the International Federation of Catholic Universities and came together at the University of Notre Dame September 10-12, 1971.

The result of the Conference was a document entitled "The Contemporary Catholic University" of which copies may be obtained along with further information from the Paris Secretariat of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (77 Bis rue de Grenelle, Parish VII, France).

By way of preamble, I wish to state that the basic tenets of this document are accepted by me as a base of operation in regard to any relationship with King's College. A copy of the aforementioned document will be appended. In view of this clear admission of adherence to the principles of the document, I shall not find it necessary to refer to it again except when making direct quotations.

I. Catholic Character

The first principle governing the very existence and operation of King's College in its present status is that it is a Catholic Institution. What this statement signifies in contemporary ecclesiology and educational circles is anything but simple. However, at least from our point of view, the only reason for the existence of King's College is its Catholic affiliation and orientation since it has not been demonstrated to our satisfaction that there exists any special expertise or contribution to the community, except those which would be expected from competent educationalists, or which may have arisen through our good relationships with the University which has permitted certain specializations to the College as a support to its existence. At the same time, it would appear quite obvious that the University is quite competent to handle such matters if King's were to terminate its existence.

The Notre Dame document expresses this particular characteristic as follows: "By definition the Catholic university or college represents a tradition in the world of learning which finds expression in certain characteristics in addition to those held in common with other institutions of the academic world. The attempt to identify these distinguishing notes is made more difficult because the ideal is often obscured

by shortcomings and limitations of the everyday world. However, central to any such definition or description is the quality of personalism; that is a profound sense of persons or awareness of community, a quality of human nobility enhanced by the historic reality of Christ's person and message."

In our judgement it was for such purposes that King's was founded and, to date, I am convinced that, while deficient in some realization of these ideals, King's has been true, fundamentally, to this original concept. Hence, I should like to dispose immediately of the idea that King's should be phased out as not having a Catholic role to perform. This problem once disposed of, we will be free to devote our attention to the relationship between the ecclesiastical authority and the College and, once the lines of authority are established and accepted, to apply ourselves to the fulfillment of the objectives of the College in all their amplitude.

II The Ownership of the College.

King's College, its buildings and lands as well as all of its capital assets, belongs solely and entirely to the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of the Diocese of London. The Diocese granted the land for the College and raised the money for the original foundation, although we acknowledge the contribution of the public to some of these funds. Should the question ever arise of disposing of the capital assets of the College, consideration would have to be given of the various contributions which were made outside the strictly ecclesiastical framework.

The contributed services of the priests and religious on staff, while extremely important, do not enter into our present reckoning of credit items, although future accounting might well give them consideration.

III Administrative Autonomy.

In recent years administrative authority has been exercised by a Board of Directors whose members have been individually appointed by the Bishop of London. At first glance, this would seem likely to create the impression that the Board is, as a necessary consequence, constituted by a group of "yes-men" or simple delegates of the Bishop. The truth, as anyone who has dealt with this Board well knows, is far from this position. In every case, particularly in later years, I have tried to make it abundantly clear to those whom I am appointing that they are being named for their interest, their intelligence, their experience and their wisdom. They have been encouraged to assume full responsibility for the administrative care of King's College. It can easily be established that during the last eight years, the Bishop has been consulted directly only on one or two occasions concerning matters of grave moral or ecclesial policy. This is as good a place as any to pay tribute to the persons appointed to the Board in recording that they have understood their role and have exercised it with a great sense of responsibility. Also, I believe, with a great sense of real autonomy.

It is not for me to conjecture concerning such recommendations as may eventually be accepted by the Board of Directors for the restructuring of authority in the College. However, I wish to go on record immediately that de facto autonomy must reside in the Authority of the College. That Authority I hereby recognize as vested in the Board of Directors. What sharing of their functions they may decide in the light of recommendations received, I choose not to anticipate.

The only limitation which is conceivable upon the administrative Authority of the College would be under circumstances in which the governance of the College departed from the basic objectives of the foundation of the College. In this regard, I make mine the statements in the Notre Dame document, particularly on pages 6 and 7. For immediate reference I quote paragraph (E) on page 7.

"E. It follows from this that the magisterium as such can intervene only in a situation where the truth of the revealed is at stake. Within these limitations, this means complete freedom of research and of teaching must be guaranteed. Moreover, even where a situation might call for examination by the competent ecclesiastical authority, and intervention should respect the statutes of the institution as well as the academic procedures and customs of the particular country."

I believe that this passage may be somewhat illuminated by the following section.

IV Theology and Theologically-related subjects at King's College

It would be absurd to have a Catholic-founded College with claims to Catholic orientation in which no authentic teachings of the Church were available. It follows then that theology and other aspects of religious education must constitute an integral part of the teaching and formation scheme.

The role of theologians has been much clarified in our time. In themselves, theologians are scholars and should follow the normal rules laid down for scholarship. This requires for them the kind of freedom of research and investigation that applies in other domains.

However, theology, at least in the Catholic view, has another dimension which must not be mislaid or miscalculated. Catholic theology differs from other scholarly research inasmuch as its basic tenets must be seen in the light of a revealed religion. The belief of Catholics necessarily inspires, leads and helps to conclude their theological findings. Not that there is any conflict with or between this belief and the exercise of reason, but that the exercise of reason must bear at least partly upon what we believe to have been revealed not by man but by God. The personalist relationship with Christ, the essential point or revelation, must also be authenticated in the situation.

This being so, it becomes evident that the Department of Theology must be basically oriented to the teachings of the Catholic Church without, however, any hindrance to dialogue with scholars of other denominational faiths or even with non-believers. "Although the Department of Theology or religious studies in the Catholic University must search the fullest possible range of man's religious experience, it should be pre-eminent in scholars of the Christian and Catholic tradition. A personal religious commitment, however specified denominationally, will characterize a scholar whose teaching and research probe in a vital way into the depths of his subject". (Page 3, Notre Dame Document).

In this general field of faith, the Bishop of the Diocese, quite independently of his role as sole constituent of the Episcopal Corporation which holds the capital assets, must exercise supervision and, in one sense, authority. Since the College presents itself to the community in which it exists and operates as a Catholic College, it must hold itself responsible in theological and religious orientation to the Bishop who is the final arbiter of the teaching of these matters in the local Church. I take the liberty of suggesting to those who will make recommendations upon the future structure of the academic authority that some means be devised by which, in this area, the Bishop be furnished with an easily available and unembarrassing mode of exercising his responsibility, both in the choice of professors and in the general tenor of the department. It is the only academic or administrative function which I shall seek de facto.

CONCLUSION

The basic guidelines of agreement with the Diocese of London appear to have been delineated in the above paragraph. For clarity and brevity sake, allow us to recapitulate.

1. The capital assets of the College are presently and totally in the hands of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of the diocese of London. we are open to suggestions concerning any reasonable adjustment

of this situation with the clear understanding that the interests of the Diocese must be protected, including its past contributions. At the same time, to allay any fear of undue interference, we make ours this statement of the Notre Dame document, "It is important that the institutional authority of a university be clearly distinguished from the authority of the institutional church and its organisms. The Catholic University is not simply a pastoral arm of the Church, it is an independent organization serving Christian purposes but not subject to ecclesiastical -- juridical control, censorship or supervision." It is clearly established that should the status quo be maintained, we would be only too happy to seek further ways and means, should they be judged necessary to guarantee that kind of freedom to King's, including a serious, reasonable and mature academic freedom as I stated in Section III of this document.

2. Through a process of evolution, the Board of Directors is now the governing body of the College and the Diocese recognizes it in this role. Whatever reorganization is decided by the Board, necessarily in consultation with the other elements of the College Community, will be quite acceptable to me, with the reservations already stated in this document.

3. We are prepared to subscribe to any possible and reasonable organizational structure which will guarantee the professional and academic status of the teaching faculty.

4. We respectfully request consideration of the responsibility of the Bishop over the actual teaching of theology and of religious education in any of its doctrinal or moral aspects.

5. As indicated in the first section, as long as King's remains a Catholic College and is so viewed in the community, certain standards of conduct and conformity with the contemporary culture and the contemporary attitudes of Catholics must be respected and the Bishop must consider himself obliged to insist upon this proviso.

We offer these thoughts in the utmost spirit of cooperation and with the understanding of the difficulty of the task which is being undertaken. We take the liberty of imploring all concerned to put aside sectarian feelings, vested interests and even past divisions in order to devise a sound, efficient structure for King's College.

The French have a dictum, "les bons papiers font le bons amis". I believe that we are all serving a common cause by drawing up clear structures of authority. I see no reason why we cannot maintain friendship in so doing.

Devotedly yours,

Bishop Carter, Bishop of London

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