

Training men for the Ministry in a New Country

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A few facts concerning the training of ordinands in a "New" country may be of interest and possibly present some suggestions to those concerned with that work in "Old" country.

The supply of men Candidates for the ministry in Australia is drawn mainly from men who have already spent some years in another occupation. Very few pass straight on from school or university to the Theological College. This means that they have tested their vocation & have received an education in the practical affairs of life which is all to the good in a country where Separates have no ancient endowments and there is no "Established Church". Clerical incomes are almost entirely derived from the free-will offerings of the people. The diocese has a say on this subject but the last word lies with the particular parish, that is, with its responsible lay officers.

Training for Orders in a New Country

An article on this subject intended for an English Church paper naturally suggests comparisons and contrasts between conditions in the mother land and those in the daughter dominions. My purpose however is simply to place a few salient facts before church people in England in such a way that they may be able to make their own comparisons.

In the first place the supply of ^{candidates} men for the ministry in Australia is drawn mainly from men who have already begun life in another occupation. Very few ordinands out here pass straight from school or university to the Theological College.

This means that the educational standard of the candidates varies a great deal, and this variation creates one of the main difficulties of the Theological College in Australia.

Yet it may be said at once that there are distinct advantages to the Church in the fact that its ~~ordinands~~ postulants for ordination are men who have been in the world of business or industry "on their own". This means that they have tested their vocation, and have received an "education" in the practical affairs of life which is all the more useful in view of the conditions of church work in a country where the parishes have no ^{endowments} ~~endowments~~ and there is no "Established Church".

Again, the services of lay readers are much more freely used in Australia than in England. Hence there is more opportunity of testing vocation and ~~proving~~ gauging fitness for ~~the priesthood~~ Holy orders. Almost all the men who apply for admission to Moore College have conducted services and even preached sermons long before they enter the regular ministry. In several country dioceses the bishop ~~sends~~ ^{puts} the aspirant to Orders through the trial of a lay

ministry before deciding whether he will accept the applicant as a candidate for training. Let me quote a typical instance. Mr. J.B. (the initials are fictitious) applied to the Bishop of Z. to be received as a candidate for training with a view to ordination. The Bishop, if the preliminary inquiries yielded satisfactory results, sent the young man to a district under the general supervision of a parish priest who might have twenty centres in his parish where services were held. A certain course of study would also be prescribed. If the applicant "made good" after a year's trial, i.e., if he proved "acceptable" (hateful word) to the people + had made progress with his studies he was then sent to the diocesan ^{the} Theological College for theological training. This is the outline of ~~the~~ system followed by more than one country bishop in this part of the world. Each diocese, however, makes its own arrangements for recruiting men for the ministry. The main point to notice at present is that very nearly all the candidates for Holy Orders in Australia have served ^{and have} a period as layreader, catechist, or lay evangelist, ^{practically} been assistant curates without the status conferred by ordination.

Thus the training of candidates for orders out here does not begin in the Theological College. A few there are who go ^{from} ~~to~~ school to university, + thence to the Theological College without going out into the world of business or industry. But even these men are used as layreaders during their student days. In fact the parochial authorities regularly prefer a theological student to what they call an "ordinary layreader".

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"Comparisons are odorous", said Mrs. Malaprop. Nevertheless we are informed by educational experts that the "comparative method" [should be used] is the most interesting and otherwise efficient method of imparting information. I do not propose to pursue this method [but only to indicate that] in writing ~~as~~ ^{as} will not ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~but that the form~~ of this article however will ~~not~~ ^{I mention this} because ~~not because~~ ^{because} ~~the~~ while. Yet this article will not take the form of a comparative study of English & Australian conditions, its material will be suggested inevitably by a comparison between the mother land & her daughter dominion. After many years spent in educational work in England I have

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more practical side of the preparation for the ministry.

First, there is the devotional training. This is organised by each college in its own way as the circumstances differ so widely (of such variation). The two Daily Offices are said at every college, and the Communion is celebrated at least once a week. In some colleges the students are away every week end & a Sunday celebration in the college chapel is impossible. At Moore College we have a celebration every Sunday and Holy Day in term and a corporate communion at the beginning and end of each term. We have a short Greek Testament reading every morning, except Sunday when a sermon is preached. Our daily evening is choral, arranged for men's voices, and we have a sort of "family prayer" at 10 p.m. which serves as Compline. A few colleges observe near two of the intermediate Canonical Hours between Matins & Evening. The difficulty is to leave enough room for spontaneous devotion among the students themselves. If the day's routine is mapped out for every hour the students are not likely to develop that initiative & dependence upon personal resources which are so necessary for church work in Australia. My own plan has been to provide the minimum of routine devotions and to leave room, & quite unofficially & indirectly, to encourage the students to organise regular devotions among themselves on their own lines. There are eighteen chapel services in the week, less than three a day. Early Communion is the only chapel service on Sunday. Our students are all engaged in parish work during the rest of that day.

Secondly there is the training in what may be called the technique of the ministry - the reading & general conduct of the services, pastoral visitation, parochial organisation, religious instruction, sermon preparation and delivery. Nearly every student at a theological college in Australia is called upon to conduct services & preach sermons while he is under training. Quite a number of them also undertake pastoral visitation and other parochial responsibilities for which they are paid by the parishes they assist, & thus, as it were, work their passage through their student days.

A few colleges are able to give a good deal of attention to this more technical training, but ~~at~~ on the whole it is ~~generally~~ ^{correct} to say that the Australian ordinand receives a more thorough all round training in the practical work of the ministry than the English ordinand receives. Such a training is all the more necessary out here because there are very few parishes where anything like a staff of assistant clergy is maintained. Many men are placed ~~immediately~~ in sole charge of a district immediately after ordination, especially in the country dioceses. The point to notice is, that in Australia, the newly ordained man has already acquired an experience in the practical details of parish work that the English neophyte has to acquire in his first curacy. We do need a few more parishes out here in which a newly fledged parson may learn his job in close personal association with men who have already gone through their apprenticeship.

The training of men for the ministry in Australia is beset with peculiar difficulties.

The main problems are those arising from our enormous spaces and distances, and the financial difficulties of the church in a new country with no "Establishment" and no ancient ^{endowments} ~~endowments~~. We have had, as it were, to start from scratch.

For a population of about five millions Australia would appear to be badly ~~oversupplied~~ over-supplied with theological colleges. Our own church has one college in Queensland, ^{three} ~~two~~ in New South Wales, four colleges and one hostel in Victoria, one in South Australia, one in West Australia and one in Tasmania.

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more than seventy five percent of the population is ^{located} ~~to be found~~ in New South Wales and Victoria where the greater number of Colleges are ~~to be found~~. The difficulties in the way of concentrating efforts in establishing one central College are, the great distances of the main centres from each other, the wide diversity of conditions in urban & rural areas, and the existence of different types of churchmanship.

The contrast between town and country is much greater in Australia than in England. Church work in Melbourne or Sydney is not very different from work in Manchester or Birmingham or Liverpool. But the problems and methods of ministrations in the vast bush areas are totally different from those of an English village. It has been found distinctly advisable in Australia to fix one or two theological Colleges in country districts, partly in order to prepare men directly for the conditions of country work, & partly to counteract the pull of the great metropolitan centres.

There is no need to speak at length of the obvious disadvantages entailed by such a division of resources ~~as is~~ among so many institutions which are necessarily on a small scale. But this point will serve to introduce the main difficulty, namely, the ~~lack~~ of financial ~~the~~ problem.

In the first place the Church has to find the facilities for theological training entirely out of her own resources. Theology is banned so far from Australian Universities. Melbourne University has refused to entertain the proposal to establish a theological faculty. Sydney University has expressed approval of the ^{idea} ~~project~~ but an act of Parliament stands in the way, and the financial provision for such a faculty is not

yet in sight.

Secondly, the Church has no posts to offer to men who will devote themselves to theological scholarship. The Presbyterians have established several Divinity professorships, but the Anglican Church not established one so far. Almost all those who are engaged in training ordinands are pluralists. They have to undertake various ~~outside~~ external duties, usually parochial, to provide themselves with an adequate income.

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which is the recognized standard in every diocese in Australia. Such is the general course of training men for the ministry in this new country. The absence of endowments sets a severe restriction on the production of profound scholars but it ^{also} sets a high standard of general pastoral efficiency for the men of the ministry have to justify their position to the people who are expected to support them.

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which is the recognised intellectual test in every diocese in Australia. Such is the usual method of training men for the ministry in this "new" country. The absence of endowments sets a limitation on scholarship, but it also sets a high standard of pastoral efficiency because the men of the ministry have to justify their vocation to the people who are expected to support them and who generally do support them.

The actual age of Candidates for Holy Orders in Australia varies as widely as their intellectual attainments but ~~on~~ ^{on} the average it works out at a higher figure than the average for candidates in England. ^{and this affects the length of the period of training} At ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~College~~ ^{College} the course for non-graduates is three or four years. ^{During} ~~and the first year~~ ^{The strictly} ~~the~~ ^{the} theological course occupies two years and leads up to the examinations for the Licence in Theology of the Australian College of Theology, a body established by the General Synod of the Church of England in Australia. The subjects are almost identical with those of the Bishop's Central Examination for ordinands in England & the standard is about the same. ~~Some~~ ^{Some} College students are taken through the subjects of the Sydney University Matriculation Examination before proceeding to the theological ^{course} ~~subjects~~.

Thus the Australian trained clergyman has undergone a double test before he is admitted into Holy Orders. His vocation and practical ability are tested by his employment as a voluntary ^{as a} stipendiary lay reader, and he has to go through a period of college training and obtain the Licence in Theology.

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A few facts concerning the training of Ordminands in Australia may be of suggestive interest to those engaged in that work in England. To economise space the article will be limited to the points of difference rather than of likeness between conditions in the "new" & in the "old" country.

The supply of Candidates for the ministry in Australia is drawn mainly from men who have already spent some years in another occupation. This means that they have tested their vocation & have received an education in the practical affairs of life that is all to the good in a country where the parishes have no ancient endowments, — there is no "Established Church," and the clergy derive their incomes almost entirely, and often directly, from the free-will offerings of the people. Yet it also means a great variation in the ^(educational) ~~educational~~ standard of the candidates, ^a ~~their~~ ^{that} ~~variability~~ creates one of the main difficulties of theological training in Australia.

This difficulty is that the Theological College has to serve three distinct purposes at one & the same time; it has to be a school, a university, and a Theological College. Very few of the students come straight from school, & fewer still come from the University. No university in Australia grants degrees in divinity, and theological subjects are barred out from the courses of instruction. Hence the Churches are left entirely to their own resources to provide theological education for their ordinands. Attempts have been made to persuade the universities to adopt a more liberal attitude, but the only success so far has been won in Sydney where the University Senate has approved of the removal of the restriction. At present, however, an Act of the New South Wales Parliament stands in the way, and until four words

have been removed from that Act the restriction remains.

Meanwhile the Presbyterian Church in Australia has established several Divinity professorships in Sydney & Melbourne and elsewhere. In Sydney, also the Presbyterians, Methodists & Congregationalists have pooled their teaching resources and have for some years past conducted a joint Theological Course, though retaining their own colleges for residential and other denominational purposes. They have invited the Anglicans to join in this united faculty, & the proposal has been favourably received in Sydney. The principle of such joint action has already been accepted as part of the movement towards Christian Reunion, but there are certain practical difficulties in the way of a workable scheme which have not yet been overcome.

One great difficulty is that the Anglican Church in Australia has no posts to offer to men who will devote themselves entirely to theological study and teaching. There are several Anglican Theological Colleges, but not one of them has an endowment for its teaching staff. The Church of England has no Divinity professorships in Australia. The ^{adequate} ~~demands~~ endowment of theological study and teaching is one of the crying needs of the Church in Australia. ^{The demand for} ~~it has been made by the Conference of Theological Colleges; it has been~~ ^{a much greater} ~~not than any cathedral in similar spectacular object, however~~ ^{endowed by} ~~desirable that~~ the General Synod and affirmed by at least one Provincial Synod, and it has been voiced again & again by & in the Church papers. There is scope in Australia for a generous benefactor to follow the example of those who endowed the professorships in the old country & in the U.S.A.

Nevertheless, ~~in~~ the Australian trained clergyman can hold his own, as regards all round efficiency, with men who have

enjoyed advantages we do not yet possess but are endeavouring
some day to attain. He may not have studied theology at a University
but he has [received] undergone a practical preparation for the
ministry that only few of our English clergy ~~to~~ who went straight
from school to university & then, ^{not always} ~~possibly~~, to a Theological College,
underwent.

I have already said that most Australian ordinands have
been engaged in earning their living by some other occupation before
offering themselves as Candidates for Holy Orders. I now add that most
of them also have served as lay readers. There is a peculiarly wide
scope for such lay ministrations in Australia, and they are used
very freely in public worship, much more so than in England.
Quite a number of laymen give up their week-ends to supply services
at centres which the parish clergyman is unable to visit except
at long intervals, and the bulk of this lay service is given freely.
The Diocese of Sydney has an organized plan for ^{distributing} ~~arranging~~ the
duties between the members of its Lay Readers' Association.
Here is another test of vocation and aptitude for the regular ministry.

Hence, in Australia, the average age of candidates for Orders
is higher than the age of such candidates in England. The actual age varies
as widely as their educational attainments. The intellectual standard
is