

Our Theological Colleges. (1) In England.

THE problem of providing ministers for our churches arose some two hundred and fifty years ago. For a century there was little done, and the churches decayed. From 1770 to 1870 Education Societies were founded. The last fifty years have been marked by experiments in aligning these with other institutions. We are now face to face with many difficult questions as to the future.

I. THE NEED GRADUALLY FELT.

In the heroic days of the Interregnum, the churches asked only that the ministers should be men of faith and zeal. They earned their living by all manner of manual trades, their book of study was the Bible, their only tutor was the Holy Spirit. But, just as in the earliest Church, it was found that the exuberance of Pentecost died down, and that method had to be introduced, so did the English Baptist Churches begin to consider their relation to their ministers, to regularise the present, and look to the future. Henry Denne might be sent out with a roving commission to preach and plant churches, but when Bromsgrove did the same with David Crosley, a generation later, the churches of Lancashire and Yorkshire objected. They said that he must be a member of one particular church, subject to its orders, and not preaching at large according to his own will. The question of education, however, was not urgent there, and it arose in the two cultured cities of London and Bristol. To these naturally drifted the few clergy who had become Baptist, and while they lived, there were a few ministers not unworthy to be compared with the highly educated Presbyterians ejected from the Established Church. At Assemblies like our Baptist Union meetings, these urged on the churches the necessity of some education for the ministry. But it was easy to see the difficulties. The universities were closed to all dissenters, and though there were

arising private schools kept by the Presbyterian ministers, a Baptist lad would be out of his element there. So the only plan that seemed feasible was based on the system of apprenticeship, whereby a lad was put by his father in the home of some merchant to learn the trade from the bottom, marry his master's daughter if lucky, get the freedom of his guild, and set up as master. Insensibly working on this model, fathers who saw the grace of God in their sons, put them into a minister's family, and hoped that the Church would presently call them to assist in the gospel.

It was a schoolmaster who first sought to improve on this. Edward Terrill, of Bristol, a baptized deacon in a church hitherto served by Presbyterian clergy, made a large bequest to ensure that the minister of Broadmead should not submerge education under evangelistic work, but should train young men for the ministry. When the Hanoverians were established on the throne, and the future of dissent seemed secure, London also began to face the problem. At this time there was one single minister who had had any education worth speaking of—John Gale. He had been to the University of Leyden, and was so well equipped that when the vicar of Shoreham wrote a history of infant baptism, he was able to criticize it keenly enough to elicit a rejoinder. In 1719 there was an important meeting in London to deal with an awkward case of theology at Exeter. The Presbyterian layman who guided the meeting was a friend of Gale, and called the London ministers to the meeting, much to the annoyance of the others, who said bluntly that they had not expected to meet "Anabaptist preachers." At their pride of caste and education the Baptists were stung, and the incident redounded to the stability of two new enterprises, the Particular Baptist Fund and the General Baptist Fund.

These twin schemes included the raising of educated ministries for the two sections of the denomination. Both proceeded on the same plan, to board out promising young men with pastors, and provide them with theological books. The most favoured place was Trowbridge, where two successive pastors kept school; but the great majority of their pupils did not enter the ministry. In London a good theological library was founded by the Hollis family, and lodged in the spacious

premises of the Barbican Church, where it was available for all London Baptist ministers. But, unhappily, both these plans were viewed with grave suspicion owing to the Arian views at the two centres. And the feeling grew that education led to heterodoxy, and that orthodoxy had some special affinity with ignorance. The old book by cobbler Samuel How on *The Sufficiency of the Spirit's Teaching without Human Learning*, was in constant demand.

Gifford, of Bristol, sent his son to a famous school at Tewkesbury, where he received a better education than Oxford was giving. Andrew Gifford became pastor at Wild Street, then at Eagle Street, and in his congregation numbered John Ward, a university man and a schoolmaster, who became trustee of the British Museum and professor at Gresham College. Ward felt how inadequate were existing methods, and Ryland, a schoolmaster in the Midlands, took a census of Baptist Churches, which showed a steady falling off from 1689 to 1715, and again to 1750. Ward struck out a new line, and founded a trust to send young Baptists to the University of Glasgow, to fit themselves for the ministry. But he had such misgivings as to the demand for these scholarships within the denomination, that he permitted them to be awarded to others should no suitable Baptists apply.

In this plan he did but imitate what the Hollis family had done in New England. Not only were they the first to make any substantial endowment of Harvard, but they had founded Baptist scholarships there. And though one or two of the Hollis scholars drank too deeply of the Harvard spirit, and lost all evangelistic fervour, yet in Pennsylvania, whither Hollis had sent abundant theological books for Baptist ministers, the seed fell into fertile soil. A good Baptist Academy was founded, and justified itself by sending out men who evangelised far and wide, training the churches to even better things. It was the Philadelphia Association which at last decided to found a Baptist College, and to plant it in New England, which might thus be quickened to new life. A canvasser came over to England, where he obtained liberal support, and the denomination at home was thus aroused to see that the colonies were really solving the problem so badly neglected in England.

2. EDUCATION SOCIETIES.

The Terrill endowment had done good things at Bristol, and it was obvious to enlarge its scope. Institutions which depend on endowments alone, do not enlist much sympathy, but annual subscriptions from churches and individuals both evince and maintain public interest. The revival initiated by Whitefield at Bristol had now extended to Baptists; old churches were showing new life, fresh churches were gathering, and Josiah Thompson took yet another census which brought home to every thinking man the fact that new methods must be adopted. Ample support was forthcoming. Andrew Gifford appreciated the need of good premises well equipped with museum and library, and a new note was struck. Unfortunately, the authorities were timid, and dared not ask for any charter such as Rhode Island had given; thus the precedent was set for England of a Society without any legal basis, whose sole purpose was to train men for the Baptist ministry. The Bristol Education Society justly claims that it has constantly pioneered; it might also add that most of its experiments have been worthy of imitation.

It is remarkable that the second venture should have been in connection with a body almost forgotten now—the Assembly of General Baptists. This was gravely affected in its theology by the general Arian drift of that century, but at least it did seek to arrest the decline of its churches by training young ministers. A General Baptist Education Society was founded, and a minister at Ponder's End was engaged as tutor. Such a method was already antiquated, and this second society never founded a college, nor did it succeed in arresting the decay of its churches, which to-day are negligible, and hardly claim the name of Baptist. The third venture was in direct rivalry, and was due to Dan Taylor, who at the time was both a member of the Assembly, and the leading spirit in the New Connexion. In Yorkshire he had kept a school, in London he took pupils for the ministry, and induced his Connexion to back his enterprise. He built a little chapel off the Mile End Road, where they might practise; for he was keenly evangelistic, as were all the churches of the body. In the long and honoured story of this New Connexion Academy, it is in-

teresting to see the insistence that it must be in the midst of the churches, must be in touch with the Association, must be actively engaged in spreading the gospel.

Dan Taylor came from Halifax, near to which were two Calvinistic Baptists, John Fawcett and John Sutcliff, both convinced that for progress there must be a succession of educated ministers. Sutcliff walked to Bristol to get his own training, then in his pastorate at Olney took students, and finally bequeathed his fine library to the Northern Education Society, due to Fawcett. This man, passing poor on £40 a year, had to maintain himself by a boarding-school. A few of his pupils he influenced to the ministry, and William Ward went to the mission field. In the atmosphere he created, the idea of a second academy was favoured, and in connection with a regular meeting of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Association, the Northern Education Society came into being. Everything hinged on the right leader, and this was found in William Steadman, with the traditions of the South. These induced him to combine the pastorate of a church with the headship of the society, and in hired premises near Bradford a second academy was founded. Hither came students not only from the north of England, but from Scotland; and as Steadman was an ardent itinerant, the students spent their vacations in preaching tours or in reviving moribund churches, to the great gain of the north.

London had tried more than once, but on the old lines of boarding out with men up and down the country. There was one church really alive, at Prescott Street. It had been wise enough to call from the country a man who, though self-educated, was well-educated, and who, having become a Calvinist, retained the evangelistic fervour of his New Connexion days. Abraham Booth was the only London minister who at first backed the B.M.S.; it was he and his deacons who founded an Academy at Stepney. Here again the attempt was made to combine the leadership with a pastorate, and a further attempt was even made to continue a private school.

About the same time Bristol was relieved of one difficulty. It lies so close to Wales that many of its students, not to say tutors, had come from across the border. Uneasy grumblings had been heard that these lads did not know English, and that

they held back the whole curriculum; while some were ungenerous enough to add that they came to fit themselves for the better financial outlook in England. The foundation of the Welsh and English Education Society, and its college at Abergavenny, enabled Bristol to concentrate better on work among Englishmen for England.

Then came a pause, and nothing fresh was attempted until the liberalizing of theology begun by Fuller had produced great tension among Calvinistic Baptists, especially in Lancashire and Yorkshire. The conservatives founded a society which did work at Accrington, but a few years revealed that there was no real need for it. The unrest, however, was not purely local, and a Strict Baptist Society came into being to rally the people who adhered to the standards of the eighteenth century, if not the seventeenth. It fostered continental work, tracts, a magazine, &c.; and it also undertook education. At first it deliberately opposed the academy plan, and boarded out its students. But when its southern supporters grew lukewarm, and its Midland protagonist went to Lancashire, plans were revised, and an academy was founded at Bury, which in time developed into Manchester College.

In London the tremendous energy of C. H. Spurgeon founded the Pastors' College, where stress was laid not only on evangelical preaching, but on a knowledge of the English Bible. There was something of the Barnardo spirit here, no deserving applicant ever being turned away. And about the same time the Northern Education Society moved its students out from Bradford to Rawdon, the London Education Society from Stepney to Regent's Park.

The second century thus closed with a new emphasis. Education societies were hardly named, colleges had come into being. The theory of a pastor with students in his family was obsolete, college tutors were differentiated. The links with associations were much loosened, and each college had a constituency of its own, determined partly by geography, partly by theology, partly by personal sentiment.

3. EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCES.

Until 1870 the denomination was quite self-contained, and its educational work, limited almost entirely to the training

of ministers, was unrelated to any other. But as the grammar schools and universities were opened to dissenters, and board schools were founded, so that in secular education Baptists met with others, the question slowly dawned whether the training of ministers might not be co-operative.

London University was a deliberate attempt on behalf of non-Anglicans, at whose foundation a few Baptists were active. Arrangements were made whereby independent colleges could affiliate, and one or two Baptist colleges did; but the tie was very loose, and students living in Yorkshire really gained little or nothing. Oxford and Cambridge were opened, but with the important reservation that degrees in divinity were not available to nonconformists. This privation, however, was really sentimental, for the old universities required no serious course of study leading to such a degree, which rarely guarantees any knowledge of divinity at all. The dangers were two: that a student who took classics, mathematics, law, philosophy, science, should imagine these studies qualified him for a pastorate, or that a Church should be hypnotized by "B.A. Cantab," to call a man who had no qualifications; and that a man steeped in an atmosphere predominantly Anglican should quit the Church of his boyhood. It has proved that the older colleges at Oxford and Cambridge have made no serious contribution to our ministry.

There was an increasing approximation between the various Free Churches, and it was along this line that the educational problem was advanced a stage. Many of the colleges drew together, and agreed upon a system of examination in common, so that no one college should remain in ignorance of its real standing, and that all students might be encouraged to a high aim and wide culture. The Senatus Academicus came to represent Baptists, Calvinistic Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians; it granted diplomas certifying to attainments on a general scheme, and further diplomas guaranteeing an advanced course of study on some special line. It was but an extension of common examinations to institute common lectures, and tentative steps were being taken towards this, when new schemes of national education transformed the situation.

The monopoly of Oxford and Cambridge, trenched upon by London and Durham, was lost within this half century.

Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham, and Bristol followed suit; Exeter, Newcastle, Nottingham, Reading, and Southampton took steps that way. Manifestly these important developments called for readjustment. By the theological colleges linking with or incorporating into these new institutions, many ends were served. Skilled tuition was available in everything but the technical subjects, in classes where men would meet ordinary men and be kept human. Staffs could specialize better, or be reduced, or could cope with larger numbers. Students could profit by lectures from many professors, and could win degrees that were not a laughing-stock of the initiated; though, indeed, where Anglicans co-operated, the high standard of the *Senatus* had to be lowered. Thus Regent's Park came to be one of six Schools of the University of London in the faculty of Theology, and its students habitually attended lectures by tutors at three of these schools. Manchester became one of eight colleges recognised for external lectures in the faculty of theology at the northern capital; between them these had a staff of fifteen lecturers, while the students could also profit by lectures in six other departments.

Under these new conditions, the qualifications for a Head altered. In the old days, an admirable Crichton was required, who would lecture twenty hours a week on twelve subjects, would then preach twice on Sunday, would keep discipline within and raise funds without, "with such assistance or otherwise as is afforded by an occasional meeting of committee"; and who would be content with the wages of a modern Wigan miner. But at great schools and at universities, heads were often almost entirely free from actual teaching, devoting themselves to a wide choice of Staff, administration, policy, finance. The committees, so flatteringly described by a member of one of them, came to seek men who commanded the confidence of the churches and the denomination at large, who would not be secluded in the lecture-room, but would play a part in Baptist affairs generally. The changed outlook has become startlingly evident in the recent appointment to the headship of our premier college.

4. MODERN PROBLEMS.

There are many questions which deserve careful con-

sideration as to the future training for the ministry; most of these questions concern every denomination; none can be answered by merely quoting recent precedents. Some of them are stated for consideration.

About half our ministers have not been to college. The situation is like that in the teaching profession, where teachers are needed so badly that many are enlisted who have not been at any training college. The questions presented are, whether our theological colleges should not try and provide more than half, then, if so, how they should secure students early enough.

These two questions are the more difficult because of the general and increasing ignorance of the Bible. Whether it be in our own or in other denominations, the present generation knows far less about the scriptures than most generations for three centuries. Every examiner is constantly ashamed of this fact, and occasionally he calls attention to it by a newspaper collection of "howlers." Our Sunday schools and our elementary schools fail gravely in this most important matter. There is hope in the high standard set by the Oxford and Cambridge local examinations, which often induce good and effective teaching at the secondary schools, now increasingly popular. It may be seriously questioned whether many curates and ministers in their first year could answer respectably the Senior Local papers. One result of this state of affairs is that the cream of the rising generation learns to distrust, even despise, the Biblical knowledge of the younger ministers. And therefore it is plain that the denomination must lay even more stress on the absolute need of a sound knowledge, and of steady systematic progressive study of the Bible. As the Church of England insists on a four years course after ordination, we are on the right track with a similar encouragement to all probationers. Our colleges receive raw material which, on the whole, is not properly furnished with a general knowledge of the Bible; so they have to impart this, to show how to study, and then to train for acquiring a special and deeper knowledge.

This suggests a consideration of the college curriculum. There are increasing demands that fresh subjects be taught, and some denominations do not shrink from a preparation extending over seven years. Apart from book-learning, Henry

Drummond pointed out that a man intending to devote himself to the cure of bodies had to attend clinics and walk the hospitals; he asked whether for the cure of souls there should be similar practical apprenticeship. On the other hand, the question has often been raised whether a knowledge of Hebrew is of any value to the great majority; and in days when even universities cease to insist on Greek and Latin, the question is of growing importance.

Another question is as to the total number of men entering college; here again the analogy of the teaching profession is suggestive. Every director of education knows how many teachers work in his county, how many drop out each year, how many will be needed, and how many must be started in training. He then considers how many must go to college, how many must train otherwise; and he suggests to his education committee what inducements must be held out in order to secure the proper number of candidates. Personal influence of existing teachers on promising scholars, interviews with parents, scholarships, maintenance grants, free training, are familiar expedients. Further difficulties have to be met, as between county and county, equalising the flow and the expense; rates of salary, fixity of tenure, retiring pensions, have to be frequently adjusted.

Some of the corresponding questions for us are matters of general denominational concern, and are dealt with by the Baptist Union through its Ministerial Recognition, Sustentation, Annuity Committees. But there remain others for the colleges to face. A committee might propound to itself questions like this:—For what counties are we in practice mainly responsible? How many new ministers are needed here annually? How many men ought we to take into training annually to meet this need? How can we quicken the Churches to look out and encourage candidates? How can we bring home to them their duty to provide the expense?

The Roman Catholics, always astute, and with long experience in such matters, have answered such questions long ago. They look out in their schools for likely lads, then they deliberately guide their thoughts to the ministry, encourage the sense of a vocation, isolate such boys from others, and so intensify the bent towards the service of God.

The best brains of their denomination are chosen for this highest of callings, and chosen in abundance. Their seminaries are constantly replenished with picked candidates.

And thus our colleges face another set of questions. Can we continue in our original isolation? Is it time to enlarge the scope of our inter-collegiate board? Shall we enter into closer relations with Associations? An even more disturbing question arises: Can the work now done by five colleges be done better at one centre? Once each college was a centre of home missionary extension, before railways and motor-vehicles rendered travel easy; once the personal influence of the head was all-important over the members of his "family"; is it possible that Louisville, with its hundreds of students for the ministry and its ten or twelve tutors, is on a line that might suit us better at this time?

Another group of questions clusters round management. Shall the dead hand of ancient benefactors rule, the annual meeting of subscribers, the body of past students, the committee, the officers, the tutors? He who has experience in the management of a Cambridge college, a Reading university college, a technical training college, a borough secondary school, will realise the importance of raising such questions, and asking them repeatedly, not being content with the answers of thirty years ago.

And behind all, loom the financial questions. How far is it wise to endow, and on what terms do endowments cease to be curses? How can we secure ever fresh subscriptions, maintaining a live interest in live institutions? Have we been right in largely waiving fees, not only for tuition, but almost for board and education? Do people value what they get for little or nothing? Do we risk pampering our students, and setting their financial ideas on a basis that will affect all later structure?

These questions are not independent of one another, and to answer them is not easy. But to evade them is dangerous or fatal. In the fifteenth century men and women were no longer satisfied with the methods bequeathed by their pious ancestors. There were rich monasteries and nunneries, to which fewer and fewer candidates applied, till many had to be closed because no one entered; their plant and their wealth had to be

diverted to other ends. The colleges and the universities at Oxford and Cambridge have needed constant re-modelling; occasionally the blindness of those within has caused forcible reconstruction from without, but now they are sufficiently alive to be sensitive to new needs, and to adjust themselves accordingly. We have enough wisdom, forethought, enterprise, to see to it that the colleges founded by our forefathers shall meet the needs of the generation to come, and provide a succession of teachers well grounded in the Word of God, able to lead men to Him, and to train in His service.

W. T. WHITLEY.

Dr. Clifford on the Baptist Outlook.

The following has been compiled from notes of an interview with Dr. Clifford, who is one of the Vice-Presidents of the Historical Society.

THE Historical Society is to be congratulated on enlarging the scope of its *Quarterly*. The literary output of the Baptists in England is very much inferior to what it was, say, in the eighties. Then we had the *Baptist Magazine*, which came out monthly at a cost of sixpence, and also Baptists had a share in other publications, such as the *British Quarterly*, to which Dr. Dale frequently contributed. Then there was the *General Baptist Magazine*, which had a splendid circulation among General Baptists, and far beyond, for some sixteen years. The more cultured members of our churches were certainly better provided for in the matter of denominational literature than they are to-day; and we certainly do need our own organ, in which all questions that concern Baptist life, and thought in general, are to be discussed. One of the greatest needs of the time is clear thinking, especially about the centrality of Christ in thought and life, and about the teaching of Jesus concerning what may be called the Fellowship of Souls. The world to-day is full of prejudices which require to be exposed and destroyed, concerning God, and religion, and the New Testament, and our Churches are