

THE TRAINING FOR SERVICE.¹

BY THE REV. J. GORDON HAYES, M.A.

“ To learn, and yet to learn, whilst life goes by,
 So pass the student's days ;
 And thus be great, and do great things, and die,
 And lie embalmed with praise.

“ My work is but to lose and to forget,
 Thus small, despised to be ;
 All to unlearn—this task before me set ;
 Unlearn all else but Thee.”

WHILE the cultivation of the spiritual environment, with its action and re-action upon the spiritual organism is the final stage, yet the inception of the process, being the conception of the higher nature, must usually take place much earlier. The knowledge of God, merely objective until the great crisis of the soul, becomes increasingly subjective from the time when God's Spirit enters, “ until Christ be formed ” in us.

There is nothing new to be said, though a great deal remains to be done, in the matter of the spiritual training of the minister of Christ. Let us contemplate the position calmly and dispassionately. If we are overwrought or feel pressed for time, it were better to put it aside until we get normal. For we shall never be right until we remember that this is business which cannot be hurried. Time must be taken to assume the right attitude, to find and to breathe the proper atmosphere. The result will be regulated by our care in preparation. We must compose ourselves by separation from everything else, and by prayer, for the soul to meet its God. They must commune, but they cannot unless the mind be free. Time and place must fade as we approach the spirit's rest.

“ Now from Thy rest within the veil
 My spirit looks on passing things.”

It is written “ All power is given unto Me . . . Go ye therefore ” —the Risen Lord to His devoted followers. And He continued “ Lo ! I am with you always, even unto the end of the age,” speaking to all who serve Him up to this day. Yet, dare the greater number

¹ Being the third and final section of the paper on “ The Agent of God,” the first and second sections of which respectively appeared in the *CHURCHMAN* of October, 1921, and January, 1922.

of Christ's servants assert that His power is manifest and His Holy Presence felt amongst us? What we most deplore is the pronounced absence of His power; are we not therefore without His Person? We have wandered away from Him. We do not the things that He said. Indeed, we do not realize that He has told us all we need to know in His written word, and is waiting for us to do it. He has identified Himself so intimately with His own revelation of His Will that the Word Incarnate and the word written are inseparable—"In the volume of the book it is written of Me." The word of God is all-sufficient, and hence final: even more, for into this world of death no life can come, but "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." ¹

But we have not that personal acquaintance with Holy Scripture which is necessary to learn God's will, and so our lives are not in that profound subjection to our Lord which they should be. When we are obedient we shall feel His power.

"He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My word hath one that judgeth him; *the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him at the last day.* For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting." ²

To begin with, there must be receptiveness for God's will as already revealed. We are then responsible to Him for carrying it out. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." ³

Not having a scientific basis for the mind prevents the clergy from seeing the vital importance of the scale of truth, though without the "single eye" all must be distorted, and there is no knowledge without obedience. ⁴

We need to feel the force of truth. If it were not for sin we should do so naturally. As it is to-day the fundamental facts, of sin and salvation from it, are rarely heard from our pulpits. Many of the clergy are quite oblivious to the fact that those who would worship God have no choice, but must worship Him not only "in spirit" but also "*in truth,*" or not at all. The one thing required in a steward is that he be found faithful, yet how many

¹ 1 Pet. i. 23. See Mauro, *Life in the Word.*

² St. John xii. 48-50. ³ St. James iv. 17.

⁴ St. John vii. 17.

sermons are faithful to Christ? And if a man is not so he is no Agent of God's, though he be Archbishop or Pope.

The Master waits. We wrestle and strive in His service, we say. Ostensibly so, but He is not manifest. We have never waited until we were endued with power from on high. He waits until we do. "There is no substitute for your act of surrender. When God states a condition of blessing, no other condition, however good elsewhere, can be substituted. This is why all your crying, and waiting and petitioning—yea, even agonizing before God—have accomplished naught, but to leave you grieved, disappointed and dazed at lack of answer. You have been praying instead of obeying. Prayer is all right *with* obedience, but not instead of it. 'Obedience is better than sacrifice.' So is it better than prayer, if it is the thing God is asking. . . . We turn to and begin to pray, for, we say, is not prayer a good thing? Forsooth it is, but *not well spent if used to dodge obedience.*"¹

The second stanza at the head of this article states our present task, "What things were gain to me these have I counted loss for Christ." Our former task included the beginnings of the spiritual life. Here it must be assumed to be a reality, though not without misgivings. For, being the crucial point, it is the great objective of Satan's offensive. His agents cannot serve God, and there is no third alternative. Two kingdoms, and two kings, compete for our allegiance. Unless men are converted from the power of darkness to the kingdom of God's Son they remain the servants of sin, whatever else they may be.

But we have reached the more advanced stage. Progress now appears to require the demolition of all we have patiently built up. By one of those spiritual paradoxes, which seem so remarkable to us, the pathway to the higher life begins by leading us downward. And we strain our mortal faculties, sometimes in vain, to understand. It is not by sight that he who follows Christ can walk :

" Let Him lead the blindfold onwards,
Love needs not to know;
Children whom the Father leadeth
Ask not where they go."

If we turn to the gospel we find our Lord very largely engaged in training the founders of His Church. And we may not be far

¹ *The Threefold Secret of the Holy Spirit*, J. H. McConkey.

wrong in saying that this training mainly consisted in the eradication of the old sinful nature, and the imparting of a new character which Christ alone could give. The old nature could be expressed in the word "self"; all that appertains to it is anti-christian. The Christ-life consists, on the preparatory or negative side, in the denial of "self," and in positively, as its name implies, receiving and living upon Christ Himself by faith.

"If any man would come after Me let him deny himself."¹ This is the root-principle of discipleship, known but neglected. And as long as neglected our work is not Christ's but our own, as it seems to be. If we wish to follow Him He will tell us to go and sell all that we have. He chooses His servants on the basis of those who are willing to lose their life in this world. Carnal Christians cannot serve, they will only be saved "as by fire." Surely it is obvious that God must have obedient servants, or none at all.

In spite of their Master's recent teaching we find the "Twelve" striving for greatness.² This showed they were fundamentally wrong, so Christ solemnly said that they would have to turn completely round and become as children before they could even enter His Kingdom. We have not yet exhausted the meaning of this. Children are simple both in intellect and emotion. Short of perfect knowledge, impossible to man, unsanctified thought is a hindrance to spiritual progress.

"We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see."

The salvation of the soul is a practical not an intellectual matter; it is something to be accepted by faith. We live in an age of intellectual activity, but of poverty in the higher emotions, when few, as Christ foretold, seem likely to choose "the narrow way" and simply trust the Heavenly Father. But how could He appoint Agents who are otherwise? We need to see, and to enter into, the spiritual order of things, the first principle of which is humility. This is the antithesis of the spirit of the world, which magnifies "self." As the unconverted crave to become great, we should desire to be good. These two are mutually exclusive. Greatness is human, goodness Divine. A sight of ourselves in the light of God's Holiness is necessary, to put us in our place, the only place where God can use us. It is thus that the path to higher things

¹ St. Matt. xvi. 24.

² St. Matt. xviii. 1.

must first lead us "downward." There is a continual need for self to be dethroned and Christ to take its place, His rightful place, as King of our lives. Nor, till life is done, shall we have fully accomplished our task of unlearning all else but Him. The more perfect the preliminary education the greater the need for self-sacrifice, for there is the more to be laid upon the altar. Abnegation rather than effort is the great need here.

A friend of the writer on meeting the Rev. W. Haslam, many years ago, remarked, "I know you through your books," to which the great evangelist at once said, "Do you know *my Master?*" This is great. The Agent must be *a man* with a *message* from *His Master*. You may build up the man, but his message will depend upon his right relationship to his Lord. And he must not be absorbed even in his message, but in the Lord Himself. Our greatest danger is that we forget our Blessed Master in our zeal for His work. The result is that the work ceases to be His and becomes merely our own. The Master must be everything, He will then look after His own work, and His workers. "I take, He undertakes." We get broken down over difficulties that are nothing to Him, but if we will surrender the charge into the hands of the Head of the Church and act as His assistants, we shall see a marked improvement. "Apart from Me ye can do nothing."

An old verger once said to the writer, "Keep right with God, and the work'll be all right." His simple and obvious advice has often been helpful. We know it, but do it not.

The true environment of the soul is God, but do we live in Him? We need to pray for a healthful spiritual appetite, for that blessed "hunger and thirst after righteousness"; then we shall feed our souls upon "The Living Bread" which is ever coming down from Heaven to give life to the world. But "without holiness no man shall see the Lord"; it is the condition of communion, for God is Holy. A holy life is only possible in Christ, but He can purify the mind and will until it is of maiden innocence and is shocked by the slightest thought of evil.

By following our Lord's methods of selection and training the ministry to-day might be greatly strengthened. Christ chose unimaginative, practical men, probably because nine-tenths of mankind are the same, certainly that they might be the more credible witnesses of Himself. We should select likewise, remember-

ing that witness for Christ is the great end of our existence. We must let our light, which is the Light of the world, shine before men; there is no other means for its diffusion. We preach the gospel perhaps, and wonder why it has so little effect; but we have not been able to testify for Christ, or tell what He has done for our souls. This failure is not humility, but "self," as nervousness is "self." The old nature will persistently turn up, and in more subtle forms, to the end of the chapter.

As in the selection, so also in the training, of the twelve, our Lord left us an object lesson we have been slow to learn.¹ Whatever God does, in Nature or in grace, He produces great effects by simple means. Just as Christ chose quite ordinary men, thus, for the main part of their training, the most natural methods are employed: to which is simply added this, *that they everywhere followed Christ*. The divine arrangement was for ordinary men to follow Him every day and every hour. It is certain that those who do this most consistently are His best agents. The greatest factor in the training of the Twelve would be the constant presence of their Master, His perfect personality gradually transforming theirs. We should teach as Christ taught. But chiefly should we let Him train His own agents Himself. At present we place obstacles in the way of the realization of such an ideal. This is a subject for the serious consideration of those who are teachers of the agents of Christ. Such teachers need above all things to exhibit the Christ-like life, for the inculcation of this must be their ultimate object. Mental knowledge of holy things is not fit for those whose lives are not in obedience to Christ. Our instructors must live the "Christ life" before their pupils, as some do so well, and not merely lecture on theology, and then disappear. This was not our Saviour's method. But we are involved in a difficulty that is fundamental, and one which, at present, it seems impossible to surmount.

In spite of some attempts to avoid such a predicament we are reduced to dealing with divinity students entirely upon the mental plane, although we have no Divine Authority for any such course. A great gulf seems fixed between the study of theology, which alone is considered or tested, and actual knowledge of God, or real personal religion. This is a tremendous matter, and the

¹ See Dr. Latham's *Pastor Pastorum*.

crux of the whole question of clergy training. For, without personal knowledge of Christ, God calls no man to the ministry. We seem to stand helpless before the very citadel, and see it held by the enemy. For the days are come when Satan is an angel of light and his ministers are ministers of righteousness.¹ It is always at points of strategic importance that one finds the adversary entrenched. He knows what matters most, and with his perfect wisdom deceives the whole world, letting men do whatsoever they will, except when it is vital to their soul's salvation. Unless this citadel can be won, and official training be made actual, whatever may be done in christianizing our civilization, comparatively few souls will be reconciled to God. Are we to rest satisfied with the relegation of vital truth to unofficial channels? Or is it possible to work patiently to the end that our teachers may all be filled with the knowledge and love of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding?

Lastly, as in order due, we come to PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Lord Acton said, in his lecture on "Luther," "to the bulk of ordinary Christians reform meant morality in the priesthood." We are better than that to-day. But do not let us too hastily assume that therefore we are perfect. The writer was astonished to find at the University a type of elder men who were absolutely impervious to certain obvious facts. And there are men everywhere, not least in the ministry, who are equally blind to objectionable truths. They will not face the facts. This may be cowardice, but it is certainly mental dishonesty. Some prefer a fools' paradise to the strenuous path of truth, in the train of those who—

"Climbed the steep ascent of Heaven
Through peril, toil and pain."

Thus at the present time, we might paraphrase Acton and say that "to the bulk of ordinary Christians reform means *mental* morality in the clergy." The basis of any profitable reformation must be intellectual honesty. Unfortunately a form of spiritual ophthalmia is very prevalent: and as our knowledge of nature is impaired by defective visual organs, so that of God's revealed will is seriously affected by the lack of the "Single eye," or honest and clear moral

and spiritual sight. As life proceeds and the energy of youth declines, there arises in many a constitutional tendency to self-deception. We become less disposed to face unpleasing facts as our power of combating them diminishes. And then, the wish being the father of the complacent thought, we take the other view that "all's right with the world," comforting in our old age, but false. Sin is still in the world, though the Saviour is still able to save. We must have perfect intellectual honesty. Unless we have a clear vision for truth our whole outlook is warped, and we cannot see things as they are, in the world or in Holy Scripture.

The first fact we are faced with is that the Church of Christ is not holding its own. The statistics show that church membership is falling behind the increase in population. And the second fact is the cause of this: that is, the decay of spiritual life. Seek, as the writer has done, in parish after parish, for men of prayer, and you seek them almost in vain, for they are nearly extinct. How many individuals, among the hosts which flock to our communion rails, have even an elementary knowledge of Christian Truth? How many can find their way into the Bible? And how could their souls live without the word of God and prayer? How many Sunday school teachers profess to know Christ as their Saviour? Yet what are they doing with their classes if they know Him not? We must assume that they are laying the foundation for confirmation, I suppose; the result of which is seen in their compliance with our religious customs, blindfold.

Hence, we must not be afraid of originality. Unless somewhat drastic experiments are tried the Church will be in danger of degenerating into a venerable monument of historic interest, inhabited by the caretakers. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to reform is "officialdom." In Church as in State the efforts of a few, even highly placed, officials are quite inadequate to the removal of this great incubus, which seems to crush out all life. Nature never propagates in straight lines and rectangles outside the inorganic kingdom, so that if life is to be cultivated we should do better to look to the botanical nursery, the farm and the forest for our models, rather than to the rigid geometrical forms which at present hinder progress. As Dr. Latham points out, "The training of the Twelve was quite a healthful process, very different from our artificial

cultivation of clergy to-day. Official agencies tend so often to become inefficient. When the Gospel had to be taken to the nations a most original personality was raised up, and equipped by quite unconventional training. And as St. Paul was the greatest apostle, so to-day if "red tape" could be abandoned men might arise capable in God's hands of converting thousands. Our present training is too intensive in its narrow intellectual groove, and too short. The main "desiderata" are spirituality and business, both being practical; the one the end and the other the means. We need men who understand the world, but who live beyond its power. But how are we to get them?

It is certain that no church can expect to so much as exist unless it make provision for its own maintenance. The Church of England should provide for the supply of its clergy. This is admitted, and in some dioceses clerical education societies have already been started, for the selection, assistance and training of candidates for Holy Orders. Something of this kind might be instituted with advantage in every diocese, if the diocese is the most suitable basis to work upon. But it would not be well to close the door entirely upon the present voluntary system, though it needs supplementing. The Church requires a much larger nucleus of those it has itself nursed and equipped. One obvious difficulty in practice would be that arising from the different schools of thought, but this should not prove insuperable if any kind of reconstruction is possible.

There is a peculiar danger incidental to the payment of members of Parliament which should be carefully guarded against in the Church. Searching investigations should be made to prevent men taking orders merely as a livelihood. To the upper classes the Church offers no special worldly advantages, at least apart from its positions of dignity. But to the lower classes it offers the great inducement of social position. A curate earns a similar income to a secular clerk, or draughtsman, and sometimes he gets it; his tenure is more certain, his calling more "respectable," and preferment is at least possible. But the whole question of selection needs careful consideration.

Some characters are constitutionally fitted, and others as unsuitable for the ministry. The majority, probably, do not readily reveal any strong bias either way. We shall return to these

points. But the initial difficulty is that of forming a correct estimate from an undeveloped personality. This is a dilemma, for while on the one hand it is important that the training for a holy calling should begin while the mind is receptive, on the other hand how can one know what the character will become until it is reasonably mature? A solution may perhaps be found somewhat on the lines indicated herein, by the cultivation of the character required, but a policy of most patient searching and watching should be pursued. And in our searching for the right men let us not hesitate to firmly eliminate those radically unfitted for the ministry, by want of self-control, or disorderly minds, or above all by that aversion or "deadness" to spiritual things that one sometimes meets with. A few of these might be interviewed occasionally as years go by, if otherwise deemed likely to develop well, but there must not be much sentiment about the business of selection. Many seem so strongly fitted for the struggle of life in the hard world, by natural selfishness or other qualities, that they can be left alone without any regrets. Others have just as clear a natural aptitude for following Christ. And these, while carefully watched and tended, should give little trouble. They would need their general education to be very complete, especially in knowledge of men, where they would find a severe schooling, but after which their course should be simple. Probably with the greatest number of boys, however, a great deal of watching and "nursing" would be necessary, lest some, and perhaps many, who might eventually turn out to be excellent material, should be neglected, and vice versa. The warden of a clerical education society entrusted with the sacred duty of selecting candidates must have the "infinite capacity for taking pains" of a genius. Indeed if devoid of genius for this kind of work, he is out of his place. He must set no limits of age or social standing, that the Master may choose whom He will. Not all will be chosen in their "teens," some whom God selects need many years of preparation before they are fitted for their special training. None should be pressed into Christ's service, however suitable they may appear to us. We may reason with them, but the decision must be their own, and God alone knows their hearts. Let them take up their business or professional career, and then, should God call them, they can come out in His good time. "God is great," and if we will not hew such narrow

channels will show us marvels. "Where the spirit of the Lord is there is Liberty."

The assumption is that all whom we are prepared to look upon are Christian boys, and preferably of Christian parentage, and even ancestry. Our object should be to get and keep in touch with those who seem likely to be suitable, to prevent their becoming warped out of recognition; by assisting their development as men and Christians,¹ and finally, to add the special training of the Agent of Christ. To swerve from the main stream of life too soon is to run in a separate channel ever afterwards. While with some, to go too far in general education will have the effect of their becoming too fond of secular studies. The age of enthusiasm should rarely be lost before actual work begins. But one cannot fix a definite year for such a thing as ordination, except to say that the present limit² is low enough, and in most cases rather too young. Personality must have time to mature, character to form, before taking orders. So many men awaken in after years to the awful fact that they are not suited for the ministry; a fact perhaps long known to others.

In these days the proportion of our clergy who need practical experience before ordination should be that of urban to rural parishes, or even higher. For the work of the Church, humanly speaking, fails chiefly from bad management such as would ruin any mercantile concern. Waste of time and money means waste of temper too, and general inefficiency. It is these things which are turning men away from us to-day. The practical difficulty at present is how and when to fit in the business training.

It is obvious that only those who have had both University and business experience are qualified to judge of their relative merits, as preparation for Holy Orders. But an assembly of such men, lay as well as clerical, should be convened to thoroughly sift the matter. The advantages of a University career are too well known to need enumeration. But like everything human it has corresponding disadvantages for those whose life-work is to be that of reconciling man to his Maker.

Turning to business, one finds at once that it is less pleasant, more arduous, and would appear to be a far less ideal life than the

¹ That is by providing suitable conditions for growth, etc.

² Twenty-three years.

other, when regarded theoretically. But in practice, it is the writer's opinion a business life is the better school of the two for an Agent of Christ, other things being equal. Given the same religious knowledge and desire for Christian activity to begin with, a business career is more favourable for their natural development. Six or seven hours a day at the office leave an equal time for reading and Church work.

Space forbids an exhaustive consideration of the subject. Each case should be judged upon its own merits, for elasticity is essential to life. But the writer would not advocate sending a man to Oxford or Cambridge until his character was fairly matured. To their parents all boys are pure and good, but the number who live double lives is considerable.

As throughout nature a small proportion only of seed reaches maturity and fruitfulness, so a much larger number should be selected for general training and supervision than can be expected to endure to the end. To allow for disappointments a wide margin should be left over, that the unfit may drop out before ordination.

The demands of a town parish deny the leisure necessary for adequate attention to such an important subject. The writer, however, felt it his duty to contribute these notes towards its discussion. In trying to regulate our own lives we are in danger of becoming far too intellectual. We are forgetful that unless knowledge is perfect the whole life will be vitiated: forgetful also how little effect reason has upon conduct if the will be adverse. We should begin by the surrender of the will to God. Our lives would then be directed by Him Who alone is omniscient, and Who has said that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them."¹

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine."

J. GORDON HAYES.

¹ Eph. ii. 10.

