

## THE MEDIAEVAL UNIVERSITY

The University of St Andrews came into being as part of the movement which established national universities in many of the kingdoms of Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In Scotland this development was accelerated not only in growth of national feeling but to some extent at least by the highly individual course pursued by the Scots in the Great Schism of the Papacy (1378-1418). About Whitsunday 1410 a school of higher studies was established at St Andrews and on 28 February 1411-12 the society of masters and scholars received formal incorporation in terms of a charter granted by the Bishop, Henry Wardlaw. Full University status was conferred on 28 August 1413 by a series of Papal Bulls issued by Pope Benedict XIII of the Avignon line.

The constitution of the University was modelled on that of Orleans and certain other French universities in which the dominance of the teaching masters, unquestioned at Paris and Oxford, was modified by the authority of the Bishop-Chancellor and by the participation of all members of the academic society in the election of its administrative head, the Rector. As Chancellor, the Bishop of St Andrews - from 1472 an Archbishop - exercised a general supervision over the University and conferred degrees on candidates examined and attested by the Dean and masters of the appropriate Faculty - Arts, Theology, or Canon Law. For the annual election of the Rector masters and scholars were divided into four nations - Albania, Angusia, Laudonia and Britannia - each having one vote in the manner of Paris and other French universities.

In 1419 the University acquired its first building, the so-called Chapel and College of St John the Evangelist in South Street on the site of the University Library building which now houses the Psychology Department. This was no more than a small chantry college adapted to support masters of the Faculties of Theology and Arts and to provide accommodation for their lectures and meetings. In 1430 Bishop Wardlaw founded a Pedagogy for the Faculty of Arts on an adjoining site. The Pedagogy soon absorbed its older neighbour and endured for rather more than a hundred years when it was in turn absorbed in St Mary's College. Although primarily under the control of the Faculty of Arts it contained teaching and residential accommodation for members of the other Faculties of the University.

The first fully organised and endowed collegiate society to be established within the University was the College of St Salvator, founded for the study of Arts and Theology in 1450 by James Kennedy, Bishop of St Andrews. The chief feature of the building was the magnificent collegiate church that still forms the principal place of academic worship in St Andrews. In 1512 the College of St Leonard was founded by Alexander Stewart, Archbishop of St Andrews, and John Hepburn, Prior of St Andrews. This was a "college of poor clerks" associated with the Priory of St Andrews and primarily intended for the education of novices of the Augustinian Order in Arts and Theology. Finally, in 1537-38, Archbishop James Beaton reorganised the old Pedagogy as a seminary for the training of secular priests in Arts, Theology, and Canon Law under the title of the College of St Mary.

The growth of the collegiate system undoubtedly strengthened the University. Above all, it was through the college endowments that an adequate teaching staff was secured and maintained and students were saved from the grinding poverty that had prevailed in earlier university days. But masters and students were subjected to a greater degree of discipline within the colleges, and a similar rigidity of organisation gradually extended into the constitution of the University.

## THE REFORMED UNIVERSITY

Such was the form of the academic society of St Andrews at the coming of the Reformation in 1560. After various tentative proposals of reform, in 1579 there was enacted the "New Foundation of the University and Colleges of St Andrews". This preserved the main features of the mediaeval constitution but assigned rather greater powers of supervision over the University to the Chancellor and over the colleges to the Rector. The colleges, which had already acquired a monopoly of teaching, were also completely reorganised. St Salvator's College and St Leonard's College became predominantly "colleges of philosophy" or Arts, while St Mary's College became a college of Reformed Theology. Despite these changes, the colleges retained the residential character imparted to them by their original founders. This New Foundation was somewhat modified in 1621 and again in 1642, 1661 and 1695, but its main features persisted almost until the great reform of 1858, and throughout this whole period the University remained closely associated with the Reformed Church "by law established".

As regards the Constitution of the University, from 1560 until 1689 with the exception of two short periods the position of Chancellor continued to be held *ex officio* by the Archbishops of St Andrews. The Rector was elected annually by the four nations, now Fifa, Angusia, Laudonia and Albania, but the office came to be held virtually in rotation by the three college heads to whom there were subsequently added, as *virii rectorales*, the Professors of Divinity. In 1642 there is the first mention of the *Senatus Academicus*, consisting of "the whole Principals, Professors and Regents of the University" and perhaps already assuming that dominance that became explicit later in the same century. Of academic developments in a period much interrupted by civil and religious strife the most notable was the foundation of a common University Library in 1612 and of an Observatory, unfortunately short-lived, in 1670.

After the Revolution of 1689, despite the persisting autonomy of the colleges, the authority of the *Senatus Academicus* came to be supreme in the University. It exercised many of the powers hitherto vested in the Faculties and in the *Comitia* or General Congregation of the University. The Rector now functioned primarily as President of the *Senatus*. It was the *Senatus*, too, which after the abolition of Episcopacy in the Established Church claimed the right to appoint the Chancellor, a nobleman selected from outwith the University and holding his office for life.

In 1747, during a period of acute depression in the University, the two Arts colleges were combined under one Principal as the United College of St Salvator and St Leonard. At the same time the Faculty of Arts finally abandoned the system by which each of the Regents in turn took a class through the entire four years of the Arts curriculum. Under the professorial system, gradually introduced during the preceding period, each teacher of the United College became a specialist in a particular branch of study in the manner already prevailing among the Divinity teachers of St Mary's College. The colleges continued to be predominantly residential until the close of the eighteenth century.

## THE MODERN UNIVERSITY

From 1826 to 1830 the University was subjected to a searching investigation by a Royal Commission on the Universities of Scotland. The Commission recommended radical alterations in the constitution of the University, which were eventually embodied in the Universities (Scotland) Act of 1858. While maintaining the constitutional and financial

autonomy of the colleges and reserving the control of courses of study, examinations and discipline to the *Senatus Academicus*, the Act created a University Court with extensive powers of supervision over the older bodies.

The President of Court was the Rector, who was now to be chosen for a term of three years from outwith the ranks of the Principals and Professors by the matriculated students of the University. The place of the Rector as President of the *Senatus* was assigned to the senior of the two college Principals. In addition to the University Court the Act of 1858 introduced a General Council composed mainly of graduates of the University and having the right to elect the Chancellor, who acted as its President. Like the *Senatus*, the General Council also elected an Assessor on the University Court, the membership of which was completed by the Senior Principal and Assessors appointed respectively by the Chancellor and the Rector.

The dominance of the University Court in the academic constitution was further emphasised by the Universities (Scotland) Act of 1889 and by Ordinances of the Commissioners appointed under that Act. The Court now acquired control over the property of both the colleges then comprised in the University and over all appointments other than those in the patronage of the Crown. After the expiry of the Commissioners' powers the Court was also given authority to pass Ordinances effecting minor changes in the constitution of the University within the framework of the Acts of 1858 and 1889.

In view of its increased responsibility the membership of the Court was enlarged to include all the college Principals, the civic heads of St Andrews and Dundee and additional Assessors from the *Senatus* and the General Council. The Principal of the United College was to act as Principal of the University and President of the *Senatus*. University Lecturers and Assistants were to supplement the instruction hitherto conducted entirely by the Professors.

An important duty assigned to the Commissioners of 1889 was to affiliate the University College founded at Dundee in 1881 "and make it to form part of the University with the object, *inter alia*, of establishing a fully equipped conjoint University School of Medicine". The affiliation and partial incorporation of the college in the University was eventually effected in 1897 and in 1898 the Conjoint School of Medicine was established at Dundee. As a result of these and other changes the University now comprised four Faculties - Arts, Divinity, Science (including Engineering), and Medicine - to which degree courses in Education, Dentistry and Law were subsequently added. Women students were admitted to all courses of study in 1892 and halls of residence for their accommodation were inaugurated at St Andrews in 1896 and at Dundee in 1917. Collegiate residence for men students was revived at St Andrews in 1921 and inaugurated at Dundee in 1946.

An unresolved problem in all these developments between 1897 and 1953 was the constitutional relationship between University College, Dundee and the University in which it had been partly incorporated by the Commissioners on 1889. In 1951 a Royal Commission was appointed with full powers to inquire into this and other related problems and in 1953 the principal recommendations of the Commission received legislative sanction in the University of St Andrews Act of that year.

The Act dissolved the governing bodies of University College and placed its property and endowments in the hands of a reorganised University Court. The two St Andrews colleges, which had retained their corporate status in 1889, were reconstituted as "unincorporated societies of teachers and students". The teachers and students of all parts of the University

in Dundee were formed into a third society subsequently designated Queen's College. In accordance with the Commissioners' proposals the colleges as such were allotted no administrative functions, but two College Councils were established - one for the United College of St Salvator and St Leonard and St Mary's College and one for Queen's College - to which various duties of a local character were assigned by the Act and might be assigned by the University Court and Senatus Academicus as occasion arose. In the ensuing period the Dundee School of Economics was incorporated in the University and new Faculties of Law, Applied Science and Social Science were established. In 1967, in terms of a Royal Charter, Queen's College became the University of Dundee<sup>1</sup>.

The College of St Leonard was reconstituted in 1974 to care for the interests of all postgraduate workers in the University. The membership of the College consists of research students and research fellows and a number of members of the academic and administrative staff of the University who have been appointed members of the College. The aim of the College is to foster intellectual and social contact between research workers of different disciplines and to further the lot of research, and of research workers, in the University.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lists of officers of University College and Queen's College during the period of their association with the University of St Andrews will be found in the *Calendar* for 1966-67