

Editorial matters

In the first half of this new decade, three issues which have been prominent in Church of England debates (and promise to remain so for at least the rest of the decade) are also matters shaping, in varying ways, the church of the 21st century. First and most high-profile among these is the role of women clergy. Although it is now over ten years since the first women were ordained priests, the question of the role of women in the church remains a controversial one in some circles and issues of sex discrimination remain important in many areas of church life. The question of women in leadership will become prominent once again in the next few years as the church considers whether to allow women to be consecrated as bishops. The outlook of the first women bishops will also be shaped by the other two factors. The question of the future of ordination training has recently been subject to controversial review through the Hind Report and the outworking of this is still in its early stages. Major questions remain concerning a number of issues, including the differences and the relationships between residential training in theological colleges and non-residential regional courses. Thirdly, there has been much comment about the changing pattern of different church traditions within the Church of England and in particular the rise in the number of evangelicals, including within the ordained ministry.¹

A study of the Ministry Division statistics relating to the total number of ordinands in training at colleges and courses in each of the first five years of the new millennium (from 2000-1 until the current year 2005-6) highlights a number of challenging issues surrounding each of these three areas and particularly the interaction between them.

Colleges and courses

The number of ordinands in any one year who are training in either colleges or courses (not including those on OLM schemes) has been fairly constant at around about 1,100 although it was slightly higher at 1,200 at the turn of the millennium. There has, however, been a shift towards more people studying on non-residential courses. Until 2001-2 there were more ordinands training in colleges than on courses. Currently, however, there are 532 sponsored students in the 12 colleges (including just 3 at Llandaff) but 653 on the 12 regional courses.

The Ministry Division statistics also divide ordinands into two categories: Stipendiary/NSM and Permanent NSM. The latter category is smaller and overwhelmingly found on the courses (there are only 25 people training for

1 Two recent studies which discuss some of these issues are Jeff Astley et.al., *Fragmented Faith?: Exposing Fault-lines in the Church of England*, Paternoster Press, 2005 and Kelvin Randall, *Evangelicals Etcetera: Conflict and Conviction in the Church of England's Parties*, Ashgate, 2005.

permanent NSM in colleges this year) although they are now outnumbered on courses by those who are accepted in the stipendiary/NSM category.

What is most interesting, however, is some of the more detailed breakdown of the statistics particularly in relation to men and women and the significance of the traditional evangelical colleges.

Men and women

The cumulative figures easily mask the incredible differences in experience between male and female ordinands. Much has been made recently of the fact that the gender balance among Church of England ordinands is almost 50:50. This year there are 607 men and 578 women in training at colleges and courses. In some years recently the figures have been even more balanced and (including OLMs) more women than men have been ordained. The division of men and women between the two modes of training and the two categories of ordinands is, however, far from as balanced. This raises interesting and important questions about how men and women are being trained differently by and within the church and the different environments offered by courses and colleges in terms of gender balance.

The first difference is that many more women than men are training as permanent NSM ordinands (197 women and 128 men this year). In other words, among the permanent NSMs the ordinands divide roughly 40:60 between men and women whereas in the stipendiary/NSM category the proportions are almost the opposite at roughly 55:45. This must raise questions as to why so many more women are training for posts in which they will never receive a stipend from the church. Are women – especially older women – simply happy to be able to be ordained (after being denied this for so long) and less willing (or even not encouraged) to consider the ‘leadership’ roles usually linked to stipendiary ministry?

Given how these two groups divide between colleges and courses it is therefore not surprising that there are also many more women on courses than in colleges. This year only 175 women are training in colleges but 402 – well over twice that number – are training on courses. In contrast, there are currently 356 men in colleges but only 251 on courses. Nearly 60% of men in training are therefore in full-time residential colleges whereas barely 30% of women are trained in this manner. It would appear that the church is not only preparing to pay its women clergy less (because more of them are permanent NSMs) but that it is investing less in their training as so few of them train residentially.

It might be thought that the difference between colleges and courses arises simply because so many more women are permanent NSMs but that would be a false conclusion. Even among those classed as Stipendiary/NSM there is a significant gender difference. If the permanent NSM ordinands are not included in the figures we find 72% of men are trained in colleges but only 42% of women. In other words, there are less women in colleges because there are less women accepted for stipendiary ministry and – unlike men – even when women are accepted for stipendiary training they are still more likely to be trained locally. It is also probable that many more of the women in colleges are unmarried.

This disparity probably reflects the wider reality that while many husbands expect their wives to give up their employment and move house to enable their husbands to train for ordination residentially for two or three years, Christian wives

are perhaps much less likely to expect this of their husbands. Are men less willing to make such sacrifices to enable their wives to train full-time at college, preferring them to train on local courses through a mix of evening classes and residential weekends and summer courses? That perhaps represent a wider challenge to the culture of the Church of England and not just to its processes of selection and training.

These disparities between the forms of training for men and women obviously also shape the gender composition on courses and in colleges. This year on all the courses the majority of ordinands are women (or in one case the split is exactly 50:50). In several places the men are a relatively small minority of between a fifth and a third of the student body. By contrast, in the English theological colleges, women are in the majority only at Cranmer, Ripon College Cuddesdon, Queen's and Westcott House and in only one of these are women more than 55% of ordinands. The quite different gender balance on courses and colleges is therefore another important factor in the varied experience offered by these different means of training for ordained ministry: in most colleges women are outnumbered by men to a ratio of at least 2:1 whereas on courses they are almost universally in the majority.

Evangelical dominance?

Much has been made in recent years of the strength of the six traditional evangelical colleges. Here, of course, statistics can easily become more like 'lies and damned lies' as there is a great variety across these six colleges, not all who attend them would identify as evangelicals, and many evangelical ordinands train at other colleges or on courses (many of which increasingly include evangelicals on their teaching staff). However, the colleges remain an important formative influence on their ordinands and, rightly or wrongly, networks created in them continue to play an important role in the church and conclusions are drawn about clergy on the basis of their training college.

Since 2000, every year the six evangelical colleges have contained between 64% and 70% of all ordinands in full-time residential training. The relative decline of colleges, however, means that this is only 25% to 30% of all ordinands in training each year. The overwhelming majority of those being ordained, therefore, are not being formed within the traditional evangelical colleges but on courses and in non-evangelical colleges where there is generally a much broader spectrum of Anglicanism present and encouraged.

Women and men in evangelicalism

An even more interesting and a rather disturbing situation is once again uncovered when the figures are subjected to analysis based on gender. Within the traditional evangelical colleges the proportion of male and female ordinands has been fairly consistently 70% men to 30% women. What is more, these cumulative figures cover a great range and some fluctuation over the time. As already noted, just over half the ordinands at Cranmer Hall are women and it has had a good gender balance for a number of years. St John's has also consistently had about 40% female ordinands. In all the other evangelical colleges, however, women are usually only between one in three and one in five of their ordinands while Oak Hill has never had more than two women ordinands training at it in any year.

When these figures are placed in the context discussed above, the disparity is even starker. This year there are just over 100 women ordinands in the evangelical colleges but over 250 men. This means that although roughly two-thirds of all ordinands in residential training and over a quarter of all ordinands in any year are training in the six evangelical colleges, the figures are quite different when comparing men and women. The evangelical colleges this year will train 73% of men in colleges and 43% of all male ordinands. In contrast they will train only 58% of women in colleges (a fall from over 60% in most recent years) and an astonishingly small 18% of all women ordinands. A further interesting fact is that Oak Hill, the most conservative of the evangelical colleges, is currently training 25% of all the men in the six evangelical colleges (and almost 20% of all men in all colleges) and Wycliffe Hall a further 20%. Almost inevitably these are also the two evangelical colleges (along with Trinity) that currently have the lowest proportion of female students among their ordinands. In other words, a large number of men coming out of evangelical colleges have been trained in a predominantly male culture and had a relatively limited or almost non-existent experience of women ordinands in the course of their training. This must raise questions as to how well they are being prepared to work with women clergy, including women in senior posts.

While any conclusions from this data must be tentative, the cumulative effect of these patterns is that very few women clergy in the Church of England are being shaped by a distinctively evangelical training and that evangelical networks which are based around formation in evangelical theological colleges will remain male-dominated. Unless concerted action is taken to resist these forces, they will help to perpetuate the increasingly false (but still widely expressed) view that it is hard to find good evangelical women clergy (especially when looking for speakers or trainers at conferences) and that women clergy are overwhelmingly more theologically liberal.

In this issue

The aim of *Anvil* is to encourage clear and creative thinking and practice in theology and mission and our opening article from leading theologian Alister McGrath does this by considering the challenges we face today in the task of apologetics. The journal also seeks to engage constructively with other Christian traditions and Martin Davie's article offers an excellent introduction to the recent Anglican-Roman Catholic report on Mary and an evangelical perspective on its claims. As an evangelical Anglican journal, the identity of Anglicanism is a serious concern and Graham Tomlin here offers a readable and challenging vision of Anglican values based on the central features of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformers. Finally, we try to resource debates within evangelicalism and Anglicanism. With controversy likely in coming years over women bishops, we publish the differing perspectives of Anne Dyer and Clare Hendry on two important recent evangelical studies on women in authority.

As we were going to press we heard news of the death of the Venerable George Marchant, one of the founders of *Anvil* and the first Chair of the Editorial Board. Anne Dyer, the Assistant Editor, who joined the Board during his Chairmanship, offers a short personal tribute on p15.

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