

■ The establishment of Heythrop College as a centre for higher studies in theology and philosophy – its official designation as an *athenaeum* is hardly likely to win popular acceptance – is intended as a step forward in English ecclesiastical education, and the traditions of the Society of Jesus (who will continue to direct the college) are a guarantee of standards of academic integrity. Heythrop will now be open to all students, lay as well as clerical, and is empowered to confer higher degrees. It apparently is also to house the long-projected Institute of Advanced Studies, at least as a temporary measure, and it may be supposed that it will develop as a centre of research. Already *The Heythrop Review* is attempting to supply the need for a theological journal at a serious level of scholarship. And the appointment of a theologian such as Father Charles Davis as a professor at the college is an indication of the genuine intention to give wide scope to its teaching.

Within the accepted pattern of Catholic seminary education Heythrop assumes a vital function, but it is to be hoped that its establishment will not prejudice more radical attempts to relate Catholic ecclesiastical studies to the rapidly evolving pattern of the English universities. There are obvious historical reasons why Catholics have played a small part in the theological schools of Oxford and Cambridge since the Reformation, but the contribution – if one may be allowed to mention Dominicans in this context – of the late Father Daniel Callus and of Father Gervase Mathew at Oxford deserve to be remembered, and such Jesuits as Fathers Martindale, Leslie Walker, Corbishley, Copleston and Turner at Campion Hall have for long assured an impressive Catholic presence in the general academic life of the University. It is hoped that Heythrop – which is eighteen miles from Oxford – will establish contacts with the Oxford faculty of theology, and the international character of the Society will assuredly help in bringing foreign scholars within the ambit not only of Heythrop but of Oxford as well.

And here one must welcome the recent developments at St Edmund House, Cambridge, which has acquired a new status in relation to the University so that it now elects Fellows (both clerical and lay, and not necessarily Catholic) and thus provides an altogether wider setting for the clerical education for which it was founded. Its provision for research, in particular, will do much to extend the range of its influence, and already

some of its priests are candidates for higher degrees in theology and the moral sciences.

But there remains the further question of the share that Catholics should have in the theological evolution of the newer universities. Many of them were – or are still being – founded with wholly secular assumptions, and religion, if it enters into the academic programme at all, is a cultural phenomenon, part perhaps of a course in anthropology, acknowledged as sociologically significant, but refused any academic autonomy as of right. But in many modern universities – Bristol, Birmingham, Exeter, Nottingham and Hull, and, most recent, Southampton, are examples – theology is recognized as a discipline of academic importance, taking its place on equal terms with the other faculties and seen as having many points of intellectual contact with them. Spared the Establishment associations of the older universities, such faculties of theology have a freedom of manoeuvre, an opportunity to experiment, which will have an increasing influence on the theological climate of the country as a whole.

If the ecumenical insights of the Council are to be taken seriously – and the hierarchy of England and Wales have committed themselves to their implementation – the place of theological studies is paramount. Otherwise, generous gestures – a bishop attending this or that function, a joint initiative on civic occasions – may peter out into a mood of unspecified benevolence, and the crucial work of theological understanding will be evaded if not refused. It is evident that the formal discipline of seminary education will continue, though many voices have been raised in the Council to urge a thorough reconsideration of what form it should take in our own time. But a Catholic contribution to the new schools of theology in the English universities – and it is a matter of giving *and* taking – is in no sense incompatible with it. It may be too soon to envisage ecclesiastical students taking formal courses in theology at 'mixed' universities, but some courses at least could be open to them, in biblical studies and church history for instance, and some Catholic scholars could make a valuable contribution to the university teaching. Mgr Francis Davis's pioneer work over the years in the University of Birmingham is proof of it.

The practical difficulty is the isolation, even as a matter of geography, of the seminaries themselves. And the religious orders are even worse placed. There is unhappily a tradition, at once domestic and proprietary, that has up to now prevented the opening up of ecclesiastical studies, so that the seminaries and the religious orders seem to regard it as a point of honour that they should be self-sufficient, needing no help from outside. In this respect the new structure at Heythrop may extend the horizons of Catholic scholarship. But of its nature it will continue to do so within the closed circuit of ecclesiastical education: its contacts with the new

theological faculties can only be indirect.

It may be that the medieval pattern, improbable though it might seem, can inspire a solution to our present needs. Colleges that preserve a particular allegiance, to an order or to a diocese, can none the less share in a common intellectual life. A centre of learning, to be vigorous and outward-looking, needs a variety of voices, a reflection of the true dimensions of society itself. And it is hard to see how students can be prepared for the 'dialogue' which the Church has now accepted as her obligation in the modern world if, in their formative years, they are altogether excluded from any part in it. Colleges that were at least in physical contact with the real world of contemporary learning could preserve their proper traditions. The houses of religious, in particular, could bring the resources of their prayer and monastic life to bear upon the secular world which they exist to serve. And it is a counsel of despair to suppose that exposure to even a measure of contact with that world would imperil a true vocation. In this connection, Newman's opinion on clerical education, quoted on another page, are very relevant.

One might hope for at least an experimental use of the growing facilities of the new universities. Two or three small colleges, pursuing their own religious life but seeing it at the same time as a valuable point of entry to the world outside its walls, could at first perhaps do little more than be selective in their use of the theological studies available. But no one would any longer suppose that the Catholic presence in the university was just a pragmatic affair; and at present it too often happens that the only clerics who are university students are there to acquire qualifications in some secular discipline so that they may teach in grant-aided schools. The acceptance of new opportunities for the Church's mission is the most urgent of our tasks, and it would be a calamity if theology itself – and above all its emergence in the open world of the new universities – were thought to be no concern of Catholics, and had no importance for the training of priests, who must live in a world they must *know* if they are to have any part in its redemption.

■ The pattern of education in any country, like any other aspect of its life, owes much to a particular history. Even climate has its part in shaping structures that are peculiarly a country's own. And American higher education reflects in particular the struggles of a new nation on its way to maturity; it reflects, too, the special concern of the American Constitution to separate very sharply the respective rôles of Church and State. Of recent years there has been growing concern about the future of American Catholic colleges, and indeed of all the large number of institutions of higher learning that are associated with religious bodies. They have been vigorously criticized for over-emphasizing religion, or alternatively for neglecting it. In any case there is wide-spread dissatisfaction at the result. They have been accused of being, and indeed have been proved

to be, academically weak. Their administration is said to be inefficient, their attitude towards students too paternalist. They could hardly expect to survive – and very often it has been said they would not deserve to survive – unless they drastically addressed themselves to their real function in an adult American society, one that is very different from that in which most of them came into being.

The Danforth Foundation set up in 1962 a systematic enquiry into 'church-related higher education in the United States', and its recently published report (*Eight Hundred Colleges Face the Future*) is an important piece of documentation as well as containing constructive suggestions for the changes that are needed. Faced with the enormous expansion of American higher education, faced too with the increasing secularization of American life, the Church colleges have been placed in a defensive position. And, as the report emphasizes, the liberal tradition of education in America has been seriously undermined by the influence of the German university tradition, with its emphasis 'on factual knowledge rather than on broader understanding'. 'The broad, humane purposes of liberal education' have lost ground.

After a rigorous analysis of the present state of the Church colleges – and it is too little realized, in this country at least, that more than one third of the 2100 American universities and colleges are associated with religious bodies (and of these 42 per cent are Catholic) – the report turns to recommendations that are to be submitted for discussion at a series of regional conferences. There are detailed suggestions concerned with greater administrative efficiency, financial support, practical co-operation of related institutions and the elimination of haphazard development. But of more general interest (by no means confined to the American situation) are the proposals for the teaching programme of the colleges themselves. They can, the report insists, 'make an educational contribution of the first order by giving priority to good teaching'. Their emphasis on the humanities, and their concern not only for specialization but for 'the broader responsibility of higher education' within a reasoned framework of belief, can be a contribution that is uniquely theirs to make. A final section of the report has some stimulating things to say about different institutional patterns, distinguishing between 'defender of the faith colleges', 'non-affirming colleges' and 'free Christian colleges', thus recognizing that even within the pattern of Church institutions there will be varieties of denominational accent. The aim must be to extend the freest pattern, for 'it stands unapologetically for religion and liberal education, but it relies on example, persuasive presentation of ideas, and a climate of conviction, rather than of conformity, to accomplish its ends'.

Insofar as Christian opinion has any influence that it can bring to bear on the evolving universities, it could well remember these wise conclusions of the American report.