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Does Higher Education change the faith of Anglicans and Methodists preparing for church ministries through a course validated by a UK university?

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**Abstract**

Churches often validate their ministry training through Higher Education (HE) institutions in order to assure the academic quality of their awards. Although academic progress is carefully assessed, and churches have long debated formational aspects of ministry training, there has been little quantitative work that examines whether exposure to HE changes the faith of students. This study reports on the effects on various aspects of faith (such as beliefs about the Bible, biblical literalism, morality, exclusivity, quest orientation, and dogmatism) of a ministry programme delivered to Anglicans and Methodists that was validated by a United Kingdom university. A sample of 91 students completed questionnaires at the start and finish of their period of study, which ranged from one to three years. There was no evidence of systematic change in any of the tested variables that coincided with the period of study.

Keywords: Church of England; conservatism; liberalism; ministry; quantitative study; training

## **Introduction**

Churches preparing people for ordained or lay ministries in the UK will often partner with universities in order to ensure candidates are exposed to education that has been validated against national quality frameworks. Higher Education (HE) is generally aimed at inculcating students in skills associated with critical thinking, and values of tolerance, openness and acceptance of differing points of view. Churches may not only value such things for their own sake, but also want to ensure that those who minister in the public gaze show skills and abilities that parallel those expected for other professions. In a society where the proportion of the population that goes to university has increased ten-fold from about 3% in the 1950s to about 33% today (Bolton, 2012; Universities UK, 2017), it would seem important that those who teach and preach understand something of the complexities of scholarly approaches to biblical study, theology, church history, and so on.

The advent of universities coincided with the rise of academic theology and biblical studies, which became separate and specialist discourses that often required personal faith to be set aside in the interests of objectivity and inclusivity. Some two decades ago, Stephen Fowl summed this up in a comment about the discipline of biblical studies: ‘While most biblical scholars of both Testaments still continue to identify themselves as Christians, they generally are required to check their theological convictions at the door when they enter the profession of biblical studies’ (Fowl, 1997, pp. xiii-xiv). The debate about faith and secular objectivity in the study of religion is not just between the Church and the Academy, but within the Academy itself. Witness, for example, the claim of Francis Watson (1994) that biblical study is an activity that only makes sense within context of the faith traditions for which the Bible is a sacred text, and that this sort of position is perfectly legitimate within a university setting; a claim that was rigorously refuted by some secular scholars (Davies, 1995). Given the way in which the study of religion in universities can often be (and is sometimes required to be) divorced from the practice of religion, it is hardly surprising that some of those involved in preparing people for ministry believe churches should eschew altogether the worldview and demands of HE quality frameworks.

For these and other reasons, the relationship between academic study and preparation for ministry has not been straightforward by any means. A central debate is how academic education for ministry relates to the need to prepare candidates for the pastoral and spiritual aspects of ministry, when critical understanding is not necessarily an asset. For some this other aspect of preparation is described as ‘formation’, a term that has a complex history in the Church of England, and which is still the cause of discussion about what it means and how it is best conducted (Archbishops' Council, 2003; Groom, 2017). While education and formation are not necessarily seen as incompatible, there has long been a sense that they may represent different sorts of aims, which may sometimes clash (Wilton, 2007a). For those who see ministry as primarily requiring qualities that foster spiritual wisdom, good interpersonal skills, and a resilience in the face of the demands of office, the period of preparation is about personal transformation and faith development that may have little to do with knowledge of academic scholarship. For others who see ministry as the ability to understand and pass on the accumulated tradition of Bible and Church, to speak faith to a complex and changing world, and to challenge and overcome the narrowness of inherited dogma, the period of preparation is about developing skills that are closely aligned with the best of scholarship. The Church of England was initially concerned mainly with preparing ordinands, and the tension between ‘secular’ style education and ‘Christian formation’ is apparent in a number of papers and official reports (Archbishops' Council, 2003; Bunting, 2009; Overend, 2007; Williams, 2013).

The ‘separatist’ position is not the majority view in the Church of England, which has for many years drawn on the expertise of universities in preparing ordinands and lay ministers. Traditionally this has been by offering validated awards through theological courses and, more recently, regional training courses. In the 1990s the HE funding arrangements in England and Wales allowed more creative collaborative partnerships to be formed between the churches and various universities: the universities provided the awards and quality control on a cost-neutral basis to churches, which were responsible for delivery of the programmes. The programmes were bench-marked against the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) frameworks, which were primarily aimed at setting out the sorts of learning

and skills expected of school leavers who embarked on theology and religious studies programmes at university (Wilton, 2007b). As access to HE expanded, the Church of England and other denominations increasingly used partnerships with universities to quality assure the training of non-ordained ministers such as lay readers, local preachers, pastoral assistants, and evangelists. The introduction of foundation degrees in 2000 (Foundation Degree Task Force, 2004) offered greater flexibility in developing degree-level programmes that took seriously the vocational nature of ministry preparation, while maintaining the expected standards of academic rigour.

By the start of the century there were a plethora of university partnerships with dioceses and regional training courses, often involving several different denominations and offering preparation for both ordained and lay ministries. The partnerships at York St John University were probably typical, involving several regional dioceses, several different denominations (Church of England, Methodists, United Reformed Church, Roman Catholic, and various free churches), and offering a foundation degree and a 'top up' bachelor degree in theology and ministry. The students, numbering up to several hundred at any one time, were mainly training part-time as lay readers or local preachers, though some were training for ordained ministry. These sorts of arrangements were common in a number of universities in England and Wales until 2015 when, following the Browne Report (Browne, 2010), the government withdrew its direct funding to universities and massively increased student fees. Faced with having to pay universities for the first time, the Church of England negotiated with Durham University to validate a Common Awards programme that would be the basis of all validated ministry preparation. This marked the end of many other partnerships, including those at York St John University. Common Awards seems to have successfully allowed the Church of England and some other denominations to continue to offer validated HE as part of their preparation for ordained and lay ministries at a price that reflects the economies of scale (Higton, 2013).

The debate about the necessity for HE validation of ministerial training rumbles on, however, along with the call to make formation the cornerstone of training. Evidence for the effect of preparation on faith in the UK is rather sparse, partly because it is not easy to gather it. There have been a number of qualitative

studies that have examined the experience or effect of preparation, based on interviews with trainees, examination of the work produced by courses, or reflections from those running courses (Cornu, 2005; Heywood, 2009; John, Nixon, & Shepherd, 2018; Leach, 2010; Rowlands, 2009). These studies have provided some useful narratives and case studies that show how individuals have responded to the more formational aspects of preparation, and how they have developed (or not) the capacity for reflective practice, which has been the cornerstone of some programmes (Heywood, 2009, 2013). The drawback with such studies is that they are based on case studies and small samples, and may not give a good picture of what is the overall, average effect of education on the faith of those preparing for ministry.

There has been little or no quantitative study of this question, perhaps because this must inevitably involve some simplification, and because many of those who prepare people for ordination or other ministries are not trained in quantitative social science methodology. Quantitative approaches have the advantage of offering the possibility of measuring at least some aspects of faith (such as attitudes, orientations, and beliefs) before and after training and to assess objectively if there is any evidence of change before and after exposure to HE validated training. Academic programmes use testing to assess the development of knowledge and skills related to theology and religious studies, but they do not assess if an individual's faith is influenced by studying. This paper reports on 91 students on the York St John University's Foundation Degree in Theology and Ministry who completed questionnaires near the start of their programme and when they had completed it. Most of these students were from the Church of England, though some were Methodists. The aim was to see if being on the programme was associated with any overall shifts in some faith-related beliefs and attitudes among this sample.

### ***Faith and Higher Education***

The specific question of whether HE ministry programmes change faith is related to broader-based studies that have looked at the effects of university on students' religion. Until fairly recently the majority of studies have been in the United States where, traditionally, the majority of teenagers entering university have come from Christian families and were likely to have attended church fairly frequently. The

assumption by some sociologists was that exposure to HE would have a detrimental effect on religion, partly because of the education itself, and partly because of the exposure to alternative ideas and lifestyles. University education optimises the discourse of Modernity, which is seen by some sociologists as one of the underlying drivers of secularisation in the West (Bruce, 2002). In theory, developing the capacity for critical rationality at university will tend to make students question their beliefs, especially those associated with ‘miraculous’ events. Those who started with narrow, dogmatic beliefs might become less dogmatic and more questioning about the faith they received in childhood. The overall effect may be a loss of faith, evident in reduced affiliation, reduced attendance at services, and uncertainty about central beliefs of the Christian faith.

A review of the evidence for such effects of HE on the faith of American college students found that it did not fully support such long-held assumptions (Mayrl & Oeur, 2009). The majority of college students maintained some sort of religious affiliation, albeit sometimes at a superficial level. There is little clear evidence to show that college has a detrimental effect on student religious beliefs, and those changes that have been observed might be due to demographic factors shared with those who do not attend college (Mayrl & Uecker, 2011; Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). A similar conclusion emerged from a detailed study of Christian students attending UK universities: leaving home and gaining autonomy may change the way that religion is expressed or religious identity understood, without necessarily leading to a complete loss of faith (Guest, Aune, Sharma, & Warner, 2013; Sharma & Guest, 2013).

This lack of overall effect of education on religion is evident in specific areas of belief, such as those related to creationism and evolution. For example, Baker (2013) found little or no effect of education on creationist beliefs in a nationally representative sample from the United States. There was some evidence that education may simply reinforce the prevailing beliefs of conservative or liberal positions. A similar effect was also evident among churchgoers in the UK (Village & Baker, 2018), where rejection of evolution was related to education levels among liberals, but not among conservatives. In a similar fashion, Village (2007) found that whereas Anglo-catholic or broad-church members of the Church of England showed

declining biblical literalism with increasing exposure to HE, there was no such effect among evangelicals. Interestingly, the same trends were apparent for laity and clergy, with the latter having levels of literalism that were no different from laity from the same traditions with the same level of education.

These studies of creationism and literalism used specific religious beliefs to assess the effects of education, which is appropriate when looking at strongly religious groups because changes in affiliation or attendance are unlikely. What were not tested were more general markers of faith orientation or how beliefs are held. Psychologists have long used measures of orientation based on notion of intrinsic and extrinsic religion (Allport & Ross, 1967), and its subsequent development to include a quest orientation (Batson & Ventris, 1982). The latter might be useful in the context HE validated ministry programmes because it refers to faith that is open to the possibility of questioning and change. Similarly, Rokeach's idea of dogmatic beliefs (Rokeach, 1960), characterised by close-mindedness and unwillingness to question may be useful because HE aims specifically to challenge that sort of thinking, be it religious or otherwise.

### ***Research Question***

The overall research question was whether students enrolled on a university-validated foundation degree programme in theology and ministry as part of their preparation for church ministries showed any systematic changes in attitudes, orientations or beliefs related to the Christian faith before and after being on the programme. Given the evidence reviewed above, the working hypothesis would be that there will be no change, or change may be more likely among those who see themselves as belonging to more liberal than conservative traditions.

### **Method**

#### ***The Programme***

York St John University is a small Anglican-foundation University in the north of England, that gained its charter in 2006, having previously been a college linked to

Leeds University since 1975, and a Church of England teacher-training college before that. The Foundation Degree Theology and Ministry was delivered from 2003 until 2016, when the final students either transferred to another university or completed their award. The programme aims included statements such as ‘To produce a learning experience which encourages open, rational and disciplined study within an environment of respect and tolerance for people and their diverse Christian and religious beliefs and practices’, which reflected the desire to expose students to critical perspectives on the Christian faith. A wide range of modules were available to allow flexibility for the needs of different partners, but all students were required to do some modules in Christian theology and biblical studies. The module learning outcomes were benchmarked against the prevailing QAA benchmarks for HE in theology and religious studies (QAA, 2014). Typically those for Level 1 (equivalent to Level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework, EQF) referred to mainly descriptive aspects of learning, while those of Level 2 or 3 (EQF 5 or 6) referred mainly to the ability to critically analyse, though criticality was encouraged at all stages of the programme.

The majority of students on the programme during the study period (2010-2016) were part-time and preparing to be lay readers in Church of England dioceses or lay preachers in Methodist circuits in Yorkshire. Typically, lay readers would complete Level 1 in two years, be licenced, and then many would continue to complete two more years to gain their FD award. A few of these might then spend a further two years completing the BA Theology and Ministry.

### *Sample*

Questionnaires were sent to all 453 students on the programme in 2010 and 173 (38%) agreed to participate. In subsequent years until 2016, questionnaires were sent to all those starting on the programme and all those who were finishing. A total of 312 students completed at least one questionnaire of which 91 completed two and these formed the sample for this study. Of the 91 students, 65% were women, 7% were aged less than 40, 26% were in their 40s, 36% in their 50s, and 31% in their 60s. In terms of where they lived, 31% were rural, 25% small town, 32% suburban, and 12% urban/inner city. In terms of education prior to coming on the programme, 65%

already had a university degree at undergraduate or postgraduate level as their highest qualification, but 82% had no formal training in theology or religious studies beyond school.

### *Instruments*

Participants were asked to include their student identification numbers on both starting and finishing questionnaires, and these were used to pair questionnaires from the same student. The need to do this was explained carefully to students, who were required to sign separate consent forms to show they understood that complete anonymity was not possible in a longitudinal study of this nature. Starter and finisher questionnaires were not identical, but did include the same instruments used to assess various aspects of faith. All were Likert scales with five responses ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

The *Bible scale* (Village, 2007, 2016) was a 12-item scale that assessed liberal versus conservative beliefs about the Bible. It has been widely used elsewhere in samples of Anglicans and other dominations, where alpha reliabilities are invariably above .90. High scores indicated belief that the Bible is inerrant or infallible, that it reveals exclusive truth about God, that it is literally true, and is the final authority in matters of faith and conduct. Alpha reliability for 210 students who completed a starter questionnaire in this study was .91.

The *literalism scale* was a 10-item scale listing events from various parts of the Bible (Village, 2005, 2007, 2012). Participants were asked to indicate if they thought each event happen or if it was a fictional story. The scale has been used on samples of Anglicans and other dominations, where alpha reliabilities were above .90. High scores indicated a literal belief in historical and miraculous accounts in the Bible. Alpha reliability in this study was .92.

The *morality scale* was a 6-item that assessed liberal versus conservative beliefs about issues such as cohabitation, divorce, abortion and homosexuality. A high score indicated conservative views about morality, and alpha reliability in this study was .85.

The *exclusivity scale* was a 6-item scale that assessed pluralist versus exclusivist positions on Christianity. It included items 'Christianity is the only true religion' and 'You don't have to be a Christian to go to heaven'. It was coded such that a high score indicated an exclusive stance on Christianity. Alpha reliability in this study was .86.

Religious orientation was assessed by the New Indices of Religious Orientation, NIRO (Francis, 2007). The 9-item subscales measured intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest orientations and had reliabilities in this study were .68, .60, and .69 respectively. *Quest orientation* was the one that was most likely to be influenced by HE, and only this subscale was used in the analysis. It is characterised by a willingness to embrace complexity in religion, to admit doubts and the possibility of change, and a willingness to question assumptions about the transcendent (Batson & Ventris, 1982).

The *dogmatism scale* was an 11-item scale based on the DOG scale (Altemeyer, 2002). The original 20-item scale, included on the questionnaire, had items coded in both an open- and closed-minded direction. Factor analysis suggested that in this sample they might behave slightly differently, and only the closed-minded statements were used here. Alpha reliability in this study was .86.

Other variables were included as controls and to test if changes in the dependent variables differed between groups of students. General theological stance was assessed using the LIBCON scale, a 7-point semantic differential scale measuring liberal versus conservative belief that has been widely used in studies of Anglicans and other denominations (Randall, 2005; Village, 2018; Village & Baker, 2018). Scores were categorised into three groups Liberal (scores 1-2), Middle (3-5), and Conservative (6-7) after Village (2018). Education (before starting the programme) was assessed on a six point scale that was used to identify those with university degrees (= 1) and those without (= 0). Also include were sex (1 = male, 2 = female) and number of years of study on the programme. Most students studied from two to four years, though a few completed only one year between surveys, either because they left the programme earlier, or because they completed their first questionnaire in

their penultimate years. For the purpose of analysis number of years of study was coded as 1, 2 or 3+ years.

### *Analyses*

The first step in the analysis was to explore the data to see how the various measures of faith related to sex, prior education, and general theological stance. The basic design of the study was to test participants before and after the ‘treatment’ (i.e. their programme of study), which effectively makes each subject their own control, and reduces the effects of between-subject variations (Pituch & Stevens, 2016). The complication was that participants varied in their exposure to the programme, with some studying for one year, some for two, and some for three, so it was necessary to first test to see if the length of study was related to the extent of any change, and to control for this in the analysis if it did. The next step was to test if there were any changes in scores between starting and finishing study. The final step was to test if the direction or extent of change varied between participants in different groups. This tested the idea that studying at HE level may have more effect on the faith of liberals than of conservatives. The central analyses were done using the repeated measures option of the General Linear Model procedure in SPSS (IBM\_SPSS, 2013).

### **Results**

There were no significance differences in faith measures at the start of study between either men or women, or between those with previous degrees and those without (Table 1). As expected, however, scores varied significantly by theological stance, with liberals scoring lower on all scales except for quest, where they scored higher. This is as predicted from previous studies of these scales in relation to different denominations or church traditions. The LIBCON scale functions as a marker of general theological liberalism versus conservatism. Different churches with varying theological traditions were linked to the programme partnership, and this was reflected in the variations in beliefs and attitudes among the student body.

The next step was to see if the extent or direction of change were related to the number of years on the programme. If the learning on the programme was influencing

faith outcomes we would expect that those who learnt for longer showed greater change. This was tested by introducing a between-subjects effect (number of study years) in the repeated measures analyses for each faith measure. Results for the Bible scale are shown in Table 2 as an illustration. Although scores were slightly higher, on average, for the few students who completed only one year of study, these differences were not statistically significant. Furthermore, there were no significance differences in the extent of changes between those who studies for 1, 2, or 3 years. Similar results were found for all the other faith variables, and there was no evidence that the number of years on the programme influenced the changes in faith measures. This meant that students could be treated together irrespective of the number of years they studied on the programme.

The repeated measures analysis of variance was then applied to all six measures of faith to see if any of them showed significant change between the start and finish of the programme (Table 3, 'All' column). Overall there was very little, if any change, in faith measures, the only statistically significant effect being on the Bible scale, with finishing scores being slightly lower, on average, than at the start (33.2 versus 32.0,  $p < .05$ ).

The final step was to see if changes varied between different groups. There were no effects of sex, prior education level, or theological stance (Table 3 illustrates the latter effect only). Although liberals and conservatives had different starting levels on each of the faith measures, they showed the same lack of significant change over the course of their study.

## **Discussion**

The lack of any discernible effect of being on the programme on any of the six measures of faith tested did not mean that all students were left unchanged by the experience of study in HE. There may have been systematic changes in other aspects of faith not covered by the measures used here, but which are hard to quantify. For example, both questionnaires contained other items that attempted to operationalise Fowler's stages of faith construct (Fowler, 1981), but this proved difficult to do reliably using quantitative methods, as others have found (Parker, 2006, 2010), so these measures were not included in this analysis. For those aspects that could be

reliably assessed, some individuals did show marked increase or decrease in some scores, as evidenced by the range of differences between student start and finish scores: for the Bible scale, differences in start and finish scores ranged from -14 to +15, for literalism -15 to +12, for morality -9 to +8, for exclusivity -14 to +10, for quest -16 to +12, and for dogmatism -12 to +15. The point is that these differences were normally distributed around zero, so the *average* change across the sample was minimal. Attempts to explain the variations in score changes between students failed insofar as they did not seem to be related to a student's sex, previous education experience, general theological stance, or how long they studied on the programme. There may be other factors that would explain variations in change between students, but these would require more detailed analysis incorporating other predictor variables. The main purpose of this paper was to examine the extent of any systematic changes in faith for those who took part in the programme.

The lack of any effect is consistent with the lack of effect of general education on beliefs such as biblical literalism (Village, 2007) or creationism (Baker, 2013; Village & Baker, 2018). Prior work suggested that theological liberals might be more likely than theological conservatives to show some changes as a result of study, but this was not evident in these results. In some ways this may be comforting for theological educators, who may feel that their task is to impart knowledge and ministry skills, rather than to change or subvert someone's basic attitudes toward faith. Theological education in university is not about converting conservatives into liberals, and fears expressed by some conservatives that this is precisely what it tends to do seem, on this programme at least, to have been unfounded. On the other hand, some educators might be disappointed to see no evidence of an increase in quest orientation or a decrease in dogmatism. These two faith orientations should be related to the basic aims of HE to shape enquiring, questioning minds that are open to new ideas and willing to change. On average, theological liberals embraced quest and rejected dogmatic belief to a slightly greater extent than conservatives at both the start and the finish of their study, but neither group were likely to change in the intervening period. These positions may be related to more fundamental aspects of individual differences, such as personality, which can shape the way that faith is held and expressed (Francis, 2005; Village, 2013; Village, Francis, & Craig, 2009). These are

not necessarily good or bad, but maybe just different. The positive side of high quest and low dogmatism is flexibility in belief and the possibility of adapting to changing mores in church and society. The negative side is difficulty in holding onto essential truths and a tendency to be easily swayed by popular opinion. The positive side of low quest and high dogmatism is the comfort of certainty and clarity about what is right and wrong. The negative side is an unwillingness to hear or understand other points of view and difficulty in adapting faith as life and society change.

This limited study has shown how it is possible to assess the effects of HE programmes in theology and ministry on at least some aspects the faith of students. Clearly it is also possible to use qualitative methods to explore narratives of change among students on similar programmes, and to identify some of the things associated with such change. Such methods offer nuance but will invariably bias towards change, and the in-depth analysis of particular individuals and their interpretations of how ministry formation shaped their faith. Such accounts must be balanced against larger-scale studies that ask the broader question of whether there are discernible shifts in attitudes and beliefs across whole cohorts of students.

The rather low sample size in this study was partly because of the well-known difficulty in getting participants to complete questionnaires at widely differing points in time. It was also limited because the programmes were curtailed as a result of changes in where churches went for validation. It might be worth starting a similar programme of study among students on the Common Awards programmes validated at Durham University. If this was done then it could be possible to explore different aspects of faith development or change than those tested here, including even some related to aspects of formation suggested by others (Harrison, 2014). It would also be useful to look in more detail at students who are being prepared for different sorts of ministries. This study opens the debate by claiming that, in some key aspects of faith at one particular moment, there was little measurable effect of a ministry preparation programme. Is this a one-off aberration, or is it generally true that, on average, people leave ministry preparation with pretty much the same sorts of beliefs and attitudes they started with? If ministry preparation is 'formation', what is being formed and is there any general direction of travel among cohorts being prepared for ministry?

Churches that validate their programmes with universities demonstrate a strong commitment to trying to improve the academic knowledge and skills-base of their potential ministers. Universities put a lot of effort into trying to accurately and fairly assess the levels and changes in these academic competencies. Churches have also made a great deal about the need to foster other sorts of skills and gifts beyond the academic. Preparation for ministry is rightly understood to be a journey in faith and the formation of appropriate ways in which that faith is understood and lived. If HE programmes are not changing the basic faith stance of students, are they also having little effect on formational aspects of ministry development? It may be time to try and answer this question with more systematic investigation than has been the case to date.

Table 1 Mean (SD) scores at the start of the programme by sex, education, and theological stance

	Sex		Education: has degree		LIBCON scale			
	Male	Female	No	Yes	Liberal	Middle	Conservative	
Bible	32.7 (12.7)	33.4 (9.1)	32.2 (10.5)	35.9 (9.7)	27.7 (9.4)	32.9 (8.3)	41.2 (9.2)	***
Literalism	38.0 (9.6)	37.4 (8.7)	37.0 (9.3)	38.7 (8.5)	33.4 (8.6)	37.0 (8.9)	43.8 (6.0)	***
Morality	17.1 (7.1)	17.0 (5.1)	17.0 (5.9)	16.9 (5.6)	13.8 (4.3)	17.2 (5.3)	21.2 (5.7)	***
Exclusivity	19.7 (6.5)	20.8 (6.4)	20.3 (6.6)	20.6 (5.9)	15.8 (5.2)	21.6 (4.8)	25.1 (5.8)	***
Quest	31.3 (4.9)	32.0 (4.8)	31.5 (4.7)	32.5 (5.0)	34.6 (4.6)	31.0 (3.6)	28.8 (4.3)	***
Dogmatism	29.2 (9.6)	30.8 (7.1)	29.8 (8.0)	31.7 (8.0)	26.4 (7.6)	32.9 (5.2)	32.1 (9.7)	**

Note.  $N = 91$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 2 Changes in Bible scale scores at the start and finish of the programme in relation to number of years of study

Number of study years	<i>N</i>	Mean (SD) Bible scale score at:	
		Start	Finish
1	6	36.8 (12.9)	36.3 (11.9)
2	44	31.4 (11.1)	30.5 (11.3)
3+	41	34.5 (9.0)	32.9 (9.9)

Analysis of variance	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Change through study	21.7	1	21.7	1.36	.247
Change x Number of years	7.2	2	3.6	0.23	.799
Error	1403.3	88	15.9		

Table 3 Mean (SD) scores at the start and finish of the programme, overall and by theological stance

Scale	All		Liberal		Middle		Conservative	
	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	Start	Finish
	N = 91		34		33		24	
Bible	33.2(10.4)	32.0(10.7)*	27.7(9.4)	26.3(8.9)	32.9(8.3)	30.7(9.0)	41.2(9.2)	41.7(8.8)
Literalism	37.4(9.0)	37.8(8.5)	33.4(8.6)	33.2(8.0)	37.0(8.9)	38.2(8.0)	43.8(6.0)	43.9(5.4)
Morality	17.0(5.8)	16.6(5.3)	13.8(4.3)	13.3(3.5)	17.2(5.3)	16.3(5.2)	21.2(5.7)	21.7(3.8)
Exclusivity	20.4(6.4)	20.7(6.5)	15.8(5.2)	16.4(5.6)	21.6(4.8)	21.6(5.9)	25.1(5.8)	25.8(4.1)
Quest	31.8(4.8)	32.0(4.3)	34.6(4.6)	34.1(3.2)	31.0(3.6)	31.3(4.4)	28.6(4.5)	29.8(4.2)
Dogmatism	30.3(8.0)	30.2(7.7)	26.4(7.6)	27.0(8.6)	32.9(5.2)	31.7(5.7)	32.1(9.7)	32.7(7.5)

Note. \*  $p < .05$ .

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