
Theological Education

The Good
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Introduction:

The Good Theological School

What is “the good theological school”? This question has framed the work of the ATS Quality and Accreditation Project during 1993 and 1994. It is an important question that immediately precipitates a variety of answers. Religion in North America, like the society in which it exists, is pluralistic and increasingly complex. No one form of religious expression, and no one kind of theological school, can claim essential superiority over all others. But the question still deserves to be asked. In the context of profound differences, are there patterns of common good that deserve attention? As theological schools increasingly attach their identity to their heterogeneous character, can some common assumptions about institutional quality—goodness—inform such an identity? The question about “the good theological school” requires the asking of many more questions. This edition of *Theological Education*, prepared especially for the 1994 ATS Biennial Meeting, identifies some questions and records some conversations that addressed them. The first five essays describe the Association’s Quality and Accreditation Project and provide a text for participants in the 1994 Biennial Meeting. The last three articles summarize significant work of the Association over a number of years to rethink major issues in theological education, and they provide a background for considering the present questions.

Quality and Accreditation

The introductory essay provides an orientation to the ATS Quality and Accreditation Project, a four-year effort to rethink the nature of quality desired in theological schools and to redevelop the ATS accrediting standards to support these emerging perceptions of quality. The essay describes the project by proposing answers to three questions: Why should ATS undertake this project at this time? Why has the current process for conducting the project been chosen? Why have the four focused questions guided thinking during the first phase of the project?

The next four essays provide the primary background for the Biennial Meeting discussion. Each of these essays was written by a team of writers who are reporting on discussions that occurred in a September 1993 consultation on “The Good Theological School.” Participants in this three-day event worked in one of four

groups that addressed one of the four questions. These questions serve as the titles for the four essays. Writing teams were responsible for reporting the discussion and, beyond reporting, for adding their own reflections about the question addressed by their consultation work group. The four essays do not present a comprehensive taxonomy of issues to be addressed in each of these areas, nor are they based upon a body of scholarly literature or research. They are summaries of thoughtful conversations among theological educators in response to an assigned topic. Their purpose is to convey with accuracy the discussions that occurred at the September consultation with the hope that these discussions will evoke further conversation and will identify issues that have not been raised previously. Each group's hard work during the September consultation deserves acknowledgment and appreciation. The roster of group members follows each essay.

The writers frequently refer to "our group" to identify the work group's discussion. Each of the four essays has been reviewed by members of the work group for its faithfulness in reflecting the group's discussion. The essays differ in style because the discussions differed, and different questions invited different patterns of conceptualization. Because several groups, working independently, identified some similar issues, the essays are not entirely discrete. Theological education is never easily organized into neatly discrete categories.

These essays provide a text for participants in the 1994 ATS Biennial Meeting. This year's meeting is designed as a plenary gathering of the Association's members to address these four questions in an effort to identify Association-wide perceptions of "the good theological school." The essays provide a primer, based on a previous group's discussion of these questions, for broader discussions to occur at the Biennial Meeting.

Background Resources for the Quality and Accreditation Discussion

The final three articles give an overview of two long-term efforts of the Association. The Basic Issues Research Project has involved a sustained, thoughtful re-examination of foundational issues of theological education. An earlier edition of *Theological Education* included an article in which David Kelsey and Barbara Wheeler reviewed the findings of the Basic Issues Research Project, and an abstracted version of that article appears in this edition.

A second major project of the Association, begun in the early 1980s, has been the globalization of theological education. In a recent issue of *Theological Education*,

Robert Schreiter summarized many of the issues that have been addressed during the course of that project. Barbara Brown Zikmund abstracted Schreiter's article for the newsletter of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI), and a version of that document is included in this edition.

Finally, the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education compiled a bibliography of books and articles about theological education since 1980. That bibliography is reprinted here for general reference purposes. Much of this literature was produced as ATS invited or evoked attention to the suggestions raised by the Basic Issues Research Project as well as the initiatives of the Lilly Endowment Inc. and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The editors especially express gratitude to the members of the Quality and Accreditation Steering Committee who have guided this project, designed its events, and consulted at length on the design of this edition of *Theological Education*.

Members of the Steering Committee are: Katarina Schuth, St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, Chair; William Dyrness, Fuller Theological Seminary; James Evans, Colgate Rochester Divinity School; Clark Gilpin, University of Chicago Divinity School; Jean-Marc Laporte, Toronto School of Theology; Patrick Miller, Princeton Theological Seminary; Sara Myers, Iliff School of Theology; Fredrica Harris Thompsett, Episcopal Divinity School; Timothy Weber, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Charles Wood, Perkins School of Theology; and Barbara Brown Zikmund, Hartford Seminary.

The ATS Quality and Accreditation Project

Daniel O. Aleshire

The Association of Theological Schools voted at its June 1992 Biennial Meeting to undertake a major redevelopment of accrediting standards. The project began with the 1992-93 academic year and will conclude with the recommendation of redeveloped ATS accreditation standards at the June 1996 Biennial Meeting. The 1992-94 phase of the project focused on perceptions of “the good theological school.” The 1994-96 phase will consist of activities to redevelop ATS accrediting standards based on the perceptions of quality that emerge in the first phase of the project. The Quality and Accreditation Project is perhaps best understood in the context of responses to three questions about the project: Why *now*? Why *this* process? Why *these* focused questions?

Why Undertake the Project at This Time?

When The Association of Theological Schools voted on its first set of accrediting standards in 1936, it determined that “in accrediting a theological seminary or college regard should be had for the quality of its instruction, the standing of its professors, the character of its administration, the efficiency of its offices of record, and its proved ability to prepare students for efficient professional service or further scholarly pursuits.” The accrediting categories contained in this 1936 action have remained remarkably constant over the decades. While many changes have occurred in ATS accrediting standards, including major reviews in the early 1970s and in the early 1980s, the resulting revisions of the standards have continued to reflect much from the original categories. Prior reviews of the standards have reflected a tendency to restate and update standards, but the fundamental categories have not been seriously revisited. The current effort to redevelop the ATS standards is occurring at a time when these general evaluative categories have been called into question—both externally in the North American world of higher education and internally among ATS member institutions. This questioning, coming at the same time as other significant changes in North American theological education, explains why this ATS project is undertaken at this time. Several issues deserve particular attention.

Questions about North American Higher Education

The bi-national character of The Association of Theological Schools makes it difficult to generalize about higher education because the situations in the United States and Canada are strikingly different. Higher education has been highly valued in both countries, however, and colleges, universities, and other higher educational institutions have been the recipients of trust and a certain social privilege. Subtle changes in cultural perceptions, as well as considerable financial stress in both the United States and Canada, have brought the broader social institution of higher education under increasing scrutiny. In Canada, the reduction in provincial support for students attending institutions is perhaps the most obvious indicator of this shift. In the United States, public funding for many forms of higher education has diminished, but more importantly, a subtle cultural suspicion of the benefits of higher education is emerging. This suspicion was reflected in the deliberations of the U.S. Congress in the 1992 reauthorization of the 1965 Higher Education Act. Concerns were expressed about the educational effectiveness of institutions and about default rates of federally-guaranteed student loans. As a result, the reauthorization legislation holds institutions more accountable for the kind of education they conduct and holds students more accountable for the repayment of the monies they have borrowed. The suspicion, however, seems to go beyond these concerns.

The questioning, the reassessing, the rethinking of higher education and the evidences of its quality have been occurring with increasing intensity over the past decade. Accrediting bodies have sensed the cultural mood and are attempting to respond. In the first half of the century, accreditation was primarily a process by which schools established that they had adequate resources to be judged as postsecondary institutions. Following World War II, and during most of the era in which ATS has functioned as an accrediting agency, the accrediting process required schools clearly to articulate their mission as institutions, to demonstrate that they had necessary resources, and to provide evidence that they were accomplishing their mission. In the past decade, the accrediting process has tended to move away from resources and mission assessment to focus on the character of teaching and learning, and the assessment of educational and institutional effectiveness. In a recent statement, executives of regional accrediting associations in the U.S. agreed that their standards must move more in the direction of affirming the importance of teaching and learning in higher education, requiring institutions to demonstrate their educational effectiveness, and providing more public information about the accredited status of schools.¹ This emphasis reflects the progression of higher education's

accountability in this century and is a response to an increasing constituent concern about whether the money given to and expended by institutions of higher education is providing the benefits presumed of education.

ATS schools are no strangers to these questions and worries. Many schools are related to denominations in which denominational meetings typically raise questions about what has been or should be taught in the seminaries. Self-study surveys of alumna/ae almost always identify subjects that were taught in theological schools that were never used in the practice of ministry, and topics perceived as essential to the practice of ministry that were never taught in theological schools. ATS schools now find themselves in the midst of fundamental issues and concerns. The broader questioning and assessment of higher education, and the more narrow questions raised of and by theological schools, contribute to the current need for the Association to ask serious questions about its understanding of good theological education and the kind of accrediting standards that will support it.

The Changing Character of ATS Schools

Another reason for engaging in the Quality and Accreditation process at this time is the changing composition of the Association and the changing character of students attending the schools.

ATS Composition

The ATS constitution limits votes on accrediting standards to accredited institutions. An analysis of the potential voters illustrates the shift that has occurred in the Association membership. In 1964, there were 91 accredited institutions in The Association of Theological Schools, of which 72 could be classified as mainline Protestant and 19 as conservative or evangelical Protestant. There were no Roman Catholic or Orthodox schools in the Association in 1964. Thirty years later, in 1994, the Association has 189 accredited institutions, of which 83 could be classified as mainline Protestant, 56 as conservative or evangelical Protestant, and 50 as Roman Catholic/Orthodox.² The Association's homogeneous schools of 30 years ago have become more heterogeneous and now relate to the entire range of North American Christianity. There are more evangelical and Roman Catholic schools accredited by ATS in 1994 than the *total* number of accredited schools in 1964. The number of accredited schools has more than doubled in these three decades, but perhaps more significantly, the ecclesial and theological perspectives represented by those member schools have broadened geometrically. The 1996 vote to adopt redeveloped standards

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will be taken by a very different community of schools than that which voted on accrediting standards 30 years ago.

ATS Student Bodies

The rather striking changes in the accredited schools of ATS between 1964 and 1994 are paralleled by rather dramatic changes in the students who attend these schools. School by school, denomination by denomination, student enrollment in theological institutions seems to follow a common pattern. Students are older, a higher percentage of them are women, they feel less able to relocate to attend their denomination's seminary, and instead, attend the nearby seminary regardless of its denomination, and they are far more likely to serve as non-ordained lay professionals than were students of 30 years ago. These students will move into their careers more mature, but they will have fewer years of service in ministry because of their average age upon graduation. These students bring very different demands and expectations to institutions regarding the scheduling of classes, the kinds of student services and housing needed, and financial aid requirements.

Changes in North American Religion

The changes in the Association membership and the students served by the schools are compounded by the changes occurring in North American religion as a whole. While the changes vary, mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, and evangelical Protestants are all experiencing significant change.

In 1964 mainline Protestantism tended to perceive itself as stable, central to the structures of the culture, with its future place of influence assured even though significant challenges were mounting. The mood in mainline Protestantism is very different in 1994.³ Several mainline denominations have experienced significant decline in their membership during these three decades. The stress of negotiating denominational programs in the midst of declining membership and increasing need, and a declining funding base in a period of significant inflation, have brought financial stress on everything related to those denominations, including their seminaries.

Roman Catholics in North America have experienced a different kind of stress. The total membership of Roman Catholic parishes has increased during the past 30 years. Recent immigrant groups of Latins and Southeast Asians have added to Roman Catholic membership as did European immigrants at the beginning of the 20th century. Roman Catholic seminaries, however, have experienced a profound decline in the number of students enrolled in priestly

vocation programs and a dramatic increase in the number of students enrolled in lay vocational programs. The decline of priestly vocations in a clerically-oriented church has immediate impact on the conduct and character of Roman Catholic theologates and on the distribution of resources from religious orders and dioceses. Roman Catholic seminaries have merged or formed patterns of affiliation to counteract scarce resources as they struggle to provide clerical and professional leadership for the largest religious community in North America.⁴

The evangelical Protestant community has not escaped profound change either. While it has not experienced the decline in members that mainline Protestants have experienced, or the decline in church vocations that Roman Catholics have, it has experienced significant shifts in the maturing of early 20th-century (frequently “protest”) institutions and the birth of many late 20th-century institutions. Some of the evangelical schools accredited by ATS in 1994 did not exist in 1964. While some evangelical schools of long historical significance have recently obtained ATS accreditation, much of the increase in the number of evangelical schools in ATS has been the result of the founding of new schools. The development of new institutions and the institutionalizing of earlier structures of theological education have brought their own forms of stress and needs for resources.

While any assessment of religion in North America, at any historical point, can note major shifts over time, it would appear that the aggregate effect of these changes over the past 30 years may well be unparalleled in this century. All of these changes—cultural, institutional, and religious—underscore the need to ask questions about the character of good theological education and “the good theological school.” The questions do not assume that there is only one kind of good theological school. Early indicators suggest that the Association must learn to think pluralistically about its schools and the religious realities that they serve.

Why This Process?

The complexity and breadth of the various issues confronting North American higher education, religion, and theological schools have contributed to a design for the Quality and Accreditation Project that devotes half of the total project time to the questions about “the good theological school.” The first phase of the project (1992-94) is attempting to identify the perceptions about good theological education that exist both among ATS member institutions and more broadly in North America. The second phase (1994-96) involves the drafting of redeveloped ATS accrediting standards.

1992-1994 Phase

This issue of *Theological Education* is one of four major activities in the first phase designed to help the Association think about the nature of “the good theological school.”

In September 1993, approximately 50 people gathered in Chicago for a three-day meeting to consider the question: What is “the good theological school”? They addressed this theme through four fundamental questions: (1) *What is the character of curriculum, formation, and cultivation of ministerial leadership in the good theological school?* (2) *What is the character of teaching, learning, and the scholarly task in the good theological school?* (3) *What is the character of the institutional resources needed for the good theological school?* and (4) *What is the character of administration and governance in the good theological school?* Persons worked in groups throughout the consultation on one of the four questions, and all 50 participants considered each of the four questions in plenary sessions.

Four of the articles in this edition of *Theological Education* draw their titles and content from the work of those four groups. Two individuals in each of the groups formed a writing team, and they have summarized the group’s conversation in the context of their own editorial perceptions. The purpose of each essay is to bring prior conversation in this project to the attention of the ATS membership as a whole.

Participants at the 1994 Biennial Meeting will be asked to contribute further to the conversation related to these four questions during the plenary discussions and to consider adopting some “sense of the body” statements about good theological education in the final plenary and business sessions. The 1994 Biennial Meeting is a third major activity of the first phase of the project.

A fourth aspect has been the production of a video to be introduced at the Biennial Meeting. The video raises critical issues about “the good theological school,” and it will be used following the Biennial Meeting to extend the conversation to individual school faculties during the fall of 1994.

1994-1996 Phase

The Association membership will elect persons to serve on four task groups during the 1994-96 biennium, each of whom will be charged with the responsibility of drafting redeveloped standards in different areas. The task groups will work during the 1994-95 academic year to redevelop the standards, and they will report their work by late fall of 1995. A series of regional meetings will be conducted throughout the U.S. and Canada during the late fall of 1995 and winter of 1996. These hearings will solicit comments and discussion about the

redeveloped accrediting standards. The task groups will then be reconvened to consider the comments and discussion in these regional hearings and to develop their final draft recommendations. These final draft recommendations will be published in the spring 1996 edition of *Theological Education*, along with commentary regarding the reasons for the recommended standards and the implications of those standards in the work and evaluation of theological schools. The Association will then engage in final discussions at the 1996 Biennial Meeting and take action on the redeveloped standards.

Several features of this design deserve some comment. This process seeks to assure inclusive participation across the diverse communities within the Association. It also attempts to embody certain perceptions about the nature of quality and the purpose of accreditation. Finally, it seeks to keep the work of several Association-sponsored projects in focus.

Inclusive Participation

The process, first of all, reflects a commitment to an inclusive, collaborative effort. Ultimately, the ATS standards of accreditation are owned by the schools who adopt them and who submit themselves to evaluation by them. Any effort to redevelop the standards must be attentive to the broad range of constituent schools and, in turn, the broad range of constituencies within those schools. The Quality and Accreditation process seeks to attend to the particular concerns Canadian schools bring, as well as those of the U.S. schools; it seeks to attend to issues regarding Roman Catholic theological education, as well as Orthodox, evangelical, and mainline Protestant theological education.

North American theological education has become gender-inclusive in the last 30 years. The presence, voice, and contribution of women students, faculty, administrators, and board members in ATS schools must be attended to carefully in the process of developing standards by which theological schools should be evaluated.

North American theological education also has become increasingly inclusive of racial, linguistic, and cultural minority persons within the United States and Canada. These groups are important, not only because they have significant contributions to make to majority self-understanding, but also because much of the growth in religious participation in the U.S. and Canada is emerging from racial, ethnic, and linguistic minority communities. The history of North American theological education has been predominantly European and male. Across North American religious communities, this history is giving way to a future that is more racially and gender inclusive. North American society is increas-

ingly multicultural and reflects a wide variety of religious impulses and experiences. The diverse membership of schools within the ATS, greater diversity among students attending the schools, and the diverse religious communities the schools serve all mandate a process that seeks the contributions of constituencies that have previously not had adequate opportunity to contribute to the formation of institutional understandings of good theological education.

Perceptions about Quality

This project also seeks to embody perceptions about the nature of quality and the work of accreditation. Quality has become a popular word in North American life, and the ubiquitous use of a term sometimes makes thoughtful people suspicious of it. Theological education will be well served, however, by attending to the nature of quality in theological schools. Quality in theological education may be enhanced by good institutional processes, but those processes, however good they may be, do not define quality theological education. For me, anyway, quality begins with knowing something so well, so intimately, so respectfully, that “love of” and “commitment to” characterize this knowing. Quality in theological education has to do with care in the handling of sacred texts and the faithful imagination of a kind of life that has not yet been brought fully into existence. It has to do with ideas and practices that can fashion meaning, incite justice, do good. Quality, no doubt, must and will mean more than one good thing. But among the many, quality in theological education has to do with schools, teachers, and students who can imagine how to do their work well and cannot imagine doing it any other way. In this way, quality begins to draw upon theological understandings of creation, stewardship, care, and community.

Perceptions about Accreditation

The ATS Quality and Accreditation project seeks to be sensitive to the purposes and uses of accrediting standards. Standards have traditionally defined a “floor,” a minimally acceptable level of some resource or process in an institution of higher education. To the extent that accreditation functions as a floor, a *minimal* threshold, it invites questions from schools such as: “What is the minimal number of faculty for us to have and be accredited?” “What is the minimal number of volumes we must have in the library and be accredited by ATS?” While standards must address these minimalist issues, if they function only to define the lowest common denominator, then accreditation provides little more than a kind of regulatory permission to operate. Obtaining a driver’s

license doesn't depend upon how well an individual scores in the passing range, only that the individual has one point above the failing score. Perhaps more helpfully, accrediting standards should seek to define what good practice is and describe what quality would look like in a good theological school. Such standards of accreditation need to point toward a high ceiling to which a school should aspire. Accreditation should assure the public that certain things are true about an accredited institution, but beyond this, accreditation should help a school to envision an upward trajectory, an institutional goal, an institutional capacity to improve. If redeveloped ATS standards only broaden the floor, or redefine minimally acceptable levels of operation, they contribute little to quality in theological education, and, ultimately, little to the good of the religious communities served by theological schools.

ATS Emphases and Efforts

Finally, the process seeks to pay attention to some significant Association efforts that have occurred during the past decade. ATS has been engaged in serious reflection about basic issues in theological education, about the globalization of theological education, and about the nature of scholarship in the theological school. While these conversations have already introduced some changes in ATS accrediting standards, the present process brings the accrued perceptions and wisdom of these other major ATS emphases to the forefront. This edition of *Theological Education* includes edited summaries of reports from two of these major efforts: the ATS Globalization Project and the ATS Basic Issues Research Project. The inclusion of these essays focuses attention on the contribution of these past efforts and the ways in which they may inform the present discussion about "the good theological school."

Why These Questions?

The project's Steering Committee, in long and thoughtful conversations about how to undertake a discussion about good theological education, concluded that four fundamental questions provided the basis for the needed assessment. These questions have already been identified and provide a frame of reference for considering the larger question: What is the good theological school? The questions focus more on the educational and institutional activity of theological schools than on the possessions or processes of theological schools. The questions embrace the subjects of most of the current ATS accrediting standards and even reflect the categories of the 1936 action to establish

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criteria for accreditation. However, they bring those standards into slightly different focus. They provide a lens for looking toward the good, rather than a device for measuring minimally acceptable levels. These questions may not be the only questions that need to be asked of theological education at this time, but they represent certain fundamental questions that must be addressed in coming to some understanding of good theological education.

What is the character of curriculum, formation, and the cultivation of ministerial leadership in the good theological school? This question invites serious reflection on the standards by which ATS evaluates Master of Divinity programs, Master of Theological Studies programs, and professional Master of Arts programs. The question invites schools to think about the ways in which their tasks change as the student bodies they educate change. It also invites questions about the kind of leadership that may be most needed in North American churches, parishes, and religious communities. Is it the kind of leadership that has been available in the past, or does the changing social location of religion itself require new images of the qualities most desired in religious leaders? As professional schools, theological schools are intrinsically concerned with the character of leadership. This question invites schools to examine that aspect of their identities.

What is the character of teaching, learning, and the scholarly task in the good theological school? This question invites many others. Is there something particularly theological about teaching, learning, and the scholarly task in the good theological school, or is the task of the theological school to apply generic understandings of teaching, learning, and scholarship to the particular disciplines of theological inquiry? Theological faculties appear to have changed over the past 40 or 50 years, and with those changes, there has been a shift in the patterns of teaching, disciplinary orientation, and learning expectations. Are the disciplines that exist the ones that should be? Are the patterns of teaching, learning, and scholarship that we now have the ones most needed? Responses to these questions will inform the accrediting standards in many ways: about faculty and the assessment of their value and contribution, about students and evidences of their educational attainment, and about the knowledge that should accrue from theological research and scholarship.

What is the character of the institutional resources needed for the good theological school? ATS member institutions appear to have entered a time in which they cannot assume they will have the kind or quantity of resources they have had in the past. The prospect of the future invites questions about which resources are most fundamental and non-negotiable, and which are cultural artifacts of a particular way of understanding higher education. Emerging voices in Ameri-

can religious life raise questions about whether the resources presumed to be necessary for theological education are the ones that are, in fact, most necessary. Some suggest that the current presumptions about necessary resources are elitist and exclusionary, while others worry that the increasing needs of the religious community for a “traditioned leadership” will require even greater resources. The per student cost in ATS member schools ranges from a low of \$5,000 to upwards of \$40,000. What is a reasonable use of resources in educational institutions? How much should an accredited school be required to own? Should accreditation in the future be based more on the availability of shared resources and less on the ownership of resources by each accredited institution? These questions require answers that transcend expediency. They are questions that must be answered in the context of “the good theological school” rather than within the exigencies of any one school’s particular budget crisis.

What is the character of administration and governance in the good theological school? The past 30 years have seen some dramatic shifts in the way theological schools conduct their corporate lives. Governing boards have become far more crucial to the life of schools and have been assigned increasing degrees of power and responsibility for the oversight and well-being of institutions. Administrations, at least in the perceptions of many faculty members, have grown, absorbing institutional resources. How do schools understand the increased administrative workload? Why have administrative staff positions increased more rapidly than faculty positions? What are the administrative complexities of the theological school, and is there a theological angle of vision on these administrative complexities? Significant questions for the understanding of power, control, and oversight of theological schools need to be addressed. This overarching question invites reflection about the ways in which *boards* should be accountable to accrediting standards, in addition to faculties and administrations. In a time when diminishing resources create considerable stress and demand on administrative leaders, accreditation standards need to understand those demands and appropriate responses to them.

These particular questions have been chosen as the focus of this project because they seem to be at the center of many ongoing conversations about rethinking good theological education. The ATS Quality and Accreditation Project seeks to provide a disciplined opportunity for ATS constituents to ask the fundamental questions, to listen carefully for a wide range of answers, and to respond sensitively by redeveloping standards that will cultivate good theological schools.

ENDNOTES

1. Chronicle of Higher Education, February 9, 1994, A21-22.
2. This grouping of schools is obviously arguable. It is based on the author's analysis of schools' identifiable constituencies, self-identification, and associations. Other analysts might group some schools in different categories, but the overall proportions would likely not change.
3. See, for example, Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press); Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Also, recently and from a different perspective, Phillip Hammond, *Religion and Personal Autonomy: The Third Disestablishment in America* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992).
4. See Katarina Schuth, *Reason for the Hope: The Futures of Roman Catholic Theologates* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989).

What Is the Character of Curriculum, Formation, and Cultivation of Ministerial Leadership in the Good Theological School?

Donald Senior, Catholic Theological Union

Timothy Weber, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

At the center of the discussion of what constitutes a good theological school are matters of curriculum, formation, and the cultivation of ministerial leadership. The group that contemplated these issues at the ATS consultation in Chicago in September 1993 had the kind of rich diversity that characterizes The Association of Theological Schools. Participants came from Roman Catholic, Evangelical, and mainline Protestant schools of every variety: freestanding, university-related, denominational, independent, diocesan, and those serving a number of religious orders. This mixture of perspectives meant that interchange was lively and opinions often varied. It would be misleading to imply that we reached a consensus on all the matters we discussed, but it would be equally misleading to say that the group was hopelessly at odds. While not everyone concurred on everything, there were lines of agreement about the nature of the challenges facing us and about some of the directions that schools of theology might take in the future.

After reviewing the changing context in which theological schools must operate in the 1990s, this report will summarize and analyze the group's reflections on curriculum, formation, and cultivation of ministerial leadership, and then draw some conclusions about future agenda for "the good theological school."

Changing Contexts

North American theological schools do not exist in the same world they used to. People in theological education with long memories can recall a time not too long ago when theological schools operated much differently than they do today.

Students

The student body of the typical theological school in, say, the mid-1960s consisted almost exclusively of recently college-graduated white males who were studying for the basic ministerial degree. Most of these students were unmarried (including the Protestants), lived “in residence” (*i.e.*, on campus), planned to finish their degrees in the normal time frame, and were already “inculturated” within their own religious traditions.

Everyone knows that this world no longer exists. In the mid-1990s, student bodies are much older and more diverse than they were 30 years ago. Women now constitute one-third or even one-half (or more) of the student body in many schools, and the increasing presence of ethnic and international students has raised issues of cultural diversity and globalization. Large numbers of students are now married with children and must pursue their degrees part-time. More students than ever are commuters and spend little time in “community activities” beyond the classroom. Students seeking the standard professional degree are often in the minority, as more students pursue other kinds of masters’ degrees without intending to ever serve as a priest or a pastor. In fact, some students enroll in theological schools for reasons of personal enrichment, without any professional or ministerial aspirations. Furthermore, it appears to many people that increasing numbers of students are coming to seminaries without much knowledge of or experience in any religious tradition.

Supporting Constituencies

The ecclesiastical world of the 1960s was also quite different than it is today. Thirty years ago Roman Catholics were starting to enter mainstream North American life, thanks in part to the election of John F. Kennedy and the new vitality generated by the Second Vatican Council. Mainline Protestants were still basking in the glory of the church building boom of the 1950s and the suburbanization of North American religion. Their churches were robust, and mainline church leaders were seen as shapers of public values. Within Protestantism’s most conservative wing, the militant fundamentalists and the more moderate “new evangelicals” were busy staking out their own territories and starting to come into their own as builders of theological schools. Despite the growing turmoil beyond the walls of theological institutions, the ministerial roles most students expected to assume seemed well-established and clearly defined.

By the mid-1990s, the ecclesiastical landscape looked quite different. Mainline Protestantism had lost millions of members and considerable culture-shaping power. Roman Catholicism had gained millions of new members but was suffering its own decline in participation rates, and experiencing a dramatic shrinkage in the numbers of priests and religious. While conservative Protestants saw some institutional gains and looked like the new “mainline” to many observers, evangelicals were deeply divided over numerous issues and began to engage in intense self-criticism. Due in part to the inability of Roman Catholics and many mainline Protestant groups to replace retiring clergy, long-standing clergy roles were called into question by the large number of lay people who assumed various kinds of ministry responsibilities in local churches.

Religion’s Role in Culture

In general, then, the role of religious institutions and their leaders in North American culture changed considerably over the past three decades. In the 1950s, Will Herberg argued that being Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish was nearly synonymous with being American; but in the 1990s, pollsters report that the fastest growing segment of society are the “nones,” people with no formal ties to any religious group. While North Americans seem as interested in religion as ever before, their spirituality often operates outside established religious institutions. With religion’s increasing privatization and exclusion from public life, the influence of religious organizations has declined. In a word, organized religious life appears to be increasingly marginalized. Various observers have noted this “cultural disestablishment” of the churches and the resulting “culture of disbelief” in which religion is both ignored and excluded from public life.¹

In light of the above changes in North American religious life, it is not surprising that theological schools are reevaluating themselves in terms of curriculum, formation, and preparation for church leadership. The good theological school cannot continue to operate as though nothing has changed.

Curriculum

The working group spent less time discussing specific curricular issues than it did those of spiritual and ministerial formation and the interrelationship of curriculum and formation. All agreed that the curriculum stands at the heart of what constitutes a good theological school.

Defining Curriculum

Our discussion determined that educators use “curriculum” in three ways. First, curriculum may refer to a particular course of study. We speak of the “M.Div. curriculum” and mean all that is required to earn the professional degree: core courses, electives, field education, supervised ministry hours, etc. Second, we use “curriculum” to refer to everything that happens to students under the aegis of the school. In this sense, the curriculum includes not only academic requirements, but those other events or processes that the institution provides: worship, fellowship groups, trips to the Holy Land, special programs or lectureships, retreats, social events and the like. Third, but less frequently, we sometimes use “curriculum” to refer to whatever happens to an individual student during his or her seminary years: classes, internships, worship, friendships with fellow students and professors, financial pressures, personal growth and crisis experiences, family life, and other similar experiences.

Although the theological school should be concerned about the curriculum in all three senses, it directly shapes and controls curriculum only in the first two senses of the word.

Pressures on Curriculum

As anyone involved in theological schools knows, there has been a lively discussion within ATS concerning the nature of theological education for more than a decade. Most of the conversation has centered in one way or another on curricular concerns. Although the debate has taken on different forms and gone in different directions, it has included the following kinds of issues: the growing dissatisfaction in many quarters with the traditional four-fold curriculum; the overspecialization of the theological disciplines; perennial tensions between “theoretical” and “practical” approaches; the relationship between academic concerns and spiritual formation; the proliferation of degree programs at the expense of curricular focus; the need to pay more attention to global, gender, racial, and cultural issues; and the seeming inability of the seminaries to turn out the kinds of leaders the churches say they want or need.

As noted above, the changing world in which theological schools exist has put considerable pressures on how—and why—they operate. During our two days of interaction, our group noted two pressures in particular that have an impact on curriculum.

Market Pressures

As the number of students enrolled in M.Div. programs has declined, many schools of theology have been forced to devise other programs to attract students and stave off financial ruin. Thus, for example, we have seen the proliferation of M.A. programs directed to people not heading for the ordained ministry. To attract non-traditional students, many schools have established extension centers far removed from the central campus or have adapted class schedules to meet the needs of their student bodies. Some schools are now offering complete degree programs in off-campus settings or have started using new high-tech “delivery systems” in order to capture new student markets. By turning to “distance learning” and block scheduling, one might argue, theological schools are simply emulating other kinds of higher education where such programs have been used for some time.

In many cases, responding to such market pressures has been institutionally invigorating, producing much creativity and innovation. Some schools have been forced to reconsider their mission and make some hard but necessary choices about what they can and cannot do, or to discover ways of doing more with less.

But market pressures also have a way of putting a terrible strain on already stretched human and financial resources and of leading to further “Balkanization” of the curriculum into separate components with no unifying core. When survival is at stake, it is easy to allow marketing to take precedence over a school’s mission.

Growing Diversity

As indicated above, student bodies have changed considerably over the past two or three decades. The presence of more women, racial/ethnic, and international students has altered the context and even the content of the curriculum in many schools. ATS’s recent emphasis on globalization has underscored the fact that the growing edge of the Christian movement has shifted to the Southern Hemisphere and that one does not have to travel to the Third World to find cultural diversity. Such awareness has prompted many necessary and long over-due changes, but responding to such diversity has also complicated curricular issues by adding new dimensions to the mix. Most theological educators would agree that taking such pluralism seriously has made it even more difficult to focus the curriculum.

Curriculum in a Good Theological School

In its discussion of curriculum, the work group reached agreement on a number of issues, while recognizing that the terrain remained vast and complicated.

Curriculum as Process

The curriculum of a good theological school should be understood not as an accumulation of courses and other sorts of academic experiences but as an overall process of critical reflection and integration. The curriculum itself, understood in this holistic manner, is “formative” in the full sense of the term. As one participant put it, “We teach whole people, not just courses.” The goal of a theological curriculum is not just the accumulation of knowledge or the development of ministerial skills: it is a way of understanding, a formed perspective, or, as it has often been described in ATS circles, an acquired *habitus* or capacity for doing theological reflection.

In order to engender this theological aptitude in students, a curriculum needs to teach students how to evaluate the cultural and corporate contexts of ministry today. As one group member suggested that a good curriculum will equip students with the capacity “to describe and explain the practices and problematics of the communities they are serving and attempting to transform.” Furthermore, a good curriculum will enable students to understand these communities and their challenges in terms of the classics of the Christian heritage. How do the Bible and the long memory of Christian teaching and practice speak to the issues that face us? A good curriculum will invite students into an atmosphere that encourages respect for people’s religious experience and an understanding of the hard realities of people’s lives. In short, the curriculum in a good theological school will include both critical reflection and the integration of academic and experiential elements. It will engender a faithfulness to the gospel at the same time it provides a critical perspective on those institutions that seek to serve in God’s name. The group recognized that there is a variety of ways these two aspects can fit together, determined to a large extent by the particular theological school’s orientation and mission.

The Need for Coherence in Curriculum

In a good theological school, everything that happens to students under the school’s aegis (*i.e.*, as understood in the second sense of curriculum described above) should cohere in the vision that the school has for its students. In other words, the curriculum should be mission-driven rather than market-driven. All

aspects of the school's life—everything over which the institution exerts control—should relate to its mission and its social and ecclesiastical location.

The Maintenance of Flexibility

Given the changes in student bodies and supporting constituencies, the curriculum should be flexible enough to meet the needs of different kinds of people with a variety of vocational goals. Even the most homogeneous theological schools are not as homogeneous as they used to be, and they will be required to expand their offerings. Good theological schools will have to find ways to live out the Pauline admonition to find unity in the midst of diversity.

The Marks of Distinctiveness

Despite the considerable pressures to be all things to all people, the good curriculum will reflect the school's sense of its own distinctive mission in relation to other theological schools, institutions of higher learning, the church, and various therapeutic and service agencies. Thus, the curriculum of a good university-related divinity school may be quite different from one in a good denominationally related seminary, but both can exhibit marks of genuine excellence and coherence.

Naturally, the working group had no desire to specify how individual theological schools might achieve such coherence, diversity, and distinctiveness within their own settings, but we were convinced that good schools will find a way to do so.

Formation

While strongly affirming that the academic curriculum itself can and should be profoundly formative, the group turned its attention to what is often called "spiritual formation" and recognized this was an increasingly important and much debated aspect of theological education.²

Not everyone in theological education means the same thing by "spiritual formation." In fact, the more "ecumenical" a theological school is, the more difficult it is to settle on a working definition of the term. For instance, not only are there many different denominational and theological perspectives found in most theological schools today, there is also an increasing presence of Christians (*e.g.*, African-American, Latino, Native American, and Asian) whose experience and perspective were previously ignored or absent. To take them all with the seriousness they deserve requires an openness to different approaches to and meanings of Christian spirituality and how to achieve it.

Even in the schools that appear more homogeneous, notions of spiritual formation vary widely. For some, “formation” might be synonymous with conversion, sanctification, or deepening religious commitments (which in some circles is called “Christian discipleship”). For others, it might be understood more in terms of psychological, moral, or character formation. In still other contexts, formation refers primarily to the development of ministerial skills or, more generally, growth in Christian maturity by means of developing rather specific virtues or habits that undergird the religious life. In some schools, spiritual formation might consist primarily of inculturation into a particular liturgical or confessional tradition or, in schools connected to universities, inculturation into the various academic guilds.

However the term is used, in a good theological school spiritual formation will certainly relate to acquiring the kind of theological aptitude described above in the discussion of curriculum.³ Putting it another way, becoming theologically capacitated is an important part of what we mean by being spiritually formed—but it is not everything we mean. Spiritual formation is not synonymous with the ability to think and evaluate theologically, as essential as such activity is. It includes not only the way we think, but the kind of people we are. Different Christian traditions will express it differently, but at its core, spiritual formation means something like growing in grace, becoming more like Jesus, learning to live a holy life, increasing our love for God and service to others, or practicing the Christian virtues.

Given such variation in defining spiritual formation, the good theological school will be able to specify what it means by the term and how formation fits into its own distinctive mission.

General Observations

The Importance of a School's Mission

To a large extent, the relationship between the curriculum and spiritual formation is determined by a school's mission. Because of differing missions, the university-connected divinity school may be less concerned about issues of spiritual formation than a denominational seminary is. Most divinity schools, for example, are mainly oriented to the academy and seek to train scholars for higher education, while most seminaries are primarily oriented to the church and seek to train people for religious leadership. Nevertheless, most of the group did not want to say that either kind of school is absolved of paying attention to both concerns. A good theological school connected to a university needs to recognize the importance (and inevitability) of spiritual formation in its aca-

ademic programs, and a good church-related freestanding seminary needs to strive for academic excellence in its professional program. Good theological schools do not ignore the one just because they put more emphasis on the other, but they seek ways to connect them in light of their particular missions.

The Perceived Relationship between Faith and Learning

Schools may also have very different notions about the nature of the spiritual life and its relationship to scholarship. Some religious traditions have forged over time strong connections between faith and learning. In our group, Roman Catholics, Reformed Protestants, and Wesleyans all cited their traditions' long-standing commitments to bringing piety and rigorous scholarship together. However, in some theological schools the relationship between the critical study of religion and the pious practice of religion remains problematic; it is not altogether clear how one can be inculturated in a tradition at the same time one is taught to evaluate it critically.

Ironically, this tension between affirming a faith tradition and doing critical scholarship is often more apparent in schools usually considered to be at opposite ends of the spectrum—ecumenical university-based divinity schools and evangelical seminaries. Although one could cite notable exceptions at either extreme (and admit that such a problem may exist at any type of theological school), at many university divinity schools piety is seen as a threat or at least a deterrent to critical scholarship, and at many evangelical schools critical scholarship is seen as a threat or at least a distraction to piety. In both types of institutions, the ties between theological scholarship and spiritual formation are tenuous at best. Some people would say that good theological schools should maintain such tensions, while others would argue that good theological schools should work to resolve them. As things now stand, not all theological schools agree on whether it is even possible to do *faithful* scholarship and maintain *scholarly* faithfulness at the same time.

The Growing Importance of Spiritual Formation

Nearly everyone in the discussion group agreed that the importance of spiritual formation in theological education has increased in recent years for a number of reasons. First, even church-related theology schools can no longer count on new students being already formed within a particular religious tradition or culture. The dislocation of traditional family life and the decline in church participation among many young people, particularly in mainline denominations, result in many students having little or no sense of the history,

customs, and ethos of the religious communities they feel called to serve and lead. In the past, most students came to theological schools at least partly formed in and by their families and local congregations. But this is no longer true in many cases. Theological schools are thus being forced to do what used to be done in other places by other people. The theology school cannot substitute for the family, the clinic, or the church itself. Nevertheless, it may have to take some increasing responsibility for the personal and spiritual development of the student it is preparing for public ministry in the church and society.

Second, spiritual formation has become more important in theological schools because of the changing demographics of student bodies. Because many candidates for ministry are older students, they bring not only a potential for increased maturity but also the possibility of a longer and more complex web of personal experiences and the freight of more psychological baggage. In other words, the years have a way of mis-shaping, as well as shaping, candidates for ministry. Theological students may be no less highly motivated today than they have been in the past, but they often bring with them some of the marks of our current culture: unstable and broken family relationships; experimentation with drugs, alcohol, and sexuality; the strengths and weaknesses of living in a materialistic, competitive, and highly individualistic culture; and so on. These facts have been documented in a number of recent studies.⁴

Third, spiritual formation is more pressing than it used to be because of the growing awareness of professional misconduct by some clergy. Many people in the churches hold theological schools at least partly responsible for such scandalous failures. They demand that schools do a better job of screening clergy candidates and give more priority to the teaching of ethical values in their curricula. Such criticisms raise the stakes for schools of theology in setting standards for admission and certifying students as “ready for ministry.” Member schools of ATS have been sued over the misconduct of their graduates, and such cases are bound to increase. Therefore, giving more attention to spiritual formation is one way that good theological schools can respond to the crisis of clergy misconduct.

Structuring for Spiritual Formation

It is a rare theological school that does not recognize the importance of “community” for accomplishing its purposes. Many schools spend enormous amounts of energy and resources to promote a sense of community and shared experience. Educators speak rhapsodically of being “a community of scholars” or a “seminary family.” It is widely assumed that academic as well as spiritual

formation is best done in groups of people who know and understand each other. “Being there”—in residence with the community—is seen by some as a *sine qua non* of good education. But people involved in theological schools today know that the reality is often much different than the rhetoric.

Despite our best efforts, community is increasingly hard to come by in institutions where extension programs, block scheduling, one-day-a-week or evening classes abound. Commuter students are often on campus only long enough to attend classes and conduct institutional business. Under such conditions, talk about community is often nothing more than wishful thinking or nostalgia. How is spiritual formation done in such a fractured and disjointed setting? More directly to the point, is it even possible to do spiritual formation on the fly?

Theological schools undertake spiritual formation in a variety of ways. Some promote common worship, though in many schools there seem to be fewer students around to attend worship. Others encourage voluntary small groups for prayer and fellowship. At some schools, students regularly interact with spiritual directors or faculty mentors. Still others require students to participate in clinical pastoral education, supervised field education, or internships. Some institutions provide, as part of their formation process, psychological and vocational testing and counseling. In short, the group recognized that formation of various kinds goes on all the time in theological schools, in many different contexts.

A number of people in the group insisted that the curriculum also effects spiritual formation. What students learn plays an important part in determining the kinds of people they become. It could be a dangerous and counter-productive bifurcation within a theology school to identify spiritual formation only with experiences outside of the classroom.

Likewise, *how* teachers teach may be just as crucial in the formative process as *what* they teach. For example, what is a teacher’s own attitude toward the tradition, congregational life, and the work of ministry? Does the teacher view himself or herself as primarily a scholar or as a Christian minister engaged in academic work? Does the teacher speak about his or her own faith and spiritual struggles? How does the teacher handle theological conflict or ethnic and cultural diversity in the classroom? Is he or she respectful of students, other faculty colleagues, and the school’s administration and support staff? When the issue is viewed from this perspective, no teacher can assume or argue that formation is the responsibility of some non-academic, “practical” part of the school’s program. Both the form and content, then, of pedagogy are parts of

formation. In fundamental ways, the curriculum is formative and formation is curricular.

Not to be overlooked in any discussion of spiritual formation are formal and informal learning experiences. Some people in our group argued that due to the presence of so many experienced students, more attention needs to be given to dialogical and participatory teaching methods. Case studies, for example, promote more student involvement than, say, the traditional lecture format. Likewise, “immersions” or other opportunities for out-of-the-classroom, hands-on learning can have profound consequences in the area of spiritual development. “Transformational education” of this kind is capable of combining hard-nosed academic work with intense personal experience to change lives in remarkable ways.⁵

Even in the most traditional classroom settings, spiritual formation can take place. Sometimes students with little previous exposure to historic Christian teachings can be profoundly transformed by reading “Christian classics” for perhaps the first time in their lives. Students have undergone deep intellectual and spiritual “conversions” after discovering the contemporary meaning of ancient Christological debates, pondering the writings of monks and mystics, or studying parts of the Bible for the first time.

As the above rather cursory summary indicates, there is more than one way to do spiritual formation. The good theological school will have to decide how to do it and how important the spiritual formation of its students is in the fulfilling of its institutional mission. Should specific programs in spiritual formation be required for all students? How does a good theological school know if its formational goals are being met, and what is it willing to do if some students fail to measure up?

Cultivation of Ministerial Leadership

Closely tied to spiritual formation is the issue of preparation for ministerial leadership in the churches. The two are connected, but they are not the same thing. Spiritual formation is something we hope to facilitate for all students, including those never intending to enter the ordained ministry. As already indicated, some students feel called to various lay ministries, while others aspire to teach and do research in religious studies or the humanities. Still others have no idea what they will do beyond graduation; for them, studying theology is part of a personal religious quest or another form of a liberal arts education. Regardless of their vocational goals, all students—and all Christians, for that

matter—need to understand formation as becoming theologically capacitated and manifesting signs of spiritual maturity, however such maturity is defined by one's tradition.

Requirements for Church Leadership

Do not church leaders need more than these basics, as formidable as these basics are? Do not church leaders need additional aptitudes for specific skills for their ministries? Most people would probably say that they do. At the very least, leaders of congregations need to know how to plan a worship service, run a business meeting, perform a wedding or conduct a funeral, preach a sermon, keep a watchful eye on the congregation's finances, and do basic counseling. They also should know something about conflict resolution, group dynamics, and how to deal with various governmental entities such as social services or, if they ever anticipate leading a building program, a zoning board.⁶

Students need to become aware that ministry in the form of religious leadership is a public not a private role, and consequently students must be attuned to the issue of behavior and accountability required of those who enjoy the community's trust.

Beyond these basic skills are other more personal aptitudes. Religious leaders need a special kind of spiritual maturity. As people expected to direct or guide the spiritual growth of others, leaders will have special demands placed on their own spiritual life. As teachers and preachers, they will need both to understand the tradition and demonstrate its power in their own lives. Leaders will also have to possess spiritual, moral, and psychological stamina to handle the stresses and temptations that come with religious leadership.⁷

In a sense, the above list of personal and professional aptitudes is quite unremarkable. It contains the kinds of things we might expect to say about religious leaders at any time and in any place. But our work group believed that there may be something about this time and this place that requires something different of religious leaders. As we mentioned earlier, the changing status of religion in contemporary culture has left many denominations and congregations in a state of crisis, torn by theological and moral disputes, pressured by pluralism and relativism, and compromised by a consumer approach to life. As a result, many religious institutions downsize and drift, unsure of their own identity and direction. What does it mean to be a church leader under such conditions? And what does it mean for theological education?

Our group discussed this issue at some length. One of our group members pointed out that 30 years ago, prompted by the revolutionary atmosphere of the

'60s, students graduated from seminary with a rather critical attitude toward institutions whose power and affluence often produced hubris and insensitivity. Back then a leader's job was to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, who were legion. Intractable and sometimes unresponsive institutions, including the churches, needed the lash of prophetic critique and deconstruction. By contrast, many religious institutions today are in serious distress: hubris and insensitivity have given way to insecurity and feelings of malaise and decline. Such institutions may be incapable of surviving the prophetic fire that some church leaders used to call down on them. Now, some group members suggested, leaders need to be able to nurture and revitalize ailing institutions by helping them to develop new visions for ministry and rediscover their theological identities.⁸ Prophetic criticism will never stop being part of the leader's responsibility, but the current situation requires that it be exercised within a "stewardship of institutions."⁹ The truly effective religious leader is one who enables a community to mobilize its energies for the hard work of transformation and adaptation to social change. The challenging task for leadership today may be in building up institutions rather than tearing them down.

New Alliances for Developing Church Leadership

What is the best way to produce church leaders who are able to "think with and on behalf of the traditions—a capacity that depends partly upon the leader's having acquired or appropriated the tradition in a deep-going way, and partly upon the leader's being able to maintain a sort of critical distance from the tradition at the same time"? How can students achieve both a "thorough internalization and critical perspective" of the tradition that will enable them to lead?¹⁰ How does one cultivate leaders who mobilize communities to be adaptive?

Many group members believed that such leadership could best be produced by developing a closer partnership between schools of theology and other religious institutions. Seminary faculty and staff need to forge better working relationships with pastors and lay leaders in local congregations, social agencies, and other ecclesiastical entities so that students can have access to the life of the community in ways not possible in the classroom. Students need to learn first-hand how communities work and to develop the skill and experience of reflecting on the dynamics of a religious tradition. Colleagues in the field thus become invaluable partners in helping faculty and administrators assess the readiness of students for ministry and developing in them leadership capacities.

Often it is in the transparent moments of preaching, teaching, counseling, and leading groups—more than in a classroom discussion or a research paper—when students’ best education occurs and their true capacity for ministry is unveiled.

The precise form that this partnership takes will vary because the relationships between schools and churches differ so widely. Increasingly, churches are blaming seminaries for not doing more to develop effective church leadership. In some cases mega-churches are undertaking the training of their own leaders out of profound dissatisfaction with seminary education. In short, the good theological school will see itself as “a particular enterprise of the community or communities of faith, entrusted with a distinctive mission on their behalf and sustained by a living relationship to them.”¹¹

Further Implications

Implications for Faculty

The above discussion has profound implications for faculty in theological schools. In a school whose mission requires more attention to the personal and spiritual development of the student, where respect is needed for the life of institutions and communities, and where emphasis is on the cultivation of ministerial leadership, faculty members who are indifferent to or uncomfortable with such things will be out of place. But not all schools or faculties need to be the same. Each school’s mission will ultimately determine what kind of faculty it needs. Even in schools with strong ties to the church, it is not necessary or even desirable that all faculty be spiritual directors or take an equal interest in relating practical experience to academic study. Most faculty were hired *not* because of their mentoring abilities, but because of their academic expertise. But in the future, theology schools of all kinds will have to keep formational needs in mind as they recruit new faculty and build the corporate character of the faculty as a whole. In the aggregate, the quality, style, and personal values of a good theological faculty must actively support—and not stand in opposition to—the kind of curriculum and spiritual and ministerial formation described above.

Implications for Accrediting Standards

Members of our group recognized that good theological schools will take many different forms on account of their ethos, history, mission, and relationship to the life of the church. But we also agreed that along with this inevitable

diversity, good theological schools will possess certain common characteristics in relation to their curriculum, spiritual formation, and cultivation of ministerial leadership. Thus all good theology schools will:

- be aware of the social, religious, and cultural environments that shape students and the religious communities they will serve;
- be an institution in which faculty and administration have been able to think through together the rationale for their curriculum in relationship to their stated mission;
- give careful attention to admissions and evaluation procedures to insure that students are qualified to serve in various vocational roles;
- provide students with those experiences and supports needed for appropriate academic and spiritual development;
- respect and value the diversity in their student bodies;
- develop working partnerships with pastoral agents and mentors from churches and other religious institutions to assist in the theological education of students; and
- in those schools most committed to developing ministerial leadership, insure that all elements of the curriculum—understood in the broadest sense—cohere in helping the student understand the public character of ministerial leadership, the nature of communities and their dynamics, and the means by which they can be transformed and adapted to social change.

Members of this work group included: Donald Browning, University of Chicago Divinity School; Daniel Cortes, The Pew Charitable Trusts; Craig Dykstra, Lilly Endowment Inc.; Ralph Klein, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago; Jeremiah McCarthy, St. John's Seminary; Robert Neville, Boston University School of Theology; Elizabeth Patterson, Fuller Theological Seminary; Katarina Schuth, St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity of the University of St. Thomas; Donald Senior, Catholic Theological Union; George Schnier, Regis College; Timothy Weber, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Charles Wood, Perkins School of Theology.

ENDNOTES

1. Wade C. Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Philip E. Hammond, *Religion and Personal Autonomy: The Third Disestablishment in America* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992); George Gallup, Jim Castelli, *The People's Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1989); Reginald Bibby, *Fragmented Gods* (Toronto: Irwin, 1987); and Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). This issue is also noted in the previous essay as a critical reason for undertaking the ATS Quality and Accreditation Project at this time.
2. We are grateful to Professor Charles Wood, a member of our work group, for making available his essay, "'Spiritual Formation' and 'Theological Education,'" *Religious Education* 86 (Fall, 1991): 550-56, which was helpful in writing this section. The 1988 Supplement to *Theological Education* was devoted to the topic of "Theological Education as The Formation of Character." (See *Theological Education*, XXIV, Supplement I 1988.) The editorial introduction to the volume by Clark Gilpin (pp. 5-9) and the essay by George Lindbeck, "Spiritual Formation and Theological Education," (pp. 10-32) are especially pertinent to the issues under consideration in our paper.
3. See, further, George P. Schnier, "Formation as a Unifying Concept of Theological Education," *Theological Education* XXII (Spring, 1985):94-113, and his recent book, *Education for Ministry: Reform and Renewal in Theological Education* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1993).
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5. Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans, and William Bean Kennedy, *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987); Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans, and David Roozen, *The Globalization of Theological Education* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993).
6. Charles M. Wood, "Lilly Foundation Study: Paying Attention." *Quarterly Review*, 13 (Fall, 1993):39-44.
7. Charles M. Wood, "'Spiritual Formation' and 'Theological Education,'" pp. 554-555.
8. Kennon L. Callahan, in *Effective Church Leadership* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), expresses this idea in terms of moving from an institutional to a missional approach.
9. Charles M. Wood, "Lilly Foundation Study: Paying Attention," p. 41.
10. Charles M. Wood, "'Spiritual Formation' and 'Theological Education,'" p. 555.
11. Charles M. Wood, "Lilly Foundation Study: Paying Attention," p. 46.

What Is the Character of Teaching, Learning, and the Scholarly Task in the Good Theological School?

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Discussion of the character of teaching, learning, and the scholarly task for theological education, as it is being recast for the future, must begin by acknowledging the changing circumstances in which this discussion is taking place. Some arenas in which circumstances appear to be changing most dramatically are noted in other essays in this volume. However, because they are critical to this essay, some repetition and elaboration will be helpful. Church and society, the students and faculties of ATS schools, and the academy itself are all arenas of changing circumstances.

Changing Circumstances

Church and Society

Many churches in North America are undergoing shifts, the significance of which is not yet clear. Some institutional ecclesial forms appear to be less spiritually and financially viable. Traditional denominational identities and loyalties are waning as religious affiliation becomes a matter of personal preference and religiosity a privatized experience. All the while, the richness of religious pluralism is assuming a more human face as Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Jews become the neighbors of Christians who have assumed the nation was theirs alone. Meanwhile, the society at large seems to attend less to religious beliefs or moral values in its ordering of life. The church/state separation, crafted to protect religious freedom, appears to result increasingly in an absence of public religious and moral discourse. Racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity—and prejudiced divisiveness—complicate society's dedication to the creation of a common life. This complication is compounded by the collapse of many institutions that have traditionally provided moral and religious formation. Educational institutions, including theological schools, find it difficult to assume the role vacated by these traditional institutions.

Students and Faculties

Increasing numbers of students in ATS-related schools are older, are choosing a second career, are women, and come from racial/ethnic and linguistic minority communities. Increasing numbers of them are enrolled as part-time and non-residential students. Many come to theological schools in search of a faith formation and with an intensely personal faith-orientation. Fewer students seem to have a strong denominational identity or loyalty, or a strong academic background in the study of the Western humanities. Student bodies are frequently more diverse than the faculties who teach them. More than half of the faculty members teaching at theological schools in the United States were trained in one of 25 Ph.D. programs. Accordingly, these faculty members tend toward a uniformity of identity. At the same time, ATS schools are anticipating the retirements of significant percentages of these relatively homogeneous faculties.

The Academy

Most, if not all, of the 25 degree programs in which the majority of faculty members were trained have been shaped by what David Kelsey calls the “Berlin” model of theological education.¹ This model featured the integrity of rigorous, critical, research-informed theorizing, on one hand, and the application of theology in practice for the sake of professional education on the other. By the time this model became the paradigm in North America in the early 20th century, theorizing became oriented less to education and more to research results, and application more to education and less to research. The result was a professional education cast increasingly in functional and individualistic terms, and academic education increasingly focused on research. This paradigm, together with the rise of religious studies as an academic rather than ecclesial discipline, has pressed the question of what is “theological” about theological education.² The result is a perceived fragmentation of theological education³ as faculty are trained academically and expected to teach in schools oriented to professional education.

The Character of Teaching, Learning, and the Scholarly Task

Teaching and Learning

Since the establishment of the current ATS standards, significant new emphases have arisen concerning the role of the teacher of theology. Without doubt, the lecture method continues to be an effective means for teaching

theology. Some understandings of theology can best be communicated by lecture. However, there is growing evidence that the lecture should no longer be considered the sole pedagogy for theological education. Discussions of theology among professors and students are also important. Teachers of theology teach by personal presence with their students; presence can communicate to the students commitments about the study of theology. In addition, computerized research and databases are growing in importance as a method of theological instruction. For many theology professors, the need for multifaceted teaching styles exists in tension with the demands for traditional theological scholarship.

This expanded notion of theological teaching is taking place in a context in which relatively few teachers of theology have had much formal training in pedagogical methods. Leadership of discussions, dialogues with individual students, and other non-lecture pedagogical methods can be threatening to some teachers. Leaders in theological education will need to address this issue both for current and future theological faculty members. Workshops, seminars, and summer programs may prove helpful to current teachers, and courses in theological pedagogy may need to become a more standard part of the curriculum for those preparing to teach in ATS schools.

Closely related to the shifting emphasis in teaching is the changing character of theological learning. Today's theological students are often older, a greater percentage are women, they come from more ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds, and they bring more varied educational backgrounds. One consequence of the more diverse character of today's theological students is a wide variety of learning styles. While many of today's students are quite intelligent, they may well exhibit that intelligence in different spheres of thinking and learning. Some of them, for example, may be much more attuned to inductive methods of learning or to an outcome-based model of education.

While there is much to be praised about the diverse learning styles of today's students, candor requires the admission that previous educational experiences have left many students in need of significant remedial work in areas such as writing, reading, and study habits. Sometimes such skills are needed because English is their second language, but often the need for remediation exists in students whose first language is English.

Many theological learners lack a strong background in the arts and the humanities, and need remedial education in these disciplines. This is not to say that the students' previous education (often in technical, scientific, or business-related fields) lacks value. It *is* to say that the arts and the humanities (subjects such as poetry, music, literature, history, language) are of significant value for

theological education. When students lack a humanities background, they may find theological learning much more difficult. In the future, programs in the humanities may become a significant adjunct to theological education.

The diversity of learning styles also raises the need for the integration of theological learning. In this context, many schools of theology are again envisioning theological education as a formational activity (*i.e.*, an activity based on the assumption that the student's personal appropriation of theology is the most central aspect of theological education). This emphasis on theological learning as formation has always been strong in some religious traditions, but it is growing in others. As formation gains prominence in theological education, the religious studies model of some university departments may be questioned by those involved in theological education. Since the time of Schleiermacher and especially since the 1960s, many have espoused the notion that theological scholarship can be completely or largely detached from concerns related to the faith commitment of the theological student. This approach may be changing in the 1990s in many theological schools.

Another major theme in theological learning today is globalization. How can we hear and be in conversation with theology as it affects all cultures and all parts of the world? No longer can theological education proceed on the basis of the assumption that "true" theology is Western or North American. We may no longer assume that theology as articulated in any one place is appropriate for other places. We must also see that no particular articulation of theology is adequate unless it engages in substantive and perhaps transformative conversation with other articulations. In short, diversity, globalization, and formation are interrelated aspects of theological learning.

This section has addressed the teaching of theology and then moved to the learning of theology. But viewed from another perspective, the teachers are the learners and the learners are the teachers. Therefore, what was said of one group applies to the other. Teachers of theology must be open to ongoing learning as they teach, and learners of theology must be authorized and authorize themselves as teachers of theology.

The Scholarly Task

In light of these considerations about teaching and learning, theological scholarship must be considered in the context of contemporary approaches to theological education. Theological scholarship seems to be under significant stress because of the diverse communities in which theologians/scholars must do their work and the multiple forms of scholarship necessary for effective theological scholarship.

Theological scholarship must engage five related communities. First, theological scholars must relate their work to the work of the larger scholarly community. This means that they must meet accepted standards of professional research and find appropriate ways to integrate non-theological material into their work. The relatedness of their work to the larger academy creates a certain tension for theological scholars inasmuch as the claims of the academy's religious studies perspective may be in tension with certain dimensions of the theological task. Second, theologians need to relate their scholarship to the church—both locally and globally. It is important to balance this ecclesial focus with theological study of the social and cultural questions of the day. Third, the individual theologian must be a specialist. But as specialists, theological scholars must be able to contribute to the integrity of the entire theological enterprise. Fourth, theologians must relate their work to the practical needs of those involved in fields such as pastoral ministry, religious education, and organized activities for social justice. Theological scholarship lacks credibility if it remains locked in an ivory tower. Theological scholars must engage in disciplined, systematic, and critical reflection on practice. Fifth, theological scholarship must be committed to the formation of leaders in the churches, while recognizing that church leaders will not be effective unless they are conversant with the entire theological enterprise.⁴

Obviously these groups—the academy, the churches, the specialists, the practitioners, and the leaders—can often be in tension with one another. Theological scholarship is a special challenge because of the many and sometimes competing communities that have a stake in the activity of theological scholars. Theology's responsibilities to each of the communities requires a “yes, but” stance (*i.e.*, affirming the integrity of each community's claim while at the same time noting cautions). Only as theology relates to each community within a lively tension can fruitful scholarship occur. At the same time, the unique character of theological scholarship may warrant special emphasis on one or another of the communities described.

Effective theological scholarship will be exercised in a variety of ways. Five types of scholarly activity are worthy of mention in the context of theology. First, and always, scholarship focuses on original research and on publication of its results. While it is clear that other notions of scholarship are increasingly important today, they do not lessen the importance of scholarship as research. Second, scholarship can be the retrieval of missing or forgotten theological notions. Such retrieval may involve historical research, but it may also involve connecting insights from the history of theology in ways that offer fresh meaning. Third, theological scholarship can be an activity of integration, of

finding imaginative connections between and among disparate theological insights so that the interrelatedness of theological thought becomes clearer. This integrative scholarship may not involve original research but it can be of great service in enhancing the significance of theology. Fourth, scholarship can be incarnational. As such, it focuses on practical applications of the concrete meaning of theology as it engages the problems of today's world. Such applications of theology are critically important if theology is to be vital and credible. Fifth, teaching itself can be construed as a scholarly activity. The diversity of learning styles makes finding appropriate ways to communicate theology critically important. The future of theology requires that theologians find ways to engage students in deep and lively theological learning.

Before considering some of the key questions about teaching, learning, and scholarship, it may be helpful to enumerate several of the working group's questions about scholarship in light of the communities and types of scholarship that have been described.

First, how can future ATS standards on scholarship address the complete range of issues concerning scholarship that have been described here? Later we shall give special emphasis to the metaphor of conversation that may help theological schools assess whether or not they are appropriately addressing all the issues related to teaching, learning, and scholarship.

Second, how will future standards for preparing and hiring faculty and future standards for assessing programs of theological education address the complete range of issues that have been described here?

Third, the emphasis on diversity in teachers, learners, and types of scholarship ought not to lead to a polarization between theoretical and practical approaches to theological education. Instead, theological education must achieve a theory-laden praxis and a praxis-laden theory. If theory and praxis are brought together in this fashion, how will theological education accomplish the full-bodied scholarship that is needed?

Emerging Critical Themes

Among the themes that emerged from our work group's discussions, three are especially critical for further consideration: (1) accountabilities, (2) commonalities and diversities, and (3) conversation. An elaboration of these themes is offered, not so much to answer all appropriate questions as to provide further elucidation.

Accountabilities, first and foremost, raise the vexing question: to whom are theological schools accountable? Who are the stakeholders in decisions and directions about curriculum, ethos, and structure, for example? Here various and often contesting, if not conflicting, constituency clusters come to mind: students, staff, faculty, boards of trustees, churches, academic guilds, the society-at-large. The adjudication of claims becomes more and more complicated as these constituency clusters become increasingly diverse within and among themselves.

Accordingly, questions of adjudication and criteria are raised relative to the tradition and/or traditions to which theological schools are accountable. Loyalty to traditional ecclesial identities can no longer be easily assumed. Religious pluralism presses even further for any assumption of a given “tradition” to be interpreted and applied. Moreover, all traditions are bearers of legacies that are sometimes ambiguous. It is therefore incumbent upon theological scholarship to question closely the legacy of any tradition.

These questions about accountability lead to several others, one of which is the consideration of academic freedom in theological education. Academic freedom was a key value informing the work of H. Richard Niebuhr, James Gustafson, and Daniel Day Williams, most particularly relative to questions of school governance, but also relative to implications for courses of study and the disciplined critical inquiry requisite for the scholarly task in the McCarthy era of the 1950s.⁵ Although today’s circumstances are different from those of the 1950s, academic freedom remains a critically important issue for theological schools, especially in an era when denominational judicatories themselves face pressures that can make them less supportive and more demanding of theological schools and students alike.

These questions of openness and closedness, freedom and safety, intervention and demand relate to questions of credibility and authority as well. As years go by and as accounts of abuse and lack of integrity multiply, religious institutions and professionals appear to be accorded less authority and enjoy less credibility in social and ecclesial contexts. Questions of credibility and accountability are also fueled by the responses of many churches and schools to the fear that they will not survive current and foreseeable changes (*i.e.*, first and foremost, to revert to practices and standards that were once the foundations of authority in order to regain it). Other questions resound: which tradition and/or traditions? which classics? which hermeneutics? what qualifies as theological knowledge? All these are echoed by questions fueled in the face of racial, gender, class, and ethnic backlash.

Finally, questions of accountabilities revolve around the question of integration and integrity. The proliferation of talk in theological schools about leadership formation raises questions such as: Are theological schools joining the trend toward a therapeutic ethos and religious privatization? How is talk of formation related to the growing numbers of students who are part-time and non-residential? How do we reconcile talk of formation in light of the fact that many faculty members were trained according to religious studies rather than ecclesial perspectives and values? Inasmuch as formation is used as a corporate term rather than an individual term, how is this to be reconciled with the increasingly functional, individualistic cast of theological curricula and outcomes? Finally, with regard to future revision of standards of accreditation, how would we measure or evaluate significant formation qualities such as spiritual maturity or moral character? And who would be the partners in this measurement or evaluation?

A second emerging critical theme relates to discussion and debate on commonality and diversity. In this regard, further discussion of globalization is needed. Is there a sort of intellectual imperialism embedded in the term itself as we Westerners seek to broaden our horizons and incorporate what we “discover”? Or are the term and its techniques helpful in forging a way beyond present understandings of what counts as tradition and classic knowledge—substantively, stylistically, and spiritually? Continual watchfulness is imperative, lest well-intentioned attempts to mend the fragmentation result in new, more sophisticated levels of abstraction or the retrieval of an established, classical center.

Theological educators must reckon with the reality that the questions of commonality and diversity are not simply posed with regard to fragmentation and fracture and the search for values to which all may ascribe. Deeper than this is the reality that people living in various linguistic, cultural, religious, racial, and gendered worlds often find they cannot talk to one another. The ability to relate respectfully if not meaningfully is painfully absent. Talk of community—whether in the context of theological education or the wider human community—is treacherous unless predicated on courageous honesty about the enormity of the task of talking amid and across acute alienation.

In our working group, the notion of “conversation” emerged time and again as a model and metaphor that may enable us to navigate these treacherous waters. “Conversation” did not and does not emerge as a solution in itself, but it can shield us from the temptation to domesticate diversity and, accordingly, to tame the rowdy tangle of talk that constitutes authentic conversation.

Conversation understood as a model and method, evokes yet another group of questions: Who participates? Who decides who participates? Who invites whom to participate? How is parity attained between and among invitee and inviter? Are there criteria for adjudicating differences, beyond naming particularities relative to experience and perspective?

Answers to these and other questions may not be articulated in abstraction. We believe the process of accreditation could encourage each and every theological school to address such questions as an integral part of its life. Accreditation standards could name each and every theological school as a locus of ongoing conversation. Schools could name the specificities of their situations and speak to questions such as: Who is and who is not participating in this conversation? Why or why not? What issues are most pressing given our situation? What is the significance of our particular institutional form to questions of accountability? To questions regarding commonality and diversity?

Accreditation standards could articulate ways in which schools sustain such conversation and remain open to changes in the conversation as new participants join in the discussion. Ways to adapt to these multiple, ongoing conversations may need to be a part of the standards themselves.

A Concluding Note

In all of the above, we discern a challenge to theological educators who are committed to excellence to consider models and metaphors characterized less as *standards*, which are measurable and predicated on certain portions of control, than as *surprises* springing forth as we risk real presence and participation, all the while courageously acknowledging and addressing contemporary confusion and conflict and alienation for the sake of an authentic, and finally abundant, common life.

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ENDNOTES

1. See David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), esp. pp. 49-93.
2. See David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological about a Theological School* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992).
3. See Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).
4. In the section just completed, the authors were especially aided by the remarks of Thomas Ogletree at the September 1993 ATS consultation on "the good theological school."
5. See Niebuhr, Williams, and Gustafson, *The Advancement of Theological Education* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

What Is the Character of the Institutional Resources Needed for the Good Theological School?

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This essay focuses on the issue of institutional resources needed for quality theological education at the turn of the millennium and how those resources might be deployed. As is true of other essays in this series, this one attempts to reflect as accurately as possible the contributions of the entire working group as well as related suggestions made during plenary sessions.

In considering the character of those resources necessary to support the process and systems of good theological schooling, this group looked in particular at issues related to finances, facilities, and personnel. Consideration was given to ways in which financial policies can be formulated, facilities developed and maintained, and personnel deployed to support changing interpretations of what constitutes a good theological school. The discussion was carried out in the context of addressing some of the following questions: At a time in which financial resources for many institutions are strained, what is the relationship between sound financial policies and quality educational programming? What kinds of facilities are necessary to address the reality that theological education is being carried out in changing contexts? Especially in light of current technological advances, how do schools plan both efficiently and humanely for long-term engagement of their personnel?

In considering such questions and their implications for future ATS assessment, it is of course necessary to recognize both that the term “good,” like the term “theological,” has multiple meanings and connotations, and that in light of changing circumstances and contexts new concepts of what constitutes “good theological education” will have to be developed. One must also recognize that for many institutions, *defining* the good school may be one thing, while having the financial resources to bring that to reality is quite another. “Quality” in many cases will have to be determined in light of the realities of limited resources in the areas of finance, facilities, and personnel.

Increasingly, therefore, “good” probably will need to be determined by many schools in a more “survivalist” way than may have been the case in the

recent past. To call upon the metaphors of floor and ceiling, with adequacy suggested by the former and quality by the latter, it will be important for schools that are experiencing financial concerns to find ways in which to keep their focus upward rather than downward. One way to address the reality of limited resources is to ask whether or not we can, or need to, own and maintain properties as we always have. Another is to consider new ways of deploying our personnel to allow us more long-range flexibility (as, for example, possibly rethinking the traditional system of tenure). Schools may become more conscious of the theological concept of stewardship, seeing the school not as the owner but as the steward of resources. Individual schools and the Association as a whole may need to address the question of whether there is, or should be, any difference in the ways a theological school stewards its resources from the practices of other educational institutions.

As we rework criteria that distinguish the good theological school, it seems apparent that quantity and type may no longer be sufficient indicators. Instead of focusing on the amount of the endowment and the size of the faculty, it may be that the goal of the good theological school will be to see how efficiently it can utilize its resources to achieve performance consistent with its mission. The character of the resources should follow and reflect the nature of the school. Denominational schools need to understand their use of resources also in light of the standards and expectations of the church bodies to which they are responsible. Does a large endowment give a seminary the freedom to bypass the church and its expectations? The church and the school may both need to be more creative in developing ways in which to share resources and, at the same time, schools themselves may need to find cooperative opportunities for making better use of their respective assets.

Although for the purposes of this report the three categories of resources identified above (financial, physical, personnel) will be addressed separately, it should be noted that the relationships among these resources are extremely important. What is the direct connection between the annual fund and the size of the faculty or the number of support staff available? What is the relation between the nature of the physical plant and the character of the support staff? And perhaps most importantly, how do they all serve the mission of the theological school as it has been developed and agreed upon by the faculty, administration, trustees, and related church body?

The Matrix

The working group spent considerable time reflecting on a discussion led by Robert Lynn on the history of 20th-century theological education. The several phases Lynn developed seemed to provide a framework for responding to questions about institutional resources and their definition in relation to “the good theological school.”

The first phase of theological education in the United States and Canada, which Lynn discussed, coincided with the period from the beginning of the ATS in the 1930s until the 1960s. During this first phase, a fairly elite group of mainline Protestant theological and divinity schools came together for the purpose of enhancing the quality of theological education. This group established a set of standards by which to identify “the good theological school,” and applied them as other schools sought admittance. The assumption on which these standards were based was that of single, commonly agreed-upon ideas of what constitutes good theological education and what should characterize a school that provides such education. This kind of essentialism led to the formation of a set of criteria that were largely comparative and quantitative. The fundamental question was, “Are the resources of the school in question, in both character and quantity, like those of current ATS schools?”

The second phase Lynn presented began in the 1960s; its culmination is signified by the current efforts of ATS to redefine its accreditation standards. In the 1960s, the “club” of similar institutions, which to that point had constituted the ATS, was opened to include Roman Catholic seminaries and evangelical theological schools. Both the impact of Vatican II on the Catholic seminaries and the evangelical schools’ quest for inclusion in broader cultural discourse caused the composition of the ATS to change. Because these schools often differed from previous member institutions with regard to issues of governance, ecclesial connections, relation to the liberal university model of education, and relation to the general cultural ethos, the standards used to certify members of ATS in the past were becoming less workable. The new schools provided theological education with resources that were often different in kind, character, and quality from those primarily associated with good theological training. Because schools could no longer be fairly assessed simply by comparing them to a single standard, qualitative judgments were avoided and a new existentialist basis of comparison was established. In this second period, schools were assessed in terms of their integrity and internal consistency. The basic question then was, “Are the resources of the school in question adequate to the mission of the school as that school itself has defined it?”

It has become clear that ATS member schools are entering a third phase in the development of the understanding of “the good theological school.” The process of ascertaining how well a given school is accomplishing what it has set out to accomplish cannot include the same standard issues of quality in theological education. While some schools seem to be operating on the assumption that we can still try to “fix” what is wrong by using the standards of the first two phases, others recognize that the current diversity of theological schools will not admit to a single “essentialist” notion of the good school. It has been suggested that phase three will not be characterized by a new set of standards as such, but by generating and sustaining conversations through which different schools may find themselves working toward different ends, with different resources, and with different possible outcomes. If phase one was guided by a commonly understood standard of quality and phase two by the standards of integrity, the operative term for phase three may be effectiveness. Measures of effectiveness, however, cannot be described as a single vector on a matrix but, rather, in relation to a complex range of demands to meet the complex world in which we now find ourselves.

The new approach needs to recognize and value the insight of phase one—that there should be some commonly held notions of what constitutes a theological school. It must also include the insight of phase two—that to some degree the definition of “good” is continually being shaped in relation to one distinctive mission that individual schools pursue. The approach of the third phase should include not only a focus on the quantity/quality of a school’s resources (as deemed necessary to conform to an ideal school), or on the adequacy of those resources to the achievement of a school’s mission (as defined by the school and/or the supporting denomination), it should also include the ability of the school to respond to the variety of external factors that are affecting theological education today. Here issues of flexibility, adaptability, efficiency, and effectiveness become important. Factors to be taken into consideration include, but are not limited to, changes in student bodies, changes in the economy, theological/social/cultural controversies, shifts in denominational life, changing ministerial expectations, the impact of cultural diversity, the litigious environment in which we live, environmental concerns, and the impact of technology.

The working group suggested that one way to envision the three phases of accrediting standards in theological education is as a three-dimensional matrix. The first phase of this history, characterized by evaluation according to standards of adequacy or quality in *comparison* to the other ATS accredited schools, could serve as the vertical dimension of such a matrix. The second phase, when

evaluation focuses on the standards of institutional integrity and internal consistency (mission translated), can be seen as the horizontal dimension. Theological educators are now asked to consider an increasingly important third dimension, to be developed as a third phase unfolds, with external factors coming increasingly to bear on the ways in which theological schools must construct their education. This new phase can be seen as a vector cutting across the horizontal and vertical dimensions of this matrix. This model helped our group to consider the three foci of our concentration, namely the physical resources, financial resources, and personnel resources. What can we identify as necessary under each category for a “good” theological school in this—the third phase—of theological education?

A number of factors bear on the definition of what is good in today’s market economy. Most schools face an enrollment with a lower full-time-equivalent and a higher head count, that translates into a demand for more services. Changes in seminary-church relations, and sometimes dwindling denominational resources, often mean that there is diminished support for schools and for students.¹ As a result, more schools may need to look to such options as training programs for lay pastors or to shortened Master of Divinity and other masters’ programs. Changes in the American work force, including more part-time workers and higher unemployment, affect both recruitment and sources of funding. Many donors are reluctant to put more into seminary resources at a time when schools cannot easily meet their expectations in terms of output. Schools are also realizing that diversifying the racial-ethnic make-up of the faculty at a time when increasing demand is met by insufficient supply may have very real financial implications. Faced with such difficult realities, some people in seminaries and churches will shift the areas of sacrifice to the faculty and administration, asking them to work out of a sense of “call,” and perhaps seeking to return to earlier times when the work of theological education was barely remunerated.

In the midst of competing tensions, it seems clear that one definition of the good theological school in this new phase must be an efficient utilization of resources to achieve performance goals. Formerly, schools may have seen their mandate as trying to acquire more and more in the way of resources, but today it is necessary to redefine how one’s limited resources can most effectively be deployed. The reality, of course, is that some schools have more flexibility to dream and plan than others. As an Association we may have to find ways in which standards of effectiveness on this score, by definition, will have to be different: the school with a large endowment and more flexible resources may

Institutional Resources

have to be held to a different standard of achievement than the institution with severe financial and physical limitations.

Physical Resources

What is the character of those physical resources that might mark the good theological school?

Ownership of property has been, and in most cases, continues to be considered highly desirable, if not essential, as a mark of the quality of a theological school. It is an axiom that donors are happier contributing to buildings than to programs, and a president is always delighted to be able to announce plans for the enlargement of his or her institution's physical facilities. Buildings and grounds have always been considered an asset. According to a recent study, the vast majority of the wealth of theological schools takes the form of real estate and property. The other side of this, of course, is that the most critical liability for theological schools as a whole is the deferred maintenance on their physical plants.²

Our working group determined that in the third phase of theological education it is going to be necessary to take several important steps: (1) The relationship between the physical resources of the school and the nature of theological training that takes place there must be reconceptualized, and old assumptions about what is absolutely necessary must be reexamined. (2) Faculty, administration, and trustees must also consider the relationship between the character and condition of a school's physical resources and the distinctive mission of the school as it is determined by that institution and, if appropriate, by its sponsoring denominational body. (3) Serious attention must be given to the changing social, cultural, theological, environmental, and other contexts in which our teaching and ministerial preparation takes place to determine what kinds of physical plants and resources are most needed, and whether the physical resources we now have may really be obsolete.

This set of questions (which we saw as corresponding to the three dimensions of the matrix described above) introduces a number of issues that will need to be addressed. Among those issues are the character and quality of space necessary for appropriate kinds of interaction between teacher and learner as well as among the learners themselves; the relation between that space and the mission of the institution; the capability of the space to be adapted to the special needs of people with disabilities, to whatever kinds of special arrangements may be necessary for commuting and second-career students, and to the

constantly changing technological environment with students using computers, recorders, and other electronic devices in the classroom.

Crucial to conversations about space and physical resources are questions pertaining to the structure, nature, and use of the library facility. How should a school determine what kind of library is best suited to support its particular educational programs? Advances in technology are introducing major shifts for libraries and their general processes of collecting, storing, and making available various kinds of information. Global resources are now accessible and distributable in ways that were heretofore unthinkable. What, then, constitutes a good basic theological library? Resources must be readily available to students from a wide range of backgrounds and capabilities. Can commuting students access the library through a computer link-up? Are students with physical disabilities able to use the library in appropriate ways? What kinds of library resources are to be provided for the broader public?

This is a time when it is important to think creatively as theological institutions, and as divinity schools in conjunction or in cooperation with colleges and universities, about the appropriate ways in which to share our library resources (books, machines, and people). A clear statement of the institution's mission will be needed to determine how a library collection supports the particularities of that mission. It may be no longer possible to assume that the "good" theological library will be able to be truly comprehensive in its holdings. However, rapidly expanding computer technology now allows access to other collections in ways not possible before. This provides a unique opportunity for schools to strengthen areas relevant to their particular programs and mission while not denying their students access to other materials (through Interlibrary Loan, etc.).

Another of the physical resources of the institution to which schools need to give immediate attention is student housing. Until recently, housing was considered a great asset to a school; now it is more often a financial liability. As we move to a new phase in theological education, we need to rethink the use of these physical spaces. The time when a seminary could be envisioned as a kind of enclosed community with full-time students living on campus and with faculty living at least near the campus is, for most institutions, a thing of the past. Many of our students are commuters, taking classes part-time, involved in work circumstances that make their on-campus time minimal, married with extensive family responsibilities, etc. For some schools the time has come, and for others it may be near, when the best stewardship of the financial and educational resources of the institutions means that student housing can no longer be

provided. In such cases the schools must think seriously about what kinds of alternative physical resources can make up for the inevitable loss of community interaction and support that student housing on campus traditionally provided.

Schools that continue to maintain student housing must address a different set of questions. Should such housing be in the form of dormitories or student apartments? Minimal or extensive? Available to all who wish it or on a first come/first served basis? Subsidized by the school or a source of income to the school? Again decisions need to be made in light of the aims and purposes of the institution, so that student housing contributes to the ethos of the community. If a school has a heavy enrollment of commuter students, thought may be given to providing occasional overnight quarters. The institution with large numbers of married students may consider ways to enlarge housing space and to provide play areas and equipment for children. Are housing opportunities available for non-traditional family groupings?

How is space allocated for community activities? Primary here is an appropriate place in which worship, both traditional and non-traditional, can take place. Does this space reflect the aims and purposes of the theological school? Some schools may consider ways to make it flexible and adaptable to a variety of worship styles and traditions, and/or open for the use of other worshipping communities. What spaces are available for other community activities such as a student center, a day-care center, a neighborhood center?

There are other questions that should be addressed in relation to space. Is there adequate parking available to make the institution accessible to the public as well as to students and faculty? Are faculty offices adequate for the pursuit of research as well as for meeting with students? Is it desirable or possible to provide office space for retired faculty? Do support staff have room to carry out their work effectively? Is the school well served that does not have a place for regular community meals?

Although they reflect a range of possibilities, all of these questions still presume a main campus with some variation on the traditional uses of space. Some institutions may be forced to adopt and others may choose, as a result of intentional planning, a very different model. Teaching and learning may be so reconfigured that traditional classrooms are no longer necessary, or the physical site of the seminary may be nothing more than a technological center with reception and learning taking place in a variety of other sites. Off-campus learning centers are only one model of what an opening up of space in this way might look like. The ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment will foster a broadened understanding of what constitutes good theological education for the beginning of the 21st century.

Personnel Resources

What is the character of those human resources in “the good theological school”? Our working group determined that the personnel resources of an institution should be understood as broadly as possible to include persons who provide and who profit from the services of the school, those who contribute directly or indirectly to its educational mission, and those who appear on both the income and the expense sides of the ledger. Therefore we saw included among these personnel resources students and their families, faculty, members of the administration, support staff, trustees, donors, alumni/ae, local pastors, local lay leaders, denominational officials, racial/ethnic and other “voices” in the local community, contracted service providers, and representatives of neighboring institutions with whom an institution has cooperative relationships. Space here allows discussion of only several of these categories of human resources.

In the past, many schools could make commitments to support staff and other kinds of staff that involved retaining them in employment even when they no longer contributed significantly to the school. Changing circumstances may require more careful planning so as neither to put the school in the position of having to honor commitments that do not fit with its budgetary realities nor to result in unfair or inequitable treatment of its employees. The acquisition of more sophisticated computer technology may alter the kind or number of support staff in theological schools. In their long-range planning, schools must consider not just the numbers of support staff, but their contribution to the atmosphere and community the school attempts to foster.

Thus, in considering future personnel needs, it is necessary for a theological institution to (1) conceptualize the relationship between its human resources and the quality of theological schooling that it is able to offer, (2) review the relationship between the character and condition of its human resources and its distinctive mission, and (3) assess those resources in light of a dramatically changing external environment.

Even more urgent, perhaps, is the need for an institution to consider the relationship between the academic programs it offers and the size and quality of its faculty. Is the student-faculty ratio such that it puts the institution in some financial jeopardy, or that students are not able to receive the quality education they have a right to expect? Which programs, and therefore which faculty, are essential to the mission of the school? Which provide the school with income necessary for its financial survival? Are these the same? An institution may need to judge the viability of maintaining an educational program to which it is

deeply committed, or which its faculty very much wants, but which does not contribute to the financial base of the school. Is a Ph.D. or a Th.D. degree absolutely essential, for example, if it draws on the services of faculty but promises no income? If service to the church is primary to the mission of a school, how does the school balance offering a Ph.D. or a Th.D. degree versus a D.Min. if it is too costly to offer both?

One subject about which doors of conversation are being slowly opened is the system of faculty status as it relates to theological education. Do our present policies and practices allow for changes when they are necessary? Can the tenure system, for example, allow for the flexibility we believe is necessary as we attempt to respond to contemporary external factors? What about the relationship of tenure to new regulations and customs surrounding faculty retirement? “The good theological school” may have to consider abandoning the tenure system, if the external circumstances that originally gave rise to the system have changed. Schools will also need to review the system of faculty evaluation in relation to salary increases, leave opportunities, and other financial rewards. Increasingly institutions are being called on to take into consideration a range of factors in assessing the quality and performance of their faculty members, particularly the effectiveness of their teaching. Should salary increases be tied only to traditional standards such as quality of teaching and amount of publication, or are other elements now worthy of financial reward such as fluency in languages that allow for the study of diverse cultures, for example? How, in effect, can the services of our faculty best be deployed and rewarded? What kinds of financial and other rewards for faculty will allow the school to achieve the goals that it sets forth in its statement of mission?

As schools begin to give increased attention to the desirability of a diverse faculty, a range of questions linked with financial realities arises. The attempts of more and more institutions to attract more faculty of color or of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, for example, means that the demand both for and on such faculty is becoming very high. Should an institution exceed its own standard pay ranges for faculty in order to hire a person of color? Are the other members of the faculty willing to live with possible resulting pay inequities so as to work toward the goal of greater diversity? Many institutions are finding that in order to secure qualified faculty of color they are needing to invest significant financial resources in supporting some of their own doctoral students—what has been called the “grow your own” solution—a move that has obvious financial ramifications for the overall planning of the school and may raise equity concerns in terms of financial aid for other students.

Another area that urgently needs to be addressed in many schools is that of student indebtedness and student financial aid. How do we deal with the reality that in many instances the church is contributing less and expecting more, with the increased cost of education passed on to the student? What does it say to us as theological educators that single people, women, and persons of color are on the high end of borrowing? How can institutions help students with high levels of debt who are preparing for vocations that generally are low on the pay scale? How should a school marshal its financial aid resources so as to be competitive, humane, and fiscally responsible?

These reflections are intended to be just a sample of the many concerns related to the area of seminary personnel.

Financial Resources

What is the relationship of sound financial policies to good theological education, and what is the nature of the financial resources that mark the good theological school?

According to a recent study, the majority of theological schools in the U.S. and Canada are underfunded. In spite of the lofty missions of theological schools, financial survival is coming to dominate the discussion of educational programming and deployment of personnel. This appears to be the case whether the major source of income is tuition and fees, endowment return, denominational support, or, as in the case of some Canadian schools, government subsidies. Put simply, income from whatever source—what you earn, what you borrow, or what you are given—seems to be less readily available for many institutions than has earlier been the case. This necessitates some difficult thinking and planning about how best to marshal, maintain, and expend resources. Financial resources include but are not limited to tuition and fees, endowment, current gifts, foundational support, capital gifts, government support, auxiliary enterprises, grants, contributed services, and credit worthiness. While these resources in many cases have served theological education well in the past, theological schools are asking where the most viable sources of revenue are to come in the future, particularly in light of such realities as declining membership in many mainline Protestant denominations and resulting loss of financial support to theological education.

Three sets of questions emerged as our working group considered matters related to financial resources.

Institutional Resources

1. The first set of questions has to do with the budgeting process as a major element in institutional planning. What are the signs of financial health in the good theological school? Does the good school have both an operating and a capital budget? Should schools strive to build endowments? Do large endowments shield the school from the concerns of the churches? What should be the relation between endowment income and income from tuition? What is the relation of instructional expense to the overall budget? Is it useful to have a small deficit to convince others to give? It was noted that many institutions simply do not have good processes for linking long-range planning with budgetary realities. Should endowment grow at the same rate as the operating budget? What about spending rates of endowment? We believe that long-term capital formation and appropriate planning strategies to achieve it are essential to the survival of an institution.

2. The second set of questions or issues grows out of the need of theological schools to address fund-raising as a major element in institutional advancement. For some institutions this is a recent development and one with which they have very limited experience. Does every school need a development office? What is the role of the CEO in the work of the development office of the good theological school? How are the activities of institutional advancement evaluated? Are faculty, students, alums, and trustees involved in fund-raising? Should they be? Are donors treated with respect and appreciation? What are the relationships among the activities of fundraising, recruiting, and public relations?

3. The third set of questions and issues grows out of the contemporary need for schools to be flexible and adaptable in the acquisition and use of their financial resources. It is important for an evaluation team to ask a school what means it is using to consider the demands of external factors on its financial planning operation. How are resources allocated and how has that allocation changed over time? Is there a program for building the capital budget? Are the auxiliary enterprises draining the resources of the institution? Does the whole constellation of auxiliary enterprises cost more than it brings in? Is it possible to quantify the measure of "the good theological school" in terms of financial resources?

Our working group generally wanted to encourage the ATS to formulate standards that are both flexible and quantifiable, moving toward evaluation that is more data-based than assessment-based, especially in the area of finances. At the same time some members expressed concern that in doing this the Association not slip into the business of simply doing a kind of "bean counting." The primary issue, we felt, was whether the school under consideration is governed

by principles of good stewardship in the development, use, and planning of its financial resources.

“The good theological school” will have these things in place, including plans for long-term maintenance and a long-range plan for building capital resources. Both acquiring and spending are necessary and are all tied in with a regular capital budget. It is also important to make sure that an active deferred-giving program is in place. Stewardship equals good management equals long-range investment of resources.

Information Resources

In the course of the discussion, a fourth resource area was identified—that of informational resources. It could be argued that information resources will actually transform all other kinds of resources in profound ways. Given the fact that the United States and Canada are societies in which information is the primary commodity, power is going to follow information. Our group felt that emphasizing the crucial importance of this “wild card” of informational resources may be one of our most important contributions to the discussion of new realities for theological education. What will the good theological school be in the post-Gutenberg era? Will traditional textbooks and text-oriented libraries soon be obsolete? Will computer-based multi-media instructional programming replace classroom teaching?

In light of the emergence of this area of resources, a whole new array of questions and issues looms on the horizon for theological schools. What is the commitment of the good theological school to information resources? How do information resources contribute to the mission of the school? How are these resources developed, managed, and invested in strategic planning? What percentage of the institution’s resources is allocated for information services? What kind of ethical standards need to be developed for their use? How do information services enhance the educational function and its quality? What are appropriate control and accountability systems? What are the networks or access systems available for information resources? What are their measurable educational outcomes? How do we retain the traditional ethos of theological schooling, as well as basic human values, as information resources expand?

While this area is only beginning to emerge, it is necessary to begin thinking of ways to assess the quality, institutional coherence, and adaptability of these resources in theological education. Advances in information technology are irreversible—and expensive—and ultimately are necessary for good theological

schooling in the future. Schools will have to find ways to share and efficiently employ these resources, at the same time that they exercise caution that information systems do not become ends within themselves rather than the means to an end. The development, management, and future investment in information systems will need to be guided by biblical principles of stewardship.

Conclusion

These four resource areas and the historical evaluation matrix present a plethora of challenges and opportunities for theological education. Several issues and observations on the good theological school will serve as a conclusion to this report. The first observation is that it may be more appropriate and helpful to see theological education as occurring within a system, rather than only within a single institution. To do this would provide greater options available to students. A second observation is that “the good theological school” may be *defined* rather than *confined* by the limits and flexibility of its resources. This would lead to the question of the nature of quality in this new environment. A third issue concerns the capacity of the theological school to function in this new environment to immerse the student in the ethos of the community of faith. In what way can “the good theological school” of the future be an “ethos-bearing” institution? A fourth and final issue concerns the change in paradigm that is affecting theological education today. While it is apparent to many that such a paradigm shift is occurring, the rules and boundaries of the new paradigm are not yet fully seen. Good theological education, therefore, will need to address the leadership needs of the faith community in a period in which the old paradigm is fading and the new is still in the process of appearing.

Members of this work group included: James Evans, Colgate Rochester Divinity School; John Gilmore, Columbia Theological Seminary; Thomas Gleeson, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley; Albert Hurd, American Theological Library Association; G. Douglass Lewis, Wesley Theological Seminary; Gordon MacDermid, Atlantic School of Theology; David McKenna, Asbury Theological Seminary; Patrick Miller, Princeton Theological Seminary; Michaeline O'Dwyer, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley; Joseph P. O'Neill, Educational Testing Service; Anthony Ruger, consultant, Wethersfield, CT; Jane Smith, Iliff School of Theology; and Joyce Tucker, Presbyterian Church (USA).

ENDNOTES

1. A recent Auburn/Lilly Endowment study shows that while there was financial growth through the 1970s for most schools, in the 1980s there was a significant drop in both denominational financial support and in gifts and grants, with 80 percent of capital funding coming from individuals.
2. A recent Lilly Endowment study of deferred maintenance for theological schools showed that one-third of the schools studied had facilities rated poor and a third to a half had facilities determined to be fair to bad.

What Is the Character of Administration and Governance in the Good Theological School?

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The Association of Theological Schools has embarked on a renewed quest for quality as it redevelops accrediting standards. Such redevelopment is required by the growing diversity of member schools, dynamic changes in the ecology of religious communities in North America, and the urgent needs of those communities for leadership. These cultures and claims of diverse constituencies are quickly evident in the varieties of administration and governance of ATS schools. How may the Association make valid and helpful accrediting assessments of the quality of the administration and governance of its member schools?

This brief essay is intended to assist the deliberations of the 1994 ATS Biennial Meeting. The authors have benefited from the conversation and counsel of several colleagues in seminary leadership and look forward to the advancement of this discussion during and following the Biennial Meeting.

This deliberation is timely and necessary for a variety of reasons. The topic of institutional governance has been neglected. Changes in governance patterns are underway in many institutions, especially in the role of trustees. The constituencies and publics served by ATS member institutions depend upon the schools in differing ways. These constituencies have made various claims upon their institutional missions and programs, revealing the differing abilities of the schools to respond. Changes in society are particularly reflected in the diversity of voices and concerns to be addressed. Finally, economic erosion of the institutional resource base has occurred along with the right-sizing of seminary programs and structures.

These realities prompt reconsideration of the standards of quality of administration and governance by which theological schools are evaluated. Furthermore, evaluative standards will be sensitive to the diverse types of ATS schools and their distinctive governance. In order to be most meaningful, future assessments will recognize distinctions among authority, governance, and leadership in the schools' administrative structures and processes.

Definitions

For the purpose of discussion, our working group used the following definitions for key terms:

Governance - the method designed by an institution to provide the means, structure, guidance, and direction essential to pursue its agreed-upon mission and vision. Governance is legally vested by constituencies.

Authority - the legal and ethical power to make decisions. Trustees generally have final or formal authority and provide the faculty with functional authority for educational, curricular, and faculty decisions. Authority is shared and distributed.

Leadership - the offices and roles by which individuals are authorized to carry out distinct responsibilities essential to the institutional mission and vision. Leadership is authorized and responsible.

Administration - the process whereby the governance structures carry out their responsibilities and roles with accountability for legitimacy and competence. Administration is accountable for outcomes.

Common Ground and Assumptions

Not everything is new in the present moment, nor must all the values that have long marked quality governance be reinvented. For example, the wisdom of distinguishing governance from administration endures, and this insight has been acquired at high cost to many institutions. Similarly, seminary leaders will continue to cultivate board members who will invest their wisdom, work, and wealth, and governing boards will generally make their most strategic contributions through the development and care of the institutions' mission and the authorization of the chief officers of the theological schools.

All cultures and societies have standardized processes to govern social, economic, communications, and ideological behaviors in their communities and institutions. Boards and administrations in the not-for-profit sector must learn the distinctive lessons required for holding these beloved institutions in trust for the sake of a mission valued by a constituency. In theological schools where critical symbol systems and beliefs are stewarded, a particularly high value will be placed on the theological integrity of their governance.

Newcomers to the governance and administration of theological schools are likely to be surprised by the intense interest within these relatively small schools in the exercise of authority and power. Debates concerning the legitimacy of

governance and the use of authority have always been close to the center of religious communities, and the differentiation of traditions has often rested on firmly held views of the theological legitimation of authority. By their very existence, all of these schools represent considered efforts by diverse constituencies to sustain the integrity of their communities and the witness of their deep convictions in the pluralism of North America.

In some schools, this intensity of attention may be focused in traditional theological legitimations of hierarchical authority structures and ecclesiastical offices. In others, the culture of academic authority systems now prevails along with debates concerning the legitimation of religion in the arts and sciences. Most theological schools will be interested in the biblical warrants which may legitimate and critique the use and abuse of authority. Some will insist on very direct appeals to the Bible.

The environment of scarce resources in these schools also affects profoundly their cultures and construals of authority. Governance follows revenue in theological schools too, perhaps not as immediately as in some other settings but just as surely! This need not mean the cynical collapse of all other values in the face of economic determinism. But it requires strategic integrity in the development of the institution's resources (*i.e.*, building the constituency of support around the mission).

The character of a theological school's administration and governance, therefore, is fundamental to its quality and best appreciated within its identity, constituency, and mission. Assessment for accreditation must probe to this foundational level rather than too quickly impose standardized criteria for quality governance derived from other institutional settings.

Governance in the good theological school will be actively committed to the identification, support, and fulfillment of the institution's mission. Such governance requires shared leadership, involves shared accountability and responsibility, and expresses itself in situational adaptability. The modes and cultures of authority will differ as will levels of direct involvement by governance and administration in the educational program and by faculty and students in leadership.

"The good theological school" knows its mission and thereby sets its course, develops its educational, human, physical, and financial resources, and stabilizes the institution through turbulence and pressures. This mission is faithful to the school's identity and appropriate to the genuine needs of its constituency. All systems of governance, authority, leadership, and administration, no matter how culturally diverse from one school to another or how theologically particular, may

be evaluated by the quality of their service to the school in identifying, supporting, and fulfilling its mission.

Current Governance and Tension Issues

Administration and governance are dynamic arts in lively institutions. Vessels in mission need deep keels, but they also must be directed to respond to significant challenges and to change course when it seems wise, at times without full agreement. The following is an incomplete list of factors, vectors, or forces bearing on theological schools as both threats and opportunities. We convey them to the Biennial Meeting from the discussion of our working group, admitting the risks of prejudice and incompleteness. All of these would need to be restated in local situations, but perhaps even such a laundry list can assist member schools in beginning to name some of the winds blowing over their bows.

A. Curriculum deliberations must contend with the competing claims of ministerial professionalization, academic specialization, and social diversity in North America and the world.

B. Church and denominational requirements continue to rise, often feeling more like intrusions because of growing neglect of the school's life and health.

C. The erosion of revenue calls for increased accountability in financial realities.

D. The culture's acceptance or openness to multiple theological realities, representation, and participation has challenged every school, including those once well located on the theological spectrum.

E. The authority of the church has been exercised in some instances by take-overs or by bureaucratic or ideological controls of governance, perhaps to the detriment of the theological school and its mission, or perhaps to reclaim the school for a denominational constituency.

F. The growth of the "quality movement" in management theory and practice has increased emphasis on assessment and the measurement of outcomes for theological schools.

G. The complexity of ministerial practice has intensified the demand for multiple competencies and challenged the viability of smaller seminaries. On the other hand, the dramatically changing environment poses a challenge of adaptability which may be greater for larger schools.

H. Government regulations, relationships, and intrusions affect member schools in the United States and Canada to a greater degree than previously imagined.

I. As theological schools function more like other institutions of higher education, they experience the need for greater professionalization of administrations and boards, thus altering their cultures and ways of legitimating leadership.

J. The explosion and advancement of technology have already infused academic research, are currently altering the integrated management of schools, and are about to transform the delivery of theological education in a culture that will demand democratized, decentralized access. Technology may drive the future question to be “What is good theological education?” or “What is quality education for leadership for communities in mission?” rather than our question as an accrediting association of “What is the good theological school?”

K. The dramatic increase in the leadership of women in religious communities accompanied by the feminist movement in the broader culture have dramatically altered understandings of ministerial roles and church polity. Other underrepresented groups have also appeared in the roles of governance, authority, leadership, and administration of these schools, claiming their rightful place at the table and challenging prevailing models of authority and power.

L. The member schools of the ATS have found themselves in a litigation-prone society, committed to the protection of the rights of individuals, but increasingly defensive as institutions are finding their deep commitments to communitarian values and resolutions more difficult to implement.

What Quality Standards Should ATS Use in Evaluations of Governance and Administration?

Our working group proposed a series of statements as standards of quality for the governance of ATS schools. These are cited below, with some discussion of each, as guidelines for the assessment of quality in the governance of theological schools.

The ATS should value the diversity of its member schools and their governance models in the way every other standard is articulated and interpreted.

The denominational seminaries are significantly diverse among themselves, as are the freestanding seminaries; the university divinity schools operate in a very different environment of identity, constituency, and mission. The first quality standard, therefore, must appreciate this legacy of diversity rather than allow a single type of school or its governance to establish the norm.

Possible inquiries to begin the assessment of this quality include:

- How do you characterize your theological school by type, including a description of its identity?
- How do you identify the constituencies of your school and what they expect and need from you?
- What are your sources of revenue?

ATS will evaluate all systems of governance and administration by the quality of their service to the school in identifying, supporting, and fulfilling its mission.

This standard must respect the particular identity, constituency, and mission of each school and hold the governance and administration of the school accountable to the same respect. It will require that ATS schools discipline themselves to discern the constituencies depending upon them for quality work in their educational program, to listen and learn what is most profoundly needed by those constituencies, and to commit the institution to provide its educational service at its highest attainable standard. Within the circles of the accreditation of academic quality, therefore, the ATS will be an agency that values the needs of publics within and beyond the academy (*i.e.*, religious communities and others serving the common good, in assessing the validity and quality of the service of member schools).

Possible inquiries for the assessment of an institution's fulfillment of this standard would include::

- Does your school have a statement of mission?
- How was it written and who approved it?
- Does it disclose what you do, for whom you do it, and how to tell whether you are doing it well?

ATS will evaluate all systems of governance and administration by their appropriateness to the theological, ecclesiastical, and/or philosophical identity of the school.

Possible inquiries for the assessment of this dimension of quality are:

- How does your school authorize its leaders to plan, budget, and deploy its theological, personnel, and fiscal resources to fulfill its mission?
- How do you engage the participation of your identified constituencies?
- How do you inform governing bodies and the public?

ATS will evaluate all systems of governance and administration by congruency to their mission in the development and use of educational, personnel, and fiscal resources.

Possible inquiries for the assessment of this standard could include:

- How do you distinguish which constituencies have a voice or vote in governance and administration?
- How do you ensure that the values that inform your revenue development are consistent with the strategic allocation of resources?
- How do you identify and appropriately authorize the various internal and external stakeholders in the school and what structures recognize their existence and differentiation?

ATS will evaluate all systems of governance and administration by the adequacy of their financial strategies to provide the resources needed to fulfill the mission.

Possible inquiries to assess the institution's response to this standard could be:

- How is your financial planning integrated in the work of your governance and administration?
- How are your strategies for endowment development and management correlated with the mission?

ATS will evaluate all systems of governance and administration by their authorization of administrative leadership to make it possible for quality work to be done in accord with the mission.

A possible inquiry for the assessment of this guideline might be:

- What contemporary understandings of leadership does your school consider valid and beneficial, and how does it use them to equip its own leaders?

ATS will evaluate all systems of governance and administration by their planning for collaboration among members of leadership teams, including the expectation of the self-correcting capacity of such collegial leadership.

A possible way to assess this statement would be to ask:

- How do those responsible for governance participate with administrative leaders in collaborative efforts around concerns affecting the mission?

ATS will evaluate all systems of governance and administration by their clarity about various levels of policy formation and evaluation of its implementation. This standard will include an assessment of the adequacy of the school's inclusion of those whose contribution or authority may have previously been marginalized.

Possible inquiries for the assessment of such a standard would include:

- What methods exist in this community to listen to faculty, staff, students, and constituents, and what are the avenues of access for various participants in policy development?

ATS will evaluate all systems of governance and administration by their consistency with the educational mission of the school, because these schools have a unique opportunity to learn and to teach among constituencies where wisdom is needed in matters of governance, authority, leadership, and administration.

A possible way to measure this quality would be to ask:

- What opportunities are offered to faculty, staff, students, and constituents to observe and inquire about the school's systems of governance and administration in the light of the mission?

ATS will evaluate all systems of governance and administration by their ability to establish cultures of evaluation in which institutions learn to tell the truth about themselves and are accountable for the quality of their work.

Possible inquiries for assessment include:

- How do you evaluate, value, and report:
 - The quality of your graduates?
 - The quality of the educational programs?
 - The quality of the faculty's scholarship?
 - The performance of your leaders?
 - The stewardship of your resources?
 - The effectiveness of your governance?

Governance Is a Process, Not an Event

This essay may appear to have been written by a committee because in large measure it was. It is important to note, however, that it was a committee of peers, leaders of ATS schools whose conversation shaped the writing by the two of us who are listed as authors. Furthermore, the discussions at the Biennial Meeting will move the conversation further until the actual process of redevelopment of current standards is undertaken.

In addition to the strong aversion to rigid or uniform standards that do not respect the vital differences in our school, our working group cautioned against the imposition of standards when a school is in the midst of a creative or critical moment. Similarly, when an institution is aware of a need or deficit which it is

seeking to address, the standards are best invoked as an encouragement to boards, constituencies, faculties, and administrations. In a culture of evaluation, quality standards have high educative value.

In our schools, and as an Association, we are committed to quality work. We have derived great benefit from the high academic standards conveyed to the Association by the dominance of the university divinity schools in an earlier era.

As the discussion of governance and administration in the good theological school reveals, however, the member schools and the Association are now confronting a new set of complex challenges close to the heart of the theological enterprise and the education of leaders for religious communities in North America. The ways in which governance and administration are practiced and evaluated can make a significant difference to the ability of our schools and the Association to meet these larger challenges.

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The ATS Basic Issues Research Project: Thinking about Theological Education

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Barbara G. Wheeler, Auburn Theological Seminary

Editor's Note: A longer version of this article first appeared in *Theological Education* in Autumn 1991 (Volume XXVIII, No. 1). The original article consisted of a review of the work of the Basic Issues Research Project and a projection about possible activities. This shortened version includes only the material that reviews and summarizes the Basic Issues Research. It is reprinted in this edition of *Theological Education* as background for the current ATS conversation about Quality and Accreditation.

Our assignment is to describe current thinking about theological education. We have been asked to perform this function because, for most of the last decade, we have worked as evaluators of various programs sponsored by The Association of Theological Schools and the Lilly Endowment that have produced a sizable wave of writing and public discussion about theological education, work that forms an important conceptual backdrop for the conference on Building Theological Faculties. In this summary, we shall characterize very briefly the literature and discussions of the last 10 years and say what we think has been most notable about them.

When we were first asked to serve as observers of Lilly and ATS programs, we were already veterans of the usual sort of debates about theological education, the kind that take place regularly in faculty meetings and from time to time in church assemblies as well. We had participated in long, never-resolved arguments about how theory should be related to practice, about how the work of the various departments can be integrated, and about whether our graduates are adequately prepared for ministry. We had seen faculty committees on educational reform break apart along field and disciplinary lines, often into parties that came to think of themselves as “academic” or “practical” in orientation. And we had heard some of our faculty colleagues shrug off the whole project of discussing and revising the curriculum as an exercise in public relations, an administrative device to pacify students and outside constituencies.

We suspect that our experiences are fairly typical. When theological educators turn their attention to their own work, they fall into predictable patterns of

discourse and behavior that give talk about theological education a reputation for being tedious. Eventually, even the prospect of engaging in such discussions yet again makes us tired. We know a small child who once went on strike, refusing to accompany his parents into any retail establishment that offered clothes, housewares, or postal supplies. He gave all such places the same name, “yawn stores,” because he said they all made him uncontrollably drowsy the moment he got inside. Frankly, when we began in 1981 our project of evaluating programs whose purpose was to cultivate writing and create discussion about theological education, we felt in anticipation some of that heaviness behind the eyes that the child identified. So much conversation about theological education has been so soporific that we found it impossible to set our expectations for these new programs very high.

But we were surprised—positively and pleasantly surprised. Simply the amount of activity since 1982 has been surprising: several dozen books and articles on the nature and purpose of theological education and about what have come to be called “basic issues” in theological education, plus an almost equal number of essays and reports on more specific policy questions and institutional topics, and on top of all that writing—workshops, consultations, and seminars, some large and bi-national, some regional, some on particular campuses. This volume is all the more impressive because it brings to an end an interval, more than two decades since the publication of the study by J. Richard Niebuhr, James Gustafson, and Daniel Day Williams, during which very little was written about theological education except committee reports. Even more surprising than the amount of publication and discussion, is its quality and freshness. Both the literature and the programs organized around it have taken different forms and produced a far more exciting and original body of ideas and perspectives than we, and we would guess anyone else, might have expected.

The question of why the discussion about theological education has so quickly become lively and vivid and different is a matter for historians to take up from a greater distance. From this vantage point, one can see that two major supporting organizations, the ATS and the Lilly Endowment, have given the writing and discussion a powerful boost. But foundations and associations cannot create either new ideas or openness to them. “If the people won’t come,” said movie mogul Sam Goldwyn, “you can’t stop them.” We suspect that diversity—both the increasingly rich mixture of religious traditions in the community of accredited theological schools and the increasing diversity of gender, race, ethnicity, and class within theological schools—has played a large role, shaking some conventional ways of talking about theological education

loose from their moorings and rendering some sturdy old platitudes unusable. Luck has also been a factor. As it happened, some of the first contributions to this new discussion were of extraordinarily high quality. Fine work at the start often builds a tradition of fine work to follow, and that seems to be what has happened here.

Although we cannot establish with certainty why the discussion about theological education has so markedly improved, we can take note of some of its remarkable features. Our list includes both matters of form in terms of its participants, activities, and theological character, and matters of substance in terms of challenging conventional assumptions about the tasks of theological education.

Thinking about Theological Education: Changes in Form

Perhaps the most striking formal feature of the last decade of activity has been the participant: most of the writers and discussants have been faculty members. Such broad faculty participation in national debates about theological education is a new development. Until this decade, almost all the public discussion was conducted by presidents and deans. Even within schools, as we noted before, substantial numbers of faculty members had resisted administrative attempts to involve them in discussion about their common educational tasks. Thus the fact that the programs and activities that have come to be called “issues research” (a term coined by ATS to refer to both the writing and discussion of the last decade, regardless of sponsor) have been faculty-centered is news and has important implications for the future. If faculty members continue to become engaged in the national discussion in significant numbers, perhaps they will bring back to their home institutions some of the excitement, critical self-consciousness, and rigor in thinking about theological education that have marked the larger discussions, but that school-based debates have frequently lacked.

The second surprising and impressive feature of the form that issues research activities have taken is related to the large role that faculty have played in those activities: the books, articles, conferences, and seminars that comprise issues research have been distinctively *scholarly* in approach. This too is a major departure from past practice. It has not been the habit in North America to treat the topic of theological education as deserving the sort of painstaking scholarship that so many other topics and subjects have enjoyed. In the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, North Americans engaged in extended debates about whether

theological education should be reshaped as more explicitly professional education. But at no point, in all of the wrestling with that issue, was anyone commissioned to sort out all the different conceptual and historical strands that have been tangled in the term professional. Nor was such clarification volunteered. As a result, the discourse on professional education took on a highly polemical tone and many of the documents on the subject, revisited 20 years later, read more like declarations and manifestos than carefully nuanced arguments. This is just one of many examples of the past failure to provide scholarly grounding for the debates about theological education. The failure is ironic. We educators have long insisted that our students recognize that scholarship is an indispensable resource for the responsible practice of ministry, but we have often failed to claim that same resource when we write and talk about our own practice of theological education.

The issues research program of ATS and some closely associated projects are repairing this deficiency at an impressive rate. In the last decade, several superb histories of individual seminaries have been published, and the first general histories of theological education ever to be written have appeared. Major monographs by Edward Farley, Joseph Hough and John Cobb, Charles Wood, Max Stackhouse, Katarina Schuth, David Kelsey, and a feminist group called the Mud Flower Collective have sorted concepts in careful, helpful, and scholarly ways. Week-long summer seminars, whose papers are available in special issues of the journal *Theological Education*, have attempted to define terms and to explore what is at stake in some crucial questions before us: how we should respond to pluralism, whether theological education should seek to form character and spirit, how to deal with the tension between the often opposed values of critical disinterest and advocacy for what we believe. This work, both writing and discussion, has been of high quality, and there has been, as we noted before, a lot of it. It should be a point of pride that North American theological educators have come so far in establishing a new scholarly tradition that focuses on their own practice.

The third distinctive feature of issues research is its theological character. Yet again, this feature makes the work of the last 10 years very different from what went before. We North Americans have never been participants in the long European tradition of arguing on theological grounds about how theological schools should define their mission, what should be included in the course of theological studies, and how those studies should be organized. We have from time to time had public theological wrangles about theological education, in fact, some very noisy ones, but these have centered not on the theological

rationale for a particular program of studies but rather on the theological orthodoxy of those who will be permitted to teach. More frequently, however, North Americans have conceived theological education not as a theological problem at all, but as a matter of practical application and technique. Our attention has been focused not on the theological grounds and reasons for doing what we do, but on questions of how to do it effectively.

The authors and discussants who have contributed to issues research do not view theological education as that kind of technical problem. Diverse as these contributors are, they all regard theological education as a form of Christian practice, and they all insist that the question of what we should do in theological education receive the same kind of careful theological consideration that we give to other important questions of practice, such as how we as Christians should worship, and what should be our ministry of service and advocacy in the world. As a result, the recent literature has taken the shape of something we have never had before, a practical theology of theological education, and the shift that that represents, from narrowly technical questions about what form our witness as theological educators should take, is a major contribution that could, if it continues to develop, make a signal difference in the depth of our reflection on our own work.

Thinking about Theological Education: Changes in Substance

Even more surprising than these formal changes (the involvement of faculty, the newly scholarly approach, and the new theological mode of the conversation) have been the substantive directions of the writing and discussion. In the quarter century after H. Richard Niebuhr's work and before this new round of writing, the debate about theological education, inconclusive and often tedious as it was, at least had a focus of sorts, a focus created by a fairly broad agreement about which were the most important problems for precisely those intractable puzzles that made us so weary to theological education discussions. If we could not keep ourselves interested in the discussions, however, we could at least agree about the nature and seriousness of the problems. The course of theological studies does not adequately integrate the disciplines of theological inquiry; it further fails to present theory in ways that make practice more effective; and the result of these two serious failures is a more comprehensive one: the basic purpose of theological education, to prepare people to fill competently the functions of ministry, is not often enough or fully enough achieved. The surprising substantive contribution of the last decade's writing on

theological education has been to challenge our almost unanimous conviction that these are the problems we should be struggling to solve. Indeed, the literature strongly suggests that our preoccupation with problems is a problem in itself, for it masks much more fundamental difficulties that underlie all of them.

What are these problems that are more fundamental than the integration of the disciplines, the relation of theory and practice, and the adequacy of preparation for ministry, which we have long thought the most difficult problems we face? In *Theologia*, the first volume to appear in the recent series of writings, Edward Farley argues that our most fundamental problem—he calls it a crisis—arises from the fact that the generic structure of studies that is now shared by North American theological schools across the range of Christian traditions—the structure that holds most of our educational practices and ideas in place—is incoherent.

Farley reaches this conclusion from a historical account of how the present structure came into being. In the late medieval and early Reformation periods, theology was conceived in a unified way, as a *habitus*, a wisdom that disposes the knower to God. This unified theology had divisions or literatures—scripture, doctrine, the history of God’s work in the church, and polemics against error—but all were aspects of a single thing, theology. In subsequent centuries this notion of theology as sapiential knowing was eroded, and it lost its power to unify its internal divisions. The divisions themselves, however, have remained in place, over time taking on new and highly disparate functions and meanings. The late Reformation contributed an arrangement for these separate divisions that reflected ideas about religious authority and knowledge that reigned at the time: Scripture first, next its exposition as theological teachings, and then the application of those teachings to life. The arrangement is still with us today, despite the fact that the notions of authority and knowledge that hold it in place have been greatly revised and in some cases discarded.

The late Enlightenment further transformed the divisions of study into modern academic disciplines. They continue to function that way, despite the fact that many of us deplore the fragmentation and hyperspecialization that has been the result. The orienting purpose of these divisions/disciplines has also changed. Schleiermacher proposed a new way to state the purpose of theological study that would justify its presence in the modern university: It prepares professional leaders for the churches, which are socially significant institutions. This professional orientation of the whole program of study is now almost universally accepted, despite the enormous confusion it has created about what

the various disciplines of study have to do with preparation for practice. And we North Americans have made our own contribution: an image of practice as the collection of jobs or functions that the clergy carry out. This is the image that now regulates practical and ministry studies, with its many sub-disciplines, despite the deep doubts many have expressed about the individualism and technocracy that this conception of practice seems to support.

These developments, piled on one another over time, have left a highly problematic legacy, a crazy-quilt pattern of studies that has no internal order and for which no compelling rationale can be constructed, because the pattern is simply an aggregate of forms and ideas from the distant and recent past, fit into a structure, the four-fold pattern, whose principles of unity ceased to have power for us a long time ago. Even without a persuasive set of reasons for studying these things, to this end, in this order, rather than other things, to other ends, in some other order, however, the inherited pattern of studies is a heavy weight that holds in place many features of and ideas about theological education, whether or not we like them and want to keep them in their present form. The contradiction involved here—the practice of theological education is regulated by a pattern of studies for which we can produce no satisfactory intellectual explanation—is, Farley maintains, our fundamental problem, a problem so serious that it amounts to a crisis.

Most other recent writers on theological education substantially agree with Farley that the ways that theological education is oriented and ordered make no coherent sense. Further, they join him in pointing out that the problems we have been occupied with are grounded in some assumptions that no longer seem safe in light of Farley's account. These assumptions, which amount to a sort of conventional wisdom about theological education, have to do, like the problems they undergird, with its basic features: its goal, its structure, and its movement. The challenges to our conventional assumptions about these things have been vigorous. More than anything else, these challenges are what surprised us about the recent literature and discussions and what promises to keep theological educators awake during the next decade of conversation about theological education.

The first sharp challenge has been to our standard assumption about the overarching and governing goal of theological education. By and large, the conventional wisdom has it that the goal of a theological education is to prepare people to fill competently the functions of the clergy. That goal is stated explicitly in many seminary catalogs, and it functions even more widely as the assumption behind the traditional problem of how the whole of a theological

education can equip people for more effective ministry practice. But these writers, newly aware that the functions of ministry practice became the goal of theological study only recently, have consistently called this assumption into question. The writers recognize, of course, that most students in theological schools are planning to serve the church in professional roles, and none of the writers is opposed to competence in the clergy. What they do oppose is using a functionalist understanding of church leadership as the organizing principle of theological education, as the criterion for deciding what gets studied and in what order. Among other arguments, they advance the contention that functionalist education simply does not work. Their underlying point here seems analogous to the classic paradox about happiness: the more directly you pursue happiness as the goal of life, the less likely you are to become happy. Similarly, the more directly we pursue the goal of cultivating competence to fill the functions of church leadership, the less likely we are to prepare people to be competent leaders of churches over the long haul.

Therefore, many recent writers suggest that a different approach is required: Rather than defining the overarching goal of theological education by reference to the functions clergy fill, they say, it should be defined as it was before the functionalist addition, by reference to theology. In the interim, however, theology has changed, becoming a specialized discipline. For it again to serve as the goal and glue and reference point of the whole pattern of studies, it will have to be massively reconceived. Several of the recent writers have called for this and have offered proposals for what theology as a broad, inclusive enterprise would look like. These proposals are diverse, but most of the writers converge at one point: *theological formation* rather than preparation for the functions of ministry should be the central, defining task of theological education.

Recent writers also challenge our conventional assumptions that the movement in theological education is from theory to application in practice. That theory *should* provide foundations and direction for practice is, of course, what we assume when we struggle with the traditional problem of how we can make the theory of the so-called academic disciplines more relevant for application in the so-called practical ones. Challenges to the conventional wisdom on this score have come from two sides. Farley and other writers, such as Craig Dykstra, point out that our conceptions of both are so confused that the chances of relating the terms are slim. What, for instance, *is* theory in theological education? Is it the theoretical human sciences that support the specialized areas of ministry study, such as psychology, sociology, and communications? Or is it everything that

goes on in all the non-practical fields? Just what are we referring to when we say that theory should be related to practice? From another side, many writers find recent dynamic and interactive views of practice more appealing than the one-way theory-to-application model that theological education uses. For one or the other of these reasons, virtually all the authors agree that it is precisely our persistent use of the conventional pairs of contrast terms “theory / practice” and “academic / practical” to describe our problems that obfuscates what our problems really are and that makes them so intractable.

The third conventional assumption consistently challenged in the recent literature concerns the *structure* of theological education. This assumption, embedded in the traditional problem of how to integrate the disciplines, is that we have four disciplines (Scripture studies, historical studies, theological studies, and practical studies) that can be meshed because, presumably, they all contribute to the overarching goal of theological education, which is conventionally stated as preparing people to function as clergy. The areas correspond to the sorts of competencies future church leaders will require in order to carry out their functions. The literature rejects this view. Farley and others have produced convincing evidence that the pattern of studies and its divisions developed haphazardly. They were not devised to reach any one objective, and they are not parts of any larger whole. Therefore, contrary to the conventional wisdom, they are unlikely to be integrated, no matter how hard we struggle to do that.

What the field areas have become, recent authors have pointed out, are loose political confederacies among scholars who share a training in the same professional academic disciplines (such as history or philosophy or psychology) and share loyalties to the same professional academic guilds. The writing and discussion in this decade has raised forceful questions about whether these academic disciplines and guilds should continue to determine the structure of theological education. To permit this, say some authors, is to subvert the proper overarching goal of theological education, which is “to do theology.” Instead, the character of the goal ought to define the structure of theological education and bend the disciplines to its purposes. That will mean a smudging of what now seem self-evident lines between disciplines, a demand for scholars capable of a good deal more “inter-disciplinary” scholarship, and perhaps the invention of some new “disciplines.”

The writers and discussion participants of the last decade have accomplished a great deal by making us question our basic assumptions about what we are doing in theological education. They have awakened us, shaken us out

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of our complacency, and provided an alternative to the boredom and frustration we felt with the same old set of problems. But the writers have also left us a great deal to do: If we can no longer simply take for granted that the goal of theological education is training for clergy functions, that this can be accomplished by applying theory or theology in practice, and that the four-fold structure of disciplines is adequate to these ends, then we have a great deal to talk about in the next period.

The ATS Globalization and Theological Education Project: Contextualization from a World Perspective

Robert J. Schreiter

Editor's Note: As early as 1980, ATS had a committee dealing with internationalization and theological education. That committee's work resulted in the Association establishing the Task Force on Globalization. The Task Force coordinated the Association's focus on globalization by conducting several national conferences, producing a significant body of literature dealing with globalization, and facilitating discussion of globalization issues at ATS Biennial Meetings. Most recently, the Task Force published an index to the five editions of *Theological Education* (produced between 1990 and 1994) that have addressed a wide range of issues related to globalization. In 1990, the Association adopted an accrediting standard on globalization. ATS attention to globalization has been enduring and widespread. The thinking, the literature, and the conversations that have been cultivated by this long-term effort are an important point of reference for the current discussions on Quality and Accreditation.

Robert Schreiter has served as consultant to the Task Force on Globalization and has made many scholarly contributions to this area. He addressed the 1992 ATS Biennial Meeting on the subject of contextualization, and that address was subsequently published in *Theological Education* (Supplement I, 1993). The volume contains much of the history of this ATS project and provides other useful analyses.

Following this editorial note is a portion of the Schreiter article. Prior to the section reprinted here, he identifies four assumptions about contextualization that emerge from his Roman Catholic identity: (1) its theological appreciation for "nature" (and therefore culture) that especially values oral modes of knowledge, (2) its concern for the centrality of the incarnation of Jesus Christ that carries hope about all of creation, (3) its sacramental view of the world that appreciates nature as conveying Divine revelation, and (4) its concern for the "evangelization of cultures" that goes beyond evangelizing individuals. Schreiter then made four observations about contextualization and globalization:

1. Contextualization from a world perspective becomes essential because of the inevitability of globalization. Contextualization is finding one's own voice against the backdrop of global media. It is a way of holding up what is noble and immensely human and humane in local culture—against all forces that would undermine its dignity.

2. Contextualization and globalization are interdependent. Thinking about context begins when the larger, global reality impinges uncomfortably. At the same time, our concepts of globalization have implications for what we do in our own locales. The two can serve as mutual correctives as we measure our faithfulness and our growth in our educational settings.

3. Globalization is currently profoundly asymmetrical. We are moving from an East-West axis to a North-South interaction. In this new world the North does not look to the South as a partner, but as a resource to be exploited. In this new world the population of the South is expanding and the average age of the North is growing older. New patterns of mission and dependency are emerging, but it is difficult to know the meaning of mutuality in such a profoundly unbalanced situation.

4. Contextualization is coming about more slowly than globalization. Why? Because the legacy of colonialism is still very strong. The power of the global media culture is pervasive. The North resists contextualization because it is felt to be a rejection of Northern values. The North resists contextualization because it simply does not like to do things differently.

In this situation, according to Schreiter, there are three concrete issues facing contextualization—the uprooting of peoples, the question of reception (or how the gospel message is received), and the shape of belonging in multiple worlds of reference. He reflects upon the implications of population movements for contextualization. He examines issues surrounding the way the gospel is offered and accepted in different contexts, and he notes that it is common for people to find themselves with double and even triple religious and cultural loyalties. The final sections of his address examined globalization and the implications of globalization and contextualization for theological education. The exact text of those final sections is reproduced here.

Globalization: The Long View

Along with our understanding of contextualization, we need a fuller understanding of globalization. I wish to sketch out a proposal here of how we might understand globalization from a perspective useful for theological education and ministry. Space does not permit working out the interaction with contextualization, except to make some suggestions in the closing section.

I wish to present this perspective on globalization by taking a longer view chronologically than we have been wont to do in theological education circles. Most frequently, we trace the interest in globalization back to the late 1970s, just as globalization itself is traced back to the early 1960s in business and education, or to the League of Nations in politics. However, I think that blinds us to those “world” perspectives we are hearing from the southern hemisphere. Globalization is a phenomenon much larger than theological education—something we all know, but tend to forget. It is larger than the phenomenon of religion, although religion plays an important role in it.¹

To aid in this, I want to make a rough adaptation of Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-system theory as a basis for understanding globalization.² I am proposing that globalization (as seen from the point of view of theological education) has gone through three stages. Each of these stages is shaped by larger developments that serve as the *carrier* of these developments (*i.e.*, they form a frame of reference

for which societies of that time articulate their reality). This articulation, in an integrated fashion of all elements of society, creates that phase's sense of *universality*. Religion in turn responds within the carrier to this universality. This is its *theological mode*. And this brings about certain *results* that reflect what, at that phase, constitutes effective globalization.

Schemata always distort reality. But they can help us see a bigger picture and help us raise questions about what we do, and see relationships that may have heretofore eluded us. The categories here of carrier, theological mode, universality and results are meant heuristically—not to foreclose, but to make us think.

It should be noted too that each of the three phases continues into those of its successors. But as we shall see, what happens to the theological modes of the previous phases is that they meet a different set of challenges than what they had encountered when they were the dominant mode. The phases should not be read in an evolutionary pattern from low to higher, the world and the carriers of those conditions. Let us turn to this long view of globalization.

First Phase: 1492-1945

Expansion and the Building of Empires

The first phase has its period of dominance from the European voyages of exploration down to the conclusion of the Second World War. It is a time of European expansion and the creation of new European territorial space on the other continents of the world. The *carrier* of this phase of globalization is an image of expansion and establishment of political power over wide areas of the world—empire. The mode of *universality* giving justification or credence to this expansion is the concept of *civilization* that is invoked. In the early stage, the peoples encountered are seen as either animal or demonic; in a later stage, as not fully evolved.³

On the religious side, we see a concomitant development, reflecting the envelope of the carrier in which it acts, and the universality in which it works out its own understanding of globalization. Images of expansion of the church, of a *plantatio ecclesiae* come to the fore. There is a sudden interest in worldwide evangelization (first among Roman Catholics in Spain and Portugal; later among churches of the Reformation as England and the Netherlands become worldwide powers). The *theological mode* responding to this is *world mission*, understood as saving souls and extending the church. The *results*, by the height of European empire building in the nineteenth century, is a worldwide missionary movement. Globalization, at this point, means extending the message of Christ and his church throughout the whole world.

Second Phase: 1945-1989

Accompaniment, Dialogue, Solidarity

The Second World War finished what the First World War began: the dissolution of the overseas empires of Europe. From the late 1940s into the 1960s, region after region was given independence (at least “flag” independence) and it looked as though the shackles of colonialism would be cast off. There was an optimism about a new world at that time, fueled by economic expansion in the North and a discourse of “development” of the newly formed nations. All of this presaged a new kind of world. The *carrier* of this second phase was *decolonialization, independence and economic optimism*. The mode of universality was *optimism* about overcoming the evils of the past.

On the religious side, Reformation churches found themselves overcoming their old antagonisms (partially as a result of the student missionary movement and the experience of Resistance in Europe during the Second World War), and started coming together. The Roman Catholic Church abandoned at the official level its fortress mentality against the modern world and embraced that same modernity in the Second Vatican Council. Both of these Western embodiments of Christianity found themselves welcoming a new partnership with the churches of the South. The shift into the new phase called into question the dominant universalities of the previous phase. What “mission” meant came under close scrutiny. Meanwhile, many Catholics and Protestants continued to practice mission more or less as they had in the previous phase, while others sought modifications, and still others called for the outright abandonment of mission.

The response toward ecumenism, the ambivalence toward mission, and a new attention to the churches of the South was developed in the carrier envelope of decolonialization, independence and optimism. The *theological modes* that emerged were those of solidarity, dialogue, and accompaniment. Solidarity bespoke the new partnership that led to a sense of mutuality and commitment to the churches on the churches’ own terms; it gave birth to liberation theologies. Dialogue was a reaction to the evangelizing mode of the first phase, and emphasized respect for the other and left the possibility of conversion deliberately vague. Accompaniment was meant to overcome the hegemonic patterns of leadership from the colonial period, and replace them with greater mutuality. The *results* were a new definition of globalization as ecumenical cooperation, interreligious dialogue, and the struggle for justice.

These were all couched in the optimistic universality of the 1960s that the world’s problems could be overcome. The tension between mission and these latter three went largely unresolved, and for many there was a clear divide between mission, on the one hand, and ecumenism, dialogue and justice on the other. Many,

however, struggled to create a new synthesis. Globalization came to embrace all four by the 1980s.

Third Phase: 1989 - Between the Global and the Local

Paul Tillich and others said that the 20th century began in August 1914 with the outbreak of the Great War. It could equally be said that it ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall. But the conditions leading up to that political event were also shaping a larger understanding of what sometimes is called the postmodern world. It was 1973, the date of the OPEC oil embargo, which is often given as the date when economic power and the concomitant modes of production began to shift. New technologies, especially in communications, marked a move away from largely industrial economies to economies involved more in the flow of information, technologies, goods and services. Just when the South was struggling to attain nation-states, these states were becoming more and more superfluous as information and capital drew their own map of the world—one beyond the eighteenth century ideal of the nation-state.

The *carrier* of this new postmodern reality is a new *global capitalism*. As was noted earlier, the defeat of socialism left no alternative. But the liberal capitalism that had been seen as the implacable foe of Marxist socialism has largely disappeared now into a new form of capitalism that emphasizes the mobility of capital, information and resources rather than the building of large industrial bases. While often having a clear national identity of origin (Japanese, American, German), it in effect moves wherever it needs to in order to achieve its short-range goals. Because profit margins have narrowed since the 1960s, the temptation is to get the short-term profit rather than wait for a long-term return.⁴ This global capitalism is characterized by postnationalism, a communication system built on network rather than hierarchy, a multicentered view of the world, and a tendency to operate in the short term. While it brings untold new wealth to some, it also breeds asymmetries, conflict, and a sense of no alternatives for those not included in the flow of its information, technology, capital and goods.

Its mode of *universality* is the new *global culture*, characterized by American cola drinks, athletic and casual clothing, and American movie and television entertainment. It is a culture sent virtually everywhere, but received in considerably different fashions. For example, “Dynasty” is watched differently in Lagos than in Los Angeles; studies have shown that Canadians see the resolutions of disputes in “All in the Family” differently from the Dutch (Archie tends to be the winner in Canada, while Edith, Gloria and Meathead triumph in the Netherlands). The universality is both real and unreal at the same time. It is real inasmuch

as it is found everywhere; it is unreal in that what it signifies means different things in the reception of the local culture.

What becomes the theological *mode* of the third phase of globalization? Discussions of the meaning of mission continue. Worries about the stagnation of ecumenism; the possibility of genuine dialogue with the religiously other and a theology of religions; and speculation about the future of liberation theology in a no-alternative world bespeak the fact that even as we have moved into a new phase, the previously dominant modes continue with us. After all, most Christians still feel the need to spread the gospel, overcome the scandalous divisions in the body of Christ, understand other religious traditions better, and struggle for justice. But the optimism that marked those earlier discussions has been replaced by a sobered realism (the attitude of the postmodern phase). Can a new mode be identified?

I would suggest that the new *mode* will involve bridge-building, finding symbols of hope, and seeking paths of reconciliation. In other words, the barriers in the third phase are not between Empire and colony, or between older and younger church, but rather they are barriers that run helter-skelter through our communities, created by attempts to hold the global and the local in critical correlation. Even to phrase it as between North and South is too simple, since the South lives in the North and the North in the South. We need to find the cracks yawning in our midst where the global and the local fail to connect. We need to seek symbols of hope in a world that seems less and less able to hold out opportunities for another vision. Our hope is not the optimistic hope of the 1960s; it is a tempered, more sobered hope, but a hope nonetheless. Likewise, in the tensions and conflicts that emerge, we need to seek paths of reconciliation lest an ecologically threatened earth fracture altogether. There are many false paths of reconciliation, to be sure. But in an ever violent world where the majority suffer, reconciliation—the discovery of the gift of true humanity—is something we cannot disdain to seek.⁵

Globalization in this third phase, then, becomes a quest for the bridges between the global and the local. The global has changed; its economic face appears to be even less benign than in the recent past. This has prompted new expressions of the local—the eruptions in Central Asia and in Eastern Europe, the resurgence of native pride in the Americas, but also the rootlessness of much of affluent North America and Western Europe. How shall the global and the local be configured to one another, within communities and across continents? How shall prophetic challenge be maintained? If the hypothesis about the yoking together of the global and the local suggested above is correct, this could well be

the shape that globalization will take in the ensuing period, even as we struggle to integrate the understandings of the first and second phase.

Implications for Theological Education

Let me conclude this already too long presentation with just a couple of suggestions about what all of this means for theological education today. I make the suggestions in three points and a concluding remark about vision.

If the next phase of globalization finds us between the global and the local, we need to prepare ourselves and our students to:

1. *Understand the contextual.* Especially for uprooted peoples, for those who receive in a different way from how it is given, and who seek ways (and it is often plural) to belong. The world has shifted such that we can no longer presume (or perhaps should even presume) an Archimedean point.
2. *Build strong local communities.* Only communities confident of themselves and imbued with the gospel will resist the temptation to become enclaves or fortresses rather than the communities Christ intends.
3. *Interpret the global,* both in its hegemonies—how it destroys human life—and in its gifts of decentralization, democratization, and local empowerment.

To carry these out in the concrete may require some axial changes. The sin-and-forgiveness model that has dominated Western Christianity for some many centuries may need to give way to others. One being suggested from the South is a death-and-life model, since that hues closer to the day-to-day experiences of the poor of the world.

Certain biblical images have often undergirded, at least implicitly, our understandings of globalization. In the first phase, it was undoubtedly the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20. In the second phase, Luke may have provided the key: Luke 4:16-20, in the call to solidarity and justice; Luke 24:13-15, in the call to accompaniment.

The Scripture for this third phase may well be Ephesians 2:12-14; “[r]emember you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in this world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.”

ENDNOTES

1. See the collection by Wade Clark Roof, *World Order and Religion* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991).
2. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the World-Capitalist Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974) 2 vols.
3. For a good history of this development of understandings of the “other” encountered, see Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).
4. For a general description of this new form of global capitalism, see Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); for a critique of the relation between the liberal-industrial and global capitalism, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
5. I have explored these themes of reconciliation more fully in *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992).

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Editor's Note: This bibliography was originally published in 1993 in *Auburn Studies*. It has been constructed from several previously assimilated bibliographies and augmented by several other entries. Much of this literature produced during the past 12 years has been in the context of the ATS Basic Issues Research Project and several initiatives of the Lilly Endowment Inc. Appreciation is expressed to the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education for permission to reprint this bibliography, and to its staff, particularly Mark Wilhelm, for the work required to reprint the material in this edition of *Theological Education*.

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