

Theology and Pastoral Theology.

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THE question of the preparation of candidates for Holy Orders is to the fore at the present time, but its solution is being made more difficult by what is in itself a help—namely, by the increased opportunities for theological study in the general development of English Higher Education. At present there is a strong swing of opinion in favour of University teaching, and certain Bishops have announced that after a particular date they will only ordain men who have taken a degree. But the fact that its necessity is being so loudly urged shows that there remain considerable doubts as to the efficacy of the University courses to prepare men for their work, especially when, as is often the case, a degree is taken in some school other than that of Theology. Nor will this case grow much less frequent as long as so many laymen continue to believe that for a clergyman to study his own subject properly is “narrowing.” Moreover, the instinct that has led to the founding of so many Theological Colleges and the experience of their very great value, in spite of their defects, form a force sufficiently strong to offer considerable resistance to any hard-and-fast rule on the subject.

And it is not at any rate obvious that, under present circumstances, it would be an advantage to insist on a University degree as an indispensable condition before Ordination. A degree at one of the older Universities, even if taken in Theology, is not enough; nor, in spite of their traditions, are the atmosphere and life such as, by themselves, prepare men for their work. This is duly emphasized in the Report of the Archbishop’s Committee on the Supply and Training of Candidates for Holy Orders. The Theological faculties of the newer Universities are frankly undenominational, though the teaching is given by various religious colleges and institutions, and, granted that this is probably the best solution of the difficulty caused by

our divisions, the influence of the University tends to divorce the teaching from real life and to over-emphasize the study of languages, and especially of Hebrew. In the German Protestant State Churches, where practically all the clergy receive a University training and the teaching is given by the professors, the tension between the University and Church, and the divergence of their points of view, have become very serious.

At the same time, criticism is being directed against both the matter of Bishops' examinations and the methods of special preparation that are adopted. The time spent at Theological Colleges, whether post-graduate or not, is, with very few exceptions, far too short; the thought of examinations dominates it all, and it is very difficult to get any intelligent reading done. The Thirty-nine Articles in themselves do not offer a perfect scheme of doctrine, even if well taught, and there is no time to think out their relation to problems of practical modern religious life. The great majority of students do not see the slightest connection between the theology they are studying and their future work, and the divorce is fatal to both. They regard the one as a difficult obstacle to be got over, and the other remains amateurish and crude, because they have never seriously considered its deeper issues. It would seem as though the causes of these difficulties are two—one theoretical, and the other the practical result of ignoring theory. We have not thought out the relation of Pastoral Theology to Theology as a whole, and, not having distinguished the two clearly in our minds, we are never quite sure which we are studying or teaching. This adds to the confusion of the students; it prevents their work being thorough and increases its difficulty, since by obscuring its purpose it takes away the stimulus which comes from realizing the practical value of what is being studied.

I.

What, then, is Pastoral Theology, and what is its relation to Theology as a whole?

Theology may be defined as the Science of God, and since

by a science we mean an ordered department of human knowledge, Theology may be said to deal with the relationship of man to God as presented to the reason.

Of this science Pastoral Theology is a part. As a social being man has certain relationships to his fellow-man, and some of these meet his or his fellow-man's relationships to God.

Pastoral Theology deals with these as they co-operate or clash ; its subject-matter is, therefore, man's share in the relationships of his fellow-man to God. It deals with all that man can do to minister to, or help, the communion of man with God. Even if it were argued that each man stood absolutely alone, and the possibility of human mediation were denied, a science would be needed to prove this absolute individualism.

Practical Theology, on the other hand, is applied Theology. The term is often used as equivalent to Pastoral Theology, and has been the accepted term in Germany since the time of Schleiermacher, but though its subject-matter is almost co-terminous with that of Pastoral Theology, its conception is somewhat different. It emphasizes the results rather than the agent. It is more allied to politics, while Pastoral Theology has greater affinity with psychology. It is the term expressing the attitude more naturally adopted among Protestant bodies which have little conception of corporate life or of the need of an organized ministry, while Pastoral Theology is preferred by Catholic Christians who have a constant sense of their relationship to one another and to the Orders of their Church.

If these are correct definitions of Theology and Pastoral Theology, it will be seen that the two are related, but to be distinguished. Every theological question has its pastoral side, but to confuse the two while studying them is as fatal as to ignore the one or the other. When once they are differentiated, their bearing on one another is realized and the value of each is seen.

Thus, Old Testament study is quite different from Old Testament teaching. Theology studies the origin of the books of which it is composed, the exact meaning of the words of the

Prophets, the development of the Jewish Law, the evolution of the idea of sacrifice, the growth of moral ideas, the relationship of Jewish customs to those of surrounding tribes, the genius of Hebrew poetry, the purification of the conception of God as He gradually revealed Himself to the chosen people. Pastoral Theology, on the other hand, has quite other tasks. It is concerned with the value of the Old Testament, the distinguishing of the transitory and local from the permanent and universal in its teachings, its practical use in education, the problem of recasting our traditional lessons without losing what is essential, the use of its chapters or psalms in public worship.

Again, the study of dogma and of the history of dogma is quite different from Homiletics. The one is part of Theology, the other the counterpart of Pastoral Theology. Theology studies the attempts of man to explain the things of God at the bar of reason; Pastoral Theology is concerned to show why doctrine matters. When the theological student has examined the reasons why men believe in God, the student of Pastoral Theology considers how he may so dress them that they may become useful in Apologetics. Where the one studies the Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries, the other ponders on their bearing on modern life, and in their light sees how

“The acknowledgment of God in Christ,
Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And hath so far advanced thee to be wise.”

In the study of dogmatics, to preach is fatal; it is the avowed aim of Homiletics. As a student of Theology, a man studies the meaning and growth of creeds; when he turns to Pastoral Theology he considers their use in public worship. He first studies for truth's sake, clearing his mind from all thought of edification; then he takes what he has studied without bias, and “pastoralizes” it by recasting it into a useful lesson to be taught to others.

It is, perhaps, in the realm of history that it is most essential

to mark the contrast. As long as history was written for a political purpose, to establish or refute a religious creed, or to serve as edifying literature, it was not, properly speaking, history. It is essential for historical truth that the facts of the past should be approached without being coloured by preconceived ideas. But the mere study of the past is a singularly uninteresting and purposeless occupation, unless afterwards the results are to be used for guidance in the present, to vindicate the truth, or to cultivate the intelligence of men. So, to study ecclesiastical history in order to prove a doctrine, or to justify the claims of a Church, is precisely not the way to study it as a part of Theology; but when it has been studied honestly and critically, then the whole ground should be gone over again as part of Pastoral Theology, to discover analogies to present conditions in the past, to profit by the experience of men who, under other conditions, are found to have been extremely like ourselves, from the succession of events to generalize laws which will interpret present conditions, to seek for facts which will illustrate truths, or for examples which will encourage men.

Or, to take an example where the temptation is rather to study only the pastoral aspect of the subject. Numbers of little books are written about the conduct of service in church; verbal discussion of points of ritual assumes still larger proportions in religious circles. Instruction in the rendering of the liturgy appear in the earliest English treatises on the clergyman's duty,¹ and has long been a subject of discussion in society.² Practical suggestions for the management of the voice, handbooks of Church music, have not been wanting. But men have been less ready to realize that behind all this, which is the concern of Pastoral Theology, lies the whole field of liturgical study, with the result that the mass of this literature is superficial and empirical, because it lacks broad principles to guide it. The study of Liturgics, apart from the needs of one particular Church,

¹ Cf. George Herbert, "The Country Parson," chap. vi.; Gilbert Burnet, "Of the Pastoral Care," chap. viii.

² Cf. Dr. Johnson's letter to a young clergyman, August 30, 1780, in Boswell's "Life," and Jane Austen, "Mansfield Park," chap. xxxiv.

reveals certain laws of devotion and worship which must be examined before these details can be elaborated with profit. It is bound up with questions of religious psychology, both of man as an individual and of the crowd. It is necessary, if we are to gain an æsthetic sense of what is fit in architecture, in music, in the structure of religious offices, in ceremonial, in the language of prayer both private and public. All this is part of general Theology.

Once more, the study of conduct has been recognized as a science since the days of Aristotle. The Early Church found itself, from the beginning, face to face with moral problems, which it met as best it could. Theologians have, in later days, set themselves to examine and expound the basis of Christian ethics, while preachers drew up lists of theological and cardinal virtues, or used the Ten Commandments to test the consciences of their flock. In the Roman Church, the whole applied science of moral philosophy has been carefully elaborated from the Pastoral work of the Confessional. But in English Theology, ethics and casuistry have not been brought together. The theological and pastoral aspects have not been confused as in the case of history, nor has one been allowed to obscure the other, as in that of Dogmatics or Liturgics, but the help one might have afforded the other has not been realized. There is not even a term for the Pastoral science; casuistry has a special meaning, and is discredited; moral education is a popular synonym for secular, or anti-Christian, schooling; we have to content ourselves with the vague term "Church work," and the methods and aims of this "Church work" cannot be said to have been studied scientifically.

II.

Such, then, is the relationship of Theology to Pastoral Theology. We are now in a position to consider the right places of study for the one and for the other. Obviously, the University is the chief home of Theology, and the outside world—for the clergy, the parish, or diocese—the main field for

the other. But both are needed in each area. Theology at the University tends to become abstract or one-sided by the neglect of Pastoral Theology; Pastoral Theology isolated from the centres of learning inevitably becomes unscientific. But the chief difficulty occurs when we consider the training of the student of the one and the other. He may be trained in the University, in which case pure Theology will predominate, or in a theological college, where the danger is that the two will be confused, or in the parish, in which case Theology will be in danger of becoming empirical and insufficient for a thorough training. And the whole question is, in practice, still further complicated by the fact that, usually, the general education of the student has, in part at least, to be undertaken by the University or College authorities.

The failure to distinguish clearly between Theology and Pastoral Theology vitiates much in our present attempts to train men for Orders, and adds further confusion to our confused methods. Either a man takes an Arts Degree and then goes to a Theological College, in which case he has to learn his theology there and defer his study of Pastoral Theology till he is in the parish, or he takes his degree in the Theology School and hopes to study its personal application in the Theological College. The tutors have to deal with two quite different aims, with a time and a staff insufficient for either. Naturally the two interfere with one another, and neither is met thoroughly. But at least the difficulty is felt, and some attempt to solve it is made, while the man who merely takes his degree in a non-Theological School and reads privately (or with a crammer) for his Bishop's examination, learns neither Theology nor Pastoral Theology, either confusedly or clearly.

In the Theological Colleges connected with the newer Universities, an attempt is made to study the two systematically and side by side. The University examination gives a guarantee for adequate theological training; the college teaching gives it point by its denominational character. But far more time, as well as a clearer mental differentiation between the two aims, is

needed, especially when, as is often the case, the course has to serve to supply deficiencies or correct faults in general education. At least four years are really needed, with a preliminary year where the ordinary course of education has been diverted or interrupted. If two of these years are spent in reading for an Arts degree, two more are barely sufficient for a grounding in Theology and Pastoral Theology. In the same way in colleges not in connection with a University, or which only send some men in for a University examination, theological teaching should come first, and then its recasting as Pastoral Theology. The two can be studied side by side, but their distinction and logical sequence should be kept clear.

III.

Pastoral Theology makes a great claim on the student. For, since it is a practical science, to be a student in it means ultimately to be a priest. To remain in an attitude of detachment permanently is impossible.

It is true, of course, of all sciences that there is no progress made in them without application. No one makes advance in any knowledge without giving up a great deal, at any rate, in externals. The quest of the Grail inevitably broke up King Arthur's Court. Further, for the understanding of any lore the fit temper is necessary; each pursuit makes its own inner demands. If a man is to be a student and not a mere craftsman, he must be prepared to starve and sacrifice certain sides of his life; his energies get absorbed into one channel and concentrated on one interest. He must not mind becoming eccentric; he need not feel astonished if he finds that, like the Athenian philosophers, "he is not respected in our cities" (Plato, *Rep.*, § 487).

But it is true of the student of Pastoral Theology above all, from the intense interest of his subject, and from the fact that it enters into everything. He cannot be indifferent: he cannot escape the feeling that is described as a disease of modern society—namely, the restless sense of obligation to work that

comes when all round us seems to be moving and working. He can only see to it that this sense of obligation is not forced ; that he does not become affected, unbalanced, a prig. He must learn to husband his resources so as to study and work with energy and concentration ; he must beware of condemning his fellow-students as frivolous for an attitude that is often due to mere reaction or is assumed to unbend the bow. Only if he has an intense purpose can he stand the strain, and it still remains a real sacrifice that is demanded of him, a sacrifice of things often good in themselves, that are destroyed by a sense of seriousness, and by an obsession of the ideas that are necessary to the student of Pastoral Theology.



The Dawn of Coronation Day.

JUNE 22, 1911.

SLOWLY, with no great pomp
 To herald it, in greyness breaks the dawn ;
 And softly 'mid the trees
 The sweet, cool-sounding breeze
 Moves, to the ear proclaiming it is morn.

With far-off sweetness sounds
 The first faint bird-call of the opening day.
 Oh, city vast, awake,
 And in thy millions take
 The King upon thy heart, and for him pray !

Of proven worth and might
 He comes (in love we greet him and his Queen)
 To bear the awful weight
 Of Crown and Empire great,
 And rule in sight of Him Who rules unseen.