

The Training of Candidates for Holy Orders.

I.

AT THE OLDER UNIVERSITIES.

THE term "The Older Universities" carries with it certain associations which combine to produce the distinctiveness and uniqueness that are rightly credited to this kind of training for the work of life.

Among these associations a foremost place must be assigned to the residential life of the older universities. It would be difficult to overestimate the critical character of that first step into the responsibilities of manhood, when the boy passes from the system of school discipline and control into the freedom of university life. It is the first taste of manhood, and it comes, so to speak, in a moment. For some, the experience leads immediately to lasting moral development; others come to grief over the pitfalls which beset the path of liberty. Speaking generally we may claim that the residential life combined with the comparative freedom from external control proves sooner or later to have been a mighty factor in the development of character. The character for which the sons of Britain have won the world's admiration is in no small measure the fruit of the system of residential public school and university education, which has in the past produced the great majority of the men who have been the nation's leaders and representatives.

But it is more than the challenge to the realization of manhood that meets the boy as he enters the university, for he finds himself admitted to a rich and goodly heritage. The old universities have for centuries been attracting to themselves the best products of the public schools. Traditions have been built up and transmitted from generation to generation, traditions of character and conduct, traditions which belong to the world of athletics no less than to that of social life, traditions that produce an atmosphere in which the new-comer has to live. As surely as the boy's delight is in the new experience, so surely does he open his mouth and draw in his breath.

Further, the residential life means that the goodly heritage from the past is mediated through the environment of the present:

and that environment includes all sorts and conditions of men, gathered out of practically all classes of society, and representing every variety of character, mind and interest. The experience of being bound up in the bundle of this varied life is not, of course, confined to such residential life as we are contemplating, yet it is undoubtedly a fuller and richer experience than could be afforded under the conditions of the non-residential university system.

But why take notice of such truisms? Because we not infrequently encounter the erroneous conception that graduation is to be determined as to its educational value by the standard of intellectual attainment that is required for the degree. This would certainly be the case, if graduation involved nothing more than a certificate of study accomplished and tested: and judged by this standard alone, the Arts Degree conferred by the older universities on men at the bottom end of the scale is of comparatively small value, as things are at present. It may be granted that the degrees of the new universities guarantee a higher minimum attainment.

We need not, however, expose ourselves to any legitimate charge of depreciating the training of the intellect, if we insist on the point that education stands for infinitely more than that. It is because education is so much wider a thing that we claim a wider standard for the true valuation of graduation at the older universities: and this wider thing is secured by the residential life with its liberty, its traditions, and its environment.

With our thoughts particularly exercised on preparation for the ministry, we shall readily think of the religious foundations of the older universities, and their provision for the maintenance of religion and the teaching of theology, as another leading association of the term "the older universities."

The college chapels and the university pulpit are more than standing witnesses of a religious foundation; and the faculty of theology holds a leading position which is more than an inherited glory. It is easy to say hard things about college chapels; the writer can remember the day when the master of a college considered the authorship of Ecclesiastes a fitting theme for the opening sermon of the academic year. But such symptoms of academic blindness to the religious needs of men are practically extinct: if any remain, the war will, we trust, give them the *coup de grace*.

The university sermon has a distinctive function to fulfil which inevitably lays the university pulpit open to criticism on the part of those who ignore the claim of religion upon the intellect, but it is manifest to all who have ears to hear that university sermons are addressed with increasing faithfulness to the needs of the day.

The theological professors and teachers must be regarded as the enemies of beliefs which depend for existence upon credulous adherence to shibboleths ; they may at times deal too harshly with conceptions which can only find expression in the language of a past age ; there may be found among them those who set forth new opinions as though they were established conclusions ; but speaking generally the theological teachers are known in the university as men of living faith who are seeking to interpret the revelation of God in the thought and language of their own generation.

In addition to these official manifestations of religious life, there must be taken into account the innumerable agencies and opportunities of an unofficial and spontaneous character, evangelistic and devotional, academic and practical, sociological and missionary. The very multiplicity of these organizations constitutes a snare, so numerous are the claims upon a student's thought and time, which are made by well-intentioned efforts to assist his religious life, and to stimulate and direct his will for service.

The recollection of such facts as these is necessary for a true estimate of the older universities as a training ground for the ministry. There can be little room for difference of opinion about the uniqueness of the opportunities which are provided : and in respect of the pre-graduate preparation it will be generally admitted that the advantages of residence at Oxford or Cambridge are unrivalled. But for the post-graduate preparation there is not merely room for divergence of opinion ; variety of method is clearly required.

There will always be students for whom a period of complete detachment from the university environment, before they proceed to ordination, offers the more congenial, sometimes the necessary, plan. On the other hand there will always be students for whom continued residence during the period of immediate preparation is the obviously right course to pursue. The fact that there are theological colleges at the universities makes it possible for such men to combine the benefits of the life and training of a theological college with those of the university.

This would seem to be the ideal plan. The change from the old college to the theological college is sufficient to produce the consciousness of entrance upon the new and final stage of preparation: the work and atmosphere of the theological college provide important elements of help which do not belong to university residence in itself: at the same time all the advantages of contact with university life and teaching are there at hand for use.

But there is another point of view which should be taken; and the result, in the judgment of the writer, confirms the rightness of the course just referred to. For a student ought to ask himself, "Where can I, while preparing myself for my future work, place my life out at best advantage for the service of God?" The answer to this question is not far to seek, if we consider the effects upon university life of the presence of young, earnest graduates, taking their place at their college worship, joining in their college athletics, and generally contributing their bit to the influences which make for religion and godliness.

To put the matter in a concrete form, we have only to think of the influence exerted upon Cambridge life during the past thirty-seven years by the successive generations of the students of the Clergy Training School and of Ridley Hall. It was a strategic move on the part of men of faith and vision to place these institutions where they are; and their example has been followed by Nonconformists, who have established colleges at the university.

But let it once be granted that the immediate preparation for the ministry cannot be effectually obtained in the university atmosphere, then it follows that the policy must be condemned, and the sooner these institutions are transferred elsewhere, the better it will be. Yet such a proposal would be rightly denounced as insanity. Why? Not because the transference might involve financial burden, but because it would involve the forfeiture of unique opportunities and privileges.

If a student needs or desires a period of complete detachment, by all means let him have it; and the theological colleges which are situated in different parts of the country will provide it; but if a student has experienced at the university the awakening of his soul, the realization of his manhood, the development of his faith, the opening of his eyes to the claims of Christ and to the needs of

his fellow-men, then let him complete his training there, and help others as he himself has been helped.

A word must be said in closing about the university provision for the training of ordinands after the war.

There is no doubt that the theological faculties at Oxford and Cambridge will raise the standard of the conditions required for the Divinity Testimonium, and it is not hard to anticipate the lines of development. There will be a demand for an extended period of preparation. The time spent in the study of theology will have to be lengthened. Additional courses of teaching will be provided. Special arrangements will be made for the pastoral care of students who continue in residence at their college during the whole period. Students will be encouraged to secure during their period of training a wider experience than college life can offer, through spending parts of vacation times in different kinds of work. The training and discipline of such work would be invaluable. The various college missions and similar activities have hitherto done something toward this end, but it is only a comparatively few men who have availed themselves of the opportunities which they offer.

One thing is certain, the training of the clergy cannot remain as it is at present : and an extension of the period, a more thorough theological preparation, and a wider experience of life are three lines along which development may be expected.

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