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Theological Education in Historical Perspective

Harold H. Rowdon

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The history of theological education is a relatively neglected field. The structure of the ministry has attracted wide attention, but preparation for its exercise has excited little interest. This is not the occasion to attempt a detailed account. All that calls to be done is to pinpoint major trends and emphases, and attempt some kind of assessment.

THE EARLY CHURCH

We begin with the earliest period of Church History, which for our purpose can be defined as the four centuries or so when the Church existed within the Ancient Roman World, first as a persecuted minority group and then as the dominant religious force in the Empire. At first, we find surprisingly little evidence of concern for anything like formal training for Christian leadership. One reason for this may be the marked character of the charismatic gifts which outlasted the Apostolic Age. The Didache, which current scholarship tends to place in the second part of the first century, gives evidence of the charismatic nature of the ministry of 'apostles, prophets and teachers', a ministry which hardly called for formal training. Another early Christian writing, the Shepherd of Hermas, is clearly the work of a Christian prophet. Even the redoubtable Bishop of Antioch, Ignatius, writing in the early second century, discloses evidence of prophetic gift. In short, it may be suggested, with Funk-Henner, that 'the methodic teaching of the art of ruling souls took the place of the extraordinary effusion of spiritual gifts or charisms which had so largely contributed to the instruction and direction of the newly born Church in the apostolic age (1 Cor. xii, *et seq.*)'.¹

The emergence of moniscopacy in the first part of the second century may have had important repercussions for ministerial training. The bishop, focus of the Church's local unity, was conceived of as embodying in himself the whole gamut of clerical functions.² In practice, many of these were discharged by presbyters, deacons, and those in the increasing number of minor orders, under the close supervision and guidance of the bishop, father-in-God to the clergy as well as the laity. This intimate personal association of the bishop with his clergy was a source of inspiration and direction to untried clergy. The epitome of such training is to be found in the group of clergy which Augustine of Hippo gathered around him in the early fifth century.

However, 'the first conscious beginnings of regular clerical training', to quote the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia*, may well have come with the subdivision of clerical orders and the practice of raising a minister to a higher order only after he had been tested and proved in a lower one. Already in the Pastorals there is the possibility that the office of deacon was a 'stepping stone' to the office of elder. With the introduction of minor orders (reader, sub-deacon etc.) it became customary for an individual to be tested in a lower order before being

¹ Cited in J. Lebreton and J. Zeilier (eds.), *A History of the Primitive Church*, IV (1948), p. 971.

² 1 Tim. 3. 13.

advanced to a higher. From one of his letters [Ep. xxix] it appears that Cyprian, the third century Bishop of Carthage, elevated no-one without examination.

The need for ministerial training along more formal lines seems to have been

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borne in upon the Church during the course of the second century. The growing self-consciousness of a Church locked in debate with pagans and Jews on the one hand, and heretical schools of Gnostics on the other, undoubtedly called for systematic and concentrated mental discipline on the part of those who would undertake leadership. At the same time, the crystallising and elaboration of Christian doctrine and the recognition of the canon of Christian Scripture required training in authoritative interpretation. As a result, there was a marked tendency, especially in the East where enquiry and debate tended to be more thoroughgoing than in the West, for the teaching function of the bishop to be in part delegated to one or more instructors who would be able to specialise in the tasks not only of preparing and teaching a Christian apologetic to enquirers and new believers but also of giving potential Christian leaders a thorough grounding in learning, both non-Christian and Christian.

The Catechetical School of Alexandria is a prime example. Founded by Bishop Demetrius towards the close of the second century, it grew to its greatest heights under the leadership of the famous Origen before his departure to Caesarea (where he developed a similar institution). Its scope has been well summarised as 'an encyclopaedic teaching, presenting in the first place the whole series of profane sciences, and then rising to moral and religious philosophy, and finally to Christian theology, set forth in the form of a commentary on the sacred books'.³ In all this, Origen was clearly influenced by Alexandrian and Jewish precedents, but that the school was more than a 'Christian University' is evidenced by the fact that it produced notable missionaries (e.g. Gregory the Wonderworker, Apostle of Pontus, who studied under Origen at Caesarea).

The breadth of its syllabus must not lead us to suppose that the Catechetical School was an impersonal, coldly academic institution. It revolved around the person of the Master (who was appointed by the Bishop) in whose house it met, and who provided the lion's share of the instruction. In the case of Origen, at least, it is clear that the force of his Christian character, the strength of his devotion to Christ, and the rigours of his personal standards of behaviour formed an important part of the training. 'Origen,' to quote Lebreton and Zeilier again, 'transformed his disciples still more by his personal influence than by his scholarship. He was not a lecturer who merely appeared from time to time before an audience; he was a master and tutor who lived constantly with his disciples.'⁴

Such schools developed in major centres of Christianity in the East—not only Alexandria and Caesarea, but also Antioch, and further east at Edessa and Nisibis. The last, formed by Nestorians expelled from Edessa is said to have assumed very large proportions—800 students in the seventh century.

³ J. Lebreton and J. Zeilier (eds.), *op. cit.*, III (1949), p. 732.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, IV, p. 798.

In summary, then, the earliest equipment for Christian leadership—over and above the basic religious experience and knowledge common to all—was to be found in charismatic gift, practical experience at lower levels of responsibility and the personal guidance and instruction of men of God who were either themselves in the front line of Christian service—as Bishops—or who were specially set apart for the task of giving instruction and leadership.

THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Moving now into the early medieval period (i.e., c. 500-1000) we find the Church

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plunged into a new situation. The area in which it had become established was devastated by wave after wave of barbarian invaders. By land and sea, from north, south, east and west, they came, not all at once, but at intervals during the course of half a millennium or more. First Goths, Vandals, Franks—not to mention Angles, Saxons and Jutes—in the fourth and fifth centuries. Before these—and others—had been assimilated, the forces of Islam began their momentous march westwards which was to give them dominance in the Near East, North Africa and Spain, until they were stopped in 732 at Poitiers. Then it was the turn of the Northmen from Denmark and Norway who ravaged Western Europe and settled in parts of it. Finally, the seething pot of Asia poured into Europe Slavs and Magyars among the last instalment.

Apart from the question of survival, the Church of these 'Dark Ages' found itself faced with two enormous tasks: first the conversion of the barbarians—a task which was in some cases almost as formidable as the conversion of communists today; secondly, a somewhat self-imposed but almost equally daunting labour—the preservation of the culture of Rome which had to some extent been Christianised.

In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Christian instruction and training found refuge in the seclusion and relative safety of the monasteries. Already in the fourth century, Basil of Caesarea and the 'Cappadocian Fathers', not to mention Jerome, had begun to steer monasticism in the direction of scholarship. Strong impetus was given to this tendency by Cassiodorus and to some extent the Rule of St. Benedict. In Ireland, which escaped the early devastation, monasteries became famous centres of learning. Irish monks ranged far and wide in Western Europe doing valuable missionary service. It was an Irish monk, Maildubh, founder of the community which was to become the great abbey of Malmesbury, who was the first teacher of the renowned—though eccentric English scholar—Aldhelm. Boniface of Crediton, Apostle of Western Europe, received his training at monastic communities in Exeter and Nursling, near Southampton. From Ireland and England, monastic life and training was established in numerous centres on the continent, notably Fulda. That monastic communities were a source of ministerial training is further shown by an early sixth century council, that of Vaison (529) which advised every monastic priest to take a child under his care, teach him the Psalter, liturgical rites and Christian morals—'in short', comments Lagarde, 'to put him in the way to succeed him'.⁵

⁵ A Lagarde, *The Latin Church in the Middle Ages* (1915), p. 519.

At the same time, the tradition of episcopal training did not die out. Far from it. Bishop Germanus of Auxerre in Gaul, a fifth century bishop with a missionary vision, was the man to whom Patrick went for training when convinced that he was called to evangelise Ireland. Again, Augustine of Canterbury, having gained a foothold in England, established a school for the training of clergy which was subsequently developed by Theodore of Tarsus into the School of Canterbury. We know that the curriculum included the interpretation of Scripture, and that Greek as well as Latin was taught there. Indeed Bede (673-735) affirmed that there were disciples of Theodore known to him to whom Latin and Greek were as familiar as their own language. Also taught at Canterbury were music, which was essential to the liturgical services of the Church, and astronomy which was required for the calculation of the Christian Calendar. At

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the similar, School of York it appears that a course was given in Ecclesiastical Law.

Under the Emperor Charlemagne, crowned [Holy Roman] Emperor in 800, a briefly successful attempt to bring something like peace and good order to a large part of Europe was accompanied by a minor renaissance of learning. Charlemagne's School of the Palace, headed from 782 to 796 by the Northumbrian scholar Alcuin became a kind of academy. In 789 the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle urged: 'Let schools be built to teach children to read. In all the monasteries and in all the episcopal churches, psalms, hymns, singing, arithmetic and grammar shall be taught'. Lagarde is probably right in deducing that Charlemagne's aim was not to attempt the impossible task of providing universal education, but to ensure that priests and monks should be trained 'capable of understanding the Scripture, of reading the office correctly, of performing liturgical functions exactly and intelligently'.⁶ Repeated enactments are often a sign of failure to take action, but it is worth noting, for example, the requirement of 814 that each cathedral should have its episcopal school. Once again, we see the stress upon the episcopal duty to provide training, though it must be added that this training is now related less to the understanding of Scripture and more to the performance of liturgical and sacramental functions. It should be added that we find stipulations, for example at the Council of Toledo in 675 that bishops should require clergy whose knowledge is deficient to remedy such deficiency.

THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

The situation during the later part of the Middle Ages (i.e., c. 1000-1500) was very different from that obtaining in the previous half millennium. Superficially, Europe was now Christianised, and the most sustained effort ever made was promoted to realise the kingdom of God on earth. Pope and Emperor assumed final responsibility for affairs of Church and State respectively (though they rarely succeeded in fixing the boundary between the two to their mutual satisfaction or in determining their proper relationship to each other!). Distinctions between the sacred and the secular became blurred in numerous ways, and as a result it is difficult to isolate ministerial training from that given in preparation for the service of God in the state.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 523.

Facilities for obtaining the rudiments of a general education were not as difficult to obtain as is sometimes imagined. Monasteries still provided a certain quota, though in an ostensibly Christian society they tended to revert to type and emphasise withdrawal from society. Nevertheless there were monastic schools, usually held outside the precincts of the monastery and staffed by secular clergy. Promising youths might also be instructed by local village clergy. It was affirmed by Theodore of Etaples who taught at Oxford in the early twelfth century that there were experienced schoolmasters not only in towns but also in villages. In 1220 the Council of Westminster reaffirmed the duty of priests to maintain free schools in towns. Associated with larger parish and collegiate churches were the Grammar Schools. A twelfth century description of London refers not only to those associated with the churches of St. Paul, Holy Trinity and St. Martin, but also to other schools 'licensed by special grace and permission'.⁷ Sons of wealthy families could be boarded out with abbots or bishops to learn good manners in their

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household and be taught by chaplains and clergy. Through means such as these it was possible to gain knowledge of reading and writing in Latin—still the language of learning and of the Church in the West—simple accounts and training in the liturgical usages of the Church in its worship. Many a 'poor parson' like the worthy character in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* would have received such training as came his way in one of the humbler of these modes.

The outstanding development of the twelfth century was the emergence of the university. In a sense, the university grew out of the bishop's responsibility to provide clerical training. The 4th Lateran Council of 1215 still exhorted every metropolitan bishop to ensure that theology was taught in the context of his cathedral church, but in fact this duty was being taken up by the universities. Owing to the deepening involvement of bishops in affairs of state as well as the higher politics of the Church, the bishop's teaching duties had long since devolved upon the cathedral chancellor. Now, as part of a notable renaissance of learning, and in some cases at least developed out of the activities of the cathedral chancellor, the university came into existence as a 'studium generale' (i.e. a general resort of students).

The organisation of the university seems to have been influenced by the structure of the medieval gild. Ultimate control resided in the hands of the Cathedral Chancellor, but effective control was exercised by the Rector or Master of the Schools, who was usually elected by the masters and merely confirmed by the bishop. Masters gave lectures which were attended by the bachelors who at first lived in rooms, privately hired, then in halls where rooms were let to them by a master. When colleges came in the late thirteenth century they were primarily communities in which masters lived a common life under a warden. The course of studies for bachelors was the already stereotyped programme of the seven liberal arts, comprising the Trivium (Grammar, Rhetoric and Dialectic) and the Quadrivium (Arithmetic, Astronomy, Music and Geometry). More specialised studies, such as Medicine, Canon Law (increasingly important with the growing centralised bureaucracy of the medieval Roman Church) and Theology were post-graduate.

⁷ D. M. Stenton, *English Society in the Early Middle Ages* (1951), pp. 259-260.

Scholasticism dominated the theological studies. This was compounded of Aristotle's metaphysics, together with Anselm's method of glossing—or commenting—and his dissecting of dogma into rational concepts more or less closely held together by logical bonds, the latter supplemented by Abelard's synthesising of dogmas on the basis of rigorous critical examination. Like the Catechetical School of Alexandria, the medieval university aimed to produce mastery of the whole field of learning, with theology the Queen of the Sciences. Unfortunately, since the whole course might extend for anything up to 17 years, including not only disputation but also lecturing, it became less and less related to the work of the ministry and more and more the route to a life of academic scholarship. High ideals proved to be self-defeating. In any case, the nature of the Church in the Middle Ages with its sacramental emphasis, its liturgical forms and its ever increasing basis in canon law called for a type of ministerial training which provided largely stereotyped pastoral equipment and a negligible amount of homiletic preparation.

True, pastoral and homiletic aids were available, but they were expensive and relatively inaccessible. The main answer to the need of pastoral and homiletic

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ministry was the development of new religious orders—the Friars. Dominicans and Franciscans, trained to combat heresy and minister to the needs of the unchurched masses in the sprawling towns and cities of the thirteenth century were able to preach from experience as well as from books. Each friary had its training school, to which secular clergy were often welcome. In each of the seven areas into which England (for example) was divided, there was a school of liberal arts and theology (e.g. Blackfriars in London). According to Thomas Aquinas (himself a Dominican) the Orders of Friars provided that training for secular clergy which the reforming Lateran Councils had failed to provide. But in process of time, the schools of the friars became absorbed into the university set-up, and their separate impact was largely lost.

The reformers of the sixteenth century drew attention to the extent of clerical ignorance and ineptitude. Bishop Hooper's famous visitation of the clergy of his Gloucester diocese revealed appalling ignorance (two of the clergy questioned thought that the Lord's Prayer was so called because 'the Lord King' had commanded it to be used). This was undoubtedly an extreme example, but conservative humanists like Dean Colet of St. Paul's and the celebrated Erasmus also drew attention to the inadequacies of the clergy, inadequacies which were undoubtedly highlighted by the rising standards expected.

THE REFORMATION PERIOD

The Reformation took place against the background of another renaissance of learning. The Northern Renaissance, with its Christian basis, applied the principle of 'Back to the sources' to the ministerial task. Its keen critical faculty not only exposed the falsity of documents, e.g. the Donation of Constantine, which had been used to buttress papal claims, but also studied the Scriptures in their original languages with the same attention to historico-grammatical rather than the dominant method of allegorical interpretation. The major reformers were more indebted to humanism than is sometimes thought. Melancthon at Wittenberg, as well as Calvin at Geneva and the numerous centres of training set up in the Netherlands, Scotland,

and later North America, under the direct or indirect inspiration of Geneva,⁸ gave ministerial training a firm basis in exegesis of the Scriptures in the original languages. In Geneva at least, this high academic training was balanced against practical experience which, in the case of those bound for dangerous missionary work in France, might extend to anything between one and twenty years of practical work in French Switzerland. Attention is often drawn to the stream of men coming, fully trained, from Calvin's Academy at Geneva. It should not be forgotten that the University of Wittenberg had been fulfilling a similar role for decades before the foundation of the Academy, and that Calvin had learned something at least from the stress on Biblically based education at Strassbourg under Martin Bucer and the famous educationalist, Jean Sturm.

Principal Kingdon has argued that the churches in the Reformed tradition centred ministerial training upon the universities because they were largely under the control of the churches.⁹ Of particular interest is a method of ministerial training which does not necessarily require the facilities of a university. It is in Zurich that we first meet the term 'prophesying' used in this context. Prophesying

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has been described by Patrick Collinson in his fine study of Elizabethan Puritanism as 'an academic exercise in the spirit of biblical humanism, replacing logical discourse, as the principal discipline for the schooling of future ministers'.¹⁰ At Zurich, both practising ministers and divinity students met five days a week to share in systematic exposition of the Scriptures. This method was perfected by the English Puritans.

In his ill-fated reform of Canon Law in England, Cranmer had planned that ministers should be trained in cathedral schools under the eye of the bishop and the tuition of readers in Divinity, Greek and Hebrew. This came to nothing, and royal injunctions, archbishops' injunctions and orders of Convocation failed to achieve much in the way of raising standards of clerical competence. Puritan initiative undertook to supply the need—and provide public edification at the same time. There were variations of method, but the basic pattern was for a panel of preachers under the guidance of one or more learned moderators to expound a passage of Scripture, proceeding steadily through whole books, to work through a systematic compilation of theology or to deal with practical and pastoral questions in the same way. In some cases, only the more adequate ministers spoke in public: the relatively unlearned were examined by the more learned ministers after the public had left. In a university context, this method could be applied more rigorously. Thus at Cambridge, Laurence Chadderton brought together scholars trained in the humanities, Greek and Hebrew philology, Greek and Roman history, comparative exegesis, rhetoric and logic. Weekly conferences were held at which one scholar dealt with the original language, another with grammatical interpretation, another with logical analysis, another with 'the true sense and meaning of the text', another with the doctrines.¹¹ Here was a cooperative method of training, and one which possessed considerable flexibility. Before we leave the Reformation period, we must note that the Council of Trent required all cathedral and greater churches 'to maintain, to educate religiously, and to train in ecclesiastical discipline, a certain number of youths of their city and diocese' or to provide for

⁸ D. P. Kingdon, *Training for the Ministry* (1969), pp. 4ff.

⁹ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰ P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967), p. 169.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

this to be done 'in a college to be chosen by the bishop for this purpose'.¹² Thus were initiated the lesser seminaries which provided general education, and the greater seminaries to add ministerial training which would enable Roman Catholic priests to match the learning and devotion of some at least of their Protestant counterparts. According to Kampschulte, a Catholic historian, Acquavia, the general of the Society of Jesus who drew up the curriculum for Jesuit seminaries, derived a great deal from Calvin's academic regulations. 'In regard to the organisation proper and in fundamental principles, the two institutions are much alike, so that they are related to each other as the blue-print and the completed work.'¹³

THE POST-REFORMATION PERIOD

With regard to the post-Reformation period, we can comment only on some aspects of the situation in England, first in the established church and then in dissent.

The universities continued to be regarded as the primary place of training for the ministry of the established church. This is delightfully illustrated by a passage in the preface to the statutes of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, founded in

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1596. The college is intended to be 'with its regard for the Church, a kind of seminary in which we want only the best seeds to be planted, and these, when planted, watered by abundant showers from the branches of the sciences, until they have grown to such maturity that they may be thence transferred into the Church, so that it may by feasting richly upon their fruit grow into the fulness of Christ'.¹⁴ That the universities did so supply the Church is further shown by the fact that in the diocese of Norwich, for example, all but five of the clergy between 1663 and 1800 were university trained.¹⁵

But of what sort was the training? Halevy, the French historian of England in the nineteenth century has painted a gloomy picture of the situation at the beginning of that century.

'England was probably the sole country in Christendom where no proof of theological knowledge was required from candidates for ordination... At Oxford theology was reduced to one single question asked of all candidates for examination. At Cambridge no theology whatsoever entered into any of the examinations for a degree. The entrance examination once passed, and it was elementary in the extreme, not to say childish, students who were not the eldest sons of gentle families, and did not possess sufficient industry or capacity to face more difficult examinations, could proceed without further delay to the clerical status.'¹⁶

Though the picture may be overdrawn, there is truth in it. This was part of the general malaise of universities which were of more social than educational value, where serious study was almost an optional extra and where examinations were conspicuous chiefly by their absence.

¹² Cited in F. W. B. Bullock, *A History of Training for the Ministry of the Church of England and Wales from 1800 to 1874* (1955), p. 3.

¹³ D. P. Kingdon, *op. cit.*, p. 7, citing E. Stickelberger, *Calvin* (1959), p. 144

¹⁴ F. W. B. Bullock, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁵ C. F. K. Brown, *A History of the English Clergy, 1800-1900* (1953), p. 248, citing E. H. Carter, *The Norwich Subscription Books*, (1937), p. 48.

¹⁶ E. Halèvy, *England in 1815*, I (1924), p. 391.

As far as theological studies were concerned, there were professors and tutors, and ordinands were expected to avail themselves of their services in preparing for the examination by the bishop or his chaplain which was a prerequisite for ordination. But, possibly because the university statutes gave the impression that no-one under the degree of M.A. was expected to attend theological lectures, these were rarely given! Furthermore, since the age of matriculation had risen there was now little interval between graduation and the canonical age (23) for entering the diaconate. Above all, many bishops were notoriously slack in their examination of ordinands.

In the early part of the nineteenth century there was no lack of protest and suggestions for improvement, and eventually action was taken. The 'Previous Examination' at Cambridge (dubbed 'Little-Go'), instituted in 1822, injected a stronger religious flavour into the general course, and new regulations in 1841 and 1842 did the same for the examination for the Ordinary Degree. A 'Voluntary Theological Examination' in Greek Testament, assigned portions of the Early Fathers, Church History, the Articles of Religion and the Liturgy of the Church of England, was instituted, and, what is even more important, most of the bishops agreed to require a pass in this examination of all Cambridge ordinands. The institution of an Honours School in Theology at Oxford in 1870 and a Theological Tripos at Cambridge in 1871 proved to be a turning point. The study of theology at the older universities became more serious and scholarly—but it also became more academic and theoretical. This is summed up in Owen Chadwick's comment in his great history of *The Victorian Church* that whereas Pusey was first a canon and second a professor, his successor, Driver, was first a professor and second a canon.¹⁷

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The work of the older universities was supplemented by the foundation of King's College, London (1829) and the University of Durham (1832). The former was at first intended to prepare for the older universities those who desired degrees and ordination, but later provided complete training for ordination. The latter gave careful attention to the needs of theological students and in the creation of a theological degree course anticipated the older universities by several decades. In addition to the degree course it established a Licence in Theology course in 1833 which was open to graduates of other universities. This covered Interpretation of Scripture, Church History, the 39 Articles, Liturgy and Pastoralia.

Though the tradition of bishops involving themselves in ministerial training by no means died out, it suffered from the hostility of the universities. The efforts of Bishop Burnet of Salisbury (1689-1715) were frustrated in this way, and he felt obliged to give up a promising experiment after five years. In a more remote area the saintly Bishop of Sodor and Man, Thomas Wilson (1689-1755) used to give a year's training to ordinands. According to Hugh Stowell's *Life*, 'without the formality of college lectures, the Bishop was daily communicating the substance of such doctrines in a more attractive manner and a more engaging style'.¹⁸ During the nineteenth century, several diocesan colleges were established, but the idea of bishops giving personal instruction and inspiration to ordinands was not altogether lost. Bishop Lightfoot, for example, gathered graduate ordinands around him at Durham.

¹⁷ O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 11 (1970), pp. 451-452.

¹⁸ Cited in F. W. B. Bullock, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

Similarly, the idea that much can be learned during the course of a curacy maintained the emphasis on 'learning on the job' which is as old as the Church. The point was well made when Bishop Fraser of Manchester told his diocesan synod on November 26th 1874, 'If incumbents give a title to a young curate, it seems to me that the incumbent is just as much bound to teach the curate how to do the work to which he is called as a joiner would be to teach an apprentice his trade'.¹⁹ Often this ideal has been honoured more in the breach than in the observance, but there can be no doubt that it provided a valuable means of 'in-service' training. So did the ministers' fraternals which during the Evangelical Revival became almost as important a means of such training as the Puritan conference had been.²⁰

Evangelical clergy in particular,²¹ have given themselves to the training of men for the ministry. At Cambridge, Charles Simeon held his famous Sermon Classes, supplemented from 1812 by Friday Conversation Parties, when up to 80 students assembled in his rooms for tea at 6.00 during term-time. For an hour he was plied with questions on the interpretation of Scripture and doctrine, or on practical matters associated with the work of the ministry.²²

C. J. Vaughan, who after being Headmaster of Harrow for fifteen years became Vicar and Rural Dean of Doncaster (1860-1869), Master of the Temple (1869-1894) and Dean of Llandaff (1879-1897), developed the practice of giving training to ordinands, mostly graduates of Oxbridge. He held services for them, lectured daily on the Greek New Testament and arranged for them to gain experience of pastoral work.²³

The nineteenth century saw what appeared to be a basically new development—the theological college. But there were precedents, not only in the freak cases of post-Reformation colleges like Gresham College in London (of which J. W. Burgon was Professor of Divinity in the late nineteenth century), the short-lived

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theological college whose buildings later housed the Royal Hospital of Chelsea, and the enterprising Grammar School at Ystrid Merug, near Lampeter, which enlarged its scope towards the end of the eighteenth century to provide one year of instruction for non-graduate ordinands,²⁴ but also in the age-long tendency for the bishop to depute this aspect of his teaching office to others. Most of the nineteenth century Anglican theological colleges arose in an episcopal or at least a cathedral context.

The first, St. Bees, on the Cumberland coast, almost stands in a category of its own. It was intended to provide training for non-graduate ordinands, and its syllabus covered Biblical and Church History; the evidences of religion; the Creeds and Articles of Religion; Doctrinal and Pastoral Theology; and Latin and English composition, with special reference to sermon construction. Lampeter, the brainchild of Bishop Burgess of St. David's, was conceived in

¹⁹ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁰ E.g. the Eclectic Society.

²¹ According to an anonymous pamphlet of 1826, cited in F. W. B. Bullock, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 40, 41; A Pollard and M. Hennell, Charles Simeon, 1759-1836 (1959), pp. 140ff.

²³ W. H. B. Bullock, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9, 13.

1804 but was not born till 1827. It provided a general education and had the right to award degrees, and specialised in theology and the arts.²⁵

For the rest, many of the new colleges were more or less in the High Church interest. The pioneer institutions at Chichester (1839), Wells (1840) and Cuddesdon (1854) employed a three-fold syllabus embracing devotional training and practical work in a parish as well as theological study. They were primarily intended to supplement the very inadequate preparation for the ministry given at the universities.

Evangelicals already had the C.M.S. Institution at Islington (1815), which was primarily intended to train missionaries (who previously had been prepared under the personal instruction of godly clergymen such as Thomas Scott). In 1846 Joseph Baylee, incumbent of Holy Trinity, Birkenhead, founded St. Aidan's College, Birkenhead, with the full support of J. B. Sumner, evangelical Bishop of Chester. A two year course of thorough study, combined with practical work for three hours per day, three days per week, served to prepare non-graduate ordinands.²⁶ In 1863, Alfred Peache and his sister Kezia founded the London College of Divinity at St. John's Wood (it was transferred to Highbury in 1866). T. P. Boulton was first principal till his death in 1884, when he was succeeded by C. H. Waller.²⁷

Such colleges were often viewed with suspicion. They were regarded as party institutions. (It is interesting to note that Joseph Baylee of St. Aidan's, though avowedly and staunchly evangelical' claimed that 'his loyalty was not to a part, but to the Church'.) Their small size and dependence upon the person of the principal, usually a dominating character, seemed to be limiting factors. The emphasis, particularly in High Church colleges, on the cultivation of piety was often interpreted as Jesuitical. By the universities they were regarded as rivals. From the seventies, however, with the reform of theological syllabuses, the emergence of teachers of the calibre of Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, and the opening of the universities to men of all religious persuasions, there was a tendency, which has been gaining strength ever since, for the study of theology to focus upon the university rather than the cathedral. Colleges—both anglican and nonconformist—became associated with universities. Wycliffe and Ridley, founded to stem the tide of rationalism as well as of ritualism, were sited in Oxford and Cambridge respectively. The Congregational college at Spring Hill, Birmingham, moved to Cambridge, while the Baptist college of Regent's Park moved to Oxford. Most of

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the diocesan colleges survived, some of the new Anglican orders founded colleges, as did the evangelicals, but for good or ill, theological training has tended to be cast in an academic mould. The development of academic, critical Biblical scholarship may have been in part both cause and consequence of this trend.

Something, however brief, must be said about the nonconformist scene. The dissenting academies founded after the Great Ejection of 1662 were dominated by the need to provide for dissenters the equivalent of a university education. This is generally reckoned to have been

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-31.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

²⁷ [Footnote reference missing – *Web Editor*]

of superior quality and range.²⁸ Their very openness to new ideas and methods may have helped to expose them to the rationalism that was the spiritual death of so many in the eighteenth century. As has happened not infrequently in the history of theological colleges, 'new academies were founded by evangelicals because they could no longer support the old'.²⁹ An example is Hoxton, founded in 1782 at Mile End by men who were influenced by the success of Trevecca College, the well-known first-fruit of the Evangelical Revival.

Like the Anglicans, non-conformist ministers often gave both general and theological education to promising young men, combining personal influence with mental training and practical experience. An example is Dr. Bogue of Gosport who trained men for the ministry at home and overseas.³⁰

Of outstanding interest is Wesley's training of lay preachers. They were men trained 'on the job'. But Wesley was keenly aware of their need for mental stimulation and practical guidance. From time to time, as at Kingswood in Lent 1749, he met groups of them, and gave lectures on theology, logic and pastoralia.³¹ For their use he prepared a *Christian Library* consisting of 50 volumes of extracts from the great works of Christian literature, and wrote original works such as *A Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion*.³¹ Wesley insisted that his preachers should combine dedicated study with dedicated itinerant preaching. 'Read the most useful books,' he urged, 'and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the morning in this employ, or, at least, five hours in the four-and-twenty.'³² Thus the men were directed to develop the gifts they possessed. W. J. Warner has drawn attention to the way in which this constituted a remarkable leadership-making process.

'Almost without exception, they were men who were accorded a natural leadership by their fellow-members in the small groups, and then they grew up through the enlarging units of the societies until, at length, by the logic of events, they became the general leaders.... From a display of initiative in the smallest group, they became band or class leaders, exhorters, and then served as local preachers within striking distance of their secular employment. At length, over a period varying in time, but sometimes extending over years, they become itinerant preachers, by the appointment of Wesley and the Conference.'

Adds Warner, 'It was an instance of complete equality of opportunity and democratic mobility.'³³

Another interesting method of training Christian leaders is exemplified in the Bible Training Institutes founded by D. L. Moody. Situated in large cities, such as Chicago and Glasgow, they were intended to combine the training of leaders with the evangelising of down-town areas by students.³⁴ By comparison, academic standards were unimportant. Some of the numerous Bible Colleges have adopted

²⁸ I. Parker, *Dissenting Academics in England* (1914), passim; H. McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts* (1931), passim.

²⁹ D. P. Kingdon, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

³⁰ See *Life of J. Angel James*.

³¹ J. Telford, *The Life of John Wesley* (1886), p. 225.

³² W. J. Townshend, H. B. Workman, G. Eayrs, *A New History of Methodism* (1909), 1, p. 297.

³³ W. J. Warner, *The Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution* (1930), p. 257.

³⁴ J. F. Findlay Jr., *Dwight L. Moody* (1969), pp. 189, 321ff.

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a similar outlook, though in recent years there has been a noticeable tendency to raise academic standards.

This, however, is not the place to discuss the contemporary scene, with the proliferation of evangelical centres of theological training at various academic levels, experiments in training in a thoroughly ecumenical setting, and the emergence of a scheme of decentralised training pioneered in Latin America under the name 'Theological Education by Extension'.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that there is a long and persistent tradition that inherent in Christian leadership lies the duty to make provision for the future. 2 Tim. 2. 2 embraces four generations of Christian teachers, and Paul places fairly and squarely upon the shoulders of Timothy the task of ensuring this continuity. Sometimes the work has been delegated to others (e.g. Origen as Master of the Catechetical School; Cathedral Chancellors; Masters and others in Universities). It has even been necessary for individuals or groups to step into the breach (e.g. Charles Simeon; C. J. Vaughan; monasteries; theological colleges). But in principle, training for the ministry belongs to the on-going work of the ministry. Danger, if not disaster, is not far away when it becomes isolated, and exists as an end in itself.

The importance of training 'on the job' is shown by the persistence throughout church history of the curacy method. In-service training is no new idea. Perhaps Wesley's training of his lay preachers is the most thorough-going example.

Another dominant theme in the history of ministerial training is the need for mental training at the highest possible level of attainment. Anti-intellectualism has on occasions insinuated itself into the Church (for instance, in the early stages of monasticism) but it is evidently an aberration. The Gospel demands the very highest of which we are capable. At the same time, when intellectual pursuits become an end in themselves, or a substitute rather than a spur to personal devotion, they turn to dust and ashes. Like every human activity, mental study has its built-in dangers. Perhaps it needs to be seen more clearly in terms of the spiritual gifts which are variegated and differ 'according to the grace given unto us' (1 Cor. 12; 1 Pet. 4. 10, 11).

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