It has long been recognised that the medieval secular colleges of Oxford and Cambridge made, in several areas, a contribution to university development disproportionate to their size.¹ This is nowhere better exemplified than in the field of higher faculty studies, the promotion of which was the original raison d'être for the English secular colleges; with one or two notable exceptions,² the secular colleges were designed, not to furnish a general arts education, but an amalgam of advanced arts and superior faculty disciplines, the permutations in each college varying with the predilections of the founder. Of particular importance to an understanding of the intellectual patterns of medieval Oxford and Cambridge is the balance maintained especially between theology and law as the most prominent subjects apart from arts. In this regard, the colleges are not always representative of the main directional trends in the studies of the secular scholars in the English Universities; and, especially at Cambridge in the fifteenth century, there seems to be evidence of a positive collegiate reaction against the prevalence of law.

Quantitative analyses of academic personnel at both Oxford and Cambridge, employing a computerised investigation of data where a manual approach would scarcely be feasible, have, in recent years, enabled us to make overall assumptions about the relative order of magnitude of the disciplines pursued in the medieval English Universities as a whole and in their component parts in the form of colleges and halls or hostels.³ The late Dr

² On undergraduate contingents in English secular colleges before 1400 see Cobban, The King's Hall within the University of Cambridge in the later Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1969), ch. 2 and Cobban, “Decentralized Teaching in the Medieval English Universities”, History of Education, v (1976), 195-6, 198.
A.B. Emden's *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500* and his companion *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500*, together with his manuscript addenda, have provided the essential data for these exercises. The analysis of this material has been greatly aided by a computerised breakdown according to a number of selected categories. Mr T. H. Aston, the Director of the multi-volume *History of the University of Oxford*, currently in progress, has presented many of his statistical findings, for both Oxford and Cambridge, in terms of total numbers or percentages over a century or longer-term span; for example, the total number of university theologians produced before c. 1500 or the percentage output of theologians by a college over one or more centuries. The method which I have previously used and which I employ in this article is the 'generational' approach. By this is meant that print-out was acquired for all known members of Oxford and Cambridge colleges and halls or hostels up to c. 1500, along with their known degrees or areas of study; this material was processed for every institution by date of member residence by generations of twenty years each. The results, insofar as the evidence will permit, give an insight into the higher faculty mix of the scholars of a specified institution in a selected generation of twenty years. In this mode of reckoning, many scholars fall within more than one generation; these, and their degrees or areas of study, have been included for each generation in which they occur so that a 'moving' generational profile or series of snapshots of the known superior faculty concentrations in each generation is achieved. By contrast, Mr Aston has counted scholars only once according to the generation in which they first appear. This has the effect of ironing out overlap, making possible the compilation of straightforward totals or percentages over a selected time scale. There are, however, some advantages to be gained through the 'generational' approach.


4 Articles by Aston in previous note.
5 This computerised data for Oxford and Cambridge, which is basic material for this article and which I have analysed manually, was obtained through my association with the project for the *History of the University of Oxford* to whose Director, Mr T.H. Aston of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, I am indebted.
especially when monitoring the distribution of studies within the units of the university as opposed to the university as a whole. Whatever the case, both methods are valid and complementary and when each independently would seem to confirm major trends some satisfaction may be derived from this form of quantitative investigation. I have arranged in an Appendix the summary ‘generational’ position of the Cambridge secular colleges with respect to theology and law in both the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; that is to say, the figures given show the average collegiate percentage output per generation of twenty years over the two periods 1300 to 1399 and 1400 to 1499, and these statistics will be referred to frequently later in the article.

Because of the restricted and variable nature of the samples involved in this type of quantitative work the resultant patterns concerning the academic shape of medieval Oxford and Cambridge may be advanced in only the broadest of terms; nevertheless, the replacement of the intuitive generalisations of previous generations of scholars of academic history by rather firmer conclusions resting upon a substantial body of distilled numerical or biographical data has introduced to the subject a degree of measurement not accessible to the pioneering historians of the medieval universities.

From available evidence, it appears that theology was the largest single faculty at medieval Oxford if civil and canon law are treated as separate faculties for this reckoning. But if civilians and canonists are taken together then they probably outstripped theologians by a not inconsiderable margin; and disregarding those who studied both laws, it is likely that civilians outnumbered canonists by just over a third. In terms of single faculties, however, theology predominated even if that lead was more pronounced in the case of the regulars than with the seculars.

6 See Appendix, below.
9 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
10 Ibid., p. 11.
Whereas about nine-tenths of the regulars were engaged in theology and only about one tenth in law, seculars studying theology exceeded secular civilians by only approximately 2 per cent, although, leaving aside those who followed both laws, secular civilians and canonists combined accounted for 68 per cent of known graduates.\textsuperscript{11} When this university disciplinary framework relative to theology and law is set against the pattern of collegiate output some arresting observations may be made.

It is clear that the Oxford colleges absorbed only a very small proportion of the total academic population;\textsuperscript{12} nevertheless, from the foundation of the magnificently conceived New College in 1379, this was an increasing proportion and it comprised, along with the company of hall principals and mendicant orders, some of the ablest and most influential members of the university. Taken as a group, the Oxford secular colleges do indeed reflect the position of theology as the foremost faculty; in all but two of the ten colleges founded between the late thirteenth century and 1500 theology was the dominant area of study.\textsuperscript{13} But whereas, as on the university plane, theologians held only the barest of leads over civil lawyers and were superseded by civilians and canonists combined, in the majority of the secular colleges theologians were, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in a numerical superiority. In the initial phase of collegiate development in the late thirteenth century about four-fifths of the members of secular colleges were theologians as compared with lawyers who amounted to about a fifth; in the fourteenth century well over half of the college members were theologians with lawyers accounting for about two-fifths; and in the fifteenth century the college theologians fell to between two-fifths and a half while lawyers had edged over the 50 per cent mark.\textsuperscript{14}

These broad proportions, however, mask the degree to which theology predominated in eight of the ten secular colleges because the figures incorporate, from the late fourteenth century, the

\textsuperscript{11} Loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{13} My own findings in this regard, which will be published in vol. 2 of the \textit{History of the University of Oxford}, are in close agreement with those of Mr Aston (art. cit., p. 13), although, as explained in the text, our methods of approach are rather different.
\textsuperscript{14} Aston, loc. cit.
sizeable legal complements of New College and All Souls. Taking the eight secular colleges of Merton, Balliol, University, Exeter, Oriel, Queen’s, Lincoln and Magdalen, and reckoning the number of theologians in each college on a century basis, the average collegiate percentage of theologians would seem to be in the region of 70 per cent.\(^\text{15}\) This accords well with the results obtained when the higher faculty mix is analysed for every college, not on a century basis, but by generations of twenty years each. Investigation by generations reveals that in the eight specified colleges theology was consistently in a very substantial lead over all disciplines, with civil and canon law minority areas of study, having a patchy and modest significance at certain periods in this collegiate grouping.\(^\text{16}\) It is abundantly clear, then, that while the Oxford secular colleges did indeed encapsulate the status of theology as the largest single faculty, the collegiate differential between theology and law was heavily at odds with that prevalent for seculars in the university as a whole. This theological concentration in the colleges was in general accord with the statutory provisions of the founders\(^\text{17}\) and is a salutary reminder of the absence of co-ordinated educational planning in a medieval university whose development was haphazard and whose directional growth was liable to be affected by the individual academic value judgements of major benefactors.

In this matter of theological preference on the part of the Oxford college founders, however, it seems that, on occasion, the will of the benefactor could be frustrated and with results of considerable academic consequence. William of Wykeham had designed New College, founded in 1379, for a warden and seventy fellows or scholars, augmented by ten priests and three clerks for the chapel and sixteen boy choristers.\(^\text{18}\) Ten of his fellows were to study civil law and ten canon law, and elaborate regulations were prescribed for the maintenance of these quotas; two were to be permitted to study medicine provided that a university regent existed in this discipline; and two were to be allowed to specialise

\(^\text{15}\) Derived from the figures given by Aston, loc. cit.

\(^\text{16}\) Conclusions based upon the ‘generational’ approach employed in my forthcoming contribution to the History of the University of Oxford.

\(^\text{17}\) The statutes of the ten secular Oxford colleges founded before 1500 are given in Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford (3 vols., ed. by the Queen’s Commissioners, Oxford and London, 1853), i, ii. (Cited hereafter as Statutes).

\(^\text{18}\) For the statutory composition of New College see Statutes, i. ch. 5, 2-4.
in astronomy, although there was no such separate degree at Oxford. It is apparent that the majority of the fellows were expected to study arts before proceeding to theology. The many publications on Wykeham and New College have assumed that the academic proportions within the medieval college were in general conformity with the statutory blueprint; and the recent commemorative volume on New College has not dissented from this view. Computerised analysis of New College members, however, about whom higher faculty study is known, by generations of twenty years and extending from 1380 to 1499 reveals that between 1380 and 1459 either civilians or those engaged in both laws as compared with theologians were in the ratio of approximately 2:1; and between 1460 and 1499 the ratio was in the region of 3:1. In percentage terms theology, in each of the twenty-year generations between 1380 and 1499 accounted successively for only 29, 30, 30, 32, 26 and 24 per cent of the recorded graduate members. Such a pattern is dramatically contrary to the statutory quotas whereby civil lawyers were to comprise only one seventh of the fellowship. It is true that in every generation the proportion of members whose area of graduate study is known was less than half of the sample. Nevertheless, since the number of civilians and those who studied both laws is consistently and decisively higher than the number of theologians, this would appear to be a circumstance of key import. It is probable that the turnover in lawyers was more rapid than the case with theologians: but the data would certainly indicate that the college permitted, and right from its earliest years, a substantially larger complement of civilians or students in both laws than the de iure statutory provisions. In his list of Oxford colleges and halls of c. 1440-50, John Rous, the Warwickshire antiquary, categorised New College

19 From many examples, this is the assumption in G.H. Moberly, _Life of William of Wykeham_ (Winchester and London, 1887), ch. 9; also in the section on New College in H. Rashdall, _The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages_ (3 vols., ed. by F.M. Powicke and A.B. Emden, Oxford, 1936), iii. 213-223, and in H. Rashdall and R.S. Rait, _New College_ (London, 1901).


21 Statistics from my work on the _History of the University of Oxford_.

22 Ibid.
as a centre for theology and law, whereas it would be more accurate to describe it as a focus for law, with theology as the supportive branch of study. Indeed, between 1380 and 1500 New College and All Souls from the late 1430s were overwhelmingly the main collegiate sources for civil lawyers in Oxford. By contrast, New College's output of canonists fell far short of the statutory provision for ten at any one time. By generations the number of canonists, leaving aside those who studied both laws, ranged from zero between 1380 and 1399 to nine between 1420 and 1439. Expressed another way, of at least 300 lawyers produced by New College by c. 1500 only 16 or 5 per cent were canonists. The comparable figure for All Souls was 8 per cent. Although these proportions are augmented when those who studied both laws are included, nonetheless, the production of unadulterated canonists consists from the principal legal colleges of late medieval Oxford is not at all impressive.

The statutory distortion in favour of law at New College, detectable in the first twenty years of its existence, is all the more intriguing because the founder, not himself a university graduate, took an active interest in his college until his death in 1404. The earliest extant statutes of 1400 were not the first to be issued, and it is clear that they embody a good deal of collective experience, the outgrowth of an initial period of trial and error. There are strong indications that some of Wykeham's original statutes had not been universally obeyed by the fellowship. But the subversion of the fundamental statutory balance authorised between theology and law is of such major concern that it is difficult to understand why the founder, during his lifetime, and the wardens of New College of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries acquiesced in this radical departure from the projected academic plan. One can point to the circumstance that, by the time of the foundation of New College, a degree in civil or canon law or in both had come to

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23 A copy of Rous's list is edited by A. Clark in 'Survey of the Antiquities of the City of Oxford' composed in 1661-6 by Anthony Wood, i (Oxf. Hist. Soc., xv, 1889), 638-41: the description of New College is given at p. 638.
24 As in n. 21.
26 Loc. cit.
27 E.g. Moberly, op. cit., ch. 9; Storey, op. cit., pp. 8-9.
supersede a qualification in theology as a prerequisite for a successful career in ecclesiastical administration; and secular government had long preferred graduates in law. It may well be that New College fell victim to utilitarian career pressures which would tend to promote law at the expense of theology. This is perhaps a reasonably good speculation, but if a volte-face did occur at New College in response to market forces then this was repeated to any marked degree in only one of the other Oxford colleges where the promotion of theological study was ascribed the main emphasis.

Archbishop Chichele's college of All Souls, founded in 1437 or 1438, may be regarded as Oxford's legal counterpart to New College. In the statutes of 1443 the original complement of twenty fellows was increased to forty of whom twenty-four were to be artists who might proceed to theology, and sixteen were to be jurists embracing both civil and canon law, which hitherto was the largest legal contingent for an Oxford college. It was also prescribed that every fellow who was a master of arts must take priest's orders within two years of completing his necessary regency, the enforced spell of teaching imposed by the university on all new masters of arts, and every bachelor of civil law, who did not take a doctoral degree within five years, must proceed to the priesthood. Although the statutes allow for up to twenty-four fellows in arts who are to engage in theology and only sixteen legal fellows, an analysis of the higher faculty studies pursued by members of All Souls in each generation of twenty years between the 1430s and 1499 demonstrates that in each generation civil law or both laws were decisively in the ascendant, the ratio of civil law or of both laws to theology being 5:1 before 1439, 6:1 in the generation 1440-59, 8:1 in the generation 1460-79, and 6:1 in the generation 1480-99. In percentage terms, theologians, in each of these generations, constituted respectively only 14, 12, 10 and 12 per cent of the total recorded graduates. In this particular analysis information concerning higher faculty studies is known

30 Statutes, i, ch. 7, 12.
31 Ibid., i, ch. 7, 39-40.
32 Figures from my work on the History of the University of Oxford.
33 Ibid.
for about half of the members in each generational sample, and this would seem to lend a fair reliability to these statistics. As at New College, it is probable that the turnover in civilians was more rapid than for theologians, but it is nonetheless clear that civil law was the dominant discipline at All Souls, either by itself or combined with canon law. This is an outcome which could hardly have been predicted from the statutes since they postulate that, at any given time, theologians are to exceed lawyers by a third. Not only was civil law the main academic concentration at All Souls, but the broader conclusion emerges that New College and All Souls were consistently and by an overwhelming lead the most prominent colleges for civilian studies in Oxford before 1500.

In explanation of the statutory upset at All Souls one can only repeat the speculation made about New College that the lucrative and career advantages of law over theology had worked a substantial deflection from the constitution as envisaged by Archbishop Chichele.34 It is perhaps surprising that worldly prelates of the stamp of Wykeham and Chichele, who was a notable ecclesiastical lawyer and civil law graduate of New College, had not, from the stage of the drawing board, turned their foundations more generously towards the legal requirements of the age. Apart from the important personal chantry motives underlying their colleges, it is manifest that both founders were interested more in university education as a utilitarian training for professional service than for the purposes of disinterested scholarship. For this reason, it is not easy to understand why they had attempted to give a special prominence to theology at a time when civil and canon law degrees were accorded a superior vocational value.

The fact that New College and All Souls took a different academic course from that charted by their founders was not much reflected in the secular colleges of pre-fifteenth-century vintage which maintained their primacy in theology through to 1500, Queen's, however, having a noticeable number of civil lawyers in the three generations between 1380 and 1439.35 Lincoln


35 This point and the following statistics for Lincoln and Magdalen are derived from work on the History of the University of Oxford.
(1427) and Magdalen (1448), which, with All Souls, represented the sum total of Oxford's college foundations in the fifteenth century, were both predominantly theological preserves. Analysis of the discernible higher degrees or study areas of the members of Lincoln by generations between its foundation and 1499 endorses convincingly the theological character of the society as enshrined in the statutes.\textsuperscript{36} As a percentage, theology, in each of the four generations between the 1420s and 1499 comprised in turn 63, 70, 77 and 80 per cent of the recorded alumni. But it is interesting that in each generation there were a small number of fellows with either separate civil law degrees or degrees in both laws: according to the statutes, however, only one fellow at a time might study canon law,\textsuperscript{37} and nowhere is there mention of civil law. At Magdalen, theology was the principal area of study in conformity with the statutes,\textsuperscript{38} but this concentration was qualified over the fifteenth century as degrees in civil and canon law or in both laws made increasing inroads. As a percentage, theology, in the generations 1440-59, 1460-79 and 1480-99 amounted to 85, 73 and 55 per cent: the corresponding percentages for law degrees of all kinds were 15, 23 and 34 per cent. Since the statutes allowed only two or three fellows to study canon or civil law and then only by special permission,\textsuperscript{39} it is clear that there was some statutory relaxation in favour of law; but overall the theological complexion of the college was generally maintained.

It would seem reasonable to assert, then, that the secular colleges of medieval Oxford helped to reinforce the standing of theology as the largest faculty. But while the proportion of seculars engaged in theology in the colleges was substantially higher than that in the university as a whole, so the secular colleges catered only minimally for law, the number of collegiate lawyers being proportionately far smaller than non-collegiate lawyers: and if statutory intentions had been everywhere observed to the letter this imbalance would have been even more pronounced. Before the sixteenth century there were a multiplicity of halls at Oxford where lawyers formed the chief academic grouping, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that prior to c. 1500 the halls

\textsuperscript{36} Statutes, i, ch. 6, 17, 19.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., i, ch. 6, 20.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., ii, ch. 8, 5-6, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., ii, ch. 8, 6.
were more important venues for legal studies than were the colleges.\textsuperscript{40} The theological emphasis in the secular colleges was firmly complemented by the five monastic colleges and indeed by a number of halls where theology was the main focus of study.\textsuperscript{41}

The SECULAR COLLEGES OF MEDIEVAL CAMBRIDGE made a broadly comparable contribution to the overall academic context of the university, but there are some differences in emphases. Mr Aston has estimated that in the late fourteenth century theology was the largest faculty at Cambridge and that the mendicants formed by far its greatest constituent, with SECULAR THEOLOGIANS comprising perhaps only a quarter of the THEOLOGICAL TOTAL at about 10 per cent.\textsuperscript{42} LAW probably accounted for up to a third or even more of the SECULARS, about a half of whom did not progress beyond ARTS.\textsuperscript{43} The proportions for law and arts were seemingly much the same at the close of the fifteenth century;\textsuperscript{44} but with the increase in the number of SECULAR scholars, allied to the non-expansion of the regulars, the size of the faculty of theology must have been reduced and with it the influential position of the regulars, especially the mendicants, within the university. Between the late fourteenth and late fifteenth centuries the percentage of scholars engaged in theology may have fallen from about 40 per cent, of whom three-quarters were regulars, to about 15 per cent of whom only about half were regulars.

In the fourteenth century when theology was apparently the foremost faculty at Cambridge the eight SECULAR COLLEGES founded before 1400, taken as a group, certainly reflected this situation. The position may be conveniently presented by means of statistics obtained for each college expressing the average collegiate percentage output of those engaged in theological study or holders of degrees in theology per generation of twenty years extending from

\textsuperscript{40} According to the list of Oxford halls drawn up c. 1440-50 by John Rous there were 34 halls for legists: see Rous's list ed. by A. Clark, op. cit., pp. 638-41. Dr Emden has published in tabular form the number of halls in each list of the Chancellor's Registers between 1436 and 1537 together with that of Rous: A. B. Emden, "Oxford Academic Halls in the Later Middle Ages" in \textit{Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays presented to Richard William Hunt} (ed. J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson, Oxford, 1976), pp. 353 ff. at p. 355.


\textsuperscript{42} Aston, Duncan and Evans, "The Medieval Alumni of the University of Cambridge", art. cit., pp. 57 ff. and esp. p. 61.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., pp. 58-9.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., pp. 61-3.
1300 to 1399. The three leading colleges for theology were Michaelhouse, Gonville and Pembroke with generational percentages of 89, 54 and 45, although for Michaelhouse the samples in each generation are rather low. Corpus Christi and Clare were almost equal with 40 and 39 per cent; Peterhouse came next with 22 per cent; and, at the bottom of the theological league table, stood the King’s Hall with 5 and Trinity Hall with zero per cent. These figures show fairly convincingly that six of the Cambridge secular colleges of the fourteenth century, that is, if one includes Peterhouse at 22 per cent, were significant for theology in varying degrees: in general, however, they did not reach such high-level concentrations of theology as were to be found in the Oxford colleges of the same period. Nevertheless, given that only about 10 per cent of seculars were engaged in theology in the university in the fourteenth century the collective contribution of the Cambridge secular colleges to that company of scholar theologians must have been substantial, especially in view of the fact that the Cambridge hostels, in contrast to some of the Oxford halls, seem to have been of very minor import for theology.

Whereas lawyers were only marginally accommodated by the Oxford colleges before the foundation of New College, the Cambridge secular colleges before c. 1400 were moderately important legal centres. The three most significant colleges in this regard were the King’s Hall, Peterhouse and Clare. The King’s Hall, whose statutes do not specify the academic regime, produced more civil lawyers than any other college, which may be considered in keeping with its origins as an arm of the chapel royal set in the University of Cambridge and having as one of its chief aims the provision of a reservoir of educated personnel for royal

45 See Appendix, below.
46 Although the material for the Cambridge hostels is fragmentary and only a small number of scholars may be confidently assigned to hostels, my calculations indicate that out of a total of about 30 hostels identifiable at different times between 1300 and 1500 in only 14 of them is there definite evidence of theologians, the collective yield being 29, with the number of theologians per hostel ranging from 1 to 4. On Cambridge hostels see H.P. Stokes, “The Medieval Hostels of the University of Cambridge”, Cambridge Antiquarian Society (octavo publications), xlix (1924): see also the comments of Aston, “The Medieval Alumni of the University of Cambridge”, pp. 14-18, 52.
47 See Appendix, below.
48 Printed, in W. W. Rouse Ball, The King’s Scholars and King’s Hall (privately printed, Cambridge, 1917), Appendix 1.
The King's Hall's average generational percentage output of civil lawyers over the fourteenth century was 49 and 19 for canonists. Peterhouse ranks as the leading college for canon law with a generational average of 39 compared with 29 for civil law. Clare was almost equally divided between the laws, with average percentages of 16 and 18 for civil and canon law respectively. Of the remaining colleges, Trinity Hall, Pembroke and Corpus Christi produced small numbers of civilians in each generation with average percentages of 7, 7 and 4, while Michaelhouse, being wholly uninvolved with civil law, had a zero percentage; and, in the realm of canon law, Trinity Hall, Pembroke, Gonville and Michaelhouse furnished percentages of 13, 12, 8 and 3. It is therefore apparent that in the fourteenth century the Cambridge secular colleges assumed a greater prominence as legal institutions than did their Oxford equivalents. The fact that, before the establishment of New College, the King's Hall was, with Merton, the largest college in the English Universities\textsuperscript{50} would tend to underscore the value of the King's Hall as a legal focus within the university. Indeed, over the whole period from 1300 to 1499 the King's Hall produced just over a fifth of all university civilians, the average percentage King's Hall contribution to university civilian output being 22 per cent.\textsuperscript{51} This is a very notable percentage output for an individual college especially in a period when the colleges were still in the evolutionary process of establishing themselves as main constituents of the university, a movement not fully completed until the mid-sixteenth century.

The collegiate scene in fifteenth-century Cambridge reveals important academic changes characterised by a contraction in law and a concomitant marked intensification in theology. It is true that the King's Hall and Trinity Hall sustained their role as legal centres.\textsuperscript{52} The output of civilians at the King's Hall was increased slightly while that of canonists was doubled, although over the entire period from 1300 to 1499 the college's average percentage contribution to university canonist production was only 11 per

\textsuperscript{49} Cobban, \textit{The King's Hall}, esp. introduction and ch. 1.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., pp. 45-6.

\textsuperscript{51} See Cobban, "The Medieval Cambridge Colleges: a Quantitative Study of Higher Degrees to c. 1500", art. cit., p. 4, where Table 2 demonstrates the King's Hall's share in university civilians in each generation between 1320 and 1499.

\textsuperscript{52} See Appendix, below.
cent, which is half the corresponding civilian average. In the fifteenth century Trinity Hall's stake in the nurturing of civil lawyers rose twofold but that of canon lawyers was reduced marginally: between 1300 and 1499, however, there was a near equal concentration of civilians and canonists, although in terms of the generational average the latter narrowly exceeded the former. Of the new foundations of the fifteenth century King's College was the only one significant for law, and it was more prominent for canonists than for civilians: between the 1440s and 1499 it was second only to the King's Hall in respect of canon law, and for civil law it occupied the second position after the King's Hall in the two generations between 1460 and 1499. As with New College and All Souls, there is a serious discrepancy with regard to the legal strength of King's: for the statutes of the early 1440s specify that the majority of the seventy fellows or scholars are to study theology, only four being allowed to engage in canon law and two in civil law.

Apart from the King's Hall and Trinity Hall, of the colleges founded before 1400 Peterhouse, Clare, Pembroke, Gonville and Corpus Christi all exhibited parallel academic trends in the fifteenth century: that is to say, their production of lawyers was noticeably curtailed, very substantially so at Peterhouse and Clare, and the theological element was augmented quite dramatically. In the case of Peterhouse, the fourteenth-century average output per generation for theologians was 22 per cent and for the fifteenth century it was 59 per cent: the comparable figures for Clare were 39 and 76; for Pembroke 45 and 78; for Gonville 54 and 71; and for Corpus Christi 40 and 82. Paradoxically, Michaelhouse, an overwhelmingly theological college, actually suffered a reduction in theologians in the fifteenth century, although it still realised an average generational percentage of 79. At the bottom

53 Cobban, art. cit., p. 8, where Table 4 demonstrate the King's Hall's share in university canonists in each generation between 1320 and 1499.
54 King's College appears to have produced only four civilians in its first generation between the 1440s and 1459: see ibid., p. 2, Table 1.
55 Documents relating to the University and Colleges of Cambridge (3 vols., ed. by the Queen's Commissioners, London, 1852), ii. 482-4. (Cited hereafter as Camb. Docs.).
56 See Appendix, below.
57 Hervey de Stanton's statutes for Michaelhouse are printed by A.E. Stamp, Michaelhouse (privately printed, Cambridge, 1924), p. 42.
end of the theological spectrum even the King’s Hall increased its quota of theologians considerably, raising the fourteenth-century average from 5 to 20 per cent. Trinity Hall, loyal to its statutes, remained exclusively a college for law. This intensification of theology in the old-established colleges was heavily complemented by the new secular foundations of the fifteenth century. In descending order the average generational percentages for theology were Queens’ 97, Godshouse 94, St Catharine’s 88, Jesus 75 and King’s College 51. As in the case of the fourteenth so in the fifteenth century the contribution of the Cambridge hostels to the support of theologians appears to have been negligible.

This concentration upon theology by the majority of the secular colleges in the English Universities of the later medieval period is a notable fact because it would seem to be at odds with the contemporary consensus which regarded a training in law as the optimum requirement for an ecclesiastically or politically useful career. Although the magnetic pull of law asserted itself at New College and All Souls causing a serious deflection from the statutory intent, at Cambridge in the fifteenth century, the legal constituent was significantly diluted in the majority of the old-established colleges, and, of the new foundations, only King’s College was at all a resort for academic lawyers. The increasingly supportive role of the Cambridge colleges in the sphere of theology must have been one of the contributory factors which, in the course of the fifteenth century, lessened the dominance of the mendicants within the theological faculty. As at Paris and Oxford, so at Cambridge, there had been intermittent disputes between the mendicants and the seculars: and while there may not have been any outstanding conflict in the fifteenth century, the gradual erosion of the mendicant grip on the faculty of theology must have been a natural objective, hallowed by Continental precedent, on the part of the Cambridge seculars. A more evenly apportioned theological faculty as between regulars and seculars was seemingly achieved by c. 1500, and clearly the colleges were partly

58 Camb. Docs., ii. 417-18. Trinity Hall was the only college in the medieval English Universities wholly confined to law: see C. Crawley, Trinity Hall: the History of a Cambridge College 1350-1975 (Cambridge, 1976), ch. 1.

59 See Appendix, below.


instrumental in redressing this balance. But the need to boost the number of seculars in the faculty of theology was probably not the primary motive underlying the theological upsurge in the Cambridge colleges in the fifteenth century. What appears to be detectable in fifteenth-century Cambridge is, to some degree, a collective collegiate response against the encroaching tide of legal studies in the English Universities and, at the same time, a positive affirmation of theological orthodoxy.

In the later medieval period the Church in England had become immoderately legalistic, with an ever-expanding maze of courts and officials to implement the diocesan work of bishops who were often non-resident dignitaries; and the universities were expected to provide the army of law graduates to serve this complex ecclesiastical machine. The number of secular theologians who achieved major promotion within the Church in the fifteenth century was severely restricted, and only a small proportion of the bishops were theological graduates. However competently the Church might conduct itself in external legal forms there was no shortage of critics to argue that this was accomplished at the expense of an acceptable level of spirituality. For example, the Dominican theologian and preacher, John Bromyard, who was probably acting Chancellor of Cambridge University in 1382, and the preacher, Thomas Wymbledon, who is perhaps to be identified with the Merton College fellow of that name in the 1380s, repeatedly lament the neglect of theology in the English Universities for the lucrative pursuit of law. Similarly, Thomas Gascoigne, the Oxford Chancellor in the early 1440s, was a stringent critic of a system which seemed so openly to prefer legal dexterity to religious zeal, which served to turn out priests trained more to give a legal ruling than a spiritual lead.

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ments of this kind, it was commonly asserted that the dearth of men of spiritual capacity within the Church was the principal cause of contemporary social evils in fifteenth-century England. Some of the commentators who were disturbed by the excessive utilitarianism within the ecclesiastical hierarchy looked to the universities for the genesis of a spiritual regeneration by which the ills of society were to be ameliorated. Are not Oxford and Cambridge the ‘eyes and blazing lights of the kingdom’, ‘the mother, lantern and well of the clergy’?\(^6^5\) By a return to the discipline of theology the universities had the capability to inject into the community educational values of a spiritually uplifting nature to grapple with the morally deleterious effects of a prevalent legal materialism.

The collegiate movement in fifteenth-century Cambridge appears to have been strongly influenced by this style of thinking. It has been seen that in the fifteenth century the majority of the Cambridge colleges founded before 1400 had raised their theological and reduced their legal numbers. In parallel fashion, the rigorous contraction of law or its complete or virtual exclusion and a paramount accent on theology were the statutory characteristics of the new colleges of the fifteenth century. Although, as indicated previously, there was a measure of statutory modification at King’s College in favour of law, theology, in practice, remained the largest single area of study. The statistics given for Queens’, St Catharine’s and Jesus have confirmed that the high statutory concentration on theology was realised in actuality in these colleges. Godshouse, founded in 1439, stands somewhat apart from the collegiate norm, being designed to train undergraduates for the degree of master of grammar preparatory to their acceptance of teaching posts in English grammar schools.\(^6^6\) Yet, even here, the senior fellows appear, for the most part, to have been theologians. St Catharine’s College, a society of student priests with an exclusive study regime of philosophy and theology, was probably the most complete embodiment of a conservative educational ethos geared to the advancement of theology and the


rejection of utilitarian and especially legal values.67 In terms of personnel, St Catharine’s and the other ‘high theology’ colleges of fifteenth-century Cambridge could, by definition, make only a limited practical impact in this direction. What was equally important was to transform the climate of educational opinion, to make an institutional gesture towards the way that university education needs to be orientated if graduates of the right calibre and in adequate numbers were to be produced to raise the ‘spiritual average’ of the clergy and, by extension, the spiritual norm throughout society. In the event, this collegiate attempt to arrest the engulfing spread of legal studies by a theological reversion centred in the colleges did not survive into the sixteenth century: it fell a victim both to the relentless professional needs of society and to the powerful alternative of humanist education.

The Oxford collegiate scene does not seem to manifest such a concerted reaction against the acceleration of legal studies. This may stem in part from the circumstance that law did not feature so largely in the fourteenth-century Oxford colleges as in those of Cambridge of the same period. But even when it had become apparent that New College and All Souls were developing into major legal centres there was no obvious theological reaction. Indeed, as has been seen, both of the mainly theological colleges, Lincoln and Magdalen, contained a fair representation of legal fellows. Of the three new Oxford colleges of the fifteenth century Lincoln was the most overtly theological institution: it was a rather introspective society of student priests analogous, in some ways, to St Catharine’s College, Cambridge. But the foundation of Lincoln was not so much a reaction against the position of law in the university because it was designed chiefly to help reassert the orthodoxy of Oxford after the traumatic ravages of Wyclifism. Although the most cogent efforts had been made to purge Oxford University of its Wyclifite and Lollard proclivities, the stigma of heresy lingered there throughout the fifteenth century. Richard Fleming, the founder of Lincoln, was much preoccupied with the heretical threat, and his principal motive was the establishment of a seminary for the production of graduates in theology as an aid

towards combatting the heresies and errors in the Church, an aim somewhat reminiscent of the original Dominican ideal.\(^{68}\)

Lincoln is apparently the first English secular college to be concerned specifically with the matter of heresy. The next Oxford foundation, All Souls, proscribes heresy as one of the crimes for which a fellow may be expelled:\(^{69}\) but, apart from this, the subject does not figure conspicuously at All Souls or indeed at Magdalen later in the century. But the idea of the secular college as a vehicle for the suppression of heresy was given a wider expression in fifteenth-century Cambridge: the extirpation of heresy was one of the motives underlying King’s College;\(^{70}\) St Catharine’s was much concerned with the preservation of Christian orthodoxy, and the crime of heresy is placed first among the statutory reasons for which a fellow may be deprived;\(^{71}\) and at Queens’ and Jesus there was a stress on the conservation of the purity of the faith.\(^{72}\) Oxford’s murky reputation as ‘the University of heresies’ (Archbishop Courtenay) had clearly redounded to the profit of Cambridge. Because of its relative freedom from heresy, Cambridge had come to be regarded in the fifteenth century as a sound investment, both capital and spiritual, this being one of the reasons, for example, which prompted Henry VI to select Cambridge for the academic enterprise which materialised as King’s College.\(^{73}\) Although the Cambridge secular colleges had a

\(^{68}\) Fleming’s envisaged statutes were never executed, but there has survived his prefatory note later prefixed to the code of statutes given in 1479/80 by Thomas Rotherham, Bishop of Lincoln and later Archbishop of York: the prefatory note makes it clear that the extirpation of heresy was the main raison d’être for Lincoln College, a concern repeated in the proem of the Rotherham statutes. Fleming’s Prefatio and Rotherham’s Prohemium [sic] and statutes are bound up together in a late fifteenth-century volume of 40 pages in Lincoln College Archives, Charters III.

\(^{69}\) Statutes, i, ch. 7, 66.

\(^{70}\) Camb. Docs., ii. 471.

\(^{71}\) See the original statutes, St Catharine’s Muniments, XL/10, fos. 12v 13; also, Documents relating to St Catharine’s College in the University of Cambridge (ed. H. Philpott, Cambridge, 1861), pp. 24-5.


\(^{73}\) See the letters patent of Henry VI of 10 July 1443 in Camb. Docs., ii. 471.
necessarily circumscribed role in the counteraction of heresy on the wider social plane, at least a founder might take all anticipatory steps to ensure that his college was not to be used to subsidise fellows with heretical tendencies as had occurred at Oxford. It may therefore be concluded that while a paramount concern of the secular colleges in fifteenth-century Cambridge was the curtailment in the proliferation of legal studies by maximising the number of fellowships available in theology, among the new foundations at any rate the heresy issue was also an important, if secondary, consideration: and this collegiate stand adopted against heretical tenets must have proved invaluable in projecting even further the image, which already obtained in influential circles, of Cambridge University as the bastion of orthodoxy in the community.

It would seem that the secular colleges of Oxford and Cambridge were rather conservative study areas within the English Universities before c. 1500 and were not generally representative of the level of secular involvement in civil and canon law in these universities at large. This quantitative analysis has emphasised how extensive were the concentrations of theologians in the majority of the secular colleges. While law was afforded more scope in the Cambridge colleges in the fourteenth century than in those of Oxford, in the fifteenth century the position was somewhat different: New College and All Souls emerged as prolific centres of law at Oxford, and at Cambridge law proportions were either scaled down heavily or, in the case of the new foundations, given a minimal or practically no expression at all. In the later medieval period the Cambridge colleges were tending to develop along rarefied theological lines, forming communities increasingly divorced from considerations of educational utility, a movement seemingly less pronounced at Oxford. The entrenchment of theology in so many of the secular colleges of the English Universities right up to the end of the fifteenth century may well have served as a delaying barrier to academic innovation, and was perhaps a contributory factor to the slowness with which Oxford and Cambridge came to terms with the impulses of Continental humanism, Cambridge being even more laggard than Oxford in this regard. Finally, the present quantitative investigation has served to underline the circumspection with which collegiate statutory material needs to be treated: the degree of discrepancy between statutory intent and actuality in terms of the distribution
of studies may range from the minor to a deflection on such a scale as to render necessary reappraisals of important areas of English academic history.

**APPENDIX**

Average collegiate percentage output per generation of twenty years of the Cambridge secular colleges over the period 1300 to 1399

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theologians</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Civilians</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Canonists</th>
<th>%</th>
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Average collegiate percentage output per generation of twenty years of the Cambridge secular colleges over the period 1400 to 1499

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theologians</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Civilians</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Canonists</th>
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¹ Scholars who studied in both laws have been reckoned separately as civilians and canonists.