Introduction

A CHARTER of Queen Elizabeth I dated 11 January in the twenty-seventh year of her reign (1583/4), which is the prime treasure among the Emmanuel College Archives, empowers Sir Walter Mildmay, Knight, Chancellor of the Exchequer and one of Her Majesty's Privy Council, to establish a 'College of sacred theology, sciences, philosophy, and good arts' consisting of a Master and thirty Fellows and Scholars (graduate and undergraduate), more or less. The College is to be a perpetual body corporate, with the usual powers of owning property, and of suing and being sued in the courts of the realm; and the Founder (or after him his heirs or assigns) is authorised to make statutes for the good and wholesome governance and regulation of the College. It is the statutes made by Sir Walter under this charter that are here presented in full in an English translation. As a picture of a living society a body of rules might well be thought no more than dry bones; but Mildmay's statutes have a deal more flesh on them than their modern counterparts. He is not afraid to explain his motives, and that not only in the preface, which sets the tone of the College as a seminary of Puritan preachers. Nor is the text cast all in large and general words. In these statutes we read not only what manner of men the Founder wanted as Master and Fellows and Scholars, but also what faults and vices they were to avoid; not only how their election was to be conducted but what possible malpractices must be guarded against. Allowances for food and clothing, fines for lateness or neglect of duty, are specified to the last halfpenny. We meet here not only the dons and the undergraduates, but even the under-cook and the laundryman.

Not everything, of course, could be covered; day-to-day detail of, say, the times of meals or (more important) the prescribed books for lectures or the surveillance of undergraduate behaviour, had to be left to the discretion of the Master and other College officers; but for these matters we are happily able to supplement the Statutes by a body of College orders of 1588 which codified the practices that had developed in the first three years of running the new society. These
orders are printed, with some explanatory comments, after the Statutes.

The classic recipe for making yoghurt begins: Take some previous yoghurt . . . So Sir Walter Mildmay, drawing up statutes for his new College, looked to those of Christ’s College, where he had himself been an undergraduate some forty-five years earlier, and where Laurence Chaderton, the intended Master of Emmanuel, had been a Fellow. It is worth noting here that the Christ’s statutes, drawn up in 1505, had themselves been based on those of the parent foundation of God’s House (1439), though with much amplification and with a more classical Latinity. Those of God’s House had in turn been based on those of Clare Hall (1359). (These earlier documents may best be consulted in Early Statutes of Christ’s College . . . with the statutes of God’s House, edited with an introduction, translation, and notes by H. Rackham, and printed for Christ’s College in 1927; and in Documents relating to the University and Colleges of Cambridge, published by the Universities Commission, 3 vols., London, H.M.S.O., 1852.) The divergences from the Christ’s model will appear more particularly from the commentary which has been appended to each chapter. It is intended that this commentary should be read as an essential part of the present volume, rather than being reserved like footnotes for reference only in special need. To this extent it is hoped that the body of the book will be self-explanatory; but the intentions of the Founder, and his means of achieving them, cannot be fully appreciated without some consideration of the larger historical setting.
4. Signatures of the first twelve Fellows to the College orders of December 1588.
The historical background

I A Puritan college

At its foundation, and for three-quarters of a century thereafter, Emmanuel was often commented on as different from other Cambridge colleges, as a ‘Puritan’ college, where the Chapel lay north and south, not east and west, where they wore no surplices and received the Holy Communion sitting; they were Calvinists, they were Presbyterians, they were nonconformists, they were (it was implied) disloyal to church and state. That these criticisms all concerned matters of churchmanship was fair enough, for the Founder’s prime purpose was to establish a place for the education and training of ministers of the church; yet they were facile and often shallow, and there is, and always was, much that could be said in reply. Viewed historically, the orientation of the Chapel (and other College buildings) had as much to do with the bearing of the Roman road through Cambridge as it had with disapproval of Romanist tradition; subsequent history shows that surplices may come and go – and their last disappearance from Emmanuel undergraduates at prayer was in deference to no scruple about ritual but to the exigences of wartime clothes-rationing; and Laurence Chaderton, the first Master, when asked at the 1604 Hampton Court conference what he had to say about ‘sitting communions’, replied that it was ‘by reason of the seats so placed as they be’, but that they had some kneeling also. His response is important not only as evidence that Puritans were not devoid of humour; it typifies Chaderton’s view that externals are in the true analysis things indifferent, and that variation should therefore be tolerated in either direction. As to the supposed political implications of nonconformity, no one could have been more loyal or less revolutionary than the Founder, a skilled administrator who occupied positions of increasing responsibility and trust under each monarch from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I. His college was not designed to promote an ‘alternative’ church, but to improve the quality of clergy within the existing framework; and Chaderton, whom he personally chose as Master, is on record as saying that he would give his right hand rather
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than countenance anything contrary to the Queen’s established laws. This is not to deny that both were men of strong religious convictions, and that both favoured reform rather than reaction; but change was not something to be forced; the right seed with right nurture would in God’s good time grow as it ought. The Founder’s famous analogy of planting an acorn is no mere witticism; it sums up a whole philosophy.

We are not in a position to trace the development of the Founder’s own religious beliefs. He was born (around 1520) in an England which was still Roman Catholic, though the sparks of reformation were already kindling among the more learned and spiritual; his foundation of Emmanuel towards the end of his life – when a man’s inner convictions tend to assert themselves most clearly – reveals him plainly in the Puritan camp, though we must remember that ‘Puritan’ is a label, normally, of disapprobation, with undertones and implications of an extremism which ‘wise, grave Mildmay’ never shared. But although his spiritual odyssey is unrecorded we may perhaps divine something of it from the events and circumstances of his lifetime. His services in government, to economic and parliamentary administration, were undoubtedly great; but his foundation of Emmanuel may well have seemed to him – as perhaps it was absolutely – the most important thing he ever did. To assess such a claim one needs to see not only the character of the College as revealed by its statutes, but its position in relation to the dramatic vicissitudes and development of both the church and the University through much of the sixteenth century; to look back, in fact, as Mildmay might himself have done, over events which he had himself lived through, or at furthest heard of from men of his father’s generation.

II Reformation and secularisation in Cambridge

J. B. Mullinger, in his history of the University of Cambridge, made the royal injunctions of Henry VIII in 1533 the dividing event between the mediaeval and the modern University. The injunctions were of cardinal importance in the secularisation of the University; where it previously owed allegiance first to the Pope and next to the King, henceforth its allegiance must be to the King alone, as head of both church and state. But their specific provisions gave effect to trends in theology and academic study which had already been developing for thirty years or more. The dethronement of ecclesiastical authority represented by their...
abolition of degrees in canon law went deeper in the provision that theological lectures were no longer to be according to the scholastic commentators, but ‘according to the true sense’ of Scripture, and that students were to be permitted and encouraged to study the Bible for themselves. But direct interpretation of holy writ needed to be backed by learning; and there was a further regulation that the Colleges must provide daily lectures in Latin and Greek. The latter had been taught in the University at least since the residence of Erasmus at Queen’s (1511–1514) and the establishment of the Lady Margaret Readership (1502), both under the aegis of John Fisher as Chancellor. The publication in 1516 of Erasmus’s own new recension and translation of the Greek New Testament had been a landmark in the theological application of the ‘new learning’; and long before the King’s breach with the Pope the humanists had been criticising the academic traditions of the universities as stale and sterile. But the 1535 injunctions continued to recognise the education of the clergy as the main, or at least a major, function of the universities, and a necessary and desirable one at that, especially if the clergy (as they had done throughout the Middle Ages) were not only to fulfil the priestly and pastoral functions of the church but to provide leading figures in the government of the country. In addition, it had long been the practice of the monastic establishments to ‘exhibit’ some of their number to the University for the furtherance of their studies, quite apart from the existence of monasteries or friaries of the principal orders in Cambridge itself; and in the same year as the injunctions a statute was passed which made it actually obligatory upon at least the major abbeys each to maintain two men in study at the universities. At the same time there is evidence that some found the charms of academe too alluring. Beneficed clergy liked to prolong their stay in Cambridge beyond the needs of study; and in 1536 there were further provisions, both that those who were not seriously working for a degree should return to their cures, and also that the wealthier clerics should at their own expense maintain poorer younger men in the University who might later assist them in their pastoral charge. (Fifty years later, Mildmay could still feel that the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed, though the pabulum he believed they needed was of a different order.)

Despite these measures of the mid-1530s the strongly knit links between church and university were already breaking up. Men like Erasmus or Fisher had hoped to use the new learning as a force to
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purify and revivify the doctrine and life of the church. More widely, however, it was seen as a challenge to the entrenched tradition of ecclesiastical authority: and at the same time humanism was developing as an alternative and secular system of education. Study in the university came to be regarded as the means to a layman’s career in public life. Higher education was the way to a rapidly increasing range of government offices, and so to affluence and a stake in the country. The years between the break with Rome and the accession of Queen Elizabeth I are the period when this distinction between ecclesiastic and civil employment became clearly drawn. The separation was indeed encouraged even from within the church; Latimer urged that laymen should take on the administrative work of the realm so that the clergy might devote themselves to their proper pastoral and preaching duties.

An associated effect was a change in the social origins of those attracted to the University. Where the typical student had been a poor man seeking a career in the church, there was by the 1540s a larger proportion of sons of the nobility and gentry whose parents recognised the cultural value of literary studies;

\[\text{ingenius didicisse fideliter artes emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.}\]

This change was bound up, in the ineradicable interchange of cause and effect, with developments in the character of the Colleges and their status within the University. It was in general true that the earlier colleges were founded for the nurture of poor scholars intended for the priesthood. Other students lived more independently, with lesser commitment to discipline, in student hostels which had neither the permanency of a corporate community nor its comprehensive concern for the welfare and instruction of its members. The organisation of teaching and learning, by lectures and disputations, had been the concern of the University authorities, not the Colleges. The sixteenth century saw gradual and sometimes startling growth in the endowment, the functions, and the influence of the Colleges in Cambridge, and the consequent eclipse of the once numerous hostels. Here again we should look to the beginning of the century for the initiation of these changes, which were only partially foreseen by those most concerned. When John Fisher in 1506 persuaded the Lady Margaret Beaufort, the widowed mother of King Henry VII, to devote her wealth and influence to the refoundation of God’s House as Christ’s College, and again in 1511 to