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# Evangelical Theological Colleges in the Church of England and Ordinand Numbers 1963-2003

**In this survey, Gordon Kuhrt shows that the proportion of college-trained Church of England ordinands training in the evangelical theological colleges has grown in the period 1963-2003 from 33% to 68%. Tracing the developments over these 40 years he claims evangelical colleges have generally responded with greater imagination and energy to the challenge of diversification and that the changes have significance for the church's future leadership.**

The rise of Evangelical influence in the Church of England in the last forty years has been widely noted by recent historians (for example, Hastings, Edwards, Bebbington, Hylson Smith, Manwaring and Saward) and biographers (Dudley-Smith on John Stott and McGrath on James Packer). What follows offers a short statistical analysis of ordinands in Church of England theological colleges in the latter half of the twentieth century. There are, however, three preliminary matters of definition that need to be addressed

## Definitions

The application of the epithet 'evangelical' to certain colleges is justified firstly by looking at their current brochures where four make the explicit claim and two others use clear coded language referring to their strong commitment to biblical theology. Secondly, official reports from, or closely associated with, the Ministry Division use these distinctions in a public and accepted way – notably the Lincoln Report of 1992 para 200, the Hereford Report of 1993 by implication and the *Final Report of the Steering Group for Theological Colleges and Courses* to the Advisory Board for Ministry and the House of Bishops of 1996 (ABM paper no.12, page 15). This last report said, 'Most of the 11 Anglican Theological Colleges are identified with a particular theological position which may also be defined in the Trust Deed or instrument of government...All...indicate a readiness to accept students regardless of their personal theological tradition, whilst also tending to attract a majority who are in sympathy with the college's tradition'.

If the theological self-description is true of the college, the question remains as to whether it is true of the ordinands. It is certainly true that some people who

are not evangelicals will be found in the evangelical colleges. It is also true that evangelicals will be found in colleges of other traditions. There are also ordinands (probably an increasing number) who do not like labels at all. However, as explained above, the colleges are explicit about their traditions and, by and large, the ordinands choose which college they would like to attend.

Thirdly, other methods of training have developed apart from colleges. This is absolutely true and Table A indicates the significance of the introduction of a nationwide provision of non-residential courses. This major development is both a result and a cause of the development of non-stipendiary ministries and a trend to older candidates.

**Table A – Numbers of ordinands, colleges, courses and schemes**

Year	Total Ordinands in Colleges and Courses	Colleges	Courses	OLM Schemes	Evangelical Colleges
1963	1402	26	1	0	7
1973	871	17	6	0	6
1983	1022	14	15	0	6
1993	1073	14	13	4	6
2003	1299	11	12	19	6

Year	Ordinands in Colleges	Ordinands in Evangelical Colleges	% in Evangelical Colleges	Ordinands in other Colleges
1963	1357	449	33%	908
1973	728	287	39%	441
1983	735	348	47%	387
1993	673	380	56%	293
2003	500	344	69%	156

### **Trends in the evangelical colleges**

The six current evangelical colleges are:

- Cranmer Hall, Durham
- St John's College, Nottingham
- Wycliffe Hall, Oxford
- Ridley Hall, Cambridge
- Trinity College, Bristol
- Oak Hill College, London

Table A above shows that the total has moved from seven colleges in the 1960s to the present six. This is not due to a closure, but to the merger in Bristol of the

former Tyndale Hall and Clifton Theological College along with Dalton House/St Michael's.

The total number of ordinands in these colleges can be seen to have fallen from 449 in 1963 to 344 in 2003. Though a fall in real terms, the percentage of the ordinands in these colleges is an extraordinary progression from 33% to 69%.

### **Trends in the other colleges**

The current other colleges are:

- College of the Resurrection, Mirfield
- St. Stephen's House, Oxford
- Ripon College, Cuddesdon
- Westcott House, Cambridge
- The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham

The number of colleges in this category has reduced from 19 in 1963 to the present 5. Table B provides the details for each of the colleges in each year. The total number of ordinands in these non-evangelical colleges is given in Table A and, excluding the 1960s, it is clear there has been a continuing trend of decline from 441 in 1973 down to 156 in 2003.

### **Evangelical growth?**

Has the total number of Evangelical ordinands grown? As is frequently the case with statistics, it depends where you start. However looking at Table A and the numbers of ordinands in evangelical colleges and again excluding the 1960s the totals have normally kept in the 300s. But the numbers expressed as a percentage of those in the college sector has grown very significantly although this is largely due to a decline in the number of ordinands in other colleges (the final column of Table A).

The evangelical colleges have shown considerable imagination and energy in ongoing programmes of diversification. These include welcome to overseas students and other independent students, programmes of continuing ministerial education, sabbaticals, and postgraduate research (see my *Issues in Theological Education and Training*, ABM 1997).

In addition (and this list is not exhaustive), Wycliffe Hall has become a Permanent Private Hall of the University of Oxford and has developed the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics; Ridley Hall has strong involvement with the CYM (Christian Youth Ministry) Training Scheme, Theology through the Arts, the Foundation for Business Ethics and the Leadership Institute; Cranmer Hall had for several years its Institute for Communications; St. John's Nottingham moved from North London and developed its Extension Studies Department, mixed mode training, youth ministries work and programme on Christianity and Culture; Trinity College Bristol followed its merger by federating with Bristol Baptist College; and Oak Hill College has strong international links and a vibrant youth and children's training ministry.

**Table B – Ordinands at English Theological Colleges 1963-2003**

College	Merger/Closure	1963	1973	1983	1993	2003
Ely	closed 1963	35				
St Aidan, Birkenhead	closed 1968	60				
Cheshunt	closed 1968	55				
Worcester	closed 1968	40				
Rochester	closed 1970	44				
St Chads, Durham	closed 1971	19				
Lichfield	closed 1971	51				
Kelham	closed 1974	86	12			
Warminster/St Aug Cant/Kings London	closed 1975	53	42			
Chichester	closed 1994	54	40	47	20	
Salisbury	merged 1970	44				
Wells	closed 1994	56	86	71	12	
Lincoln	closed 1996	61	49	61	45	
Queen's Birm. Clifton, Bristol	Merged	36	24	32	27	19
Tyndale Hall, Bristol	Trinity 1970	84				
Ridley, Camb.		57	43	46	75	45
Ridley, Camb.		63	29	49	52	63
Westcott, Camb.		41	43	40	47	61
Cuddesdon	Merged	54	54			
Ripon	Ripon, Cuddeson 1974	40	33	60	61	34
Cranmer, Durham		44	42	50	58	50
LCD/St Johns Nott.		81	78	90	86	62
Oak Hill		72	45	51	42	54
Mirfield		38	26	32	27	16
St Stephen's, Oxford		41	42	44	54	26
Wycliffe, Oxford		48	50	62	67	70
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1357</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>500</b>

**Table C – Recommended candidates by age 1975-2005**

Age	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
20-29	274	278	227	162	95	106	86
30-39	85	177	162	139	108	146	123
40-49	42	117	105	104	137	148	173
50-59	37	69	58	36	65	123	161
60 plus			9	2	15	14	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>578</b>

**Causes?**

I am frequently asked the causes for the major and significant shift that has been demonstrated by these figures. It has been a privilege over these past ten years to visit almost every diocese on many occasions, all the colleges and courses, and over 400

parishes. I believe that the evangelical and charismatic traditions have generally speaking retained a confidence in the gospel, a strong and indeed growing commitment to culturally relevant mission and evangelism, a growing intellectual confidence, and, finally, a deep commitment to youth work. This is seen through lay people volunteering to work weekly with, and organise camps and house parties through, Pathfinders and CYFA (Church Youth Fellowships Association). Spring Harvest, New Wine and the Mission Agencies' provision of opportunities for gap years and short appointments are of great significance in leadership training and the exploration of vocation.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while there has been a major shift from residential college to non-residential regional course training (see Table A), and from younger to older candidates (see Table C), the majority of the younger candidates and those preparing for a 'full-time' stipendiary ministry will be training in the colleges. It is therefore highly likely that the future leadership of the church will largely be drawn from this constituency. In addition, the colleges can develop a concentration of theological and academic resources. In the forty years reviewed, the percentage of college ordinands in evangelical colleges has progressed from around 33% to about 69%, and there appear to be no signs of that trend slowing let alone reversing. While there will be a few ordinands of other traditions in the evangelical colleges, and a few evangelicals in colleges of other traditions, the statistics indicate a major and significant shift which has particular significance in relation to potential for leadership in the future.

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