

**THE UNIVERSITIES OF EUROPE
AT THE PERIOD OF THE
REFORMATION. THE STANHOPE
PRIZE ESSAY FOR 1876**

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The Universities of Europe at the Period of the Reformation. The Stanhope Prize Essay for 1876
by V. W. C. Hamlyn

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474
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THE
STANHOPE PRIZE ESSAY
FOR 1876.

BY

V. W. C. HAMLYN,
Scholar of Balliol College.

"Rem ipsam adsequere, non umbram rerum."

—Melancthon. "*De Corrigendis Adolescentium Studiis.*"

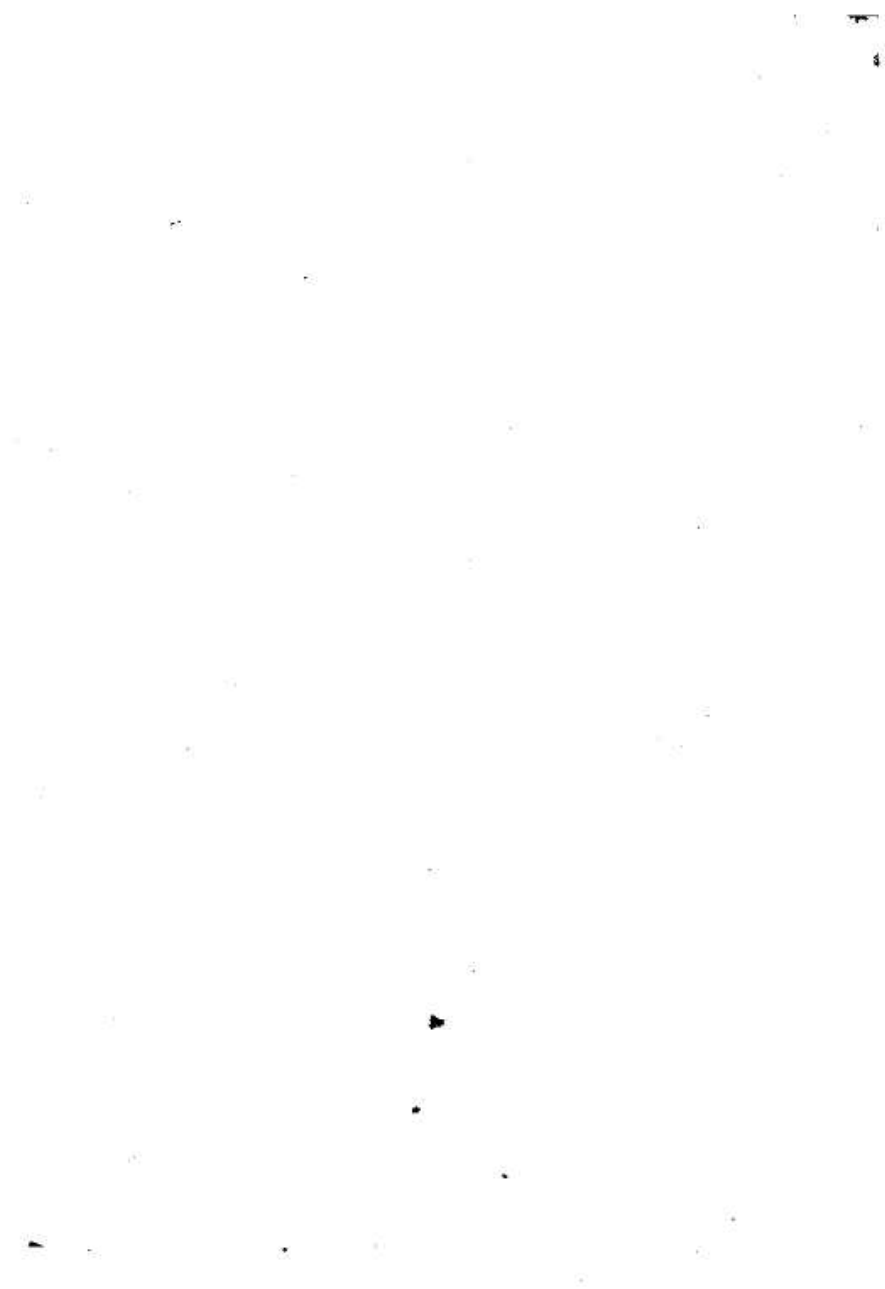
"Ad majorem Dei gloriam."

—Motto of the Order of Jesus.



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George Adolphus Osborn R 130 4
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THE UNIVERSITIES OF EUROPE AT THE PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION.

THAT crisis in a man's career whose influence seems most actively to control his later fortunes is the natural and frequent object of his thoughts ; nor is the experience of society different from that of the individual, since the periods of the world's history most fraught with evident import to its present welfare arouses in it the most lively interest.

In such a connexion with our immediate age stand the events of the Reformation years, years from their proximity and the absence in later centuries of events of equal extent or importance, the traditionary source of all the vexed questions of to-day, and in an especial manner of those concerned with religion and education.

The Reformation broke the bond of the ecclesiastical system that for centuries had held together the nations of the West ; it produced social and political results of the gravest character, it overthrew the method and studies to which since the 13th century the Universities of Europe had given unquestioning allegiance, and by changes of a radical nature modified the structure of those bodies to suit the requirements of the age.

There have, indeed, been few years of previous or later University history wherein the influence of learned bodies has exercised a more lively effect on the outer world, or when they have in turn been so susceptible of external opinion.

It was from the ranks of the students of the Universities that the champions of the classics stepped forth to do battle with the advocates of scholasticism, themselves members of the academic bodies ; it was from the heart of the Universities that the attacks of Erasmus on Mediæval Theology came ; a Theological teacher of Wittemberg, Philip Melancthon, compiled the confession of Augsburg, and the best efforts and talent of the Order of Jesus were lavished to

The Universi-
ties and the
Reformation.

secure the restoration of Catholic supremacy in these, the most formidable homes of religious dissent.

With the downfall in the 16th century of the Universal Church and the European authority of the Pope, the tie that had formerly bound the Universities to the Church perished, and the growth of secular influences substituted in its place a nearer relation to the State. Apart from other circumstances, the change was in a measure due to the attitude of hostility assumed by the rank and file of the Church towards the pursuit in the Universities of those studies which the Italian Renaissance had brought into prominence.

So long as culture and education depended amidst the storms of the Middle Ages on the shelter of the Church for its protection, so long as the memory of past services and the consciousness of common interests survived, the Church exercised an undisputed empire over University life and thought. But when amidst the progress of learning and discovery, the increase in knowledge of the past and the growth of juster conceptions concerning the present, the advocates of Latin Christianity clung yet closer to the Doctors of the 13th century, when the choice lay between the study of the Bible in its native tongues or the Latin version of the Vulgate ; between the Aristotle of antiquity or the Latin translation with its scholastic commentators ; Homer and Virgil or the trite text books of the mediæval writers, the rebellion was almost universal, and the foremost thinkers of the age unable to longer hope for assistance at the hands of the Church turned for help and assistance to the secular powers.

The cause of education before directed by ecclesiastics was transferred to laymen, the power of the spiritual authority gave place in the Universities to that of the temporal, and the duty of endowing education, a task before accomplished by the revenues of the Church, devolved on the Exchequer of the State. The events of the 16th century overthrew the predominance of ecclesiastical influence in the Universities, and though the circumstances of succeeding years has rendered that influence tenacious of its hold on education, the tendency has always been towards the development of a more secular character.

The intense theological interests of the 16th century have been succeeded by more general studies, and at the present day the retention of any of the original ecclesiastical features seems seriously menaced. In the years of the Reformation, however, we have only to notice the vast importance of the Universities in that great religious struggle, to trace the connexion of their changes in study and the development of novel religious conceptions, and to observe that their studies were either theological or literary, and little concerned with scientific or legal acquirements. The period of years, with which this Essay is concerned, extends from the commencement of the century until the close of the Council of Trent, a date of considerable importance alike in the annals of the Universities and of the church, as marking the commencement of a new era.

The Incorporation of Oxford and Cambridge (1562) points to the final establishment in England of Protestantism; the massacre of St. Bartholomew and the death of Melancthon are of equal prominence respectively in France and Germany, while the final publication of Rome's future policy, in the decrees of Trent are the last acknowledgments of the irremediable differences which for the future were to separate Europe into clearly defined religious parties.

The succeeding years of the century are those which should be treated of in an essay on the Jesuits or the Catholic Reaction. The work of the Reformation and the importance in that movement of the Universities ceased much earlier. Nor is it possible to include within our subject the growth of such Academies as Leiden, which rising in quieter years and profiting by the turmoils of the past were able to devote themselves to wider studies, and to cultivate in their midst that scientific spirit whose first development belongs to a later century.

In the subsequent pages little or no reference has been made to the Universities of Spain. In that country the last Saracenic Academies had perished in the final overthrow of the Moorish kingdom, while the Catholic Universities

adhered strictly to the course of studies prescribed by the thirteenth century.

In a country so little open to external influence as Spain, the influence of the Reformation years was inappreciable, while of the counter-influence which that revolution evoked it was the earliest victim.

Yet it would be unjust to leave unmentioned the foundation of Alcala by the Cardinal Ximenes, an University whose Polyglot bible gave promise of a future linguistic excellence which was not unfortunately fulfilled.

The early triumph of the Jesuits, and the absence of any literary communication with the rest of Europe, secured for Spain a lasting adhesion to the studies and method of the Middle Ages.

If we are truly to realise the position of the more ancient Universities in the period under our notice, and if we desire to understand the motives of their conduct towards the Reformation as well as the changes which were effected in them by that movement, it will be needful for us to examine somewhat carefully the circumstances of their origin and growth.

Otherwise, looking on the organisation of Paris, of Oxford, or Bologna, we should be apt to think falsely that they had always presented the same imposing appearance, and remain in ignorance of their real history and antecedents.

The Church
and the Uni-
versities in the
Middle Ages.

One of the chief points in connexion with the earliest Universities, and one which we who live in later days are apt to overlook, is the importance of the influence of the Mediæval Church on education. From the fall of the Western Empire until the great intellectual revival of the 13th century, the Church was the ark in which all human knowledge was preserved in the countries of Western Europe. The ravages of invaders, the devastations of war and pestilence, drove the majority of men from all thought of learning; and the conquerors of Gaul, of Spain, or Britain, were long strangers to the most elementary forms of education.

Yet the Latin Church preserved for the use of its ministers and as the language of its services the speech of imperial Rome; and amongst her scattered monasteries,

secure from the attack of barbarian marauders, might be found schools of youth instructed in Latin and even Greek; as well as Libraries whereina were contained the writings of authors such as Boethius, and even perhaps some manuscripts covered with copies of the works of Virgil and Livy.

Amidst an almost universal ignorance it was only amongst churchmen that any approach to culture could be found; as a consequence they were promoted to posts of the highest importance, and the language of ecclesiastics, Latin, became that of the court. All education was naturally allotted to the care of the clergy, and with the exception of such institutions as the Palace school of Charles the Great, the only provision for instruction was to be met with in the schools of the Cathedrals or Abbeys. By the eleventh century when the trans-Alpine countries were better ordered through the development of the royal government, as was to be expected, population became far more dense and the general prosperity increased. The contact in the following and subsequent century with the culture and thought of the Arabs gave a great impetus to Europe, while the Universities which that people possessed may have given an idea for future imitation.

However that may be, it is certain that in the 12th and 13th centuries there was a desire for knowledge and learning quite unprecedented. In the 11th century many had gathered round teachers such as Lanfranc and Anselm, in the Abbey school of Bec; but now the face of France, of England, and Italy, was constantly traversed by pilgrims swarming to and fro from one celebrated teacher to another. These teachers, it is important to observe, were almost invariably in orders; for although amidst so great a band of learners it would have been possible now to have selected teachers, whose lives had not been spent in seclusion, still the Church afforded the safest asylum and the easiest livelihood for those who desired to spend their days in study and teaching; and so the men who were the instructors of the age were always to be found amongst her servants. Indeed, too, the custom of mediæval times was to regard all students as in a manner Churchmen; and often, to secure themselves