

The Scientific Study of Pastoral Theology.

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THE question of the training of the clergy is one which is prominent in the minds of all who are anxious for the present and future welfare of the Church. The serious need of efficiency in Church work has been forced on the notice of the public by the investigations of Mr. Booth. The decline in the number of candidates for Holy Orders has for some time been making Churchmen wonder whether part at least of the cause may not be found in the light way in which many who are ordained enter into their duties; and those whose outlook is quickened by anxiety note with grief the too frequent loss of men of the best type, whom they see drawn away to other callings which present definite, if severe, demands. Theological colleges, it is true, are increasing in number; it is recognized that if men are to be recruited from the newer Universities, or from different social grades, their preparation must be lengthened to make up for that which they may lack in other ways; courses of lectures are being given in many dioceses for younger men in their diaconate; supervision of their preaching and advice about their sermons is often arranged; there is talk even of definite practical instruction in social and school work. But the whole movement is still somewhat vague and empirical. The course of reading in the colleges often appears merely academic; its relation to practical duties is not seen clearly. There is an indefiniteness in the ideal of study, so the schemes at times seem to lack point. The aims of clerical life are not sufficiently viewed as a whole; the different elements are hardly co-ordinated; so that an impression is given that there is a mass of things to be learned, each of which seems to call for attention in competition with the others. In short, the creation of a School of Pastoral Theology is needed, in the sense in which a School of Pure Theology exists at a University. No one need be in ignorance of the aims of the Queen of Sciences, or

rest satisfied with uncertainty as to the matters with which it deals. A man before deciding to study the subject for his degree can easily find out the lines on which it has been organized, but for the man who contemplates the work of the ministry there is far too much uncertainty in the ideal of his work that he sets before himself, while the general public asks, "What *is* Pastoral Theology?"

Before we begin to elaborate our methods of practical training, or at least side by side with their pursuit, we need to consider the nature of the subject studied as it is in itself. There may be said to be two classes of sciences, pure and applied. In the order of time we may, perhaps, begin on the practical side; in the order of thought the pure science comes first, and its preliminary study may often save much waste of effort later on. In studying a pure science we must first settle exactly what is the scope of the subject in hand. We must know clearly what it is that we are going to examine as distinct from the subject-matter of other sciences, "scouring it clean," as did Glaucon the conception of Justice. We must set it in relation to other branches of knowledge, and seek for the best methods of studying it in the abstract. We must consider how the special faculties needed for its understanding may be educated, and begin by the creation of the right type of student. On the other hand, in going on to the pursuit of an applied science we shall rather be noting objective phenomena, collecting, criticizing, experimenting, and generalizing from the things themselves, a matter that demands after-training and practice as a sequel to special education.

Perhaps the best method to guide us in working towards such a creation of a science of Pastoral Theology is to take a parallel study in which the same difficulties occur, in which the same mistakes have been made, and in which an encouraging result has followed on the distinction being made between the pure and the applied science. To illustrate our task we may compare with it the work done in the science of history.

The science of history, or historic, as it may be called, is

something quite different from scientific history writing or teaching. The writing of history began with mere compiling of chronicles, and in many ancient races it never advanced beyond this stage. The introduction of the element of personal observation has earned for Herodotus the title of the Father of History, while, owing to the sense of the permanent value of his work, others have seen in Thucydides the first true historian. History has been written with a purpose since the days of Tacitus, and increased reflection on its aims and structure has produced what has been called the philosophy of history. There has been a gradual improvement in method, a growing sense of the value of first-hand authorities, of the necessity of verifying quotations, of more careful generalization from evidence, of the moral duty of impartiality. All this may be paralleled in Pastoral Theology. The personal note has never been absent : the purpose of supporting a school or party in the Church has been only too often the inspiration of a book ; the modern manual of Church work bases its claim to attention on the fact that it is the result of first-hand experience. But history first made its real advance when men realized there was a science of historic, with its ascertainable laws, for the appreciation of which was needed the creation of a peculiar sense. Then it was realized that the important thing was the evolution of the right type of student, with a clear idea of the scope and method of his work. Let us now apply this lesson to Pastoral Theology, and compare the process by which a student must work in the one and the other science in order to come to understand the laws by which each is ruled.

The first thing necessary was to define the nature of history, to distinguish it from good writing, from moral judgment, or from political purpose. It may be used for these ends, but they are different. So pastoral work must be distinguished from rhetoric, from schoolmastering, from sociable agreeableness, and from philanthropy. These may be closely related to it, but in idea they are distinct. Pastoral Theology deals with the share played by man in the relation of his fellow-man to God.

The first question to be considered is, What exactly is, and should be, the work of a clergyman ?

The next step in the study of history is the gathering of data (*Heuristik* or *Quellenkunde*). The student has to learn where to go to get his knowledge ; he has to realize the difficulty of dealing with a subject which concerns past events, nearly all traces of which have disappeared. He has to train himself to recognize what is relevant to the matter in hand, to know what has already been done. He must acquire power patiently to follow up lines of research ; he must discipline himself to method in collecting evidence. He must join the ranks of those who are slowly building up the organization by which facts of the past are made available for historical use, who are constructing the machinery of libraries, or collating and cataloguing documents. In these methods the student is educated in a University, and according to the quality of his education, at Oxford or Cambridge, in France or in Germany, so is the nature of the work finally erected on this foundation.

So in Pastoral Theology the same comprehensiveness of sight is needed. The student is not, it is true, confronted with the difficulties inherent in a study that is confined to the past, but it is no simpler task to deal with that of the thoughts and spiritual life of the men who are living all round him. He has to gather his data from personal experience, from the expressed opinions of men, from the tone of the press, from reports of parishes, from the inquiry-room or the confessional, from books and conferences, from the congregation and from individuals, from men and women, from young and old. For this the best method of training must be considered which shall give spiritual sensitiveness to understand others, and ethical perception to penetrate the moral issue involved in every event. The same humility and fear of dogmatism that is necessary for the historical student must be impressed on the student of Pastoral Theology. He must learn not to jump to conclusions, nor to generalize from a single case. He must accustom himself to see things that he does not want to see, and to note all that goes against his

own personal conviction. He must acquire a wide outlook to take in all that is being done, and get accumulation of evidence. He must realize that single stories of the experience of individuals are only one item each in the mass of human life. Moreover, some system must be constructed by which the results of these observations made by many men, and through sustained periods of time, may be chronicled, compared, and set in order.

After the collection of data comes the duty to criticize them. The student of history must compare the sources of his information, and value them according to their worth. He must learn all the niceties of external and internal criticism. He must know how to test the genuineness of a document, to judge of its date by its language and style. He must know how to form a full opinion of the independence and trustworthiness of its author, and must be on his guard to detect corruptions made in transcription or from prejudice. He must beware of relying on the argument from silence, that most fruitful source of error.

Still more must the student of Pastoral Theology learn to exercise critical judgment. He must know how to test the worth of statements, and to discount party feeling. He must be ready to criticize customs on fundamental grounds, and to give to tradition neither too much nor too little authority. He must learn to pierce through phrases, and to ask on how much real knowledge assertions are based. He must cultivate the judicial sense, and secure a balanced judgment. He must not assume that because he hears no contradiction that there is nothing said on the other side. He must beware of one-sided presentations of facts, and must examine everything by every possible test—by the criteria of intrinsic probability, of personal experience, of history, of analogy, and of tried and proved results.

When the student of history has learned to collect and try his evidence, he may proceed to the task of forming a judgment upon it (synthesis, *Auffassung*). He must first sort his data, eliminating those that are irrelevant to the matter in hand.

Having done so, he is in a position to decide how far with reference to any point he has sufficient information to warrant him in drawing a conclusion. Often the process will reveal the fact that he is still in ignorance as to the essential features of the subject he is studying, and that far deeper research is needed before an opinion may be pronounced. Where the evidence is sufficient he must balance it as a whole; he must try to find the unity underlying its apparent contradictions; he must set himself to grasp the matter as one thing, in all its complexities and ramifications. He can then, at last, begin to set free his imagination to fill up gaps, to trace out probable conclusions, and to guess where further information may be found. Fertility of suggestion, acuteness in powers of deduction, soundness in generalization, or brilliancy in exposition are, as the ultimate aim of the historian, only safely exercised after the severe discipline of critical methods.

So in Pastoral Theology, as soon as tested evidence has been collected, the constructive side of the science may begin. The data of spiritual experience and the phenomena of religious life, as recorded and tested, must be gathered together and viewed as a whole. For this the appeal may be made to the past, or observation directed to the living present. Where evidence is still insufficient, the work of search must go on, and a serious examination of the facts may sometimes result in the discovery that certain parts of a clergyman's work, as at present carried on, rest on a basis of untried assumptions. As definite laws of spiritual life begin to appear, the student will be quickened to note other signs of their working where they had not been suspected. He must gain the power to see the significance of little things, and to learn from the lesson of the tested experience of others how to estimate the value of what is being done elsewhere, and to focus results arrived at over a large area. Each part of pastoral work must be reviewed as a whole in its bearings on social and individual life, and all the many cross influences that are inseparable from even the smallest undertaking in our complex modern civilization need to be reckoned

with, and their Christian aspect must be sought out as giving the only possible harmony of them all. Only after mature scientific deliberation, carried on in all humility, with a sense of the greatness and delicacy of the task, with the object of finding out what are God's laws of spiritual growth, rather than what we wish them to be, can teaching be given with authority, or methods of pastoral work be inaugurated with success.

Pastoral Theology is, therefore, a department of Theology, as ecclesiastical history is a branch of historical science. Theology is the science of the knowledge of God—that is, of the relation of man to God, as God can only be known to us through our human faculties. Pastoral Theology is a department of this science, and deals with man's share in the relation of his fellow-men to God. The University is the place to study the one, while the world of men is the field in which the other must be constructed. But before the school of practical knowledge can be evolved, the prior need is the creation of the student trained to the right temper and in the right method of work. This should be the aim of the post-graduate theological college, standing between the education of the clergyman and his entry into the duties of pastoral work.



Literary Notes.

OF course, Mr. Frederic Harrison's volume, "The Creed of a Layman: Apologia Pro Fide Mea," was one which had naturally been looked forward to with more than ordinary interest as soon as it became known that he was preparing a statement of his attitude on religious questions. The book opens with a few introductory pages which explain the author's reasons for writing it: "I never parted with any belief till I had found its complement; nor did I ever look back with antipathy or contempt on the beliefs which I had outgrown. . . . I have at no time of my life lost faith in a supreme Providence, in an immortal soul, and in spiritual life; but I came to find them much nearer to me on earth than I had imagined, much more real, more vivid, and more practical. Super-human hopes and ecstasies have slowly taken form in my mind as practical duties and indomitable convictions of a good that is to be."

