TE | Theological Education

Guest Editors' Introduction

Between the Times

Prophecy in the Present

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2018 • Volume 51, Number 2

Theological Education Between the Times

ats The Association of Theological Schools
The Commission on Accrediting

ISSN 0040-5620

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Volume 51, Number 2
2018

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Wider Horizons

Theological Education
is published semiannually by
The Association of Theological Schools
IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA
10 Summit Park Drive
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15275-1110

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The Association of Theological Schools is a membership organization of schools in the United States and Canada that conduct postbaccalaureate professional and academic degree programs to educate persons for the practice of ministry and advanced study of the theological disciplines. The Association's mission is to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public. The Commission on Accrediting of ATS accredits schools that are members of ATS and approves the degree programs they offer.

This journal is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database® and is available in electronic form in ATLASerials® (ATLAS®), both produced by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606; atla@atla.com; http://www.atla.com. It is also indexed by Religious and Theological Abstracts, PO Box 215 Myerstown, PA 17067; rtabstracts.org

Theological Education Mission Statement

Theological Education, the journal of The Association of Theological Schools and The ATS Commission on Accrediting, is devoted to the distinctive concerns of graduate theological education in North America. The journal supports the mission of the Association and the Commission by providing those concerned with theological education—including administrators, faculty, and independent researchers—with scholarly discourse and reports on issues and trends, research findings and resources, provocative reflection pieces, and models of critical analysis and effective practices in graduate theological education.

A Special Issue with Essays from Theological Education Between the Times

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The writing collected in this special issue of *Theological Education* grows out of Theological Education Between the Times, a project based at Emory's Candler School of Theology and funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. The project convened five consultations in the spring of 2015. Nearly sixty people with a stake in theological education participated in one or another of the consultations. Participants wrote short pieces before and after the meetings that reflected on the meanings and purposes of theological education. Almost all of the following pieces have been selected from that larger set of writing. While they have been revised for publication, we hope they retain some of the freshness and urgency of the original contributions.

The Theological Education Between the Times project begins with a conviction that we are "between the times" in at least two senses. First, the changes taking place in schools, churches, and the wider society run so deep that they suggest that we are in a time of transition from one prevailing paradigm in theological education to another. Change of this depth has happened before in theological education in the United States. In the early nineteenth century, a model that relied on apprenticeship gave way to a model that worked through specialized schools to produce a learned Christian gentleman (retaining the language reflects the way that gender was built into the norm). At the turn of the next century, that model gave way to one that repurposed these specialized schools as more

clearly post-baccalaureate institutions for the formation of ministers as professionals.[1] The professional model—like others before it—has never described every form of theological education in the United States. Significant resistance has come from Catholic, Orthodox, and Pentecostal traditions, among others. But the professional model has had the cultural power to project its norms beyond itself. If that power has not been so great that other models have had to conform to it, it has been sufficient to lead other models to reckon with it and, in many cases, make accommodations to it. Now that professional constellation of institutions, ideas, and individual life courses is breaking up. It is not yet clear what will replace it. Theological education is between the times.

The design of the project also begins with a Christian conviction that the present age unfolds between the times of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the one hand, and the final consummation of God's work of redemption on the other. To live between the empty tomb and the wedding feast of the lamb is to live in a time in which the reign of God is both already present and, emphatically, still to come. Guided by this hope, the project design relies on human wisdom for the limited but real insights it can provide, values earthly institutions for the temporal goods they are, seeks to discern signs of God's work in our midst, draws strength from the abiding presence of Jesus, and trusts that the passing of one familiar era is not the end of God's redeeming activity but an opening to new forms of discipleship. Because of this theological reading of history, the project design rejects the narratives of world-historical progress and decline that often dominate contemporary discussions of theological education. We might make temporal improvements; we might lose institutions or ideals of real value. But these gains and losses cannot be added up to form grand narratives of progress or decline. In this age, every moment is defined, first of all, by its proximity to a *basileia* that is already present and not yet fulfilled. We are between the times.

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1 In making this quick sketch of transitions in prevailing models of theological education, we are indebted to Glenn T. Miller's three-volume history of theological education in the United States. See Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Ante-Bellum Theological Education*, Scholars Press Studies in Theological Education (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990); Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870–1970* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Plurality: Theological Education since 1960* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).

This vision of theological education between the times shaped the starting points for the writing collected here in many ways. First of all, it shaped the topics that writers consider. If theological education is between the times, the heart of our task is to discern the contours of God's work in the world and to develop faithful responses. But this core work is too often occluded in the present, partly because institutions feel anxious about their survival and partly because managerial logic has crowded out other forms of practical reasoning in our age. Questions of management and strategy are always important. They are especially pressing for many institutions now, but they necessarily operate within the frame of an existing model and deliberately bracket any sense that God is active in the world. Therefore, they tend to constrict the field of vision of the people engaged in discernment. To open this field more widely, project leaders invited participants to write on the *telos* or "meanings and purposes" of theological education. Managerial discourse is comfortable with talk of goals. But talk of *telos* opens conversations to eschatological horizons beyond even the biggest, hairiest, and most audacious of goals.[2] It pushes us to more basic sorts of questions—questions that require practical wisdom, theological reflection, social analysis, and more. Talk of *telos* renews the possibility of discernment.

The conviction that theological education is between the times also shaped who was invited to participate in the project and where the consultations were held. The work of discernment requires a deep diversity of voices and perspectives. That is, it requires the church, and in the most fulsome sense that the church can be gathered.[3] The need for plural and contested bodies for deliberation is especially acute when whole paradigms are changing. In a time between the times, discernment requires angles of vision from social and cultural locations in a wide variety of relationships to what is currently established and whatever is coming next. Attention to diversity, then, is not just a gesture toward some standard

2 Language of "Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals" (BHAGs) emerged in the consultation at Saddleback. It comes from James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, "Building Your Company's Vision," *Harvard Business Review*, September–October (1996): 65–77.

3 Luke T. Johnson's *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996) has especially informed the model of discernment at work here.

of political correctness that is extrinsic to the project. It is essential for the work at hand.

While diverse, the gatherings did not come close to representing the full range and vigor of religions in the United States. To cite just one notable narrowness: for the sake of a more focused conversation, participants were overwhelmingly but not exclusively Christian. To name another: only twenty-one of the almost sixty participants were women. While this number is significant, and while individual women played leading roles in conversations, limits on women's leadership in some traditions created difficult trade-offs between efforts to involve leaders from many traditions and efforts to attain gender parity. Even with these limits, the gatherings still included a deep diversity of voices. There was no majority racial/ethnic identity among the participants. People in the consultations identified themselves as African, African American, Asian, Asian North American, Hispanic, Latino/a, multiracial, Pacific Islander, and white (non-Hispanic). The diversity of voices, we believe, enabled a better, deeper discernment than could have happened in more homogeneous contexts. It also made clear that future efforts need to be even more fully "majority-minority."

Because many of the participants have complex and multiple relations to traditions and denominations, no simple tally of affiliations can capture the full range of identities. What is clear, though, is that no one tradition was in the majority. "Mainline" or "ecumenical" Protestants were over-represented in relation to their numbers in the total US population, but they did not constitute a majority. Solid numbers of evangelical, Pentecostal, and Catholic Christians participated. A smaller number of Orthodox Christians took part. Again, the diversity that was present illuminated the need for more.

Crucially, the list of participants also included about a dozen people from institutions that were not at that time accredited by The Association of Theological Schools. The participation of these members often pressed the consultations to deeper and wider questioning of the basic assumptions of the professional model that does so much to shape expectations around theological education. Participants who traveled from the United Kingdom, Brazil, and South Africa did even more to expand the conversation.

The diversity of participants was enhanced by the decision to hold the consultations in meeting places that were different from one another in meaningful ways. Early in the planning process, Peter Cha of Trinity

Evangelical Divinity School, a member of the project's Board of Advisors,[4] stressed the importance of where people gathered for the kind of thinking they could do together. Place matters because it reinforces the assumed background of the conversation. It matters because of the messages it sends about who belongs as a host and who is invited as a guest. Guided by these thoughts, the consultations happened in five distinct settings: Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California (in a meeting cohosted by Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary); Howard University Divinity School in Washington, DC; Candler School of Theology of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia; Esperanza College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Mundelein Theological Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois.

The diversity of places and participants extended to how individuals chose to write in preparation for the consultation. An invitation to write in the language and genre that best enabled an author to say what she or he most needed to say accompanied the call for papers about the *telos,* or the meanings and purposes of theological education. That invitation to language and genre diversity came with outstanding *exempla* by Board of Advisors members Fernando Cascante of Asociación para La Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH) and Mark D. Jordan of Harvard University Divinity School. Cascante's writing displayed the power of autobiography

4 Members of the Board of Advisors included Daniel Aleshire, (then) Executive Director, The Association of Theological Schools; Brian Blount, President, Union Presbyterian Seminary; Gay Byron, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Howard University School of Divinity; Kathleen Cahalan, Professor of Theology, Saint John's University School of Theology and Seminary; Fernando Cascante, Executive Director, La Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH); Peter Cha, Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School of Trinity International University; Christopher Coble, Vice President for Religion, Lilly Endowment Inc.; Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Dean, Esperanza College of Eastern University; T. Scott Daniels, Dean, Azusa Pacific Seminary; Mark D. Jordan, Andrew Mellon Professor of Christian Thought, Harvard University Divinity School; Nadine Pence, Director, Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion; and Katarina Schuth, Endowed Chair for the Social Scientific Study of Religion, University of St. Thomas School of Theology.

as a genre for thinking about theological education.[5] Jordan's writing both called for and modeled a fragmentary style suited to this time between the times. Many participants in the consultations reported that they felt inspired by the excellence of the pieces from Cascante and Jordan. Some also felt liberated to write in genres other than those most common to academic reflection on theological education. The shift in genre was significant, for genres condense whole worlds of theological reflection and assume the legitimacy of wide networks of institutions. The currently prevailing genres for theological reflection, for instance, are tied closely to the professional model of theological education. The academic article arose with the professionalization of the professoriate and remains one of the emblems by which professional academics recognize one another and the students who might join them. But theological reflection has been pursued in very different genres—including autobiographies like Cascante's and "crumbs" like Jordan's—in past centuries. Indeed, it flourishes in a wide range of less authorized genres now, and it may be pursued in still other genres in ages to come. Thus, this time between the times must be a time of crafting new genres and revitalizing old ones.

The editors of this issue hope that at least some of the diversity and vitality of the consultations makes its way on to the pages that follow. We have grouped the essays into three sections. The first section features essays that describe different ways that theological education is "between the times" and how theological education is called to adapt in recognition of this fact. Juan Francisco Martínez's article, "Preparing Leaders for God's Work in a World of Adaptive Challenge," sets the tone for the whole issue with its stress on the need to discern God's work in the world and craft faithful responses. Martínez makes clear that this kind of discernment is part of every Christian life. It is especially important now when the practices, institutions, and populations of churches are changing so rapidly. Rapid and profound changes also characterize the context that Marti R.

5 For a revised version of Fernando Cascante's piece, see Fernando A. Cascante-Gómez, "An Invitation to a Road Less Traveled: Theological Faculty and the Future of Theological Education," in *Religious Studies News: Spotlight on Theological Education* (2017), http://rsn.aarweb.org/spotlight-on/theo-ed/between-the-times/invitation-road-less-traveled-theological-faculty-and-future-theological-education. This issue of *Religious Studies News* also contains other essays from Phase 1 of Theological Education between the Times written by Eduardo Antonio Alonso, Kathryn Lofton, Hosffman Ospino, Angela Simms, Maria Liu Wong, and Ted A. Smith.

Jewell analyzes in her article on "Practical Theology: Preparing Ministers for Today's Church." Jewell pays special attention to changes in ministry in the Catholic Church. She argues that the present context demands ministers formed in practical theology's attention to a dialectic between theory and practice. Daniel O. Aleshire's article on "The Emerging Model of Formational Theological Education" traces the rise of theological education as professional education and suggests some of the ways this model is under stress. Aleshire argues for a new model that is more focused on formation of a distinctly Christian *habitus* that involves both ways of thinking and embodied practices for living.

The second section of the issue, "Prophecy in the Present," gathers pieces of writing that press readers to think again about the categories that organize our current institutions. Some of these essays are in the first person. Others adopt a third-person voice more characteristic of contemporary academic analysis. But together they share a desire to make us think again about ways of being in theological education in these times. Dwight N. Hopkins opens this section with eleven propositions on "The Purposes of Theological Education" that grow out of his sense of being called *by* the faith of his ancestors and his sense of being called *to* pass on spiritualities that sustain the lives of later generations. Theological educators stand between past and future, embodying "in our daily lives now the expectant 'not yet' of the future." This requires a distinctly global vision, Hopkins writes. Scott C. Alexander shares something like this global vision in "Encountering the Religious 'Stranger': Interreligious Pedagogy and the Future of Theological Education." In particular, Alexander argues, Christian theological education needs to incorporate learning about other faiths—and learning *from* living people who practice different faiths. Like Alexander, Jennifer A. Herdt stresses the need to navigate between "shoring up identity" and "engaging the other." In "Local Matters and the Naming of God," she develops some critical tools for this kind of work. In place of abstract and essentialist accounts of theological language, she argues that theological concepts emerge as people of faith encounter situations that require them to make new distinctions. She then sketches the implications of this more local account of theological concepts for theological education. Kathleen A. Cahalan shows what this local process might look like in one individual life. Her "Informed and Formed by Theological Education" uses autobiographical narratives to reflect on a series of ways that she has conceived theological education in her own journey as a

student and teacher in very different contexts. Cahalan's narratives culminate in her hope to embody "theological education as a disciplined way of life, a real pursuit of wisdom in our times." Keri L. Day shares part of the story of her own journeys through theological education in "Notes from a Native Daughter." She describes the deep ambivalence of her experience in theological education as an African American student and professor. She narrates some ways in which theological education has been simultaneously liberating and marginalizing for her. She draws on that liberation to call for changes that address the dynamics of marginalization still at work. In "Theological Education as Personal and Communal Self-Reflexivity for the Sake of the World," S. Steve Kang tells a similarly complex story about the ways he has navigated the strictures imposed by a series of dichotomies, including "Korean" and "American" identities and "liberal" and "evangelical" theologies. Drawing from this experience, Kang proposes a more orthogonal mapping of theological identities that breaks up reductive dichotomies and creates more space for real pluralities to flourish.

A final section, "Wider Horizons," includes writing from three theological educators who have extensive experience in institutions beyond traditionally accredited theological schools. In "Remember Your Graduation," Rachelle Renee Green draws on her work teaching theology in a women's prison to reflect on the meanings and purposes of theological education. She emphasizes the difference that the prison context makes for the ways theological education happens and the ends that it pursues. Her reflections, firmly grounded in a singular context, have implications for theological education in every context. Mark R. Gornik retraces a particular "Itinerary of Learning" that has similarly wide relevance. Gornik's essay describes the genesis and vision of City Seminary, a community of learning in Harlem that includes people with roots in many different corners of a truly global church. City Seminary brings together theology, spirituality, and daily life in ways that promote learning across cultures and between generations. Graham Tomlin has helped to lead first St. Paul's Theological Centre and now St Mellitus College, two innovative efforts at theological education based in London. St. Paul's grew out of the mission and education work of Trinity Brompton, an evangelical Anglican congregation. It offers intensive, unaccredited formation for reading the Bible, thinking theologically, and living as a Christian in the contemporary world. St Mellitus complements this program with accredited courses that serve both people preparing for ordination and lay people seeking to enhance their

ministries and deepen their faith. The missional sensibility and generous orthodoxy of these institutions shines through Tomlin's essay on "The *Telos* of Christian Education." The essay's sharp focus on the core question of the consultations makes it a fitting capstone to the issue.

Daniel Aleshire has said that in these times we are not moving from one model of theological education to another, but from one model to *many* others. Pluralism is the time signature of the present moment. The thirteen writers in this issue—to say nothing of the almost sixty participants in the consultations—do not share a single, strong vision of a *telos* that could give shape to a proposal for a next model of theological education. But we do share a recognition that we are in a time of great change. We also share a set of basic questions about the meanings and purposes of the work in which we are engaged. We share a sense of the need for theological education, in some form, to continue into future generations. And we share a sense that there is real value in thinking about these things together.

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Between the Times

Preparing Leaders for God's Work in a World of Adaptive Challenge[1]

Juan Francisco Martínez
Fuller Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: In this time of profound changes, it is easy for Christian leaders to lose sight of God's work in the world. Theological education needs to help students develop capacities to discern God's work and connect with it effectively. This will be done by helping students learn to be attentive to the Spirit in their lives, attentive to how God is working in the world, willing to experiment as they develop new ways of doing ministry, and able to acquire tools for connecting Bible and theology to the task of Kingdom service.

Those of us formed and framed by Western late modernity have tended to believe that if we only have enough focus, determination, and education, we will find our way. No matter the discipline or the task, we have often understood our task as clarifying, defining, mapping, and doing. But as the church seeks to be faithful to the Gospel in the midst of adaptive challenges, our tradition and our scriptures remind us that following Jesus, being a faithful church, and preparing leaders who follow Jesus and lead church communities to faithfulness is a messy journey of discovery.

Formal theological education in the West has tended to reflect our fascination with modernity. We long ago adopted the models of the Western academy for theological formation. We also adopted from modernity a pedagogical model that moves from theory to practice. But shifting into a rapidly changing postmodern environment, we find that our models are no longer preparing leaders for the task of leading in this new reality.

1 This essay is adapted from an article originally published in *Journal of Missional Practice*, Issue 1, Autumn 2012. It is published here with gratitude to the journal for permission to include some content from the original article. See http://journalofmissionalpractice.com/discovering-gods-initiatives-in-the-midst-of-adaptive-challenge/

To prepare leaders to be faithful in this generation, we need to help them embark on a journey that does not have a clear end point other than the heavenly city whose architect is God. This is a journey of discovery, of recognizing that God continues to work in the world, often in ways that seem mysterious to us. Because most of our churches and many of our models for theological education were framed in a different era, our leaders often seem unable to understand, much less respond to, what is happening.

Yet, because we believe that God continues to work in the world, a key task of theological education is to prepare leaders to be attentive to what God is doing and to participate in that work. This means, first of all, helping leaders to hear the Spirit. It also means using gifts of discernment to recognize where God is working today. This includes attentiveness not only to the present but also to church history. How have we seen God work in the past? What can we learn from church history? A third way of being attentive to the new thing God is doing is by experimenting. How can we help leaders seek new ways of being faithful in new circumstances? Preparing leaders for this journey will raise many questions, and the path(s) will not be clear. But even when there is no clear path before us, we know that the Lord of the Church and the Lord of creation is with us and has pointed the way forward toward the heavenly city.

Toward a life of attentiveness to God: building expectation into ministry preparation

During times of difficulty and complexity, God's people can become discouraged and unfocused. Sometimes the difficulties have to do with a lack of faithfulness or a loss of commitment. At various times recorded in the Old Testament, we read that the people and their leaders lost sight of God's goal for their lives. They found it particularly difficult to be faithful and so reduced their vision to the vision of the world around them. At other times, the issues and problems were such that the past did not seem to be able to give them enough tools to deal with the new realities.

It is here that the spiritual disciplines are a crucial part of the formation of discernment and discovery. Theological education can begin by teaching and leading students in spiritual disciplines. The goal should be to develop environments in which leaders and future leaders can be open to new possibilities, where they can live in expectation of what God is doing

and going to do in our midst. But the spiritual disciplines also invite them to seek after God today and to be attentive to how God is working even now, often in unexpected ways.

The spiritual disciplines remind theological students that, before plans and answers, they need to wait on God. For some students, the disciplines will be a call to conversion and discipleship. Because many people in the Western world were framed by modernity, they are often stuck in plans for what people will do and not expectations for what God will do. Spiritual disciplines also make us open to listening to those God puts in our midst, people whom God wants to use to speak into our lives and ministries.

The Spirit blows where it will: helping students look to where God is working

In reading the Bible and the history of the church, one sees moments when human history seems to be at a point of transition. Societies, nations, or communities seem to have lost their ways. The people of God are either caught in the same situation or do not seem able to see where God might be at work. During these times of adaptive challenge, many people give up. But as some pray and seek out God, renewal, change, and reformation come out of those most difficult times.

Because we know the Spirit works in new ways, and because the Spirit has guided the people of God through complex situations in the past, we want to prepare leaders to be attentive to the new things God is doing today. Renewal movements throughout church history point toward some of the key factors we can anticipate as we seek new ways of looking forward and expecting God to work. How can theological education help people to be attentive to how we see God working in history? Church history is crucial in helping students frame the story *of* God´s people, but it also needs to focus on how God has worked *through* God's people and what can be learned from that.

Clearly, God is working today with particular power among the churches of the Global South. Many of the most vibrant churches are in the Global South, while many churches in the Global North are struggling. We can help theological students to understand that the church is a global reality, and to have a sense of mission that recognizes that our part of the world is only a small part of what God is doing. Our issues and situations are not at the center of God's work. What is it about the situations

and responses of the churches of the Global South that future pastors and leaders might do well to consider? How does this recognition relativize our understanding of the often dying churches in the Global West?

One aspect of the Global South that students might consider is churches' ministry from the bottom up. Though many of these churches are poor and on the margins of their societies, they seem to be intuitively missional in their approaches to being the church. What is it about doing mission and ministry from poverty that creates a different perspective? How can leaders from the "rich" churches of the Global North learn from this type of ministry?

This spiritual attentiveness is enhanced in cross-cultural, multicultural, transcultural, and intercultural settings. How can we teach theological students to recognize that most ministry today will be done in this type of environment? These settings "encourage" or push us to look at different ways God is working in various situations. They also become the spaces in which people can be more easily attentive to new ways of doing ministry, as new encounters invite us to relativize our cultural framings and recognize that other ways of looking at the church in mission might actually be more useful in increasingly intercultural urban settings. Theological formation can create ministry settings where students can be involved in intercultural settings.

But students also need to learn how to "read" the places where they minister. They must be attentive to signs of life and the Spirit in their neighborhoods. Students should be particularly attentive to those signs that are outside their normal ranges of mission.

Another one of our tasks is to look into our communities and identify and challenge signs of death and self-centeredness. Thus, part of our theological task is to teach students to be prophetic, to develop the discernment to name the principalities and powers that influence the places where God calls them to serve in His name.

For this, our future leaders require a solid biblical and theological foundation. But they also require formation in specific areas such as a practical theological method that helps them connect Scripture to new realities, and formation in leadership—particularly interpretive leadership.

Part of such leadership development entails addressing our ecclesiologies. In practice, our ecclesiologies often reflect a Christendom model of the church's place in society. How can we reframe students' thinking to look toward the margins, to places where churches have not a central role

but a servant's role? This means focusing on a "free" church theology, one that empowers more congregations that have the freedom to develop on a local basis, addressing the mission of their concrete contexts.

Teaching students to experiment and explore

For such leadership preparation, experimentation and exploration are important, particularly the willingness to be open to new ideas about how to do and be church, and the willingness to try these experiments to see if they produce focus and change in our understanding of the church in mission. Many of the traditional methods of church planting and mission no longer seem to work—and even when they "work," the result often produces as many questions as strong churches.

For such theological formation, "mashups" that bring together things that we have not normally assumed fit together can be life-giving. This means doing things like inviting leaders to think about church and mission in ways that "mess" with all of our current models. Our concepts of church have been so framed by Western Christendom that we often find it hard to "remember" that the early churches were not linked to our current church model and that they developed around homes, synagogues, and various hiding places, often under persecution. This invites us to think about church communities that may have little to do with anything we normally call church today.

Students can begin this process by recognizing that people are in different places. They cannot automatically assume that the "old" no longer works in any environment. Not all churches are in crisis. Not all denominations are in crisis. At times, the traditional patterns and the traditional congregations will continue to help people be faithful to the gospel and to the church's mission. But the world is changing. How can today's and tomorrow's leaders be faithful? By being open to new ways of thinking about their roles in the world.

For "traditional" churches that are strong and growing, experimenting is about inviting them to use their existing strengths as a base to look toward God's future instead of waiting until they hit a crisis. If strong churches develop a missional vision, they will be able to support new models of church and mission with their resources.

If churches that are being "successful" doubt that they need to change, churches in crisis may find change even more difficult. Preparing leaders to

serve churches in crisis will be particularly complex. The sense of loss may push many toward nostalgia and a selective memory of the past. It may make them less open to change, determined to reconstruct a past they perceived as more favorable. Instead of being able to visualize a new future, they can only dream of what was, or what they think they remember.

Seminaries and theological institutions that are going to be ready for this type of innovation are those that create a culture of experimentation and that value innovation. Yet some churches are far from experimentation. For example, church planting models in some denominations require so much planning, organization, and money that experimentation is impossible. Any failures are major losses. But many of the growing Pentecostal denominations take a very different approach. People who have a sense that God has called them to plant a church are encouraged to try it. If they establish a group or a ministry, then the denomination provides some level of support and investment. Clearly, one of the key types of ministry in which developing leaders will be involved will be church planting. How can we tailor theological formation to help students understand this task?

Seminaries and theological institutions that are going to be ready for this type of innovation are those that create a culture of experimentation and that value innovation.

Recruiting future leaders for this environment

In this journey of discovery, the best experimenters will usually be peripheral people, those outside the centers of traditional church power. They usually have not gone through the "official" processes and might not really "fit." They have not yet earned the trust of the system, yet those are often the people who will be able to visualize a different reality, new models of church and mission.

Who will be the best leaders for this new and adaptive reality? Likely, people currently outside the "normal" channels, people on the peripheries of power and influence. New believers, immigrants, and the undocumented, second-career people, and the frustrated children of the church: these are all likely to be the type of people best prepared by life for the task of visionary, transformational leadership. But many of these people will

not have the normal academic credentials or the financial basis for traditional theological education. How might theological institutions focus on student recruitment from a missional perspective, recruiting students who will need academic and financial support, but who are also most likely to be able to adapt and effectively serve in the new reality?

Changing models of leadership development

Being innovative means recognizing that we need multiple models of leadership development. Most seminaries were developed on a university model with a certain type of church in mind, but very few church leaders being formed today will pastor churches that fit this established type. That means we also need "mashup" models of leadership development that combine the educational flexibility of Bible institutes, the continuing education of good DMin programs, mentorship support, and all types of "on the job" preparation. To prepare missional leaders, we will also have to experiment with new models of leadership development. Once again, innovation will be key to providing the necessary biblical and theological foundation for leaders who are forming communities of people with the vision to be disciples of Christ in the world.[2]

Naming some of the complexities of the journey

In this journey of discovery, one of the ways a person learns is through failure. Part of our task will be to incorporate this type of learning into the education process. Those of us taught to consider "success" but not "failure" as being from God will need a major shift in attitude. How can we teach our students the joy and the pedagogical importance of failure?

Also, in the midst of adaptive challenges, many of the things that seemed sure and indispensible in the past no longer seem that important. The black and white theological battles and debates of one generation may

2 Bible institutes have been crucial in forming leaders in many parts of the world. Formal structures, such as seminaries, have not been able to succeed in many parts of the majority world. When they are working well, they are more flexible at many levels. They are cheaper, are able to prepare people no matter what background education they have, adapt to people's schedules, etc. Among US Latino/a Protestants, Bible institutes have been the principal method for preparing people for ministry. For example, see *Centro Hispano de Estudios Teológicos* (www.chet.org).

lose their relevance in another. But what will surely also happen is that new circumstances will raise new theological and missiological questions and issues. As we experiment with new models of being a faithful church, our students will have to face new questions and will be confronted with new theological divisions and challenges. Consequently, a practical theological method—a method that can learn and discern in the process of experimenting—will be an important tool in this journey.

On the one hand, a changing society raises new questions. Those types of questions will only become more complex as we seek to be faithful to God's work in the world. But being attentive to where the Spirit is working will also force us to ask hard missional questions. People on the margins may be undocumented, may have a checkered past, and may find it hard to fit into existing structures. But they may also be leading movements that obligate us to think in new ways about what it means to be communities of followers of Jesus Christ involved in God's mission in the world.

Just as the church should open itself to new leaders, it should also open itself to new kinds of institutions. In a season of experimentation, some models may be temporary. Even so, as we cross boundaries of class, ethnicity, language, popular culture, and other divisions, this process may be messy. It will break through traditional theological and denominational categories. Some of the new networks and "parishes" will not look like anything we or our students are used to.

Theological formation as constant experiment

Given the time of flux in which we are preparing leaders, there may be no clear road before us but we will make a way as we move in the power and direction of the Spirit. For some, this lack of assurance will create anxiety. Perhaps we can mitigate that anxiety by remembering it can also be a time of great opportunity.

What continues to guide the process is the light of God's direction and the faith that God is at work in the world. Because God has worked in the past, we have markers that will guide us toward the future. Even as the early church developed in the light of a new Pentecost, we continue forward knowing that we are preparing leaders to share in God's work, a work that is immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine.

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Practical Theology: Preparing Ministers for Today's Church

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ABSTRACT: Given the complex challenges of rapidly changing parish life, pastoral leaders must be creative in finding new approaches to their ministry and leadership. Catholic theological educators are feeling the need to reframe their understanding of how to prepare persons for the demands of ministry today. To do this work, they are turning to practical theology, engaging the dialectic between theory and practice to better form persons to care for the People of God.

The Spirit is calling us into an unanticipated future. This was the most significant and, frankly, unexpected finding of the Lilly Endowment-funded Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project[1] that focused on excellence in parish pastoral leadership. The national scope of the nine-year research project provided a bird's-eye view of the speed and significance of changes in Catholic parish life in the United States. Today, both the evolution of pastoral roles and the significant restructuring of parishes place increasingly complex demands on those in ministry. Demographic changes are one contributor to these demands. The number of Roman Catholic priests in the United States is declining, with just under twenty-six thousand diocesan priests, and only 63 percent of that number in active ministry.[2] This downward trend is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. In total, forty thousand lay ecclesial ministers (non-ordained men and women employed at least part-time in parish pastoral leadership positions), along with some eighteen thousand permanent deacons,

1 The Emerging Models of Pastoral Leadership Project (2003–2012) was a joint effort of the National Association for Lay Ministry, the Conference of Pastoral Planners and Council Development, the National Association of Church Personnel Administrators, the National Association of Diaconate Directors, the National Catholic Young Adult Ministry Association, and the National Federation of Priests Councils. The project was funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. as part of its Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program.

2 Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Frequently Asked Question, http://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/, accessed October 15, 2017.

work with their pastors to sustain parish life. At the same time, there is a significant increase in the number of Catholics in the United States. The Catholic population is up two million in the past five years alone, driven by the current waves of immigration.[3] These changes require difficult decisions about pastoral practices and leadership, decisions that challenge traditional practices no longer adequately serving parish communities. These changes include requiring pastors to serve multiple parishes at the same time; learning to acknowledge and accept the ministry of the non-ordained; and realizing that lay men and women must take more responsibility within their own parishes.

In this context of rapid change, the Emerging Models Project interviewed more than five hundred creative and innovative lay and ordained leaders from across the country. In addition to its quantitative findings, the study conducted qualitative interviews that shed light on the growth edges of current theological understandings of pastoral ministry and ecclesial practice. The project discovered that, in addition to the need to be pastoral, ethical, collaborative, and welcoming, today's successful parish leaders have to be creative and adaptive. With so much shifting around them, they have the prophetic task of engaging the community in discernment of the invitation of the Spirit, moving into new models of parish life and leading the community in light of these changes. Project respondents demonstrated an operational ecclesiology rooted in a strong sense of *communio* through which they animate the parish community for ministry, as they answer the call of Pope Francis to create missionary disciples. With a determined fidelity in the face of challenges, they work to be inclusive, exhibiting a strong commitment to the challenging and sometimes frustrating task of welcoming and integrating immigrant families into their communities. More than half of young Catholics in the United States are Hispanic. The Asian Catholic population, though not large, is also increasing. These demographic changes create the need for pastoral changes.

More poignantly, with Eucharist central to the life of the parish, pastoral leaders are having to ask tough questions about what happens when there isn't a priest available to celebrate Eucharist with the community. Some parts of the country only have Mass on a day of the week other than Sundays; some rural areas only celebrate it monthly. In light of this, those

3 Ibid.

working in parishes find themselves asking tough questions about what it means to be a Eucharistic people. Attending to these complex concepts requires strong theological grounding to move parish life forward. It is with these changes and these challenges in mind that I come to the question at the center of this essay: What is the *telos* of theological education for ministry?

To prepare pastoral leaders for the changing and complex world they will encounter in the twenty-first-century parish,[4] ministry education programs must themselves adapt their models and expectations. Educators must take on the difficult task of reframing their understanding of the pastoral ministry and theological education needed today. Graduate programs hope to form students who will be professional in the roles they assume, theologically and ministerially adept, and in possession of a developed personal and spiritual maturity and the kind of clear ministerial identity that will let them flourish in the twenty-first-century world.

My own experience of preparing graduate students for ministry is in a program designed primarily for laity. The student body has been largely female, although the number of lay men interested in a theology degree is increasing. Students are diverse in both age (twenty-five to seventy) and cultural heritage (Anglo, Latino/a, and Vietnamese). They express a strong sense of call, wanting to offer their lives and giftedness to the church, for its sake and for the sake of the People of God. Most of my students have or desire full-time employment in a church, parish, or social ministry setting. The rest are completing a master's degree for personal enrichment and are highly active on parish and diocesan committees and councils, and in catechetical programs in which they bring their theological and ministerial training to bear.

To help students live out these commitments, theological education needs to engage the dialectic between theory and practice so that students can come to their ministry as authentic, ethical, and valued members of the ecclesial community. Courses need to be interdisciplinary, offering cognitive education rooted in rigorous theology, pastoral praxis, and a process of ministerial formation in ministry. In other words, the best ministerial classes help our students to "be, think, and act like a minister."

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4 The latest results of the Emerging Models Project research have been published in Mary Gautier, et al., *Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

This is a prime example of how the *telos* of ministry education for Catholic pastoral leaders has changed. It is no longer confined solely to the seminary or theologate where the educational process is defined by the US bishops' Program for Priestly Formation, or even to seminary programs that accept laity into their student bodies. The majority of lay people seek graduate degrees from universities, as do men preparing for the permanent diaconate. By the 1980s, universities had developed curricula based either on the traditional academic study of theological disciplines or on the newer field of religious studies.

As programs increased, academics and practitioners began to question this model, believing that forming persons for ministry calls for a more pastoral approach. Ministry and learning needed to be more integrally connected. This realization animated the work of the Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry (AGPIM), an association of educators, theologians, and administrators representing Roman Catholic universities.[5] These educators have come to name and develop the discipline of practical theology as the operative paradigm in graduate ministry programs. Concerned about outcomes for students, educators began creating courses engaging a dialectic between theory and practice, bringing the results of this engagement to the practical life of the church and helping students to *be, think, and act like a minister.* This can't be done in the abstract. Students have to learn how to build the bridge to real life every step of the way.

I find myself returning to my personal mission in teaching. I hope to prepare people who have integrated faith and life in order to bring the riches of our faith to the People of God, in the name of Jesus and for the sake of the kingdom. This mission requires an experiential pedagogy that provides theological grounding, ministry-specific skills, and the ability to reflect theologically on the needs of the faithful. And it has the additional demand of doing so in a diverse, multicultural world.

Perhaps, then, more than simply preparing persons for ministry, our *telos* is serving the people of God. The Spirit has led us into an unanticipated future. We are called to step out like Peter, trying to follow Jesus walking across the water even when we can't imagine how. For guidance, we look to Ruth who went with Naomi to a land that was new to her. For courage, we walk with the woman at the well who went to her village with

5 Association of Graduate Programs in Ministry,http://www.graduateprogramsinministry.org/, accessed October 15, 2017.

a whole new message. In this season of change, are we willing to be the change we seek, to walk in faith as we form people who will accompany the faith community into God's future?

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The Emerging Model of Formational Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: Theological education in North American has changed in many ways since colonial times. These multiple changes, however, constitute variations on two broad forms that have characterized Protestant theological education and, to a lesser extent, Roman Catholic theological education. Some evidence suggests that the second broad form, the professional model, is receding and a third is emerging. While the third model retains significant elements of the professional model, it makes formational efforts increasingly central to education for ministry.

Introduction

This is no way to start an essay, but it is the only way I know how to start this one. This article is about formational theological education, and I begin by recalling a few moments from my theological education.[1]

Fifty years ago, I was a college freshman and was serving as part-time student pastor of a small, rural church. It was 1967, the Vietnam War was growing larger, and a young man in the church (there were only two) was drafted. The congregation was relieved that he was sent to Korea and not Vietnam, but relief turned to grief when word came that he had been killed when his jeep hit a land mine. I met the family and funeral director at the airport to escort his casket to the funeral home. Driving alone from the airport to the funeral home, following the hearse and preceding the family car, was a time of deep and hard questions. I was alive, exempt from the draft as a ministry student, following someone my own age who had been abruptly exempted from life. In a moment like this, who was I to be a minister?

1 This article is based on the Archbishop Michael Ramsey lecture I gave at Nashotah House Theological Seminary in May 2017.

Four years later, I was in seminary. The Vietnam War was still raging, the protests were becoming more intense, and the nation was growing weary of war. After students at Kent State were shot during a protest, the seminary designated a day of prayer. It was a heavy and reflective day. A professor whom we regarded as especially wise taught one of my classes. He came to the lectern and, after a moment's silence, said, as best I remember, "My namesake (the son of another professor) is in Sweden because he could not allow himself to participate in this war. My own son is in the Mekong Delta today, fighting in it. You tell me how to pray." With that, he left the room. Students sat in silence for a time, and then left quietly, one by one. That moment remains profoundly powerful for me, and telling the story revives the emotion I felt then. What does it mean to pray? How do we know what our most earnest petitions should be?

During my last year in seminary, I took a class on the teaching of Jesus. The reading list was extensive, including Rudolph Bultmann's *Jesus and the Word.* The problems with Bultmann's work have been the subject of scholarly attention since the 1970s, and he is on fewer reading lists today. The words of that book grabbed me, however, and have not let go. I still have my marked-up and underlined paperback copy. "The Kingdom of God," Bultmann wrote, "is not an ideal which realizes itself in human history; . . . we can say only that it draws near, it comes, it appears."[2] Reading that book changed how I understood the Jesus of the Gospels and the work of ministry. How can a theological construal—mere words on a page—shape the meaning we make of faith and guide us in understanding a way in the world?

These experiences linger not because they were spectacular or even unique but because they were formative. Theological education crunches souls and moves hearts as much as it informs minds. Formational theological education emerges from pastoral experiences, unexpected words in a seminary class, the argument in a book; it is the kind of education needed by people who will, in time, stand alongside parents grieving the untimely death of a child, or stand in a pulpit to declare a faith on which people can bet their lives, or represent religion in a culture that is disinterested in it or even suspicious of it. How does education ready persons for a life of religious vocation?

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2 Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. L. Smith and E. Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1958), 38.

How have ministers been trained for their work in the past, how are they being trained now, and what might be the future of ministry education?

Classical and apprenticeship models of Protestant theological education

Ministry education in the colonies and early US nationhood took two forms.[3] The first was a formal educational model. Glenn Miller, the premier historian of American Protestant theological education, writes that "clergy and laity were to receive the same education, one that fitted them ideally for service in either of the two public realms, church or commonwealth."[4] These colonial schools adapted the English model of the "learned gentleman," where "learned" meant steeped in classical subjects and languages. Although the education of ministers was at the center of higher education, there was no specialized education for ministry. Teachers of clergy were pious and knew the classics and educated students for the intellectual capacity both to serve as religious leaders and to contribute to cultural structures and social conventions.

Joseph Willard, for example, was a pastor when he became president of Harvard, and his two successors were also clergymen. During the same period, Samuel Smith, a clergyman, was the president of the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. Benjamin Moore, the president of what is now Columbia University, was the Anglican bishop of New York when he became president. Clergy in colonial America and in the first decades of nationhood contributed significantly to the cultural and intellectual leadership of the nation. They were able to do this partly because of religious inclinations of the founding of institutions and partly because a common educational experience equipped graduates for service in both religious and civic contexts.

The second form of education for ministry, a more informal or apprenticeship model, was a function of both the frontier character of the colonies

3 A part of this summary is taken from Daniel Aleshire, "Theological Education in the United States," *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Education*, eds. Michael D. Waggoner and Nathan C. Walker. In press.

4 Glenn Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Antebellum Theological Education* (Atlanta: GA Scholars Press, 1990), 48.

and revival movements. Many ministers could not obtain a formal education because they were unable to attend schools that were generally located in the Eastern colonies/states. Others did not pursue formal ministry education because it was not perceived to be necessary—or for some, was feared to be detrimental. These ministers learned by apprenticing with more experienced ministers or by serving as pastors to congregations that called them because they were pious and had gifts for ministry. They might have read texts assigned by a mentor or an ecclesiastical structure, or were content studying the Bible as they preached it. Revivalist communities like Baptists and Methodists relied on this less formal system. Because it was an informal system, there are no records about the number of ministers trained this way. It is likely, however, that more ministers were trained in these informal systems than in the colleges.

Both of these models served the culture and fit the times, and these criteria are key to understanding education for ministry in other cultural moments as well.

Freestanding theological schools and the development of theological disciplines

In the nineteenth century, formal education for ministers gradually moved from colleges to specialized theological schools. The first two freestanding Protestant seminaries in the United States were Andover in Massachusetts (that became Andover Newton Theological School) and what is now Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. Andover was founded in 1808 by Congregationalists who opposed the appointment of a Unitarian-leaning professor to the Hollis Chair at Harvard. Princeton Seminary was founded as The Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in 1811 and separated Presbyterian ministerial education from the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. Princeton Seminary required faculty to swear "an *ex animo* (literally, from the soul) oath that their theology was that of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms."[5] Though Andover was not under strict church control, the founding documents nonetheless required every professor to be "a man of sound and orthodox principles in

5 Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, 113.

divinity."[6] While Andover was aligned with the religious understandings of Congregationalists, Princeton Seminary was placed under the direct control of the church. Miller argues that "Andover defined the academic standards; Princeton set the ecclesiastical standards."[7]

It was in these freestanding seminaries that a theological faculty first began to teach academic content that was different from the curriculum of classics taught in the colleges. Over time, these subjects formed an academic body of divinity. The curriculum at Andover, for example, included "natural theology" (apologetics, philosophy, and ethics), sacred literature, ecclesiastical history, and Christian theology.[8] Theological education was morphing into something different in both institutional form and educational content.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, these subjects emerged as academic disciplines, and as disciplines became more defined, scholarship became more specialized. Old Testament appears to have been the first area that developed as its own specialty and New Testament the last, apparently because most faculties thought that New Testament belonged to everyone.[9] Over time, scholarship took on characteristics associated with disciplinary fields of study that included specialized scholarly methods (Old Testament scholarship had different methods from church history or even New Testament) and specialized content. Academic guilds formed, including what is now the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Society of Church History (both in the 1880s) and what is now the American Academy of Religion (1908).

These developments in theological education reflected the patterns of development in higher education. The American Historical Association, for example, "was founded in 1884, [when] history had only recently emerged as a distinct academic discipline. The first few professors in the field of history had only been appointed at major universities in the

6 Margaret Bendroth, *A School of the Church: Andover Newton Across Two Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 15.

7 Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, 113.

8 Bendroth, *A School of the Church*, 19.

9 Glenn Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870–1970* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 45.

1870s."[10] The industrial age was beginning, knowledge was expanding, the United States was becoming more urban, and theological education was accommodating to a changed perception of advanced learning and the growing complexity of ministry.

Ministry education as professional education

The development of freestanding seminaries, theological disciplines, and more technical forms of theological scholarship provided the basic architecture for twentieth-century Protestant theological education. It reflected the patterns of education similar to those that had developed for professions like law and medicine. A professional education model for ministry included liberal arts,[11] subject areas like scripture, theology, history, and ethics, and pastoral arts like preaching, pastoral care, religious education, and church administration. As the professional model matured, theological schools introduced field or contextual education as well as study in sociology of religion and congregational studies. While the nineteenth century developed specialized disciplines for the liberal arts areas of study, relatively little disciplinary structure had developed for the pastoral arts areas. With the twentieth-century development of the pastoral arts disciplines, ministry education could fairly be understood as a form of professional education.

Like the classical studies and informal or apprenticeship models of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the body of divinity in special purpose schools of theology of the mid-nineteenth century, the professional model that matured to its full expression in the twentieth century fit the times. The modern age had brought complexity, specialization, urbanization, and other fundamental shifts in the culture, the church, and

10 https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/brief-history-of-the-aha, accessed May 2017.

11 I am using "liberal arts" and "pastoral arts" to distinguish subjects like Bible, theology, and church history from subjects like pastoral care, homiletics, and religious education. Other terms have been used—like classical and practical or theoretical and practical—but I am using these terms because the first group of subjects are researched, studied, and learned in the way that liberal arts subjects are researched, studied, and learned, while pastoral arts subjects depend on different scholarly methods and are learned in different ways. These terms are arguable, of course, but I have chosen them on the basis of the differing scholarly methods and practices rather than differing subject matter.

higher education. Ministry needed to accommodate these changes, and the professional model was right for the times. It provided the education needed for ministers to assume their roles among the other professionals who functioned in an ever more complicated and sophisticated culture.

Roman Catholic and formational education

The story I have recounted thus far has focused on Protestant theological education, but there is more to the story. Between 1780 and 1880, the Roman Catholic population in the United States grew from about thirty thousand Catholics served by about thirty priests to six million Catholics served by six thousand priests. The Seminary of St. Sulpice in Baltimore had its first graduate in 1792 and predated both Andover and Princeton as a freestanding seminary. Catholic theological education at this school, now St. Mary's Seminary, and other seminaries founded in the nineteenth century generally operated separately from Catholic colleges and universities. While these seminaries followed the centuries-old rubrics of the Tridentine seminary decree, bishops were given broad authority to decide how their seminaries would operate and what they would teach. Roman Catholic theological education addressed problems like the need to train priests efficiently because of the booming Catholic population, a limited number of qualified faculty to serve many diocesan schools, and the need to serve the ethnicity of immigrant Catholic communities in the context of the Americanization of the Church as a whole.[12] Over time, even though they operated with limited engagement with Protestant schools, Catholic theological schools—like the Protestant ones—developed disciplines of study and scholarly societies (the Catholic Biblical Association in 1936 and the Catholic Theological Society of America in 1946).

While certain similarities between Catholic and Protestant theological education are evident, one dominant difference deserves comment. Roman Catholics have long considered the theological education for priesthood to be a process of formation. The current *Program of Priestly Formation* adopted by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops states that "Formation, as the Church understands it, is not equivalent to a secular

12 Joseph White, *The Diocesan Seminary in the United States: A History from 1780 to Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989). Conclusions in these paragraphs are drawn from this comprehensive and detailed history.

sense of schooling or, even less, job training. Formation is first and foremost cooperation with the grace of God."[13] Another document of the US Catholic bishops states, "Moved by that grace, however, we make ourselves available to God's work of transformation. And that making ready a place for the Lord to dwell in us and transform us we call formation."[14] The *Program of Priestly Formation* states that the goal of formation is for a priest "who understands his spiritual development within the context of his call to service in the Church, his human development within the greater context of his call to advance the mission of the Church, his intellectual development as the appropriation of the Church's teaching and tradition, and his pastoral formation as participation in the active ministry of the Church."[15]

A Carnegie Foundation study of the education of clergy noted that formation was part of all theological education. The researchers identified "four shared intentions for student learning, originating in clergy practice and embedded in a variety of pedagogies,"[16] namely: (1) facility for interpreting texts; (2) raising students' consciousness about historical and contemporary contexts; (3) cultivating student performance in public clergy roles; and (4) nurturing dispositions and habits integral to the vocation of religious leadership. While the first three intentions reflect accepted practices of professional theological education, the fourth introduces a formational task for theological education that Protestant theological education has sometimes overlooked. "Nurturing dispositions and habits integral to the vocation of religious leadership" suggests a formational pattern of theological education that is reflected in the other three pedagogical intentions, but it differs from them, particularly in the educational practices it requires. The other three certainly can nurture dispositions and habits, and frequently do, but this nurture is incidental to education in the

13 The *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th edition (US Conference of Catholic Bishops), 28.

14 "The Basic Plan for Ongoing Formation of Priests," 7, quoted in the *Program of Priestly Formation*, 28.

15 The *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th edition, 29.

16 Charles R. Foster, Lisa E. Dahill, Lawrence A. Golemon, and Barbara Wang Tolentino, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 33.

first three areas and requires its own pedagogical practices and educational goals.

Formational theological education

In each of the periods I have noted in this essay, the social location of religion in the culture, the needs of religious communities, and the developments in higher education have all influenced the form of theological education. If these have been the influences in the past, then theological education in the future will likely be influenced by these same realities.

North American culture appears to be moving religion from a more public social location to a more private and personal location. Although the influence of evangelical Protestants in recent elections might suggest that religion has a strong public voice, this apparent influence may reflect more the ability of political systems to co-opt religion for their own purposes than the ability of religion to influence the political process. While religion remains a strong and viable presence in North American society, it is not as culturally influential as it was in previous centuries. This change influences the work of clergy, and as that work changes, theological education will change.

Religion is changing. Religious expressions are stressing personal practice more than social presence. The evidence is now clear that the American population is engaged in a long-term decline of religious participation, as evidenced by the fact that the fastest growing religious preference is "none" or "no religious preference."[17] The percentage of those who attend the largest membership parishes and congregations continues to increase, while the percentage attending smaller congregations continues to decrease. The membership reported by almost all Protestant denominations—evangelical as well as mainline Protestant—is declining. As religious participation changes, congregations change, and as congregations change, theological education will change.

Higher education is also changing. Liberal arts colleges—the nineteenth-century backbone of higher education during the time that freestanding theological schools developed—are hard pressed in the twenty-first century to demonstrate their relevance for graduates' financial

17 Pew Research Center, Religious Landscape Study. See also Mark Chaves, *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

success. Institutions that have sophisticated science and technology education, or capacity for advanced research programs—schools very different from theological schools—have emerged as the backbone of twenty-first-century higher education. While theological education was central to liberal arts colleges in the eighteenth century, establishing and following the dominant patterns of higher education as they developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it does not seem that liberal arts colleges will be able to claim a future by following the newest dominant pattern.

How will changes in culture, religion, and higher education influence theological education? I am, of course, not sure, but my hypothesis is that the next pattern of theological education will not be understood as professional education in the way that the current model has been. "Professional" has meaning and value for institutions that have social status in the culture.[18] Its meaning is far more ambivalent if the institution to which it is related has limited cultural status. Whatever the next model to develop, it will reflect the dominant model of ministry.

What might be a model of ministry for this kind of future in North America? Henri Nouwen, in an era of increasing complexity in society and fragmentation in religion, argued for the importance of authenticity. "The minister," he wrote, "can make this search for authenticity possible, not by standing to the side as a neutral screen or impartial observer, but as an articulate witness to Christ, who puts his own search at the disposal of others."[19] Nouwen's ideas have been revered for making space for a more confessional form of ministry and reviled for being too therapeutic when a wounded church needs entrepreneurial leadership. While these concerns have merit, this image of ministry may be key to the future. In a world of more privatized religious experience, first and foremost the Christian minister needs to be an authentic Christian human being. This authenticity is crucial to both ministerial authority and leadership. In the era of professional ministry, authority and capacity could be derived from the social institution and from religious knowledge and ministerial skills. While those may remain important, they may become secondary to the minister's authenticity as a person of faith.

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18 For example, the social status for virtually all professions in the United States is confirmed by laws and licensing that define the profession and its role.

19 Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 103.

What does this mean for theological education? I think that more than introducing a new form of theological education, education for this kind of ministry will rearrange elements that have been present all along. The *Educating Clergy* study, mentioned above, concluded that one of the four significant areas of pedagogical effort in current theological education is "nurturing dispositions and habits that are integral to the vocation of religious leadership." William Sullivan wrote in his introduction to this study: "The clergy's area of expertise lies not in physical or information systems, but in a world of social practices structured by shared meanings, purposes, and loyalties. These social networks form a distinctive ecology of human life and are the matrix of individual identity and purpose."[20] While identity and purpose are crucial to effective ministry in ways that they may not be to the practice of law or medicine, Sullivan notes that the "conventional view of professionals as value-neutral problem solvers has come under increasing strain."[21]

The model of theological education that I think will emerge will be a more *formational* form of theological education. Like Roman Catholic theological education and one of the four pedagogies identified in the *Educating Clergy* study, the future will place more emphasis on the human and spiritual dimensions of ministry. The liberal arts areas of ministry and the pastoral arts areas will remain crucial (in the classification I used earlier), but increasingly they will be situated alongside a robust effort to cultivate personal integrity and spiritual wholeness. An accrediting standard, adopted by The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in 1996, first noted the educational implication of this model of ministry:

> In a theological school, the overarching goal is the development of theological understanding, that is, aptitude for theological reflection and wisdom pertaining to responsible life in faith. Comprehended in this overarching goal are others such as deepening spiritual awareness, growing in moral sensibility and character, gaining an intellectual grasp of the tradition of the faith community, and acquiring the abilities requisite to the exercise of ministry in that community.[22]

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20 Foster et al., *Educating Clergy*, 8.

21 Foster et al., *Educating Clergy*, 11.

22 ATS Commission on Accrediting General Institutional Standards, 3.1.1, (http://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/general-institutional-standards.pdf)

Formational theological education includes educating for an intellectual grasp of theological disciplines and competent pastoral skills, but it undertakes this work with careful attention to authentic humanity, relational ability, and spiritual maturity. It fits Nouwen's perception about ministry cited earlier: "The minister is the one who can make this search for authenticity possible." This is a personal and identity issue for the minister him- or herself. The posture is achieved, says Nouwen, "not by standing to the side as a neutral screen or impartial observer," which would be contrary to generally accepted practice in other professions than ministry, "but as an articulate witness to Christ," which is not so much a ministerial skill as it is an aspect of Christian spirituality. The minister is also one "who puts his (her) own search at the disposal of others," which requires a well-developed relational capacity.[23]

Formational theological education cultivates habits, perceptions, a way of being in the world, a kind of theological *habitus*, combined with a sense of personal wholeness and growing spiritual maturity. It makes Christian character and spirituality central rather than co-curricular as has been the tendency in the professional model of theological education. While formational theological education is intellectually engaged, it reflects a different academic effort and a different telos from the one associated with disciplinary learning and acquiring professional skills.

If this model does emerge as the pattern that the cultural location of religion requires and communities of faith need, the consequence will be significant for theological schools. The current academic practices would not be eliminated, but they would be recalibrated. Likewise, current educational efforts to cultivate pastoral skills would not be eliminated, but they would be repositioned. For the first time in the history of North American theological education, theological schools would grow away from dominant forms of higher education rather than toward those forms.

Conclusion

My perceptions about this possible revised model of theological education explain why I began this article by recalling formational experiences in my own theological education.

23 Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, 103.

The funeral of a young soldier my age evoked in me issues at the core of ministerial identity. That experience thrust me into the long process of coming to terms with my identity as a minister. I knew being a minister would differentiate me from people who were not ministers. It would show up in false perceptions at some frustrating times, and at other uniquely privileged times such as stewarding sacred moments in worship or attending to holy moments in human lives. Formational theological education cultivates authentic identity.

The comment my professor made during that day about prayer was, at its heart, about humility. I was so convinced of the moral disaster of the Vietnam War that I was sure how to pray. Yet, if my professor, wise as he was, did not know, how could I? The beginning of wisdom is humility, and without it, very little learning is possible. Humility is a spiritual quality that makes any kind of learning possible. Formational theological education cultivates spiritual maturity.

Reading Bultmann birthed a convictional moment in me—that the kingdom of God is here, just not yet completely. Ministers witness unspeakable tragedy one moment and glimpse profound goodness another, and the tragedies would be unbearable without the glimpses of goodness. An intellectual moment in a book became a convictional moment: Christian life and ministry occur in a time when two times overlap. Formational theological education gives intellectual learning a home that it would not otherwise have.

My Baptist theological education occurred at the height of the professional model, but it was full of formational moments—what Catholics would call a "cooperation with grace of God." The education of ministers and priests in the United States has emphasized different kinds of content at different times since the Colonial Period. It focused first on the classics of Western humanities, then developed theological disciplines related to text and tradition, then developed the professional disciplines related to skill, practice, and leadership. As the future emerges, theological education will hold onto what it has developed and expand its formational efforts. They will not be the new center of theological education as much as they will assume equal space among the others and, as such, change the pattern of theological education in substantive ways.

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Prophecy in the Present

The Purposes of Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: In the context of a modern research university, theological education needs to be able to give an account of its purposes in secular and humanist terms. I offer such an account here, naming theological education's dependence on past generations, its obligations to future generations, and its call to connect with publics beyond the university. I develop this account through eleven propositions on the nature and purpose of theological education today.

I teach in a divinity school at a secular university. Like all academic units in this university, the divinity school's criteria for excellence are seen in the turn to the intellectual currents of Western modernity as reflected in the contributions of the Western European Enlightenment. In fact, the university's motto captures that thrust: "Let knowledge grow from more to more; and so be human life enriched."

Here, there is a sense of humanism, in which each human being has the right and the duty to put forth her or his critical voice and defend that voice publically in a secular and humanist ethos. Thus, for me, the question of the purposes of theological education connects to this context.

I see a double calling in theological education's purpose. First, I'm called "by" and "to" a transcendence beyond my individual self. I choose to describe the "by" aspect as being called by the theological traditions of my family ancestors, who preceded my existence. It is transcendent because it is a spirituality gifted to me by my family before I was born. I understand the "to" to denote my duty to pass on my received ancestral spirituality to my children, to my grandchildren, and to other future generations who might be interested in what I have to say and how I live.

The second focus of the double theological calling resides within the university's criteria of articulating my voice to public audiences—the larger neighborhood of the civic realm, the church of the believers, and the academy of formally trained scholars. In the academy, we often hear this as responding to the calling by asking ourselves: Is my first theological

calling clear, cogent, compelling, and convincing? And so the purposes of theological education focus first on God and second on human beings. For me, theological education has to continue to frame its work in this way.

Within this fluid and dynamic framing, contemporary theological education has several exciting challenges, eleven of which I list here:

First, theological education must prepare our students for leadership in a world of political economy in such a way that they can discern the good news of the gospel in changing global realities. For instance, China has a population of 1.4 billion people. India currently hovers around 1.3 billion people and will surpass China eventually. With the decentralization of the USSR and the subsequent end of the Cold War, the world is a multipolar reality, not one defined by a standoff between two superpowers or the unilateral will of one nation. The rise of the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), Asian economic coalitions of nations, recent international pacts in Latin America, and the independent Africa Development Bank (with access to more than $35 billion US dollars from China) all point to changing and dynamic nodes of leadership. How does theological education prepare the church to do outreach in this new world order? Moreover, how does theological education save formerly mainline churches in America (the predominantly white congregations) from a slow membership decline, even as it learns from and provides resources for the fastest growing congregations, which are disproportionately among people of color and immigrants from the Third World? And what similar implications for theological education do we find in the marked shift of global Christianity's growth to Africa, Asia, and Latin America?

> *". . . the purposes of theological education focus first on God and second on human beings.*

Second, theological education must attend to the glaring domestic chasm among US citizens between the have-nots and the have-mores. The economic wealth divide is wide and widening. When citizens lack wealth, they will use whatever means necessary to survive and feed their families. Such a powder keg is waiting to ignite. Theological education can get ahead of the curve and train leaders by hearing the pains of the helpless, the homeless, and the hungry. Lessening the gap has the potential to bring more people into the church and, therefore, to increase tithes and servants

to carry out the ministries of the church to the materially poor, the emotionally bruised, and the discarded lonely.

Economic inequality arises from and accentuates racial inequalities. The disparities are especially acute in wealth. (Wealth includes tangible assets owned by families, while income comes primarily from working for someone else.) While white families are becoming wealthier, black families are lagging behind. In 2013, the median white household wealth moved upward to $141,900. During the same period, black household wealth dropped by a third to $11,000. Whites have thirteen times the net worth of blacks.[1] Between 2004 and 2010 (including the most acute years of the subprime mortgage-generated Great Recession), blacks lost 25 percent of their wealth, while whites lost only 1 percent. Between 2010 and 2013, black median wealth dropped an additional 34 percent. White home ownership is 28 percent higher than black home ownership. Worse trends exist in the white-black comparative ownership of stocks.

Home ownership and stock portfolios are two of the most significant means of intergenerational accumulation or loss of capital in the United States. A substantial number of white grandparents or parents have passed on wealth to their descendants. Not only are most black families not the beneficiaries of intergenerational legacies, but contemporary black families are losing their wealth accumulated in this current family generation. Economic democracy is not working in the United States. Actually, all indicators and patterns point to a rapid redistribution of wealth upward. Fundamentally, a disproportionate number of white families is gaining ownership of more and more, while massive numbers of black families are increasingly losing ownership even of earth, water, and air—core elements of wealth.[2]

Third, theological education needs to be clear about its purpose in higher education. The business school manages people and capital. The engineering school produces social relevancy by supplying builders, from petroleum engineers to urban engineers. The music school churns out leaders who create music to soothe the soul of a nation. What does

1 Rakesh Kochhar and Richard Fry, "Wealth Inequality Has Widened Along Racial, Ethnic Lines Since End of Great Recession," Pew Research Center, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/12/racial-wealth-gaps-great-recession/.

2 See "Echoing in the Streets: A Growing Racial Wealth Divide," https://www.huffingtonpost.com/chuck-collins/echoing-in-the-streets-a-_b_6319740.html.

theological education do? I believe it offers, at minimum, three forms of vital worth to people. It gifts all the other academic disciplines and constituents of human civilization with healthy values. Other disciplines and institutions in the broader realm of citizenship make important contributions. Theology, however, raises questions about the nature of the value of everything and everybody else. It discerns the values of the individual, the individuals, and the institutions involved. The question is not simply about the particular value added; the fundamental investigation concerns the nature of the values themselves.

Theological education also fosters healthy communities. Theology aids human beings in forging healthy communities. Theological education has a vision of living out the future now; it is the Pauline "already" and "not yet." From millennia of traditions and from hundreds of ecclesial practices, theology can teach even secular civic organizations how (and how not) to craft a dynamic, breathing community where the collective goods motivate individual contributions to the collective and the collective provides all of the resources so all individuals in community can pursue their healthy gifts.

Theological education also lifts up positive spirituality in human cultures. Culture consists of human labor, the aesthetic, and the spirit of creativity. The animating dimension is a presence of some forms of spirituality (i.e., a transcending spirit, that which precedes and persists after the present human generation). That spirituality is always embodied in human labor or human aesthetics. Spirit or spirituality is never non-incarnated outside of human materiality. If it were, humans would not know that it existed. That spirit or spirituality consists of a co-laboring process of God and human partnership. The human co-laborer brings to the endeavor creative imagination. God, or the sacred co-laborer, inspires humans to do what we humans usually imagine as beyond the commonly human, which is one definition of a miracle. In sum, theological education, as a process of self-reflection of the church, helps hold together healthy communities and keep a healthy individual within a community.

Fourth, theological education equips citizens with practices of self-cultivation. Here, the emphasis is on complementing various forms of pastoral or spiritual practices such as prayer and service to the neighbor. Practices of self-cultivation seek to develop a way of life where harmony and balance reign inside each person's body. Of course, theological education roots itself in Christian heritages. Given that fact, on what other world

civilizations and cultural and spiritual practices can we draw to foster healthy citizens? Meditation complements prayer. In meditation, one empties oneself of feelings (or lowers one's consciousness away from that to which the five senses are responding), of emotions (to forget reacting to emotive moments brought on by external stimuli), and of thoughts in one's head. Perhaps the last is the greatest challenge. How does a human being release thoughts such that the mind slows down its thinking? Key to this meditation proposal is slowing down the breathing in the body. In the body, we find life's energy. Christians, following the Old Testament, call this the *ruach* given by Yahweh at the moment that *ruach* was breathed into earth. Christians, following the New Testament, call this the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Some forms of African daily living might designate this as the presence in the body of the ancestors. In Daoism, it might be termed *Qi.*

Meditation anchored in slowing down breathing and focusing on breathing is an ongoing process. Harmony and balance of internal life energy in one's breathing enables one to be in sync with the material energy in nature and the cosmos.[3] But isn't this what a major telos of Christianity is all about? Here, we stress a both-and spiritual practice of the individual self. One engages in both Christian prayer (which looks for something or calls on someone outside of the self) and harmony and balance of internal life energy—breathing that empties the internal self of everything (i.e., feelings, emotions, and thinking) to allow harmony and balance to unfold inside of the self. Individual selves, after years of practices, can potentially cultivate their internal harmonies and balances into harmony and balance with earth, air, water, and the cosmos.

Fifth, theological education has to teach students all of Americans' cultural history. It is in human culture that the sacred reveals itself. As we link pedagogy to Americans' cultural history, we must keep the current dominant ways of doing theology along with their epistemological legacies. However, we maintain the now dominant theological tradition with a difference. That difference denotes giving it equal time as the theological traditions of all American cultures. This moves us to democratizing our curricula with the complete picture of America, with each subgroup's theological story receiving equal representation in books assigned and

3 See James Miller, *Daoism: A Short Introduction* (London: Oneworld, 2003).

topics discussed. We want to broaden the conversations and give equal footing, time, and attention to the entire *pluribus* from which our *unum* comes.

The black American cultural theological narrative is emblematic. Specifically, it is important for the elders to educate our young people about their cultural histories. To assist our youth's search for their identities, we must enhance their knowledge about their own ancestries. Our sense of positive place and feeling of being proactive as citizens is directly related to clear self-knowledge and strong self-identity. And African American history definitely precedes the American slavery period. Long before European contact, many West African empires existed, such as Songhai, Mali, and Ghana.[4] These empires had their own formal governments, treasuries, militaries, schools of higher learning, families and clan structures, international treaties, written texts, judiciaries, religious systems, art, music, dance, and diverse languages. Prior to European missionaries arriving on slave ships from Europe, Africans practiced African traditional religions. West Africans believed in the view that "I am because we are," meaning that individuality was subordinate to the well-being of the entire community.[5] And so, African identity must not be forgotten as the "African" part of African American.

Sixth, in addition to teaching this African heritage, we must teach our youth about the more immediate "American" part of the African American history of their ancestors' contribution to the United States. This legacy stands for the "American" aspect of African American. Black youth carry in their veins a rich creative legacy that benefitted black people.

4 See G. T Stride and C. Ifeka, *Peoples and Empires of West Africa* (Edinburgh, Scotland and Nairobi, Kenya: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1983); Paul Bohannan and Philip Curtin, *Africa & Africans: A New and Revised Edition* (Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press, 1971); Roland Oliver, ed. *The Dawn of African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); K.B.C. Onwubiko, *School Certificate History of West Africa, AD 1000–1800* (Onitsha, Nigeria: Africana-FEP Publishers Limited, 1984); and Harry A. Gailey, *History of West Africa from Earliest Times to 1800* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970).

5 John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1991).

Moreover, these remarkable achievements under incredible odds symbolize African Americans' gifts to all of America.[6]

Seventh, theological education has to think about human culture as the site of divine revelation. There are actually Christian warrants for this claim in the instance of revelation. For example, the Christian tradition believes that the divine descends vertically into the horizontal plane of culture. If an ultimate power greater than oneself exists, the human person only experiences the divine as the divine reveals itself in human culture. Biblical instructions call for a clarification of the notion of culture. Philippians 2 reads, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Phil 2:5–8 NRSV). Here, God pours out Godself into human culture. Similarly the birth narratives of Jesus indicate the conscious decision of divinity to reveal itself in human culture. Christian theological education becomes effective as we appreciate different cultures because Jesus was born into a specific culture during his time. Jesus' spirit, thus, appears wherever there are human cultures. The Hebrew Scriptures talk about Yahweh revealing Godself in ancient Hebrew culture. Likewise, the Christian Scriptures talk about Jesus revealing himself in ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and, through Paul, Koine Greek cultures. In a word, we do theological education because Christian revelation is a cultural dynamic colored by the social conditions of diverse cultures.

Eighth, theological education at the dawn of the twenty-first century must take seriously the realities of the peoples who occupy the majority of the world. Millions of these peoples, but not the majority, are Christians.

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6 Black American citizens gave to their country incredible persons and personalities like George Washington Carver (pioneering scientist who created more than one hundred inventions from the peanut); W.E.B. Du Bois (one of America's rare intellectual geniuses); Zora Neal Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Toni Morrison (cultural artists); the many known and unknown musical creators of the spirituals, the blues, doo wop, soul music, R&B, rock and roll, hip hop, and gospel songs; American sports champions such as Arthur Ash, Althea Gibson, Tiger Woods, and Michael Jordan; business leaders like Maggie Lena Walker, Madame C.J. Walker, John H. Johnson, Oprah Winfrey, and Booker T. Washington; major military heroes symbolized by the Tuskegee Airmen and General Colin Powell; and powerful preachers in the persons of Howard Thurman, Gardiner Taylor, and Vashti McKenzie.

Inevitably, as theologians engage world Christianity, we will enter pedagogical and epistemological encounters with other great religions, self-cultivation practices, and indigenous spiritualities of the world. One of the first lessons that American theological educators might learn from these encounters is that global Christian partnerships as well as global interreligious connections must move away from a posture of simply converting people to one's faith or converting those of one's faith to one's narrow interpretation of a common faith. Rather, what is needed is an orientation in which North American Christian leaders participate as equals with the rest of the global family.

Ninth, theological education needs to place a stronger accent on an interdisciplinary methodology. For the majority of the developing world, religious educators begin with a social analysis of their families, communities, countries, and regions of the globe. They do not start with an idea removed from the prior reality of their social locations. Because all theologies emerge from the particular social situation of the theologian advancing the theological education, we need a host of non-theological disciplines to help unravel how religious education operates in a complex, particular, and messy environment. Political economy as well as psychology can aid religious education. In other words, we need more higher order systems of thought and more explorations into the history of systems of thought.

Tenth, Christian theological education has to become more of a public enterprise. Unfortunately, the dominant US tradition for theological education seems to stress an individual journey or something that is mainly, if not only, accountable to a small group of ten thousand scholars in the prestigious American Academy of Religion (AAR). I do agree that this is one vital public and I'm committed to the intellectual health and scholarly vibrancy of the AAR, but there are other publics calling for accountability. If theological education is about the relation between "theos" and "logos," then let us remember that "theos" and "logos" inhabit all of creation. There are additional important publics that need to benefit from theological education, such publics as the church and the wider civic society and, indeed, the world and the cosmos.

Eleventh, and finally, Christian theological education must engage all youth of America in a spiritual process. We need to embark on a nationwide spiritual revival among the newer generations. From a Christian perspective, all human beings reflect the image of God, a God of love, justice, peace, and compassion for oneself and for one's family, community, country, and

the world. At heart, such spirituality is about self-affirmation and community building. It teaches our yellow, red, brown, white, and black youth about a vocation of service to the lowest rung in society. It focuses the vision and horizons of our youth on something bigger than and beyond each individual self. For truly, as the African proverb says, "I am because we are." Each human being is inextricably intertwined with the humanity of others. Each person's humanity is connected to all peoples' humanity. To be human is to embrace our human dignity, which is both our natural-born right and our sacred right.

Ultimately, these are the purposes of theological education. To be human for all of us is to embrace the fact of what Martin Luther King, Jr. called the inescapable and intertwined destiny in which the "we" in the United States (yellow, red, brown, black, and white people), the "we" of the globe (people from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Australia, Europe, North America, South America, and the Pacific Islands), and the "we" of all that is (earth, air, water, animals, nature, and cosmos) are all connected. Being human mandates that we love into reality, at this moment, a spirituality greater than the individual self. It requires us to embody in our daily lives now the expectant "not yet" of the future.

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Encountering the Religious "Stranger": Interreligious Pedagogy and the Future of Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: One of the truly tectonic shifts in theological education between the times is the introduction of degree program standards of accreditation that require ministerial competency "in the multi-faith and multicultural context of contemporary society" (MDiv A2.3.2). To propose a theological rationale for, and some key principles and practices of, interreligious pedagogy in theological education, the author draws on biblical and quranic wisdom and his seventeen years of experience with directing an interreligious studies program at a Roman Catholic graduate school in theology and ministry.

Introduction: a phone call from "Gerardo"

A few years ago, I received a welcomed telephone call from "Gerardo," a former student of mine. At the time, he was a newly ordained presbyter in the Roman Catholic tradition. He had graduated just one year earlier from Catholic Theological Union (CTU) with both an MDiv and an MA (Theology) with a concentration in interreligious dialogue. He called ostensibly to chat about his experience with pursuing a PhD in theology with a focus on Islamic studies and Christian-Muslim relations, his MA concentration at CTU.

Being a person of generous and grateful spirit, Gerardo also called to thank me for the important role he claimed I had played in shaping his scholarly and ministerial career. I remember being deeply touched, as I was totally unaware that he was about to offer me an insight that so elegantly encapsulated the heart of my ministry as director of a program in Catholic-Muslim studies at a Roman Catholic graduate school of theology and ministry. "You know," Gerardo said, "it occurred to me that I can start a sentence in a way most Roman Catholic priests cannot." I had no

clue what he meant by this or how it related to his reflections on his time at CTU and our work together. So I naively asked, "Oh? What would that be?" "The sentence," Gerardo responded, "goes something like this: *When I was in seminary, my Muslim colleagues and professors used to say . . .* "[1]

In one simple phrase, Gerardo evoked something truly extraordinary, but something to which I had become so accustomed as part of my work that I could neither fully appreciate its revolutionary character nor find the words to articulate its potential impact on theological education in the twenty-first century. Gerardo was not simply testifying to the fact that he had been transformed by studying Islam and meeting Muslims, as true as this is. He also alluded to the impact on his own theological education of what I would categorize as *interreligious pedagogy*: that when he was '*in seminary*,' being *formed both intellectually and spiritually for his vocation to the priesthood*, his Muslim '*colleagues and professors* used to say . . . . ' He was making a comment about his own theological education that has profound implications for the future of theological education in general.

In what follows, this essay will attempt to do two things: The first is to root the practice of interreligious pedagogy in two mutually illuminating reflections from sacred scripture—one from the New Testament and the other from the Qur'an. The second is to identify and briefly discuss the significance for theological education of a few key principles and practices of the interreligious pedagogy to which Gerardo's sentence so evocatively alludes.

Encountering the religious "stranger"—Mk 7:24–30[2]

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is at once the ultimate stranger/guest *and* host. He is the ultimate stranger and potential guest as the one who has come into the world but does not "belong to the world" (Jn 17:16); he is sent by the "Righteous Father" whom the

1 My memories of this exchange are not exact, and I am making certain embellishments here to relate the story in the most effective way possible. In fact, I am not certain whether this exchange occurred by telephone or in person.

2 Albeit slightly rewritten, substantial portions of this section have been taken from a section written by the author of a dual-authored article (together with Mary Boys) on hospitality and theological education for interreligious dialogue. The entirety of this earlier article appears as "Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices from a Roman Catholic Perspective" in *Theological Education* 47, no. 1 (2012): 47–73.

world does not know (Jn 17:25). And he is the ultimate host as the one who has come to bring an end to all alienation and "to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20).

The synoptic tradition presents a rich and nuanced portrait of Jesus as both stranger/guest and host where the focus on figures who are non-Israelites and thus archetypal *religious others* appears to be no coincidence. The parable of the compassionate Samaritan (Lk 10:25–37) stands out in this regard. Later Christian tradition sees the parable as an allegory of salvation, identifying the Samaritan—the radical religious other of first-century Judaism who plays the role of host for the "half dead" son of Israel—as Christ. Yet, perhaps the synoptic tradition's most striking use of the religious other in its treatment of Christ's teaching and practice of hospitality comes in the somewhat startling memory of Jesus's encounter with the Syrophoenician woman (Mk 7:25–30; Mt 15:21–28). This memory is startling because it appears to tell the story of a stranger/guest challenging Christ as host to commit himself to the deeper demands of a hospitality that knows no bounds.

The Markan setting of this story employs the rhetoric and imagery of hospitality. Jesus is in the predominantly Gentile region of Tyre and enters a home seeking refuge from the crowds. We are not told whether the home is a Jewish or a Gentile one, but given the tenor of the ensuing exchange, we can probably assume it to be the former. Thus, Jesus is an Israelite stranger/guest in the region of Tyre, but perhaps at the same time an acting host in this Jewish home visited by the Gentile woman seeking an exorcism for her daughter. That the Gentile woman is welcomed into the Jewish home is a sign of great fidelity to the Torah's teachings about the treatment of the stranger/guest, especially given the fact that Jews were a minority in this particular region of ancient Palestine. But this visitor is not satisfied with being welcomed into the home. She wants more. This mother has come for what Jesus and Jesus alone can give: a cure for her daughter's madness. As one master exegete of the Matthean version of this scene notes, "There is nothing that fires up a mother's audacity more than her child's wellbeing."[3] What unfolds is a scene in which we witness the

3 Barbara Reid, OP, "Holy Rage in the Work of Love," unpublished talk presented to the annual Chapter of the Dominican Sisters of Adrian, MI.

genius of a "tenacious mother"[4] who will not let her daughter be the victim of conventional, and thus limited, hospitality.

Like a gracious host forced to confront an overly demanding guest, Jesus responds by telling the woman that she has crossed the line. As if to proclaim that all hospitality has its reasonable limits, he sharply reminds her of her social location as religious other, telling her that she is violating the canons of hospitality by acting like a "little dog" (Gk. *kynaria*) demanding to be fed before the children (Mk 7:27).

After all, his gifts of healing are intended for the daughters and sons of Israel and not for pagan "dogs." However, instead of reacting with the justifiable indignation of being compared to a little dog by this Jewish stranger/guest in Gentile territory, the woman embraces the humility and vulnerability of the stranger/guest before her host and accepts the comparison. Instead of acting on what would be her understandable rage, and thus severing the bonds of the limited hospitality she enjoys, she simply reminds Jesus, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs" (Mk 7:28).

In the Matthean text, Jesus overtly proclaims the greatness of the woman's "faith"— presumably in him as "Lord" and "Son of David" (Mt 15:22)—thus implying that this quintessential expression of Israelite faith in this most unlikely of non-Israelite persons is the catalyst for the healing of the woman's daughter (Mt 15:28). The Markan text, however, concludes more subtly and perhaps more evocatively. In the Markan pericope, Jesus indicates that the woman's *words* (*dia touton ton logon*) are the reason for her daughter's healing (Mk 7:29). Are they words of faith? Yes. But the Markan account does not present them exclusively as words of faith in Jesus *qua* Messiah but in the practice of true hospitality. It is as if one can hear her reasoning to herself: "If this itinerant rabbi is an authentic healer, he will not be able to resist the demands of hospitality." Her words are presented as so wise and apt that the Syrophoenician religious stranger/guest and host is actually depicted as reminding her Jewish counterpart, who is also host and religious stranger/guest, of something the latter knows all too well: *that true hospitality breaks through limits*. Through this encounter, Jesus heals the woman's daughter, and the woman provides Jesus an opportunity to proclaim his Gospel of a divine hospitality that knows no bounds.

4 Ibid.

Thus, in the context of interreligious hospitality, both parties have touched each other deeply and mutually in God's Spirit.

Evangelical hospitality is, therefore, the hospitality of *encuentro*[5] in which mutuality and mutual transformation are central. As such, it is this understanding of evangelical hospitality that should inform and shape the pastoral practice of Christians as they interact with religious others. That this has not always been the case is a fact of our history, a history which we must own in its entirety—accepting both the good and the bad of where we have been—in order to move forward in the Gospel spirit of reconciliation and hope.

Encountering the religious "stranger"—Surat al-Hujurat, v. 13

Surat al-Hujurat of the Qur'an (Q 49) opens with a series of admonitory commandments addressed to "those who attain to faith" (*al-mu'minun*).[6] These commandments are concerned with the integrity of the community of the faithful and address certain behaviors that are usually highly corrosive of communal life. After a proclamation that each and every person

5 I use the Spanish term *encuentro* in celebration and affirmation of how the term has been used generically in Hispanic theology (particularly in a Catholic context) to denote an encounter in a spirit of mutuality and radical inclusivity aimed at destabilizing marginalization and the harmful effects of the dominant culture on subaltern groups. I am fully aware of, and largely concur with, the critique of the process of Encuentro (writ large) under the auspices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2000 and 2006. As Carmen Nanko-Fernández has noted, the bishops' "Encuentro 2000 and the 2006 proposal for the creation of a committee on culturally diverse communities, illustrate the marginalization that results for the US church's largest population when ecclesial leaders interpret diversity as difference that must be controlled." *Theologizing en Espanglish* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014), Kindle Locations 321–322. At the time of the publication of this essay, the Encuentro V process is well underway. Local diocesan and regional meetings are taking place in preparation for the national meeting on September 20–23, 2018 in Grapevine, Texas. It remains to be seen whether the "concluding document" scheduled for production in 2019 (see https://vencuentro.org/encuentros/timeline/, accessed February 19, 2018) will address and respond to this critique.

6 Here, I employ Muhammad Asad's apt translation (in *The Message of the Qur'an*) of the Arabic word *mu'minun*, conventionally translated as "believers." I do so largely for the reasons upon which Asad himself bases his innovative translation: the English word "belief" usually does not encompass the holistic and radical existential commitment connoted by the word "faith" (Ar. *iman*); and such a commitment can never be assumed to be fully realized in the sense of a complete identity.

of faith is a brother or sister (*ikhwatun*) to one another (Q 49:10), the text moves on to forbid explicitly two specific behaviors that it implies are especially damaging to the integrity of human community. The first prohibition (Q 49:11) is against inter-group "derision" (*la yaskhar qawmun min qawmin*). The second prohibition (Q 49:12) is against "vain speculation" about one another (*ijtanibu kathiran min al-zann*)—a behavior that leads to "unwarranted violations of others' privacy" (*tajassus*) and malicious "gossip" and "slander" (*ightiyab*) that the revelation graphically likens to "eating the flesh of one's dead brother or sister."

This cluster of verses then reaches its climax as the voice of God broadens its address to include all of humanity (*al-nas*), suggesting that the preceding verses do not apply just to the faithful, but to all daughters and sons of Adam and Hawa':

> O humanity! We have created you from a [single] male and a [single] female and apportioned you into [various] peoples and social groupings so that you might come to know one another. Indeed, the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-conscious. For truly God is one who [fully] knows and is [fully] aware.

In this single verse, the Qur'an offers a profound insight into the mystery of diversity within the human family. It begins by maintaining that this diversity is not the result of happenstance but rather of divine design.[7] It then supplies the divine rationale for this design: the opportunity for human beings to overcome their natural cognitive and affective sense of alienation-in-difference, not by focusing on difference as something to be avoided or denigrated, let alone as something to be employed as an excuse for mutual enmity, but precisely by engaging difference in a process of *encuentro*, or, to use the qur'anic language of this verse, *ta`aruf.*

But what is the endgame here? Is it just some vague increase in mutual understanding? Hardly. From the context of the preceding verses, one might well assume that this verse is offering an exhortation to greater communal integrity and, since this verse addresses the totality of human creation, an exhortation to its hearers to work assiduously for the greater

7 See Q 5:48.

solidarity of the human family. Such an assumption would be correct, but somewhat inadequate.

The last part of this verse suggests that the endgame of qur'anic *encuentro* is a deeply spiritual one for the individual person of faith and that, perhaps, it is precisely as such that the personal transformation inherent in *encuentro/ta`aruf* becomes the foundation for a social transformation of the human family into ever deepening solidarity rooted in justice. The last part of the verse reminds its hearers that, in all this diversity, God valorizes not the people who come from any particular identity group (be it gender-based, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, or even religious),[8] but those who have the most *taqwa*, or who are most mindful of God Godself. The most noble of human beings in God's sight are those who strive to remove from the center of their lives any and all individuated expressions of the will to power, and replace these with the will of the Creator and thus a true and deep commitment to peace (*salam*) and justice (*`adl*).

This last part of the verse also suggests that it is precisely through *encuentro* that the God-consciousness of all participants in the process is raised. To put it more simply and directly: *in the context of encountering the religious other in mutuality, one's own faith is not diminished, but edified and perfected.*

Interreligious pedagogy: key principles and practices

Through the Gospel of Mark, we learn that the experience of Christ himself was one of the mysterious (and not so mysterious) ways in which we grow in our commitment to God's mission in and through our vulnerability to strangers— including and perhaps especially religious strangers. And Q 49:13 conveys a similar message: that the divinely ordained diversity we see in the world—even and perhaps especially religious diversity—is designed to be a medium by which every human being deepens her or his own God-consciousness (Ar. *taqwa*) as she or he attends to the experience of God in the lives of religious "strangers."

8 On the subject of a qur'anic theology of religious difference and an apt typology of "horizontal" and "vertical" difference, see Jerusha Tanner Lamptey, *Never Wholly Other: A Muslima Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Oxford, UK and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Both of these scriptural pericopes—the biblical and the qur'anic—speak of the profound intellectual, affective, and spiritual personal growth in faith that can emerge in the context of the interreligious encounter. As such, they form the basis for a theology of interreligious pedagogy that holds much promise for the future of theological education but that is only at the beginning of being understood in the numerous ways it warrants.[9]

Reflecting on my experimentation with interreligious pedagogy at CTU during the past seventeen years, I can identify at least three specific pedagogical principles or "best practices" that form the basis of Gerardo's educational experience.

The first is the *imperative not just to learn about, but to learn from the religious other*. Since their inception, the faculty of the Catholic-Jewish and Catholic-Muslim Studies Programs at Catholic Theological Union have comprised, respectively, both Christian faculty with expertise in Judaism and Islam and Jewish and Muslim faculty with expertise in Christianity. In this way, students learn the absolute primacy of authentic self-representation in interreligious studies and dialogue as well as the critical importance of developing an informed and ideally empathic understanding of religious traditions other than their own.

The second pedagogical principle or best practice is *interreligious team teaching and relationship modeling*. Not only does this practice help to ensure mutuality in syllabus construction, class instruction, and course leadership, but it also can be a vehicle for modeling interreligious relationships. A majority of CTU's courses in interreligious studies are team-taught by faculty who, in many cases, have longstanding professional and personal relationships of a very high quality. For example, in courses like "Abraham's Children" (taught by a team of three colleagues—Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) and "The History of Muslim-Christian Relations" (taught by both a Muslim and a Christian faculty member), students frequently note in their evaluations that some of the most enriching aspects of the course were the ways in which the faculty modeled interreligious relationships rooted in a high degree of shared erudition, mutual respect, and obvious friendship.

9 A brilliant and recent example of this can be found in Edward Foley's new monograph, *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015).

Most recently, the principle/practice of interreligious team teaching and relationship modeling has opened new and exciting intersectional avenues for students, faculty, and overall institutional transformation. For the past two years, I have partnered with an African American Muslim colleague who is a seasoned community organizer for a nationally and internationally recognized Muslim social service organization that is pioneering innovative and highly successful projects for social change on Chicago's South Side.[10] He and I teach a course called Community Organizing in Interfaith Perspective in which students explore African American Christian and African American Muslim liberation theology interspersed with training modules in the practice of faith-based community organizing. At the conclusion of the course, students have the option of pursuing a practicum in which they can realize the community organizing project they propose as one of the requirements for the course.

. . . the principle/practice of interreligious team teaching and relationship modeling has opened new and exciting intersectional avenues for students, faculty, and overall institutional transformation.

Third and finally, an indispensable principle/practice of interreligious pedagogy that is closely related to the first but worthy of its own distinct status is *Jewish and Muslim students studying interreligious dialogue together at CTU*. We have found that the presence of courageous and path-breaking Jewish and Muslim students as interreligious teachers, guides, and companions is as important as the presence of our Jewish and Muslim faculty. It is these students who—in classes not directly related to dialogue, in the refectory, in study groups, in the dormitories, and in a wide variety of student social activities—add an invaluable perspective that challenges their Christian colleagues and faculty to grow in ways not previously imagined.

10 IMAN (Inner-city Muslim Action Network); see https://www.imancentral.org. IMAN's executive director, Rami Nashishibi, was named a 2017 MacArthur Fellow.

One concrete example of this is a recent conversation[11] in the community organizing class referenced above. The focus of our discussion was James Cone's *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Discussing Cone's work in a diverse classroom of Christian women and men from different national, racial, and denominational backgrounds is usually a challenging and rewarding experience. The challenges and rewards, however, are exponentially multiplied when the student body includes a fairly traditional Turkish Muslim and a rabbi from the Jewish Renewal movement who leads a Unitarian Universalist congregation. In this incredibly dynamic exchange, implications of the meaning of the "cross" for Jews and Muslims not only provided fascinating lenses through which to consider Cone's theses, but also challenged the students and faculty alike to reexamine long-held theological assumptions about the religious self and the religious other and how these assumptions might impact organizing for social justice.

Conclusion

Muslims played a role in Gerardo's intellectual and spiritual formation for the Roman Catholic priesthood, and he has come to value this a great deal. Many other students who are graduates of the MA (theology) concentration in interreligious dialogue at CTU have expressed similar assessments of their experience with interreligious pedagogy and have suggested that far more of their colleagues at CTU would benefit from being exposed to interreligious pedagogy as a key element of their intellectual and spiritual formation as religious leaders. Many, if not all, of our Muslim students have voiced similar opinions. Both Christian and Muslim students with whom I have worked have often used the expression "future of theological education" to describe the importance of interreligious pedagogy in seminaries and graduate schools of theology and ministry.

By the same token, some theological educators—aware of the commitments to interreligious pedagogy of CTU and other institutions like the American Islamic College in Chicago—have expressed understandable concern that such a dynamic might significantly impede or unduly complicate the necessary Christian or Muslim identity formation of our

11 C5006 Community Organizing in Interfaith Perspective at Catholic Theological Union (October 17, 2017).

students. Consistent with what I believe to be the lessons of Mk 7 and Q 49:13, however, my experience suggests the opposite to be true. My experiments in interreligious pedagogy have taught me that the formation of students' mature Catholic or Muslim identities, for example, and their formation for dialogue with one another or with people of any other faith tradition are not at all competing pedagogical values. The ability to define one's faith commitment and to live into it in a life-giving way within a multi-faith social context is indispensable to shaping and maintaining a deep and evolving sense of Christian vocation or Muslim duty in a religiously plural social context. It is no less than a vital component of the future of theological education.

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Local Matters and the Naming of God

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ABSTRACT: Theological education can flourish only where it pursues the knowledge and love of God rather than becoming preoccupied with survival. With this end front and center, and understanding theological concepts as rule-governed uses of words that arise wherever shared practices of seeking to know and love God need new distinctions, we can navigate three tensions of the present moment: between fidelity to tradition and liberative critique, between theory and practice, and between shoring up identity and engaging with the other.

Not long ago, the big news on the religion front was the disconfirmation of the secularization thesis. The world was not, after all, marching inexorably toward the end of religion. Religion, and indeed publically active religious life, was flourishing around the globe. Western Europe no longer looked like the destiny of the globe but instead like a strange blip. It was not American exceptionalism (the persistence of religion in America) but European (secular) exceptionalism that required special explanation. More recently, however, the big news in the United States is the rise of the "nones"—those who have no particular religious affiliation. This sector increased from 15 percent to 20 percent of the adult US population over the five years prior to 2012, and to 24 percent by 2016.[1] Perhaps the United States is more like Western Europe than we thought, only with a bit of a time lag. That news, together with the familiar refrain of the demographic decline in the United States of the mainline Protestant denominations, has prompted considerable financial and existential anxiety within the world of American theological education. With fewer individuals going to seminary or divinity school and fewer pulpits and other posts to which to send them upon graduation, it is easy to develop a crisis mentality.

1 http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/; https://www.prri.org/research/american-religious-landscape-christian-religiously-unaffiliated/.

It is also tempting to grasp at straws. Psychologist Ara Norenzayan has argued that while it was religion, notably those traditions centered around "Big Gods," that fostered human cooperation in ways that made it possible for large-scale societies to survive and thrive, secular societies can now fulfill many of the functions previously secured through religious commitment and affiliation, including fostering cooperation, peace, prosperity, and happiness.[2] Yet Norenzayan also notes that secular societies do not seem to do very well at giving their members a sense of meaning in life.[3] The world of theological institutions might, then, be tempted to jump on the bandwagon of "meaning," trotting out studies that purport to show how this socially vital function can only be fulfilled through the continued existence of these institutions. Studies of this sort can be fascinating, even if the terms under which they are conducted must be persistently queried: is there a single question concerning "meaning" that can be univocally posed in Lagos, Hyde Park, and Bombay? Yet, what is critical for institutions of higher education to recognize is that to allow their own survival to become an end in itself, to allow concerns for survival to define their ends, will ultimately be fatal to their capacities to grasp those ends.

This much, then, by way of heartily endorsing the remit of these consultations. Now I propose to take a step back from the nitty-gritty of curricular innovation, new programs, faculty lines, or online initiatives, and to ask instead about the ends of theological education. My own proposal here is not at all novel. In fact, I wish to do no more than hold out, as the proper end, the heart of the mission statement of my own institution, which brashly proclaims its commitment to fostering "the knowledge and love of God," and then proceed to relate this aspiration to three features of the present moment: the tensions between fidelity to tradition and

2 Ara Norenzayan, *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

3 Ara Norenzayan, "Big Gods, Good Societies: Do We Need Religion to Thrive," Feb. 11, 2015, Faculty Roundtable, New Haven, CT.

liberative critique, between theory and practice, and between shoring up identity and engaging with the other.[4]

Whatever it means to dedicate oneself to the pursuit of the knowledge and love of God, it is an enterprise that ought to be rooted in tradition, and indeed, in particular traditions of naming and worshipping God. It ought to be rooted in tradition because it is only in the context of particular social practices, sustained over time, that persons are formed to name God. Because God is named by these traditions as transcending all such naming, and because our traditions mal-form us even as they form us, it is an enterprise that ought at the same time always to be self-critical, attentive to idolatry, and—in particular—always attentive to the ways in which both anxiety and social privilege can deform inquiry by falling into idolatry.

“Whatever it means to dedicate oneself to the pursuit of the knowledge and love of God, it is an enterprise that ought to be rooted in tradition, and indeed, in particular traditions of naming and worshipping God.

Our theological concepts are rule-governed uses of words that arise wherever shared practices of seeking to know and love God find themselves in need of new distinctions. Just as we inhabit a form of life that has found a need to be able to distinguish “generosity” from “extravagance,” and “murder” from “manslaughter” (although we can imagine

4 Yale University Divinity School mission statement. In full, it reads: “Yale Divinity School has an enduring commitment to foster the knowledge and love of God through scholarly engagement with Christian traditions in a global, multi-faith context. Participating in the vibrant life of Yale University, the Divinity School is uniquely positioned to train leaders for church and society given its ecumenical and international character, engagement with music and the arts, and commitment to social justice. Rigorous scholarly inquiry, corporate worship and spiritual formation, and practical engagement in a variety of ministries enable students to develop their knowledge and skills in a community that welcomes and affirms human diversity. “The Divinity School pursues its mission of training students for service in church and world through three principal activities: (1) it prepares people for lay and ordained Christian ministries; (2) it shares with the Graduate School in educating scholars and teachers for theological schools and departments of religious studies; (3) it equips people preparing for public service or other careers to understand more fully the theological dimensions of their vocations;” https://divinity.yale.edu/about-yds/mission-history

forms of life that have no need of such distinctions), so Christians have found a need to distinguish "Creator" from "demiurge," "truly human" from "merely human," "person" from "nature."[5] If our concepts are rule-governed uses of words, and a rule for the use of a concept must be social in order to play this sort of a role in a form of shared life and communication, then we can only learn these meanings and acquire these concepts by "entering into the language, the culture or history of" a community.[6] Our theological concepts, like our ethical concepts, are local matters. Yet they are not merely private or parochial attitudes that we proceed to press on others, as the emotivists thought my judgment "x is good" was an expression of the attitude "I like x" urged on others.[7] The adequacy of their uses is assessed in relation to the point of making the distinction, which is a point in some communal practice or practices. And the use of theological concepts is governed according to interpersonal rules, rules that are simultaneously rules for thinking about the world and rules for our own behavior.[8]

Theology, then, is a local affair, but insofar as it seeks the knowledge and love of God, offering an interpretation of what *is* in relation to what *ought* to be, it reaches beyond that local community, which is itself nothing more than many interpenetrating communities of communication. To be a concept-creating creature is to be capable of learning *others'* rule-governed uses of words, of creating new possibilities of communication, and fostering ever more inclusive communities.

Our identities as well as our concepts have their home in more or less local communities, even as our concepts claim objectivity and thus reach beyond their local origins. Because as Christians we have learned both that God transcends our local naming and that we cannot love God unless we love our neighbor, to pursue the knowledge and love of God is to seek a broader range of communication with our neighbors, near and distant. But very often we try to control others and absorb them into our world rather

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5 Given my understanding of the nature of these consultations, I assume here a Christian "we."

6 Herbert McCabe, *Law, Love, and Language* (London and New York: Continuum, 1968), 87.

7 Julius Kovesi, *Moral Notions*, ed. R.E. Ewin and Alan Tapper (Christchurch, New Zealand: Cybereditions, 2004; orig. pub. 1967), 43.

8 Kovesi, *Moral Notions*, 4, 106.

than becoming vulnerable to them by opening ourselves to genuine communication.[9] The communal practices and rule-governed uses of words of some within society are privileged, are amplified and sanctioned, in such a way as to come to seem uniquely realistic and authoritative. And the communities that nourish our identities and allow us to speak also nourish our aggressions and hostility toward outsiders. As Willie James Jennings writes in his powerful exploration of *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, "the speaking of another's language signifies a life lived in submersion and in submission to another's cultural realities." White American Christians too often fear just that submersion. We fear a vulnerability that seems to spell loss of identity, of security, of power.[10] Hence Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, argues Jennings, is the temptation of every people to "isolating self-sufficiency," to "see their collective existence as ordained by God and secured by the divine will," or "to rule the world and guide all other peoples in its own national vision of the true, the good, and the beautiful."[11]

With this as the orienting frame, three core features of theological education fall into place. To be about the business of cultivating the knowledge and love of God requires, first, that we be deeply rooted in particular traditions (however fuzzy their borders) of knowing, worshipping, and serving God and neighbor. It requires, too, that the life of the mind, of scholarship, of cultivating these traditions of naming and of critically assessing our practices of naming be carried out in a context of living out the love we name and of prophetically denouncing the idolatries that distort our capacities to see, name, and love—and that privilege some namings, some lives, over others. Modernity has become a time in which Christians have become preoccupied with making a case for their existence, whether by demonstrating that they are still relevant (often at the cost of sounding like a belated echo of secular discourse) or, in reaction, by staking out the distinctiveness of what they have to say.[12] Neither distinctiveness nor

9 Ibid., 101.

10 Willie James Jennings, T*he Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 266.

11 Ibid., 260–61.

12 Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 163–90.

relevance is an end in itself, but commitment to tradition and commitment to social justice and service to neighbor go hand in hand.

Second, if we exist to foster the knowledge and love of God, theory cannot be separated from practice. Whatever the practical exigencies that require distinct curricular areas, we must direct an unblinkingly critical eye toward whatever tendencies we have, say, to think that the heart of the seminary operation is in systematic theology, and that pastoral care or practical theology are rather marginal or insignificant.[13] The concepts about which we theorize finally exist only insofar as they are necessary for making sense of shared practices. If they make sense only of the academy's practices, we would be right to suspect that the enterprise that claims to foster the knowledge and love of God has lost its way.

Third, if love of neighbor involves opening ourselves to communication with the neighbor, we cannot fulfill our call to cultivate the knowledge and love of God if we do not seek out communication with those other than ourselves, including those who name and worship God differently, and including those whose rule-governed uses of words have no place for "God." The importance of sex/gender/sexuality, racial/ethnic, and global diversity, together with ecumenical and interfaith engagement, are thereby underscored not simply as key to retaining relevance or proving political correctness but as absolutely vital to fulfilling our mission. Keenly aware not just of the local character of our practices and the concepts that arise out of them, but also of the ways in which these are infected by privilege, fear, and idolatry, we own that God can be known and loved only insofar as we become vulnerable to encounter.

> *"Steeped in tradition, rooted in shared social practices, relentlessly self-critical, vulnerable to others—these are the hallmarks of a theological education devoted to the knowledge and love of God, rather than to its own survival.*

13 Here, David Kelsey's clear-sighted critique of the blind spots of both the *Wissenschaft* and the *paideia* models of theological education remains right on target, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 227.

Steeped in tradition, rooted in shared social practices, relentlessly self-critical, vulnerable to others—these are the hallmarks of a theological education devoted to the knowledge and love of God, rather than to its own survival. We follow, after all, a rabbi who insisted on the fulfillment of the law and yet who called out the hypocritical privilege of its defenders and ate with the impure, anticipating a topsy-turvy kingdom of God where the humble and hungry would be filled with good things. May we follow the call to go and do likewise.

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Informed and Formed by Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: This essay explores the author's experiences of both the contributions and the limits of the varied ways in which the meaning and purpose of theological education have been understood: as a habitus, as liberating praxis, as faith seeking understanding, as the clerical paradigm, as scholarship for the church, as spiritual practice, and as practical knowing. With appreciation for each, she concludes that theological education is a disciplined way of life in search of wisdom for our times.

Initially when I was asked to reflect on the meaning and purpose of theological education, my memories reached back to graduate school. But then I realized my story began in college when I declared my major to be "theology." But wait: what about high school? I took a theology class every year, and then backwards to grade school . . . . In fact, there are many ways in which education in theology has shaped my entire life, all of which bear important meaning and purpose for me personally but also reflect the communities of discourse in which I have participated. Thus, each school I attended, the specific books and courses I studied, the individual teachers and the students with whom I journeyed — all bring to bear the meaning and purpose of theological education in a particular place and time. And yet to begin this story, I'll have to start with graduate school.

In the 1980s when I entered graduate school at the University of Chicago, practical theology was being reconceived: application of theory to practice was out, the clerical paradigm was exposed and rejected, and the nature of theology as a practical enterprise was being debated. As part of our course work, we read a new book on the topic and hosted a

major conference about theological education.[1] Actually, my own introduction to this enterprise came in a conversation about the nature and purpose of theological education. We rallied around the new perspectives. "Yes!," my student colleagues and I cheered. "Out with Berlin and in with Athens! Liberation for the oppressed! All knowing is practical! Theology must be public and not only concerned about the church! The world matters to theologians!" My strongest sense of the meaning and purpose of theological education at that time was shaped by the authors we were reading: Hough and Cobb's claims about Christian identity,[2] Edward Farley's notion of *habitus*,[3] and Don Browning's insistence that all theology is practical "through and through."[4] I thus gathered that the meaning and purpose of theological education was *to give an effective Christian witness in the world.*

As I launched into my first job teaching theology in a small Catholic college, I put aside my newly found knowledge of practical theology and theological education. Though college theology teachers rarely refer to what they do as religious education, the fact is that much of my time was given to basic instruction about the Catholic faith. In this context, I came to think of theological education as *making sense of being a Christian in the world from within Catholicism.* I loved helping students make sense of the Christian story, why it matters or not, and what kind of life one lives because of that claim. I saw my task as upholding the basic Catholic notion that theology is *faith seeking understanding.*

Several years later, I took a position as a pastoral theologian in a Catholic seminary and theological school. I was excited to return to the field of practical theology and theological education, but I was puzzled about

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1 The conference focused around the publication of the book by Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985). Additional books include: Don S. Browning, *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and World* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983); James N. Poling and Donald E. Miller, *Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985); Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

2 "Christian identity is forged by the living practice of Christians in their world." Hough and Cobb, *Christian Identity*, 49.

3 Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 31, 35.

4 Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Philadephia: Fortress, 1995), 3.

my title. This led me on a long quest to figure out what pastoral theology is in the Catholic context, as I basically experienced it as the clerical paradigm Roman-style. I wondered why the language of practical theology was missing from the Catholic context, which led me to write an essay examining four key figures who offered three approaches to the nature of theological education and the practice of ministry: Don Browning (practical theology as practical reason), Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass (Christian practices), and Rebecca Chopp (liberation and feminist theologies).[5] Each of these approaches spoke some truth to me about the nature and purpose of theological education, but was I to choose one?

I realized how easily I could be pigeon-holed when a senior colleague at a practical theology conference said to me, "I thought you were one of those practices people." As I began writing and teaching, was I to take up one of these approaches and advance it at the expense of the others? As a young scholar, I experienced the meaning and purpose of theological education as the *pursuit of knowledge and scholarship for the sake of the church*, which basically meant locating myself in the discipline. Only later did I realize that my essay was largely autobiographical. I set out to clarify where I fit into practical theology and discussions of theological education, as each of the key figures and their approaches had deeply formed me: I wrote my dissertation with Don Browning, I worked for Craig Dykstra for several years, and my undergraduate theological formation was in feminist and liberation thought.

Well, the truth is that I didn't choose—I still find each of these frameworks interesting and engaging for our work in theological education. I wanted to pursue a way of thinking that drew upon these ideas, methods, and commitments. But it's also true that our scholarly identities are formed through relationships with colleagues, participating in particular communities of discourse, and adopting certain loyalties and commitments. For instance, in my current context, theological education is primarily *preparation for ecclesial leadership* in Catholic parishes, schools, colleges, hospitals, and social service agencies. Because it takes place in a Benedictine Abbey, we also talk about theological education as the *pursuit of wisdom*, though at times it is difficult for us to make the connection between the two.

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5 Kathleen A. Cahalan, "Three Approaches to Practical Theology, Theological Education and the Church's Ministry," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 9/1 (2005): 64–94.

In the early 2000s, I was invited to be part of a collaborative project on theological education and practical theology—an experience that has been pivotal in furthering my understanding of theological education.[6] Out of the initial work grew a second collaborative book project, *Christian Practical Wisdom: What It Is and Why It Matters*.[7] Here the authors worked to bring together various strands of practical thinking, drawing upon the nature of practical reason, practices, and liberating praxis. As we studied practical wisdom, phronesis, and practical know-how, we realized that this kind of knowing is embodied, situated, imaginative, communal, and participatory, but that it largely stands in contrast to the prevailing epistemologies of the academy—those in which we'd been shaped and continue to pass on to our students. So, we set out to do something rather distinctive in our writing: we decided that each of us would write an essay on how we learned practical knowing and wisdom in our own lives. In other words, we had to *show* it, not just write about and footnote it.

I decided to write an essay about prayer, in particular the practice of *lectio divina.* As a child, I was drawn to pray with the Scriptures and had been reading the daily liturgical readings each morning. As a teen, I found a small book on prayer, which taught me *lectio*, and I have continued to practice this ancient method as an adult. In writing the essay, I reconstructed my life's narrative about spiritual practice and realized that my theological education actually began as a child. My formation in Catholic schools included contemplative silence as well as the new liturgy, and through these practices I have always felt a deep calling to prayer.

In the process of writing, I discovered that in "showing" my spiritual practice I had also exposed a deep fault line in my life and work: my daily *lectio* remained fairly disconnected from my work as a theological educator despite the fact that I wrote my dissertation on prayer and worship. I realized that my theological education did not honor the kind of knowing that arises from spiritual practice. It taught me the history and need for a theological *habitus*, but it did not teach a practice. I've come to appreciate

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6 Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, eds., *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

7 Dorothy C. Bass, Kathleen A. Cahalan, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, James N. Nieman, and Christian Scharen, *Christian Practical Wisdom: What It Is, Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016). My "show" chapter is titled "Swimming: How the Practice of *Lectio Divina* Heals and Transforms," and my "tell" chapter is titled "Unknowing: Spiritual Practices and the Search for a Wisdom Epistemology."

that it is only by spiritual practice that we can come to know certain things about ourselves and our life together in God. And one of the things we come to know is the God of unknowing. I realize now that much of our formation is in abandoning our conceptual frameworks about God in order to know God truly. I've come to believe that the purpose and meaning of theological education is to *learn a disciplined way of life that intentionally grounds everything* that I do, in particular my writing and teaching vocation, *in God's gracious and redemptive love for the world.*

My calling as a theological educator has been shaped by differing understandings of the meaning and purpose of theological education, each with its own contribution as well as limits.

- I understood *theological education as a habitus* but in my formal training was not given a practice to sustain it.
- I had grasped *theological education as liberating praxis and witness to the world*, but I also realized the limits of critical reason to fashion a more just society.
- I claimed *theological education as faith seeking understanding*, but I understood and taught this as the mastery of ideas.
- I knew the limits of *theological education as clerical paradigm*, but on a daily basis in my teaching, my horizon largely remains church ministry.
- I have pursued theological education as *scholarship for the church*, but I have also been caught short by my desire for self-gain.
- I was schooled in *theological education as spiritual practice*, but I never felt it was legitimate to take into the academy.
- I have come to grasp *theological education as practical knowing* only to realize the impoverishment of my own practice and the disconnection from my teaching and writing.

At this point, I would still rather not choose. Each of these ways of approaching theological education has real merit as well as challenges for my context—the school, the faculty, the students—and for myself. I realize that these meanings and purposes are largely penultimate and that I must continue to strive to be formed in God's ways for the sake of God's world so that I might form students in that way too. What I would most like to embody is *theological education as a disciplined way of life*, a real pursuit of

wisdom in our times. But my story continues. I am only beginning to see the implications of this for my teaching and calling.

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Notes from a Native Daughter

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ABSTRACT: This essay offers a series of "notes" by the author, a "native daughter" to theological education, who experiences herself as both insider and outsider. Similar to the author, many other ethnically and/or racially marked persons experience theological education as both liberative and marginalizing. This essay invites the reader to wrestle with these insider/outsider tensions that so many non-white persons in theological education endure and suggests that the meanings and purposes of theological education must transform in light of these concerns.

As an African American theological educator, I experience myself both from within and from without theological education. Although I was trained in the theological academy, I confront the strangeness of my existence within an institution that was not originally created for people of color like me. For much of the theological academy's life, it has excluded people along axes of racial, gender, and sexual difference (along with other kinds of difference and identity). As a black female religious scholar, I experience this strangeness in a variety of ways, from faculty recruitment and retention to a theological curriculum that reflects the white normative gaze, even when it seems to include others. Being nurtured in the intellectual bosom of the academy, I am one of its own—a native daughter. Yet, the experience of "home" within theological education continues to evade me. I am both insider and outsider, a dynamic that creates a double-consciousness of sorts within me. The problem of home in the theological academy continues to be an unresolved question.

> *"I am both insider and outsider, a dynamic that creates a double-consciousness of sorts within me.*

I hear this same sentiment from many racial/ethnic minority students and faculty members around the nation. Those of us from racial/ethnic minorities are constantly enduring this insider/outsider tension. Asked to reflect on the meanings and purposes of theological education, I do so from a location defined by this tension.

Articulations of the meaning, purpose, and ends of theological education often do not consider the questions, concerns, or commitments of racial/ethnic communities. But they need to. The theological academy must begin to pay serious attention to its native daughters and sons of minoritized racial/ethnic groups who possess profound wisdom about the shifts transpiring in theological education and in Christian churches more broadly.

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Theological education should acknowledge that the "2040 shift" many theological educators have spoken about is already here. The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) has created a national project titled "Preparing for 2040," which begins with a recognition of projections that America's white population will no longer be the majority but the largest of several other sizable ethnic populations by 2040. This project then asks how theological education should prepare in light of this future demographic trend. It also looks at the consequences of this growing reality.[1]

Other recent studies have demonstrated that this demographic reality is already unfolding, generating profound consequences for theological education. For instance, while there has been a decline in the overall number of students in seminaries and divinity schools, the "racial/ethnic" (non-white) student population in ATS schools is growing. Indeed, it is the *only demographic group that is growing*.[2] By the end of the 2014–2015 academic year, more than 39 percent of all students in ATS schools were non-white, including American and international students.[3] This statistic has steadily increased over the last two years.[4] In some of the fastest

1 Beginning in 2009, The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) provided a four-year consultation program titled, "Preparing for 2040: Enhancing Capacity to Educate and Minister in a Multiracial World." This program gathered representatives from thirty seminaries from Canada and the United States in order to think of institutional strategies that could effectively address the growing diversity and pluralism characteristic of churches, theological education, and society more broadly.

2 Juan Martínez, "It's Already 2040 at a Seminary Near You," *Religion and Civic Culture* (March 2, 2014).

3 Please refer to the 2015 ATS Annual Report, pages 3–4, https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/publications-presentations/documents/2015-annual-report%20FINAL.pdf.

4 Ibid.

growing seminaries, the percentage of racial/ethnic minority students is near or over the 50 percent mark. By 2020—twenty years earlier than the shift is projected to happen for the nation as a whole—the white student population could constitute less than 50 percent of the entire national seminary population.[5] The face of Christianity in America is increasingly becoming brown and black, which correlates with the increasing presence of brown and black seminarians.

Moreover, this racial/ethnic seminary population overwhelmingly possesses evangelical and/or Pentecostal backgrounds, which compounds the difference in the ways they understand the meanings, purposes, and ends of theological education from the ways the present academy envisions these commitments. For many Pentecostal communities, the meanings, purposes, and ends of theological education are bound up with high levels of experimental, *somatic* religious fervor not necessarily aligned with more "rationalist" approaches to Christian practice. For instance, one might argue that Pentecostal practice reflects the idea that God is not necessarily within human grasp (if we understand that God can be fully grasped through "rational" doctrinal categories and structures). But God is *always within human touch.* Bodies mediate divine reality in much of Pentecostal practice. How does this somatic-centered Christian practice shift how we speak about God? About human nature? About the character and meanings of the church? About the meanings, purposes, and ends of theological education? These questions have always mattered. But demographic changes in American Christianity—and theological schools—give them particular urgency.

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Theological education needs a turning point. It should no longer operate with white normative assumptions in terms of the theorization and "doing" of theological education. The theological academy will not survive without the wisdom of *all* its native daughters and sons.

In light of the ways in which the 2040 shift is transpiring right now, theological education must begin to alter its vision of what it means to think theologically. Right now, what it means to "think theologically" and

5 Ibid.

"do theology" (in terms of sets of practices) privileges a Western epistemological viewpoint and subordinates other non-Western or non-white perspectives. For instance, African American theological discourses are often assessed as "supplementary" to the "fundamentals" or "basics" of theological education. The work of Emilie Townes, for instance, is often not seen as "canonical" in the way that Karl Barth's work is seen. As a result, ethnic minority students often grope in the dark when it comes to discerning how to participate in integrative learning within theological education. In this case, students are unable to bring their unique, particular experiences to bear as they think theologically. A central characteristic of integrative work is the ability to reflect on theological practice from one's own social location in conversation with other traditions and epistemologies. Consequently, many racial/ethnic students are denied this important moment by being forced to align their "theological departure points" with canonical discourses (that offer predetermined meanings of both theory and practice). There is an assumption that this hierarchical model of theological knowledge is necessary for theological education to be done "right." Different epistemological starting points (in both method and content) are interpreted as a "surplus" that may even distract from the "core" courses.

How should the curriculum in theological schools shift in light of these demographic trends? We might ask why "minority" classes (such as those that focus on African American, Latino/a, or Asian theologians) are not required courses in ATS seminaries. What would it mean to center these courses, not as electives, but as *core requirements* in the ongoing conversation of how students need to be equipped for ministry (in traditional and nontraditional understandings of that term)? And why is racism still treated as a peripheral theological subject in many seminaries and divinity schools? Isn't social justice and reconciliation among racial groups a central conversation within Christian churches and broader society? If so, why isn't this concern reflected in how courses are structured within ATS schools? Don't social commitments such as racial justice also matter for white students who need to rethink their practices of ministry in light of the changing context of US Christianity and the diverse racial concerns present in this country?

* * *

I also believe that this shifting demographic in seminaries must alter decisions in faculty hiring and retention. There is a profound problem when one-third of the student body of a seminary or divinity school is constituted by African American students and the school has no black professors or perhaps only one or two. Shouldn't the faculty composition reflect the student body in terms of diversity? Within many theological institutions, this is the greatest obstacle. When racial/ethnic minority scholars are recruited, they are often recruited only if they have a record of publishing, even if they already have a position, only to find themselves competing with white candidates who are still writing their dissertations. Ethnic scholars also often confront being "ghettoized" into "Black Religion" or "Asian Studies" or "Latino/a Studies," as they are told that "classical" fields like "Ethics" or "Theology" are restricted to those scholars who focus on classical discourses (read: white Western scholarship). This sponsors a deep form of humiliation for racial/ethnic minority candidates, a profound source of pain that even leads to self-doubt among such candidates. Even when scholars from minoritized groups are recruited and hired, they are often denied tenure based on the incompatibility of their scholarship with assumptions associated with white scholarship.

Such overt systemic racism and ethnocentrism within the theological academy does not allow racial/ethnic minority scholars to experience the academy as home. They are unable to experience themselves as insiders who are welcomed and celebrated in simple and uncomplicated ways. Instead, such scholars fight to survive and struggle to assert their own humanity and the humanity of their students within the racist matrices of theological education. Theological institutions *refuse* to deal with this reality. They treat their native daughters and sons as alien and insignificant. However, these daughters and sons are the future of theological education.

* * *

Twenty-first-century theological education must hear the voices of all its native sons and daughters. The current models of theological education, especially the epistemological assumptions upon which these models are built, must go through radical transformation if they are to survive the

current dilemmas that confront them (including declining enrollment, diminishing pastoral positions in mainline Protestant denominations, and a range of other issues). As a native daughter, my "notes" attempt to raise questions about the *who* of theological education in order to discern the new contours of this vocational enterprise. Attending to the *who* of theological education is crucial for thinking about the *what, how,* and especially the *why* of theological education. Will the theological academy listen?

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Theological Education as Personal and Communal Self-Reflexivity for the Sake of the World: A Hyphenated and Orthogonal Meandering

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ABSTRACT: People's lives are complex and multidimensional. However, both liberal and conservative theological education tends to reduce thinking into either/or bipolarities that do not have room for the fullness of people's lived experiences and resulting perspectives. Adopting an orthogonal model that holds together diverse categories in multiplicity will better enable theological education institutions to foster a safe and hospitable environment where students and faculty can engage together in self-reflexive explorations.

During the past four decades of my hyphenated existence in the United States, I have had my share of identity crises. By birth, I am a Korean; by citizenship, I am an American. I was a resident alien for some time until I became a naturalized US citizen. I knew I was culturally "un-natural" before then, but these days I am reminded that I am unnatural in other ways as well. I, therefore, introduce myself to others as a Korean-American to give them freedom to categorize me as they prefer. Yet, my hyphenated identity does not end there. Actually, this is only the beginning.

My hyphenated and meandering project of self[1]

Starting a new life as an immigrant teenager in New York City did not go exactly as I planned. I wanted to live the "American dream." But within the only safe haven I knew—the Korean-American community—I was routinely assaulted by Korean-American peers who had dropped out of school and started running with gangs. Fortunately, I found solace at a local Korean-American church whose senior pastor claimed to have become a born-again Christian after many years of being a liberal (and, as he saw it now, unbelieving) pastor. For him, and thus the congregation, the battle line was unmistakably drawn: either you believed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and received God's blessing or you were a part of the Social Gospel movement, which, they believed, did not amount to much.

As a teenager, I resonated with the Gospel of personal salvation that was proclaimed at the church. But still I longed for the Social Gospel promise of justice, freedom, and peace in the wider world. And what I longed for most of all was a blessing from God that would free me from the threat of the gangsters. I feared for my life for nearly five years. The question I asked myself then was, "How come I don't seem to reap the benefit of either of the two strands of the Gospel? Why don't I have the inner peace promised by the evangelical church? And why don't I get to enjoy the peace on earth that the Social Gospel promises? Why isn't there a Gospel that can liberate me from the living hell that I am in?"

Years later, I took those questions with me to a conservative seminary. I asked them through the course of attaining two master's degrees—that experience was relatively positive. For the first time in my life, I was able to construe Christianity independently from my Korean and Korean-American church experience. Moreover, for the first time I met several non-Korean-American friends. I met Caucasians and even an African-American (at a conservative seminary!). I very much wanted to belong with them and with their churches, which seemed to be consistent with all the high-level Christian learning at the seminary—learning that was entirely Western, devoid of any of my own church's reflection and experience.

This time in seminary was a valuable experience, with different Christians thinking about Christianity through the lenses of other cultures. But

1 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 5.

when we graduated, we each returned to our own church contexts and lost that interaction. However, upon entering ministry in a Korean-American church, I began to realize that there was no such thing as one single, homogeneous Korean-American experience, as I had been taught to believe and as I had internalized. Instead, I encountered a great multiplicity of lives shaped by a host of factors like gender, generation, language, socioeconomic status, and years of residence in America. Despite my desire to build leadership and facilitate congregational transformation in the church, I found people to be very much caught up in the everyday struggles of life as immigrants or as second-generation Koreans who were trying to fit into mainstream America. I saw myself in the same predicament and felt like a failure trapped in a space-time continuum without a manual or equipment to get myself out of it. Moreover, I felt quite ill-equipped to serve multigenerational Korean-Americans with various needs.

These struggles produced doubts about my life's calling in church ministry. I thought to myself, "If I can't minister among my people, what else can I do? Did I hear God wrongly?"

I often hear my students cynically say that when the future seems unclear and doubts about one's calling arise, the solution is to pursue more education. And that is exactly what I did. Excited to be back at my *alma mater*, I began doctoral studies with much enthusiasm. However, during the second year of my studies I sensed that my advisor and other professors did not really support the dissertation topic on which I wanted to focus, namely the identity formation of second-generation Korean-Americans. They encouraged me to establish myself in the field first as a "scholar" contributing to the discipline of religious education.

Around the same time, I started responding negatively toward the institution for what I deemed to be its paternalistic tendencies toward international students and its demand that American ethnic minorities assimilate into mainstream evangelicalism. In the midst of my personal struggles with (the lack of) what the seminary had to offer, I began to realize that there might be more at stake here than my petty reactions against the school. My anger and frustration soon extended to American evangelicalism as a whole, with its Western, individualist, and modernist ethos and its identification with a suburban, white, politically conservative, middle-class sub-culture. While my reaction was not necessarily against evangelical theology, I was ready to give up my evangelical theological

commitments. The theology and culture were so closely intertwined that they had become inseparable.

Though my friends and professors were well-meaning, I still felt that my honest concerns and questions were being dismissed. This dismissal only widened my hyphenated existence into a gulf that I worried would become an unbridgeable abyss. I realized that I needed to drop out of the doctoral program. And so I ran—not knowing where to run, only that I had to get away.

I experienced God's grace in a powerful manner from an unexpected place in the midst of my struggle to figure out where my home should be. A good friend referred me to a doctoral program at a major university in the Midwest where I could do interdisciplinary work, combining the disciplines and issues that interested me. I found God working in a strange, delightful way in this so-called bastion of secularism and liberalism. Through my professors and colleagues, who represented a variety of backgrounds, traditions, and commitments, I not only refined my calling but also experienced a healing like I had never experienced elsewhere.

One of my professors at this school was an African-American woman who had been a nun. Through her, I was able to witness God's hand in the patchwork of my life. Moreover, I experienced God's grace as I befriended those whom evangelicals stereotyped as the worst of sinners. As I spent time with them, God gave me a growing compassion toward them, and it was largely through their sustained support and challenges that I felt I could explore my "reflexive project of the self":[2] God's compelling call for me to be a generous evangelical with an ecumenical spirit and an interdisciplinary scholarly agenda.[3]

However, there was one practical problem with my newly refined calling. No seminary of the evangelical persuasion and no seminary of the liberal persuasion (in its right mind!) was ready to take a risk on someone with a convoluted heritage like mine. I did not fit neatly into their familiar categories. After my experiences, I was afraid of the constraints I might face teaching at a conservative seminary. Consequently, I taught at a conservative liberal arts school for the next eight years. Even there, I did not

2 Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 53.

3 This resulted in S. Steve Kang, *Unveiling the Socioculturally Constructed Multivoiced Self: Themes of Self Construction and Self Integration in the Narrations of Second-Generation Korean American Young Adults* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002).

quite fit. I vividly remember what one colleague half-jokingly said to me during my interview at the college: "We like you a lot because you are a Korean-American, but can you have a sex change?" I was a token hire but, even then, one that did not fit all of the minority categories that they desired to fill with one person.

When I took the teaching position in 2005 at a seminary in New England where I taught for ten years, it was not too difficult to observe how the seminary had its distinct heritage and ethos in the largely post-Christian New England context. Some of the titles of the books by one of its best known professors suggest the seminary's assessment of the world in which it finds itself: *No Place for Truth, God in the Waste Land, Losing Our Virtue*, and *The Search for Salvation*. Yet, the seminary's operative paradigm is more sophisticated than the mere "Christ against culture" paradigm in Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*. In theory, the school tries to sustain a large enough umbrella to shelter those who hold to "Christ above culture," "Christ and culture in paradox," and "Christ transforming culture." However, even here, divergences from the school's prevailing views are subtly discouraged. Faculty members must tread carefully as they negotiate how their own experiences and identities inform their theologies and as they advocate for their perspectives in the classroom.

My journey has been meandering, both as I try to make sense of my hyphenated heritage and as I search for my fit in theological education. None of the theological institutions where I've been feel like home for me because none of them has room for the full complexity of who I am as a result of my journey. In fact, both liberal and conservative streams seem to demonstrate a certain kind of foundationalism that leads to bipolar thinking. This framework forces either/or choices that deny the full, lived complexity of a person's experience. This is a disservice to the church and limits its effectiveness.

Bipolar thinking in theological education

Though my own journey has taken me through diverse experiences, I do not think it is unique. Many people with hyphenated identities and many people of younger generations who are living in the midst of an information explosion also have a plethora of life experiences. The complexity that results from these diverse experiences does not fit within the prevailing bipolar framework of theological education that forces either/or choices.

I concur with the bases of Heinz Werner's comparative organismic theory when he says that, on the one hand, everywhere in life there are tendencies toward fragmentation, partition, separation, division, multiplicity—the many. And on the other hand, everywhere in life there are countervailing tendencies toward wholeness, constancy, synthesis, identity, unity—the one.[4] These forces of differentiation and integration exist everywhere, yet in theological education, whether it be within the liberal or the conservative stream, we seem to focus on either the many or the one as we approach the tasks for theological education.

The conservative stream of theological education, like the seminary at which I currently teach, has traditionally ridden the wave of integration. At a glance, the wave of integration that supposedly promotes wholeness, constancy, and unity is something we all want to celebrate for what it promises. However, any project of integration must delineate the sphere of integration—its scope, sequence, and process—as well as the assumptions and commitments that guide such integration. Much of the time, it has been my experience that a community's demand for the students to assimilate to its tradition has resulted in an unexamined foreclosure of difference without the supportive and self-reflexive explorations that the students need. It is not unlike what the Borg in *Star Trek, The Next Generation* would say: "Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated" . . . into the "one perfect church," as if one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic church were not good enough.

This unifying impulse is also rooted in the theological thought process of the conservative stream. The teaching of conservative theological educational institutions seems to emphasize inordinately a core of Christian faith as a set of propositional truths.[5] This tendency can be traced back to a rationalistic approach to theological inquiry and biblical interpretation in the Enlightenment.[6] American evangelicals have by and large construed the task of theology as moving smoothly from the truths of "the ancient

4 Bernard Kaplan, "Meditations on Genesis," *Human Development* 10 (1967): 84–85.

5 Walter Liefeld and Linda Cannell, "The Contemporary Context of Theological Education: A Consideration of the Multiple Demands on Theological Educators" *Crux* 27.4 (December 1991): 19–27.

6 George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Mark Noll, The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 83–98.

biblical text to the contemporary affirmation of doctrine" and labeling the truths as "self-evident."[7] Ironically, in this process of reducing what is essential in theology to something apparently universal and unifying, the evangelical faith tradition has experienced three unfortunate bifurcations: between the biblical text and the current context, between theology and spirituality, and between faith and learning.

In the liberal stream of theological education, it seems that the force of differentiation functions as a *modus operandi* in the way we, the faculty, are encouraged to "name" the world, to borrow a term from Paulo Freire. In turn, we encourage students to do the same in their studies. I celebrate such emphasis in theological education of this stream. I have personally benefitted greatly by learning to name my reality. Naming my immigrant experience as a racial minority in America, my subconscious view of the world stemming from my history and experience, my physical and psychological (dys)functions, and hidden or subjugated power dynamics allowed me to discover and articulate my own voice. However, due to our rugged individualist tendencies, this process can be too much of a lonely, individualistic journey at times. We often do not go further and deeper in helping one another interrogate our own assumptions and our ways of being in the world. While we long for community, we as individuals are almost incapable of taking the risk of being vulnerable with one another, of inviting one another into our lives, and of trusting one another to name our realities and be transformed together. Individualized spiritual direction might name this problem, but it does not do enough to help solve it.

Institutional structures further contribute to these centrifugal forces. Thanks to various donors with special interests, many seminaries have established centers to promote otherwise neglected issues within the theological education curriculum, including concerns related to class, ethnicity, gender, race, and various at-risk groups. Indeed, these centers are crucial in providing a safe and hospitable space for those whose voices have too often been silenced and whose lives have too often been subjugated. These centers can promote awareness and advance their causes in the public. However, given their proliferations and their specializations in theological education, these centers often compete for attention and get drowned out due to the over-scheduled (co-, extra-)curricular endeavors

7 Stanley Grenz and John Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 13.

in theological education. In practice, these "centers" end up functioning more like "peripheries." The force of integration gives way to the force of differentiation, resulting in a pattern in which these centers get to stay a part of theological education only because they are always at some distance from the core. The status quo of the theological education system co-opts any real opportunities for robust integration, mutual influence, and transformation. This brand of multiculturalism combines a balkanization of different communities with a fragmentation of the curriculum and a focus on the individual that together ends up giving the established center even more power.[8] So liberal institutions' value of differentiation does not end up affecting the institutional core, and evangelical institutions' unifying impulse results in dividing lines.

While the two streams of theological education can look very different, they share a complex lineage: they are both the children of modernity, as evidenced by their commitment to epistemological foundationalism.[9] If conservatives' foundation is scripture, liberals find an analogous foundation in the universality of experience.[10] From these scriptural foundations, conservatives have developed a worldview that features linguistic propositionalism, commensurability with the natural sciences, and an understanding of divine action as divine intervention. Liberals, on the other hand, have worked from the foundation of experience to develop a worldview featuring expressivism in language, incommensurability between theology and science, and an understanding of divine action as immanent within ordinary empirical processes. Yet, as different as these manifestations of the two streams of theological education may appear to be, their shared roots in foundationalism commit them to a single way of adjudicating what counts as a legitimate inference. The reasoning of the two takes similar forms; they just start this reasoning from different bases.

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8 Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

9 Simply put, foundationalism asserts that "all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief." See "Foundationalist Theories of Epistemic Justification," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/justep-foundational/.

10 Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

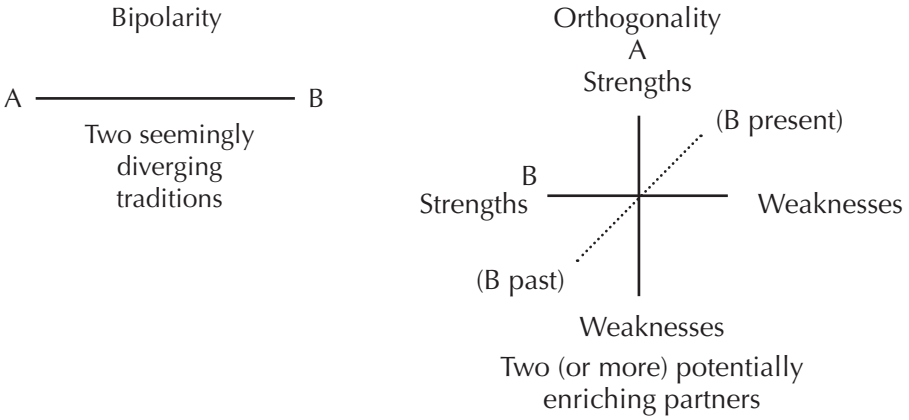
This foundationalist logic drives each side to polarized thinking. Here, I will simply define such bipolarity as characterized by two mutually repellent forces or diametrically opposed ideas, natures, or views. In my observation, the use of bipolarity in the theory and practice of both streams of foundationally grounded theological education has had, perhaps, the most profound effect in the formation of those who participate in theological education, whether as faculty or as students. Broadly speaking, to use Paul Ricoeur's notion of hermeneutics,[11] both streams of foundationally grounded theological education encourage their respective constituents to apply hermeneutics of charity to their own commitments ("us") and hermeneutics of suspicion to the other ("them"). Thus, for instance, bipolarities used to analyze society within the liberal stream of theological education might include pairs such as powerful-powerless, victimizer-victim, colonizer-colonized, colonial-postcolonial, silencer-silenced, haves-have nots, rich-poor, and majority-minority. This focuses the theological task largely on interrogating the disparity of power, possession, and prestige of people in a series of pairs that pit us against them in society at large. In the conservative stream, a similar bipolar logic holds, but the pairs are qualitatively different in that the bipolarities are generally applied within American evangelicalism itself and include categories such as Calvinist-Wesleyan, complementarian-egalitarian, clergy-lay, low church-high church, charismatic-cessationist, and premillennial-postmillennial. As useful as the bipolar thinking might be in the classroom, the complexity of the world and of Christianity cries out against such detached, lifeless, and abstract ways of naming the world and the divine. The complexity of the world demands a complex and nuanced approach to theological education.

Toward orthogonal, communal self-reflexivity

I want to suggest a different, orthogonal model that adds more dimensions to our thinking in theological education. This will open up space for more of the complexities and fullness of people's real lived experiences and help us interact with one another in a nuanced way that promotes mutual understanding and communal self-reflexivity.

11 Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, transl. J. B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

What would it be like to move away from our entrenched bipolar ways of knowing and toward a more orthogonal way of envisioning the world? Such a way of knowing can be contained neither in the two-dimensional reality of the textbook nor in the four walls of the classroom. It demands a holistic and critically realistic envisioning and engagement with the world and the divine.



It should be clear that the world and the divine demand a multiplicity of bipolarities for us to grow in our understanding of the complexity and enormity of the reality. Rather than presenting the world as a dichotomy, or even a spectrum along a single bipolar dimension, orthogonal thinking suggests that people and ideas can find positions within a matrix of multiple categories. The illustration shows that the number of categories in an orthogonal framework can expand to include not only x and y axes but also a z axis. This creates a three-dimensional framework within which to consider the position of ideas in relation to one another. In this way, even categories traditionally treated as bipolarities, like liberal-conservative, majority-minority, (upper-)middle-lower classes, and male-female, can be held together in multiplicity. With an orthogonal framework, different types of bipolarities may be used appropriately along each of the multiple axes: strength-weakness, past-future, keep-let go, need-want, local-global, core-peripheral, etc.

“What would it be like to move away from our entrenched bipolar ways of knowing and toward a more orthogonal way of envisioning the world?

For example, this orthogonal thinking helps me locate my hyphenated self not in one of two seemingly disparate polarities (Korean *or* American) or even along a spectrum between them (Korean-American) but within a matrix that can take into account many dimensions of my experience. I can place my Korean identity and my American identity on two different axes and then explore parts of each independently to better understand where I fit and where I want to fit on a multidimensional graph that holds both elements of my identity together. Similarly, I can separate the Social Gospel and the evangelical Gospel of my youth and acknowledge that both have something valuable that must not be sacrificed by simplifying them into an either/or bipolarity. This orthogonal thinking enlarges my ability to explore multiple dimensions of these complex issues essential to identity and theology.

Orthogonal thinking is essential to assess our personal and corporate self-reflexive analysis, change (or conversion), and engagement for the sake of the world. It is, therefore, also essential for our approach to theological education. Our scholarship and teaching-learning create opportunities for us to unveil ourselves and facilitate others' self-reflexive projects before God. We ask and encourage others to ask questions like: What does God want me to be/become? What habits/addictions keep me from becoming the person God wants me to be? Of what prejudices do I need to rid myself? Of what am I afraid to let go in my life? What deformed/malformed aspects of myself need to be healed in order to experience God's transforming work? And with whom do I need to reconcile?

Such a project of the reflexive self acknowledges that our identities emerge in joint actions, interactions in in-between spaces. It is also contextual in that multiple spheres of life serve as a multiplicity of contexts in which we are shaped by and shape our surroundings. Moreover, this project is discursive in that language and narrative play crucial roles in the construction of identity and personhood. It is also relational and mutual in that we are not merely shaped by society but also act as agents in social interactions. This project of the reflexive self then invites us to avail ourselves of chances to explore together our affective, discriminant, judgmental, conceptual, inferential, extrapolative, and theoretical reflexivity within a theological education that is safe, hospitable, and trusting.

As a hyphenated person of various sorts, I have come to realize that my project of the reflexive self is deeply protean. No one bipolarity can even begin to characterize me. Instead, I see myself as a "MBP

(multiple-box-person)"[12] in need of multiple orthogonalities within a safe, hospitable, and trusting theological community in order to continue on the project with others and for God and God's reign. Thus, theological education must be about growing in both personal and communal self-reflexivity in our God for the sake of the world.

As the psalmist prays a prayer that is both deeply personal and on behalf of and with God's people, so I pray a personal prayer for and with many other voices:

When I think on my ways, I turn my feet to your testimonies . . .
Teach me good judgment and knowledge.

Psalm 119: 59, 66

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12 Dredge Kang, "Multiple-Box Person," in *East to America*, ed. Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu (New York: The New Press, 1996), 82.

Wider Horizons

Remember Your Graduation: Reflections from a Prison Theological Educator

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ABSTRACT: When we speak about the aims of theological education and its significance, we typically speak from and about the context of a university, seminary, or church. This essay speaks from the context of a US women's prison. Reflecting as a prison theological educator, the author suggests that the meaning of theological education lies in its inductive ability to cultivate counter-communal formation where God is (re)imagined. She also challenges readers to reconsider the varied locations and subjects of theological education.

"To most people, theology is about God . . . but after this program, I realize that theology is more than God."[1] These were the opening words spoken by one of the 2017 graduates in the graduation ceremony of their Certificate in Theological Studies program. As we do each year, we ask two graduates to offer reflections on what the theology program means to them. This year's speakers stood confidently in front of more than one hundred pairs of eyes riveted on them and spoke about the meaning and purposes of theological education.

Some of the words that were spoken, I expected to hear—words about how theology encouraged a new imagination for what the women wanted to do and who they wanted to become, and words about how theology allowed them to wrestle with the hurtful memories of past religious abuse and to reclaim and reconstruct a healthier relationship with their faiths. But there were also words spoken that I less expected to hear—words not meant for me nor for the other guests but for the students in the program, those who had come before and those who were just beginning. In that moment, I became an onlooker, eavesdropping on a conversation.

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1 Special thanks to the April 2017 graduating classes of the Certificate and Advanced Certificate in Theological Studies and their speakers/presenters for the inspiration and wisdom. What *you* think has been invaluable to me.

The graduate speaker looked to her left and spoke directly to the incoming class. She offered words of encouragement, reminding them that they are made of the stuff of stars and capable of doing much more than the label "prisoner" might suggest. She then turned to her right and spoke to alumni/ae of the program, reminding them of their great privilege and collective responsibility to do good with what they had been given. She spoke passionately about individual and collective potential. She spoke determinately about the duty to manifest justice and goodness in this place.

This graduate made me reconsider the purpose of theological education. And she, along with her classmates, taught me that where you ask a question matters. When we speak about the aims of theological education and its significance, we must ask ourselves, "Theological education in what place? For what people?" Like many academics, I am concerned with the perennial quest for the meaning of theological education. However, I am not asking the question from the context of a university, seminary, or church. I ask the question from the context of a US women's prison. I direct a Certificate in Theological Studies program at Georgia's Lee Arrendale State Prison, about ninety miles north of Atlanta. Each year, approximately forty incarcerated women enter the twelve-month program seeking a certificate or advanced certificate in theological studies. They engage in a year-long exploration of biblical and theological studies in classes where religion, the arts, and justice collide. In my years with the program, I have often asked myself about the significance of theological education *in this place.* This year, I found myself reflecting on this question while listening to students at our graduation ceremony. And this is what I heard: theological education in prison becomes significant when it initiates one into a community more life-giving and affirming than the prison, a community where theology "becomes more than God" and a sense of collective purpose and meaning forms. I learned that the significance of theological education *in this place* lies in its ability to cultivate counter-communal formation where God is (re)imagined.

". . . theological education in prison becomes significant when it initiates one into a community more life-giving and affirming than the prison . . .

What follows are my reflections on the meaning of theological education in prison from the standpoint of one who teaches there. I do not claim

to speak for my students—theirs are the voices we still need to hear—but I have been formed and shaped by them. I hope these words do justice to the wisdom they have shared with me.

A commencement story

The theology graduation is a powerful, liturgical initiation service where a community emboldened with a new vision for life, despite seemingly unlivable circumstances, becomes visible. This new community has its own symbols and stories. It is a community where meaning and accountability develop counter to prison norms; a community with reimagined selves, reimagined others, and for most, a reimagined God. As the shape of this community became evident to me during graduation, I could not help but think of baptism.

In the United Methodist Church, I have long been fascinated by the section in the baptismal liturgy that involves the congregation. After the clergy person asks if we will nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include the newly baptized in our care, we respond together:

> With God's help, we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ. We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others. We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.[2]

As a congregant saying these words, I am reminded of my commitment to Christ. But even more jarring, I am struck by my responsibility to the people in front of me (the newly baptized) and to those around me (the congregation) to contribute to the type of community that fosters growth, faithfulness, and life for all of us. And I am struck that this, too, is part of my commitment to Christ. The similarities are striking between our rituals of baptism and what I witnessed at the theology commencement. The student presenters passionately reminded graduates (the "new initiates")

2 "The Baptismal Covenant I—Umcdiscipleship.Org," Discipleship Ministries, accessed June 29, 2017, https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/the-baptismal-covenant-i.

and guests (the "congregation") of our potential in and responsibility to this new community—and that this community necessarily formed to talk about God.

Students continually share stories about the value of community that forms in the theology program. It is one of the only places where they can talk about religion and faith with others who are willing to listen and eager to share. It is a place where they build lasting relationships while struggling through the crucible of learning theological language. It is a place where stories of religious hurt are tenderly embraced and intense questioning is an expected companion on the journey toward healing. Through the communal practice of engaged theological learning and doing, reconciliation and restoration occurs intellectually, relationally, and emotionally.

Experiencing belonging in community is not a need unique to the imprisoned, but given the isolating effects of confinement, it is a need most critical here. Scholar Kaia Stern writes that prison disrupts meaningful community and leads to social death. Social death, a form of dehumanization, refers to the disruption of authentic relationship between and among humans that occurs in confinement. Stern finds that "faith and participation in post-secondary education can be vehicles by which people may claim their humanity."[3] This has long been demonstrated in the theological education program offered by New York Theological Seminary at Sing-Sing Prison in Ossining, New York. Since 1982, students incarcerated in New York State Prison have been able to enroll in the seminary's accredited Master of Professional Studies (MPS) degree.[4] The program at Sing-Sing is rooted in the formation of a communal ethos. Stern contends that the theology program provides "the opportunity to cultivate social relationships" necessary for life.[5] Done well, theological education in prison helps form a community that humanizes as it heals.

Recall the opening phrase from the graduation speaker: *Theology is more than God.* Her declaration was uncomfortable to hear. I didn't know whether the audience would understand. I admit, it took me time to understand. "God is more than theology" would be a less controversial statement,

3 Kaia Stern, *Voices from American Prisons: Faith, Education and Healing* (London: Routledge, 2014), 134.

4 For more information on the program at Sing-Sing, visit http://www.nyts.edu/prospective-students/academic-programs/master-of-professional-studies/.

5 Stern, *Voices from American Prisons*, 155.

but to say that theology is more than God is a heretical statement in the best way and speaks volumes about the way that theological education can create spaces for transformative religious experience. For example, a graduate proclaimed how the theology program had helped her process a troubled past with dogmatic and harmful church experiences. She spoke vividly and openly about how those experiences generated a negative concept of God and of Christianity. By welcoming questions rather than demanding rigid answers, the theology program helped her to dismantle her *imago dei.* God became more than a symbol or an object of past hurt. For her, to talk of God meant to speak of self, of community, of justice, of love, of the cosmos. Nothing was outside the realm of God; God's self was bigger than the "God" once imagined. As she reimagined herself, she reimaged God, and as God was reimaged, she reimagined herself.

"Theology is more than God" means that theology is more than our *imago dei*, the God we have imagined. This proclamation reflects the way theological engagement can push the boundaries of God-talk, challenge embedded beliefs, and critique traditionalism that harms rather than heals. Theology is "more than God" because it challenges our understanding of all that is divine, holy, sacred, and worthy. Theological education that strives to be more than God requires opening ourselves to an understanding of a God that is broad, wide, deep, and never static. It requires positioning ourselves humbly before the subject matter—God. It calls us to recognize not the God of a denomination or a certain church or a singular family but the God that is bigger than, and inclusive of all of life, all of creation, everything. Theological education becomes significant when it moves us outside of our enclaves inhabited by the imagined God into the deep, mysterious waters of God's immensity and grandeur. It is this practice of revisiting, revising, and reimagining *our* image and *our imago dei* that centers, unifies, and calls this new community into being.

An inductive aim of education

Theological education done well emboldens our imagination to encounter God-beyond-the-symbol. Christianity has long wrestled with the distinction between the God of our symbols and the God beyond them, or the God-Above-God, as Paul Tillich writes. The God-Above-God is "the object of all mystical longing" and stands in contrast to the God we have

captured as object or being.[6] According to Tillich, we become aware of this God "when the traditional symbols that enable men [sic] to withstand the anxiety of guilt and condemnation have lost their power."[7] The courage to claim one's humanity amid despair "is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."[8] Though Tillich was not thinking about a prison when he wrote these words, there are few places where the anxiety of doubt is as potent as it is here. Theological education in prison provides a space for God to be reimagined during great doubt. This is the courageous act. Theological education thus creates a healing space for the God-Above-God to appear, become known, and initiate us into a new community.

The idea of theological education functioning as an inductive community is not new. It reaches far beyond contemporary ideals. In 1956, Tillich gave an address on the theology of education to St. Paul's School in Minnesota in which he recounted the three principle aims of education.[9] The first aim is the technical aim or education for skill development, which Tillich cites as the focus of modern education. Today, it is the operative mode functioning in prison education with its primary focus on vocational training and work-skill development. The second aim, also prominent in some approaches to prison education, is the humanistic aim focused on the development of human potentialities, both individual and social. The roots of humanistic aims lie in religious experience of the infinite in everything finite. At its best, humanistic education actualizes human potentiality by fostering critical consciousness.

Yet Tillich believed that humanistic education at its worst seeks to raise consciousness without religion, leaving it empty and meaningless. It is "the emptiness of cultural goods without ultimate seriousness."[10] It is no surprise to Tillich that the emptiness of humanistic education and the false promises of technical education would lead to "indifference, cyni-

6 Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 186.

7 Ibid., 189.

8 Ibid., 190.

9 From Tillich's address entitled "Theology of Education" given at the Symposium, October 1956, Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of St. Paul's School. A printed version of the speech is published in Tillich's *Theology of Culture* (1964).

10 Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 152.

cism, despair . . . disgust of life."[11] As a result, Tillich challenges education to "re-establish systems of life and thought which give meaning and spiritual security, and which make inducting education toward a meaningful life possible."[12]

It is here that we meet Tillich's third aim of education—the inductive aim. The aim of the inductive approach to education "is induction into the actuality of a group, the life and spirit of community, family, tribe, town, nation, church. Such an induction happens spontaneously through the participation of the individual in the life of the group."[13] According to Tillich, the inductive aim goes beyond social and national affiliations "to something ultimate, unconditional, universal," an initiation into a community with meaningful symbols.[14] For Tillich, totalitarianism and the Church were the two places in the twentieth century where the aim of induction still functioned in education, one toward destruction, the other toward life. The inductive aim of theological education is needed in the twenty-first century, particularly in contexts of disenfranchisement and confinement where social death threatens and opportunities for healthy community formation are diminished.

Into a community of grace

The prison theology program is doing inductive education but not the type that one might imagine. While Tillich writes about induction into an ecclesial body, we are not a denominationally focused program nor are our students solely Christian. We are ecumenical and multireligious. As such, a feminist notion of ecclesiology from Rebecca Chopp better captures our inductive goals. In her seminal work on feminist practices of theological education, Chopp noted that the reality of church in feminist liberationist Christianity is not defined by denominational boundaries. According to Chopp, "the *ekklesia* exists where the Spirit is present, where the Spirit works through the lives of women and men for the

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 147.

14 Ibid., 150–51.

realization of new life for all."[15] She went on to assert that feminist practices of theological education allow students to experience new spaces of transformed and transforming *ekklesia*. The church, for Chopp, functions as a sign in the world, "a visible sign of God's invisible grace."[16] Chopp used the term *ekklesia* instead of *women-church* to suggest the theological normativity of this feminist ecclesiology. She described *ekklesia* as

> the space of grace, the grace that enables and empowers humans to form new relations. Feminist practices of theological education unfold the ekklesia as spaces of grace for experiencing and creating new forms of relationships with God, self, others, and the world. These relations may be personal, interpersonal, or structural. What women and men experience in feminist ekklesial spaces is the power of grace, or, to use the words of Johanne Baptist Metz, grace as living differently.[17]

Ekkeslia better captures what I believe is formed and forming in the practices of theological education present in the theology program: a community of grace counter to the social death of prison culture.

As students are inducted into the *ekklesia* forming in prison, they grow into new relationships with themselves and gain new perspectives on life. Even during the graduation ceremony, the *ekklesia* is evident. One graduate spoke about how the theology program encouraged new ideals for her life's work both in prison and beyond. Another offered a spoken word piece in which she rejected the labels placed on her and embraced a new form of self-identification. Still another, in an original poem, admonished the community to care for one another, stand up for what was right, and lift up those who were not yet strong. These are examples of feminist *ekklesial* spaces, or spaces of grace where students experience and create new forms of relating for themselves and for one another.

These graduates-incarcerated remind us that there are individual and collective aims of theological education and that these aims are not mutually exclusive. As new relationships are forged and strengthened, the

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15 Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 52.

16 Ibid., 54.

17 Ibid., 61.

students in the theology program expand our notion of a theologically formed community beyond traditional ecclesial or denominational lines to include symbols and worlds of life-giving pluralism rooted in a common search for and experience with the Divine. This becomes a counter-community in the prison and perhaps a more nuanced and faithful image of community in the world. We are reminded that theological education is not solely for the self or self-knowledge, but it is also for the collective, for a collective sense of purpose.

Implications for theological education

Theological education in prison is effective when it embraces the inductive aim of education. Tillich suggests that a combination of critical-consciousness with the seriousness of religious commitment is the best form of inductive education. It is an education that embraces questioning, seeking, and searching as part of one's faithful quest. Realization of critical-consciousness is evident in the graduation speeches as the women speak of their vocational quests toward a life of purpose, fulfillment, and productivity despite the odds set against them. Realization of the seriousness of religious commitment is evident in how the speech-givers understand their responsibilities toward one another as members initiated into a community emboldened by the symbols of Christianity for some, additional faith traditions for others. Theological education in prison initiates students into a questioning, seeking community constructed by a group of people courageous enough to believe in a transcendent Good beyond the confines of the prison walls. It is a community that seeks to encounter God-Above-God and in so doing also seeks to know a Self beyond the prison. Theological education can foster this type of community and, in doing so, actualize human potentiality. It is up to us, however, to decide if we are willing to take the risk that it is with and in the poor, the imprisoned, and the sick that we encounter, not our imagined God, but the God-Above-God.

A case for reconsidering the subjects of theological education

I conclude with a point about context and particularity. More than twenty years ago, Rebecca Chopp challenged research on theological education to consider more than the large, macro questions of aims and purposes. She

invited a "second generation" of scholarship that would be sensitive to the issues of particularity and contextuality in theological education. Chopp wrote that "before we can move forward to speak about the general aims of theological education, I think we must speak about specific practices and particular subjects."[18] Chopp continued her charge by recommending a "return to the concrete," a relocation of our investigation "from the abstract to the practical reality of our situation."[19] The practical reality of our situation is that theological education is growing in unexpected locations. As such, we must (re)consider the subjects of theological education, the cultural movements and changes, and the subsequent changes in symbolic patterns invoked in Christian practice.[20]

The United States incarcerates more of its citizens than any other country in the world. The number is even more staggering and embarrassing if you consider the entire scope of surveillance including jails and parole. With rising populations and shrinking budgets, prison administrations have "increasingly welcomed 'faith-based' providers offering services at no cost to help meet the needs of inmates."[21] As such, there has been a constant and increasing presence of religious education programs and academic, theological education offered by seminaries, universities, and Bible institutes. If we take Chopp seriously, we must reconsider *where* we ask our questions about theological education to include these spaces.

Theological education programs are growing in prison settings. What are other nontraditional settings where theological education is on the rise? What would happen to our theological education programs beyond the prison if we made inductive aims a priority? And not solely induction into denominational affiliation or even clerical or professional ministry guilds. What would happen if theological education met the deep desire and longing for community? What would be the impact? How would our programs change?

The social importance of theological education has never been as evident to me as it is in the prison, a place where relationships are

18 Chopp, *Saving Work*, xi.

19 Ibid., 12.

20 Ibid.

21 Michael Hallet, *The Angola Prison Seminary: Effects of Faith-Based Ministry on Identity Transformation, Desistance, and Rehabilitation* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 1.

constantly threatened. We must ask ourselves, "Where else in our world do people need *ekklesias* of grace, places where people can flourish?" This is the question that the present and future of theological education must consider. Whose voices do we need at the table as we "return to the concrete" and ask questions about the significance of theological education in these places? Theirs are voices we still need to hear. With ears to hear, let us hear them.

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An Itinerary of Learning: Theological Education and the Practice of Ministry

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ABSTRACT: In this essay, I explore an itinerary of theological learning, emphasizing a telos *of God's peace and abundant life for the city. In Baltimore, it is the Sandtown neighborhood, and in New York, it is ecclesial life and City Seminary of New York as an institution, each a stop along a journey. This is a perspective that emphasizes practices and institutional life, the next generation, and the transmission of faith.*

City Seminary of New York launched in 2003, inspired by the visions and experiences of the global Christian community in our city. As Maria Liu Wong and I have related in *Stay in the City: How Christian Faith is Flourishing in an Urban World*,[1] it is the churches of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean that have shaped our community of theological learning. Focusing on one neighborhood at a time, we have been bringing our faith journeys together and learning the practices of ministry in context, serving the vitality of Christian faith in our urban world.

It is in this context of learning, city, and community that the following reflection on theological education takes place "between the times." In this time of change and possibility, I reflect here on my journey in theological education that involves an itinerary of continual learning, understanding itinerary as stops along specific times and places.[2] They are not, however, stops I have made as an individual but as part of rich communities of

1 Maria Liu Wong and Mark R. Gornik, *Stay in the City: How Christian Faith is Flourishing in an Urban World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017). This book is a fruit of the Practices of Ministry in the City Project, an initiative supported by Lilly Endowment Inc., and some of the material in this essay is drawn from *Stay in the City*. See also Maria Liu Wong, "Engaging the Telos and Sharing the Tales of Theological Education," *Religious Studies News* (April 2017): 19–22

2 On the idea of itinerary, see James A. Krabill, ed., *Mission from the Margins: Selected Writings from the Life and Ministry of David A Shank* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2010).

learning and practice. Along this itinerary, it is our experience that the *telos* of theological education is God's peace and abundant life for all of God's creation, including cities.

Many people in the city

Baltimore was a first stop along my itinerary of learning. When I was ordained to ministry, the missiologist Harvie Conn preached from the Book of Acts 18:1–11, drawing out the theme that God has many people in the city, which became for me a central biblical passage situating the city and church as context for considering the telos of theological education. Later in Acts, Apostle Paul looks at the city of Corinth, at his ministry, and things are not going well. But as matters go, Paul soon realizes that he had an unimpeded access to people, particularly through Priscilla and Aquila, whom he meets at the beginning of Acts 18:

> *Along this itinerary, it is our experience that the* telos *of theological education is God's peace and abundant life for all of God's creation, including cities.*

> One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God (9–11).

"There are lots of people I'm working through," God says; there are things going on in the city even Paul did not know about. God's work is bigger than even somebody like Apostle Paul is able to get his head around. This is not a judgment on Paul, but an invitation to be open to a new vision, to seeing what is happening beyond one's immediate perceptions.

In the declining post-industrial city of Baltimore of the 1980s, this was an important message. God was already at work in the city, something we saw each day in our neighborhood of Sandtown in West Baltimore. We were learning theology as something hopeful, joyful, and forward looking. Theology was what we were doing on the streets, carrying a focus on life;

it was knowledge and wisdom that was being developed.[3] And it was among community — Allan, Susan, Ike, Antoine, LaVerne, Nina, Frank, Gary and many others — that I learned to be attentive to the ways of the Spirit.

Moving to New York more than a decade later, I found renewed meaning in Acts 18. In Harlem, where our church and community work was taking place, I noticed a strong West African presence. There was the Senegalese restaurant that was always playing the music of Youssou N'Dour, the Ivorian car service, the shop named after Touba, and a mosque where West Africans met. I wondered if there was also a Christian community among the African immigrants and, if so, where they were worshipping.

In 2001, working with Andrew Walls, who at the time was teaching at Princeton Theological Seminary, I sought to understand how Christian faith was developing in the city. As a first step, to gain an understanding of larger ecclesial patterns that included not only African churches but also churches with ties to Asia and Latin America, I visited and documented nine African congregations across the five boroughs of New York City.

One of the first congregations I visited was a Nigerian congregation in Brooklyn called the Redeemed Christian Church of God International Chapel. At the time, this congregation was renting a rundown warehouse, keeping warm in winter by kerosene heaters stationed on the dirt floor. I found a gracious welcome, a full house, and dancing, praying, peaching, and healing.

After I returned to my apartment in the evening from Brooklyn, I wanted to see if I could learn about the church in David Barrett's monumental *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*.[4] In a moment I will never forget, there in my kitchen as I paged through the encyclopedia I found that the Redeemed Christian Church of God had more than two thousand congregations in Nigeria. The branch in Brooklyn was not a single, isolated church of

3 See C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco Roman Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and David F. Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

4 David B. Barrett, Goerge T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds. *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

immigrants but represented a global movement, based in Lagos and moving through the cities of the world.

The other churches were Aladura, Independent, Pentecostal, historic Protestant, and Catholic—and I was finding similar patterns. Barrett's encyclopedia of world Christianity became a local guide in ways I never fully anticipated. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana was just at home in Accra as it was in Manhattan and the Bronx.[5]

In 2017, I revisited this baseline research from 2001 to ask, "What transpired among these same nine congregations? Did they grow, close, multiply, move, or remain the same?" Even though I had been working continuously in this area since 2001, what I found astounded me.

Of the nine congregations in my original study, seven are not just still active but have grown in ministry, often expanding through new branches and parishes, and have become yet more woven into the life of the city. The two congregations that are no longer active were a small gathering of Liberian refugees and an evening service ministry to French-speaking believers. In each of these two instances, when the leader moved on, the communities appear to have dispersed.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God I visited in Brooklyn is no longer a chapel but a "center," initiating a number of new congregations, including a second-generation church led by young people in Manhattan. Perhaps they are "diaspora" congregations, but they may be better characterized as New York churches, a part of the diversifying American religious landscape. One other finding: in 2001, I estimated that there were about seventy African churches in New York; by 2017, I estimate there are more than two hundred.

While preliminary, the findings of my re-study offer a window into the living dynamic of world and urban Christianity in the twenty-first century. The new churches of Africa as well as Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean are growing and maintaining global connections. To succeed, they have combined prayer and networks with creativity, agility, and entrepreneurial energy. They are living their faith in every part of the city and in every sphere of life.

I was learning about and being shaped by what God was doing in the city.

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5 For further reading on this, see Mark R. Gornik, *Word Made Global: Stories of African Christianity in New York* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

In the first century, in Corinth and elsewhere, the newly identified Christians "stayed in the city" and sought to "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. 3:17). Within the newly formed assemblies, they began to work out the practice and language of being Christian in all areas of life—family, food, social relationships, economics, work, and relationship to the state.[6] The same process continues today, with both repetitions and new questions and understandings.

Institutions and practices

The next stop on my itinerary of learning is City Seminary of New York. Located in Harlem, a neighborhood where the world meets, we have sought to bring together the diversity and vitality of Christian traditions within the city. City Seminary is not just a community of leaders but families, young people, ministries, and church movements. And as a community, in the common work and learning we share together, our charism is sustained by our institutional life.

Christians do not all see or do things the same way, but in the midst of the growth and diversity of Christian faith we do share a journey to the kingdom. Drawing from the formative work of Craig Dykstra and Dorothy Bass, a key way we learn together in our diversity is through the practices of ministry.[7] Practices at the seminary include, for example, "pray and break bread," gatherings where we listen and pray together in a neighborhood and also share a meal. Such practices are ways of being formed in Christ and a way of life for God's life in and for the world.[8]

There are unique opportunities in intercultural learning, a space where the gifts and stories of the whole body of Christ are welcomed and honored. As Andrew Walls observes, the world Christian community needs one another to grow into the fullness of Christ. That is, our learning

6 See John M.G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

7 Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra eds, *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008). Their discussion and work helps inform the language of the telos provided at the outset of this essay.

8 For a rich and careful description of this process, see Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

involves sharing how we are offering up every word and deed, the ordinary and the transitions of our lives, to Christ.[9]

Although it requires commitment, time, and interpretive skills, this community can nurture a transformation in our knowledge and practice of ministry. Such learning is dialogical. It involves listening to and learning from one another, reading Scripture in community, sharing meals, engaging the arts, and deepening a life of prayer. Community is where we learn ways in which the city and the Spirit make possible wise, imaginative, and adaptive ministry.

One of things we have learned is the importance of holistic or integrative learning.[10] As Mary Bediako of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Ghana stresses, it is important not to separate religious or spiritual formation from theological knowledge, but to hold them together, as churches do.[11] Because theology, spirituality, and life belong together, we have found their integration to be essential for theological learning.

Our educational approach has a particular focus on attentiveness to sensory experiences and practices. This includes how we listen and are open to God and God's presence in the city. But it also recognizes that we live in and go about the city through employing our senses, and in the process, those senses localize our theologies and practices. For example, rather than merely understanding a city through demographics, there is much we can gain through our senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight. This helps us to understand our city and local setting in fresh ways, and it requires us to be present to communities on the ground.

Attending to the senses also cultivates discernment and attentiveness that are vital to spiritual formation and ministry. Through this process of

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9 For this framing, I am again drawing again on Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews.*

10 I am grateful to Chris Scharen of Auburn Theological Seminary for suggesting David Perkins, *Making Learning Whole: How Seven Principles of Teaching Can Transform Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009). See also the formative arguments of Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983).

11 Gillian Mary Bediako, "Christian Universality, Christian Scholarship and Institution Building— Kwame Bediako on a Vision in Process," in Gillian Mary Bediako, Benhardt Quarshie, and J. Kwanbena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *Seeing New Facets of the Diamond: Christianity as a Universal Faith: Essays in Honor of Kwame Bediako* (Eugene, OR: Regnum/Wipf and Stock, 2014), 363.

becoming attuned to the senses, we may also come into closer conversation with theological traditions past and present, and with biblical texts.

The development of these practices and ways of learning would not have been possible without the cultivation of City Seminary as an institution. Although institutions are often looked down upon, and are capable of distorting their calling, they are how we organize and achieve flourishing lives and communities, embodying our deepest beliefs. City Seminary as an institution is key to sustaining and growing our community of lifelong learning and practice.

An intergenerational future

As we have observed, an increasing number of students at the seminary are the spouses and children of former students. It's exciting to see not only churches but also family members involved in the seminary. Their presence has helped us to ask, "If Christianity is growing and thriving in the city now, what will happen among the next generation? How can we honor and strengthen intergenerational faith that is at the core of the narrative of faith identity?"

This question—about the future of the next generation—is what parents and pastors in the African churches in New York asked me the most. It is a question about family, culture, belief, and the churches that they love, a time between continuity and change. We hear it asked by parishes and congregations across the city, and we ask it in relation to our own families and congregations.

In response, we have engaged in a multifaceted and multiyear project on the transmission and translation of faith among the 1.5 (i.e., second and third generations of immigrant congregations and parishes) in New York City. We have integrated into the overall curriculum and direction of the seminary what we are learning about families, youth, and intergenerational church life in this area. And it has led us to develop WE LEAD NYC, a youth seminary initiative, as part of our ecology of learning.

As Dietrich Werner has observed, the next generation is critical for the future of Christian faith:

> Theological education is . . . vital for the transmission of Christian tradition from one generation to the next and essential for the renewal and continuity of the church and its education. Theological education is a matter of survival

> for an authentic and contextual mission of the church in contemporary context.[12]

While Werner connects the transmission of faith with theological education, Andrew Walls views faith across generations through a wider lens:

> The cultural diversity of Christianity is widely acknowledged today and perhaps now needs little new defense. Perhaps we need, however, to remember that this diversity exists not only in a horizontal form across the contemporary scene, but also in a vertical form across history. Christianity is a generational process, an ongoing dialogue with culture. Just as diversity of Christian expression and its ultimate coherence combine in the contemporary scene, so they are across the generations. We belong to the ancestors—and to our grandchildren, and this is as true of the Church as a whole as of any local segment of it. The full-grown humanity of Christ requires all the Christian generations, just as it embodies all the cultural variety that six continents can bring. As the writer to the Hebrews put it, Abraham and the patriarchs have even now not yet reached their goal. They are waiting for "us" (Heb 11:39–40).[13]

This is a perspective on theological education grounded within a narrative across generations: a "full-growing" into the humanity of Christ across history and continents, and one perhaps always between the times.

Building City Seminary is a journey of prayer, friendship, and community, of sensing the city and being open to God . . . a journey of vulnerability and hope. It has introduced many new stops and places along an itinerary of learning, and it has entailed a process of personal change. It invites us or a community to seek the peace and flourishing of this God's world.

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12 Dietrich Werner, "Ecumenical Learning in Theological Education: The World Council of Churches Perspective," *The Expository Times* 123:1 (2011): 5–6.

13 Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), xvii.

The *Telos* of Theological Education

Graham Tomlin
St Mellitus College

ABSTRACT: The crisis of theological education is often described in terms of fragmentation, a tendency that mirrors a world experienced as divided and disparate. The Letter to the Ephesians describes a world divided that waits to be united in Christ. If this is the telos *of the divine work in history, then theological education needs to aim at the wisdom that integrates rather than fragments. This theme is explored through the experience of the growth of St Mellitus College in London during the past decade.*

An anecdote doing the rounds in theological circles goes like this: A well-known professor at a well-known American theological seminary was asked how his college was doing. He replied, "Well, we have the wrong students being taught the wrong subjects by the wrong people in the wrong place, but apart from that, it's fine."

The story bears witness to a sense that, for some time, theological education has been in a state of crisis. As two experienced teachers put it, "Something is wrong in mainline theological institutions. We can feel it, we can hear it, we can see it."[1] A trawl through some of the extensive recent literature on theological education tells the story. Article after article, book after book have titles such as "Seminary Distress," "The Crisis in Theological Training," and "Re-imagining Ministerial Formation." Declining church attendance, falling numbers of students in traditional seminaries, and financial shortfalls have all led to the closure or amalgamation of several long-standing institutions. Added to this, theological college faculty often feel the pressure of life in such institutions. Many people working in this sector have deliberately chosen to teach in institutions that train ministers because they are truly committed to the church and, hence,

1 Ronald H. Cram and Stanley P. Saunders, "Feet Partly of Iron and Partly of Clay: Pedagogy and the Curriculum of Theological Education," *Theological Education* 28, no. 2 (1992): 21.

have chosen not to teach in a university setting. However, this comes at quite a sacrifice. Paid less than they would be in a university post, they also face the demand to be academics, pastors, role models, worship leaders, administrators, and fundraisers all at the same time. While many would love the time to develop their academic studies, write books, and keep up with their reading, it is a struggle to do this while there are essays to grade, students to pastor, reports to write, courses to administer, and money to raise. Their colleagues in university posts may face many of these demands, but not all; they are not expected to be pastors, mentors, or moral examples to their students and often are backed up by a larger administrative structure than most theological seminaries have.

In a crisis, the best thing is to go back to basics. What is the point? Why do we do what we do? This question of the *telos* of theological education is one that has been the subject of extensive debate over the past few decades.[2] The extensive literature on this question during the last forty years does not need to be rehearsed. However, a new experiment in theological education in London during the past ten years may give some pointers for the way ahead.

While books, articles, and written proposals are legion, there are few examples of new initiatives in this area. Typically, traditional seminaries have tried to adapt to a new world but have struggled to do so, often hampered by their existing structures and the weight of history behind them. St Mellitus College is a seminary, but not a very traditional one.[3] Formed in 2007, it has quickly grown to become by far the largest Theological College in the Church of England. The ethos and atmosphere feel very different from any traditional seminary environment. The majority of its ordination candidates train full-time, with half of that time spent in academic study, the other half learning "on the job" in a parish or mission context.[4] This is more than the usual "placement"; students do not visit a

2 Many people trace the beginning of the debate to Edward Farley's work in the 1980s: Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983); *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988).

3 The author was the founding Dean and Principal of St Mellitus College, and now holds the title of President of the college after being appointed Bishop of Kensington, the area of London in which the college is located.

4 The others train part-time, alongside regular jobs and local church life, in the same way as many part-time courses do in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

church for a few hours a week in order to observe ministry there. Instead, they are normally paid members of staff, with a significant area of ministry responsibility, and are supervised by an experienced leader or mentor. St Mellitus College also has strong links to particular churches, for example Holy Trinity Brompton, the largest and one of the most dynamic churches in the Church of England; the cathedrals of the dioceses where much of the training takes place, for example in Chelmsford and Liverpool; and in the many churches where the students are placed during their training.

This article outlines some of the thinking that has gone into and emerged from this experiment during the past few years as the College has thought about and practiced new forms of theological education for ministry.

The *telos* of theological education

The word *telos* is, of course, a rich New Testament word. In the fourth chapter of the Book of Ephesians, the purpose of the giving of gifts to enable apostolic, prophetic, pastoral, and teaching ministries is precisely the building up of the body of Christ, *eis andra teleion* (v. 14)—"to mature" people. The first chapter of the Book of Colossians describes the purpose of Paul's ministry as "warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom" so that he may present everyone *teleion en Christō* (v. 28). Many other citations could be added, but one way of putting it is that the *telos* of theological education is to enable the *teleiōsis*, or maturity of the church. The further question of why the church needs to grow into maturity brings the discussion onto the larger divine plan for the whole creation. This is perhaps best summed up in Ephesians 1:10: "to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ." In other words, the church is the body within the world that bears witness to Christ, in whom and under whom all things will one day be reconciled. In focus here is not so much the *telos* of theological education or even of the church, but that of the whole creation. But there is of course a link among all three. Theological education, especially that which is focused on the church's ministers, enables the *teleiōsis* of the church, which in turn enables the *teleiōsis* of the whole creation. The *telos* of the work of God in the world is to overcome the fragmentation of a divided and broken world, to bring it to unity in Christ.

Ironically, one of the common diagnoses of the crisis in theological education is a strong sense of fragmentation. Edward Farley's seminal

book *Theologia*, was subtitled *The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*.[5] It was a critique of the traditional fourfold curriculum consisting of courses in the Bible, Doctrine, Church History, and some form of "Practical Theology." David Kelsey's equally influential book, *Between Athens and Berlin*,[6] was an attempt to bring unity to a very disparate debate. It concluded rather unsatisfactorily that it was impossible to synthesize the approaches to theological education symbolized by Athens and Berlin and hoped only for a kind of "unstable truce" between them.

In that context, this sense of fragmentation in theological education is not just a practical irritant but a theological problem. If theological education serves the ministry of the church—that, in turn, is intended to enable the *teleiōsis* of creation, understood as the reconciliation of all things in Christ—then a fragmented process of education is deeply problematic. I would suggest, therefore, that one of the primary goals of theological education is to enable students to live lives of wholeness and integration, where desperate and divided selves are brought into harmony and unity.

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How then is this maturity, this *teleiōsis*, cultivated? When St. Paul described his ministry in terms of aiming at *teleiōsis*, he also used a significant word to describe the actual ministry he exercised to bring this about: "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ (teleion in Christō)."[7] The key word here is the word *wisdom*. If the goal of ministry is to present everyone mature in Christ, then the one chief quality that enables that goal is a ministry marked by wisdom.

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5 Farley, *Theologia*.

6 David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993).

7 Col 1:28.

Christian wisdom

I suggest that the goal of theological education is not knowledge, understanding, skills, or professional competence, but rather the development of people steeped in *Christian wisdom*, defined as *knowing what to do and how to do it to enable the church to come to full maturity in Christ*. Christian wisdom implies a deep disposition of the heart and mind that knows how to act and to speak in a distinctively Christian fashion, in a way that bears witness to Jesus Christ and his Kingdom, in a range of different contexts and situations, so that the church is enabled to grow into maturity.

Wisdom has a long usage in the genre of Old Testament literature that bears the name. Yet it is a word deeply rooted in the Gospel narratives as well. This was the word often used to describe the life and impact of Jesus. In descriptions of his childhood, we are told that he "grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him" (Luke 2:40), and that he "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). During his public ministry, the crowds asked: "What is this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?" (Mark 6:2). What does *teleiōsis* look like in practice? It looks like Christian wisdom—knowing what to do and how to do it in a way that builds up the church so that it comes to maturity in Christ.

Christian wisdom implies a number of things. Both words are significant. The word *wisdom* includes the notion of a profound understanding of God, brought about at least, in part, through the study of his self-revelation in Christ and in the history of Israel and how Christians across the ages have explored, interpreted, and communicated that self-revelation.

At the same time, it implies a practical and not just theoretical knowledge. Wisdom implies the ability to make wise choices in concrete circumstances, where the answers are not obvious and cannot be read from a textbook. Wisdom involves the practice of faith as well as its understanding. As Matthew's Gospel puts it, "wisdom is proved right by her deeds" (11:19).

The designation of wisdom as specifically *Christian* wisdom adds a further ecclesial perspective. If it is *Christian* wisdom, then it needs to be learned in the context of the place where Christians gather—the church itself. Christian wisdom can only be learned in the place where Christ can

be found, in the dwelling place of the Spirit, namely the Christian Church, which is the body of Christ, the community birthed by that same Spirit.

The development of *Christian* wisdom requires the learning of a way of life and thinking, which is distinctly different from that imbibed from any surrounding culture or ethos. It requires the emergence of the mind of Christ, formed by the only one who can enable this to happen, the Holy Spirit: "the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord" (Isa 11:2). The acquisition of Christian wisdom implies a soaking, not just in Christian theology and practice but in the Holy Spirit, who shapes and forms us into the image of Christ. In the New Testament, the Spirit is the one who gives wisdom (Acts 6:10). The heart of the Pauline prayer for the believers in Ephesus is that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better" (Eph 1:17). It is not surprising that those chosen for diaconal ministry in Acts 6 were to be "full of the Spirit and wisdom."

Wisdom and integrity

Wisdom is more than knowledge, yet it is also more than practical skills. It is formed in response to God and his self-revelation, yet it is more than a cognitive exercise and embraces ethical decision making. It emerges out of prayer yet requires deep thinking. It is hard-headed and practical yet also concerns the shaping of desire. Christian wisdom, therefore, implies the integration of a number of different factors into a whole and harmonious life directed toward God.

On the ground, the kind of issues most theological seminaries face are issues such as these: How can academic theological study be brought together with practical preparation for ministry? How does the academy relate to the church? How do the demands of often secular requirements in higher education relate to the demands of spiritual formation?

Christian faith and theology are acts of bringing things together. God is understood as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, united in will and essence. The human and the divine come together in Christ. Physical bodies come together with spiritual energy and relationship in humanity; male and female make up the human race. Sign and reality come together in sacraments. Faith and work come together in Christian life; mind and emotions come together in Christian spirituality.

Wisdom entails the refocusing of fragmented and disjointed lives into a steady pursuit of one goal: the presence and beauty of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom," as we are told in the Book of Proverbs (1:7). In other words, wisdom begins and ends with God. Its ultimate content is a desire for God and a longing to see his will enacted and fulfilled in human lives and in the world. In speaking of Christian wisdom, David Ford says, "the utterly vital thing to be learnt is the incomparable desirability of God, the kingdom of God and how to follow Jesus in his realization of it."[8]

The development of Christian wisdom—required for the cultivation of whole and integrated lives and leading to whole and integrated churches that can bear witness to the day when all things will be brought together in and under Christ—requires the bringing together of a number of different factors that are often separated in many of our forms of ministerial training. For the remainder of this paper, I suggest four areas of integration, which need to take place in training if we are to produce people of genuine Christian wisdom, capable of contributing to the transformation of both the church and wider society.

Theology and ministry

Christian faith is actuated in practice. Faith is not the simple holding of an opinion; it means acting on the assumption that certain things are true. Full Christian understanding comes not in the antiseptic atmosphere of a classroom but in the interaction between the Word and the world, when people discover the faithfulness of God not simply as a theological idea but as a lived reality. For the salvation of the world, the Word needs to become flesh. The divine Word needs to be earthed. If that is true, then the same must be true for Christian theology. It needs also to be earthed in communities, practices, and Christian life. As Luther put it, "Let no-one think himself a theologian if he has read, understood and taught these things . . . . It is living, or rather dying and being damned that makes a theologian, not understanding, reading and speculating."[9]

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8 David Ford, *Christian Wisdom: Desiring God and Learning in Love* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 160.

9 Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, volume 5 (Weimar: H. Bohlau, 1883), 163.

When a woman calls out blessing on Jesus' mother, he corrects her: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28). Blessing is pronounced not on those who hear the word, but on those who hear it *and* obey it. It is when hearing meets doing that blessing and understanding come and wisdom is born. If this is true, then placing students in a context where they have to practice faith and leadership within the context of real churches or real jobs, with all their joys and frustrations, while engaging in deep theological study, has the potential to deepen true Christian understanding. It enables students to learn how to use their theology in practical ministry, to learn habits of juggling ministry, study, and family life in a way that will sustain them for a lifetime, rather than experiencing the shock of leaving the academic context for real church ministry, which is such a contrast that many never recover the habit of reading or engaging in serious theological work because they never learned how to do these things *together*.

Very often theology and ministry have been kept in separate compartments, with the common pattern of doing theology in a classroom for two or three years followed by a lifetime of ministry. Theology can only take root within us when it is practiced; therefore, Christian practice is the essential and necessary counterpart to theological and spiritual formation.

Academy and church

Christian theology is essentially an ecclesial activity. That is not an uncontested claim but can be argued both theologically and historically. If theology is reflection on God's action in the world, a response to God's primary Word in creation, the history of Israel, and supremely the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, then it needs to be done in the very place where such things are remembered and celebrated. However good and appropriate it is for theology to be conducted in universities, its primary home is in the church.

Ministerial and theological training in the early church took place primarily in and closely connected to local churches. St. Paul wrote his theological letters to real church communities, and they naturally reflected his experience within them. Many of the great theologians of the early church were bishops of churches in the great cities or closely associated with them, as reflected in the names by which we call them, such as Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Augustine of Hippo. In the Middle Ages, this tradition of church-based theological

education continued in monastic houses or the cathedrals, in time maturing into the Christian universities of the High Middle Ages. These were institutions still closely linked to the church and reflecting the realities of church life and discipleship. It was in the Enlightenment period that things began to change. Now most serious theological study began to be conducted in institutions that were deliberately loosening their links to confessional church bodies and increasingly adopting an academic neutrality towards faith. The result was that theology, which had its origins and arguably its true home in the church, now resided in largely secular universities.

Seminaries, many of which have their origins in the nineteenth century, were an attempt to create a kind of halfway house, located somewhere between local church life and the secular university, keeping links with the churches yet mirroring in many ways the residential and primarily bookish atmosphere of the university, with its libraries, scholars, and refectories.

University-based theology is a good thing. Theology needs to be in dialogue with other disciplines and needs to be present in such conversations. Yet if that is the only place in which theology is studied, something is missing. Sometimes, the result has been a theology conducted in university contexts, away from the concerns of the church, almost as if the church did not exist, and therefore frequently seeming remote from the concerns of working pastors or priests or lay Christians in the home or in the workplace. At the same time, the flight of theology from the churches has led to an impoverishment of local church life, with most Christians surviving on a short exhortatory sermon on a Sunday, having little to stimulate and provoke the deep thinking about faith of which many are capable and that often holds the key to a more satisfying and growing life of discipleship. Many lay Christians are simply bored—bored with hardly ever being able to engage their minds seriously with their faiths.

Theological training designed to cultivate Christian wisdom will need to combine the best of the academy within the life of the church. It will need to take theological study with the utmost academic seriousness, yet never divorced from the life and worship of the church, both local and universal. Otherwise, on the one hand, whatever wisdom is gained risks not being truly and deeply *Christian*. On the other, what is learnt may be increased knowledge, information, or academic understanding, but not true *wisdom*.

Prayer and theology

This leads naturally to the vital link between theology and prayer. Martin Luther's advice on the study of Scripture was this:

> Firstly you should know that the Holy Scriptures constitute a book which turns the wisdom of all other books into foolishness . . . . Therefore you should straightaway despair of your reason and understanding . . . . Kneel down and pray to God with real humility and earnestness, that he through his dear Son may give you his Holy Spirit who will enlighten you, lead you and give you understanding.[10]

Luther's words are a reminder that the study of theology will change our entire way of looking at the world. *Christian* wisdom may have some overlap with common sense, but it starts from a very different place and issues in a very different view of the world. The Scriptures open a new world where miracles happen, the poor find dignity, kings repent, the sick are healed, and the dead are raised.

As a result, theological study requires a dependence on divine wisdom—not our own—for illumination. God's ways are different from ours. That journey begins not so much with the intellect as with the heart in prayer. Prayer humbles us. It is hard to be proud of my academic achievements when I am on my knees before God. Doctorates or the lack of them count for little there, which is why theology done in the context of prayer and worship is very different from that done in a purely academic environment. Theology begins not with our words or our discussion but with silence, a readiness to hear the Word of God and to respond to it, and that requires cultivating and nourishing a desire to hear it.

In other words, good theology begins and ends in prayer and worship. Such theology becomes a conversation with God, not a study about God. Much of the best theology of the past has been done this way. It is no accident that works such as Anselm's *Proslogion* or Augustine's *Confessions* are expressed in the form of prayer to God.

One of the grave dangers of academic theological study is the subtle but sure temptation to prideful arrogance. Pursuing academic theology can sometimes lead to confining the knowledge of God into essays and

10 *Luther's Works* 34 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1960), 285.

qualifications, which can so easily lead to a patronizing and disdainful attitude toward the rest of the church that has not been inducted into the theological guild. It can also create a subtle distance from God himself, as theology is used as a way of keeping God at bay, avoiding the personal address with which he approaches us in Christ.

Theology conducted outside and apart from prayer and worship will always tend to foster pride. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1). Theological study that is interlaced and punctuated with prayer and worship can truly lead to a deep Christian wisdom, which goes beyond knowledge to a recognition of God's ways and a discernment of them in the world. It can transform an academic pursuit into the pursuit of God, which is the goal and content of Christian wisdom.[11]

Evangelical and Catholic

The Church of England, the denomination in which St Mellitus College is based, can be seen as a coalition between the evangelical and Catholic forms of Christianity left behind in England after the Reformation. Whereas on the European continent, Protestant and Catholic churches tended to divide on confessional grounds, in the Elizabethan Settlement, an attempt was made to hold together both forms of Christianity in England. This was based on the assumption that, while different in many ways, they both held to Trinitarian Christianity and, therefore, are both authentic expressions of Christian faith that were better kept together rather than held apart, however uncomfortable that may feel at times. In our post-Christian context, there is yet another reason why it is vital to keep these expressions of Christian faith together. This is the perception that the task of evangelizing a complex, varied, and multifaceted society needs a number of different expressions of Christian faith. Such a task is too big for any one part of the church: we need one another.

This requires an atmosphere in which each tradition is valued, while at the same time students do not feel under pressure to change their own traditions. How is such an approach possible, given the history of tension between these two forms of Christian faith? In our experiences, the answer is in a third element: the charismatic dimension. Lesslie Newbigin, in his

11 This is a theme explored in Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'on the Trinity'* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

classic work of ecclesiology, *The Household of God*,[12] made the point that Protestant and Catholic ecclesiologies need the charismatic dimension of the Spirit to be properly fulfilled. "The Pentecostal Christian has the New Testament on his side when he demands first of all of any body of so-called Christians 'do you have the Holy Spirit?' For without that all your creedal orthodoxy and all your historic succession avails you nothing."[13] For him, the dilemma between the Evangelical emphasis on the Word of Christ in the church, and the Catholic emphasis on the ongoing life of Christ in the church is a false one. These are to be held together by the Holy Spirit, who unites life and message, and breathes life into both Word and Sacrament. The unity of the church is held not by a doctrinal statement, nor liturgical form, but is the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the bond of peace.[14]

In the experience at St Mellitus, the "charismatic" dimension has been found to be vital in holding together Evangelical and Catholic forms of Christian life. An expectation of the presence of the Spirit in each other, and in different forms of worship, whether more liturgical or more informal, has been vital in establishing an environment in which both Evangelicals and Catholics can genuinely learn from each other, rather than remain at loggerheads. The result has been a number of churches and church plants, led by its students, that blend old and new, formality and informality, reverence and irreverence, into a missionally creative mix.

Conclusion

The goal of theological training is the building up of the church into maturity. To that end, it needs to focus on the cultivation of Christian wisdom that produces an ability to know what to do and how to do it, all focused on the desire for God and the building up of the church, so that it can bear witness to Jesus Christ and the day when all things will be brought together in him and under him. Such wisdom can only emerge by a process of bringing together factors that are often held apart, to enable students

12 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (London: SCM, 1957).

13 Newbigin, *The Household of God*, 92.

14 Ephesians 4:3.

to lead integrated, whole, healthy lives that issue in integrated, whole, healthy churches, and finally in an integrated, whole, and healthy world.

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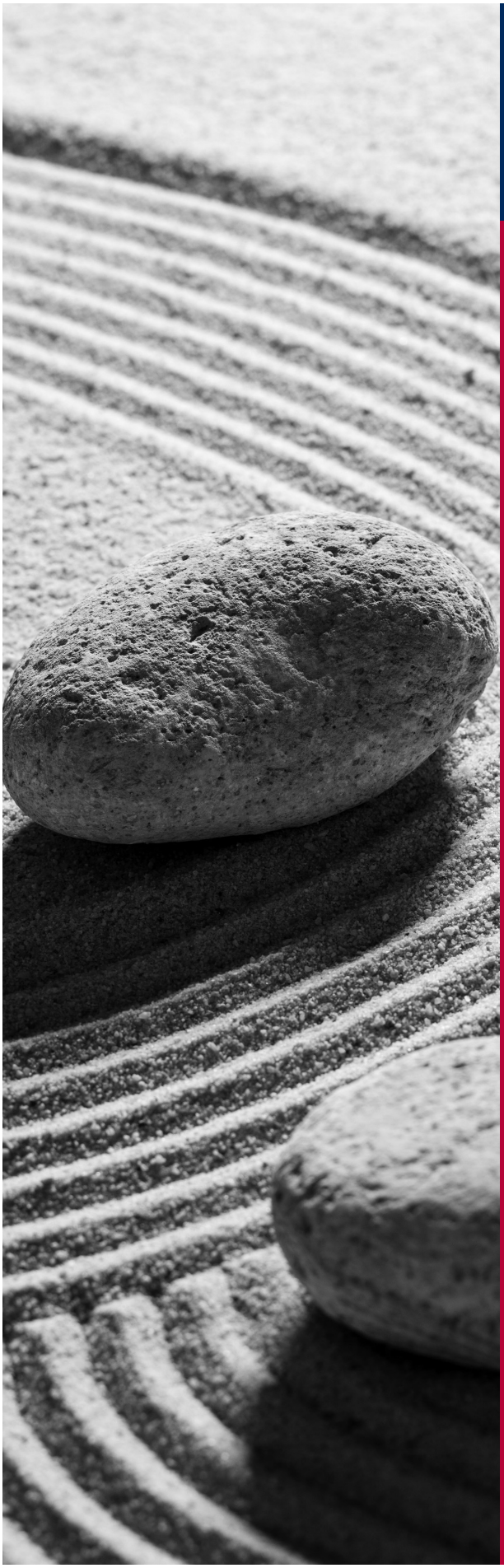

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