

BUMSTED, J. M. — *St. John's College: Faith and Education in Western Canada* Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006. Pp. 210.

St. John's College: Faith and Education in Western Canada by J. M. Bumsted is a book that every administrator in higher education could benefit from reading. The message is simple: religious colleges in higher education in Canada that consciously seek to provide first-class transferable programmes without reducing their autonomy experience extraordinary difficulties in being both credible academic institutions and of continuing relevance to their religious constituencies. The book gives an excellent account of the financial and academic woes that have hindered the full development of St. John's College at the University of Manitoba.

Religious higher educational institutions in Canada need to be mindful of four very important factors: the long-term financial and political support of their immediate religious constituency; the cost of tuition and attractiveness of their academic programmes for potential students; their ongoing relationship to public universities and colleges; and the level of educational autonomy desired by all stakeholders associated with the institution. Bumsted emphasizes each of these factors as he presents a popular history of the college that he says will be of primary interest to college alumni and friends of the college.

Bumsted points out clearly and repeatedly that the original purpose for the establishment of St. John's College was to provide theological training for the large diocese of Rupert's Land. Its founding in 1850 by John Macallum as St. John's Collegiate was originally modelled on Christ Church College in Oxford, in which there was "an intimate connection between college and cathedral chapter" (p. viii). At the same time, it was associated as a founding college within the Manitoba public university structure. Thus, from early on, it was educationally committed to the training of seminarians for diocese ministries and was involved in the teaching of the arts and sciences at both the school and college level. In this dual function, St. John's College was, from its inception, pulled in two different directions. Recognizing the limitations that a college faced in the sparsely populated Red River community of the 1850s, Bishop Anderson used the term college in its earliest sense: "I would employ it, as embracing not the pupils and scholars alone, but the Bishop and clergy also, forming a missionary college in a dark land" (p. 9).

Relying primarily on the rich archival materials in St. John's College, records dating back to the 1850s, Bumsted provides insight into the persistent financial difficulties that St. John's has faced throughout its entire existence. Financial poverty was exacerbated by financial embezzlement and the loss of the college's endowments during the defalcation in 1932. Bumsted tells us that the college lost not only its good name in the community when the college bursar, John Machray, nephew of the Archbishop Machray, was found guilty of theft and embezzlement. The college lost approximately \$400,000, which, according to Bumsted, translates into approximately \$20 million in today's funds (p. 115).

Always beholden to the next fundraising endeavour to pay past bills, the college was continually redefining its mission. At the outset it was primarily a prep school,

teaching a limited number of students from the Anglican diocese. The intent of Bishop Machray, whose name and influence were associated with the college from 1860 to 1893, was to put the primary focus on seminary education, leaving the public university of Manitoba to teach the arts and sciences. St. John's College was to be a theological college, not a liberal arts college. However, the place of St. John's College was always conditioned either by the inaction of the Manitoba government in its responsibilities toward the development of the university or by the University of Manitoba's tantalizing promises of continued autonomy for the college within a more integrated union of college and university (pp. 85, 108). The physical move to the Fort Garry campus in 1958 was based on the promise by the university to recognize the college as "an autonomous affiliated institution with its own academic program and its own students" (p. 148). The move, facilitated by a provision of land and in 1951 a new federal system of funding higher education through an enrolment-based grant, was heralded by Warden Wilmot as the solution to the college's financial problems. This reprieve proved short-lived. The replacement of federal educational per capita funding by block funding in 1966 ushered in another period of financial uncertainty for St. John's College, and this weakened its negotiations with the University of Manitoba when the province's Funt Report (1967) on financial integration was accepted by the college and university. This agreement stripped the college of its autonomy, and its educational status in the diocese was further weakened when "the diocese ... pulled the plug on the training of ordinands (and the diocesan grant)" (p. 172).

Bumsted concludes his account with a cursory sketch of the recent search by St. John's College for an identity within the corporate structure of the University of Manitoba. He writes: "What direction the college will take in the future is quite unclear. It is clear that St. John's remains underfunded. It remains equally clear that the college remains underappreciated in the larger community" (p. 209). While the epithet "We're still here!" may express tenacity in the face of adversity, the overall narrative of St. John's College speaks to the inherent problems associated with faith-based educational colleges in Western Canada: always underfunded, underappreciated by a sceptical religious constituency that wonders about its faith commitment, St. John's College — like many other colleges — struggles to define itself and its continued relevancy. Emphasizing the importance of the relationship between college and pulpit, Michael Gauvreau suggests in *The Evangelical Century* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991) that evangelical colleges abandoned their constituencies when the academic writings of college theologians became inaccessible to the parishioners through preaching. The relevancy of the colleges was linked to the task of being "both scholarly and popular, and the ideas taught by clergymen-professors were closely linked to the world of popular belief" (p. 286). Denominational colleges ignore this point at their peril.

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