
Theological Education

Theological Education
and the Practice of Ministry

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Theological Education, the journal of The Association of Theological Schools, is devoted solely to issues and ideas in graduate theological education. The journal supports the mission of the Association by: (1) providing a forum for scholarly discourse on current issues and trends in graduate theological education in the United States and Canada; (2) addressing the contemporary issues facing the community of theological schools; (3) sharing models of critical analysis and effective practice in theological education; and (4) recording the changes and advances in theological education.

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Introduction

Elizabeth C. Nordbeck

Andover Newton Theological School

Anyone who has labored for even a short time in theological education knows that preparing persons for ministry is no precise science. Effective preparation is part experience, part reflection, part careful planning and evaluation, part sheer grace. What these several essays suggest is that effective preparation is also an art, involving conscious acts of creative imagination from both individual teachers and teaching communities.

For this issue of *Theological Education*, member schools responded to a call for papers on "Theological Education and the Practice of Ministry." Although the topics of the essays are extremely diverse, ranging from writing skills to human sexuality, there is one commonality: today's theological educators are tirelessly inventive in their attempts to discover faithful methods and pedagogies that will be authentically transformative of both persons and ideas.

Transformation, broadly conceived, is the subject of the opening article, "Conversion of Mind and Heart in Theological Education," by Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, of the Catholic Theological Union. Faculty members generally agree that positive change, or conversion, is an important goal of effective theological education. But does such change actually occur—and if so, how? Hughes presents evidence, gleaned from exit interviews, that students do experience significant change in their beliefs, values, and behaviors when certain conditions are present—among them adequate time, discussion, diversity of perspectives, and integration of material. Educators themselves, she urges, need to be responsive to the phenomenon of conversion by using a variety of pedagogical styles, and by being attentive to the liminal nature of their students' learning experiences.

A cluster of five articles reveals some of the concrete, creative ways in which teachers and schools are attempting—with greater and lesser success—to provide the kind of context in which genuine conversion of mind and heart can take place. First, Bruce Shields of Emmanuel School of Religion offers "Integrating Ministry and Theology: One Seminary's Story." In the late 1980s the Emmanuel faculty created a new, team-taught introductory course in "Christian Ministries." Its goal was to help foster integrative thinking early in students' seminary careers by exposing them to the various fields within the general ministry area. Over several years, the intransigence of student schedules, as well as criticism of some of the elements of the course, have modified the original design. Nearly a decade later the goal of integration remains vitally important but somewhat elusive, and presently faculty are redesigning both this course and other integrative opportunities, including field education.

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Susanne Johnson and Patricia Davis, both of Perkins School of Theology, recount a more focused kind of classroom experiment—but also one with mixed results—in “Dialogue and Advocacy: A Case Study of a Course on Human Sexuality.” Responding to a request from the Texas United Methodist Conference, they sought to develop a course on human sexuality that would both “take embodied human sexuality seriously” and that would reflect responsibly the perspectives of feminist and liberationist theology. For them, the dilemma was the issue of advocacy, specifically for gay and lesbian persons: how is it possible to employ a methodology of advocacy in a context in which dialogue remains genuinely open and free? Johnson and Davis describe a “messy, paradoxical, and sometimes terror-filled” teaching experiment during which each became more conscious of her own power and the possibility that exists for the abuse of power.

In “Theological Education as Pastoral Care,” J. Earl Thompson of Andover Newton Theological School reminds readers that the classroom may be a locus for the working out of significant personal issues and problems, as well as a place for academic study. A surprisingly high number of today’s theological students have experienced personal trauma, grief, and loss prior to entering seminary. The result—particularly if these experiences remain unresolved—can be despair, apathy, and shame, all of which may impair a student’s ability to minister effectively as well as his or her ability to relate meaningfully with others. Thompson argues that theological schools need to offer these students a “secure base,” that is, a compassionate, collaborative environment in which they are encouraged to explore their own experiences with “sacred seriousness.” This can happen through lectures, small group work, prayer as a regular part of class instruction, and specific courses that focus, for example, on issues related to bereavement.

Few subjects are more universal than writing—and few are more neglected in theological education generally. In “Writing Practice and Pedagogy Across the Curriculum: Teaching Writing in a Theological Context,” Lucretia Bailey Yaghjian of Episcopal Divinity School and Weston Jesuit School of Theology offers a new paradigm for writing instruction in theological schools. Writing in this educational context, she contends, is more than the mastery of technical skills or the appropriation of the rhetoric and habits of theological discourse; it is itself a *theological practice* and an important (though often unrecognized) means for theological learning. Our schools, she argues, would do well to “render the writing process more visible” by envisioning writing as a theological task in which students integrate their own theological reflection with the technical requirements of the writing process.

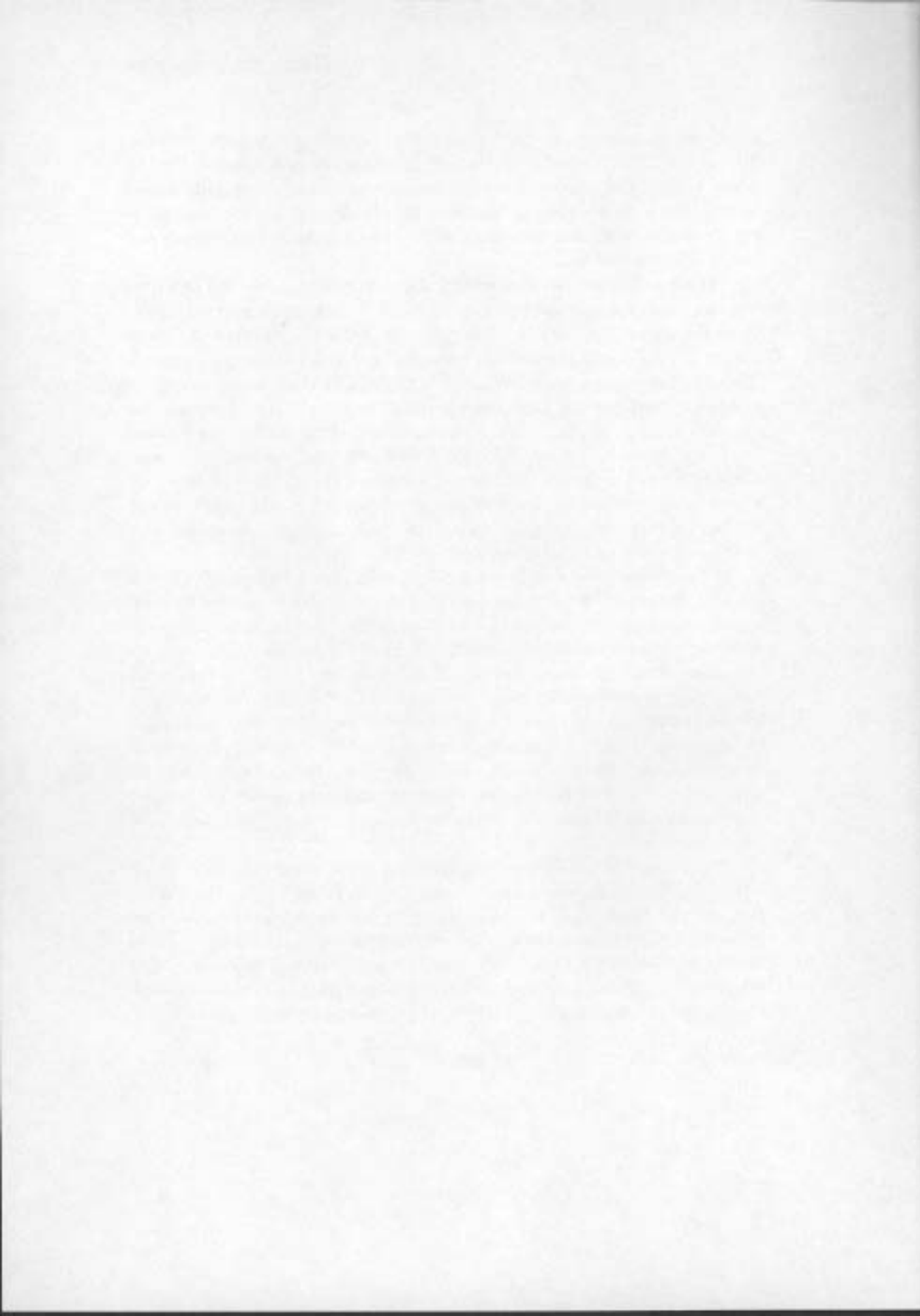
In the last article in this cluster of five, Malcolm Warford of Lexington Theological Seminary offers some broad and personal reflections on the teaching of practical ministry in “Renewing the Practices of Ministry.” Arguing against “quick fixes” for the problems that plague both liberal Protestantism

and theological education, Warford calls for a rethinking of the critical "practices of the Christian life"—proclamation, formation, and mission. This renewal, he cautions, must involve more than a focus on improving skills; it must be anchored in an adequate understanding of leadership, a disciplined life of prayer, and an adequate awareness of the church as both organization and bearer of living tradition.

The next three articles deal specifically with research as it can and does have an impact on theological education. In "Teaching Research Skills in Clinical Pastoral Education," Margot Hover of the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York describes an experiment at Duke University Divinity School, beginning in the late 1980s, that involved CPE students in research on spirituality and pastoral care. Despite initial resistance, Hover reports, the program eventually won wide support, encouraging students to become familiar with research methodologies, to read critically, and to explore available resources. An interdisciplinary approach—psychology and sociology professors as well as chaplains participated—provided mutual insight as well as valuable experience in collaboration; one result was a broadened focus on both quantitative and qualitative research.

In "Congregations and Theological Education and Research," Thomas Edward Frank of Candler School of Theology describes another ambitious experiment. Supported by a grant from Lilly Endowment, seven faculty members and eighteen research assistants—all from diverse disciplines and denominational backgrounds—embarked on a three-year program to study the practices of congregational life. Committed to a fully collaborative style of inquiry and research, the participants contended throughout with differences in methodology, status, common definitions, and "not least" with overburdened schedules. Nevertheless, it was the struggle to remain in the conversation, to "speak in (their) own voices" while honoring the voices of colleagues that was ultimately transformative of the participants' collegiality and pedagogy.

The final article, from Robert K. Martin of Yale University Divinity School, reflects on "Congregational Studies and Critical Pedagogy in Theological Perspective." Using these two popular contemporary modes of analysis for mutual critique, Martin reveals their limitations, as well as the correctives they offer each other. If both congregational studies and critical pedagogy could "coalesce," Martin believes, they could contribute significantly to the transformation and reorientation of the church to its true identity and mission.



Conversion of Mind and Heart in Theological Education

Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ
Catholic Theological Union

A few years ago the Midwest Association of Theological Schools (MATS) took as the focus of its annual meeting the question of whether and to what extent we can identify change happening within our students in the course of their studies. The "change" that we explored during the meeting was change of direction, change for the better, the change we have come to associate with the word "conversion" as described, for example, by Bernard Lonergan as follows:

One frees oneself from the inauthentic. One grows in authenticity. Harmful, dangerous, misleading satisfactions are dropped. Fears of discomfort, pain, privation have less power to deflect one from one's course. Values are apprehended where before they were overlooked. Scales of preference shift. Errors, rationalizations, ideologies fall and shatter to leave one open to things as they are and to [humanity] as [it] should be.¹

During the MATS's meeting I was asked to reflect on student capacity for change² in the classroom setting, specifically, on these questions: What changes can we expect from a program of theological studies? Is the student potential for change boundless or is it actually quite limited? Is it possible that in a course of studies students move from very narrow and rigid viewpoints to broader understandings of the tradition of the church, the naming of God, the identity of the minister, methods of pastoral care, and so on? Furthermore, in considering the classroom as the locus of conversion of a person's beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, values, viewpoints, and perspective, what is helpful in effecting such change?

This topic was selected by the Midwest Association of Theological Schools in light of statements in the 1993 *Program of Priestly Formation (PPF)*³, a document that delineates the essential structure and content of a seminarian's preparation for ordination in the Roman Catholic Church but whose broad pedagogical scope might offer appropriate questions for any who ponder the possibilities of formation and transformation through a course of studies.

According to the PPF, as candidates progress in their studies they should "grow personally into ever more committed disciples by virtue of what they learn [333]." The document further suggests that the goal of intellectual formation is the conversion of mind and heart, the only sure foundation for a lifetime of teaching and preaching. The PPF acknowledges that such learning

will not come easily or automatically, but is the result of effort and hard work on the part of an individual and through a program that is comprehensive, extensive, pastorally oriented, ecumenically sensitive, and personally appropriated.

Appropriation obviously is the key, as the PPF concludes: "A sound theological education is essentially incomplete without personal appropriation by seminarians. With such appropriation, as faith and knowledge penetrate interior understanding, intellectual conversion should follow [347]."

But does it? And if so, how, in what areas, and under what conditions?

The following reflections on these questions fall into two parts: personal testimonies of change acquired through student exit interviews will be followed by a brief excursion into the meaning of intellectual conversion, together with some conclusions and questions this raises for theological education.

Testimonies of Change

One way to assess student capacity for change is the exit interview, either by written questionnaire or in person. The following responses were provided by a random sampling of recent graduates, men and women of a variety of ages and backgrounds from many different cultures. Interviewees received a letter with a series of questions to consider before the interview, among them:

How do you think you have changed in the classroom? For example: did you experience change in any attitudes or values? Was a cherished viewpoint or perspective challenged by what you read or talked about? Did any patterns of behavior shift because of your course of studies? Can you identify anything you could call a "conversion" in your study of theology?

Every single respondent said YES. Here is a sampling.

The most dramatic testimony was offered by a young Portuguese man, probably in his late twenties; he was a member of an international missionary community, and was in a four-year Master of Divinity degree program preparing for ordination. By his own admission "Carlos" began his studies with "an attitude." He did not choose to study in the United States, in fact he was very negative about the country and its culture and even more so about the church in the United States which he believed to be guilty at least of material heresy, especially about the role of women. Furthermore, he had an image of the ordained minister as *The Boss* and as *The Holy One*. He came to the United States with some fear and with anger that his request for study in Italy or Germany had been denied. Add to this the agony of loneliness, of unfamiliar foods, of difficult communication, of unfamiliar pedagogical approaches and practices, and it is clear that Carlos was very vulnerable and a perfect candidate for change. In his exit interview Carlos said he would conclude his studies with a

different idea of church, of the United States, of the American church, of ministry and the many ministries in the church, of the ordained minister as a servant, of the meaning of discipleship.

How did this happen? First, *time* was important. Twenty-four years of personal history were being undone and radically modified. Second, proficiency in *English* and work on study skills before embarking on theological studies was very important because it made Carlos feel he was on a level playing field with other students from the beginning and not inferior to native English speakers. Third, and perhaps most important in this case, was the power of *reading*—new books and new ideas. Carlos had a voracious appetite for reading and he really engaged material, struggled with it, raised questions, let it get under his skin. Fourth, Carlos was amazed at the fact that “people asked me to *think*!” He had been used to a different system of study marked by lecture and memorization for exams. During his theological studies he recognized the value of critical thinking in the appropriation of material and its integration. “I discovered freedom in different perspectives and a sensitivity to other ways of thinking besides my own.” Fifth, it was particularly his New Testament courses, especially rigorous exegetical methods, combined with questions of contemporary meaning that made Carlos come to terms with new images of discipleship and the person and work of a true disciple. Sixth, *women* teachers were new to Carlos, who had wondered at the outset what women could possibly teach him about becoming a priest! Further, he had to come to terms with the presence of women among his classmates, even in classes in preaching and presiding—and not just their presence but their gifts, commitment, and obvious competency. In his words: “I saw them in action! I could not deny it.” Finally, because Carlos chose to specialize in Word and Worship he said he came to believe that the renewal of his church (Portugal) was possible at the *symbolic* level because of the power of symbol to shape thought!

While the experience of Carlos represents a radical conversion, his experience is not isolated. Again and again, perhaps in less dramatic ways, other students articulated similar experiences in their exit interviews. “Bernadette,” a middle-aged woman, had begun her studies in the school’s fall term in Israel and then finished her sabbatical year studying biblical spirituality in a continuing education program.

Bernadette was able to speak of two “conversions,” the first about change itself. “I developed a more conscious understanding of how change happens and how change is resisted,” she wrote. Resistance to change crystallized for her when she heard someone quote the writer and poet, Annie Dillard: “I often think of the set pieces of liturgy as certain words which people have successfully addressed to God without their getting killed.”⁴ Bernadette left her studies “better equipped to deal with change and to work for renewal” after her updating in sacraments, canon law, and ethics. Of the latter she found it particularly liberating to discover the role of personal conscience.

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Secondly, and probably typical for most persons on sabbatical in theological schools, Bernadette reviewed her life and treated her sabbatical like a year of retreat. "I had time; I had great advisement; I studied with wonderful people, and my confidence was rebuilt. I have gifts and skills and I am a part of the church!"

Among the factors Bernadette identified as important in the process of conversion were: (1) time; (2) assignments that allowed for integration and application; (3) the diversity and mix in the classroom; (4) particular teachers; (5) a nurturing and open classroom environment; (6) the presence of other middle-aged learners like herself; and (7) the welcoming of discussion and dissent as catalyst to personal thought.

"Joseph," a priest from India, was completing a two-year Master of Arts research degree when he responded to the exit interview. The impetus for conversion that he found most challenging was the cross-cultural reality he encountered in the classroom. "I discovered that my experience was not the whole of reality but only one point of view among many. There is a need for give and take, and when respect for diversity is present and people are welcoming of the other, there is a great richness. I will never again see with mono-cultural eyes!"

Joseph identified the style of pedagogy he encountered as critical to his experience of conversion. Before beginning his M.A. studies Joseph had been used to classes extending the entire day in which professors imparted knowledge and students—like empty vessels—received it unquestioningly. Joseph spoke of one example after another in which his eyes were opened, and as he spoke he was identifying a pedagogical shift from the deductive to the empirical, from the static to the dynamic, from the abstract to the concrete, from the universal to the particular, from invariable rules to intelligent adaptation. He also addressed the importance of affirmation and openness and, above all, patience, while he found his "land legs" in a new classroom situation and style.

Joseph, incidentally, also spoke about women and his conversion with regard to their role in the church. He said he had valued collaborative opportunities in classes, especially small groups, group assignments, student feedback alongside a teacher's comments, and group presentations as ways that *collaboration* (one of his conversions) was nurtured.

His other specific learning was about priesthood. He would leave his studies, he said, with a better sense of his role and his human limitations. Among other insights, he had made a commitment to bring some balance to his life, to find time for reading and reflection, for more contemplative sermon preparation, rather than working twenty-four hours a day as he had.

A group exit interview yielded other interesting comments about capacity for change. Four women students gathered one day to reflect together about their experience of study. They stated at the outset that they chose a group interview because it would be more in keeping with the way they had ap-

proached their whole program of studies. Two of these women were in the Master of Divinity program and the other two were completing their Master of Theological Studies degrees. These four women were in their thirties and forties; one was married and three were not.

What was common in their experience was this: the change that happened in them was that all had learned to trust their own human and religious experience as valid and true. Further, they claimed that their intellects were stretched and their powers of discernment were sharpened.

Women regularly have a difficult adjustment to theological studies when they experience themselves as simultaneously a subtle threat to others even while they have little personal self-confidence that they can do theology, learn a new theological vocabulary, and so on. Each of these women said she began her studies wondering: "Can I do it?"

What helped these women? First of all, in a colloquium they discovered the similarities in their hopes and their fears, they came to rely on one another in an experience named by one as "liminal" and by another as "transition and the inevitable leveling of a new situation." As one said: "In the midst of insecurity there must be some security or change simply cannot happen."

The conversion of these women was in accepting their own potentiality. To make that possible they identified, besides the colloquium: (1) a study skills workshop that provided, at the outset of their work, a familiarity with the tools and methods of doing theology; (2) the constant assurance during orientation week that it would be normal to feel overwhelmed; (3) teachers and other students who were genuinely interested in their prior life experience and willing to use it as a resource for the rest of the class; (4) the regular option of reflection papers and journals—which these women identified as "harder than research work," and which gave them permission to struggle with questions and issues; (5) faculty members who themselves modeled an ability to live with questions without fear and who "love what they teach and make us want to learn it"; and (6) constant interaction with different cultures and being stretched by different points of view. In addition, ecumenism was identified as a live issue by these women, especially because of the regular opportunity to cross-register into other local seminaries for classes and thus to have frequent, even daily contact with students of many different communions.

One last interview proved instructive on the topic of capacity for change and conversion in the classroom. "Jeff" is a United States citizen whose interest in a ministerial vocation and thus the studies in preparation for ministry developed after teaching as a layman in a religious order seminary. Jeff identified a reordering of his understanding of ministry and priesthood in the course of his studies. The specific shift he could name was in his conception of ministry: no longer of domination and rule but of oversight and leadership. Jeff came to this awareness in studies, but even more, in personal interaction with others, in the accessibility of faculty and staff, in "theology over the lunch table"

and opportunities for informal faith sharing. Jeff identified the import of time for adjustment to graduate study, communal living, ministry, and urban life. His statement about adjustment suggests that it is not just international students who need time and patience at the beginning of their programs but that every student is dealing with liminal experiences of vulnerability, isolation, loss of social identity, and a variety of semi-conscious insecurities as they begin the study of theology. Jeff also identified the integrating seminar as critical in coming to crystallize new meanings, especially for a late-blooming convert to Christianity like himself who came with lots of misinformation and preconceptions.

Jeff was pursuing a double degree, a Master of Divinity and a Master of Arts. He worked hard and found that "The more I study the less I know. God is more elusive: my images have been stretched, shattered, changed, and have become more sacred. Tradition has become a positive word. I have a new ecclesiological vision and a shift in my thinking from a Bishop-centered church to a church centered on the People of God." A certain mature realism was a product of his studies as well: "I am free to face the shortcomings in the church. I do not feel I must defend it, but there is this odd paradox: as my cynicism about the church has grown at the same time my love for the church has also deepened."

What are we to make of all these personal testimonies? Is there a way to understand the dynamics of change that can make sense of such profound transformations as articulated in this sampling of exit interviews?

Intellectual Conversion and Its Ramifications

Whether or not graduates explicitly used the language of "conversion" when they described the change that happened to them during their study of theology, it was clear that they had found themselves engaged in life-changing transformations of thinking and believing, of attitudes and patterns of behavior, of hopes and expectations. Can we call these kinds of articulations "conversion"?

Among the enormous and growing literature on the topic of conversion, Bernard Lonergan's ground-breaking distinction of different types of conversion is particularly cogent and helpful.³ For Lonergan, when conversion occurs in the lives of individuals, it cannot simply be described as a change or even a development. On the contrary, conversion is a radical transformation that plays itself out, on all levels of one's life, in a whole series of changes and developments. Something which was taken for granted and may have gone unnoticed now becomes present. What attracted little concern may now preoccupy with a certain urgency. One's thinking, understanding, valuing, and loving may be radically reversed and so, too, one's relationships to other persons and to God are also radically reoriented.

Not all conversion is as total as this of course, nor perhaps as radical! Conversion has many dimensions and many different patterns. It also has many and varied triggers. A changed relationship with God may precede or follow other changes that are personal or social, moral or intellectual. There are no fixed rules of antecedence and consequence, no necessity of simultaneity, no prescribed dimensions of change. Conversion may be telescoped into a single moment of blinding realization as Saul knew on the road to Damascus or it may be extensive over time, even the slow maturing process of a lifetime. It may happen somewhere in between. It may even happen in our classrooms!

What is true to say of genuine conversion is this: the one who experiences conversion perceives differently, values differently, and relates to others differently because the person is *different*. And the new perceptions and understandings are not so much a new set of statements, but rather new meanings that attach themselves to almost any previously perceived meaning. Paul described such a conversion when he said: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Cor. 5:17) Perhaps the same experience is communicated in the phrase: "How changed are my ambitions."

Changed ambitions, a new world, and a new order—this surely captures the import of the student testimonies described above. Students spoke of changed ambitions and a new world order with regard to their understanding of church and of the churches, of priesthood, ministry and discipleship, of culture and the relativity it imposes, of self and self-worth, of community, of God.

Lonergan distinguishes a threefold conversion: "... an intellectual conversion by which without reserve one enters the world mediated by meaning; a moral conversion by which one comes to live in a world motivated by values; and a religious conversion when one accepts God's gift of ... love bestowed through the Holy Spirit."⁶ How are we to understand intellectual conversion and to make some judgment about the extent of conversion experienced by those whose stories we have just explored?

Intellectual conversion is a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge. The myth is that knowing is like looking, that objectivity is like seeing what is there to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is what is out there now to be looked at.⁷

Such a myth is of a world known only through the immediacy and sense experience of an individual. But knowing is more than seeing. It is receiving a world mediated by the experience of a cultured community and by the continuously checked and rechecked judgments of a community. At this point Lonergan would do an excursus on experience, organized and extrapolated by

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understanding, posited by judgment and belief — all of it in dialogue with a community.

Loneragan distinguishes intellectual conversion from both moral and religious conversion. While intellectual conversion is to truth, moral conversion is to values. Moral conversion, again, according to Lonergan, changes the criteria of one's decisions and choices from satisfactions to values. Moral conversion consists in opting for the truly good. Religious conversion is to a total being-in-love.

What strikes a reader of Lonergan is that while there may be distinctions among these three types of conversion it is hard to separate them completely. Further, they are not sequential.

It may even be true to say—and this would have enormous implications for classroom capacity for change—these are not really three different kinds of conversion at all but simply different aspects of a single whole reality and that now one aspect, now another seems primary or dominant. Perhaps we might posit of these various categories that different individuals with different personalities will normally be drawn into a new world of meaning or to new ambitions by one or another of these modes most congenial to their own make-up. Some students, for example, may be more open to transformation and more inspired to change because they are attracted to truth itself, to new books and new ideas, to being challenged intellectually and to struggling for new knowledge, to greater diversity in the class and thus to the animated discussions that are there engendered. Others may be particularly susceptible to values: to competence, to accessibility, to openness, to understanding. Some students may be drawn to “changed ambitions” because a spark flies in the classroom, because they are moved by the authenticity and conviction of a teacher or fellow student or because they come to love a subject and the world it opens to them.

The vignettes of students would seem to suggest the same, because not all could be called intellectual conversion strictly speaking but all came primarily through an intellectual exchange in a classroom setting. How, then, does conversion happen in a classroom?

If there are not three different kinds of conversion but one reality with three different portals, then theological educators need to be attentive to the particular dynamics that are keys to the *three* portals. Specifically, teachers not only *might* use a variety of pedagogical styles in a class but, in light of how change happens, *must* do so in order to touch the mind, heart, and religious experience of different kinds of students, because different kinds of students are invited to conversion, to becoming different, to transformation, in a variety of ways! Discussion, small group work, practical courses and their evaluations, broad reading, research, writing, oral exams, journals, field experiences, theological reflection—these are not better or worse pedagogical methods nor are they more or less critical—industrial strength theology vs. pabulum. No, they are a variety of modes of integration, some more congenial than others to a given

individual. (Parenthetically, it appears that some degree of suspicion should be exercised about lengthy bibliographies and excessive reading assignments. Conversion cannot happen when one is careening through material just to get through several hundred pages overnight. Time, it would seem from student testimony, is critical to appropriation and change.)

Few of us are like Paul on the Damascus Road, and even Paul needed to head for the desert to ponder what happened to him when he was on the road. For most of us, conversion appears to happen in very ordinary circumstances in very ordinary time . . . and it *takes* time. Two of the most stressful periods for students in the course of their studies are beginnings and endings. Perhaps faculty need to be more attentive to the liminal experience of their new students, especially designing modes of classroom interaction and accountability that take into account the variety of transitions students must undergo as they begin their studies. Similarly it would appear necessary to be quite deliberate about the importance of time for the integration process as students prepare to graduate.

Classroom diversity is another factor that seemed to play a significant role in the exit interview conversations. Conversion was regularly identified as happening because of the great challenge of diversity in the classroom. Smaller schools particularly are faced with a formidable task of providing sufficient diversity within the classroom so that the stimulation of other world views provokes each one to perceive the world in new ways, to think differently, to be challenged and changed by other cultures, women's voices, ecumenical perspectives.

Does conversion happen to all our students? Obviously not. But one particularly bothersome reality is that some students discover "coping mechanisms," ways that the shrewdest students can pretend a change because it is expected, for example, in use of inclusive language or tolerance for diversity that masks sexism or racism. How is it possible, as educators, to discover such behavior and build in ways of testing the depth of change so that alleged conversions cannot be shed as easily as a winter coat when one returns to a different climate?

Finally, how can educators assist students to integrate their classroom conversions with their unexamined, pre-theological beliefs and behaviors? In too many graduates these peacefully coexist! Practical courses may be critical in this regard. Students may learn and be transformed by their biblical studies to think about reality differently: for example, to think differently about community or discipleship or their image of God, and then when they preach or preside they may fall back into their childhood understandings, quite unaware that they have made no connections in their several worlds of meaning. Theological reflection and integrating seminars are helpful methods of integrating the several levels on which we live our lives. It becomes a question of sustaining the dialogue.

Conclusion

Does conversion happen in the classroom? Absolutely. As our students progress in their studies they have every opportunity to grow personally into ever more committed disciples by virtue of what they learn. The classroom setting, because it is a community of learning, may also be a catalyst for change: "Conversion is existential, intensely personal, utterly intimate. But it is not so private as to be solitary. It can happen to many, and they can form a community to sustain one another in their self-transformation and to help one another in working out the implications and fulfilling the promise of their new life."¹

Conversion in the classroom is not automatic, of course. But there are ways in which theological educators can become more attentive to the dynamics of growth and change, to the many modes of participation and accountability that foster growth, to the variety of personality types, learning styles, and personal attractions that will draw people more deeply into the possibility of transformation. Time is important. Diversity unsettles and frees. There seems to be an identifiable rhythm of beginnings and endings that leaves one particularly open to change.

One might have been inclined to protest throughout this article that conversion is none of our business as educators. Granted, conversion is accomplished ultimately because of divine gift and grace. Nevertheless, if the *Program of Priestly Formation* is correct that the goal of intellectual formation is the conversion of mind and heart, the only sure foundation for a lifetime of teaching and preaching, then we had best attend to our students' capacity for change in the classroom and ways in which the classroom environment may become more congenial to such personal appropriation and the transformation that follows.

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ENDNOTES

1. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 52.
2. In this essay I will use the word "change" in Lonergan's sense of conversion or "change for the better."
3. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1993).
4. Annie Dillard, *Holy the Firm* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), 59.
5. See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, op. cit., passim.
6. Bernard Lonergan, "Reality, Myth, Symbol" in *Myth, Symbol, and Reality*, ed. Alan M. Olson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 36.
7. Lonergan, *Method*, 238.
8. Bernard Lonergan, "Functional Specialties in Theology," *Gregorianum* 50 (1969), 490.

Integrating Ministry and Theology: One Seminary's Story

Bruce E. Shields

Emmanuel School of Religion

The faculty of Emmanuel School of Religion has from the birth of the school been deeply committed to the integrating of thought and deed in ministry. This concern has produced several different kinds of programs over our thirty-five-year history, and we continue to make adjustments.

Our approach is described in a recently worded statement of philosophy of education by our faculty in Christian Ministries:

We of Emmanuel School of Religion are dedicated to leading students to understanding the gospel, the church, the world, and themselves in such a way that they will leave with the spiritual stability, the analytical ability, and the methodological flexibility needed to prepare them for effective service in Christ's kingdom.

In this article, I intend to describe two programs that reflect our theology of education. We welcome response from our colleagues in other schools to what we have done and what we are intending to do. The two programs under consideration are an introductory course in the Ministries curriculum and our supervised ministerial education program, both of which are designed to help students to integrate their seminary curriculum and, over the long run, to practice ministry in a way reflective of their personal theology of ministry.

Our Situation in 1985

The smorgasbörd approach to the M.Div. curriculum, which has been the style of our school for twenty years, did not seem to be working. On that our Ministries faculty members were agreed in the mid-1980s. Students seemed to be more prone to register for courses for which they felt prepared instead of those that would fill gaps in their preparation. Some were completing their requirements without a course in preaching (or education or counseling), only to discover not very far into their ministries a great need for what they had not elected to study.

Of even more concern to us was the obvious lack of integration we saw in many course term papers and theses, which we require for graduation. Theses in the area of ministries rarely displayed much wrestling with critical issues

either biblical or theological, while those in the traditional "classical" areas rarely dealt with questions arising from experience in ministry. What could we do about this?

Because our faculty at Emmanuel School of Religion is structured deliberately as a cross-disciplinary faculty, this entire situation struck us as strange. Our professor of preaching teaches New Testament. Our professor of world mission teaches Christian doctrine. We had been trying in our discrete classes to help students integrate the entire curriculum into their understanding of and experience in ministry. It just didn't seem to be working.

A New Idea

We began to work on the idea of a core course in Christian Ministries that would facilitate the kind of integrative thinking that we considered important to our students. Previously the students had complete freedom of choice in their course selections. The only limitation was that they were to choose a course from four of the five "fields" of ministerial responsibilities represented in the curriculum. The only required course in the Christian Ministries area was Introduction to the Christian World Mission, which could be taken for either Ministries or Doctrine credit.

Over a period of several months during the school year 1988-89, we suggested, analyzed, rejected, and revised many possible approaches to a course that would both introduce ministerial philosophy and skills, and facilitate integration. The general approach to the course came together in a meeting of the Ministries area faculty in February 1989. In March and April we compared notes on our ideas for the individual units, while continuing to fine-tune the details of integrative assignments. By the end of the term we had finally developed what we presently call CM501/502, Introduction to Christian Ministries.

This is a course taught by the entire Ministries faculty, comprised of six people; it covers preaching and worship, education, counseling, evangelism, administration, and leadership. The course opens in the fall and closes in the spring in sessions with all six faculty members present with the class participants. In the fall plenary session we orient the students to the entire course and explain how each of our specializations fits with the rest. In the spring we respond to questions the students put to us.

In preparation for the fall orientation session the students fill out a questionnaire (see addendum) giving us their unresearched response to issues about the nature of the church and its ministry. These are duplicated and read by all six instructors so that we have a basis for talking with students during the orientation meeting.

Each of the six fields of ministry is dealt with in a five-week period during the two semesters of the course. This does not give much time for practice, but

it does expose every M.Div. student to the primary issues, resources, and contemporary leaders in each field.

More important than these mini-courses, as we see it, are the integrative assignments. These include both a reading assignment and an extended writing assignment, which apply to the entire course. Each separate unit has its own assignments, including readings, and a unit paper dealing with the ministerial activity covered in the unit in relation to the student's understanding of the nature of the church and ministry.

Early in the fall semester the students are asked to read a book on the nature of the church (so far we have required William R. Robinson's *Biblical Doctrine of the Church*) and to write a personal response to the reading. In the first few years of the program we discovered that the response papers differed so vastly in quality that we developed a one-page guide for the reading and the response. We try to make clear that we do not expect every student to agree with everything Robinson wrote, but that we want them to think seriously and critically about the issues he raises so as to develop their own understanding of what the church is and how it should function. The guide appears to be helping students with their reading and with writing their responses.

This has proven to be a very helpful exercise. The reading does stimulate critical thinking about the church, and the writing of the response (not a review) pushes students to state clearly their personal views, an exercise that tends to facilitate discussions. We who teach in the first two units often wish that the assignment could be completed before the semester actually begins, but we must adhere to the schedule.

The primary reason we chose this sort of assignment as the entry to the course is our conviction that the most important conversation partner for the person involved in the tasks of ministry is the Bible. Richard Osmer, in his inaugural lecture as Thomas W. Synnott Professor of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary, has offered us a helpful survey of various ways to formulate a practical theology.¹ However, our faculty would take exception to his statement, "The conversation with which practical theology begins, I believe, is one with dogmatic theology and Christian ethics."² As important and helpful as those disciplines are, we are committed to the primacy of the Bible in forming our understanding of the nature of the church and ministry. In addition, we are not prone to accept uncritically the theories and approaches of the social sciences. We see great assistance in these methods, but we insist that our students consider them in relation to their understanding of God's revelation.

There are surprisingly few aspects of the original course that we have changed. At first we stated clearly that this course would be a prerequisite for all other courses in the Christian Ministries area. We were soon confronted with so many exceptions that made sense to us that we dropped that rule. Most of these exceptions were caused by our weekly class schedule, with classes offered

on either Tuesday and Wednesday or Thursday and Friday. In years when CM501/502 was offered on Tuesday and Wednesday, students who could attend only on Thursday and Friday would have to postpone taking the course until the next year, when it would fit into their schedules. Thus, for some students, enrolling in a Christian Ministries elective course would be put off for at least two years. We had also, early on, considered giving a brief quiz in the first meeting, but even before instituting the course we saw that a questionnaire completed in advance would be much more helpful to both students and instructors. Other than these changes, the course has been offered with few adjustments from 1989-90 until the present.

The Contemporary Quest

We are now, however, wrestling with the concept again. In 1992 our Curriculum Committee asked us to study several issues that had come to their attention. One of these had to do with the time constraints. They pointed out that because of the six-hour required course many students could schedule very little else in the Christian Ministries area. This meant that the only exposure many students received to most of the fields of ministry was a five-week unit. In terms of depth, the present situation is worse than before the course was developed. They also noted that some students were complaining about what they called the "bolt-through" nature of the short units. Both of these critiques had been and continue to be discussed by those who are instructors in the course.

The more unsettling criticism is that the integrative intent of the course is being realized only imperfectly. We were realistic enough not to expect perfection in this regard, knowing the vast differences among the backgrounds and abilities of our students. However, none of us has been very satisfied with the results of integration. We see signs of improved integration ability in many students, but those signs are not as generally noted as we had hoped.

To try to cope with these two major problems in our program, we began in 1995 to discuss ways to change the course into a one-semester course that would concentrate on the integration factor and sacrifice the ideal of conveying much information about the specific responsibilities of ministry. Personnel changes have complicated this restudy process. This next step is still under discussion, but a few aspects of it are becoming clear.

We see now at least one way to deal with the various activities of ministry in a simpler format. We are considering dealing first with the nature of ministry, then with communication in various patterns, and finally with organization. In this way we can get away completely from the discrete categories of what we call "fields of ministry" (preaching, worship, education, counseling, administration, evangelism, leadership, etc.). After discussing what ministry is, we can talk about the understandings and skills needed to communicate and organize in the church and in the world, issues into which all of us can have input.

We intend also to have the entire group of Ministries faculty involved more often during the course, sometimes acting as a panel, sometimes debating an issue, and sometimes leading break-out groups. We intend that this increased exposure to us as a group will facilitate integration better than our urging integration while teaching discrete units.

The tentative course description states: The course "is not an attempt simply to introduce students to the demands of congregational leadership. Its purpose is rather to lead students to develop their understanding of ministry in the light of the nature of the church and to integrate the various activities of ministry together into a theology of ministry." A tentative schedule might look this:

1. Faculty Team: Orientation to the course
2. Faculty Team: How our specialties fit the big picture
3. Ministering in the tradition of Christ: ministerial ethics
4. Ministering in the tradition of Christ: family life
5. Ministering in the tradition of Christ: personal discipline
6. Ministering in the tradition of Christ: devotional life
7. Faculty Team: discussion of Robinson, *Biblical Doctrine of the Church*
8. Faculty Team: discussion of ministry regarding Robinson's ideas
9. Communication by, in, and/or for the church
10. Communication with God: Worship
11. Communication with the congregation: Preaching
12. Communication with specific age groups: Education
13. Communication with troubled people: Counseling
14. Communication with unbelievers: Evangelism
15. Faculty Team: The importance of communication skills for ministry
16. Faculty Team: How to improve communication skills
17. Organization and first-century Christianity
18. Organization and the demands of the present
19. Organization: Personal time management
20. Organization: Ministerial time management
21. Organization: Personal characteristics of Christian leaders
22. Organization: Assessment of leadership potential
23. Organization: Developing leaders in the congregation
24. Organization: Administration as Christian ministry
25. Organization: Assessing ministry situations
26. Organization: Developing ministerial strategies
27. Organization: Delegating and motivating workers
28. Organization: Evaluating and adjusting in ministry
29. Faculty Team: Organizational patterns and ministerial specialties
30. Faculty Team: The nature and practice of ministry
31. Faculty Team: Open discussion in final exam period

We have yet to work out the details of assignments and scheduling, but we are on our way to something even better. We would welcome suggestions from other schools that might be ahead of us in the quest.

Supervised Ministry

At the same time we were developing the introduction course, we were revamping our field education program under the guidance of our first-ever director of field education. The program is also going through a time of transition at present, under our second director of supervised ministerial education. The following is basically his description.

Module I

Students are guided through a variety of self-assessment exercises (including Profiles of Ministry, Stage I) to discern their strengths and growth needs in ministry. This takes place in the fall semester, followed by a course on formation of Christian Ministry in the spring, which focuses on their formation as Christians and ministers.

Module II

Students serve two semesters in a supervised ministry experience. Working closely with their field supervisors, they develop a learning covenant identifying goals for their personal growth in ministry. Their weekly supervisory meetings focus especially on growth in those areas. In regular on-campus ministry reflection groups with their peers, the students share the struggles and joys of their ministries, while learning skills of theological reflection. Students have a great deal of freedom in selecting or developing a supervised ministry experience that will enrich their preparation for the kind of ministry to which they are called, e.g., hospital chaplaincy, campus ministry, cross-cultural service, etc.

Module III

For a semester, students meet weekly to learn from their reflections on actual ministry cases they are dealing with. In addition to the insights they gain through prayerfully looking at each case, they experience deep levels of fellowship and begin forming lifelong habits of learning and serving in the context of support/accountability groups.

In their final semester, all M.Div. students engage in further self-assessment (including Profiles of Ministry, Stage II) in order to measure progress in their ministry growth and to begin formulating plans for continuing growth after they complete their degree programs.

This program, which keeps M.Div. students involved in the consideration and practice of ministry through all the stages of their seminary curriculum,

encourages continuing theological reflection on ministerial activities and also continuing application in their ministry settings of their classroom learning. The growing edge of this program is the search for more effective ways of involving both field supervisors and congregations in the educational process.

Hope For The Future

Because the stated primary purpose of the school is "to prepare men and women for effective ministry," we are continually seeking ways to offer our students the means of analyzing their fields of service and of developing ways of working in those fields to accomplish God's will. The two programs described here are designed to help students integrate their M.Div. programs into lifelong ministerial effectiveness. We shall likely never be satisfied, but we continue to adjust with the changing demands of ministry to accomplish our goal.

Addendum — Questionnaire

CM 501 - Introduction to Christian Ministry
Emmanuel School of Religion

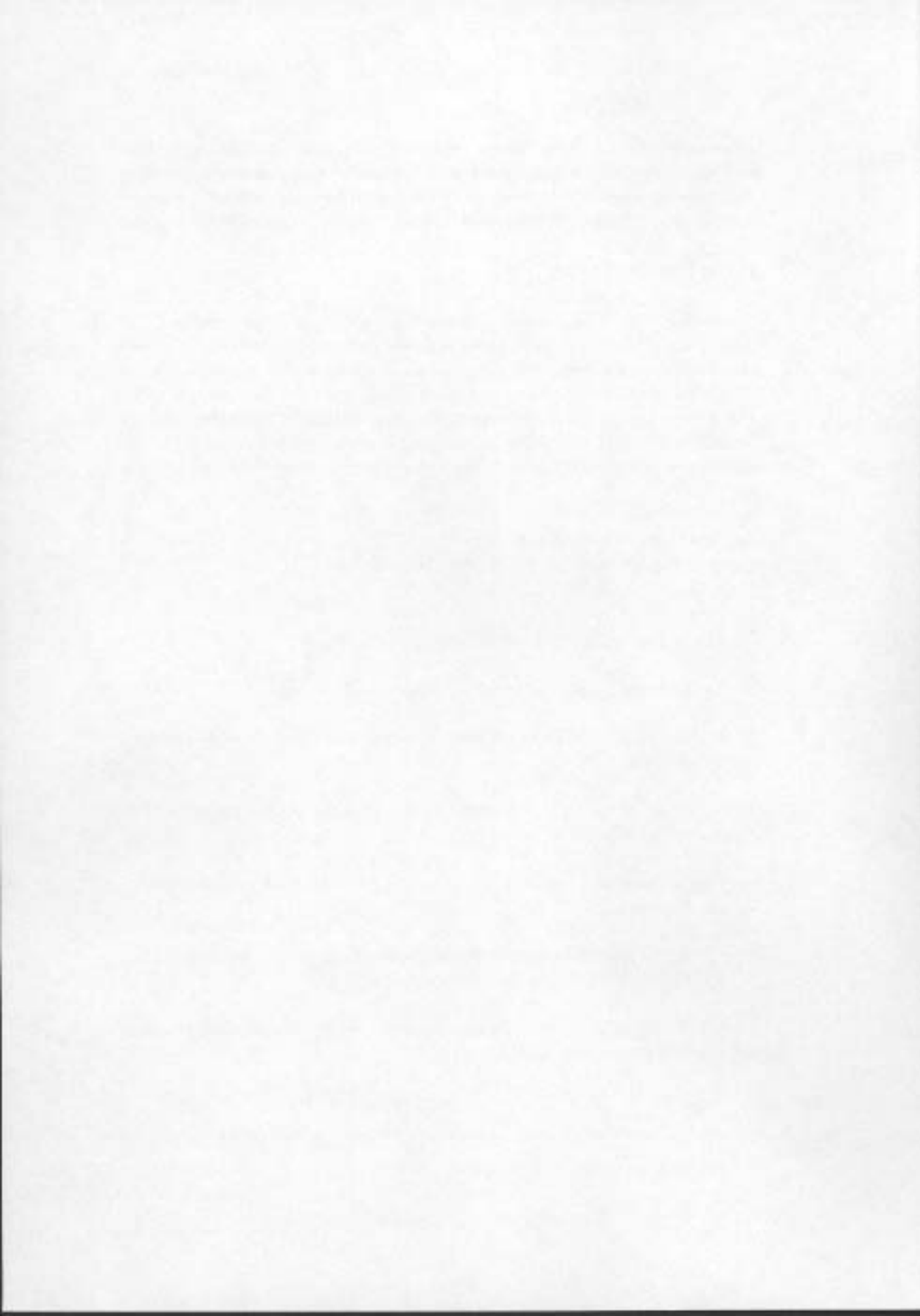
Directions: Please complete the following sentences.

1. The primary purpose of the church is to
2. In order to fulfill its purpose, the ministry of the church should be characterized by
3. I understand the various aspects (activities/skills) of ministry to be interconnected in terms of
4. I think the most difficult or problematic aspect of ministry for me personally would be
5. For me the historic or contemporary image (metaphor) which best reflects the nature of the church and ministry today is

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ENDNOTES

1. *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Volume XVIII, Number 1, New Series 1997: 46-73.
2. *Ibid.*, 62.



Dialogue and Advocacy: A Case Study of a Course on Human Sexuality

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Meeting the needs of students for a more adequate theological anthropology, especially regarding human sexuality, is one of the most significant challenges and opportunities in seminaries today. This paper is an account of our personal, professional, and theological work toward developing a method for teaching human sexuality that would be at once *sensitive* to the church's need to develop a theological anthropology that takes embodied sexual human experience seriously and *responsible* to a model of practical theology arising from feminist and liberationist perspectives.

The development of the course commenced with a request from the North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church for a general class in human sexuality from a theological perspective. This request was conveyed to us through the office of our Associate Dean. Thus, in a way not often experienced (at least by *us*), our commission for teaching came directly out of a need recognized by a church in a concrete social context. In addition to the usual more mundane considerations inherent to the development of any new course, this invitation caused us to reflect and consider very carefully the question of to whom we would be accountable and what the possible effects of that accountability might be.

As far as we know, the Conference exerted no pressure on Perkins School of Theology regarding the course content, method, or placement in the curriculum. In fact, Conference leaders several times expressed appreciation for the course (and invited us to participate in a national symposium on sexuality and the church which they organized). Nevertheless, we had heightened awareness in this course of the presence of the church as partner with, observer of, and potential critic of our work.

Our goals for the course were straightforward and simple: it was to serve as a general introduction to human sexuality, including providing brief overviews of religious/ethical, physiological, and psychological dimensions. It would be designed to assist students in becoming acquainted with current scholarship in the field, stressing developmental, cultural, gender differences, and differences in orientation in sexual behavior and attitudes. It would also be designed to increase students' confidence and expertise in providing pastoral care and educational guidance related to human sexuality, while at the same time assisting them to explore their own feelings and beliefs about sexuality.

A Model of Practical Theology

In deciding how to develop this course, one of our initial steps was to refine the model of practical theology out of which we would operate. We identified two models that we found *unhelpful*: practical theology construed as applied theology, and practical theology rooted in the clerical paradigm of ministry.

Practical theology as applied theology: In this model practical theology is seen simply as an umbrella term that covers basic functions of the ordained office of pastoral ministry, such as preaching, teaching, administering, and providing pastoral care. When students assume this model, they expect only to be taught how-to skills related to a particular area of ministry. By implication, each ministry function—or course in it—is treated as a “conveyor belt” that mediates the normative content of Christian tradition that they have learned in other courses.

An applied model of practical theology implies, then, a theory-practice or deductive approach to teaching/learning and an understanding of theology as product rather than process. Given this perspective, a course in human sexuality would be expected to do little more than supply the practical ministry skills of counseling and education around issues of sexuality.

The second model we found unhelpful is that of *practical theology in the clerical paradigm*. In this model, ordained pastors are the main actors and performers of ministry (e.g., counseling and education), with lay persons being recipients only. Again, the underlying paradigm is that of theory-practice, the task of ordained ministry conducted by-and-large as an unreflective process of initiating persons into the previous tradition.

The approach to practical theology to which we committed ourselves is *practical theology as critical dialogue* that is informed by recent scholarship in critical hermeneutical theory, as well as by insights drawn from feminist and liberation theology. Seen from the perspective of these theologies, practical theology shifts its axis to *practice-theory-practice*.

The essential dynamic of this model involves critical reflection by individual Christians and more importantly by particular faith communities on their praxis, individually and corporately, of the Christian witness of faith. Present praxis is brought into critical dialogue with a particular version of normative claims in the Christian tradition with a view toward allowing those claims to reshape praxis. This critical dialogue, moreover, is dialectic in nature; unlike the applied model, it is at least a two-way dialogue. Not only is revision of praxis a possible outcome, but also transformation of traditional theologies and ideologies remains open as a possibility.

Whereas in the applied model it is unimaginable that present experience could ever reveal and illumine distortions in the received tradition, this approach affirms present human experience as a potential locus of God's ongoing self-revelation and involvement with creation. Present human experi-

ence (including sexual/bodily experience) is allowed to speak back to and criticize the tradition. When taken seriously as a resource for doing theology, present human/embodied experience may prove to be in tension or even outright discontinuity with previous tradition.

This critical/dialogical methodology revises and enlarges the concept of tradition. From a praxis standpoint, study of Christian tradition must go far beyond its usual fixation on highly selected classical texts to include also awareness and analysis of the effects that such texts, and accompanying interpretation, have exerted and continue to exert on particular individuals, groups, and communities.¹

"The Christian heritage" or "the Christian tradition" should be understood, then, to include not only classical texts but also ecclesial and social practices related to those texts, and the social effects of such practices on the structurally, culturally, and theologically marginalized. Such effects cannot be fully known without firsthand engagement and dialogue with persons and groups living at the margins. This fact, of course, holds implications for pedagogy in theological education, and raises questions as to whether educators are called upon to "take sides" in the ongoing process of deconstruction and reconstruction of central symbols in the Christian faith.

Critical Dialogue, Teaching, and Advocacy Issues

Whether or not theological educators are always fully aware of it, teaching in a theological context inevitably catches us up into a tension between the relative safety of seeming neutrality/objectivity and the dangers of taking an overt position of advocacy (where advocacy is understood in its root sense as *vocare* "giving voice and support to") for certain viewpoints, theologies, and/or policies. In developing a course on human sexuality, for instance, controversial issues such as gender equality, reproductive choice, and sexual orientation demand that teachers make methodological and pedagogical choices about how and if they will be presented.

The safe or neutral/objective position can quickly be seen to be nonviable. The consensus in critical hermeneutical and social science theories is that any form of knowledge is decisively influenced by social location—a complex interweaving of factors such as gender, ethnic tradition, social class, economic status, cultural heritage, sexual orientation, and political experience.² These factors have a direct bearing on *how* we know, *what* we know, and *what* we *value* in our knowing. All human knowledge is historically conditioned, and all forms of knowing implicitly include biases and interests that either reinforce or else subvert the status quo.

In terms of theology, Sallie McFague³, David Tracy⁴, and others have pointed out that all constructive theology advocates, implicitly or explicitly, either for maintenance of the status quo or for social transformation. All praxis

is theory-laden, and all theory includes methodologies that circumscribe what can be considered proper or interesting subjects or objects of inquiry. Given the fact that all knowledge is driven by constitutive interests, it can be argued that integrity as educators can be maintained only by freely and openly admitting that factors such as one's social location influence what one knows and values. The initial task, then, of theologians/educators must be clarifying, as much as possible, and revealing the social locations from which they operate. Part of that clarification is revealing to students and others the theological, ideological, and political positions that underlie the teacher's work.

But self-revelation and clarification is merely the beginning. Once a theologian/educator has resolved to be overt and honest about standpoints and positions, a host of pedagogical and ethical issues arrive at her or his doorstep. One of the major issues is defining the educator's role in the classroom especially as it relates to questions of use and abuse of power. What, for instance, are the parameters within which it is appropriate in the classroom setting to actively and overtly advocate/give voice to particular viewpoints and values? What are the ethical issues involved in using the power of the teacher in such a fashion?

The educator is obliged to revisit issues such as his or her relative power vis à vis students, and ways to use that power wisely, responsibly, and for the sake of the student, the class as a whole, the larger theological community, and especially (for those who identify with feminist and liberationist perspectives) for the sake of the poor and marginalized. When an educator consciously sets about to employ a methodology of advocacy with integrity it should occur in an environment of caution, collaboration, co-partnership, and co-participation, where there are no conscious exclusions from the roundtable of inquiry and dialogue. The teacher's power should be used intentionally to keep space at the table open, and to keep it as safe and as sacred as possible. All students should, ideally, feel free to express questions and opinions that differ from the educator's, the materials being presented, and other students'. This expression of diverse beliefs, opinions, judgments, and questions should occur in a classroom atmosphere where questions and disagreements are valued, and where there is no fear of reprisal in terms of social interaction or grades.

A practical theology of critical dialogue permits appraisal of the truth claims not only of the "other's" positions (from *inside* that position), but also critical appraisal of one's own tradition or position through the eyes of the other. Unlike the wished-for simplicity of the applied, theory-practice model, this approach is complex and multifaceted. It is not linear, not neat, and not tidy. But as McFague points out, the reality of our culture today requires that we "be able to live in a messy, open-ended situation, willing to listen to the many voices within Christian faith and able to face the historical ambiguities and terrors that our tradition has helped to bring about."⁵

The remainder of this paper is a discussion of the application of this model of practical theology to the content of a course on human sexuality in a theological context. It is especially focused on our decision as teachers to reveal our own theological position regarding the possibility of ordination for gay and lesbian Christians, and, thus to advocate for/give voice to the concerns of this group, which has traditionally been marginalized and oppressed by the church.

Pre-understandings about Sexuality

Given the critical/dialogical approach to practical theology, our next task in the development of a course in sexuality was to articulate our own pre-understandings about human sexuality, and to discover, when possible, the cultural, theological, and personal roots of these.

Recognizing the importance of uncovering biblical/cultural myths about humanity, affirming the importance of Scripture as a foundation for theological insight, and also affirming the importance of recent work regarding sexuality from a theological perspective that reflects considerable attention to biblical roots,⁶ we paid particular attention to the narratives of creation found in Genesis, chapters 2 and 3. These narratives speak boldly and profoundly on issues of bodily existence and sexuality; they make it clear that sexuality is linked in a crucial manner to people's relationships with one another and their relationships to God.

1. Genesis 2, the first account of human creation, shows that from the beginning humans were "formed from the dust of the ground," that God's breath gave them life, and that, therefore, humans are created as living spiritual bodies. This understanding affirms the need to resist, and to help students resist, the very powerful cultural and theological messages about the body and the human spirit being separate. Accepting the prevailing cultural/theological idea that humans are souls *trapped* in bodies, "the flesh," "broken vessels," etc., results in, in James Nelson's words, "sexual alienation." The incorrect affirmation of body/spirit dualism separates people, the church, and the culture from important messages, experiences, feelings, ways of knowing, and spiritualities that are grounded in the body. It also gives warrant to objectification of the body, and to those who would abuse their own or others' bodies:

When the body is experienced as a *thing*, it has the right to live only as a machine or slave owned by the self.⁷

2. Sexuality is an important part of embodied human life. Genesis 1 makes clear that life as embodied sexual beings was a if not *the* central intent of God for humanity. Vs. 27 describes how God created humans in God's image as *male and female*, or as gendered beings. Vs. 28 describes God's original blessing and command for humans, which centered around sexuality and

procreation: "Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth, and subdue it." However careful we must be in interpreting this command (in terms of its relevance for this time and for issues such as humanity's abuse of the earth, the normativeness of procreation for *all* humans and the normativeness of heterosexuality), this verse shows that it is impossible, from the perspective of the biblical text, to separate theological anthropology from sexuality.

3. Feelings about one's body and sexuality are connected to one's relationship with God. According to the Genesis account, the first effect of the "fall" for Adam and Eve was a new and disturbing recognition of vulnerability as sexual beings. Adam, in a voice that has resonance for many today, cried to God who was seeking him in the garden, "I was afraid [of you?] because I was naked." This fear, according to the narrative, was a result of the sin, and not part of God's original design. Recognizing and understanding this fear has relevance for considerations of cultural and ecclesial mistrust and fear of the body, and the ways in which the church, as a corporate body, relates to God.

4. Woman, as gendered being, seems to have been connected to the "body" side of the body/spirit dualism from these earliest stories of creation. This connection has contributed to a split in images of women as temptresses or madonnas. Women's sexuality is often seen as tainted; women who affirm their own bodies and sexualities are seen as "seductresses" or "whores." The first biblical evidence of woman having a different, inferior, and more "fleshly" essential nature from man (after her unity with man was affirmed in creation—"bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh") is found in Gen. 3 where Eve's sin in the fall is punished by sexual "desire for her husband" and her "pain in childbirth."

If women are not associated with the bodily/sexual/"whore" image, they are likely to be identified with the image of the madonna/virgin—the non-sexual being who, nevertheless, bears children. In the Genesis account, Eve is named the "mother of all the living," while Adam's sexual function goes strangely unnoticed and unnamed. Both images—whore and madonna—are unhelpful in terms of understanding what healthy sexuality for both women and men might be.

Thus, a person's sexual identity—female, male, homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual, "madonna," "whore," etc.—has profound implications for her or his way of being in the world. It determines, among other things, social status, power, possibilities for relationships, acceptance or rejection by communities, legal status, social visibility/invisibility, and spirituality.

For gay and lesbian people, sexual self-identity as homosexual has too often led to social rejection, economic oppression, discrimination, marginalization, criminalization, psychiatric pathologization, physical and emotional violence, and even to murder. The church, which works to be a welcoming community for many types of "strangers," too often contributes in nefarious ways to the suffering of gay and lesbian people.

Practical Risks, Problems, and Benefits to Employing a Pedagogy of Dialogue/Advocacy

As women who have publicly identified ourselves as heterosexual we realized that our decision to advocate/give voice to the concerns of gay and lesbian people vis a vis their relationship with the church was fraught with many problems. We realized that the paradox of our position was that we were *in a position* to be advocates, but neither of us had the *personal authorization of direct experience* to speak for those gay and lesbian Christians whose voices have been long silenced. We knew that, as much as we wished it were not true, we had assumptions, beliefs, and feelings that originated in our own homophobia.

So, another major issue with which we wrestled was the question of our legitimacy as advocates, or voice-givers. Each of us had gay and lesbian friends, students, and colleagues who watched over our shoulders, commissioned us to do the work, and helped us to know what to say and do. They also remained by our sides (often not publicly) and attempted to keep us honest. In addition, we decided to include as many gay and lesbian voices in the class as we possibly could through readings, films, and guests to the class—gay and lesbian Christians from outside the seminary and church community. In the second year of the course we were fortunate to have a gay student who was free from denominational constraints and who felt safe enough to describe his own experience and convictions to the rest of the class. In another year Marilyn Bennett Alexander, one of our colleagues and the co-author of *We Were Baptized Too* (a volume in which lesbian and gay Christians describe their journeys of faith and maltreatment by the church)¹, led an extremely productive and open discussion of her own experiences as a lesbian Christian and church leader. Other years we invited panels of Christian gays and lesbians who included activists, doctors, artists, finance managers, mothers, fathers, Sunday School teachers, and youth leaders to discuss their lives in the church. These experiences kept the fact firmly in our minds that our class was most effective in advocating for the full participation of lesbians and gays in church and society, and even for the possibility of their ordination, when gays and lesbians could speak for themselves.

Our second major concern was our knowledge that despite our best intentions we could not create a perfectly safe environment for gay and lesbian voices within our class—taking place, as it was, in the context of the larger and generally more hostile church environment. In our worst moments, we realized that we, as teachers, contributed to the misunderstanding and oppression of gay and lesbian people. We understood quickly, for example, the inappropriateness of consigning lectures and films on AIDS exclusively to class periods dedicated to discussing gay and lesbian issues. We also learned from a panel of women with AIDS that the question of how one contracted HIV is inappropri-

ate, often perceived as blaming, and even voyeuristic. These sorts of very basic learnings reminded us often that we were not unsullied witnesses.

Our third concern was developing our own abilities to be non-defensive and non-anxious in the presence of students with honest questions and problems with course materials and methodologies. This involved taking a hard look at our own power as teachers, and trying to be responsible enough to be advocates for what we feel justice requires without abusing our authority by shutting down (and out) students who initially, or invariably, strongly disagreed with us and our approach. We realized that a responsible pedagogy requires that we assist students in examining conflicting and opposing viewpoints. In that regard, Jeffrey Sikers's edited volume, *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate*,⁹ was an invaluable resource.

We seemed to grow in our abilities in this regard as the course progressed over the years, but we never really met our own goal of advocacy for inclusivity and justice in the context of open and free dialogue. We came to realize, in fact, that fostering totally open dialogue with students who (by definition) have less power than teachers is perhaps an impossible task. A less-ambitious goal became the fostering of times and spaces in which each student might feel free to express her or his real fears, angers, confusion, and deep beliefs on this issue and others that arose in the class. To that end we allowed students a larger amount of time than we might have in other courses to process new material in small groups, in journal writing (which students were given the option of *not* turning in), and in non-structured lengthy breaks during which they could interact with us, class guests, and each other on more personal bases.

We noted that there seemed to be much extra-class discussion of issues in the coffee room and in the halls. We encouraged this extra-curricular discussion as long as it did not in any way endanger the guests of the class or breach the class confidentiality agreement (i.e., that any personal materials presented and discussed in class would not be discussed outside the walls of the classroom).

In order to empower students contractually and structurally as much as possible we (at the suggestion of our former dean) instituted a learning covenant with each of them individually, which we and they signed on the first day of class. It stipulated that if, at *any* time, anyone felt too uncomfortable for *any* reason during the class period, she or he was free to leave without penalty. It also stipulated that any readings that caused extreme discomfort for the students need not be completed.

Our fourth major concern was learning to react to outside negative pressures with some sort of grace. Realizing that the pressures we felt could not compare to the pressure of being a lesbian or gay person usually helped us keep our own discomfort in check. One of our lesbian co-workers reminded us, "You can put this work down when you go home at night. For me it is a twenty-four-hour job." We were also greatly assisted by the wisdom, courage, and sensitivity of our current dean in this regard.

A fifth concern had to do with our responsibility as teachers for those in the course who would change perspectives toward the possibility of ordaining lesbian and gay persons because of the class. We both felt very strongly that we could not ethically lead them to change their minds on such an important issue when they could be facing possible opposition in their churches and denominations, especially at the time of review for ordination. We recognized with sadness that we could not really protect them in any practical ways in their own ordination processes. We did, however, bring in sympathetic and activist local ministers as guests who discussed their own strategies, actions, and accommodations very honestly. In some cases these conversations began the process of building networks of solidarity between ministers and students within the ecclesial structures.

Conclusion

The tension that accompanies the presence of gay and lesbian Christians in the midst of our faith communities has underscored for us the present inadequacy of the church's theological anthropology. We hoped in some small way to address this (along with the general sexuality curriculum) in our ministry course in human sexuality. In adopting a model of practical theology that employs advocacy (or "voice giving") in a context of dialogue, we became aware at a new level of our own power and the temptations of abusing it. The use of power, we learned, is paradoxical: power is not to be used to indoctrinate or dominate, but rather to facilitate openness and co-journeying.

At our best we used our own positions in the section of the course dedicated to issues of sexual orientation to advocate for justice and the possibility of ordination for gays and lesbians, while at the same time we used our power as teachers to keep dialogue open, inviting and protecting conversation from and with those who might have been excluded. On our worst day, a student wore a hard hat to class (yes, the florescent orange kind!) to "protect" himself from us. We took this rather comical demonstration fairly seriously. The class was a success on issues of sexual orientation when students listened to us, to each other, and especially to the gay and lesbian Christians who were willing to talk with them. The class was less successful when we, as instructors, failed to take proper account of our own power. In success and failure the process was messy, paradoxical, and sometimes "terror"-filled (as McFague promised). But we continue to embrace with hope a theology that is willing to live with the paradox of power, ambiguity, and plurality, believing the fulfillment of God's reign requires no less.

Dialogue and Advocacy: A Case Study

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ENDNOTES

1. See the methodology employed by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, in *Metaphors for the Contemporary Church* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983). See also Rebecca Chopp, "Practical Theology and Liberation," *Formation and Reflection*, eds. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).
2. See Mark Kline Taylor, "Celebrating Difference, Resisting Domination: The Need for Synchronic Strategies in Theological Education," *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, eds. Barbara Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 259-293.
3. Sallie McFague, "The Theologian as Advocate," *Theological Education* 25:2 (1989): 79-97.
4. David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, and Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).
5. McFague, 81.
6. See: Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988); Bishop John Spong, *Living in Sin* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988); L. William Countryman, "New Testament Ethics and Today's World," *Sexuality and the Sacred*, eds. James B. Nelson and Sandra P. Longfellow (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994); Victor Furnish, "The Bible and Homosexuality: Reading the Texts in Context," *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate*, ed. Jeffrey Siker (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 18-35.
7. James Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 41.
8. Marilyn Bennet Alexander and James Preston eds., *We Were Baptized Too* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996).
9. Op. cit.

Theological Education as Pastoral Care

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Theological education as pastoral care begins with the suffering and hope of our students. Our mission as theological educators is to help them discover meaning in their suffering and reasons to hope. If we fail, we increase their vulnerability to despair, apathy, and shame, the major threats to their emotional and spiritual competence.¹

Many students enter theological education as a result of a painful and often paralyzing spiritual crisis: a crisis of faith, hope, and especially love. They come either depleted and demoralized seeking renewal or fresh from a victorious struggle with their adversaries. Either way, they constitute a community of sufferers seeking healing or transformation of their inward being and primary relationships. Like the Apostle Paul they have been "afflicted in every way, but not crushed" (II Cor. 4: 8). I believe they have been afflicted with despair, apathy, and shame. The greatest of these threats to their emotional and spiritual integrity is shame because it discloses an all-encompassing alienation of the self. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, shame is "the sign of disunion" of humanity from God. "Shame," he contends, "is man's ineffaceable recollection of his estrangement from the origin; it is grief for this estrangement, and the powerless longing to return to unity with the origin."² Despair and apathy breed shame, and shame leads to and deepens despair and apathy.

The most persistent and powerful motivation of our students is to overcome their alienation from God, others, and self, even if they do not consciously experience shame. They are, therefore, on a sacred journey to discover who they really are, to heal their fragmented and depleted selves, to overcome their estrangement, to reset the course of their lives, and to find a compassionate God who will forgive them in spite of their shame. They yearn for a God who will accept them unconditionally as human beings of worth and who will restore their personal cohesiveness and the integrity of their participation in relationships. They are driven not merely by a desire to pursue a vocation but by a yearning to be transformed by the renewal of their minds, their whole selves. If theological education is going to be truly pastoral to the community of sufferers and seekers we serve, we will have to address ourselves to the real spiritual dilemmas of our students, not to the ones we want or imagine them to have. Epicurus once said, "Vain is the word of a philosopher which does not heal any suffering of man."³

The spiritual struggles of our students arise from the wounds they have received in the primary relationships of their childhood and adulthood, relationships in which they have been neglected, manipulated, betrayed, rejected,

or abused. When I read autobiographical reflections of our students, I am often overwhelmed by the legion of their painful losses and the mountain of sorrow they carry. The most devastating loss of all has been the betrayal of trust by their families, spouses or partners, and the culture at large. Their injuries and grief have left them mired in shame and deficient in emotional and spiritual intelligence.

For example, many come from troubled families in which they were subjected to abuse in a variety of forms: emotional, physical, and sexual. The unity and worth of their selves have been shattered, and they seek a God who will provide a safe and trustworthy relationship in which their fragmented and defective selves can heal and develop solidity and strength. Others were raised in alcoholic homes in which they literally lost their childhood and self-confidence by overcompensating for an addicted, inadequate, and neglectful parent who abdicated most of the responsibilities of parenthood. The God these students long for will nurture, guide, and protect them like a kind, responsible parent. Numerous students have lived for years in strained or estranged relationships high in conflict and unhappiness, or they have gone through a divisive divorce in which their self-esteem and self-confidence have been shaken to the foundations. In the early 1990s an Andover Newton Theological School student survey indicated that forty-five percent of the students had been divorced. Struggling with unresolved anger, hostility, and fantasies of revenge, they are weighed down with animosity and a sense of failure, and they have serious doubts about whether they can ever trust and sustain a committed, intimate relationship. In addition, they are often overburdened with the endless pressures and obligations of single parenthood. No wonder they look for a gracious God who will forgive their failures, lift the stigma of their shame, and give them a second chance in life and love.

In theological education pastoral theology is often scorned unfairly for being mainly practical and deficient in theological seriousness. Those outside the pastoral disciplines are tempted to think that in David Mamet's "American Buffalo" the character Teach speaks for pastoral theologians when he exclaims to his friend, Bobby, "I'm not here to smother you in theory." The question pastoral theologians pose is this: What is the purpose of theory? I agree with Daniel Goleman that the paramount issue of our day is "emotional ineptitude,"⁴ not a scarcity of theory. If our theory cannot illumine the roots and manifestations of our emotional and spiritual incompetence and cannot lead us to a life of intelligent love, it is useless. Goleman is right: "Academic intelligence has little to do with emotional life."⁵ The Apostle Paul would agree. He wrote, "Knowledge puffs up, but loves builds up" (I Cor. 8: 1b). Our questions as theological educators are: What does it mean and how do we apply "intelligence to emotion"? What is emotional and spiritual competence? Paul's answer is still normative. He enjoins us to embody love, the first fruit of the Spirit, in our lives and relationships. For example, he writes: "love one another

with mutual affection" (Rom. 12: 10); "live in love" (Eph. 5: 2); "increase and abound in love for one another" (I Thes. 3: 12); and "let all that you do be done in love" (I Cor. 13: 14). This is an informed and thoughtful love, or in Paul's words, a "love . . . overflow[ing] more and more with knowledge and full insight, to help . . . [us] determine what is best" (Phil. 1: 9-10). In short, our task as pastoral theologians is to wrestle with individual and societal structures and manifestations of emotional and spiritual incompetence and to challenge them with a vision of intelligent love and justice.

As a group, theological students struggle with emotional and spiritual incompetence. (Let me quickly add that theological professors are not exempt from this battle.) This condition is the direct result of two factors: their injurious experiences in their families and in the society at large, and their being shortchanged or deprived of serious emotional and spiritual education. Following Goleman, I believe they are inadequate in some or all of the following nine measures of competence.⁷ First, they have difficulty discerning their own emotions. According to Goleman, this is "the keystone of emotional intelligence . . ."⁸ Second, afflicted by weak self-control, they struggle to manage their emotions in appropriate ways. Third, they fall short of being able to motivate themselves in a consistent and ongoing manner. Fourth, they lack persistence in the face of continuing frustrations. Fifth, they have trouble regulating their moods. Sixth, distressful emotions often overwhelm their ability to think and be guided by rational judgments. Seventh, having limited empathy, they are hard-pressed to recognize, understand, and be in tune with the emotions, particularly the suffering, of others. Eighth, managing the emotions of others in constructive and uncoercive ways is a daunting challenge to them. Ninth, they too quickly abandon hope for their primary relationships and themselves. To Goleman's list I add a tenth: they are hard-pressed to live a life of disciplined forgiveness.

Spiritual and emotional incompetence leads to serious limitations in the practice of ministry, namely, inadequacies of interpersonal intelligence or social skills. Howard Gardner argues that interpersonal competence requires the social skills to lead effectively, to nurture relationships and keep friends, to resolve conflicts, and to do accurate social analysis.⁹ Goleman's own list of social skills includes the ability to interpret accurately emotional and social cues, to listen empathically, to take the perspective of others, and to know what behavior is acceptable in various social situations.¹⁰ Goleman contends that the severest "test" of our social competence is our "ability to calm distressing emotions in others . . .,"¹¹ particularly their rage. Where in our theological education do we prepare students to pass this test?

Futhermore, emotional and spiritual incompetence generates despair, apathy, and shame, and these attitudes reinforce incompetence. If despair is the paralysis of love and if apathy is the deflation of love, then shame is the alienation of love.

Despair is a disorder of meaning. Victor Frankl defines it as "suffering without meaning."¹² Those in despair have lost confidence that life has any "order, meaning, and coherence."¹³ Sometimes despair is turned outward and, according to Eric Erikson, is "hidden behind a show of disgust, misanthropy, or a chronic contemptuous displeasure with particular institutions [like the church] and particular people [say, parishioners]."¹⁴ In other cases, despair is turned inward against the self in the form of depression and hopelessness.¹⁵ The trap of despair is always set to spring shut and ensnare our students if they cannot make sense of their suffering.

Apathy or emotional and spiritual stagnation is the decline or even collapse of generativity.¹⁶ This "spiritual malady"¹⁷ of "not caring"¹⁸ is, in Dante's elegant words, a "lukewarm love doing good."¹⁹ It has active and passive forms. In its passive expression, it is "reflected in lethargy, lifelessness, and paralysis of will."²⁰ In its active form, it expresses itself as "boredom and restlessness."²¹ Perhaps Chaucer captured both forms in his description of the apathetic person: "He does all things with annoyance, and with rawness, slackness, and excuses, and with idleness and lack of desire."²² The suffering of our students can drag them into not caring for others and themselves. Donald Capps regards this pernicious attitude as the "most threatening" to ministers' "professional self-understanding."²³

Emotional and spiritual incompetence is most imperiled by shame, for shame can be awakened in every interaction we have and can catapult us into apathy and despair. Shame is the most painful and debilitating condition of all; it is "an inner torment" and "a sickness of the soul."²⁴ Shame triggers "the piercing awareness" in us that we are "inherently bad, fundamentally flawed as a person."²⁵ It discloses our defectiveness, unworthiness, weakness, and inadequacy. In the grip of this malady, we become our shame.²⁶ Moreover, shame involves not only sobering self-exposure but also exposure of the self to others. Jean-Paul Satre writes, "Shame is shame of oneself before the Other."²⁷ Shame, then, is a negative evaluation of the self from the perspective of others. Helen Block Lewis says, "Shame is a vicarious experience of the other's scorn."²⁸ Although shame seems to arise in the self and it does have biological roots, it is primarily the result of "social self-monitoring."²⁹

As a result, shame is an isolating and alienating condition, both existentially and interpersonally. It divides people from themselves and from each other. It "ruptures" what Gershen Kaufman calls "the interpersonal bridge" and therefore is "the principal impediment in all relationships . . ."³⁰ Suzanne Retzinger claims that "shame appears to be the most social of all human emotions" because it indicates "an impaired bond."³¹ "The primary context for shame is threats to the social bond,"³² she asserts. When our needs, interests, and feelings are not understood, validated, and supported, we experience shame and recoil in estrangement. We are, therefore, continually moving toward estrangement or attunement in our relationships, personal and profes-

sional. In every interpersonal encounter we have, we are building, maintaining, damaging, or repairing our social bonds.³³ Following sociologist Harold Cooley, I believe we are always in a state of genuine pride (not to be confused with arrogant pride) or shame as we monitor or imagine how we are perceived and responded to by others.³⁴ If we are understood, acknowledged, and supported by others, we experience genuine pride and confidence in our competence. If we are ignored and rejected by them, we are seized by shame and become confused and ineffective. This interactive process occurs in us at least on an unconscious level. There is no escape from it, nowhere to hide.

Careful attention to the condition of our social bonds is not optional, for the social bond is being affected positively or negatively in every interaction. Individuals communicate something about each other's worth by means of every word, gesture, facial expression, and action. When they intentionally or unintentionally humiliate each other by word and deed, they injure the connection between them and sow the seeds of alienation. When they acknowledge and support each other, they increase genuine pride and strengthen the tie between them. According to Scheff and Retzinger, attunement and solidarity occur when "each party understands and ratifies not only the other's present thoughts, feelings, and actions but also their intentions and character—their *being*, so to speak."³⁵ Shame is aroused when there is little or no understanding or affirmation of one another.

Education as pastoral care is always attuned to the character and quality of the social bonds in the community of learning. Any other orientation poisons the ethos of the community and assaults the emotional and spiritual wholeness of the individuals in it. In order to learn, people need a rich, fertile soil of solidarity. Both people and their learning wither and die in a climate of alienation. Are we theological educators creating a community in which all of us, even when we disagree with one another, will still acknowledge, appreciate, and affirm one another? What is at stake in all of our interactions is whether we are teaching our students and relating to our colleagues in ways that enhance their sense of worth and increase their competence. To be sure no relationship is entirely free of the dynamics of shame. I expect and propose no utopia. What is of first importance, however, is our vigilant efforts to identify and acknowledge when our actions have triggered shame and caused estrangement. Shame itself is not our adversary; unrecognized and unacknowledged shame is.³⁶ Monitoring and working through the dynamics of shame in a spirit of candor and compassion can actually strengthen our social bonds.

If our theological education is going to address the emotional and spiritual deficiencies of our students, we will have to establish and build an educational community that will nurture their emotional and spiritual competence. I think we have a covenantal responsibility to co-create with our students what John Bowlby calls a secure base,³⁷ that is, a safe and trustworthy relationship or set of relationships that will provide our students encouragement, support, pro-

tection, and guidance in their efforts to become more loving and faithful. Above all else, we theological educators will have to set an exemplary standard of emotional and spiritual competence by modeling it in all our communications.

A secure base is not an end in itself, but a pastoral means to a qualitatively different kind of educational experiment, one that will privilege cooperation, collaboration, and compassion. Its purpose is to stimulate our students' curiosity about themselves as relational beings. Its purpose is to empower them to examine their emotional and spiritual strengths and weaknesses. Its aim is to inspire them to pursue love in the form of interpersonal competence. What are their unique emotional and spiritual dynamics? How have they been emotionally and spiritually wounded and healed in their lives? What have been their distinctive ways to participate in their significant relationships? What have been the emotional and spiritual outcomes of these relationships? What can they learn about themselves from these relationships, both the ones that have spawned failure and shame and the ones that have given birth to enhanced competence and genuine pride? How susceptible are they to the threats of despair, apathy, and shame? How constrained are they by shame? What steps have they taken and are they willing to risk to attain greater emotional and spiritual mastery? These are just a few of the types of questions we need to encourage our students to ask.

The program of pastoral care, therefore, requires that we guide our students to explore their intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences for signs of emotional and spiritual competence. We have to take their experiences, their stories, especially their losses and sufferings, with sacred seriousness. If we do not, they are less likely to. Now I do not believe that human experience is ever self-explanatory and self-sufficient. It has to be subjected to critical analysis, embraced with frameworks of meaning, and channeled into constructive outlets. This is not likely to happen unless we co-create a safe context of learning. Unless we are always on guard, our classrooms can become "arenas of shame"³⁵ instead of covenantal communities collaborating to care for one another. We can contribute to the creation of the latter by the kinds of courses we teach, by the classroom conversations we facilitate, by the types of essays we assign, the manner and tone in which we evaluate students' work, and by the ways we interact inside and outside of the classroom.

In sum, the theory or theology that pastoral theologians are concerned with is that which makes godly sense of human experience and motivates and guides human beings to pursue an intelligent love in all of their relationships.

Let me illustrate my understanding of theological education as pastoral care by describing some of the ways I implement these ideas in the classroom.

Lectures

My overarching educational goal is to facilitate every student in rewriting a new and liberating story of personal transformation of their selves in relationship with God and others so that they can grow in their emotional and spiritual competence. To this end I seek to help them to integrate their personal narrative of suffering and hope with the resources of pastoral psychology and theology. I usually lecture for a portion of every class in order to provide the students with a wide and diverse range of cognitive frameworks of pastoral psychology and pastoral theology with which they can rethink and reshape their personal stories and be open to new and different ways of making sacred sense out of themselves and their experiences. In addition, I attempt to model personal integration by incorporating in my lectures appropriate examples from both my clinical cases and my own life, and I challenge my students to do the same, especially in their written work. Although I am convinced that it can be instructive and inspiring for our students to hear stories about how we and others have struggled with developing greater emotional and spiritual competence, I am aware that any time we make ourselves vulnerable in the classroom, we run a strong chance of increasing our own shame. This is particularly the case when we do not have reasonable rules about "when to self-disclose, how to self-disclose, and what to self-disclose."²⁹ Nonetheless, I think that the transformation of our students requires us to be authentic with them and to risk respectful self-disclosures.

Prayer

I begin every class with prayer for two primary reasons. First, I want to invite the students to open their lives to the searching, forgiving, and transforming presence of God so that they might be continually renewed and empowered. Second, I think we theological educators have a responsibility to assist our students in naming the demons that torment their lives and undermine their emotional and spiritual competence. Accordingly, I seek to capture in prayer the hurts, disappointments, failures, fears, grief, humiliations, and hopes of their lives and to remind them of God's boundless love. I intend that the students will realize that their spiritual crises have a central place in both the informal and formal curricula of theological education.

Small Groups

Effective education is relational and dialogical. Students have often been profoundly wounded in relationships, but they can also be healed in them. Small groups provide a context in which written documents (assigned readings) intersect with living documents (the lives of the students). In my small

groups, students are invited to explore some dimension of their lives pertinent to the course, e.g., their losses and their families of origin, and to share what they can with their peers. When the groups function competently, the students become midwives to one another, facilitating the birth of a new, liberating narrative out of an oppressive story of shame and suffering. Small groups can become healing communities in which students are taken seriously, acknowledged, and affirmed. The students have a real opportunity to grow in their competence as pastoral caregivers as they practice being empathic and compassionate listeners to and steadfast supporters of one another.

A Course on Recovery from Bereavement

A course I regularly teach that will illustrate my approach is one entitled, "Recovery from Bereavement." This course has five stated purposes. First, we examine several different approaches to the psychology of loss from intrapsychic and systemic perspectives. This takes us into the most cogent theories about the anatomy of bereavement including the dynamics of recovery from mourning and the influences loss has on communities such as families. Second, various kinds of loss are studied in order to learn about the common and distinctive features of each. Third, we assess the most supportive and comforting types of ministry to people in mourning. Fourth, I encourage the students to take stock of some of their own personal losses through the years and try to understand more deeply what these losses have meant to them and how they have altered their lives. Fifth, throughout the course the primary goal is to help the students integrate new psychological and theological ideas and insights with their personal experiences of loss and mourning so that they can develop greater emotional and spiritual competence. My guiding conviction is that, if a person is going to be able effectively to comfort and support those in mourning, she or he will have to explore, understand, and make peace with her or his own losses; otherwise, she or he is likely to do more harm than good to the mourner and to risk being overwhelmed by the suffering of those for whom she or he tries to care.

Some of the questions I give to the students to guide their sharing in small groups and to assist them in writing a major integrative paper on their losses are:

- What have been the most significant losses in your life?
- What meanings have these losses had for you?
- What have been the most serious losses in the life of your family of origin and nuclear family?
- How did your family of origin and nuclear family react to your personal losses and to their losses?
- In what ways did your family members help you with your losses?

In what ways did they hinder or complicate your recovery from bereavement?

How did you yourself cope with these losses?

Did you go through stages of bereavement or accomplish certain tasks on the way to recovery? If so, which ones?

What resources did you depend upon in your recovery? Did your religious convictions help you? How?

Did your church assist you? In what ways? What assistance was not provided that you wish had been?

How did your earlier losses interact with and influence your later losses?

Who provided the most helpful pastoral and/or personal support to you in your mourning? How did they do this?

In what ways did these losses change your life?

How have you made sense out of your losses at various stages of your life?

How have you integrated them into your life?

How are you different because of your losses?

My purpose in this and all courses I teach is to create an accepting and affirming community of trust and intelligent love in which everyone can develop greater emotional and spiritual competence.

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ENDNOTES

1. I am following Donald Capps' approach to the major threats although I give much greater weight to the significance of shame. His most recent treatment of the major threats is *Agents of Hope: A Pastoral Psychology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), esp. Chap. 5.
2. *Ethics*, ed. E. Bethge; trans. N. H. Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 145.
3. Quoted by Thomas Attig, *How We Grieve: Relearning the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 63.
4. *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), x.
5. *Ibid.*, 34-35.
6. *Ibid.*, x.
7. *Ibid.*, 34, 43, 46-47, 54, 96-110, 259.
8. *Ibid.*, 46.
9. *Ibid.*, 38-39.
10. *Ibid.*, 259.

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11. Ibid., 24. See 124-126.
12. Quoted by Donald Capps, *Agents of Hope*, 99.
13. Capps, *Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 8.
14. Quoted by Capps, *Agents of Hope*, 100.
15. Ibid., 100-103.
16. Capps, *Deadly Sins*, 63.
17. Capps, *Agents of Hope*, 115.
18. Bert Kaplan, quoted by Capps, Ibid. 108.
19. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Purgatory*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985), XVIII. 108.
20. Capps, *Deadly Sins*, 60.
21. Ibid., 61.
22. Quoted by Capps, *Agents of Hope*, 112.
23. Ibid., 115.
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34. Scheff and Retzinger, *Emotions and Violence*, 8-9.
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36. Lewis, *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, 196-198.
37. See his *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1988).
38. E. James Anthony, quoted by Donald Nathanson, *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1992), 319.
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Writing Practice and Pedagogy Across the Theological Curriculum: Teaching Writing in a Theological Context

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"It is extremely difficult," writes Thomas Merton, "to write theology well. The main reason why I can't write it is that I don't know it. I don't know precisely what I mean to say, and therefore when I start to write I find that I am working out a theology as I go."¹ It is also difficult, I have discovered, to teach "writing theology" well, or to translate what David Kelsey has called an "implicit practice"² into an explicit pedagogy. Yet as director of the Episcopal Divinity School and Weston Jesuit School of Theology WRITE (Writing Resources and Instruction for Theological Education) Program, I have been learning how to teach writing in a theological context, and "working out a pedagogy as I go."

I do not, however, teach writing in a context where connections between learning to write and writing to learn are pedagogical givens. As a writing specialist with a Ph.D. in English and a Master of Divinity degree who was hired initially to teach remedial writing to international students, my theological colleagues ask me, "Why should we teach writing to graduate theological students who already know how to do it? Isn't writing a remedial intervention, rather than an integral instrument of theological education? How is learning to 'write theology well' any different from learning how to write well in any academic discipline or profession?"

For some, these questions may sound tediously rhetorical. For my faculty colleagues, however, the questions are real, relevant, and the subject of an ongoing debate between those committed to an "autonomous" model of literacy, for whom writing skills should be taught independently from their context, and those, myself included, embracing a more contextual model of literacy, for whom writing instruction is inseparable from its context.³ As the conversation has developed, however, these questions have challenged me: (1) to examine the paradigms of writing pedagogy that have informed my own teaching of writing to theological students; (2) to reflect upon the experience of writing in a theological context both my own and that of my students; and, in the light of these reflections on pedagogy and experience, (3) to argue that "writing theology well" is not only a writing process, but also a theological practice.

The Write Program: Four Paradigms in Search of a Pedagogy

To a very large degree, The WRITE Program grew out of my own experience of learning to "write" theology. When I entered Weston Jesuit School of Theology in 1986 as a candidate for the Master of Divinity degree, I expected to leave the nets of my English Ph.D. and twenty years of teaching experience at the door, and immerse myself in preparation for ministry. I did not expect to find myself learning how to write all over again, or learning how to teach writing in a theological context, first at the request of fellow students for whom I facilitated day-long workshops, and later as an adjunct instructor providing "Writing in a Theological Context" workshops for all students, and "Writing and Research Across the Theological Curriculum" courses for international students at Episcopal Divinity School and Weston Jesuit School of Theology.

But what does it mean to teach writing "in a theological context"? In the workshops I taught, I presumed that all writing is defined by its socio-linguistic context, and that writers within a particular context must learn how to navigate the conventions of language, rhetoric, and written reasoning operative within that context.⁴ I further presumed that the writing process was inseparable from the writer's process of engagement in and reflection upon the subject matter supporting the writing.⁵ In other words, I assumed that a student entering a new discipline, such as theological studies, was not only learning to write within that discipline, she was also "writing to learn."⁶ Thus I argued that learning to "write theology" was like learning to write in a foreign language, and that both mainstream American students and international students would profit from curricular instruction in "writing in a theological context."

While my faculty colleagues were convinced of the need to provide writing courses for international students, most were unconvinced that teaching writing as a theological discipline in its own right was necessary for all students. Thus our WRITE Program journey began with a remedial paradigm of writing pedagogy, which I have called the Writing as a Foreign Language Paradigm. However, each of the paradigms that I describe here—(1) Writing as a Foreign Language; (2) Writing as a Reflective Process; (3) Writing as a Disciplinary Project; and (4) Writing as a Theological Practice—has informed my writing pedagogy from the beginning of the program. I will use them here to retrace the steps of an ongoing dialogue between the teaching of writing and the learning of theology at Episcopal Divinity School and Weston Jesuit School of Theology.

The Writing as a Foreign Language Paradigm *The Paradigm in Profile*

According to this paradigm, writing is an autonomous linguistic skill that can be taught and learned independently of the social context, or discipline, supporting the writing; hence teaching writing is like teaching a foreign language, with its own grammar, vocabulary, and linguistic structure. Writing

proficiency is the norm, and its deficiency (for whatever reasons) is an aberration from the norm; implicit are cultural notions regarding literacy as "health" vs. "ill-literacy" as "disease" that must be "cured" if the person is to participate fully in literate society. The task of writing pedagogy, according to this paradigm, is to provide a "remedy" for the deficiency (punctuation rules for people who can't punctuate sentences; protocols for writing thesis statements for those unacquainted with such conventions). The course or duration of this pedagogy is determined by the abilities of the learner to "make up" his or her deficiencies; it is an intervention rather than an integral component of the curriculum.

The "user's" perception of the pedagogy is both apologetic ("I shouldn't have these writing problems") and appreciative ("I couldn't have written this without your help"); for international students, these perceptions can be disempowering. The broader cultural perception of the pedagogy is largely pejorative, sending a message to those in need of such assistance that "they don't quite measure up," and to those without "deficiencies" in their writing that they have no need of such interventions.

The gift of this paradigm is that it creates a safe space—a kind of "hospital" where the "patient" can recover from the particular deficiency and engage in the appropriate "writing practice," or remedy, necessary for that recuperation. The limitation of this paradigm is that it creates a dichotomy between "the proficient" and the "deficient," and can reduce the teaching of writing to a "fix-it" project rather than a learning process.

The Paradigm in Practice

For the first two years of the WRITE Program, this paradigm of writing pedagogy informed the International Writers' Seminars (fall) and International Workshops (spring), which met approximately every other week on Friday afternoons throughout each semester. The fourfold objective of this yearlong program was: (1) to introduce international students to writing in an American academic and theological context; (2) to enable them to identify and manage the specific writing tasks required in the Episcopal Divinity School and Weston Jesuit School of Theology context with increasing comfort and competence; (3) to provide practical instruction in basic writing skills through class presentations, individual tutoring, and writers' workshop groups; and (4) to offer a hospitable environment for each student's development as a writer in an American academic and theological context. Toward these ends, the first-semester course provided an introduction to writing in an American academic and theological context, combined with instruction and tutorial assistance in English language skills; the second-semester course was conducted more informally as a writing workshop where students presented writing in progress for other courses for class feedback and critique.

Every educator knows that each course one teaches is at least three different courses: (1) the course as it is envisioned by the teacher and projected on the syllabus; (2) the course that is actually taught by the teacher in interaction with those students who comprise the class; and (3) the course that is received and perceived by the participants. While I sought to teach "writing in a theological context" to international students, with supplementary but secondary assistance in English language skills, the course that international students actually experienced was more like a medicinal pill that they could take on a regular basis in order to heal their English language disabilities.

On the outside of the pill was a sugarcoated cultural and discipline-driven patina, designed to make the pill easier to swallow. For example, students were encouraged to write out of their own cultural contexts, and at the same time, to attend to differences between writing in a Western pedagogical context and writing for their own constituencies.⁷ In addition, students were introduced in a rudimentary way to such typical genres of theological discourse as theological reflection; theological argument; biblical exegesis; and theological research.

On the inside of this pedagogical pill, however, was remedial medicine, pure and simple, whereby students brought "diseased" papers to their tutors or to me for an editorial "treatment" prior to handing them in to their professors. While I had been duly trained to keep the pen in the student's hand and not to "fix" his paper, the most visible progress in English writing fluency occurred with those students who not only attended the class, but also took advantage of tutorial time. And whoever was holding the pen, I was still holding the medicine my students wanted: an insider's grasp of standard written English that they could tap into to "correct" their papers. There were, of course, exceptions to this rule; but as a writing teacher trained to respond to her audience, I complied with this remedial model, while quietly incorporating other paradigms of writing pedagogy into the international student courses. The most initially successful of these was the Writing Process Paradigm, to which we turn next.

The Writing as a Reflective Process Paradigm *The Paradigm in Profile*

According to this paradigm, writing is a personal, reflective, and rhetorical process grounded in one's own linguistic competencies but always open to revision and improvement: a work in progress. Writing proficiency skills must be grounded in an understanding of the way writers write (in other words, their own process); hence remediation is secondary to mediation of students' engagement in the writing process. The task of this pedagogy is fluency (not, at the beginning of the process, grammatical correctness). According to the protocols of this pedagogy, such fluency is achieved by writing multiple drafts, embracing chaos, making use of student writing groups, and writing conferences with the instructor to revise drafts-in-progress. The course, or duration, of this

pedagogy is renegotiated each time one writes a paper and reengages the writing process. The limits upon it are imposed by the student's willingness to produce and reproduce drafts, and (usually) by the due date of an assignment.

The "user's" perception of this pedagogy is writer-centered and focused upon process before "product"; to enter into this paradigm successfully, students must imagine themselves good writers and enjoy the process; students who do not consider themselves good writers are more prone to hand in the first draft of whatever they write and dispense with the revision process. The broader cultural perception of this paradigm is that it is the way "real writers" work and write, but there is also a cultural reticence around sharing work-in-process. The gift of this paradigm is that it invites students into a knowledge of their own writing process, and it offers much room for exploration, renegotiation of the writing task, and ongoing revision. In so doing, it underscores the integral connection between writing and thinking. The limitation of this paradigm is that its focus on process can become detached from its social/disciplinary context, with disproportionate attention paid to the individual student's writing process, rather than to the purpose of the writing and its intended audience.

The Paradigm in Practice

Writing in a theological context is produced by writers in a theological context. While this assumption might seem much too obvious a tautology on which to hang a pedagogy, my own experience in the WRITE Program has taught me otherwise. Although students might write four or five major papers a semester for their various courses, spending endless hours on the reading, research, drafting, revising, and final presentation of these papers, most students would never call themselves "writers." Yet as poet Marge Piercy says, "the real writer is one who really writes,"⁴ and as Yaroslav Pelikan is reputed to teach his graduate students, "We write everything three times: first, to find out what we want to say; second, to say that and only that; finally, so that someone else will want to read it."⁵ Whether our own experience of ourselves as writers writing corroborates or contradicts Percy's poetry and Pelikan's wisdom, their words remind us that: (1) writing is produced by writers; (2) writing is a process by which writers discover what they want to say and then write it not only for themselves, but for an audience; and (3) different writing tasks emphasize different parts of the process. However, a prior pedagogical step is needed in order to raise students' consciousness of themselves as writers who are really writing: that of reflection upon one's own writing process, in conversation with others who are similarly engaged in such reflection.

When practiced in a theological context, reflection on the writing process provides students with three invaluable tools. First, by paying attention to what one of my international students has called "the incipient writer in me," students become more centered in their own writing, more confident of the

writing skills that they have, and more patient with those that they are still seeking to improve. Secondly, by focusing upon the writing process in its own right, students from different cultures and theological backgrounds find common ground from which to engage their theological project. Finally, by reflecting together on their processes of writing a theological paper, students are participating in theological reflection as well, as questions about "how I write" invariably elicit further questions about "what I meant to say in this theological paper."

Therefore, at the beginning of every course or workshop, I invite students to write a process reflection on the most recent paper they have written, beginning with their first ruminations on the assignment and concluding with their presentation of the completed paper to their professor. Requesting them also to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of their writing process, I then ask them to share their writing processes with a partner, who will in turn describe the partner's writing process to the workshop group. After each partner has shared the other's process with the larger group, I ask for feedback on this process-reflection exercise, which invariably evokes two primary responses: the reassuring discovery that other students experience the same struggles with their writing, and an equally significant awareness of a diversity of writing processes among various writers. It is particularly helpful for international students to discover that native English speakers and writers are also struggling to translate thoughts into words on paper, notwithstanding differing degrees of language proficiency. For many theological students, these workshops provide the only sustained opportunity they have to reflect on writing as writing with fellow students, and to attend to the writer within who is learning to write in a theological context, but whose writing-self is not limited by that context.

Moreover, reflection on the writing process in its own right can also provide a common denominator across the theological curriculum, enabling students and faculty from different theological disciplines and perspectives to talk to one another out of their shared experience of "writing in a theological context." In a "Faculty Writers in Residence" series, faculty members are invited to talk with students about their own theological writing projects, with an emphasis on the writing process. When, at one of these gatherings, a distinguished ethics professor confessed that he typically wrote outlines from his first drafts, because he was unable to write first drafts from an outline, one student remarked, "Knowing that a faculty member whose articles I have read and admired has the same struggles with writing that I do gives me more courage to keep struggling with my own writing!"

Both in my international student classes, where discussion of the writing process provides a neutral space where students from diverse multicultural backgrounds can embrace their common task as theological writers, and in other WRITE Program workshops, talking about writing can also create com-

munity across institutional and theological boundaries. A "Writing as a Woman in a Theological Context" Student/Faculty Conversation Group included, among others, a Roman Catholic woman religious and church historian from Weston Jesuit School of Theology, an Asian feminist theologian from Episcopal Divinity School, a lesbian feminist theologian from Episcopal Divinity School, and a Weston Jesuit professor of lay spirituality and spiritual direction who had just completed a novel. As one of the participants said, "Because we were talking about writing, we could communicate in ways that we never would have if we were talking at each other from differing theological viewpoints."

While this pedagogy of the writing process, with its emphasis upon the individual writer writing, has been overshadowed in recent composition theory by social constructionist methodologies of written communication,³⁰ its engagement-reflection methodology is no stranger to the theological curriculum, or, for that matter, to theologians. Bernard Lonergan, for example, has argued that the foundation of a renewed theology is "reflection on the ongoing process of conversion," explaining that "just as the scientist studies the scientific method to gain new truth, so the theologian must reflect on the process of conversion in order to understand religious truth."³¹ Similarly, as linguistic psychologist Lev Vygotsky has described, every piece of writing encodes a process of conversion from "inner speech" to written articulation;³² and, I suggest, every theological paper that a student writes not only invites reflection upon conversion, but also becomes an active instrument of its realization. Thus when students discuss the writing of their papers with one another, they are also weighing theological arguments, refining theological language, and engaging in a process of communal discernment over words and meanings with what theologian William Spohn has called "reasoning hearts."³³

However, just as authentic theological reflection presupposes some action to be embraced as a result of the reflection, so reflection on the writing process is not an end in itself, at least when such reflection is practiced in a theological context. On the contrary, focus on the "how" of writing leads students inexorably to an awareness of the "what," the "where," and the "why" of writing. Moreover, however enthusiastically students respond to the invitation to reflect upon their own process as writers in a theological context, this reflection does not transform them instantly into mature theological writers. While it often enables students to identify particular weaknesses in their writing, such as the ability to craft a sustained theological argument, it does not provide the disciplinary tools necessary for apprenticing students to a particular discourse community, with its own conventions of style, structure, and written reasoning. For these tools, I turned to the Writing as a Disciplinary Project Paradigm, and began to adapt it to the needs of WRITE Program students.

The Writing as a Disciplinary Project Paradigm

The Paradigm in Profile

According to this paradigm, writing happens in a social, rhetorical, and disciplinary context, and the skills it supports will vary according to the context. In particular, academic writing proficiency is driven to a large degree by the discipline for which one is writing; hence when the disciplinary context of one's writing changes, the requirements and expectations of writing proficiency will also change. The task of this writing pedagogy is to introduce students to the writing practices embedded in the particular discipline by: (1) making them more explicit, and (2) conceiving the writing task as a kind of "writing practicum" within the discipline, and hence (3) providing an "added" competency rather than making up for a deficiency. The course or duration of this pedagogy extends throughout the student's writing practice and experience in the particular discipline; it is not limited to writing courses, but approaches all writing within that discipline as part of the pedagogy.

In the "writing as a disciplinary project" paradigm of writing pedagogy, everyone is a potential "user" because everyone is writing in that disciplinary context; hence the perception of the pedagogy changes from apology or appreciation to ownership of one's own mastery of the requisite disciplinary discourse. The broader cultural perception of this paradigm is a tendency to dismiss the disciplinary context as a significant factor in the writing process. When the disciplinary context is named and shared, however, it becomes common ground for writers from diverse writing backgrounds, and it fosters cooperative learning. The gifts of this paradigm are that it names all pedagogy within that disciplinary project as "writing pedagogy," it encourages both students and faculty to look at writing assignments through that contextual lens, and it develops a repertoire of rhetorical strategies specific to the discipline in which one is writing. The limitations of this paradigm are that it is bounded in many ways by the disciplinary project that it seeks to support, and it may not be as nurturing of other types of writing.

The Paradigm in Practice

A second-career professional M.B.A. woman student writes her first theological reflection paper and is told, "You haven't explored these issues with enough depth." She sits in my office and protests, "After writing brief business memos for fifteen years, how can I learn to elaborate?" A Korean Episcopal priest writes, "At first, when I learned to write the theological paper in English I was confused as to whether I was studying theology or learning English." And an American computer engineer turned theological student confesses, "My transition difficulty involves moving from a problem-solving discipline to an "engagement-reflection" discipline where I must enter in regardless of my state of knowledge or preparation."

Each of these students knows from painstaking experience what many theological faculty, for whom theology remains in spirit if not in truth, "the Queen of the Sciences," too easily forget: that theological discourse is not a universal language but a local dialect among dialects. Similarly, theology is a discipline among disciplines, even if it is, according to theologian Roger Haight, an "ungainly" one.³⁴ If we understand a discipline as "a community, a practical tradition, a problem focus, a text milieu or corpus, and a creative grammar or rhetoric,"³⁵ disciplinary writing is a primary means of "displaying disciplinarity."³⁶ But in order to write effectively in a particular discipline, students must, to adapt David Bartholmae's words, "invent" it:

Every time a student sits down to write for us, [she or he] has to invent the university for the occasion—invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like history or anthropology or economics or English. The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding and arguing that define the discourse of our community. Or perhaps I should say the various discourses of our community . . .³⁷

While Bartholmae imposes what might seem a daunting task upon undergraduate students, my own experience as a theological student writer and as a writing teacher of theological students corroborates his assertion. Although I had written a Ph.D. thesis, had published articles in my own field of literature, and had taught students how to write in English composition classes for twenty years, theological study required that I learn to write all over again. But because, as Clifford Geertz has suggested, "the various disciplines . . . that make up the scattered discourse of modern scholarship are more than just intellectual coigns of vantage but are ways of being in the world," to learn to write in a theological context was "not just to take up a technical task but to take on a cultural frame that would ['redefine'] a great part of [my] life."³⁸ In other words, writing theological discourse was one means of my socialization into the theological community, just as it is for the students I now teach at Weston and at Episcopal Divinity School.

I am not suggesting that writing competence cannot be transferable from one writing discipline to another,³⁹ or that writing skills mastered in one discipline have no relevance within a new context. However, I am suggesting that my major task as a beginning theological student was to learn how to write "disciplinary discourse"⁴⁰ that was significantly different from the writing I had done for the literary academy, however reassuring their similarities, because in every discipline, written knowledge does different things.⁴¹

To account for these differences and similarities, Susan Peck MacDonald conceives of academic writing as a continuum with "data-driven" discourse, in which the text forms the basis for abstractions about the text, at one end, and

"conceptually driven discourse," which "begins with a theory, hypothesis, problem, or other conceptual apparatus whose terms are set before the data are approached," at the other end of the academic writing continuum.²² While theological discourse embraces both ends of this continuum, with, as I shall argue presently, an "experience-driven" discourse radiating from the center, my own challenge as a theological student, and that of many of the students I teach, was to negotiate "conceptually-driven" writing and thinking.

As a novice theological student I relied heavily upon the writing skills I had, while remaining painfully aware of those that I needed, and I recommend the same strategy to my students. But the conceptually-driven discourse that characterizes most theological writing demanded that I not only write differently, but that I think differently. And if thinking "is a matter of trafficking in the symbolic forms available to one or another community,"²³ thinking and writing theologically required me not only to reposition myself within the continuum of academic discourse, but also to re-conceptualize myself as a practicing writer within a new discourse community.

Putting this "writing in the disciplines" paradigm of writing pedagogy into practice has been essential to our development of a paradigm of "Writing as a Theological Practice." Rhetorician James Crosswhite correctly observes that "different disciplines and professions operate with different rhetorics. Different authorities are recognized by different professional groups. Different protocols and styles of reasoning hold sway in different disciplines."²⁴ Translating my own experience into an effective "writing in the disciplines" pedagogy for WRITE Program students has been complicated by the fact that Episcopal Divinity School and Weston Jesuit School of Theology students are writing in different theological contexts, with different rhetorics, writing protocols, and styles of reasoning influencing both the kinds of theological writing assigned and the criteria used in evaluating student writing. While Weston Jesuit School of Theology professors tend to favor "conceptually-based" theological writing or "data-based" biblical exegesis that states a straightforward hypothesis and supports it in a logical and systematic manner, Episcopal Divinity School faculty encourage a contextual, social-location-based rhetoric of engagement and reflection, whether the assignment is a biblical exegesis or a theological essay. Yet both faculties cultivate excellence in student writing, are encouraging and exacting mentors of their thesis students, and expect from all students writing in which critical reflection translates on paper into structured argument and analysis, whether a student uses a feminist liberation methodology or traditional historical-critical exegesis.

In order to honor the differences and the similarities of these contexts, I first invite students to define and describe their own writing context by asking the question, "What has been your experience of 'writing in a theological context' at Episcopal Divinity School or Weston Jesuit School of Theology?" As students begin to identify the particular parameters of their own site of writing, they also

become aware that their classmates' contexts differ in significant ways from their own.

In a "Writing as a Woman in a Theological Context" workshop, one student wrote, "I have been privileged to be a student and writer at Weston Jesuit, because, in all the writing I have done here, my professors have consistently encouraged me to combine my head and my heart, the passionate and the rational." However, another student reflected, "The Weston context has not honored my own experience as a woman in mid-life who has brought many years of ministerial and life experience with me; I have found the writing required of me to be too academic and unrelated to the way I really converse with women I minister with."

"Since coming to EDS," writes another student, "I have found that I need to be able to make and unmake my context: a white middle-class American woman, educated to reproduce the discourse of academic writing." She went on to describe her experience of writing as dialogical and multivocal, embracing different social and theological locations. In dialogue with her, another EDS student wrote, "If I am asked to write one more theological reflection from my own social location, I will scream! I would much rather write a traditional academic paper for a change!"

By naming their own experience of the theological context in which they are writing, students begin to situate themselves within the context and to exercise some control over its conventions and expectations. But another difficulty in dealing with this "writing in the disciplines" model is the diversity of faculty pedagogies and preferred writing protocols, even within the same institution and, frequently, within the same subject area. As Caroline Matalene says,

If we define rhetoric as a way of thinking about the relationships that exist among speaker, subject matter, purpose, and audience, then we might think of rhetoric as the verbal equivalent of ecology, the study of the relationships that exist between an organism and its environment. Both rhetoric and ecology are disciplines that emphasize the inescapable and, to a great extent, decisive influence of local conditions.²⁵

As a theological student at Weston, I took biblical studies courses from four different professors, each one of whom had very different expectations of what a good exegesis was and how it should be written. I learned very quickly that each course a student takes tends to be a "discipline" or "discourse community" of its own, with its own rhetorical requirements. In spite of these differences, however, I also discovered that once I had a working model for one exegesis paper, it made the next one much easier to write, notwithstanding local variations of style, length, and exegetical focus.

A necessary second step, then, toward a "writing in the disciplines" paradigm of writing pedagogy is one that engages students in identifying

writing protocols for particular classes they are taking, or for a specific theological genre. For the purpose of examining genres of theological discourse, I provide students with a set of questions designed to elicit information concerning a theological writing assignment: the subject matter, distinguishing stylistic features, structure of argument, level of language, intended audience, and persona, or voice, of the writer.²⁵ The students, in turn, have chosen either a theological article they are reading or a theological writing assignment, accompanied by the professor's instructions for completing the assignment, as a sample of theological discourse that they wish to interrogate. After students have engaged this heuristic process in small groups dedicated to a particular theological writing task (e.g., the theological reflection paper or the biblical exegesis), each group develops its own "working model" for that theological genre, consisting of a general description of the genre and specific constraints, or guidelines, for writing in that theological genre. These working models of theological discourse are shared informally with the larger workshop or class group, and ultimately find their way into an in-house "Theological Writer's Guide" that is distributed to students registered for WRITE Program courses and workshops.

Theological faculty, however, remain the most strategic guides for theological student writers, both through individual mentoring of students writing within their fields of specialization and through their participation in "Faculty Writers in Residence" student/faculty conversations and mini-workshops on "Writing the Theological Thesis." These conversations and workshops have: (1) established common ground across theological disciplines by means of the writing process; (2) identified common rhetorical strategies across the theological curriculum, such as the one-page paper responding to a theological question (Weston) or the situated engagement-reflection paper (EDS); and (3) recognized differences between writing across the theological curriculum, such as the data-based protocols of church history and biblical studies, and the conceptually-based protocols of fundamental or systematic theology.

Every theological student knows intuitively, however, that a "writing in the disciplines" paradigm is not adequate to embrace the profundity of writing that a theological education, at its best, inspires. Informed as it is by what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls the "double agenda of 'scientific' theological thinking and professional training,"²⁷ theological education is also, as Rebecca Chopp describes, an immersion in "transformative practices."²⁸ One of these practices is surely writing, but if writing is to be an agent of transformation in theological education, we need to reconceive writing as a theological practice.

The Writing as a Theological Practice Paradigm *The Paradigm in Profile*

According to this paradigm, writing, as a major mode of theological learning, is one of the social practices of teaching and learning common to the

theological school,²⁹ and a primary criteria employed in evaluating theological learning. Within this paradigm, writing proficiency is measured by the degree to which writers have integrated their own process of theological reflection with the operative protocols of the theological context in which they are writing (e.g., social-location-based reflection; thesis/argument; exegesis). The task of this writing pedagogy is to re-envision writing as a theological practice and to invite students to engage that practice from the starting point of their own social/theological location. The parameters of this writing pedagogy extend across the theological curriculum, requiring students to embrace a multiplicity of voices, contexts, paradigms, and pedagogies.

In the "Writing as a Theological Practice" paradigm of writing pedagogy, the user's perception of the pedagogy is both discipline-directed and integrative; in other words, writing is construed both as specific discourses encountered across the theological curriculum and as a more global practice of theological learning through which those discourses are engendered. The broader cultural perception of this paradigm is that of highly specialized (and often arcane) discourse that is inaccessible to nonspecialists; however, theologian David Tracy identifies theology as public discourse and argues for its accountability to each of the publics, or audiences, that it addresses: academy, church, and society.³⁰ The gift of this paradigm is its integral and intuitive connection with the process of theological education in which it is embedded and its dedication to the particular demands and disciplines of writing in a theological context. The limitation of this paradigm is the virtual lack of a curricular structure to support it; hence its pedagogical potential across the theological curriculum remains largely unexamined and unexplored.

The Paradigm in Practice

In the "Writing and Research Across the Theological Curriculum" class, I teach writing as if it were a theological practice. But in order to do this, I first invite theological students to make writing their practice, believing with Natalie Goldberg that "to do writing practice means to deal ultimately with your whole life."³¹ The writing practice that I recommend to students, however, is an ongoing process of writing, peer response, and rewriting. Every class session, therefore, begins with "Reflecting on Paper," a fifteen-minute "structured free-writing" exercise in which students respond to a protocol I have prepared or are free to pursue one of their own. Some students may use this time to produce a logically reasoned response to a theological question. Others may write an in-process reflection on a research project, or narrate an experience at a field ministry site. Still others might write a poem:

We were arriving gently
Everyone else in their seat
Some of us on tiptoes

As if walking in our sleep
We dived slowly
Into our white paper
Each one cooking
The best from their ideas
Then we share our goals reached
Everyone a true architect
A theologian, a philosopher, a poet!
We free the best of ourselves
Testing the purest of sensations
Small ecstasies bearing our ideas:
To express our feelings
Is the best that could happen.³²

This writing is then shared with a writing partner or workshop group for feedback and response, in order to include the writer's audience within the circle of writing practice and to make that practice a more communal affair.

By beginning each class with writing practice, and widening the circle of that practice to include peer response and rewriting, I am trying to do several things. First, I am trying to clear a more visible, communal, and multifaceted writing space within our theological context and to encourage my theological students to clear spaces in their own lives for their own writing practice. Secondly, I am attempting to reposition the act of writing in the disciplines of theology and religious studies from that of "writing up" one's conclusions at the end of the process³³ to "writing down" one's questions, reflections, and preliminary hypotheses from the very beginning of a project. By that strategic repositioning, I am also making a claim for writing as a primary mode of theological learning and communication that is no less deserving of class time, space, and focus than oral modes of theological discourse. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I am inviting my students to integrate the personal and communal processes of theological reflection with their own writing practice, in the hope that they will discover the incipient writers within them and continue that practice in other theological contexts.

Writing as a Theological Practice: A Paradigm in Progress

The "Writing as a Theological Practice" paradigm that I imagine for my theological context is not yet fully instituted. The word "instituted" is appropriate here, because the WRITE Program remains adjunct, rather than integral, to the institutions that it serves. In my theological context, and, I suspect, in yours, writing is embraced as a pedagogical means to a theological end, and writing proficiency is presupposed of theological students. However, in my theological context, and, I suspect, in yours, the practice of writing is so very

much taken for granted that it disappears into the curriculum like invisible ink. This disappearing act is due, at least in part, to the fact that theology is a "phonocentric" discipline.³⁴ It privileges the spoken, proclaimed word above the secondary medium of writing. This disciplinary preference is evident in the written language that theologians use to address their audiences. As Rowan Williams does when he asserts that theology is fundamentally "a way of talking,"³⁵ and David Tracy when he imagines theology as a "communal conversation on behalf of the kairos of our day,"³⁶ theologians typically submerge their own acts of writing into metaphors of speaking and conversation, preferring to "speak through books," as Clement of Alexandria exhorted in the second century, than to "write" them.³⁷

In theological education, as in other academic and professional disciplines, writing with invisible ink has consequences. When the practice of writing becomes invisible, the process of writing disappears as well, and their role in the construction of theological meaning is "overwritten" by more visible and vocal media of theological learning. Moreover, the power of the written, published word to maintain disciplinary boundaries and control the production of theological discourse is subtly disguised by treating academic writing as an apologetic alternative to "talk" or "conversation." In such a climate, as one of my faculty colleagues described, writing practice and pedagogy remain "one oar in the water" that is left to paddle alone while others pursue more explicitly "theological" pedagogical practices.

Writing as a Theological Practice: Reenvisioning the Paradigms

But what if writing in theological education were construed not merely as the reproduction on paper of preexisting mental acts of theological reasoning, but as an active constituent of the theological imagination? What if writing a theological argument were no less "writing theology" than engaging in a theological reflection group is "doing theology"? What if writing in a theological context were understood as ongoing reflection on conversion, in whatever rhetorical form or mode of theological discourse? And what if, in the light of that understanding, the act of writing from a theological location were taken seriously as "an act of creating one's life in new ways?"³⁸ What if, at the same time, writing across the theological curriculum were envisioned as a "social practice" no less than a solitary one,³⁹ through the encouragement of theological writers' groups and collaborative writing projects? What if, in other words, writing for the purposes of theological learning were a theological practice, after all?

Let us call writing practice in a theological context a theological practice. Instructed by Alasdair MacIntyre, David Kelsey, and Rebecca Chopp, I understand a practice to mean a way of doing and a way of being that is both socially

constructed and individually embodied, and subject to norms that define or direct it.⁴² A theological practice, then, is a socially constructed and individually embodied way of doing and being apropos to a particular theological community. As David Tracy describes it, the production of theological discourse through "the acts of speaking and writing" is such a practice: "Across the broad spectrum of different academic settings and different cultures, even the broader spectrum of different paradigms for theology's disciplinary status, most theologians do recognize their responsibility to produce theological discourse which meets the highest standards of the contemporary academy."⁴³ Rebecca Chopp defines theology itself as "discourse about God in the Christian community" that "directs the praxis of the community."⁴⁴ And Rowan Williams argues that:

Theology is a language used by a specific group of people to make sense of their world—not so much to explain it as to find words that will hold or reflect what in the environment is sensed to be solid, authoritative, and creative of where we stand. Thus theology is always involved with doing new or odd things with speech And that's saying that theology is a way of talking, and a way of transforming and negotiating with or in language.⁴⁵

While Williams's phonocentric bias toward theological discourse is evident in these remarks, he argues cogently for theology as a discipline that does things with words for the love of God and for the hope of a transformed human community. If this definition sounds more poetic than theological, that is no accident. As poet Kathleen Norris observes, "Poets and Christians . . . are people who believe in the power of words to effect change in the human heart."⁴⁶

Writing as a Theological Practice—a Language Practice

Writing as a theological practice, then, is, first of all, a language practice: "a way of transforming and negotiating with or in language." It is not pure, unadulterated ratiocination springing from theologians' heads like Athena from the head of Zeus. Theology is "talk, thought, reasoning about God"⁴⁷ mediated through *language*. Thus we can call theology, in rhetorician I.A. Richards's terms, a "language study": "Corresponding to all these studies [Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Sociology, Anthropology, Poetics, Dialectic] are characteristic uses of language All of them are both subject matter and language studies. That is the chief point here: there is no study which is not a language study, concerned with the speculative instruments it employs."⁴⁸

In theological parlance, Richards cautions us against separating the writing of theology from the "speculative instruments" that we employ to "do theol-

ogy": thinking about human experience, reading, reflection, reasoning, inquiry, interpretation, prayer. When Thomas Merton describes himself "working out a theology" as he writes, he gives us a rare glimpse of a theological writer thinking theologically through the process of writing, rather than merely using writing to transcribe prepackaged theological thinking. The first image of our theological writer at work relates thought and language integrally, as sound to melody; the alternate view imagines written language separately, as the garment of thought. Max Black wisely identifies both these images as models of a complex relationship that cannot be completely captured by either one; but he, like me, favors the analogy of sound to melody, perhaps because, like mine, it reflects his own experience more accurately. Extending this analogy and extrapolating from it, language is the sound of which spoken and written theology is one melody.⁴⁷

Writing as a theological practice is also grounded in a sociocultural understanding of language in which learning to write theological discourse can be compared to learning to write a foreign language and, to a greater or lesser degree, internalizing its culture. In my "Writing Across the Theological Curriculum" course for international students, I introduce the "Cultural and Linguistic Contexts" of our writing practice with Rowan Williams's "Theological Integrity"⁴⁸ and David Tracy's "A Social Portrait of the Theologian"⁴⁹ as theological points of departure; Helen Fox's introduction to *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing*⁵⁰ for a cross-cultural perspective on American academic literate practices; and Howard Becker's "Freshman English for Graduate Students" in *Writing for Social Scientists*, which not only serves as a basic writing text for the course, but also provides a persuasive precedent for teaching discipline-specific writing on a graduate level.⁵¹

These readings provide a preliminary framework for student writing on their own contexts of literacy, first in their cultures of origin and also as writers in an American academic and theological context. In such papers, an African student described learning to write by forming letters in the ground, with a stick carefully sharpened for the purpose; a Japanese student remembered her mother criticizing her inscription of Japanese characters so severely that she disliked writing of any kind for years afterward; and a student from Mizoram (northeast India), struck by the pedagogy of domination implicit in her missionary-based education, wrote a thesis critiquing the religious captivity of literate practices in her rural Indian village, especially in relationship to women's place in society.⁵²

By examining the history of their own literate practices in relationship to their development as writers in a theological context, students take responsibility for their own appropriation of "Standard Written English," rather than being appropriated by the dominant discourse. As an EDS D.Min. student and seminary professor from Uganda eloquently wrote concerning the cultural implications of learning to write in an American style:

Thank you Carla, for your observation is good.
What the American has, is what s/he gives.
Take his technique, understand her values,
for then you will stay in this: the land of your sojourning.
Carla, Sojourner, are you here to stay?
Those who sojourn, go back home,
Taking food and all to their own.
Take the techniques, go with their values.
Write for your people, about their values,
Write the critique of the American values,
for they move faster than ever before, engulfing the world.
Empower, empowerment: who will do it for your people?
You will do it, for what you have is not so little.
Stay here, around, and it will be so little;
Take it home and you won't belittle
the few who will get the little,
Empowered, empowered.⁵³

Writing as a Theological Practice—a Reflective Process

Writing as a theological practice is, secondly, a reflective process with personal and pedagogical dimensions. I use the term "personal" unashamedly, because persons use language to express themselves, and there is no genuine education without personal engagement, commitment, and transformation. That is to say, if the personal is political, it is also pedagogical. Rebecca Chopp has wisely noted that many women are drawn to theological education "after or in the midst of life-transforming experiences."⁵⁴ In my experience, all theological students come to seminary for profoundly personal reasons that may or may not be political ones; at the heart of every student I have ever taught is a story of conversion waiting to be written and struggling to be realized in the form of vocation. That personal story of conversion is also what sustains students through the hard places of their theological study and draws them toward deepening understanding. Indeed, many theological students make their first attempt at theological writing in an autobiographical essay addressed to the Director of Admissions that grounds their call to theological study in that story of conversion.

Building upon Geoffrey Baum's insight that "theological reflection depends in large measure on personal biography,"⁵⁵ I introduce the writing of theological reflection by asking students to write the preface to a theological autobiography that focuses upon the intersections between their personal call to conversion and their development of theological consciousness. While students are encouraged to follow the logic and the poetry of their own "narrativity," which Rebecca Chopp defines as "the ongoing activity of writing our lives,"⁵⁶ supplementary readings include Geoffrey Baum's "Personal Expe-

rience and Styles of Thought,"⁵⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether's "Beginnings: An Intellectual Biography,"⁵⁸ and Marcus Borg's "Meeting Jesus Again"⁵⁹ as examples of this kind of theological reflection, along with Gerald O'Collins's "Human Experience"⁶⁰ and Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer's "Theology as a Kind of Human Reflection."⁶¹

I begin the writing of theological reflection with theological autobiography in order to underscore the integral connections between personal experience and theological reflection. As Gerald O'Collins writes, "our life expresses itself in experience. Experiences disclose what our life is and is to be." But even more importantly, "the self cannot live through an experience without in some way conceptualizing, exteriorizing or expressing—whether in language or otherwise—that experience. Without such expression experience has no meaning and is essentially incomplete."⁶²

However, writing a theological autobiography—or even a part of one—is not easy, as my students attest. For some, there is too much dissonance between the "autobiographical" and the "theological" for them to imagine the two categories into a unified narrative. For others, the term "spiritual autobiography" is much more congenial, with its emphasis on following one's heart rather than one's thinking processes. One visiting Roman Catholic seminarian from East Germany objected violently to the assignment, insisting that "I will not make my personal life an object of study for this course." While this student's antipathy to the assignment was rooted in the pedagogical norms of his own culture, the disciplinary borders between personal narrative and theological reasoning that it presupposes are no less difficult to cross in our own theological culture. Indeed, the activity of theological reflection is often collapsed into one or the other of these domains, to the detriment of both. Yet authentic theological reflection, whether written or spoken, is an integrative practice of attention to experience from the standpoint of a theological imagination.

If, adapting the terminology of Ann Berthoff, we construe the theological imagination as a metaphor for the theological "mind in action, making meaning,"⁶³ we can expect this meaning-making activity to encompass both "data-driven" discourse and "conceptually-driven" discourse.⁶⁴ However, the writing of theological reflection requires also an "experience-driven" model of discourse. In "experience-driven" discourse, we claim experience as the starting point for theological reflection and struggle to organize and shape our experience in and through language.⁶⁵ Building upon Susan Peck MacDonald's taxonomy, I locate "experience-driven" discourse at the center of a writing continuum that embraces "data-driven" (or textual) discourse at one extremity and "concept-driven" discourse at the other:

Concept-driven Discourse	Experience-driven Discourse	Data-driven Discourse
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While any one of these categories may provide the starting point for reflection (a biblical text; a theological question), my adaptation of MacDonald's model emphasizes the foundational role of experience in all theological writing. As Roger Haight argues,

... Insofar as the conclusion of any theological argument or explanation is itself theological, it cannot be decided on the basis of objective reason alone. Theology always unfolds within the context of religious or partially religious experience; the affirmation of the truth of theological judgments is always a function of engaged participatory experience and knowledge.⁶⁶

To be sure, a writer's recourse to experience will take different rhetorical forms, depending on the audience addressed and the purpose of the writing; in a systematic theology course, students will be expected to subject their experience to the scrutiny of argument, and in a biblical studies course an experiential response to a text must also be warranted by the text. However, the writing of theological autobiography invites students to an integration of the theological imagination in which personal religious experience provides grounds for theological reflection, and theological reflection in turn is critiqued by experience.

Finally, however, such writing does not become a communally reflective activity without recourse to the writing partners, or workshop groups, who help each other to integrate personal processes of theological reflection with the rhetorical protocols of the theological context in which they are writing. When, for example, my student from East Germany voiced his objections to personal writing with other members of his workshop group, a constructive conversation concerning differing cultural models of theological reflection ensued. When he experienced other students taking his point of view seriously and learning from it, he in turn was able to accept the theological autobiography assignment as a valid contextual exercise. Approaching the task from that perspective, he wrote an autobiographical reflection on the experience of serving as an altar boy in his parish and its influence upon his decision to go to seminary. Receiving respectful and positive feedback from his workshop group on his writing further transformed the assignment from a violation of his own cultural experience to a cross-cultural learning experience. Thus for this student, as for many others I have worked with, the writing of theological reflection has been complemented, challenged, and brought to completion through group reflection upon the writing.

Writing as a Theological Practice—a Cross-Disciplinary Project

"Theology," argues David Tracy, "is a generic name not for a single discipline but for three: fundamental, systematic, and practical theologies."⁴⁷ Whether or not Tracy's taxonomy satisfies all theologians, his argument for theology as an inherently interdisciplinary enterprise has pedagogical consequences for theological educators who are also writing teachers. The students I teach are learning to be systematic theologians and biblical scholars; feminist liberationist theologians and diocesan priests; they are Anglican seminary professors from Uganda suspicious of American academic theology and Roman Catholic lay woman theologians from South Boston seeking a common language to share with women in their local parish; they are Jesuit priests from Paraguay learning to write theology for their own people; and they are Episcopal women postulants for ordination for whom oral and written rhetorical practice is integral to their ministerial formation and identity.

Because every discipline is also a discourse community comprised of "a group of people who share certain language-using practices,"⁴⁸ writing as a theological practice is concerned with identifying the "language-using practices" that theologians share and learning how to write in those languages. As the diversity of my students suggests, however, there is no dominant "disciplinary discourse" into which I can initiate them, nor can I imagine my primary job to be that of teaching students to replicate that discourse, if there were one. Yet I can, and do, imagine writing as a theological practice to be a cross-disciplinary project integrating writing, reading, critical reflection, and conversation about writing across the theological curriculum, inviting students to embrace many theological texts, contexts, methodologies, and pedagogies, from their own social location and theological site of writing.

At times, as I have suggested earlier, that project involves introduction to and analysis of particular genres of theological discourse, with particular attention to the modes of thinking, reasoning, and reflection that theological writing has in common. It goes without saying that this immersion in theological discourse requires reading, and that, in the absence of disciplinary writing instruction, most students learn to write theology by reading it. At other times, it involves critique of privileged or prevailing modes of theological writing, as one faculty colleague recently questioned the pedagogical limitations of one-page theological position papers vis-à-vis more exhaustive theological research projects. At all times, it requires vigilant attention to the development of the student's writing abilities across the theological curriculum, as they are reflected in the degree to which they have integrated their own process of theological reflection with the operative protocols of the theological context in which they are writing.

In other words, through engaging in writing as a theological practice, I want students to participate in the disciplinary conversation as authentic selves

in dialogue with the discipline(s), rather than leaving "themselves" out of the conversation. As Thomas Farrell observes, writing in critical and creative conversation with the texts of any discipline "involves the self in orchestrating and harmonizing various voices in the field. When [writers] do, their writing is intersubjective, because their personal subjectivities have been expanded to include the meanings and values that have been voiced and developed in the disciplines in question."⁶⁹ The intersubjectivity that writers engage in when they read, reflect upon, and analyze the literature of a discipline requires what literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin calls "the dialogic imagination,"⁷⁰ and my second semester "Writing and Research Across the Theological Curriculum" course is grounded in this process.

In this course, students choose one writing/research project from across their theological curriculum to work on in conjunction with the class. Beginning with the assumption that "writing processes and written products are both elements of the same social process,"⁷¹ I further assume with James A. Reither that "academic writing, reading and inquiry are inseparably linked; and all three are learned not by doing any one alone but by doing them all at the same time. To teach writing is thus necessarily to ground writing in reading and inquiry."⁷² But just as playing the piano with two hands and manipulating its pedals with one's feet is a far more complex activity than playing the piano with one finger, so the reading, writing, and disciplined theological reflection required in preparing a theological research project from textual sources is an extremely complex intellectual activity. Not only must students have a mastery of theology "as a disciplined way of thinking,"⁷³ but they must also be able to read theology critically. While the capacity for critical reading is usually taken for granted by theological faculty, in *Critical Thinking Reading & Writing: A Brief Guide to Argument*, Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedau argue that in order to be critical readers, students must:

1. summarize accurately an argument they have read;
2. locate the thesis of an argument;
3. locate the assumptions, stated and unstated;
4. analyze and evaluate the strength of the evidence and the soundness of the reasoning supported in the thesis; and
5. analyze, evaluate, and account for discrepancies among various readings on a topic (e.g., explain why certain facts are used or not used, why two sources might differently interpret the same facts).⁷⁵

In my experience, students who cannot read critically (using the skills outlined above) cannot write critically either, and we do our students an injustice when we do not acknowledge the complexity of these tasks from the outset and provide adequate curricular resources for students unfamiliar with these advanced writing/research practices, rather than expecting them to rely

on the haphazard research skills that they might or might not have acquired in the course of writing a college "term paper."

For graduate theological students, however, these skills are best practiced in the context of one's own writing and research. Using Wayne Booth et al., *The Craft of Research* as the primary text for my course, I first invite students to engage these tasks in the course of developing their own research question, and examining the strength of its claims, grounds, and warrants in writers' workshop groups.⁷⁶

Theological argument, however, takes many shapes and forms, depending upon the audience addressed, the methodology of the writer/researcher, and the purpose, or agenda, of the research project. Recent theological scholarship has identified the shapes and forms of argument as "rhetorics" or "rhetorical sites."⁷⁷ If, as has already been suggested, the three audiences of the theologian are the wider society, the academy, and the church,⁷⁸ then it follows that Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" will use a different kind of theological rhetoric than Karl Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith*, and Rebecca Chopp's *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* will privilege different claims and warrants than David Tracy's *The Analogical Imagination*. Yet students must gain a familiarity with argumentative strategies appropriate to each of the theological audiences, methodologies, and agendas represented by these authors, to name only a few.

For these reasons, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza admonishes feminist scholars to be "bilingual" writers of the dominant disciplinary discourse and feminist-critical rhetorics.⁷⁹ As I have suggested, however, students are expected to be not only "bilingual" but multivocal practitioners of diverse theological rhetorics. Using the standard "claims/grounds/warrants" model of argumentation as a point of departure, I also introduce students to scientific "create a research space" models; philosophical (main path/faulty path) models of theological discourse, as well as rhetorics of Rogerian persuasion; feminist rhetorics of resistance based upon "talking back" and "re-readings" of the dominant tradition, and multicultural models of contrastive rhetoric.⁸⁰

Finally, in conjunction with their own research process, I assign a "Theo Log," or Research Journal, in which students record ideas for research, the progress of their research, reflections on readings and other source materials, a record of time spent on particular writing/research tasks, and a final evaluation of their writing/research process. As an adaptation of Anne Berthoff's "dialogical journal,"⁸¹ the "Theo Log" provides students with a dialogical space to converse with their theological sources, especially if they juxtapose textual research and their own responses on facing pages of a spiral notebook, or on a similarly divided computer screen. While I am not alone in encouraging the integration of critical reading and writing across the theological curriculum through the use of dialogical/reflection logs or journals, I underscore the processes themselves as legitimate subjects of inquiry and pedagogy in a theological context.

Writing as a Theological Practice—the Practice of Theology

In each of the preceding sections, I have attempted to weave theory and practice together in order to reveal the underlying pattern of writing as a theological practice that informs our theological curriculum. But is the theological practice of writing no less the practice of theology? Finally, let me draw these threads together into four summarizing claims:

1. *Speaking and writing are the fundamental modes of theological learning, and the major criteria used to evaluate theological learning.* My task as a writing teacher begins with this awareness; theological schools are not schools of creative writing, but they are schools preparing students for public roles of speaking and writing as religious professionals. As David Tracy argues, "Every theologian (and clergy or academic) by the very acts of speaking and writing, makes a claim to [public] attention." Leaving speaking aside for the time being, however, my paper has concentrated on writing, because

2. *In theological education, writing has been the more invisible, though no less integral, mode of learning.* Although the production of writing is a major requirement of the theological curriculum, the practice of writing is so very much taken for granted that it disappears into the curriculum like invisible ink. This disappearing act is due to the fact that theology is a "phonocentric" discipline, privileging the spoken, proclaimed word above the written word, and submerging acts of theological writing (and hence writers) behind metaphors of speech and conversation.

3. *The task of this pedagogy is to render the writing process more visible by reenvisioning writing as a theological practice.* In the simplest of terms, a theological practice is something that individuals who comprise a theological community do in a particular way for a particular purpose. Thus when students write papers for their theological courses, they are not just "writing a paper"; they are engaging in the theological practice of integrating their own process of theological reflection with the rhetorical requirements of the theological writing task. Thus both writing proficiency and theological competence are measured by students' ability to "write theology well."

4. *If writing in a theological context is a theological practice, then the theological practice of writing is likewise the practice of theology.* To engage in a theological practice is to practice, or "do" theology. When writing across the theological curriculum is recognized as the disciplined and dedicated practice of theology, such writing is transformed from mere "paper work" into an empowering mode of theological learning. When the writing process is retrieved as a theological resource enabling students to "work out a theology as they go," learning to "do" theology and learning to "write" theology become integrated practices, and theological faculty are empowered to teach writing, as they go.

These are some of the pedagogical claims I have made for reenvisioning writing as a theological practice. But what practical difference could it make for theological students and educators to imagine writing as an integral theological

operation, rather than an optional linguistic skill? First, it would invite theological educators to envision the practice of writing in all of its rhetorical and cognitive sophistication, and to familiarize themselves with the current literature of composition pedagogy and, more broadly, written communication. Secondly, it would engage theologians in more conscious and systematic reflection upon their own writing process and its translation into a theological practice. Thirdly, it would encourage theological faculty to envision themselves as teaching writing as a theological practice, rather than merely assigning "papers" in order to teach theology. And finally, it would require that writing as a theological practice be taught by theological faculty writers in fully accredited courses, in whatever form or shape the courses might take (for example, a weekly writing section for a theological foundations course, or a "Theological Writers' Seminar" required of all entering students).

Conclusion: Reenvisioning Writing as a Theological Practice

I have argued here that writing is a major mode of theological learning across the landscape of theological education, but a largely unexamined one. This learning is not limited to international student programs, although that is where theological schools are placing the greatest emphasis upon writing. Secondly, I have suggested that although most theological faculty implicitly acknowledge writing as an instrument of theological education, the operative pedagogies and paradigms informing our practice have not been made explicit, and writing instruction remains on the margins of the theological curriculum. By reimagining writing as a theological practice, I have argued for its inclusion as an accredited course not merely across, but within, the theological curriculum. If, however, every theological educator is also a writing teacher, I hope that my writing will encourage others to reflect on the practices they have and the pedagogies they need to teach their students "to write theology well." I conclude with some practical ways of implementing writing as a theological practice:

1. Introduce the writing process as a theological practice by inviting students into the disciplined and dynamic exercise of the theological imagination when they write papers for courses.
2. Design a theological writing seminar for students, or a theological writing section of an introductory theology or biblical studies course.
3. Collect theological sources and anecdotes of theological writers at work, and share these with students to make "writing theology" a more visible discipline.
4. Keep a file of well-written theological articles, and use them to exemplify theological writing style, format, and protocols of written reasoning in a class session devoted to "writing theology."

Teaching Writing in a Theological Context

5. Encourage faculty to share their own writing processes with students to develop a sense of a theological writing community inclusive of students and faculty.
6. Extend the model of theological reflection in small groups to that of students working with their own theological writing in small groups.
7. Make writing expectations and protocols clear and accessible to students by including guidelines and style sheet specifications in syllabi.
8. Encourage students to submit first drafts of papers for feedback prior to final submission.
9. Offer feedback on both the form and content of student writing, with particular attention to the writing conventions of theological scholarship.
10. If a student writes a good paper, suggest specific journals for which it might be appropriate, and help to revise the paper for publication.
11. If students need help with their writing, refer them to a writing tutor and give the tutor feedback concerning the student's writing needs.
12. Create your own strategies to mentor writers who are theologians and theologians who are writers, as you struggle with them to write theology well, and to work out a theology as you go.³⁰

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ENDNOTES

1. Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Doubleday Image Books, 1956), 178-79.
2. See David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 119.
3. Brian V. Street distinguishes between "autonomous" models of literacy and "ideological" models of literacy in his monograph, *Literacy in Theory and in Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2-3. I find the term "contextual" more congenial to my own understanding of the model of literacy that undergirds my writing pedagogy.
4. See, for example, Michael A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), and David Bartholmae, "Inventing the University," in Mike Rose, ed., *When a Writer Can't Write: Studies in Writers' Block and Other Composing-Process Problems* (New York and London: Guildford Press, 1985), 134-165.
5. See I.A. Richards, *Speculative Instruments* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955), whom I have quoted in further detail in ("Writing as a Theological Practice as a Language Practice").
6. William Zinsser argues eloquently for writing as a primary mode of learning in *Writing to Learn* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

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38. Chopp, 32.
39. See, for example, Kelsey, 181.
40. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 187, for whom a *practice* is "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve . . . standards of excellence . . ." governing that activity; David Kelsey, for whom *practice* refers to "any form of socially established cooperative human activity that is complex and internally coherent, is subject to standards of excellence that partly define it, and is done to some end but that does not necessarily have a product" (118); and Rebecca Chopp, who defines *practice* as "socially shared forms of behavior that mediate between . . . subjective and objective dimensions" (15). See also Anne Lewis Deneen, "Intuitions, Writing and Theological Education," M. Div. Thesis, Episcopal Divinity School, 1997, who appeals to the Standards of Accreditation of The Association of Theological Schools to argue for writing as a theological practice.

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43. In Breyfogle, "A Conversation with Rowan Williams," 296.
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55. Geoffrey Baum, ed., *Journeys* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 5.
56. Chopp, 34.
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64. See p. 11 and note 22, above.
65. O'Collins, 46-47.
66. Haight, 221.
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69. See eds. Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup, *Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1993), 47.
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75. See, for example, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 131-32, 176-180; and Chopp, *Saving Work*, 91-93.
76. Tracy, 5.
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79. See Berthoff, "Preface" to *Reclaiming the Imagination*, iii.
80. I received generous help from writers and theologians in the writing of this article. My Boston Theological Institute writing colleagues Barbara Coogan and Rosamund Rosenmeier encouraged this paper from its earliest stages, and improved it with their comments. My faculty colleagues Ian Douglas, Kwok Pui Lan, and Roger Haight, S.J., graciously read and responded to successive drafts from a theological perspective. Anne Deneen offered invaluable feedback as a theological student and writing teacher par excellence. Finally, my International Writers' Seminar students of Episcopal Divinity School and Weston Jesuit School of Theology have been willing and eager to "work out a theology" while writing in English, and that has made all the difference.

Renewing the Practices of Ministry

Malcolm L. Warford

Lexington Theological Seminary

As a way of thinking about practical theology, I want to do several things: set the context of my own life as a teacher, frame the issue of practice and theology, and then describe the courses I teach in the practice of ministry at Lexington Theological Seminary.

The Context of My Life as a Teacher

My first theological education occurred within the community of learning in which Lexington Seminary was the center. Growing up in Lexington, Kentucky, as a child and young person raised in the Woodland Christian Church, the seminary's students and faculty touched my life throughout those crucial years. Faculty members were part of the Woodland congregation, seminarians served as youth advisors, and the school itself was a resource and partner in the mission of the church.

Most of all, I remember the students at the seminary who led our youth groups and introduced me to the practices of the Christian life: Joyce McGuire, John and Jackie Crowden, Newton Fowler, Fred Francis, Cy Rowell, and many others. The key teachers were Lexington graduates Don Scott and Don Anderson, who became ministers of Woodland, and Ben Lewis who later was my philosophy professor.

Although I have spent much of my life in the United Church of Christ, I have never felt apart from the theological and ecclesiastical tradition that is embodied in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I carry within myself the formative elements of that tradition in the generations of my own family.

I grew up when there was still an ecology of Protestant life that knit together family, church, college, and seminary. These were "homes of learning" in which I heard the good news of the gospel and was called to the ministry of Christ's church.

Along the way as a minister and teacher, I have been informed by critical texts and events that shaped my thinking and gave me hope. In this regard, there are words that we read that form us in the way we think, feel, and speak. We can never know for sure what word we read may become incarnate within us, but words have the power to call us forward. And the word that comes from God, that Word, calls us to life and gives us the power to speak.

When I think of the theological writings that have stayed with me, I would name first of all the sermons of Paul Tillich, especially the collection called *The New Being*. Because I was in seminary when Dietrich Bonhoeffer became known

in this country, *The Letters and Papers from Prison* has been a significant text. Early in high school I found Thomas Merton, and I have carried on a conversation with this Trappist monk all my life. In thinking about the church, the creative though sometimes cranky reflections of Kierkegaard have shaped my understanding of a post-Christendom church. My interest in the nature of vocation was evoked by Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, and the biblical theologian who taught me the most has been Paul Minear. These basic and constant texts have been augmented by many others, and all of them have been challenged and informed by the new learning from emerging theological voices, especially in the African-American and feminist movements of theological renewal.

Parallel to these theological texts, I have always read widely. The pivotal turns came with reading *All the King's Men*, by Robert Penn Warren, and in discovering Eudora Welty, Anne Tyler, and Flannery O'Connor. Before I lived in Maine, I knew it well from the essays of E. B. White. Alongside all these and more have been essays and novels of Wendell Berry, Walker Percy, and Reynolds Price.

At another level, but not without influence, have been the mystery writers and their investigators of the human condition. Simenon's Maigret, Ross MacDonald's Lew Archer, Jan Van de Wetering's Dutch detectives, and Bartholomew Gill's Inspector McGarr are figures that have been important. Mysteries bring us into others' worlds and the best of them present the otherness and strangeness of life.

Originally I was headed toward teaching in the History of Religions. During seminary I studied with a Buddhist ethicist from Sri Lanka, Pyadassi Thera, and after seminary I entered graduate study at McGill in the Institute of Islamic Studies. The call of the congregation and the upheaval of the late 1960s, though, took me from graduate school to full-time ministry in Vermont and New York during those years of change and turmoil. In the midst of this struggle, my sense of vocation changed and my direction shifted. More and more the issues centered for me in the nature of education and formation, especially the formation of institutions embodying a radical vision. When it came time to return to doctoral study, I pursued studies in education and history eventually writing a dissertation on the evangelical-abolitionist tradition that formed Lane Seminary, Oberlin College, and Berea College. Robert Lynn, Lawrence Cremin, Douglas Sloan, Ellis Nelson, and Robert Handy were the primary teachers.

While books and formal schooling have been essential forms of education, the deeper learning has occurred in relationships. Marriage is a covenant in which we confront the fact that we are less than we idealize ourselves to be, but we find that we are more than we might ever imagine ourselves becoming in the mutuality of another who knows us and yet loves us. With Pam in the "little commonwealth" of our family I have found this kind of learning.

The congregations and seminaries that I have served have been communities that have taught me in profound ways. In the occasions of fulfillment and

the times of falling short as well, I have discovered my gifts and my limits. In this regard, throughout my life as a teacher, pastor, and administrator, I have been concerned about the nature of institutions. Most of what I know about institutions comes from working alongside Avery Post and Donald Shriver and from experience that was interpreted and rethought with the help of Warren Deem and Robert Greenleaf, who were wise and thoughtful teachers. At the foundation of this interest is the theological issue of vocation. I am concerned about how an institution shapes its life around a sense of calling and how leaders are formed by this sense of vocation.

The Issue of Practice and Theology

Practical theology as a discipline fits both my intellectual and personal commitments. Within the practical field at Lexington Theological Seminary are included music and worship, pastoral care, preaching, educational ministry, field education, and the practice of ministry. Often the practical field is defined simply as the sum total of its parts. In this regard, we fall into a model that assumes that practical theology is the applied side of theory: the classical disciplines are to define the body of knowledge and the practical area is to apply this knowledge in skills and techniques. The difficulty of this stereotypical way of understanding practical theology is that it really does not describe the nature of theological study. The fact is that theology at its best is practical, and practice is always shaped by some kind of theological perspective.

Some of the most important theological learning occurs in practical courses, and some of the deepest moments of insight into the nature of pastoral practice take place in the context of biblical, theological, and historical studies. Every member of a seminary faculty is called to be a theologian whose scholarship and teaching are formed by the church's ministry.

Practical theology is defined as a field of study by the integral way in which all its various areas of study and practice share a common purpose to help the church realize its calling as the body of Christ in this contemporary context. The practical field exists to help pastors and teachers come to understand and sustain practices of leadership that equip the church for ministry, that is, the work and calling of the *laos* (the people of God). How an ecclesial consciousness is evoked and how practices of faith are cultivated out of this consciousness is the primary purpose of practical theology. At the heart of the field is the unifying theme of what it means to be the church in a particular place. Along this line, the theologian Leonardo Boff has written:

The church comes into being as church when people become aware of the call to salvation in Jesus Christ, come together in community, profess the same faith, celebrate the same eschatological liberation, and seek to live the discipleship of Jesus Christ. We can speak of church in the proper sense only when there is question of this ecclesial consciousness.¹

One of the common difficulties in defining what we mean by "practical" is that we usually interpret this term as a kind of hands-on skill that is immediately relevant to a given situation. In this regard, what is practical is almost always contrasted with what is theological or theoretical. Practical courses then become how-to-do-it courses that teach techniques and procedures to maintain the life of the church. Theology is seen as something left behind in other courses. In fact, some students are resistant to the idea that a practical course will be deeply theological. In effect, the student says, "I've already taken care of the theology, now teach me how to preach, teach, manage the church." What is unspoken, but often assumed is "Don't confuse me with theological issues." This kind of commonplace assumption trivializes the nature of the practical and distorts the theological task.

Sometimes the practical field has simply picked up techniques from other fields and then given them Christian labels, i.e., Christian management theory. What has been missing is an in-depth understanding of the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the techniques that have been adapted for use in the church. The history of theological education is filled with these countless fads and temporary enthusiasms. The result is that we have lost the church's distinctive practices of fidelity, remained ignorant of biblical understanding, and sold our soul in the pursuit of quick fixes.

In a time of survival issues throughout the church, these problems are becoming more prevalent as congregations seek some kind of solution for the deep and distressing issues of membership loss and sinking morale. We chase after idols because of our infinite capacity for self-delusion and then fall captive to a kind of cynical pragmatism. We tend to think theology is one thing while the life of the church is seen as something quite different. Even when congregations and church agencies intend to take theology seriously, this intention often ends up as an opening devotional to a business meeting that quickly draws upon other values and perspectives for making decisions.

Central to the task of practical theology is the challenge of integrating theology with practice. This is the task of the whole curriculum and it is the calling of all Christians, but in a particular way, practical theologians are called to think about and help the church claim this integrative necessity to see things whole.

The Practice of Faith

In its origins, the word "practice" emerges from the nature of institutions as embodiments of traditions. The current focus on practice has been largely evoked by the work of the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue*, a critique of the managerial and therapeutic corruption of our culture which is aimed at reclaiming the moral nature of institutions and the connection between virtue and practice. Central to this discussion is the recognition that

practices are rooted in history. When disembodied from this social context that extends over time, practices are reduced to being techniques of control and aggrandizement.²

MacIntyre observes that an institution essentially is "the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices," and as he goes on to maintain, "its common life will be partly, but in a centrally important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what [for example] a university is, and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine is. Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict."³

In the popular culture of the church and our society, this is a radical idea. Our social ideal is harmony. We generally feel an institution is in good shape when things are quiet. In this view, the role of the leader, therefore, is to keep things quiet by so managing programs or feelings that the institution does not engage in explicit debate or conflict. For MacIntyre, however, such an institution is essentially dead because traditions are alive only when we sustain a continuing inquiry into what they mean and what they call us to be and to do.

One of the most helpful interpreters of MacIntyre's thought for the church has been Craig Dykstra, who over the past decade has focused on the nature of practices in the life of the Christian community. In acknowledging Jeffrey Stout's designation of baseball as an example of practice, Dykstra points in a personal way to baseball as a community, a shared practice, and a continuing tradition. While baseball's most obvious practitioners are the players on the field, he suggests that we think of baseball as a set of practices shared as well by "Tommy Lasorda managing, Vin Scully and Joe Garagiola doing the play-by-play, and even my sons and I watching games on television and Roger Angell writing about it in *The New Yorker*."⁴

At its best, baseball is a communal activity in which the game itself is at the center of all the various practices that make up the traditions of the game. It is the practice of baseball that brings together the various players, managers, owners, fans, and umpires. The integrity of the sport resides in how the game is played. One of the central practices that has made up this tradition is being a good sport. Playing the game according to these practices of sport has been seen as integral to winning. In recent decades, sport has been taken over by financial interests that make players multimillionaires and owners rich beyond the dreams of an earlier era. In this context, the practices of baseball are more and more undermined to the point where we may wonder if the game we see played in the major leagues bears any resemblance to the tradition we can recognize as baseball.

For example, consider the recent situation in which a player spat on an umpire, then added comments about the umpire's action resulting from the emotional upset he suffered at the death of a child. The league suspended the player for five games, but they postponed the suspension until the next season so that he could be with the team in the final games of the season. He offered

a lame apology to the umpire and then contributed \$5,000 to the medical charity related to the illness that caused the death of the umpire's child. The umpires, who had gone on strike in protest of this weak disciplinary action, were required by the courts to return to work.

In this situation, monetary gain is the only operative value. No understanding of sport, no definition of the integrity of the game, can withstand the single overwhelming value of how much money might be gained or lost. The moral impact of the argument has no value and the game itself is played as if in an ethically neutral zone.

Throughout our society we face similar situations in every part of our life. There does not seem to be any institution that has the capacity to stand over against this unrelenting judgment of monetary gain. This bottom line has won hands down in most encounters with Amos's plumb line of institutional integrity.

The church is no exception to this situation. Time after time the church follows the spirit of the age and claims the society's values as its own. When cities are crumbling as investors leave, businesses move to the suburbs, and neighborhoods are left to decline, what has the church usually done? We have followed the urban flight and run as quickly as we could from the city as place of ministry and mission. Instead of being an institution whose practices were shaped by values other than numerical growth and financial gain, we have simply imitated other institutions.

As the church has struggled to deal with declining numbers and loss of faith, we have tried to find quick fixes and gimmicks to address deep theological issues. Instead of struggling with our own practices of faith that could inform us about the issue of what church growth means in the gospel, we have simply defined evangelism as marketing. Instead of looking at the church's traditions of teaching and formation in faith, we have "dumbed down" our educational ministries and bought every psychological self-help movement that has come down the pike. Instead of helping the church understand worship as mystery, doxology, and mission, we have been formed by electronic images of religious entertainment that focus on making worship user-friendly and turning the minister from prophetic preacher to talk show host.

In this present moment, nothing less is at stake than the future of the liberal Protestant tradition as a practice of faith. Whether this tradition continues as a faithful form of the gospel largely depends on this generation. If this sounds alarming, I intend it to be. There are other times and other moments in Christian history that have faced a similar situation, but I think the moment is now qualitatively different from anything else we have faced. The question is not whether the people of God will continue. Instead, our question is more modest; it is the issue of whether the form of the church we have known as the liberal Protestant tradition has a future. I think that question is still up for grabs.

Our difficulty as a church is that for most of our members the Christian life is less a set of practices than it is a range of feelings. Our images are privatistic, individualistic, and emotive. We assume that the vitality of local congregations depends on our ability to sustain good feelings and to meet individual needs. The idea that there are practices of the Christian life that shape our emotions and form our commitments is a foreign understanding. The concept of faith as a discipline is not a familiar image. In this sense, the local congregation is not so much a tradition composed of practices as it is another form of entertainment that satisfies the religious feelings of spectators who can hardly tell any difference between the dynamics of the sports arena and the church on the corner.

The Practices of Ministry

At the center of the Christian faith are practices that call us to action out of the vision that we see incarnate in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These practices are the practices of ministry that make up the gospel tradition. They compose the common life of the church and extend the traditions that are described in the New Testament witness. In Acts, for example, the community of faith is described in the following way:

And they devoted themselves to
the apostles' teaching
and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread
and the prayers. (Acts 2:42)

The practices of the Christian life are expressed in proclaiming the gospel to the world and forming faithful lives within the church. The practices are embodied in the character of the community of faith and the nature of that community as *koinonía*, that is, communion and fellowship. These practices are sustained in worship and prayer and in the forms of spiritual life that nourish the church's mission in the world which is the vocation of all Christians.

Within this context, to think of the leadership of the church, especially the work and calling of the church's pastors and teachers, is to address the issue of renewing these practices of the Christian life—the ministry of the whole church. Unfortunately, our first response to this issue of renewal is usually to frame it as the clerical problem of how to preach, teach, counsel, or manage. The issue is defined as how to improve these individual skills. What I want to suggest, however, is that these are not the practices of the ministry. These are skills and ways of knowing that may express such practices, but the practice of ministry is focused at a deeper level in three dimensions:

Renewing the Practices of Ministry

To proclaim the gospel to all the world (Proclamation)

To build up the body of Christ (Formation)

To equip the church for ministry (Mission)

The particular way in which these practices are carried out depends upon the situation and the nature of the church's witness in any given moment. To be a teacher of the faith, a practical theologian who leads a local congregation, is to understand these practices and to be able to discern and to express the relevant skills and knowledge to embody the practices we are called to serve.

For example, the most obvious form in which the practice of proclamation is expressed is through preaching in worship. Yet, it may be that the most powerful form of proclamation that expresses the church's word to the world is in the congregation's budget. In this regard, a pastor who understands this reality recognizes that the crucial moment of proclamation may be in the meeting of the church's trustees who control the creation of the church's revenues and expenses. The issue is how to preach in forms other than the sermon alone.

In this context, it would be interesting to imagine reorganizing the practical field of the seminary in light of these practices (Proclamation, Formation, and Mission) rather than in our usual pattern of defining practical theology as the miscellany of all the discrete skills and knowledge in preaching, educational ministry, music and worship, field education, administration, and pastoral care. What difference would it make to use these three practices of proclamation, formation, and mission as the essential organization of the courses we teach in this area? Or for that matter, what would it be like to think of the whole curriculum structured out of the practices of congregational ministry to proclaim the gospel, build up the church, and equip the church for ministry?

In the part of the practical field at Lexington known as "the practice of ministry," my colleague Jan Linn and I understand the courses in this area within three ways: leadership, spirituality, and congregational form and mission. Our aim is to understand ecclesial leadership as the calling to equip the church for ministry and to help the church form its life around the mission that calls it into being.

In leadership courses that explore the work of pastors and teachers, we are concerned about the calling to serve, equip, and lead the church in discerning its direction in a particular place. This requires knowing how to help the church appropriate the traditions of faith and form its life in the midst of conflict, competing systems, and financial realities.

Secondly, this focus on the dynamics of leadership is anchored in prayer and spiritual development. The leadership of pastors and teachers is built on a life of faith that permits us *"to live from the inside out."*²⁵ In order to lead the congregation in discerning its work and calling, the pastor must be a person of the Spirit who sustains a disciplined life of prayer.

Third, leadership is centered in guiding and leading the church in forming and reforming its life as the body of Christ in the midst of its existence as a local culture, voluntary association, and religious institution. In particular, this leadership centers in how the church organizes its life, allocates its resources, and plans its outreach as a living tradition that is defined by Christ at the center of its witness, stewardship, and evangelism.

It is tempting in this time to feel overwhelmed by the forces of change and the continuing necessity to rethink the traditions in which we live. We are prone to protest, and inclined to whimper. When I am moving in that direction I am sometimes redeemed by words that come back to me from Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

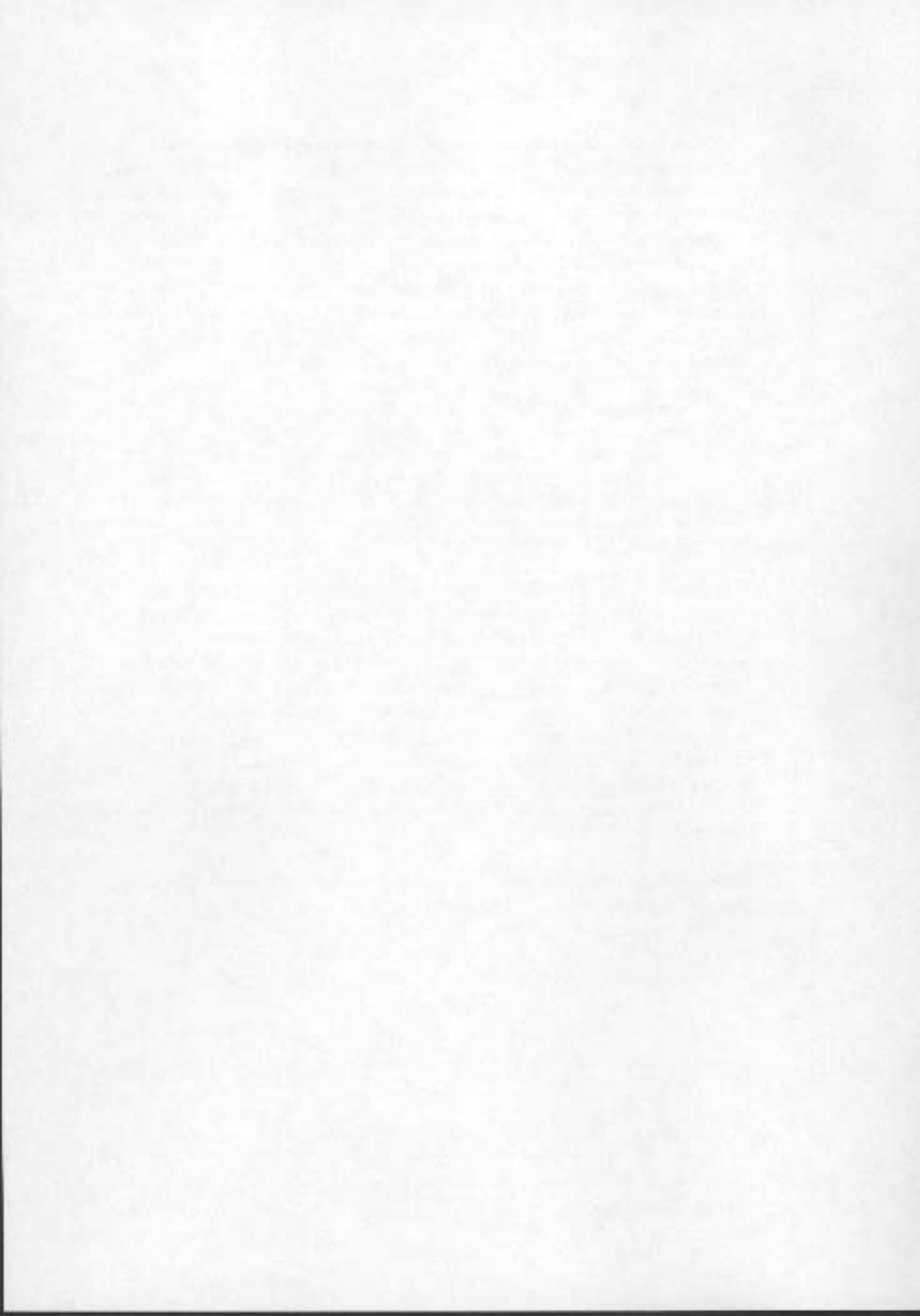
One may ask whether there have ever before in human history been people with so little ground under their feet Or, perhaps one should rather ask whether the responsible thinking people of any generation that stood at a turning point in history did not feel as we do, simply because something new was emerging that could not be seen in the existing alternatives.⁶

We are called then to live in hope for it is a matter of faith as to how things will turn out. Our questions about the church finally have to be placed within the question of God's continuing revelation. In this regard, we should remember that in the new heaven and new earth called into being by God, there are no religious institutions—no temples there. This vision of John should make us aware of the provisional nature of the church. Our primary concern cannot be the survival of the church as we know it. The question is how the church is called now to form its life within the promises of God that we have seen in Jesus Christ. This is our hope and our calling; it is the source of the renewal of the practices of the Christian life and a way of renewing the particular practices of ordained ministry.

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ENDNOTES

1. Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), 11.
2. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 181-203.
3. *Ibid.*, 222.
4. Craig Dykstra, "Reconceiving Practice," in *Shifting Boundaries*, Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley, eds. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 43.
5. See Jan G. Linn, *Living from the Inside Out* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1994).
6. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 282.



Teaching Research Skills in Clinical Pastoral Education

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In his pioneering book on pastoral research, Samuel Southard defines religious inquiry as the orderly observation and interpretation of attitudes and behaviors that relate to the transcendent element in people or movements.¹ A physician in attendance at a presentation for a "Mind/Body Medicine" study group at Duke University Medical Center defined pastoral/spiritual research as "a story about 'why'." For the pastoral researcher, the definitions are vital compliments of each other.

In *Research in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*,² Larry VandeCreek builds his case for the importance of pastoral research on four assumptions: that a scientific approach to pastoral care enriches care givers' practice; that reality is more complicated than it appears; that a curious, questioning stance leads to helpful objectivity; and that the research process increases objectivity and creativity by promoting peer dialogue and review.

Certainly, it was in an attempt to explore one aspect of that complicated reality that, in 1872, Francis Galton completed the first known research study on religiosity. Curious about the impact of verbal prayers of intercession and petition, he selected populations he assumed prayed more or were prayed for more than the usual citizen in England at the time. He then selected some standards of well-being and compared the two. Noting that members of royal houses had the lowest life expectancy in comparison with other affluent groups, and that mortality rates for missionaries were no better than the average, he concluded that there was no scientific support for the efficacy of such prayer.³

Since then, of course, research on religion, prayer, and spirituality has become much more sophisticated in methodology and range of subject. Psychologists, sociologists, psychiatrists, nurses, gerontologists, epidemiologists and thanatologists publish in dozens of respected journals their research on what David Larson calls "Spiritual Subjects."⁴

Still, one notices that such research is more likely to be found in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, or *Psychological Reports* than in the journals dealing with professional ministry. Moreover, while interest in research in spirituality and religiosity has certainly grown in popular culture, clinical research skills are rarely included in seminary curricula. While Larry Dossey⁵ and Bernie Siegel⁶ have longstanding

places on *The New York Times* bestseller list, few of the researchers they cite are ministry professionals. Further, one suspects that few in ministry have had the opportunity to acquire the skills adequately to analyze and critique such research. As a result, their ability to use this avenue as a source of information about the populations they serve and the value of various approaches to that service are limited.

To be fair, the learning of specific skills for ministry has traditionally occurred in Doctor of Ministry programs, seminary field education experiences, or Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), and rigorous clinical research is not generally seen as a regular component of those approaches either. This is not to say that there have not been some notable contributions to the body of knowledge in this area by chaplains and CPE supervisors. In an early example, Robert B. Reeves Jr. collaborated with other hospital personnel to design an Acceptance Scale, which he used with retinal detachment patients in a study of the relationship between acceptance and speed of healing.⁷ Subsequently, that scale was used with an open heart surgery population to identify those patients in need of intensive pastoral care prior to surgery.⁸

Further, some seminaries house centers and institutes for research in religion. Jackson W. Carroll, an ordained United Methodist minister, has served as both parish and campus minister as well as Professor of Religion and Society and Director of Research at Hartford Seminary; he currently heads the Ormond Center at Duke University Divinity School. Generally, however, seminary courses and curricula do not include instruction on research skills and techniques, and students are rarely required or encouraged to read, critique, or do clinical research.

In the early 1980s, Elizabeth McSherry, M.D., encouraged the inclusion of research as a component of training programs for chaplains, pointing out that seminary curricula were heavily weighted on the side of the theoretical. She contrasted this with the standard medical school program, which was as heavily weighted in the direction of the practical. Hospitals were beginning to deal with Diagnostic Related Groups (DRGs) as a precursor of managed care, and in the rush of financial restructuring, many pastoral care departments were being downsized or eliminated. Her selling point for pastoral research was that it enabled chaplains to demonstrate their value and productivity in terms that hospital administrators could understand—numbers of visits, patient satisfaction, length of hospital stay, and visibility in the community.⁹

Some centers had already developed a history of including individual or group research projects in the residency year curriculum. One of the requirements of nearly all CPE residency programs is the development of a "ministry specialty," and in some centers, that takes the shape of a research project that the resident is able to complete in the course of the year. The *ACPE Research Network Newsletter*, a quarterly exchange for Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) members interested in pastoral research, devotes periodic

issues to lists of projects by students and supervisors. For instance, a sampling of some of the research projects developed by CPE students at Baptist Health System in Birmingham, Alabama, from 1975 to 1990 included the following areas and projects:

- I. Pastoral Care to the Cardiac Patient
 - Ministry to Persons with Type A Behavior
 - Ministry to Cardiovascular Surgical Patients
 - Cardiac Crisis: The Hidden Spouse
 - A Study of the Dynamics of Grace Versus Works as Related to Type A Personality Cardiac Patients
 - Coping with and Finding Meaning in Myocardial Infarction: An Inner Experience
 - The Young to Middle Age Adult Cardiac Patients: Key Issues and Pastoral Care Strategies
- II. Pastoral Care and Sexuality
 - Ministry to the Colostomate
 - Sexuality and the Male Cardiac Patient
 - Implications of Sexuality in Pastoral Care
- III. Pastoral Resources / Pastoral Theology
 - Implications of the Patriarchal Narratives for Pastoral Care
 - Forgiveness and Pastoral Care
 - The Appropriate Use of Personal History in Pastoral Care
 - Communicating the Healing Attributes of God in Pastoral Care
 - Coping with Diabetes: The Implications of Faith Development
 - Religious History as a Tool of Pastoral Ministry to Kidney Dialysis Patients
 - Assessing Pastoral Initiative as a Tool in Chaplaincy
 - Guided Imagery with Hospital Patients
 - Meditation and the Search for Wholeness
 - The Use of Play: Humor as Ministry to Depressed Patients
 - Guilt: Its Origin, Manifestation, Resolution
 - Ministry of Music to Psychiatric and Ambulatory Patients
 - The Use of Explicit Religious Language in Pastoral Care
 - Poetry as a Pastoral Care Tool: Metaphors of Illness and Healing
- IV. Ministry in the Intensive Care Unit(s)
 - Ministry of the Chaplain with the Staff in the Medical Intensive Care Unit
 - Implications for Ministry: A Typology Comparison Between Critical Care and Medical/Surgical Nurses
- V. Pastoral Care to the Psychiatric Patient
 - Therapeutic Value of the Bible with the Depressed
 - Electroconvulsive Therapy and Pastoral Ministry
 - Suicide: A Thorn in the Flesh of the Community

Teaching Research Skills in Clinical Pastoral Education

Pastoral Recognition and Assessment of Depression

The Impact of Short-term Psychiatric Hospitalization on Religious Ideas and Perceptions

Between 1986 and 1992, teams of CPE residents at the University of Minnesota Hospital and Clinic developed the following research projects:

The Correlation of Submissive/Dominance Factors and the Patients' Perception of Wholeness

A Study of the Relationship between a Pastoral Inventory and Harbaugh's Faith-Hardiness Inventory

Wounded Healer—How Does One's Awareness of Being Personally Wounded Correlate with How One Does Pastoral Care?

Pastoral Care to the Pre-Surgical Patient

Emory University and Affiliated Hospitals' Department of Pastoral Services and Clinical Pastoral Education fostered the completion of fifty-one CPE student projects between 1984 and 1990, including the following:

Discovering Hope with Terminally Ill Patients and Their Families

The Religious Aspects and Motivators of Anorexia Nervosa

Pastoral Care to a Waiting Heart Transplant Patient

On the Baptism of Children in a Hospital Setting: Two Clinical Examples

Pastoral Care and Role Conflict

Pastoral Care to the Angioplasty Patient: A Case Study and Model

The Meaning of Prayer and its Significance in the Pastoral Care of Children with Cancer

Stress as a Factor in Entering a Clinical Pastoral Education Residency

Black Women and Men: Their Expectations and CPE

The Place of Separation and Relatedness in the Crisis of Dying Children

Stressors Experienced by Chaplains During Death and Dying Situations

A Construct and Methodology for Measuring Change in the Clinical Pastoral Education Student in Relation to the Being and Doing Models of Ministry

The Theological and Ethical Implications of Withdrawing Artificial Means of Life Support

This list gives an overview of some of the areas researched by students in the course of the CPE experience. It is important to note the priority that the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education has given to clinical research, at the same time advocating for increased support at that level. The East Central Region of ACPE has for a number of years given monetary grants to research projects submitted by its members, and ACPE and the Council on Ministry in

Specialized Settings both give annual awards to research papers, projects, and centers.

Movement has also occurred in some seminaries. For instance, "methods courses," which used to be the mainstay of religious education and church music degree programs, are now more widely accepted as part of divinity and theology degrees. Doctor of Ministry programs, with their emphasis on professional practice and the ministry setting as the locus for learning, were initially viewed with scepticism in theological education; they have long since gained acceptance.

Unfortunately, however, professional clergy generally have been resistant to the learning and doing of clinical research, as though it interfered either with the free flowing of God's grace or their own greater comfort with intuitive ways of acquiring information and arriving at decisions. I have wondered if this resistance has roots in secret math anxiety. Nevertheless, research skills are increasingly demanded of chaplains. Two characteristics of the current climate in health care of all kinds—traditional hospitals, health maintenance organizations (HMOs), centers for alternative medicine, hospices, home health agencies, mental health clinics, and others—are accountability and interdisciplinary collaboration, both allied to the research process. Cooperative projects are given financial and administrative support much more easily than "Lone Ranger" projects that involve single departments or disciplines. For example, groups designing care at the end of life include physicians, nurses, social workers, nutritionists, psychologists/psychiatrists, physical therapists, and chaplains from beginning to implementation and evaluation. And programs are required to show exactly what they contribute to patients' care and satisfaction—in numbers. That means that research of some type must be part of each project. It may be in the form of assessment and evaluation or ongoing quality assurance; the same skills and processes are involved.

This was the climate in health care in 1989, when Department of Pastoral Services at Duke University Medical Center began to look at the incorporation of research in the work of the department, that would eventually encompass a program for the teaching, doing, and promoting of pastoral research. At the time, the hospital was a 900-bed tertiary medical center with a threefold mission of patient care, education, and research. The Department of Pastoral Services had always had a close relationship with the neighboring Duke Divinity School. There were five CPE supervisors, each with responsibility for coordinating one aspect of the department's work—administration, patient care, student recruitment, curriculum, and research.

Impetus for this priority was provided by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education Accreditation Commission. In its most recent site visit, the Commission had recommended that the department make use of the resources of the Divinity School as well as those of the University and Medical Center to focus on research in spirituality and pastoral care. In addition to full-time and

extended CPE units, the department offered a year-long CPE residency that included four units, and it was thought that this format would lend itself to the development of student research projects. In accordance with ACPE standards, students were already routinely required to develop a ministry specialty in the course of that year, and we planned to have that take the shape of research projects in their specific areas of interest.

Each CPE program is guided by a board that monitors programs and offers direction. At Duke, a subcommittee of that board, the Professional Consultation Committee, was created to identify resources for the research that would be done. The group included faculty from the Divinity School, Medical Center staff and faculty, and the community. Meetings included review of the student proposals as well as sharing about the current research of the members. Articles of mutual interest were circulated, and suggestions were offered from the various disciplines. The members reported that these exchanges were helpful and energizing. At the end of each year, they were among the guests at the student presentations of their papers, offering congratulations and suggestions for further studies.

During the initial year of the program, the decision was made to begin by researching the role that chaplains played in the Medical Center. What developed was a study of the expectations and apprehensions of chaplains by patients, their family members and friends, nurses, and physicians.¹⁰

Part of the process of building the program involved gaining credibility with such monitoring groups as the hospital's Institutional Review Board, representing all areas of medicine and medical research in addition to sociology, psychology, and the local lay community. Many of the members were developing research questions that we were interested in, those where collaboration with chaplains would be important. For example, studies about social support and the elderly would be incomplete without looking at church/synagogue/temple attendance; a chaplain would be sensitive to such nuances as denominational variations, expectations of pastoral visitation, and understanding of membership. However, until researchers realized that we had both interest and skill in research, they didn't think to consult us or invite us to contribute to their studies.

At Duke, the CPE residency consisted of four quarters. Residents spent half of their time in pastoral work with patients, family members, and staff on their assigned units. The other half of their schedule included educational activities: verbatim and group relations seminars, individual supervision, and didactics. It has often been said that the research process consists of a series of sequential decisions; so did the design of the research module to be included in the residency curriculum. The first decision was the setting of goals for the program. In the context of our residency curriculum, it was reasonable to expect that students would learn to respect research as a valid way of arriving at knowledge; that they would learn to read research critically, and would

discover on-line and print resources for their work in ministry; and that they would have the experience of designing, implementing, and reporting on specific research on an issue or population.

At no time was it expected that the students would become expert in doing pastoral/spiritual research, or that the program would influence them to follow a career in research. At the beginning of the program, the students were quite resistant to the research module. By the second year, however, the importance of stating clearly in residency applicant interviews that research would be part of the curriculum at that center was evident. By the third year, many applicants were listing our research program as a significant factor in their decision to come to Duke. In retrospect, it seems that students with undergraduate degrees and careers in physical or social science often disconnected with their skills and experience when they entered ministry. In the research process, they recognized that those skills were still valuable, and they began with enthusiasm to integrate them into their work.

Some pastoral research programs relied on a didactic approach; the students were taught various types and steps of research by local experts. Other supervisors participated with their students as peers in the entire process, embarking on a collaborative search for resources and resource people to help them when questions and problems arose.

A parallel issue was whether the students would do individual or group projects. Individual projects allowed the students to explore their own interests, and their focus was on their own project. Group projects had the advantage of dividing the tasks, and so in some ways they seemed more efficient. The group could decide on the area to explore, define the research question, and settle on the type of study design they wished to use. Of course, one of the elements of the CPE curriculum is the focus on the group process itself, and so there was the danger of getting bogged down as the participants jockeyed for roles and figured out how to deal with anger, passivity, assertiveness, and other issues that can be expected to surface in an active CPE group. Such issues as perfectionism and resistance arose in the working out of individual projects, so to some extent, it was easier for the student to focus on her or his own dynamics and style of dealing with the task. Although a number of supervisors work very effectively with group research projects, our priority for that module was the learning about research; learning about group process occurred around other tasks and goals.

The next choice involved interdisciplinary relationships. During the first year, the student group was limited to the CPE residents. The faculty for the seminars included members of the psychiatry and sociology departments as well as a consultant from the University's Institute of Statistics and Decision Sciences. The collaborations were helpful to all sides. The psychiatrist and sociologist were intrigued and stretched by the insights the chaplains contributed to their understanding, and the statistics instructors were themselves

completing a course requirement that they provide consultation to individuals and groups. Resource people were pleased to work with us, surprised to learn that "chaplains do research," and impressed enough by the discussions that they sometimes came back for pastoral conversations with one of the group or passed along referrals for chaplain visits.

The didactic seminars were scheduled to dovetail with other events in the residency year and with the meeting schedules of the various institutional review groups. For instance, projects involving cancer patients were reviewed by the Cancer Protocol Review Committee and then either sent back to the researcher for revisions or passed on to the Institutional Review Board for final approval. The student researchers learned, sometimes painfully, to go over their protocols even with experts who intimidated them, before the deadlines, and so their projects nearly always went through the review process without difficulty.

At that time, nearly all the research in the institution was quantitative—"real" research, in the culture of the medical world. Early on, several of our students designed qualitative research protocols that raised questions in the review committee. A dialogue was arranged between the members of the IRB who had been most articulate in their objections and the faculty for our program so that we could begin to understand the problematic issues and look at ways of addressing them. Again, there was important learning on both sides as the IRB physician explained his position more clearly and expressed his regard for our expertise and the goals of our program. For our part, we quickly saw areas we needed to cover more thoroughly and language that we needed to use to communicate our purpose and methods. Interestingly enough, following that meeting, the IRB voiced its interest in the program and the student projects coming before it, and individual members generously offered to work with students in their areas of specialization.

The curriculum began with a session spent with the medical librarians who guided the residents through such on-line services as MEDLINE (Medical Literature Analysis Retrieval System On-line) and PsychLIT, and the indexes and journals that would be of particular interest to them. We spent one session critiquing current clinical research articles on prayer, social support, depression, and other topics related to pastoral care. We spent several sessions working on problem identification, developing research questions, and generating hypotheses. That led to discussions about variables, reliability and validity issues, and research design. One session each dealt with sampling, methods of data collection, and analysis. The series concluded with a presentation on ethical issues including informed consent, and another session on communicating the results.

The sessions were spaced so that the students could apply their learning immediately to their own projects, and each session included time for discussion of their progress so that they could use the group to try out their ideas and

instruments as they developed. The importance of talking about their work as often as possible with anyone who would listen was emphasized, guided by the premise that simple but crucial problems otherwise go unnoticed until the work is too far along to address them. Students learned how important it is to test each revision of questionnaires, to weigh the words they used to describe various religious activities and denominations, and to walk through the processes for distribution and collection of materials ahead of time. As they presented each stage of their work to their peers, they learned how important it is to consider the "then what's" and the "what if's."

Amid all the preparation and planning, however, the key message we wanted the student-researchers to learn was that there are no "bad" results in research. They were warned not to research topics in which they had a vested interest, lest that lead them to skew the process. For example, could one student afford to learn that patients of her denomination at that medical center really didn't wish to see a female chaplain? Could the resident who was convinced that we needed to offer mid-day worship services in the hospital chapels accept survey results showing that patients and staff would not be able to attend them?

Once those questions were answered, the students were encouraged to find the value even in results they did not expect. The students who were gleeful when the admissions clerks agreed to distribute their questionnaires to each new patient were chagrined to discover that very few were returned, for instance. As we wondered aloud about that, we began to suspect that other materials in the admissions packet were also lost or overlooked—the description of chaplains' services, the schedule for worship services, the Health Care Power of Attorney/Decisions Near the End of Life documents, for example.

The residents were frequently reminded that a good research project raises other research questions. In that case, a follow-up quality assurance project would help the department to assess patients' knowledge of the services available to them, and perhaps to plan more effective ways of informing them about chaplaincy. One excellent student project explored the comparative effectiveness of standard interview and play as ways of conducting pastoral visits with a pediatric clinic population. While she was disappointed to find only small differences by age and gender, we pointed out that the data nevertheless indicated a trend that would be worth investigating in a follow-up study.

The next development in the program was to broaden the group to include other disciplines. This model had been used in a year-long research practicum for primary care physicians where we saw again the benefits of collaboration. The exchanges in that group were so mutually enriching and rewarding that it appeared possible that it would be a good model for our course. Barbara Turner, Associate Professor in the School of Nursing and Director of the Nursing Research Center, was approached; she had established Nursing Research Committees on each of the nursing units and was looking for a way

of instructing and supporting nurses who wanted to carry out actual projects. In addition, we became aware of the number of studies dealing with spirituality reported in nursing literature and felt that dialogue with nurses about research was important.

Together, we began recruiting students through the campus newsletters and by word of mouth, resulting in a group that included a neonatologist, a psychiatrist, several nurses, a social worker, a nutritionist, and a physician assistant, in addition to our ten CPE residents. While the course sessions focused on research skills that are universally applicable to all disciplines, it was intriguing to discover the common interest in various aspects of spirituality and spiritual care.

Further, while our earlier emphasis was on quantitative research, we began noticing increased openness to qualitative research in other disciplines. I realized that much of the documentation used in CPE lent itself to qualitative research techniques in our discipline as well. For example, the CPE process involves doing a kind of text analysis on verbatims as a matter of course. Accordingly, we began to encourage students to consider qualitative as well as quantitative methodology. One of the residents entered the program with an interest in working with adolescents, particularly those with disfiguring skin problems. In the course of her clinical work, she encountered a pediatric dermatologist who was concerned with the social support available to the families of his long-term patients. Together, they designed a qualitative project employing interviews and focus groups to address questions of interest to both of them.

Over the life of that program, nearly thirty research projects were completed by CPE residents. Some of those were quality assurance projects, dealing with patients' level of knowledge of chaplains' services in the hospital and use of the chapels. Others added to our knowledge about the pastoral needs of specific populations: changes in images of God and religious practice in parents of sick children, images of God among bone marrow transplant patients, patient attitudes toward gender of chaplains, correlation between religious faith and coping strategies in sickle-cell disease patients, the correlation between loss and relapse in substance abuse patients, the value of incorporating play in pastoral visits to children, spiritual issues for bone marrow transplant patients, and the nature and place of hope for adults with acute leukemias, coronary artery disease patients, and end-stage renal disease patients.

A second group of projects dealt with the care givers: support themes for care givers of pediatric ichthyosis patients, the nature of religiosity among care givers, why and how supportive relationships develop in intensive care unit waiting room settings, and the relationship between nurses' contact with dying patients and their own Living Wills. Finally, students also looked at denominational issues such as the relationship between clergy members' age and their preferred conflict management style.

Currently, we have instituted a similar training module at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) in New York. The result of a collaboration with Marilyn Bookbinder, Director of Nursing Research, was an interdisciplinary course of twelve two-hour sessions offered over six months to a group of nearly thirty CPE residents and nurses. Each session began with a presentation by one of the many research experts at MSKCC, and concluded with an opportunity for the participants to use the group as consultants on their work-in-progress.

Session One: Introduction to library resources; searching the literature

Session Two: Guidelines for evaluating research articles

Session Three: Problem identification, developing a research question, and generating a hypothesis

Session Four: Developing an operational definition of the types of variables and issues to consider in dealing with them; reliability and validity

Session Five: Use of group process in research; how to access advice and support

Session Six: Qualitative research—philosophical basis, description of subtypes, and brainstorming on research questions particularly suited to this approach

Session Seven: Quantitative research—orientation to this type and its subtypes with discussion of the research interests of the seminar participants in relation to the design selected

Session Eight: Sampling—Understanding the study population, sample selection techniques, size and power issues, and inclusion/exclusion criteria

Session Nine: Data collection—formulating and matching approaches and instruments to the type of data needed for the research question/project

Session Ten: Data analysis—interpretation of the collected data, critiquing current articles from that viewpoint

Session Eleven: Ethics—history of ethical issues in research, description of institutional review structures, examination of sample procedures and forms

Session Twelve: Communicating results—organizing the reporting of results, including publication/presentation

Consistent with our learning at Duke, this program is also open to the commonality of our research interests. For instance, nurses have taken the lead in exploring the ways in which such characteristics as hopefulness impact physical health and healing. Psychiatrists and chaplains at MSKCC collaborated in the development of the Systems of Belief Inventory that looks at a wide variety of factors including religious practices, existential outlook on life, and the capacity for love, forgiveness, quiet, and meditation. Harold Koenig researched physicians' attitudes toward addressing religious issues with their patients.¹¹ The major areas of interest for chaplain researchers today are patient satisfaction, spiritual assessment, and staff care, all of concern for our partners

in other disciplines in health care. All of us are benefiting by learning and doing research together.

Several years ago, CPE programs in pastoral research moved into another phase, as centers began planning for second year residencies specializing in research. Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, designed a research curriculum in which the resident would participate in an interdisciplinary research education module such as the one described above and would complete a research project in conjunction with the half of his or her time that would be spent in clinical work. Consistent with our experience at Duke, the supervisors there learned the importance of educating the various review boards about the relevance of the types of research that chaplains would do and about the capability of chaplains to undertake research. The project completed by the first resident to fill the position, "Effects of Shame on Heart Disease," set the program on firm footing for the future.

While the financial restructuring that has occurred with the advent of Managed Care has caused the elimination of many hospital services and increased pressure on staff who remain, it has also suggested multitudes of areas for research. Ironically, while consumers are struggling to access the health care services they need, competition among providers leads them to increased attentiveness to patient satisfaction. The creation of the Office of Alternative Medicine as a wing of the National Institute of Health added credibility to a host of approaches like meditation as valid intervention. In this vortex, the well-prepared pastoral researcher is welcomed as a full partner by those who are ready to look at spirituality as a vital component of human life and health.

Where are these researchers prepared, both to value clinical research and to do it? Candidates coming to CPE from degree programs or first careers in social work, psychology, or business are delighted to find that the research skills they acquired in those disciplines are so useful in their pastoral work. Those without that experience prior to seminary are still quite skeptical at best, hostile at worst. And while this article has focused on the importance of pastoral/spiritual research in the health care setting, perhaps it is a good time to look at the value of clinical research for the other settings where seminary graduates minister. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods would be helpful in identifying needs of parishioners and in assessing their satisfaction, for example. And while confrontations at church council meetings and fluctuations in weekly collections are traditional measures, even quite simple pastoral research projects would be less reactionary and more proactive. Something to consider.

For example, what do the people in the pews expect of their ministers/priests/rabbis/imams? The Association of Theological Schools itself amassed a huge amount of data on this issue in the past, and it would be intriguing to see how parishioners have changed or, perhaps, stayed the same. Interesting

variables include age, gender, years in the denomination, years in the particular local group, and other sources of social support. Institutional chaplains have long noticed the strong positive and negative attitudes of their population toward local clergy visitation. A fairly simple but well-organized research project would enable a minister to learn about those attitudes and expectations, to target specific needs, and to organize caring and efficient responses to them. Accountability is becoming an increasingly important factor in clergy selection and placement, and again, simple research projects help both clergy and church groups to define needs and results. Qualitative research approaches like focus groups are as useful and as helpful as quantitative methods like questionnaires as a source of information for pastors and planning/evaluation committees. Focus groups have the added advantage of bringing congregational members together to meet one another and to discuss issues of importance to them. While time consuming, individual interviews—another qualitative method—demonstrate to interviewees that their congregation considers their opinions important. Some outcome research projects can be quite exacting; for example, researching the effect of prayer group intercession on the progress of a hospitalized member is a complicated process. On the other hand, researching the attitudes of congregational members toward other racial, ethnic, economic, or religious groups before and after educational programs or social service projects on those issues would be fairly easy. Further, such a research project would be most helpful in decisions about future priorities and programs.

In her poem, "A Prayer to Eve,"¹² Kathleen Norris speaks a prayer that seems appropriate for pastoral researchers: "Mother of science/and the critical method,/ keep us humble. Muse of listeners/ hope of interpreters, inspire us to act." Those images match a Sid Harris cartoon depicting two bearded scientists facing a blackboard covered with a complex mathematical equation. An arrow points to a symbol in the middle of the equation, labeled, "Then a miracle occurs." One scientist points to the arrow and says to the other, "I think you need to be more specific about this." Pastoral researchers are in the business of being more specific about the miracles that occur in the lives of those they minister to as well as in their pastoral encounters with them. As such, it might prove fruitful for seminaries to incorporate training in clinical research in their curricula.

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ENDNOTES

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Congregations and Theological Education and Research

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From 1991 to 1994 the Candler School of Theology undertook a remarkably broad and ambitious program of research in congregational studies. Perhaps unprecedented in scope for any theological school, the program engaged the research and writing energies of about fifteen percent of the faculty at that time. Funded by Lilly Endowment, the program supported five research projects examining a total of more than twenty congregations of five different denominations (Baptist [NBC], Church of God in Christ, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and United Methodist), as well as a sixth project in biblical studies. The six Candler researchers involved each formed an investigative team, for a total of eighteen additional persons (doctoral and master's students), to explore a particular problematic in ecclesial life, bringing to bear the perspectives of the researcher's own academic discipline.¹

Meeting regularly for coordination and reflection, the research group addressed a number of issues critical to theological education today. In particular the group's discussions and papers brought the entire faculty to some degree of focus on the relationship between ecclesial practices, congregations, and the education of Christian ministers. The group's work gave rise to questions about the nature of our life together as scholars, about the pedagogy through which we educate students, and about the discourse of theology itself.

Numerous publications by the scholars in the group present the findings of their particular projects.² This article presents a summary of our collective wrestling with such questions as:

- Are congregations and congregational practices paradigmatic for theological education?
- What methodological and ethical issues arise from theological scholar-educators conducting ethnographic studies of congregations?
- What do congregational practices, decisions, and forms of leadership tell us about the practice of theology in congregations?
- In what ways are congregational research, assessment of data, reporting to congregations, and writing up findings, a form of practical theology?
- What are the strengths and challenges of collegial research?
- What is the impact of congregational studies on pedagogy, and on the educational experience of students?

This article reflects some of the ways that we have both drawn upon and debated with the literature in theological education and practical theology. We did not produce constructive proposals in a collective voice. Rather, we attempted to refine our questions more closely and provide a full description of the enriching and challenging collegial conversation through which we came to those questions. The article concludes with a call for continued engagement with issues in the relationship of congregations and theological education and research.

How the Research Program Came to Be

The narrative of how Candler happened to undertake a research program of this scope is more than merely preliminary to discussion of the "real issues." This story in itself raises many of the critical questions that must be faced in any effort to explore the future of theological education and the role of congregations in theological education and research.

Candler has been in the forefront of congregational research for many years. James F. Hopewell in particular began in 1972 to develop both pedagogical and research interests focused on congregational ministry and mission. Through what was then called the Institute for Church Ministries, in 1974 he attracted the first of five major grants from Lilly Endowment.

The first grant supported a teaching program popularly known at Candler as "Institute courses" in which a professor and a pastor team-taught a class comprised equally of seminary students and members of the pastor's congregation. Flourishing in the years 1977 through 1982, this program produced more than fifty distinct courses, each focused on a current issue in a particular congregation.

Meanwhile, Hopewell was exploring his own research interests through a second grant. His originality in bringing both anthropological method and literary theory to bear on congregational life eventuated in a seminal manuscript that became virtually a manifesto for looking at congregations in new ways. The book was published as *Congregation: Stories and Structures* after his untimely death in 1984, and was edited by Barbara Wheeler, a major voice in congregational studies and theological education.¹

Hopewell's book constituted a plea for scholars and church leaders to take congregations seriously in their own right. His brilliant review of twentieth-century literature on congregations revealed how little the depth and richness of the corporate life of congregations had been plumbed. He argued that leaders must seek to understand congregations before they propose to reform them. He suggested that scholars had simply taken congregations for granted without realizing the complexity through which congregations revealed the larger human task of creating symbolic structures and forming community.

In the early 1980s, as the Institute took the name Rollins Center for Church Ministries, a third grant program supported by several foundations continued

Candler's attention to the ministry and mission of congregations, this time through the research interests of certain individual faculty members. Lilly Endowment's share of the grant was intended particularly to encourage local church pastors to study their congregations. Several pastors were selected as Research Fellows and began projects, teamed with faculty consultants, with the intention of writing books on their findings. Some papers came out of this, but no publications.

Throughout this period Hopewell was instrumental in forming a national group of scholars with an interest in congregational studies. Meeting regularly with Robert Lynn of Lilly Endowment, the Project Team for Congregational Studies began to strategize ways to advance innovative research on congregations. In 1982 the Rollins Center was host and co-sponsor with the Team for a national conference on "Understanding the Local Church: The Values and Varieties of Congregational Analysis" that attracted a registration of more than 300 scholars, denominational executives, and church leaders. The case study and papers for the conference became the book *Building Effective Ministry*, edited by Carl Dudley, another leading voice in congregational studies. Hopewell also worked with the Team in producing the *Handbook for Congregational Studies*, a compendium of methods for understanding congregations through the descriptive lenses of identity, context, process, and program.⁴

Candler held a fourth grant in 1985 through which teams from four theological schools (Yale, Union, Candler, and Claremont) engaged in dialogues about the place of congregations in the theological curriculum. The spur to discussion was Hopewell's paper advocating a congregational paradigm for theological education to replace the clerical paradigm named by Edward Farley and others. Arguing that the clerical paradigm "deprecates the congregation" by emphasizing the individual professional applying tools to a congregation's practical needs, Hopewell called for theological education focused on "the development of the congregation" instead of the development of the individual student. Deliberations on his ideas by several scholars, mainly from the classical disciplines, led eventually to the collection of essays entitled *Beyond Clericalism: The Congregation as a Focus for Theological Education*, also edited by Barbara Wheeler with Joseph Hough.⁵

Finally, upon my arrival as director of the Rollins Center in 1987, conversations resumed with Lilly and with The Pew Charitable Trusts around possible grant support for major new initiatives in congregational studies. Candler's Dean James L. Waits, who had fostered much of the school's focus on congregations, was determined that momentum in this area not be lost. The new grants would represent an even stronger emphasis on field research through which faculty would bring issues and methods of their academic disciplines into engagement with the particularities of congregations.

In 1988 The Pew Trusts agreed to fund a project on the relationship of congregations and public life, which I conducted jointly with James W. Fowler and a team of nine student research assistants. This was a pilot in the sense that

it provided a background of interdisciplinary experience for developing a broader research program.⁶ With the help of Charles Foster, James Fowler, and I began in 1989 to formulate the material for a more extensive grant proposal.

The faculty's response to this working paper in early 1990 clearly showed a shift of interests from the 1970s. While useful elements of the proposal were hailed, the scale of the program seemed burdensome and unappealing to most.

The curricular elements were dropped as unwieldy. Faculty were invited to express interest if they wished, and to envision whatever project scope and research team composition they thought best. Six faculty agreed to undertake particular research projects with a seventh (myself) serving as director. Lilly responded by making a three-year grant of approximately \$637,000 to commence in May 1991.

The profile of our group of seven revealed much about its relationship to the foregoing narrative. The group was comprised of four men and three women, six European-Americans, one African-American (male). Three denominational affiliations were represented in the group: United Methodist (four), United Church of Christ (two), and Church of God in Christ (one), though all were thoroughly ecumenical in research, teaching, and service activities. The group was striking in its relative newness to Candler, and in most cases, to scholarly careers. In 1991 when the grant began, six of the seven had been on Candler's faculty for four years or less, the seventh for more than fifteen years. All held doctoral degrees from among the major North American graduate schools, including the University of Chicago (two), Emory University (two), Union Seminary/Columbia University (one), and Yale University (two).

The group's composition fulfilled the aim of extending a research interest in congregations in new disciplinary directions. No one in the group but me had ever carried out a full congregational study before. Some faculty had experience with ethnographic methods, but none was a specialist in the field. The academic disciplines of biblical studies, theology, ethics, pastoral care, historical studies, homiletics, liturgical studies, and Christian education were all represented in the group. One of the projects would be an analysis of New Testament texts, or as Gail R. O'Day (its primary researcher) jested, everyone else was studying living congregations, she would study a dead one. The conversation between contemporary congregations and the Luke/Acts perspective, and between practical theology and the classical disciplines, proved to be among our greatest challenges.

In sum, the narrative of how this grant came to be reflects one institutional setting in which an interest in congregational studies has been passed from one generation of scholars to another. The '90s generation proved to be less inclined toward "big questions," such as redoing the paradigm of theological education around "the congregation." The group did not attempt curricular proposals or an impact on the pedagogy or research interests of colleagues not in the program. Clearly the questions had changed. "How can we devise programs for getting students more deeply engaged with the dynamics of congregational

life?" became more like "How can I teach my classes in a way that conveys the vitality and complexity of congregations through which the issues of my academic discipline are made more fully apparent?" "How can we revise our curriculum around congregations?" became more like "How does my research in congregations, together with that of colleagues, make more vivid the human struggle for wholeness and justice in community?" With this latter question surely the savant of the earlier generation, James Hopewell, would resonate:

The local church is a microcosm of human culture, an immediate instance of the world's symbolic imagination...the worldwide toil to knit a human community out of disparate motives and symbols occurs in specific instance in the local church; the congregation...is an immediate microcosm of all society's attempts to associate.⁷

The Agenda for Our Program of Research

The most challenging task in preparing our grant proposal came in trying to articulate the agenda we had in common. In fact, even after three years together we were not of one mind or voice about what we made of our investigations of Christian congregations. We came to view this not as a hindrance, but an opening to conversations to be continued in new forms in the future.

Nevertheless we did try to articulate in the original grant proposal some areas of common interest. We named basic shared assumptions about the need for research on and with congregations. We spoke of congregations as practical theological communities; we were going to focus on practices; we described ethnographic methods most of us would use. Even those broad statements could not speak for all of us, though. We would simply have to talk together over time to discover our commonality.

After all, we were attempting something quite unusual in academia. We were bringing together people from a variety of disciplines to look at several distinct issues in the continually shifting context of multiple congregations in diverse settings. We were not coming together with a canon of accepted literature or methods. We did not explicitly share assumptions about how to do theology, or about the nature and purpose of the church, or even about appropriate protocol for conducting research. Few of us had any experience with research that entailed observing people and organizations, conducting interviews, and trying to make sense of the onrushing flow of a human association like a congregation.

Stepping cautiously into the complex landscape of this adventure, we took some comfort in initial steps to set up the research process for our individual projects. This at least we could talk about readily and try to solve immediate problems together (how much to pay assistants, who handles personnel forms, where reports are filed, etc.).

All together we employed eighteen assistants who became vital participants in their respective research teams. Eight of the assistants were in the M.Div. program, mainly graduating seniors. Three of those were student pastors. Six students from the Division of Religion Ph.D. program were involved—one in New Testament, two in theology, two in theology and personality, and one in ethics. An international student in the Th.M. program joined one of the teams. Three additional persons not currently enrolled in a degree program also assisted. The demographics of the group were diverse as well. Of the ten women, seven were European-American, two African-American, and one Fijian. Of the eight men, seven were European-American and one African-American.

While the grant officially began in May 1991 and directors were laying groundwork through that summer, our collective work really began early in September 1991. I had been urging on the group the need for training in methods of studying congregations. Most of us would be doing ethnographic research to some degree, but few had experience with it. An event in which all of us, including our research assistants, would participate would surely plunge us right into the issues we needed to face in looking at congregations.

I arranged for several scholars with credentials in the field, including Jackson Carroll (then of Hartford Seminary), Penny Marler (then a research associate at Hartford Seminary), Nancy Ammerman, and myself to lead an event with two foci. First, we would begin what I hoped would develop into a full conversation with the literature to date on congregational studies. Second, we would actually go look at two congregations to be included in projects that fall, walking in their neighborhoods and observing their Sunday activities, thus "jump-starting" that research and giving us a common experience to discuss.

"Discuss" is not a word that captures the range of moods that weekend—from anger to excitement to tears to resistance to engagement to fear to wonder. In retrospect, what had seemed to me a perfectly rational plan was not possible in a time frame of half-day sessions from Friday afternoon to Monday morning. The time pressure was particularly acute near the beginning of the fall semester with the arrival of new students, the first sessions of courses, and the faculty committee agenda kicking in for the year.

Moreover, the total group for this event included about twenty-five people, many of whom were not acquainted with one another and only minimally acquainted with the research program. We were simply not ready to go observe and interact with congregations. The level of trust so necessary to ensure common assumptions was plainly not there yet. Differences quickly arose over how to visit with strangers, or what to say about our purpose in being present, or how walking in the churches' neighborhoods as outsiders should be arranged. With the group divided into two teams exploring two congregations, two very different experiences evolved over those several hours, yet another variable for the entire group to process.

The event made clear that a conversation with congregational studies as they had developed over twenty years was going to be challenging. Most

congregational studies have been conducted by scholars in sociology or ethnography. We invited some of them to lead this event. But none of us was a sociologist and most were wary of larger assumptions that might be imported through using sociological methods. Moreover, no one was interested in conducting simply a straightforward study of a congregation for its own sake. Each of the directors had a larger issue or purpose in mind, for which an accurate portrayal of congregational reality was critical but nonetheless not the essence of the project.

In fact the projects were quite varied in their intent. Pamela Couture wanted to discover ways to encourage serious dialogue and cooperative action between congregations and public health departments, to the end of creating new public health initiatives with church involvement.

Robert Franklin, Charles Foster, and Sally Purvis were more concerned about thorough and accurate description of their congregations as a way to understand the dynamics of particular issues in ecclesial life. Those issues varied considerably, of course. Franklin was to examine continuity and change in black church traditions, Foster to explore the influence of cultural diversity on understandings and practices of congregational life, and Purvis to study the effect of women's pastoral leadership on two congregations.

Don Saliers was planning to assess the impact of a particular intervention in the life of a comparative cross-section of congregations (the reception of a new hymnal in United Methodist churches). Gail O'Day was going to be examining the texts of Luke-Acts in an effort to interpret Luke's view of worship and community identity.

Thus from the beginning the program was pushing at the boundaries of received methods in congregational studies. This was our intent in setting up a multidisciplinary group. But it also threw us into immediate tension over the most appropriate and helpful ways to approach our interests.

As soon as research teams entered their congregations and began to take turns reporting to the entire group, though, the tone of our discussions changed. We began to hear more about one another's purposes and to help one another refine questions and methods. We worked together to design a survey instrument to be used in all the congregations to collect demographic data. We enjoyed the consultative insights of James Fowler, Rebecca Chopp, and Nancy Ammerman. The research assistants were a vital part of these conversations, sharing in the project presentations and commenting from their own perspectives. This brought an even richer diversity of voices and viewpoints to the table.

Reflections from Research Assistants: Impact of the Program on Seminary and Doctoral Education

At the end of the first year we were encouraged by the response of many of the student assistants in the five studies of contemporary congregations. Not only had a number of them become full partners in formulating and carrying out

the research projects, but several of them articulated ways in which participating in the program had been transformative of their education. Their learnings suggest the importance of involving students in disciplined investigation of congregational life.⁴

Discovering Congregational Life

Some were struck initially by the difference between studying a congregation and leading one (or serving in typical student ministry roles). The program gave them an opportunity to be "a student of the church, someone who's trying to understand, someone who's asking questions, someone who's listening in, someone who's participating with." This gave them access to the "underside and the inside, rather than the topside or the upside" of a congregation.

The research assistants were aware that access to the inside had to be something graciously given to them by congregational participants if it were going to happen at all, and they realized what a privileged position it was. Their participant-observer stance opened entirely new lines of sight. "The whole world changes," said one, "once you open yourself up to what's there and the art of congregational studies."

Seminary students thrown into leadership roles especially as student pastors may tend, said one, "to lead by the traditional mold" or adopt top-down models they have seen elsewhere. The research mode reversed such models so strikingly that one student pastor was moved to say "it's almost criminal" not to give seminarians a chance to "see the underbelly" of a congregation. Another student put it, "I can't imagine at this point what it would be like for a person coming fresh out of seminary with no experience in a church going in and having to be a leader and having to shape with those people what their sense of reality should and could and might be."

Some students reported carrying with them into classes and informal discussions a rich array of anecdotes and images that enlivened and challenged their classroom learning. Their peers noticed their enthusiasm. "Other students are hungry to know what we've had a chance to learn in terms of spiritual life and vitality, in terms of how congregations come together, in terms of how they develop, in terms of how they deal with change. There's just so much they're wanting to know."

The kind of depth exposure to congregational life afforded to students by these projects was an ambiguous experience that could be stimulating but also deeply troubling. Our research project team meetings functioned to an extent as support groups through which to process new and surprising learnings. We were not prepared for the spiritual vulnerability that encounters with congregations would stir. Some students were turned off by what they saw, others were more deeply engaged than they ever expected to be. But for all, assumptions about church and ministry were called into question as they were forced to reconsider such issues as the authority of pastors or the pervasive patterns of racism in the church.

For some of our research assistants, a depth encounter with congregations broadened their vision of "what the church is and can be." To an extent this resulted simply from being exposed to congregations other than those they may have been familiar with from home or elsewhere. But it also came from realizing how congregations often function as public spaces for the community.

Therefore firm lines of distinction between congregation and community were not only hard to draw, they would distort the truth of the community's influence in the congregation. One student pastor had been frustrated by his congregation's refusal to consider ministry outside its own walls, only to discover that the community "is an exact duplicate of that church. It is the same dysfunctional group, but on a bigger scale." Another student was intrigued by the way disputes over community values—say the tastefulness or civility of rap music—found their way into the congregation, even into worship.

Congregations struggling over fragile steps toward developing a multicultural constituency especially seemed to push back the boundaries of ecclesial vision. For some students, these congregations reflected the global church and the interconnectedness of Christian communities everywhere. For others, they simply showed the hazards and the precariousness of trying to form congregations at all.

A broader, richer vision of congregational life "restored my sense of hope for the church," in one student's words. Her skepticism about whether the church had a place for her gave way to a vivid experience of God's presence:

For me it has been discovering where God is, where God is among people and what's happening, and the transformation that's happening in people's lives. Not just from some glib theory or from smiling face hope, but from actually grappling with their tears or their smiles and what has been happening with them as they speak about it. How you see God transforming things and changing things and struggling with them. For me it has said that God is still active in the church, not just outside it. And that it's a very real experience and a very powerful experience. But it isn't just spiritualized. It's very earthy. It's very real. Spirit and earth aren't separate.

Theological Reflection

Our research spurred students to theological reflection as well. The students wrestled to bring academic discourse into conversation with the discourse of congregations in a way that did justice to both. This was "what practical theology is about," as one doctoral student said, and the project was "an excellent forum for me to engage in practical theology and to expand my familiarity with it in practice."

Uncovering or naming the "operative theologies" of a congregation required time and intention for both researcher and participant. "It was exciting to work with them long enough," the student continued, "to identify the

theological themes that are informing their congregational life, which are not named theologically. "Conversely, for this student it became impossible to listen to any historical or contemporary theological claims without wondering about "actual social embodiment" of notions or traditions in particular people and places.

The research alerted students to watch for "even the theology that's being expressed by people who come up to make announcements, by the singing of the choir, by the way in which people carry themselves within the church." This student went on to add that surely theological reflection must go on to inquire how or whether people live that theology in everyday life. "Are the things that the people say about this theology of this church that they're a part of, are those things consistent with how they respond once they leave the worship environment?" Is "that event on Sunday . . . totally separate from the rest of their lives" or is there a deeper integration with life outside the congregation?

The boundaries and definitions of the theological task provoked language issues as well. "The tendency of the church is to try and define God for the world and say, 'This is who God is and how God operates.'" Yet people outside the church also experienced God, just without "any sort of theological language" in which to couch it. Was there a language to "bridge that gap?" How could the researcher listen to deeper meanings beyond categories that were "too narrow and too rigid" to sense who God is outside church boundaries?

Several students were also aware of having to leave the program before fuller theological reflection on congregational theologies was complete. Some were hoping that their team would develop its own practical theology of the church's mission in a multicultural world. They were restless with remaining in the participant-observer role and ready to move on toward advocacy for constructive change.

Collegiality

Nevertheless, many assistants praised the teamwork of the research groups in organizing, managing, and reflecting upon their participation and observation. One called her group's shared experience a kind of "sacred ground" that she would carry with her wherever she went.

Faculty leadership styles enhanced this teamwork. Several students expressed excitement that professors welcomed a "collegial relationship" and were learning alongside them, offering all team members a voice in shaping directions. This led to a "cooperative, collegial, relational way of learning rather than oppositional or antagonistic or individualistic." Yet students were also glad for the faculty's greater "experience and knowledge." The professors' familiarity with an academic discipline kept the groups focused on a goal and put their findings in dialogue with a wider literature.

Students were excited to work with professors in "primary research" instead of "reading the book after they've researched it and digested it and put theories on it and have kind of thrown it back out there and I buy it for \$10.95

or whatever." This was a chance to see research evolve, and in a particularly ambiguous undertaking. "It's very wrenching to be part of an experimental process where the method and the outcome and the questions are being developed along the way so that the sort of insecurity of everybody in it is very high." But the uncertainty was also an advantage, because everyone was in on formulating responses to situations and next steps in research.

Status, Time, and Money

Lastly, working in teams made everyone acutely aware of the "complex power relationships" among faculty, students, foundation, seminary, and church. Forming research teams was a struggle sustained over many months. While students were peer researchers to a great extent, some were also receiving a grade for their work. Doctoral students had higher academic status and could be perceived as closer to the professors. The seminarians, especially the student pastors, began in a deferential mode unsure of their voice or that they knew anything. One of the most exciting developments was their growth in confidence. "Now . . . they talk to anybody. I think that ability to relate across various kinds of layers of powers is real important . . . a conviction that they know something that people in more detached offices don't know."

All team members were having to juggle competing demands of powerful systems: denomination, congregation, seminary, family, and others. "It is very difficult, very hard," said one student pastor. And the difficulty was only exacerbated, said student pastors, by the tendency of "the seminary system" to presume a "very large, healthy kind of a church" that new pastors "may not work in for years." That is, student and first post-seminary clergy assignments are in small, often rural congregations with (at least on the surface) few resources where an aggressive, activist leadership style may not fit.

Moreover, the clergy system sends "the least experienced" into "some of the most difficult situations," especially "dysfunctional" congregations. But the student pastors recognized congregational studies skills as critical to helping them enter such situations.

The students appreciated the role of foundations in encouraging this research. "It's so important to have foundations such as yours that are willing to invest the time and money into allowing these sorts of things to happen," one addressed the Lilly Endowment visitors. "I can't imagine what would be happening in education if faculty members were having to say, 'Well, I'm just going to grit my teeth and forget about it and work my ten hours at the school every day and then go home and try to do research on my own.' The only way to "chart new ground" in theological education was to fund this kind of innovative research.

Impact on Education

Our research assistants identified three areas in which participation in the research program had a definite impact on their education. First, the students

learned some skills to which they might not have been exposed otherwise. In part, they were research skills, the art of participant-observation and the discipline of examining data. But perhaps in greater part they were skills of:

- working in a group, planning and assessing activities together;
- managing or finessing the power dynamics of church, seminary, and other institutions;
- learning to appreciate the diverse backgrounds and experiences of peers in ministry/teaching;
- working within the structure and accountability of a grant;
- preparing papers and books to report findings.

Second, our research in congregations offered a provocative reality check for students. Some doctoral students especially saw how field research and disciplined analysis contrasted with educational models that one called "encounters with disembodied theory . . . disciplined practice in abstraction and individualism." They found bridges of relevance between their academic work and the realities of the church.

The program did not encourage students to devalue theory. It simply made theory more real, more dynamic and active by putting it in dialogue with actual practicing communities of faith. Moreover, students saw how the appropriate theory of interpretation of a congregation may need to arise from the situation itself. Congregations had a powerful "communitarian sense of the ethical" that must be honored, said one doctoral student. A congregation's culture had an integrity of its own that "must dictate specific portions of the theorizing and conceptualizing that occurs in relationship to it." The point was to strike a balance "between the theory that arises out of the congregation and the theory with which one approaches the congregation."

Third, the research program was empowering for at least some of the students. They experienced themselves as agents in their own education and realized a serious responsibility for their insights and actions. Faculty directors enhanced this empowerment by trusting students to be partners in research, sending them out as independent observers and interviewers. Findings were assessed in dialogue with everyone learning together.

Students noted the weight that their presence and ideas carried in the congregations. One was startled to see how readily participants "responded to my words of encouragement, hope, and affirmation. They even took up my phrases of identification of them to identify themselves." The researchers' attention to the congregation was itself a boost to the hope and commitment of members. Thus students learned not only more about developing a critical eye, but also the importance of disciplined and caring use of their critical eye if their work was to be constructive.

Reconsidering Congregations and Congregational Practices as Paradigmatic for Theological Education

One of our stated purposes in undertaking this program was to assess the impact of congregational studies on theological education. The place of the congregation in theological education can hardly be resolved, of course, without attending to the changing nature of theological education itself. A number of scholars have challenged the traditional assumptions of theological education in recent years, with particular concern for articulating unifying principles or purposes in an increasingly specialized curriculum while also accounting for diversity and plural voices.

More than ten years ago Edward Farley published his thoroughgoing challenge to the "clerical paradigm" of educating students in compartmentalized professional skill areas. The Scholars Press series on theological education included arguments for a reconceived unity by Charles Wood, John Cobb and Joseph Hough, and the Wheeler and Hough volume. Wheeler and Farley also edited a collection of essays entitled *Shifting Boundaries* devoted to examining the impact of cultural and intellectual change on theological education.⁹

Formal Proposals—Material Realities

Only a few of these arguments have attempted to describe the actual practices that would implement the programs being advocated, and this became a point of resistance for our research group. The thoroughly formal nature of the proposals made them seem somewhat overbearing and unrelated to experience. David Kelsey's work on "what's theological about a theological school" in particular provided the group with a thesis that illustrated the problem we had in relating the larger discussion, however compelling, to the realities of our research.¹⁰

In a chapter entitled "Utopia," Kelsey undertook what he named a "thought experiment" in the nature of a theological school. Attempting to reconcile a need for a unifying principle of theological education with the requirement of adequacy to the pluralism of ways of construing "the Christian thing," he arrived at this definition:

A Christian theological school is a community of persons trying to understand God truly by focusing study of various subject matters through the lens of questions about the place and role of those subject matters in diverse Christian worshipping communities or congregations.¹¹

This proposal was appealing to us given our investment of research and writing time in congregations. We found the argument thoroughly and acutely reasoned.

Our empirical work, however, forced us to ask what exactly was the status of such a "thought experiment." For our group, having formed research teams and gone to look at actual congregations in real places, the "as if" mode of this argument was remote from experience.

Certainly Kelsey's formal claims, for example, that congregations represented a "radical pluralism" in ways of construing the Christian thing, were beyond objection.¹² We were seeing amazing diversity even among congregations that would appear on the surface to have much in common—denominational heritage, history, social location. We were convinced of the uniqueness of each Christian congregation.

But this made Kelsey's formal proposal even more complicated. How would actual theological educators find out about the concrete practices through which congregations construe the Christian thing? Kelsey was careful to assure his scholarly audience that he did not advocate curricular reform in which

somehow congregations become the sole or even the central subject of disciplined inquiry. To the contrary, all the traditional subject matters remain in place.

He argued that congregations were not a defining element of the theological school; rather they were "a contingent fact" in being the locus in which "the Christian thing is most concretely available for study."¹³

In fact Kelsey went so far as to reason that from a formal standpoint "it does not follow . . . that the persons involved in the practices constituting a theological school must also be existentially engaged in the practices constituting a worshipping congregation." Nor did theological education "require students' existential engagement in the practices of a congregation in order for the school to pursue its central object."¹⁴

How, then, was that central object to be pursued? We agreed that congregations should not necessarily provide the focal point, and certainly not the essence (the status of that term being problematic in itself), of theological education. We advocated no curricular reform making the congregation the material base for teaching and research in all fields.

On the other hand, we had difficulty seeing how the depth and richness of actual congregational life could be conveyed in an "imaginative 'as if' mode." Would this honor the complexity as well as the integrity of real congregations? How would it locate theological reflection contextually? Given the radical pluralism of congregations, and the complexity of their "very nature" by which they direct "inquiry into a large array of types of subject matter," would not professors who were existentially involved with some actual congregations make a critically important contribution to curriculum and pedagogy?¹⁵ Without such involvement the formal theologizing that goes on would have no acknowledged social location, just as Kelsey himself did not describe in his book in what kind of school he actually taught or what his existential relationship to congregations had been.

Thus we found Kelsey's utopia appealing as a reflection of the intriguing richness of our research experience, but also much more complex as a practical possibility than he appeared to acknowledge. We found ourselves both fascinated with the density of congregational life and daunted by the time and intensity of focused energy necessary to any adequate portrayal of what was going on there.

In general we were vexed by the way in which formal proposals about this abstraction called "theological education" had dominated discussion for more than ten years. We questioned why the grant-making agenda was so occupied with theory-building and the devising of new intellectual programs. We wondered who shared the presupposition that "theological education" needed to be addressed conceptually, and for what reasons.

Our group found "theological education" as a definitive term for what we were doing more demoralizing than encouraging. Books about "theological education" did not capture our passions for teaching or research. Our energies were stirred by starting with the students we were given to teach and figuring out how to teach them, and not by theological programs. We did not think of what we were doing as "theological education." Therefore each of us was prepared to enter the conversation with the specificity of our projects, but not to make sweeping generalizations or build grand theories.

Congregation as Paradigm

Similarly, in the midst of our considerable enthusiasm for the results of our congregational studies and our vastly deepened appreciation for what could be learned from living in congregations as researchers, we did not find Hopewell's proposal of the congregation as a new paradigm for theological education especially inviting either. Hopewell suggested that a constructive alternative to the traditional "clerical paradigm" of professional ministerial training that Farley described would be provided by a focus on "the life and development of the congregation." He argued that "intense inquiry" into particular congregations would deliver theology from abstraction and ministry from its preoccupation with individualistic professional skills of management and therapy.¹⁶

The response to this proposal in *Beyond Clericalism* was telling. The comments of most scholars ranged from cautious openness toward experimentation within a limited scope to explicit criticism grounded mainly in contextual issues. Thus on the one hand, historians Jane Dempsey Douglass and E. Brooks Holifield each examined the creative possibilities of a sharper focus on Christian practices in congregations as a way of illuminating church history and historical theology. Carl Holladay demonstrated how contemporary New Testament scholarship on emerging methods of contextual analysis could be framed around issues of congregational practices as a fresh angle of interpretation on biblical texts. Don Browning saw a potential for enriching the empirical base of practical theology (and indeed has gone on to conduct full-scale congregational studies of his own).¹⁷

On the other hand, Letty Russell worried that the shift to a congregational paradigm would do nothing to reveal the "nationalism, racism, classism, heterosexism, sexism, and guildism" inherent in the church. "The assumed congregational model," she went on, "still looks like the largely white, male-dominated, middle-class, Protestant church." John Cobb argued that the ministry of Christians is to be found in the world, not in the church, and that a congregational focus would turn people even more firmly inward.¹⁸

Our group agreed that making "the congregation" the paradigm for theological education was too limiting. Christian faith and practice goes well beyond congregations. Depending on how they are defined, many Christian communities might not be considered as congregations nor are many Christian practices necessarily congregational. An exclusive focus on congregations would ignore many Christian traditions. Moreover, in Candler's context—a university-related divinity school that offers five degree programs and provides much of the faculty for the university graduate school's Ph.D. program in religion—a reworking of theological curriculum around congregations, while formally provocative, would hold little material interest.

What brought our group to look particularly at congregations, then? We were excited about congregations as interesting places to examine emerging issues in theology and church. We were curious about what goes on there. A program of research in the church met for some of us a personal desire for integration of church and academia. It was an opportunity to see how one's discipline intersected with the situated contexts of congregations, and to test out generalizations in specific locations and embodiments.

Congregations are significant by any account of Christian history and contemporary practice. But adopting a paradigm of "the congregation" would induce an undesirable reductionism. Substituting a congregational for a clergy paradigm would not change the institutional focus of theological education on providing leadership for the church. It would simply redefine the nature of that leadership. But we questioned the nature of "theological education's" consistent focus on "leadership." Who decides what constitutes "leadership?" In what sense is "leadership" what the church in general, and congregations in particular, need? How is "leadership" related to ecclesial language of "vocation" and "ministry?"

Congregational Studies

These questions led us to examine our relationship to the existing literature of congregational studies, to which Hopewell and the Rollins Center were formative contributors. This literature and approach also was located socially and historically. Major institutions of theological education were encouraged to bring resources of scholarship and research to bear on congregations in the context of what was perceived to be mainstream Protestant malaise and decline. Noteworthy texts in this field of interest—such as *Varieties of Religious Presence* or the *Handbook for Congregational Studies*—began with a kind of apology for the

centrality of congregations in American culture, and seemed to assume an underlying cultural role of "making community" to which congregations contributed.

Studies of congregations were typically overlaid, further, with broad theories or typologies that purported to organize and control the messy material of actual congregations. *Varieties* emerged with four types of mission orientation, the *Handbook* offered four perspectives for analyzing congregational life, Carl Dudley and Sally Johnson's *Energizing the Congregation* suggested five "self-images" of congregations. Nancy Ammerman framed her findings about a fundamentalist church in the dualistic categories of Peter Berger's "sacred canopy" and typology of theodicies. Hopewell adapted Northrop Frye's four-fold compass of literary orientations to interpret congregational world view.¹²

Our program was at odds with these ways of defining congregational studies. In general we tried to develop modes of cooperation and mutuality with the congregations we studied, rather than trying to formulate steps, typologies, or categories of analysis by which we as scholar-researchers could try to control their densely textured realities. We were reluctant to universalize theories of interpretation that moved us away from the particularity and situatedness of the congregations we studied. We wanted to honor the language, symbols, stories, and practices of congregations as they were. We viewed our research not as an exercise in social or organizational theory, but as an undertaking of practical theological reflection.

Why a Paradigm?

The larger critical issue for us, then, as we weighed the existing literature, was naming the presuppositions inherent in the very intellectual act of looking for a centering paradigm for theological education. We found this in itself problematic. The naming of paradigms and discussion of paradigm shifts—coupled with the impulse toward universal social theory and typology—struck us as a means of trying to gain intellectual control over the rush of technological and social change the contemporary world is experiencing. Moreover, proposals for new paradigms and typologies often reflect efforts to increase the productivity and contemporaneity of organizations.

We considered this chase for renewed "institutional effectiveness" a further indication of the endemic present-mindedness of American culture embodied in business corporations, universities, congregations, and other institutions. We found ourselves resisting the tyranny of the immediate that so pervades our classrooms and the performance pressures of our own professional lives. With contemporary technology, everything is possible in the present moment. Deadlines become more and more determinative of when work gets done, setting the pace for both faculty and students, as computers, e-mail, and faxes (and grants!) cause all to adopt more and more projects.

We experienced this as one of the critical theological issues of our time and thus of our work in theological education. In response to this issue, however, we

did not find ourselves compelled toward an insistence on preserving the integrity of tradition or toward formal definitions that attempt to maintain the coherence of concepts. We were not led to seek "Christian identity" as the decisive category for unifying our teaching and research efforts.

We were drawn, on the contrary, toward efforts at even clearer discernment of the contexts within which theology is done. We defined our pedagogy as means of helping students discern both tradition and cultural context, in order to make intelligent decisions about what is really going on in situations. We found congregations a particularly good place to practice this discernment, as we examined how the complexity of congregational culture and practices both resonated with traditions (often unwittingly) and changed them.

Locating Our Research as a Theological Enterprise

Thus we located our empirical research clearly within the realm of practical theology, that is, theological reflection on practices of Christian faith, always in sustained conversation with cultural and social-scientific disciplines and with Christian traditions as they are made available through the classical disciplines. To the extent that practical theological reflection itself may tend to overemphasize present action and to put itself in the service of enhancing immediate activity, we were reminded by congregational practices how traditions retain their presence as living, dynamic others that can freely challenge and transform the present.

Practices

We found ourselves debating with recent definitions of practice, though, for reasons similar to our arguments with the theological education literature. The widely used articulation of tradition and practice by Alisdair MacIntyre, adapted in various ways by Craig Dykstra, Dorothy Bass, and other scholars, is appealing in internal logic and consistency. We struggled, though, to keep its formal integrity engaged with the reality of actual contemporary practices.

The congregations we studied were a veritable spaghetti plate of tangled practices, the diagnostic pursuit of any one of which inevitably dragged others to the edge of the dish or spattered us with foolishly premature conclusions. The simple act of singing a hymn proved to be not only a practice of congregational singing, but also a musical tradition, and a product of the instrumental training of the accompanist, and a deliberate selection by the liturgist, and a compromise between competing theological interests in the congregation, and an occasion for teasing another parishioner about her voice, and a stimulus to tears for someone whose dear grandfather was evoked by the tune, and so on to countless other tangles. In fact, the tangle itself was the practice, even though for intellectual reasons we attempted to conceptualize parts of it discretely.

Given the complexity of rational, emotional, dispositional, and practical dynamics that entered into a simple song, given, in short, the inescapable

contextuality of every practice of the church, we found Dykstra's argument for a richer sense of practice both provocative and difficult to connect with our research experience.

Here again, we thought Dykstra's presentation would be enhanced were he to locate himself as an educator in the Reformed tradition. Certainly his appeal for "profound, life-orienting, identity-shaping participation in the constitutive practices of Christian life" was compelling. He wanted "whole communities . . . to be initiated into [practices], guided in them, and led in them." If that was to happen, then "clergy must be teachers of these practices in their own communities." That must entail knowing and understanding "the histories of those practices and the reasons, insights, values, and forms of judgment borne both by the traditions of which they are a part and by competent and wise contemporary engagement in them."²⁰

We came to wonder, though, in which cases Christian congregations needed to "know what they are doing and why as they engage in those practices."²¹ Could a practice still be a practice without a rational interpretation of that practice? A focus on practice so defined could induce a rationalism of norms, when in fact rational explanation might actually make the practice more difficult or even impossible. For example, in the case of one congregation, it was better to just get a prenatal care program organized and started rather than to sort out theological rationales for providing it, which differed greatly among participants of evangelical and liberal viewpoints.

We feared that a normative focus on practices could tend toward reductionism. Which exactly are the "constitutive practices" for contemporary congregations? A range of such practices, however clearly thought out, could not fully address the located, situated texture and depth of congregational story and relationships. Practices might indeed constitute the "communal life" of a congregation,²² but a rationale for practices could not be extended to explain why people made commitments to a congregation or to certain activities, though practices might manifest that commitment.

We marveled at the complexity of describing the history of a practice even in one local place, given the remarkable range of idiosyncratic modes of storytelling and the variety of narrative constructs present in a single congregation. We wondered how one would isolate the "forms of judgment" entailed by a practice, given the multiplicity of relationships both synchronic and diachronic that are brought to expression in the mythos and ethos of the congregation. The "insights" and "values" of practices did not appear to be the same in different congregations that vary wildly in social context, learning styles, and manifold other diversities. Practices have to be located some place and situated in some particular context to make sense.

Therefore our group did not attempt to construct a definition of practice. We came to use it as an accordion-like term elastic enough to encompass a broad variability, including both the particularity of practice in local places and the commonality of practice in diverse times and places.

Our discussions of practice provided one venue for constructing a conversation between the biblical and historical disciplines based on texts on the one hand, and explorations of contemporary contexts on the other. We tested the possibility that "practices" might be a bridge term, useful for interpreting biblical materials as well as for congregations. But as Gail O'Day argued, biblical texts are not necessarily a study of practices. For example, Luke's formulations may or may not have ever actually been practices; the text is Luke's rhetoric of community, Luke's reading of how the meaning of worship could bring about a different kind of community.

While interpretation of biblical texts thus contrasted with the efforts in other projects to provide empirical descriptions of practices, we also became increasingly aware of complex interrelationships between these approaches. For one thing, contemporary practices contain, reframe, and transmit traditions; traditions are embedded in them. For another, there is no description of contemporary practice without interpretation. As in biblical studies, every description carries with it a hermeneutic which the researcher must try to bring to visibility as much as possible.

Methodology

Our continual struggle with methodology—the appropriateness and fit of methods, the significance of our interventions in congregations, the approach we should take to reporting our findings—was integral to our theological reflections. We did not seek an overarching methodology for congregational research. Rather, we used methods as we needed them to get at particular problematics in our congregations. But even this particular and contextualized approach raised a host of questions.

Those of us doing ethnographic research began with high ideals of intellectual honesty. We wanted to be forthright with the congregations we were studying, clear about our purposes and straightforward in our covenants with them about what we would look at and how we would use the information. But these initial ideals were vastly complexified and deepened by a growing desire to honor the dense given reality of the congregations we are attempting to understand. Congregations are replete with conflicting memories, counterpoint histories, shared awareness, profound social memory, and corporate operational theologies. No facile extrapolations are ever warranted.

Therefore questions of methodology cannot be conceived simply as a one-way street from the researcher as actor toward the congregation as passive recipient. Methods do not present a plain issue of what "we" can in good conscience do to "them." Both the researcher and the congregation must be prepared for disruption as well as mutual animation and serendipitous insight.

The faculty researcher puts at risk his or her own taken-for-granted world, we soon learned. The routines of classroom, library, office and study, the management of one's calendar, the expectation of control over how one chooses to interact with others, are all in flux. At an even deeper level one's dispositions

shift. The capacity for unself-conscious worship diminishes, as one begins to observe instinctively from a gaze immediately detached from the acts of a congregation, however familiar. One enters every situation with all senses alert and questions in the forefront—what is going on here, what do these people think they're doing?

Researchers must also be prepared to reexamine accepted categories or theories. Claims that fit neatly in intellectual argument suddenly come apart in a single gesture or phrase from a church member. For example, we found that generalizations about racism are much harder to formulate in the context of a congregation in which some members left in anger over integration and others of seemingly identical backgrounds were to be seen laughing and hugging with people of another race. Statements about women and men got much more complex when the meaning and status of gender as a defining factor seemed to flow in and out of dense relationships particular to congregational context.

Our research was a field of surprises. Just when the disinterested gaze seemed to be settling in, the researcher so determined to maintain distance was liable to be taken aback by his or her own depth of feeling for what was going on. This affective response became part of the research data. For example, for a project in which women were researching women, an affective awareness of the pain of the other was unavoidable. The women doing the research sensed that these female senior pastors were isolated, without strong support structures or mentors. The pastors had to work out within themselves the reality of being a powerful woman. The solitude of this struggle was both more apparent and more poignant for female researchers who had also stood in the pastor's place.

Yet it was both bane and blessing for the researcher to be of the same gender, ethnicity and/or social background (more or less) as the congregation. The same lines of force that created immediate acceptance of the researcher also served to exclude others and shut out needed voices and perspectives. We learned to be careful about settling into familiar songs, ways of greeting others, or unthinking recitation of long-memorized prayers, lest we cease to hear and see what is going on. Such acts of awareness required far more energy than we typically brought in the past to a Sunday morning or a Wednesday night at church.

For the congregation's part, those who agreed to be studied had to accept the presence of people who by observing and asking questions altered the continuing corporate reality. People acknowledged this disruption in various ways. An innocent tease—"are you worshipping today, or observing us?"—revealed how parishioners perceived the researcher's liminal status. For the most part, these interventions were welcomed. In fact, members of the research teams were often caught off guard by the ways congregations sought to incorporate them into their activities, even asking them to take leadership by teaching a class or singing in the choir or speaking to a decision.

Of course, our status as representatives of Emory University was also an intervention. Congregations told us of their pride at being selected to participate in our projects. They assigned us expertise and turned to us for advice. At the

same time, congregants queried us sharply about the time, leisure, freedom, and resources we had at hand to be able to conduct such studies. They wondered what a predominantly white major national university perceived as one of America's richer institutions wanted to do with them. This was especially poignant as we crossed ethnic or class lines and encountered apprehension about our motives, bordering on explicit distrust.

Thus our empirical projects brought to the foreground a number of methodological issues around the force of culture, race, gender, economic class, and social location in research. Being professors of a prominent university moving into a local context sets up a power relation that in the past might well have supported the supposedly objective gaze—the ideal of unbiased description, “the view from nowhere.”²³ But the longer we worked in partnership with our congregations, the more we realized our own situatedness, and the more our own biases about gender, race, age, and economics were exposed.

We learned much about ourselves as well as our congregations. Our assumptions (e.g., no European-American pastor could really understand African-American people, older congregants always like the good old hymns) were overturned. We found it crucial to conduct our studies in such a way that the academy did not have privilege of perspective.

We came out with a rich and complex understanding of “empirical” research. While we collected some quantifiable data through a survey instrument, we were aware in constructing the survey how many assumptions are borne even by seemingly simple demographic questions. As much as possible our methods were naturalistic in approach, an effort to capture the qualities of life of congregations by observing them as they are.²⁴ We listened carefully to the narratives of individuals and congregations as corporate bodies. Our assessment of what we saw became a painstaking hermeneutical task of being faithful to the congregations with which we worked.

Theological Questions in Congregations

Our primary common research question in the program as a whole was proposed to be, “How do congregations function as practical theological communities?” With Robert Schreiter in *Constructing Local Theologies* we explored “the role of the entire believing community in the development of a local theology.”²⁵ This approach opened the way to viewing particular congregations as situated places for wrestling with questions of church and culture, tradition and practice.

Of course, congregations vary greatly even within themselves in the levels of self-consciousness and theological reflection with which they make decisions or worship or carry out acts of ministry. Our research process itself was a catalyst for congregations to look more closely at the theological significance of their actions. We wanted to be alert to a range of questions:

To what extent is theological inquiry an implicit or explicit practice of congregations?

Are congregations themselves a kind of living theology?

How do congregations interact with their social context?

How does the surrounding community shape the congregation and vice versa?

How are Christian Scripture and traditions appropriated or assumed in congregations?

How are the signs, images, and dynamics of the Christian story played out both unwittingly and in the intentional struggle of congregations to find their place in the tradition?

How do Scripture and traditions act as a critical presence in congregations?

Our determined efforts to listen well to the congregations—a descriptive moment—reflected a basic presupposition that theology today is about creating spaces through the participation of many distinct voices. We sought to hear and honor the multiple voices of our congregations, and in so doing, helped them make a space for developing a more deeply shared corporate theological voice.²²

We had many occasions for asking people to tell us their stories. This in itself is a profoundly significant act which most people (including ourselves) experience only rarely if at all. Our interviews drew out of people understanding they did not know they had; our questions brought moments of insight for them as they connected ideas for the first time or realized in fresh ways the formative influence of their congregation's practices.

By mirroring back to congregations what we heard of their stories we enabled them to compose a narrative of their corporate life in a new way. They were able to see patterns of action, to claim strengths, to get closure on unresolved grief. They got a fresh cut on how their life may embody values of Christian community in ways they had never named.

Of course, story is not the only avenue into the corporate reality of congregations. They gather in and around symbols, gestures, and movements—sounds, smells, depictions, tastes, touches—that are a sensory feast. The harmony or clash of symbols precedes proclaimed or stated theology, and made us realize in new ways how essential an alertness to the arts is to theological imagination. We were intrigued by the way congregations express artistically their vision of themselves and the good toward which they strive. Their vision both reflects and symbolizes a pattern for the larger community of which they are a part. The placing of stained glass windows depicting people of color in a (previously European-American) multiethnic congregation offered one vivid example.

Finding a voice and vocabulary in the American cultural context can, to be sure, be individualistic and present-minded as well. Thus an encounter with traditions and texts is critical to constructing new narratives that are not simply beholden to contemporary local culture.

Our very exploring and describing the practices of congregations regularly introduced the vocabulary of larger discussions in church and world, and so pointed congregations toward a broader conversation of which they—self-consciously or not—are a part. We found that the connection of congregations and social and cultural systems is immensely complex, however, and not easily analyzed.

We concluded, based on our experience, that a practical theologian is participant-observer, critic, and poet. What a practical theologian can contribute is to describe with as clear an eye as possible the practices observed, drawing out those practices through a vocabulary that locates them in larger historical and cultural discourses, and naming images that evoke both the self-understanding of the congregation and the horizon of Christian practice that is embodied in diverse ways in varied situations throughout Christian traditions.

Conclusion

We began our program in 1991 with enthusiasm for our projects but some real misgivings about what exactly we were committing ourselves to. Our research, often intriguing, was as intense and demanding as anything we had ever done.

Three years is a long time in the academic world, though it can take much longer to produce a single article or book. Even sustaining our group meetings, much less our passions for the research, through three academic years was a challenge. All of us were involved simultaneously in other major projects, several of them funded by Lilly, that also demanded part of our time and attention. The other projects were all important and useful, too, and fit our skills and interests in various ways, but we had to question the advisability of taking on all of them at once.

At the same time, we were excited to participate in the unfolding of a perspective and discussion that began some years ago with Candler in the forefront of it. Lilly Endowment honored us by choosing to support our program in all its ambition and ambiguity. We understood the grant as an invitation to attempt a distinct contribution to congregational studies, practical theology, and theological education. We knew ourselves to be in fine company with colleagues around the country who have helped to shape the discussion in profound ways.

Yet for all our admiration for what had gone before, we came to feel that what we were doing needed to be grounded in our own particularity. We challenged or even set aside the given vocabulary of much of the current discussion in order to contribute to the conversation in terms that made sense to us.

At a meeting early in our third year I began to compare my experience as director of the program with leading a hike in the mountains. I organized the

hikers, made sure they had adequate provisions, and set off up a trail from which I was certain they would enjoy the view. I was excited about my own changing perspectives on congregations, particularly my growing sense that they really are complex organisms with their own character, story, culture, and collective being. I am still absolutely convinced that neither denominations—especially the clergy—or theological schools have yet fully grasped the corporate reality and mystery of congregations that transcends and envelops professional and programmatic interventions in them.

Like any scholar who has a chance to persuade others of the fascination of the central object of his or her teaching and research, I was eager for my colleagues to see how engaging congregations can be. I was sure that once they gazed at this view, their perspectives would be transformed and they would help me invite more people up the mountain. To that end I pressed for the group to immerse itself in the literature of congregational studies, and to have continually in mind whatever constructive contribution that we might make to this growing field of interest.

I was amazed at how often I paused on the trail and turned around to point something out, only to discover that my hikers had taken another fork or stopped to look at the flowers. But they taught me to enjoy other, more modest, views and to stop assuming that everyone must be persuaded to like a grand overlook or the thrilling vista.

Congregational studies never became one thing for this group. Such studies need to incorporate varieties of questions, approaches, methods, and norms. Efforts to make "it" a discipline are unnecessary and limiting. Congregational studies do not need to provide a single governing framework for all inquiry into issues of congregational life. Congregational studies are by nature various in methods and intent.

In fact, a major point of this research program was to look at congregations from the standpoint of several disciplines, using ethnographic methods as needed, in the service of investigating issues defined in the discourse of ethics, education, or other fields. Certainly many fields besides the theological disciplines are engaging in this kind of empirical inquiry, perhaps reflecting ways in which the regulative, taken-for-granted character of all our society's institutions is undergoing fundamental change and ambiguity.

So our disciplines—in dialogue with the congregations, to be sure—shaped the governing questions of our projects, with congregational study methods in the service of those questions. While this made it a continual challenge to develop a common perspective, we were more comfortable with a "traveling theory" that allowed us to work from the methods and perspectives of our respective disciplines while recognizing that all knowledge is situated.

This reflected the cultural situation in which we were working as theologians. The ferment and flourishing of multiple voices, including ours, was just what we hoped to enhance both in our work with congregations and texts, and

in our collegiality. In order to do theology with integrity and imagination, we tried to speak in our own voices, and to listen and honor the voices of others. We were committed to staying at the table of conversation.

To the extent that our research program helped to make such a space in theological education—to arrange a table around which a diversity of voices could be heard—we enjoyed a real sense of accomplishment. But the success of our program ultimately lies in the promise it holds for the conversation to continue.

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ENDNOTES

1. This article derives from the conversations of the entire research group, including Professors Pamela Couture, Charles Foster, Thomas Frank, Robert Franklin, Gail O'Day, Sally Purvis, and Don Saliers. The pronoun "we" in this paper is shorthand used for points of consensus in our group. "We" does not mean that every individual agreed with every such point that is described here. "I" refers to Thomas Frank, program director and author of this article.

2. Publications that resulted from research under the Lilly Endowment grant of 1991-94 included Pamela D. Couture, "Partners in Healing: Bridging Pastoral Care and Public Health Through Practical and Pastoral Theology" *Journal of Pastoral Theology* (Summer 1995); Charles R. Foster and Theodore Brelsford, *We Are the Church Together: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), as well as Foster's *Educating Congregations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994); Thomas E. Frank, "Corporate Culture and the Formation of Character: The Challenge of a Multi-Cultural Society" in *Faith and Work: Personal Needs and Congregational Responses* (Chicago: Center for Ethics and Corporate Policy, 1991); Robert M. Franklin, "When God Says Stay, You Stay!" in Lyle Schaller, ed., *Center City Churches* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), as well as Franklin's forthcoming book on the black church since the civil rights movement, *Another Day's Journey: Black Churches Confronting the American Crisis* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Sally B. Purvis, *The Stained Glass Ceiling: Churches and Their Women Pastors* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995); Don E. Saliers, "Aesthetics and Theology: A Hymnal Intervenes" in a volume forthcoming, Philip Bohman, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press); *Worship as Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), as well as "Divine Grace, Diverse Means: Sunday Worship in United Methodist Congregations" in Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, ed., *The Sunday Service of the Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

3. James F. Hopewell, *Congregation: Stories and Structures*, Barbara G. Wheeler, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987). Chapter Three of the book is based on Hopewell's experience with the Institute courses.

4. Carl S. Dudley, *Building Effective Ministry: Theory and Practice in the Local Church* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983); Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds., *Handbook for Congregational Studies* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986).

5. James F. Hopewell, "A Congregational Paradigm for Theological Education" in Joseph C. Hough Jr. and Barbara G. Wheeler, eds., *Beyond Clericalism: The Congregation as a Focus for Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 4, 6.
6. The major paper resulting from this project was presented at practical theology conferences at Emory and in Holland, Germany, and England in 1990; see James W. Fowler and Thomas E. Frank, "Living Toward Public Church: Three Congregations" (unpublished manuscript, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, 1990).
7. Hopewell, *Congregation*, 10, 15.
8. Quotations in this section of the paper are from a transcription of the research assistant discussion held on May 4, 1992, at Turner Conference Center, Emory University.
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10. David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).
11. *Ibid.*, 110.
12. *Ibid.*, 110.
13. *Ibid.*, 207, 209.
14. *Ibid.*, 198-99.
15. *Ibid.*, 199, 205.
16. Hopewell, "Paradigm", 7-8.
17. Jane Dempsey Douglass, "A Study of the Congregation in History," 63-75; E. Brooks Holifield, "The Historian and the Congregation," 89-101; Carl Holladay, "The Congregation and New Testament Studies," 77-85; Don S. Browning, "Pastoral Care and the Study of the Congregation," 103-118. See also Browning's studies of two congregations in *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991).
18. Letty Russell, "Which Congregations? A Mission Focus for Theological Education," 31; John B. Cobb Jr., "Ministry to the World: A New Professional Paradigm," 24.
19. Nancy T. Ammerman, *Bible Believers* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Jackson W. Carroll, *Handbook*; Carl S. Dudley and Sally A. Johnson, *Energizing the Congregation: Images that Shape Your Church's Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); Hopewell, *Congregation*; David A. Roozen, William McKinney, Jackson W. Carroll, *Varieties of Religious Presence: Mission in Public Life* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984).
20. Craig Dykstra, "Reconceiving Practice," in *Shifting Boundaries*, 50, 54.
21. *Ibid.*, 56.
22. *Ibid.*, 47.
23. Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
24. See Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985).

25. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985), 16.

26. We benefited greatly from conversation with our colleague Rebecca S. Chopp about her book, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995).

Congregational Studies and Critical Pedagogy in Theological Perspective

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If the church is, as the apostle Paul claims, the *Body* of Christ in the world, then the church is always and everywhere a historical and social manifestation. Its particular social forms are of infinite variety: from the spontaneous gathering of two or three in Christ's name to ecclesiastical bodies that endure the passing of millennia and extend to the far reaches of the globe. Of these, congregations are one of the most common and recognizable manifestations of the church. It is exceedingly important for scholars, clergy, and congregants to take this form seriously in its personal, social, and cultural aspects; only when these aspects are examined in their particularity can they be intentionally reformed to be more truly the theological reality that the church is.

In recent years we have seen the development of two distinctive modes of analysis, "congregational studies" and "critical pedagogy," both of which hold great promise for the future transformation of the church. Congregational studies is primarily a framework that loosely incorporates the interrogative methods of the social sciences for the description and clarification of congregational life. To discern and understand the actualities of the life of religious communities is the first step to addressing adequately their needs. Critical pedagogy, on the other hand, is oriented to educative contexts such as public schools. Rooted in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Paulo Freire's "pedagogy of the oppressed," and the interrelated discourses of gender, class, and race critique, critical pedagogy aims to unearth and expose dynamics of oppression, as well as to foster creative resistance against oppression in schooling. In essence, critical pedagogy is an expanded and refined reincarnation of critical theory specifically oriented to educative contexts. Through its hermeneutics of suspicion regarding relations of domination, such a critical perspective will provide the church with methodologies of critical self-reflection to illumine the shadow side of congregational life. This essay critically correlates congregational studies and critical pedagogy for the purpose of discerning how they might contribute to ecclesial transformation.

Introduction to Congregational Studies and Critical Pedagogy

Congregational Studies

According to Allison Stokes and David Roozen, academicians and denominational leaders have systematically studied the practical nature of congregations within their social contexts since the beginning of the twentieth century.¹

Over the decades, emphases and methods have shifted dramatically in the study of congregations. Currently, the dominant paradigm of congregational study was established through the collaboration of Jackson W. Carroll, the late James F. Hopewell, Loren B. Mead, Barbara G. Wheeler, Carl S. Dudley, and others who convened themselves as the "Committee for Congregational Studies." This committee sought to bring the resources of the social sciences to bear upon a practical theological analysis and reformation of the peculiar social form of congregations. According to Stokes and Roozen, congregational studies responds to the "challenge of the multiplicity of social and religious forces that erode a congregation's unity of vision, and it is an affirmation that a congregation's inherited and confessed, formal and informal, web of symbolic meaning, values, and commitments—that is, its culture—always consciously or unconsciously informs pragmatic choices made among the diverse alternatives of program, process, and context with which every congregation is continually confronted." In other words, congregational studies focuses almost entirely upon the consolidation of a congregational identity and the enhancement of ministries that develop from the congregation's self-understanding.

It would be as impossible as it would be inappropriate to lump all researchers of congregations into a singular homogeneous group. The term, congregational studies, in this essay refers to the particular configuration and self-understanding of a highly diversified complex of disciplines organized by the Committee for Congregational Studies for the purpose of studying congregations in their social context. The specific disciplines involved may vary, but the "core" of congregational studies includes hermeneutics, sociology, organizational development, history, and theology. Common to each of the disciplines are two things: a presumption of the congregation's importance as a cultural and religious institution, and the effort to achieve an empirically based understanding of the identity, effectiveness, and significance of the congregation within its wider social context.² What is herein referred to as congregational studies, then, is the intentional effort to coordinate investigative and analytical disciplines for the purpose of understanding congregations and assisting them to discern and clarify their identity, and to orient their ministries accordingly.

Critical Pedagogy

During the latter part of the 1970s, a new sociology of education emerged in the United States and England as a critical response to the way in which public education was characterized as the major support system for civil democracy. The movement to criticize the "ideology of traditional educational practice"³ was inspired by visionaries such as Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, and substantiated with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, feminism, and liberationist movements of all kinds. Representatives of what came to be known as "radical" or "critical pedagogy" included Basil Bernstein, who wrote *Class, Codes, and Control* (1977); Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, authors of *Schooling in*

Capitalist America (1976); Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (1977), and others. Critical pedagogy challenged the dominant assumption that public schools were the foundation of egalitarian democracy. It demonstrated how schooling reproduces the ideological and material forms of privilege and domination with respect to class, gender, and ethnicity. Radical pedagogy claimed that because of its formative power, schooling is a powerful instrument of the capitalist relations of production and of the legitimating ideologies of ruling groups and, therefore, offers only limited individual opportunity to socially oppressed groups.

Early on, critical pedagogy polemically berated traditional schooling. Schools and their constituent personnel were understood to be mired in an inescapable system of domination. As a polemic, however, the discourse of critical pedagogy could not break completely free from the dichotomies established by the opposition. For if schooling is seen only as an agent of the social reproduction of relations of privilege and subordination, the actual practices of resistance taking place in schools will most probably be obscured. Such a one-sided and myopic analysis will inevitably obstruct the transformative potential for creative and critical reconstruction of schooling.

Critical theory has matured in the last two decades into a discourse that resists polemicism and reductionism and integrates the languages of criticism and hope. No one has contributed more to the evolution of critical pedagogy than Henry A. Giroux. In the present introduction to critical pedagogy, I will concentrate on his effort to construct a critical *theory* of pedagogy. Giroux's work provides a meta-theoretical framework by which the particular analysis of concrete practices and ideas gains an integral coherence; in other words, Giroux maps out a rational framework within which domination is exposed and resistance to domination can be fostered.

The foundation of critical pedagogy is the awareness that knowledge, power, and interests are thoroughly intertwined, integrated, and directed by a systemic and intersubjective substrata of intentionality.⁴ Building upon the psychoanalytic and cultural critique of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Habermas, the production and legitimation of knowledge is construed as an exercise of power in the service of domination and/or liberation. Human action and the forces that bear upon it are inexhaustibly complex; polemicism, like all dichotomistic thinking, conceals the unavoidable ambiguity of social life.

Paying close attention to the social construction of knowledge, its use and effects upon individuals and groups, patterns of interconnectedness can be detected. An enduring pattern of relations designates a particular *rationality* in which the connections between certain forms of knowledge, power, and interest are legitimated and sustained. Rationality means for Giroux a "specific set of assumptions and social practices that mediate how an individual or group relates to the wider society."⁵ It is important to recognize that rationality does not merely refer to a psychic structure in the individual, nor is it the equivalent of

Jung's notion of the collective unconscious. Rather, a rationality is rooted equally in mental operations and material practices, and is sustained in both individual and collective consciousness. Rationalities are the glue that cements the mental and physical, individual and social, dimensions of life together into a dynamic and fairly coherent whole.

Within any complex society there are innumerable rationalities operative, each with its own way of construing reality and ordering relationships and activities. Rationalities, as "fields" of operations, interact with other rational fields with a combination of positive and/or negative force. But rationalities are not all created equal; rationalities are arranged hierarchically with some achieving greater hegemony in society than others. For example, Yale University remunerates me as I occupy a faculty position at the Divinity School. It is a transaction based in part on my performance as an individual during my contract. When the provost's office figures my compensation, it considers my qualifications and performance quite apart from those who might have been instrumental to my training. It does not consider former teachers who prepared me for this position even though my teachers were decisive in my academic formation. Yale's relationship with me ignores the "cloud of witnesses" that I bring to the contract. If I accept this arrangement as being fair and, thus, rational, then I will not question it. Thus, the contract and the transactions between Yale and myself inhabit a rationality that perpetuates our relationship. A similar rational pattern, perhaps with some modification, characterizes every meritocratic exchange of labor for capital. When such a rational field is placed within the more comprehensive rationality of the American social meritocracy that distributes social capital (e.g., privileges, opportunities, etc.) on the basis of explicit individual merit, the transactions between Yale and its faculty members make perfect sense. The rationality by which Yale and I relate is a subfield within the larger rational field enveloping western meritocracies. In this instance, the two rationalities mutually support and legitimate each other. If I fail to realize that the narrow conception of individual merit conceals the unequal distribution of resources and the systemic exploitation of whole classes of people, I will probably continue to expect and demand just compensation for my labor while self-righteously denigrating the struggles and resistances of those who are oppressed by the very economic system that privileges me. In this way, a rationality illumines some aspects of reality while it conceals its internal contradictions.

At the heart of every rationality is a problematic, which Giroux characterizes as a "conceptual structure that can be identified both by the questions it raises and the questions it is incapable of raising."⁴ The notion of problematic is indebted in part, it seems, to John Dewey's formulation of the scientific method. In terms of Dewey's understanding of the method by which science proceeds, knowing begins in and is conditioned by a problem that the investigator seeks to resolve. Likewise, a problematic stimulates and directs thought. As R. D. Boyne has said, "The problematic defines the field of the visible [and] . . . the

invisible."⁷ The problematic posed by the dominant rationality of an individualistic meritocracy conceals precisely knowledge of the strategies of class subjugation in order to legitimate the concentration of power among the ruling classes. The interest in retaining power generates and sustains material practices and knowledge which in turn gratifies and intensifies the interest.

The term which indicates the "interested" movement among ideas and behavior is *ideology*. Although critical theorists are equally concerned with the economic and political dimensions of culture, ideology figures prominently because only at the level of ideology can the relational patterns that constitute rationalities come into view. Ideology, then, is the level at which the *logic* of the relations between ideas and material practices is revealed. Much of the literature on ideology defines it in terms of its distorting and illusory potential.⁸ Giroux's view is much less reductionistic. Ideology is "located in the category of meaning and has an active quality to it, the character of which is defined by those processes by which meaning is produced, challenged, reproduced, and transformed."⁹ It refers to the "production, consumption, and the representation of ideas and behavior, which can either distort or illuminate the nature of reality."¹⁰ In this very broad sense of ideology, what is clarified is the reciprocity between ideas and material practices. However, its *critical* potential is clarified only when "it is linked to the concepts of struggle and critique."¹¹ Indeed it is in light of the interested nature of social interaction that culture itself becomes politicized as the contestation between the occupants of different social strata. In Giroux's view, "the linkage of ideology and struggle points to the inseparability of knowledge as power; it emphasizes that ideology refers not only to specific forms of discourses and the social relations they structure but also to the interests they further."¹² Relations of struggle and conflict are understood primarily in terms of power and characterized by the strategies of domination and resistance. In this vein, Roger Simon describes culture as a "political phenomenon [including] the power of a specific interest class or group to articulate, distribute, and legitimate specific meanings, message systems, and social practices in order to lay the ideational and material foundations for a specific way of life."¹³

Critical theory helps to reveal the complex and highly diversified nature of schools as institutions and processes of cultural formation: schools reproduce dominant practices and ideologies that limit possibilities for human fulfillment even as they produce creative and transformative ventures and supportive ideologies that enhance and increase human emancipation. Exposing and clarifying forces and effects of cultural production and reproduction will necessitate an analysis of educational institutions in terms of relations within the institutions and the relations that extend beyond the institution and involve the wider society. To this end, critical theory takes into account both interpersonal relations and "macrocosmic" relations of economic, political, and ideological structures.

Why is critical pedagogy interested in this type of critical analysis and creative reimagining? Aware of its own social location and potentiality, critical

pedagogy designates itself as unreservedly oriented to transformative action in the interests of human emancipation—an emancipation not just for a select few, but rather a liberative movement that increases the range and scope of possibilities for individuals and groups.

As we move from introductory remarks to consider the relevance of critical pedagogy to the study of the congregation, we note the following connections. First, congregations educate. In and through an infinite variety of ways and means, congregations teach their members what it means to be a congregant of a particular church, a Christian in a particular society and tradition, and a child of God in an incomprehensibly vast universe. Not only are congregations educators of their own members and close associates, they teach the wider community about these same sorts of things, albeit in a different way. Because congregations educate, they can be considered as analogues to schools as sites of cultural and religious formation and as sites in which forces of domination and resistance clash. Second, critical pedagogy brings to a study of congregations the central problematic of domination and resistance and would orient all research to the observation and analysis of the problematic. Third, in order to perceive clearly what is actually going on in congregations, critical pedagogy urges attention to the material and ideational conditions of cultural production. Fourth, congregations are highly complex institutions in which both cultural production and reproduction can be discerned. Fifth, according to Giroux, theory has practical effect: either it serves the interests of emancipation or hegemonic domination. From the perspective of critical pedagogy, theory has the power to expose and clarify what is actually happening in events and relations, and that clarification should be in service of transformative action toward human liberation. The study of congregations, from this point of view, should be primarily oriented to the liberation of its members and the institution itself from a complicity in structural oppression by means of "conscientization" which, according to Paulo Freire, always eventuates in transformative action.

Correlating Congregational Studies and Critical Pedagogy Within a Theological Perspective

Beyond an initial intuition that critical pedagogy might have great relevance to the study of congregations, how might we begin correlating congregational studies with critical pedagogy? At the very beginning of such an endeavor, it must be acknowledged that in such a compact medium as this essay it will be difficult to do much more than simply suggest how the two might be mutually corrective. Yet we will move beyond a mere correlation to investigate how the congregation itself might be particularly problematic for both congregational studies and critical pedagogy. To provide a common empirical and narrative referent for the correlation between congregational studies and critical pedagogy, let us look for a moment at what must certainly be the most thoroughly analyzed congregation ever: "Wiltshire United Methodist Church."

There is not space here to give a detailed summary of Wiltshire's troubles nor of the range of analyses performed under the purview of congregational studies. The most extensive and concentrated collage of approaches to the study of Wiltshire is the book, *Building Effective Ministry*, edited by Carl S. Dudley.¹⁴ My analysis of congregational studies and critical pedagogy within a theological perspective will take its bearing from the case study and critical commentaries upon the Wiltshire congregation. Given the constraints of space, we will not be able to consider all the perspectives represented in the book.

The Case Study: Wiltshire United Methodist Church

Nestled in a small, upper-middle class bedroom community just outside a larger city, Wiltshire United Methodist Church is the fictitious name given to what at first appears the model suburban congregation with an affluent membership. For its first 130 years, Wiltshire was a church of the working class under the domineering guidance and patronage of a local wealthy family. Around 1970 the church entered a new era. The Wiltshire community was fast becoming an upper-middle class bedroom community outside a large metropolitan area. The last of the family patrons died, and the church was appointed a new dynamic pastor, Sid Carlson. Under his assertive leadership, affluent people were attracted, membership swelled dramatically, and programs multiplied. In large measure Wiltshire church mirrored the surrounding community which had been described as a "Shangri-la," a secluded respite from the pressurized corporate world. Eventually, however, conflicts erupted between the pastor and many parishioners which shattered the pretense of congregational harmony.

Referring to the case study of Wiltshire Church, the following critical correlation between congregational studies and critical pedagogy will concern three aspects of analysis: the analytical process, the theoretical framework of analysis, the purpose of analysis.

The Analytical Process

Barry Evans and Bruce Reed investigated Wiltshire from the perspective of "systems psychology" which is purported to give insight into the "psychological state of mind of the people of Wiltshire."¹⁵ As they describe it, the systems psychological analysis assumes that actions and experiences of individuals are not only the products of their personal histories, but they also reflect and transmit the ideas, images, and conflicts of the larger social system in which they are embedded. The guiding assumption is that by observing the behaviors and ideas of the individuals and the actual practices of the institution one will detect a psychological correlation between the microcosm of the individuals' minds and the macrocosmic ethos of the institution.

Evans and Reed uncovered several clues that indicated the achievement-orientation in the congregation. Pastor Carlson had been described apprecia-

tively as "a man 'who knew how to take charge of a situation in the best corporate sense.'" The worship service he fashioned became known as "the best show in town." And in his first few years, Carlson turned the church into a more aggressive, and thus more attractive, "competitor" among the area churches by offering a wide array of programs and services from which parishioners could select. This was a strategy that corporate managers and entrepreneurs could appreciate. The combination of lively worship and numerous programs families found appealing. And as long as the church membership grew and the programs of the church increased, as long as the church could meet the needs of most of its parishioners, the congregation fulfilled the main criteria for success. And so, for years Carlson's pastoral approach satisfied the consumerist mentality of the members. In effect, the congregational system represented a cycle in which the achievement-oriented beliefs and practices held jointly by both pastor and parishioners were mutually reinforcing. Correlating the statements and activities of the individuals and the congregational system, Evans and Reed believe they uncovered the key to the psychological state of Wiltshire: an unconscious "collusion between the pastor and congregation about the myth of success."¹⁶ In order to protect and sustain the illusion of well-being among the parishioners, interpersonal conflicts and personal disillusionments were suppressed. Wiltshire church mirrored the prevailing culture of capitalist consumerism and offered its members a relatively safe haven, not only from those who could threaten their illusory peace of mind and comfortable lifestyles, but also from the prophetic voice of the Gospel. Consequently, and with no small degree of tragic irony, Wiltshire congregation was something of an obstacle to the Kingdom of God.

If we put Evans and Reed's psychological analysis of the Wiltshire church into a conversation with critical pedagogy, it will become readily apparent that congregational studies and critical pedagogy rely upon empirical data as an indispensable basis of analysis. *Social scientific methods provide the raw data and analytical framework upon which critical theory and congregational studies are able to proceed.* Of course, research methodologies are themselves constructed within a particular rationality which itself should be critically examined.

A point at which critical pedagogy offers a significant corrective to congregational studies has to do with the degree of complexity allowed in the analysis. In their study, Evans and Reed mention that a small contingent of members was dissatisfied with the predominantly self-serving nature of the church and called out for a modest increase in the social service budget and more prayer in the worship service. However, the authors did not incorporate this small resistance into their conclusions. That there was a collusion between the pastor and the parishioners and between the church and the village is true, but simplistically so. Yet, neither can we conclude a simple dualistic opposition between the majority and minority. Upon closer inspection it is clear that the challenge of the small protesting minority did not challenge the rationality governing the status quo. Rather, their requests of the pastor were quite vague, and their resistive

activity was confined to disgruntled complaints among themselves. Their resistance to the success-oriented "collusion" certainly appears weak. Could it be that the religious paradigm of charitable spirituality, requested by the disaffected minority, did not transcend privatistic and paternalistic rationalities? Is it not the case that individualistic and paternalistic acts of charity, though a temporary balm to individuals' sufferings, often serve to conceal the structures which perpetuate economic disparity and political exploitation by narrowly focusing on individualistic acts of kindness? How can a structurally naive, other-worldly spirituality help to conscientize those who most benefit from the economic and political disparity? Even though these dissenters may have meant well, their resistance most probably deepened and extended the hegemony of the dominant rationality by redirecting attention away from the structures and strategies of domination that constituted their social placement.

These observations lead to the following corrective: From a critical pedagogical perspective, *the analytical process should seek especially to expose the hidden contradictions within the social and theological forms of life.* If the internal contradictions in the rationality governing Wiltshire community and church were fully disclosed by the psychological analysis, the relation between the suburban enclave and the inner city would certainly not have been represented as a simple opposition between the haves and have-nots. The dualistic framework of Evans and Reed's psychological analysis completely elided the fact that the seclusion of Wiltshire itself stands as an implicit protest and refuge against the stressful expectations and demands of corporate life, as well as the frightening turmoil of the impoverished inner city. Furthermore, as the psychologists themselves pointed out, the veneer of harmonious tranquility ineffectively concealed persistent and widespread personal and familial crises throughout the congregation and town. The psychologists did not examine the reasons why such an idyllic community would be racked with relational crises and personal depression. Although the folks in Wiltshire might not ever recognize it, they suffered in many ways from the very system from which they benefited. Enclosed within a rationality of artificiality and self-referentiality, both the compliance and resistance of the people in Wiltshire together reproduced the very depersonalizing culture which both privileged and imprisoned them.

The Theoretical Framework of Analysis

Critical pedagogy and congregational studies can also be correlated with respect to the theoretical framework by which the analysis is conducted. Whereas above the psychological analysis was found simplistic and dualistically structured, we now turn attention to the ways in which the theoretical framework itself can promote a reductionistic analysis. In their sociological analysis, Carroll, McKinney, and Roof analyzed Wiltshire Church in terms of its *geographic* situation. The authors contend that geography is the primary way that congregations identify themselves, and that all other cultural determina-

tions are secondary. They write, "Local churches are community institutions. Most churches have defined their community geographically, although other definitions (ethnic, racial, ideological) *are possible*."¹⁷ Toward the end of the essay, they reiterate the same idea but add the undefined notion of "class": "a congregation . . . is profoundly shaped by its social context, especially the local community and the social class of its members."¹⁸ I do not disagree: obviously, congregations are constituted largely by the very people who live in the surrounding community. This is, however, a truism with little explanatory power. The point about which I contend with the authors does not regard their analysis, which certainly is adequate, but the conceptual framework that provides the analysis with its content. My very limited experience suggests that factors such as ethnicity, race, and ideology play a much more significant part in shaping congregational self-understanding than the authors allow. This is not to say that geographic or demographic factors are diminished; rather, is it not the case that ethnic, racial, and ideological factors are always and everywhere incarnated in space and time; are not cultural factors always manifest *geographically*? My guess is that a substantial number of congregants in a local church would surely identify themselves in terms of a particular class, ethnicity, or race in a *specific* community. Yet the authors have elevated geography above these factors. Why might this have been the case?

We can suppose that as the congregants were interviewed, they might have strongly identified themselves as Wiltshirians and New Englanders so that other cultural factors seemed less important. Thus, from the empirical data it would have been a matter of course to elevate geography to superior status and subordinate other cultural markers. From a critical pedagogical perspective, however, certain alarm signals would have been sounded by the priority of geography over factors such as class, race, or ideology. We can imagine that Giroux might have been suspicious and would have sought a reason to explain such an unexpected finding. One would not have to search far for an answer. It is an assumption of critical pedagogy that people will identify themselves passionately by characteristics that differentiate themselves in a significant way from others. Issues such as race, gender, and ideology signal the great fissures in our culture and, thus, stimulate great passion and commitment. These are precisely the kinds of qualities that one would expect people to register with the interviewer, unless, of course, the congregation itself is composed of people who homogeneously mirror one another.

The membership of the Wiltshire Church had changed significantly in the preceding decades. Recently the affluence of the membership had grown considerably, and the congregants were mainly corporate professionals who had relocated to the area. It is quite reasonable for them to identify themselves quite explicitly with the community that represented their achievement and station in life. Furthermore, in Wiltshire Church, with the exception of several affluent African Americans, the members are relatively affluent WASPs, a

group that has dominated New England society for generations. Only since the 1960s has the social influence of WASPs declined. The membership of Wiltshire Church saw its image reflected throughout the social context, except perhaps in the troubled inner city which was kept at a safe distance. Given circumstances such as these, ethnicity, race, and ideology are *not* any less significant in Wiltshire, for they are constituent qualities of the ruling class. Rather, these qualities are *taken for granted!* Homogeneity and privilege render these factors invisible (although no less powerful) as the tacit foundation of a common identity. Upon this foundation other factors rise to the foreground of awareness that create a *semblance* of diversity among people in Wiltshire. Factors contributing to a feeling of diversity may include, for example, wealth, employment status, familial composition, personal qualities, etc. Only upon the implicit foundation of ethnic, racial, and economic homogeneity can the category of geography gain such prominence. Thus, elevating geography to categorical preeminence effectively subordinated more significant cultural determinants. *A critical perspective, then, would challenge the primacy of superficial categories (e.g., geography) in the theoretical framework by which the analysis becomes reductionistic as it omits or denigrates hidden and yet determinative elements.*

The Purpose of Analysis

Is theory value-free? If theory cannot avoid bias, should it seek to reduce the effect of bias upon analysis? Should theory be overtly ideological? In his introduction to the methodology of congregational studies, Jackson Carroll explicitly states that the theoretical framework of researchers is "neither neutral nor value-free." He continues, "In the case of theological assumptions, for example, what one believes about God's purposes for the church will shape the agenda for what will be addressed in the congregational study."¹⁹ While Evans and Reed would probably agree that their psychological analysis is laden with interests, they have nevertheless characterized their approach as an "attempt to describe the realities of the situations rather than to *evaluate* them."²⁰ However, this facade of neutrality could not conceal the bias of Evans and Reed's "description" of the relation between pastor and members as a "collusion." Evidently their conclusions demonstrate *evaluative force* and are based on *normative* claims that remain unspoken.

In his commentary upon the congregational analyses of Wiltshire Church, Don S. Browning criticized not only the psychologists but every social science approach in *Building Effective Ministry* for leaving the normative assumptions of their evaluation at the implicit level.²¹ Both Browning and Giroux alike acknowledge the fact that all theory is value-laden and "interested" and, therefore, value is always hidden in every evaluation. That theory is always "interested" indicates that all inquiry (indeed, all knowing) is fundamentally practical and generated in our practical involvements. Only as the assumptive basis of normative claims is rendered explicit can the underlying assumptions them-

selves be scrutinized critically. To explicate the presuppositions of one's own position makes them vulnerable to critical reflection. For once the assumptions and assertions are exposed and publicly displayed, then the interrogator herself can be interrogated.

However important this correction may be, it is not enough, according to Giroux. In addition to an explication of the assumptive framework, what should be explicated (as thoroughly as possible) are the *interests* at play in the theory and the *involvement* of the theorist(s) in the situation. According to critical theorists, all knowledge is powerful and is oriented by interests. Theory, as systematized knowledge, is a form of power exercised for certain practical purposes. Furthermore, just as it is impossible to be value-free, it is impossible to be uninvolved in the situation of knowing. For as the philosopher Michael Polanyi has convincingly shown, all knowing is generated in an encounter between persons and objective realities in which persons dwell in that which they seek to know.²² If this is true, what is the place and role of the observer in the observed situation? The researcher or consultant is not an uninterested and detached outsider, who, as if peering through a window, can observe the activities within a situation without herself being implicated in the dynamics. From the perspective of critical pedagogy, schools are institutional sites of struggle between domination and resistance. For however much one may try to avoid involvement, there is no Archimedean point from which to observe in detached isolation. Everyone associated with the school is caught up in the struggle including students, teachers, administrators, consultants, and even theorists such as Giroux who are far removed from the actual scene. Is not the same true for the congregation and those who study and assist the congregation through congregational research? If it is impossible for the observer to be completely disinterested and uninvolved, what then might be the explicit interests of congregational studies and the researcher?

According to the *Handbook for Congregational Studies*, congregational research is conducted for two main reasons: (1) pragmatic problem solving and (2) focusing the identity and mission of the congregation.²³ In an introductory article in *The Christian Century*, Carl Dudley supplements two more reasons: (3) the legitimation of the congregation as a significant institution in the public square and (4) to unify practical theology and theological education in general in an orientation to the congregation.²⁴ Clearly the academic and therapeutic analysis of congregations are primarily interested in "understanding" and solving problems within the faith community. Yet, the pragmatic nature of congregational studies is clarified as one reads the literature that spells out how the analysis of congregations is to be conducted as a self-study or in a consultative relationship with an expert in church diagnostics. For example, Loren B. Mead, one of the "deans" of church consultation, emphatically places the emphasis in congregational studies upon the "significant intervention" of the researcher/consultant in the life of the church. He contends that the purpose of

multidisciplinary approaches "is *not insight* but *impact* in the congregation." "Change is the goal." The "client is the institutional church."²² It seems that as congregational studies becomes more "practically" interactive with congregations, its mode of operation pushes through mere understanding to the *raison d'être* of understanding: change by means of a pragmatic, client-centered approach of consultation. Thus, the primary reason to study congregations, as promoted by the Committee for Congregational Studies, is pragmatic (problem-solving) and secondarily, hermeneutical (the achievement of an understanding).²⁶

What is wrong with attempting to solve problems and to understand a local institution of church? Is it not through remedial action based upon accurate understandings that congregations can be assisted to be more truly what they are meant to be? Well, yes and no. Certainly, it is reasonable that as Christians we are committed to helping the church be properly oriented and effective in its ministry. However, is congregational assistance the *primary* interest we have in understanding the congregation and other religious bodies? If so, is this adequate to the nature of the church? Is it reasonable theologically? To answer these questions our correlation of congregational studies and critical pedagogy will inquire into their rational structures utilizing the illuminating conceptual framework developed by the Frankfurt School of critical theory.

The Rational Nature of Congregational Studies and Critical Pedagogy

Recall that "rationality," according to Giroux, refers to a "specific set of assumptions and social practices that mediate how an individual or group relates to the wider society."²⁷ Drawing upon the analysis of Jürgen Habermas, Giroux distinguishes between three modes of rationality: technical, hermeneutical, and emancipative.

Technical Rationality

Technical rationality is linked to principles of control and certainty in the effort to master the objectified environment. There is a sense in which the term, "technical" is used by Giroux pejoratively to indicate a certain type of rational structure. However, Giroux is not being a reactionary Luddite with respect to the development of technology; nor is technical rationality equated with technology or technique. Nor is he denying that problems exist which urgently need to be resolved. Rather a technical rationality indicates a specific set of assumptions and practices that are oriented toward a mastery of the objectified environment. To this end principles of control and certainty subordinate all other principles as normative guides for human life. Interestingly enough, Giroux points out that within a technical rationality, the social sciences figure prominently because of the methodological penchant for inductively produced "ob-

jective/empirical" data upon which conclusions are reached. Observation is characterized by an impersonal detachment from the situation itself. Knowledge produced within a technical rationality takes the form of empirically generated "facts" and "hard data" which constitute "objective" knowledge. According to Giroux, the "Achilles' heel" of a technocratic rationality is its inherent instrumentalism: that is, observation, knowledge, and even the situation at hand, are all "used" as means toward a predetermined end. This is certainly most evident in the therapeutic mode of congregational studies, for the investigation and understanding of a congregation is appropriated for strategic problem-solving. The "client-based" approach tends to objectify both the congregation and the consultant vis-à-vis a problematic. Approaching a congregation principally as a problematic situation reduces the depth and complexity of the congregation to the parameters and substance of the problem. Furthermore, this type of instrumental relationship also subordinates the full identity of the consultant herself to impersonal categories of role and function and, therefore, confines the consultant to a bureaucratic mode of being.²⁸ Within a technical mentality, the relationships between the observer and the observed are restricted to their instrumental use to what serves as the ultimate *telos*, the culmination of the consultant-client relationship in a catharsis of resolution. To engage the congregation in this manner, however, is antithetical to a central biblical and theological affirmation: that the church is the Body of Christ in the world. If this understanding were definitive of our participation in the church, if we approached each congregation as a communal sacrament in which we are invited to join members of that local body around the altar to share the body and blood of Christ in fellowship, what would that suggest about the methodology of congregational studies? It is a question to which we will return.

Hermeneutical Rationality

Whereas the technical rationality was primarily instrumentalistic in its appropriation of objects for predetermined ends, a hermeneutical rationality is particularly attentive to the intersubjective dynamics through which meaning is constructed. This means that a hermeneutical investigation addresses the implicit layer of conceptual forms, categories, and assumptions of understandings as well as the origins of all knowledge and practice as social constructions. In congregational studies, the work of Don S. Browning has been significant in that he portrays congregational studies as a theological form of hermeneutics. The central problematic to which his proposal is oriented is the judgment that western civilization is awash in relativistic pluralism and has lost a common consensus on the rules by which a society must operate. He believes that the church can and must be a vital contributor to the public debate on ethical norms. With a rich and ancient tradition to draw upon, the church should develop its "practical moral rationality" in order to contribute to the philosophical-public dialogue on social rules and norms. Toward that end, he proposes that the

church can be described as a "community of moral discourse" whose contribution to the ordering of society arises out of a "hermeneutical rationality."³³ Selectively appropriating Heidegger's reinterpretation of Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* and the theories of Gadamer and Ricoeur, Browning characterizes congregational studies as theological inquiry, and theological inquiry as fundamentally practical and critical.³⁰ Being essentially practical, only a "thin line separates theology and social science," avers Browning. As theology incorporates the methods of social science, it produces descriptions, systematic analyses, and strategic proposals for pragmatic effect upon public discourse.³¹ The methodology that supports Browning's notion of theology is that of a revised correlation closely aligned with that of David Tracy.³²

According to Browning, the main goal of a hermeneutic theology is to "test explicitly the adequacy of [the tradition's] normative claims, both their capacity to interpret present situations and their moral and religious truth."³³ In order to conduct the proper assessment, theology must address the situation in terms of five levels of reflection: metaphorical, obligational, tendency-need, contextual-predictive, and rule-role-communication.³⁴ It is not so important that in this essay we detail the nature of the five levels of reflection as it is crucial that we understand that the five levels constitute, for Browning, the full range of social experience and therefore, exhaust the range of practical theological inquiry. Oriented accordingly, congregational studies is primarily interested in "assessing [congregations'] value and determining if there are defensible grounds and viable means for their revival."³⁵

From the perspective of critical theory and its appropriation by critical pedagogy, Browning's construal of congregational studies within a hermeneutical paradigm is troubling. As Geoff Whitty has argued, a hermeneutic rationality assumes that "truth and objectivity are . . . nothing but human products and man [sic] rather than nature is . . . the ultimate author of 'knowledge' and 'reality.'"³⁶ The main problem with a hermeneutic rationality is its disregard for reality in favor of the mediations of knowledge in tradition and practices. It reduces the ontological complexity and substance of reality to its mediations in "metaphor" and "symbol" and "practice." It cannot move beyond a relativistic notion of knowledge because of its reduction of knowledge to intersubjective construction. Although hermeneutical criticism rightly exposes the wrong-minded and arbitrary division (in, for example, technological rationality) between objective and subjective elements in knowledge, the "reflective" mentality of hermeneutics does not "analyze the history of this division or develop a form of critique that is capable of revealing the ideology embedded in it."³⁷ Consequently, within educational contexts, the study of hermeneutics has not been able to "raise fundamental questions about the nature of the relationship between the state and schooling, the mechanisms of ideological and structural domination in schools, or how the relationship among class, culture, and ideology in schools serves to reproduce the institutional arrangements of the

status quo."³⁸ Furthermore, hermeneutic rationality contributes to social relativism because it ignores ontological basis for claims of oppression and subjugation, as well as for resistance and transformative action. It is as if the claims of marginalized and exploited peoples are treated merely as constructed texts and not as the indicators of an objective reality of pain and suffering. Remaining at the level of constructed meanings dissociated from their empirical/ontological basis, the hermeneutic approach fails to examine its own ideological preoccupation with practical mediations of what are most fundamentally ontological realities. This ideological embeddedness undercuts resistive efforts by eliding the ontological nature of the actual relations of both domination and of transformation. In effect, it reproduces the status quo in culture.

Although a religiously confessional stance is implied in Browning's practical theology, there is no explanation within the hermeneutical paradigm of the ontological status of the revelation of God in Christ mediated in the Christian tradition. Browning offers no explanation of the relation of the Christian tradition to the church's experience of the work of the Spirit, nor of the empirical datum of Jesus Christ, whose incarnate life, death, and resurrection are not only the meaning of the tradition, but the end to which the Scriptures and the tradition ultimately point. For Browning the mediations of the Christian faith function as terminal points of hermeneutical reflection. The truth of the Christian tradition has, for all *practical* purposes, been cut off from its ontological ground in the self-revelation of God. The hermeneutical process, therefore, remains confined to the level of mediation for the purpose of personal and corporate reconstruction of meaning and praxis. Consequently, the Scriptures and the doctrines of the tradition, as well as all the historical experiences and meanings of the tradition, have been reductionistically construed as mere social constructions.

A hermeneutical approach to the congregation does an injustice to not only the embodied existence of the congregants themselves, but also to the claim of Christians that the church is itself a sacramental presentation of an ontological reality which, though immanent, far transcends their corporate life. Browning's effort to confine theological reflection to only five levels—metaphorical, obligatory, tendency-need, contextual-predictive, rule-role-communication—means that the ontological substratum upon which the church is utterly dependent is elided. Certainly it is unscientific and specious to investigate an object without taking seriously, or at least entertaining, its own self-understanding and self-communication (granting, of course, the *possibility* that the self-understanding may be truthful). Does it not make sense to orient the research methodology to the object in all its ambiguous complexity rather than reduce the object to what seems most apparent and less complex? Since its inception the church has declared itself to be no less than the Body of Christ constituted by the Holy Spirit for the glory of the One who sends them. Despite every indication to the contrary, the church still claims that it is the incarnation of the Word in the world.

The attempt to be as neutral as possible in methodology has meant that the mediations that comprise the Christian tradition are reduced to the anthropological status of a hermeneutical terminus or endpoint. As such, the Christian tradition and its embodiment in ecclesial forms, such as congregations, lose their primary and most fundamental ontological status as a sacrament in and through which the Trinitarian communion is vivified in the world. Browning's hermeneutically reductionistic approach does a grave injustice to the self-understanding, and more importantly, the ontological reality of a long and distinguished tradition of the Christian faith.

Emancipative Rationality

The rationality of emancipation incorporates both the hermeneutic concern for intersubjective construction of meaning as well as the empirically generated and useful knowledge of the technical rationality. The framework of emancipative rationality begins with an assumption that the others do not share: that the social context is one of a conflict between two great themes, domination and liberation. The methodologies of both the social sciences and hermeneutics are integrated and oriented to the enhancement of human possibilities. For Giroux, this means that all theory should be devoted to "criticizing what is restrictive and oppressive while at the same time supporting action in the service of individual freedom and well-being."³⁸ From this perspective, then, critical pedagogy exhorts all who would study communities of faith that *the inquiry and the theoretical framework should explicitly contribute to the liberative struggle against domination. Researchers and consultants alike should be engaged and committed not only to the resolutions of perceived problems of congregations, but moreover to the creation of a better world.* With these goals in mind, by every means available, we should attempt to grasp intellectually the nature of the congregational situation (hermeneutical) and should employ all appropriate means to effect whatever change is needed (technological) in order to expose strategies of domination and to support and incite resistance.

What would such a twofold interest mean for the study of a congregation? Would an explicit commitment to personal and social liberation be amenable to congregational studies as it is generally conducted? How would a commitment of this kind transform the involvement of researchers and consultants with local communities of faith? How would the theoretical framework of analysis be transformed if it were construed with a primary interest in emancipation? In my view, such a corrective change would amount to a paradigm shift, or in critical pedagogy's terminology, a transformation in congregational studies from a technological and hermeneutical rationality to an emancipative rationality.

Although the correlation between congregational studies and critical pedagogy has been rather one-sided for the last few pages, congregational studies also has a question of its own to put to critical pedagogy: upon what basis and to what goal is liberation oriented? Giroux, himself, acknowledges that the

theory needs a vision, a "concrete utopianism" that celebrates not only what is but what could be.⁴⁰ Yet, which resources will critical pedagogy draw upon? Will it construct a vision of a utopian future *sui generis*? How will the utopian vision be ontologically grounded (so that it avoids the relativization inherent to the hermeneutical rationality)? Surely Giroux would not disagree with the contention that critical pedagogy is ideologically oriented, because it is in service to an ideology⁴¹ of liberation. He interprets everything through the lens of the concrete social conflict between domination and oppression. Yet it was precisely against this kind of ideological interpretive process that Jürgen Moltmann warned Christians: "In actual fact this 'quite concrete' way of thinking is highly abstract, for it detaches one aspect from all the wealth of life's interrelations and particularizes it." Rather than abstracting and universalizing a particular experience, Moltmann suggests that Christians should attempt to "grasp the single event, the special experience and the particular practice in the context and in the movements of the history of God." He continues,

Without an understanding of the particular church in the framework of the universal history of God's dealings with the world, ecclesiology remains abstract and the church's self-understanding blind. This will lead almost unavoidably to the danger that the church will lend a universal claim to quite limited tasks, and will support interests conditioned by a particular period with the solemnity of the absolute.⁴²

A Theologically Rational Approach

The critical conversation between congregational studies and critical pedagogy has revealed many of the ways in which the study of congregations has, heretofore, been construed according to technical and hermeneutic rationalities in which the ontological nature of the congregation is elided by a pragmatic attention to resolving the problems of or by a preoccupation with the mediations of congregational life. Rebecca Chopp argued that a critical practical theology—the field of theological disciplines in which congregational studies is appropriately placed—is best achieved by means of an emancipative rationality, for liberation is truer to the gospel than either problem-solving or a value-neutral understanding.⁴³ Yet, a theological perspective cannot rest only upon an emancipative rationality despite its merit; for left at the level of liberation, it is still in itself insufficient. Surely Chopp would agree that the Christian basis of hope in liberation is not merely a utopian abstraction of freedom but Christ whose life and ministry, whose death and resurrection, and whose life-giving Spirit are the supreme manifestations of and the ontological basis for liberation hope. The Christian faith, then, is oriented to the ontological basis of its hope: the historical incarnation of Jesus Christ and to the coming Reign of God through the

power of the Spirit to whom the gospel witnesses. Upon the basis of the divine self-revelation, a critical practical theology is, therefore, theologically oriented to a ontological reality and operates according to a *theological rationality*.

In agreement with Moltmann's ecclesiology in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, an analysis of the church must begin with its origin as the historical and particular embodiment of Christ. As the church is the Body of Christ, it is Christ who is the referent *par excellence*. In Jesus Christ the church discerned a hypostatic union of divine and created natures which are unified through a relation that does not confuse or merge the two natures into one monadic nature, but yet a relation in which the two are indivisibly unified in such way that their distinctiveness as divine and created is enhanced. That Christ is God of God, wholly divine and wholly human, was formulated by the early church using the term, *homoousion*, which meant an identity in being and sameness in nature. As such, Christ is the ontological referent that transcends the abstract notion of liberation and the entirety of the created order and all cultures and ideologies and practices and knowledges, for Christ is in union with the existence and will of God. Yet, it is because the Son of God is incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth who through the Spirit gathered disciples to be in communion with himself and the One who sent him that we are brought into fellowship with the Triune God and are allowed to participate with the Spirit in the transformative redemption of the world and all creation.

Many Christian subtraditions profess that the church is a sacramental incarnation of Christ in the world, instantiated historically as the Body of Christ. As such, each local instantiation of the church testifies to the One who sustains the universe and in whom all its creatures have their being. Standing in urgent opposition to the forces of dehumanization and the degradation of the created order, the church points to and participates in the pentecostal Spirit Who animates all there is and Who will ultimately redeem and reconcile the creation in the Christ Who is all in all. Even though the great Christian traditions profess this truth about the church, lamentably, the actual, historical manifestations of the church fall far short of its calling. Obviously, the church is a thoroughly human reality which seems characterized more by the shadow side of its humanity than by the divine light of its ultimate referent. However frail and broken the church is, nevertheless, it claims to be a sacramental embodiment of Christ in the world. As sacramental, it is acknowledged to be finite and inadequate, but a means of grace all the same. Inquiry into the church, whether by persons who are Christians or not, should take this claim seriously for it is at the heart of what defines the church as the embodiment of Christ which can in no way be divorced from the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is especially incumbent upon Christians to approach every ecclesial body precisely as Christians who commune with other Christians in the Body of Christ.

The communion in which all members of the ecclesial body are unified can only be understood truly from a theological perspective which is Christologically

centered upon the Trinitarian life of God. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has revealed the divine communion of the Son with the Father in the Spirit. It is that very communion which was incarnated in Christ; it is the *raison d'être* of the mission of Christ in the world. Because Christ is the self-revelation of God's activity in the world, theological reflection on ecclesiology and the church's action in the world begins in the history and future of Christ, who reveals the *missio dei*: "a movement from God in which the church has its origin and arrives at its own movement, but which goes beyond the church, finding its goal in the consummation of all creation in God."⁴⁴ Hence, the communal mission of Christ creates the church as a liberating communion: the messianic commission "embraces all activities that serve to liberate man from his slavery in the presence of the coming God, slavery which extends from economic necessity to Godforsakenness."⁴⁵ The Christocentric orientation of the church reveals itself to be most fundamentally an ever-extending, all-inclusive communion. As such, the revelation of the Trinitarian God in Christ is the ultimate source and authority for all ecclesial relations.

It is the communal relationality of the Trinity, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, eternal and historical, that must be the ultimate reference point for ecclesial activities and relational structures. As the Son relates to the Father in the Spirit, so the church relates to Christ in the Spirit and so derives its very nature from the communion the three divine Persons share. Therefore, if the church is to remain true to its Trinitarian foundation, there must be a direct correspondence between the internal relations of the church and the relations internal to the Trinity. This means that persons are called to relate to one another in the church as the Persons of the Trinity relate. It is a calling that is eschatological in nature, for to commune with others is to actualize the Reign of God however inadequately. Only in the eschaton will our communion be perfected as we share in Christ's inheritance. This distinctive relation, which constitutes the communion of the divine Triunity, is known in the Christian tradition as *perichoresis*, an indwelling of one by another, a mutual interpenetration and coinherence of persons to form a *koinonia* of love.⁴⁶ It is this perichoretic relation that forms the internal pattern of communion in which the many and diverse members of the church are constituted by the Spirit to be the one church in Christ.

To incorporate congregational studies and critical pedagogy within the church's Spirit-directed praxis will require a paradigm shift. The therapeutic pragmatism of congregational studies and the abstract idealism of critical pedagogy are not compatible with a proper theological rationality in which the church communes with God and the whole of creation. The Christian who is studying the church cannot pretend to be an outside investigator peering through a one-way mirror to ascertain "objective" facts about the congregation, for the construction of a value-neutral and objective "description" of the situation is a patently false illusion. A dualistic methodology that isolates the subject from object is epistemologically specious.⁴⁷ Objectivizing inquiry con-

ducted by a Christian is especially inappropriate to every social form of the church, including congregations, for the simple reason that a Christian has been formed at the deepest level of faith and practice by the very object she investigates. It is no more possible for a Christian researcher to write an objective description of a church than it is for her to write an objective description of herself. One can hopefully approach the topic with a high degree of critical self-awareness, but to attempt a Cartesian split of mind from one's formative community and from one's own faith involvements would be an epistemological error with serious practical consequences for the researcher and the congregation. A Christian should not attempt to deny her ecclesial formation in order to study the church, just as one would not attempt to deny one's personhood in order to reflect critically upon oneself.

It is crucial in scientific investigation that the methods and conceptual framework of the investigation must be oriented properly to the nature of the object. Congregations are not simply social forms; they are fundamentally *religious* in nature. Approaching a congregation in such a way that maintains the subject/object dualism and isolates the investigator from the claims the congregation can make upon her is inappropriate to the religious nature of the congregation. Even in spite of what might be a particular congregation's denial of its religious nature, it testifies to the *spiritual* dimension of life, a dimension that cannot be reductionistically investigated solely in terms of a particular institutionalized form. Nor can it be investigated solely in terms of an empirically-oriented social science. Investigating a congregation or any other ecclesial body will involve the investigator in a spiritual reality that will most certainly transgress the neat and tidy boundaries that academic and scientific study erect. Furthermore, although it is quite obvious that congregations will always have problems that need close attention, the problematic itself is of essential but *secondary* interest. Primarily, Christians are called to communion, to indwell the Spirit of God in that particular location with those gathered.

That Christians should approach congregations *as Christians* does not mean that a non-Christian person cannot investigate the church. Actually, the church has greatly benefited from the critical commentary of atheists and persons from other religious traditions. The point is that whoever the investigator is, she should be true to the calling of her faith tradition and should relate to others from the depths of that tradition and within a faith community to which she is accountable.

An objection could be raised at this point: in the effort to participate with the local Body of Christ in communion, it may seem that critical reflection must be summarily discarded. This would be true if communion meant a process of homogenization in which all the differences and conflicts of the community were dissolved into sameness or if communion entailed the concealment of distinctions and oppositions. Yet, the objection itself arises out of a mistaken conception of communion. Communion is hardly the eradication or suppres-

sion of difference, for it is on the basis of difference that it is possible for persons to relate. If somehow people could be for a moment identical in every way, they could not relate, for differences allow one to recognize the other as truly other. Differences among people are not antithetical to communion; rather, they are the *conditio sine qua non* of any form of relationality, communion included. We should consider critical reflection in the same vein: the *commun*-ication and search for truth that should characterize Christian fellowship is made possible only as the participants are able to articulate their understandings for the benefit of others. And because we are only human and not God, and, therefore, our knowledge of God and the world is always partial and fallible, our understandings require the clarification, purification, and revision available only through *compassionate* dialogue within a sustained community. As knowledge is explicated and as the bases and resources of knowledge are "unconcealed" (to use Heidegger's phrase), understandings can be clarified, tested, and affirmed or rejected for the purpose of engaging the reality of life at a more profound level. Thus, critical reflection is indispensable to the ongoing life of a community whose foremost desire is for truth and truthful living.

A theologically appropriate study of a congregation, a study which takes seriously the testimony of the congregation to be related to God who transcends culture and everything created, provides two specific and needed correctives to critical pedagogy. First, while the notions of liberation and freedom are integral to the resistance of oppression, just as they are integral to Christian faith and praxis, they are terms which today remain steeped in Enlightenment individualism: it is the individual who becomes free from personal and structural domination. Liberation as the guiding concept for a Girouxian pedagogy of conscientization is itself a pragmatic concept whose content is primarily negative: the absence of restriction and domination. That persons might be liberated through participation in a communal context may very well seem quite puzzling from an individualistic perspective. The concept of freedom in critical pedagogy is also problematic, for freedom is an ephemeral, secondary quality that characterizes certain kinds of relationships. Much like the state of happiness, freedom evaporates the moment one tries to seize it. Rather than striving after the chimera of freedom itself, we should focus our attention upon the relations that yield freedom. The concepts of liberation and freedom used in critical pedagogy signify no truly ontological and culturally transcendent referent as a *necessary* and *guiding* factor. They refer instead to the imaginative projection of a utopian, civic communion among victorious revolutionaries. Consequently, Giroux's ideals of liberation and freedom are enclosed within a cultural system unable to critique itself sufficiently by reference to what transcends culture. The biblical dictum, "the truth will set you free," means that it is the truth and not freedom, per se, that has emancipative power.

The second corrective that a theological approach contributes to the study of the congregation is that the self-understanding of Christians should ulti-

mately refer the investigator beyond the social and personal forms of the church's life to the Christ who constitutes its ultimate and transcendent referent, and without which the church cannot exist. With this in mind, we would put to congregational studies and to critical pedagogy a central and rather definitive requirement: *because all activities of the church and all Christian praxis are grounded ontologically beyond themselves in the Triune God revealed through Jesus Christ, a critically informed study of the church is correctly construed in correspondence to the overall "missio dei" as revealed in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ as he was empowered by the Holy Spirit to the glory of the One Who sent them.*

If congregational studies and critical pedagogy could indeed coalesce within a theological rationality, they would certainly become essential contributors to the radical reorientation of the church to its ontological ground and to its *missio dei*. The church is fundamentally a Christological communion in the Spirit. We who work with congregations should approach them as one who joins in communion for the purpose of purifying, intensifying, and extending the communion. This we cannot do from a posture of distant uninvolvedness. Only as we gather around the altar with those of faith in Christ—together sharing in the holy meal, together in doxology, together receptive to prophetic and priestly means of grace—only in communion are we relating to the Body of Christ truthfully.

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ENDNOTES

1. The introductory paragraphs to congregational studies are dependent upon Allison Stokes and David A. Roozen, "The Unfolding Story of Congregational Studies," in *Carriers of Faith: Lessons from Congregational Studies*, eds. Carl S. Dudley, Jackson W. Carroll, and James P. Wind (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 183-192; and James P. Wind and James W. Lewis, "Introducing a Conversation," *American Congregations: Volume 2: New Perspectives in the Study of Congregations*, eds. James P. Wind and James W. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Cf., K. Brynolf Lyon, "What is the Relevance of Congregational Studies for Pastoral Theology?" *Journal of Pastoral Theology*, v. 2, Summer 1992, 14-26.
2. *Handbook for Congregational Studies*, eds. Jackson Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 7.
3. Henry A. Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning* (New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1988).
4. Cf., Roger I. Simon, "Critical Pedagogy," in *International Encyclopedia of Education: Research and Studies*, eds. T. Husen and N. Postlethwaite (London: Oxford Pergamon Press, 1984).

5. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition* (New York: Bergin and Garvey, 1983), 171.
6. *Theory and Resistance*, 172.
7. Boyne, cited in *Theory and Resistance*, 172.
8. Cf., Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (New York: Verso, 1991), chapter one, for a typology of definitions of ideology.
9. *Theory and Resistance*, 143.
10. *Ibid.*, 143.
11. *Ibid.*, 144.
12. *Ibid.*, 144.
13. Roger I. Simon, "Review Article—Signposts for a Critical Pedagogy: A Review of Henry Giroux's *Theory and Resistance in Education*, *Educational Theory*, Fall 1984, Vol. 34, No. 4, 382.
14. *Building Effective Ministry: Theory and Practice in the Local Church*, ed. Carl S. Dudley (New York: Harper and Row, 1983). *Building Effective Ministry* is a collection of analyses of one case. Cf., the two-volume edition, *American Congregations*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Volume one of *American Congregations* is a collection of analyses of twelve congregations. Volume two is a theoretical excursus on the nature of congregational studies.
15. H. Barry Evans and Bruce Reed, "The Success and Failure of a Religious Club," *Building Effective Ministry*, 38.
16. *Ibid.*, 48.
17. *Building Effective Ministry*, 84 (emphasis added).
18. *Ibid.*, 109.
19. *Handbook*, 18.
20. *Building Effective Ministry*, 41, original emphasis. Sociologists Jackson Carroll, William McKinney, and Wade Clark Roof echo Evans and Reed's declaration of relative objectivity, "Sociological analysis will not prescribe to the church what it should be or do . . ." ("From the Outside In and the Inside Out," *Building Effective Ministry*, 99).
21. Browning, "Congregational Studies as Practical Theology," in *American Congregations*, Vol. 2, 202.
22. Cf., Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1958, 1962.
23. *Handbook*, chapter one and two.
24. Carl S. Dudley, "Giving Voice to Local Churches: New Congregational Studies," *The Christian Century*, Aug. 12-19, 1992, 742-3.
25. Mead, "Seeking Significant Intervention," *Building Effective Ministry*, 155-6 (emphasis added).
26. In the Introduction to *Building Effective Ministry*, Alice Frazer Evans and Robert A. Evans point out that the "dire" situation of congregations in North American society leads congregational researchers to document the continuing significance of the local institution and the religious life of church members. Because problems and needs generate the need for the study of and remedial action in the congregation, the authors "emphasize the necessity for a pragmatic and eclectic approach to respond to whatever problems and needs they find" (xi-xii).

27. *Theory and Resistance*, 171.
28. Cf., Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), who contends that it is the hallmark of a bureaucracy that within its structure a person merely occupies a "role" and performs "tasks."
29. Browning, *Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care*, *passim*.
30. Cf., his extended treatment of the philosophical heritage of his "fundamental practical theology" in chapter two of *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991).
31. *American Congregations*, 195-6.
32. Browning points to a slight difference between his and Tracy's outline of a "revised or critical correlational theology" (*American Congregations*, 197), but Browning states that his approach is built upon Tracy's understanding (*A Fundamental Practical Theology*, 45).
33. *American Congregations*, 196.
34. A more complete explanation of the five levels of practical theological reflection are given in "The Estrangement of Pastoral Care from Ethics," *Concilium* (Summer 1982); *Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); *A Fundamental Practical Theology*, especially 105-109. For a critical treatment of Browning's practical theology from a feminist perspective, see Rebecca Chopp, "Feminist Theological Pragmatics: A Social Naturalism of Women's Experience," *Journal of Religion*, 1987; "Practical Theology and Liberation," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, eds. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).
35. *American Congregations*, 192.
36. Whitty, "Sociology and the Problem of Radical Educational Change," in *Educability, Schools, and Ideology*, eds. Michael Flude and John Ahier (London: Croom Helm, 1974), cited in *Theory and Resistance*, 184.
37. *Theory and Resistance*, 186 (emphasis added).
38. *Ibid.*, 189.
39. *Ibid.*, 190.
40. *Ibid.*, 242. Giroux points to resources in ideology theory and in feminist liberation theology for a vision of human possibilities in *Teachers as Intellectuals* (chapter 16); however, his appropriation of these resources is more reminiscent of an instrumentalism than a "faith."
41. Recall that ideology refers to the logical relationship between mental and material practices/productions.
42. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 51.
43. Chopp, "Practical Theology and Liberation," in *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).
44. Moltmann, 10.
45. *Ibid.*, 10.
46. For a summary statement of the meaning of perichoresis and a historical overview of the term, cf., L. Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), especially 134-154.
47. For an alternative sociological approach, cf. the "naturalistic" or engaged methodologies of social research championed by Y. S. Lincoln and E. G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*

(Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985). Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan discovered that the objectivistic inquiry of "normal" psychological interviews alienates the "subjects" and distorts the data. Cf., *Meeting At The Crossroads: Women's Psychology And Girls' Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). M. F. Belenky and her colleagues argue for a new paradigm for education: an intersubjectively constructed knowledge in which teacher and learner, male and female, are joined in the knowing process in a mutually constructed conversation, in *Women's Ways of Knowing* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

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