

Theological Education

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ISSUE FOCUS

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in Theological Education*

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OPEN FORUM

**Cultivating A Culture of the Call:
A Model for Lay Theological Education**
Susan Willhauck



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Continuing the Conversation

Theological Education invites responses, of up to 1500 words, to articles published in the journal in order to foster conversation among its readers. Reader responses may be e-mailed to the Managing Editor at <merrill@ats.edu>. Responses are published at the discretion of the editors and may be edited for length.

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Editor's Introduction

Jeremiah J. McCarthy

This volume of *Theological Education* provides an important “snapshot” of several efforts under way in the ATS community of schools to embrace and enhance the Association’s commitment to the value of diversity. Our contributors to this issue of the journal bring a wealth of thoughtful reflection on this important Association commitment.

The promise and challenge of diversity confront ATS schools in every aspect of their mission and daily life. Whether a school is seeking to recruit a more diverse faculty, or whether it is seeking to ensure that its curriculum and scholarly activities (teaching, learning, and research) genuinely reflect the global face of theological education and are sensitive to the requirements of the church and student community it serves, or whether its governance structures truly embrace diversity, every school must attend to the promise and challenge of diversity.

Daniel Aleshire, ATS executive director, and Marsha Foster Boyd, director, accreditation and leadership education, in their introduction to this volume, frame the issue of diversity in light of the dramatic demographic shifts in ATS schools and assess the implications of these shifts for the task of theological education.

Michael Gilligan of The Henry Luce Foundation, and former member of the ATS staff, provides a careful and thoughtful overview of the history of the value of diversity in the ATS Standards of Accreditation, especially through the process that led to the adoption of redeveloped standards by the Association in 1996.

The current “work plan” for the Association calls for a sustained and committed effort to achieve greater diversity. Charles R. Foster, professor emeritus at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, reflects on his long experience in the classroom and the importance of embracing difference as central to a “re-visioning” of the practice of theological education, not only in the classroom, but as part of the overall “ecology” of the school’s mission and purpose.

This issue of the journal also contains insightful reflections from a director of student services (Ruth Vuong, Fuller Theological Seminary), the experience of an ethnic faculty member (Barbara Leung Lai, Tyndale Seminary), and an analysis of diversity in ATS schools, based on the ATS institutional database, by ATS staff member, Francis Lonsway.

Marsha Foster Boyd provides a most helpful context for understanding perspectives that emerged from the first *ATS Workshop on Diversity* held in March 2002 by the ATS Committee on Race and Ethnicity. Julia Speller (Chicago Theological Seminary) and Jack Seymour (Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary) were participants and observers at the workshop and offer both practical and theological perspectives on the work of ATS schools in not only working

toward, but fully embracing, the value of racial/ethnic diversity in theological teaching, learning, and research.

The essay of Edwin I. Hernandez, Kenneth G. Davis, and Catherine Wilson, addressing “The Theological Education of U.S. Hispanics,” provides an analysis of the multifaceted approaches taken by various ecclesial and seminary institutions to enhance graduate theological education for the rapidly increasing Hispanic community in the U.S. The authors suggest strategies whereby seminaries can engage in partnerships with Latino/a professional and educational organizations to further these outreach efforts.

Anthony Pinn (Macalester College) and Benjamin Valentin (Andover Newton Theological School) were invited to attend and offer their observations at the *Black and Hispanic Dialogue* seminar, convened by ATS in October 2002. Editors of *The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theologies in Dialogue*, Pinn and Valentin contributed a three-part article to this issue, based on the model of their book, in which each writer presents an essay, followed by a written dialogue between the two writers.

Susan Willhauck, assistant professor of christian formation and director of lay education at Wesley Theological Seminary, reflects on the intentional efforts at Wesley to “cultivate a culture of the call” as a model for lay theological education. Her essay in our “Open Forum” section invites reflection on the expanding pool of laity seeking theological education to enhance their contributions to church and society. Equipping this dynamic constituency for ministry calls for innovative approaches and creative delivery formats. These new voices of the laity present another aspect of the diversity facing us today.

In closing, Marsha Foster Boyd reminds all of us of the importance of “bringing the reality of diversity into the center of theological education.” It is my hope that this issue will provide readers with a rich harvest of reflection and will be a spur for ongoing conversation and action.

Diversity and Accreditation: A Measure of Quality

Michael Gilligan
The Henry Luce Foundation

ABSTRACT: In this essay, former ATS staff member, Michael Gilligan presents an historical overview of the Association's response to the challenge of diversity in theological education. He reviews the pre-1996 experience of the Association, the process of the "Quality and Accreditation" project that resulted in the redeveloped standards now in place, with reflections drawn from the "Pilot Schools Project" reporting the experience of member schools with the issue of diversity. He concludes the essay with thoughtful observations about how the planning and purpose emphasis in the standards creates opportunities for member schools to engage in ongoing assessment of their practices in achieving the value of increased diversity in all aspects of the institution's life and mission.

Institutional integrity is demonstrated by the consistency of a theological school's actions with commitments it has expressed. . . . Integrity in theological education includes institutional and educational practices that promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America. (from ATS Standard 2, Institutional Integrity)

When the representatives of member schools "present and voting" approved redeveloped accrediting standards at the ATS Biennial Meeting in 1996, the Association concluded an extraordinary four-year process of consultation and began a new chapter in its work of accrediting and fostering improvement in theological schools. From the outset of the redevelopment project, called Quality and Accreditation (Q and A), a product had been promised that would be essentially zero-based, examining every assumption that had been embedded in previous iterations of the standards, and defining both the minimum standards that every accredited institution must meet and goals of excellence to which every theological school should aspire. Highly visible in the redeveloped standards is an issue with which the Association has grappled for three decades: the ways that a very diverse community of schools should promote the greater participation of women and people of color in theological education, and the extent to which the schools should hold one another accountable for the achievement of those goals.

The redeveloped document, approved in 1996, looks different from earlier editions because, in many respects, the standards are different: more integrative, more interested in results than in resources, more inclusive of the expanding

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membership of the ATS, more responsive to contemporary concerns about assessment in higher education. The redeveloped standards also uphold values that have emerged over the Association's history and that are woven through the new text like threads. The 1996 standards are intended to represent the fabric of good theological education, and thus to be seen as a whole, but by examining the repeated appearances of these threads throughout the text, one can discern six core values that the Q and A process reasserted as constitutive of the Association's identity. (1) The primary focus of accreditation is on mission, but ATS recognizes that institutional missions and contexts are diverse. (2) Theological schools are defined as "communities of faith and learning," even in an age when experiences of community, encounters with faith, and environments for learning are all shifting. (3) Member schools agree to evaluate, and submit for peer review, all areas of their life and work. (4) The Association respects schools' confessional commitments, requires that they be formally articulated, and simultaneously holds freedom of inquiry as necessary in all scholarly settings. (5) Effective theological schools collaborate with and serve the ecclesial and academic communities, both local and global, in which they are situated. And (6) schools of this Association seek to include women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups who have historically been underrepresented in theological education.

With issues of diversity still churning in higher education, ecclesial communities, and the market place—and practices of achieving diversity in enrollment and faculty composition being challenged in the courts—it is timely to re-examine the last of those "value-threads" in the redeveloped standards, the commitment to diversity of race and gender in theological schools. When did "diversity"—or attention to the concerns of racial/ethnic minority persons and women—surface as an issue in the ATS standards? How did the previous standards articulate these concerns, and how did member schools observe them? How and how forcefully do the redeveloped standards address the same themes? In what ways did the Quality and Accreditation project advance the Association's work in this respect—and what fault lines appeared as the four years of consultation unfolded? In the five years since their approval, have the redeveloped standards given sufficient guidance to schools in self-study, committees conducting accreditation visits, the Commission on Accrediting, all those interested in both institutional improvement and social justice?

This essay considers those questions in chronological order. The treatment of diversity in the ATS standards may serve as a case study, not only about a particular set of issues in theological education, but also about how a large, voluntary community of schools has chosen to do its work.

Looking (way) back: the pre-1996 standards

For the first thirty-four years of the ATS history, the accrediting standards were silent regarding matters of gender, race, and ethnicity, but in 1972, at the height of the civil rights and women's movements, the Association voted to address issues of discrimination formally. The existing standard on student admission was amended to begin, "Admission to theological study shall be without regard to race, ethnic origin, or sex"; and the standard on faculty introduced similar language of nondiscrimination. Led by Executive Director Jesse H. Ziegler, committees and staff members worked to elaborate the Association's values, and two documents, separate from the standards, were adopted in 1976: "Ethical Guidelines for Seminaries and Seminary Clusters," and "Goals and Guidelines for Women in Theological Schools." From 1972 to 1978, the accrediting standards were further amended to extend the concern about nondiscrimination, first applied only to students and faculty appointments, to governing boards, administration, library staffing, and placement of graduates.

Throughout the 1970s, the number of Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant seminaries on the roster of accredited institutions grew, and ATS found that the increasing diversity of its membership might require some restatement of its commitment to inclusiveness. The Preamble to the standards adopted at the 1978 Biennial Meeting reveals in its careful nuances this tension for the Association:

These standards are written in a time of great uncertainty and change, with new modes of thought and acting surfacing each day. They do not purport to have final solutions, or even contain the best route to solving many of our problems. Diverse groups need to be included and consequently a whole spectrum of thought and intent must be embraced. At the same time it is important to open new horizons into the future while preserving the best from the past. The standards are not meant to dictate, rather to challenge; not to close doors, rather to open them.

From our perspective more than twenty years later, the 1978 standards seem emblematic of the challenges that thoughtful, progressive educators in various sectors experienced as they framed their first policies of affirmative action. The standard on admission, for example, noted three concerns and attempted to hold them in tension: the requirement of nondiscrimination ("without regard to race, ethnic origin, or sex"), the continuing commitment to "operate at a predominantly postgraduate [*i.e.*, post-baccalaureate] level," and a desire to increase access for persons or groups previously excluded. To accomplish the latter goal, the standard exhorted the schools: "When persons

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applying for admission have been deprived—as a result of racial or ethnic discrimination—of the educational achievement assumed by the standards, schools are urged to develop compensatory admissions policies.” That sentence, along with guidance on the training of “persons of mature years and experience” that permitted schools to “follow admissions policies which significantly deviate from the standards,” ushered in an interpretive tug of war between some institutions and the Commission on Accrediting. Schools in self-study and visiting committees asked which value was to take precedence—increasing access or preserving graduate school admissions standards—and, as in other settings, educational quality and the achievement of diversity were sometimes falsely dichotomized.

The 1978 document notably raised the bar with its introduction of a distinct standard on underrepresented constituents in theological education, titled “Responsiveness to Minority and Women’s Concerns.” This new standard began by referring to the two guideline documents that the Association had adopted, thus importing their general values but not making their full texts normative. In its tone, the new standard was more hortatory than prescriptive: “It is expected that each institution seeking accreditation or its reaffirmation should give evidence of appropriate sensitivity to issues identified in these statements. Self-studies should contain such data, and accrediting teams and the Commission on Accrediting will normally consider them in the exercise of their responsibilities.” The boldness of a new standard on inclusiveness was clearly offset by its use of the passive voice, the permissive *should*, and the qualifier *normally*, all of which seemed to institutionalize wriggle room in the relationships of individual schools to their peer community.

While some members celebrated the “Responsiveness” standard as a victory for the values of equal opportunity, others complained from the outset that it demanded too little of schools—simply “giving evidence of sensitivity to issues”—and offered too little guidance. A subsequent revision of the standard in 1984 sought to address those criticisms in several ways. The evasive construction, “It is expected that. . .,” was deleted; *shall* replaced *should* to underscore a school’s obligation to give evidence of its sensitivity; and the standard identified one specific means to “demonstrate” these commitments, “including efforts at attaining an adequate presence of such persons, within the definitions established in the statement of institutional mission.” Perhaps most interesting of the changes was an added sentence, obviously meant to reinforce the significance and to catch the attention of schools, visiting committees, and the Commission: “The importance of these issues is also demonstrated by their frequent appearance within these standards.”

Unfortunately, that sentence signaled its opposite. Despite the requirement implied by the new standard, some schools’ commitment to a more diverse community remained shallow, and they argued that the inclusion of women in some courses or degree programs was especially problematic. In their

self-study reports, a few tested the limits: would it be adequate to report enrollment statistics, allude to confessional restrictions, and make claims about future plans—or did the standards demand a higher level of compliance? In other institutions, the intention to comply seemed more earnest, but the means of achievement unclear in light of the demographics of their denominations, the make-up of their neighborhoods, the supply of qualified candidates for available positions, and the financial constraints of their setting. From the early 1970s through the mid 1990s, the Association faced two dilemmas: could it enforce these standards with rigor and fairness? And in addressing issues that extended beyond the schools to larger church and social systems, could ATS offer the schools the assistance they needed to achieve these worthy goals?

As the Commission on Accrediting and other ATS committees struggled with these questions, it became clear that solutions would be found neither in further tinkering with the existing standards, nor in assigning notations to the schools that ignored them. During these years, the Association's schools were facing additional issues and attempting to reflect them in the standards as well: the globalization of theological education and of all higher education; the implications for teaching and learning of an older, more experienced student population; the impacts of technology, particularly for off-campus delivery; the changing patterns of church life and the declining financial support from denominations; growing numbers of Hispanics, Asians, and other racial/ethnic groups in the communities that ATS graduates would serve; and the increased demand for accountability at all levels of education. In response to these pressures, ATS adopted several more standards parallel to the "Responsiveness" standard of 1978, but each of these patches that announced new values and emphases seemed to tear at the old cloth to which it was attached. To continue its practices of "righteous accrediting," the Association recognized that it needed to set aside some cherished clothes and vest itself in new forms.

Looking (not so far) back: Quality and Accreditation

With a work plan for four years, the ATS began in 1992 to redevelop the standards comprehensively. Guided by a diversely constituted steering committee and assisted by a series of task forces, the project set out to "identify shared perceptions about good theological education" and to "make explicit in the redeveloped standards the underlying assumptions and values of good theological education" ("The Quality and Accreditation Project," *Theological Education*, spring 1996). The Association also sought to ensure the fullest participation of the member schools in this process, and the standards' compatibility with the demands of external regulatory or sponsoring agencies.

As the character and practices of "good theological education" were debated, the participants weighed the Association's previous efforts to enhance the presence of racial/ethnic minorities and women. The steering committee and

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task forces also considered research and testimony about the contributions of diverse enrollments and diverse teaching staffs to strong educational environments. Among the frequently cited benefits was that students who experience diversity on campus are most likely to seek it later on. In evaluating the Q and A project after its conclusion, Jack Schuster compared its deliberations to those of the 1970s. The ATS's earlier efforts, he believed, were primarily morally grounded—to redress the evils of discrimination and to welcome the underrepresented and excluded—but the concerns of the 1990s were more pragmatic. In giving attention and assigning resources to gender and racial diversity, schools of all kinds in the 1990s sought simply to reflect the composition of the general population. And for theological schools, this meant intentional efforts to create communities resembling the churches in which their graduates would minister. In 1993, at the first large consultation in Chicago, Fumitaka Matsuoka cited an Asian proverb to remind participants of the risks at hand: when you pull a tail from the bush, you don't know what kind of tiger will emerge! The Q and A project allowed multiple opportunities for tigers to appear, as background papers were presented and successive drafts of possible standards were circulated for response. In three Biennial Meetings, three special issues of *Theological Education*, faculty discussions about the film *Earthen Vessels* in dozens of schools, and eight regional hearings, the Association invited all its members to claim their values, frame the issues, and forge consensus about the standards by which they would be accredited.

On issues of racial and ethnic diversity, the Association's consensus of previous decades met few challenges in the Q and A process, but the earlier articulation was tested and gradually refined. Some participants repeatedly cautioned ATS to "do no harm," and thus not to mandate quotas or specified levels of diversity that smaller, less well-resourced schools could not attain in the competitive environment of recruiting students, staff, and faculty. Others pointed out differences between Canada and the United States in history, legal precedent, and demographics, making the drafting committees more sensitive to the needs of native communities and linguistic minorities. Representatives from historically Black and newer Asian schools reminded the steering committee that the earlier goals of racial/ethnic diversity had been based on Caucasian-majority institutions, and they asked whether their schools needed special consideration. Finally, terms like *underrepresented constituents* were challenged as dated, as were categories like *Hispanic* or *Asian American* that failed to convey the important diversity within racial or ethnic groups.

Although concerns for women and racial/ethnic minorities had been linked in the accrediting standards since the 1970s, the Q and A project found so much more difficulty in framing its recommendations about the participation of women in theological education that eventually the two issues had to be treated separately. By the mid-1990s, women constituted more than one-third of the enrollment across ATS master's programs and were a majority in some

schools. The percentages of women faculty, though not as high, had also increased since the 1970s. These average numbers, widely cited as signs of progress in the ATS, still masked significant differences from school to school, both in statistics and in values.

At every stage of Q and A, these differences became more apparent, leading to the most heated exchanges of the regional hearings and the most insistent responses to various drafts. Several respondents warned about the dangers of “enforced political correctness” and “lockstep conformity to secular values.” Others feared that linking accrediting standards about diversity to governmental regulations might undermine the autonomy of religious institutions and some day require that they admit or hire persons deemed unacceptable. This issue, raised in reference to gender inclusiveness, was occasionally invoked also about homosexuals and persons of other faiths.

One group of schools—most often identified with “strict interpretation of Scripture” or related to traditions in which women are not ordained or permitted to preach—insisted that every statement about women’s participation be qualified with “unless institutional mission precludes,” “insofar as confessional commitments permit,” or “according to stated purposes.” Representatives from other institutions found these constructions—and particularly their repetition at multiple points in the redeveloped standards—offensive, complaining that ATS was protecting unjust and discriminatory practices. They argued for a single standard for all schools, providing for the complete inclusion of women regardless of “confessional constraints.” The question of “inclusive language” received similar debate, but an acceptable compromise was more easily identified. As approved in 1996, the standards address only schools’ published documents and are limited to “gender inclusive language with reference to persons,” thus not addressing the language of worship or names of God.

In the end, the Association chose to respect most highly the diversity of its member institutions. Each school is required to articulate the confessional commitments that are central to its identity and values in its statement of purpose, and its practices are then judged by their consistency with that articulation. Reviewing the Q and A project’s approach to this highly politicized arena, Minna Weinstein wrote, “The redeveloped standards manage to affirm the long-standing dedication [of ATS] to diversity and access without appearing to challenge the diverse traditions of its membership.” Another evaluator, Jack Schuster, commended the Association’s handling of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, but noted also the conspicuous absence of reference to sexual orientation and physical disabilities, two concerns that have received much attention elsewhere in higher education in this period. In the former instance, the diverse member institutions could not likely find consensus, and in the latter the recognition of financial constraints of many schools led the steering committee not to mandate costly adaptation of physical facilities.

Looking at the text for today: diversity in the 1996 standards

The organizational plan of the 1996 standards reflects both dimensions of the redevelopment project's goals: to reconsider and renew the Association's values about good theological education and to produce a document that would be coherent, integrated, and serviceable for member schools and the processes of accreditation to which they voluntarily submit. The first four standards read almost as a unit, describing the identity and work of theological schools, and they are followed by five standards applying these principles to the settings, persons, and necessary resources; the tenth standard recapitulates all of these in regard to distance education. Like their most recent antecedents, the standards begin with the mission of the theological school, but then break new ground by immediately linking purpose to processes of planning and evaluation, the practices of institutional integrity, and the constitutive tasks of teaching, learning, and research.

Although the 1996 document contains no heading parallel to the "Responsiveness" in previous iterations, the ATS commitment to racial/ethnic and gender diversity is introduced in the first four standards, as are the five other "value threads" named above. The first standard requires schools to articulate confessional commitments in their purpose statements, and thus to declare any limits to enrollment or hiring as part of their published identity. With this context established, the theme of diversity is developed in the second standard, Institutional Integrity, and particularly in its section 2.5. Defined as "the consistency of a theological school's actions with commitments it has expressed in its formally adopted statements of purpose . . . and with ethical guidelines for dealing with students, employees, and constituencies," the rubric of institutional integrity underscores the distinctive nature of the policies and practices of theological schools for both their internal and external publics.

The standard makes clear the range of commitments regarding diversity, and stresses the dimensions in which compliance is necessary. The first sentence of statement 2.5 defines the universe: "Integrity in theological education includes institutional and educational practices that promote awareness of diversity. . . ." The second mandates efforts toward racial/ethnic diversity: "Schools shall seek to enhance participation of persons of racial/ethnic minorities in institutional life." As noted above, the standard treats the inclusion of women and racial/ethnic minorities separately and, as was agreed, introduces a qualifier in the next sentence: "According to its stated purpose, the school shall seek to address the concerns of women and to increase their participation in theological education." The final sentence, however, stresses that the Association's general commitment to diversity in preparing students for ministry applies to all schools: "In all cases, schools shall seek to assist students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live

and practice ministry effectively in changing cultural and racially diverse settings.”

This paragraph (2.5) was among the most delicately crafted in the 1996 standards and was tested in successive drafts; the second and third sentences were originally a single unit, and the final form was suggested from the floor at the Biennial Meeting when the standards were adopted. Although an earlier paragraph of Institutional Integrity recognizes that “nondiscriminatory practices in employment” cannot “conflict with doctrine or ecclesiastical policy” (2.4), the three repetitions of *shall* indicate that no portion of the standard is optional. While the pre-1996 standards required “responsiveness,” the redeveloped document imposes a higher level of minimally acceptable performance: a school’s integrity demands practices that promote awareness, enhance participation, and foster a capacity for life and ministry in a diverse world.

The redeveloped standards also raise the bar by emphasizing, throughout the text, that attention to diversity is not simply a matter of inviting participation, but a lens in the theological school’s essential tasks of learning, teaching, research, and formation. First introduced in the third standard (“instructional methods should use the diversity of life experiences represented by the students, by faith communities, and by the larger cultural context” 3.1.2.2), this thread reappears in regard to uses of technology, courses and programs of study (3.1.2.3), engagement with diverse publics (3.2.1.3 and 3.2.3.1), and the composition of communities of learning (3.2.1.3). All of these practices are reflected in a theological school’s “over-arching goal”: “the development of theological understanding, that is, aptitude for theological reflection and wisdom pertaining to responsible life in faith” (4.1.1). Because “the entire curriculum should be seen as a set of practices with a formative aim,” the standards require careful attention to “the coherence and mutual enhancement” of all of its intellectual, spiritual, and vocational components (4.1.2), including its commitments to diversity.

While the redeveloped standards give new guidance and establish new minimum expectations regarding the theological school’s work, they neither neglect nor diminish earlier editions’ norms regarding the school’s *participants*. With the theme sounded in the first four standards as a constitutive element of a school’s integrity, the norms regarding diversity and inclusiveness are extended in subsequent standards to the library’s collection (5.1.2) and staff (5.5.2); the appointment of the faculty (6.1.3); the recruitment (7.1), admission (7.2.4), and placement (7.4.3) of students; and the composition of governing boards (8.3.1.3), administrative leaders and their staffs (8.3.2.3). Respecting the confessional commitments of schools and the realities of their ecclesial settings, the applications of the diversity theme still repeatedly invoke the auxiliary verb *shall* to signify the requirement of schools’ compliance “insofar as possible.” Nor do these standards diminish the pre-1996 focus on advocacy for the previ-

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ously excluded. The last paragraph on placement, for example, moves a theological school beyond minimal compliance to higher goals: “the institution should . . . act as an advocate for students who are members of groups that have been disadvantaged in employment because of their race, ethnicity, and/or gender” (7.4.3).

Introduced as an element of institutional integrity, the Association’s concern for diversity is summed up in Standard 9, Institutional Resources, under the heading “Human Resources”:

The theological school should value and seek to enhance the quality of the human lives it touches. The human fabric of the institution is enriched by including a wide range of persons. The institution should devote adequate time and energy to the processes by which persons are recruited, enabled to participate in the institution, nurtured in their development, and prepared for their various tasks within the institution. (9.1.1)

In a section devoted to financial and physical resources, these gentle reminders of the character and defining practices of theological education are disarmingly pastoral. A school’s attention to diversity and inclusiveness is not motivated by compliance with governmental regulations, nor by political correctness, nor even by the moral imperative to attack age-old injustices. Rather, the “good theological school” humbly acknowledges its limited role in the economy of salvation, and demonstrates through practices consistent with its mission that it gratefully celebrates the gifts of persons entrusted to its care. This standard is not limited to those who are paid or who are paying to participate in a school’s life, but extends to “students, faculty, administrators, support personnel, trustees, friends, church and public constituencies, volunteers, and external support and consultants appropriate to the mission of the school” (9.1.1). In that roster, the Association’s commitment to inclusiveness seems to reach out to all corners of the reign of God.

Looking ahead

So what have these standards come to mean for accreditation and for the improvement of theological schools that ATS hopes to foster? In 2001, the redeveloped standards are no longer a new text, and nearly half of the member institutions have already used them in their processes of self-study as they prepare for initial accreditation or reaffirmation. Does their experience offer any insight into the standards’ reliability and validity, particularly their usefulness in assessing the quality and outcome of schools’ efforts to achieve greater diversity?

In the first two years of implementing the redeveloped standards, eight ATS member institutions participated in what was called the Pilot School Project,

designed to test models of assessing institutional and educational effectiveness (cf. *Theological Education*, Volume 35, Number 1, Autumn 1998, to which the page numbers in this and the next paragraph refer). With the assistance of several consultants, these eight schools, different in type and location, essentially took the new standards for a “test drive.” Along the way, they discovered in common that the standards’ emphasis on planning and evaluation, related to institutional purpose, called them to greater clarity about their goals and greater discipline in measuring their attainment. Reporting the experience at St. John’s University School of Theology in Collegeville, Dale Launderville wrote: “The realization to which the new standards awakened me was the need to be goal-directed in every area and program within the school. It is not sufficient that the administrator of a program has individual performance appraisal goals; the program itself should have goals” (p. 72).

In the self-study process at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary during the Pilot School Project, faculty and administrators developed a set of guiding questions as they sought to demonstrate the school’s implementation of the redeveloped standards. Beginning with “What is the nature of this teaching/learning community?” they asked what distinguished their community relative to its mission, for what profile of student the school was and might be structured, and to whom the school wanted to make itself accessible (p. 32). Similarly, the new standards pushed Memphis Theological Seminary to state more concretely its educational goals. Organized under headings of Scholarship, Piety, and Justice, the goals included “[supporting] the ministries of all genders, races, and cultures” (p. 52)—and thus intentionally invited the attention of external evaluators to the ways that the school was attempting to meet this concern of the standards. In examining its mission statement, the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio also asserted its explicit commitments to inclusiveness: “The pastoral orientation of the School requires practical and reflective engagement with the multicultural, global reality of church and society. Drawing upon [its] location and historical dedication to the Mexican-American presence in the Southwest, the learning, teaching, and research of the School pay particular attention to the diverse and rich Hispanic reality of the Americas” (p. 59). In assessing their diversity, all of the Pilot Schools seemed to find themselves in dialogue with the standards, identifying where the peer communities’ goals were aligned with their own, and then gathering and interpreting data about their practices to determine what changes might enhance the theological education they offer.

Schools in self-study, their visiting committees, and the Commission on Accrediting have learned in the years of implementation that, although the redeveloped standards contain dozens of *shall* statements, they are not intended to be used as a check-list in a compliance audit. Nor can the many *should* statements be ignored as desiderata beyond the scope of accountability. Just as the Quality and Accreditation project yielded new organizational patterns, the

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redeveloped standards invite schools to design processes of planning and assessment, as well as structures of reporting, that reflect their distinctive identities and that yield information to guide the next stages of their work. A school is not required to follow the order and pattern of the ten “General Institutional Standards” in reporting its self-study, but to account in some comprehensive way for how its institutional and educational practices correspond to the standards’ demands and challenges. In assessing its diversity, then, a school should begin with its statement of purpose, examine the thematic thread that runs through the standards, and then analyze under one or more of its own headings the progress that it is achieving relative to its own trajectory and the Association’s.

Looking back on earlier versions of the accrediting standards, some have recently expressed concern that the commitment to women and minorities expressed in the “Responsiveness” standard has diminished or been lost. Reports of the past five years’ experience, however, suggest the opposite. The redeveloped standards have clearly introduced a more demanding task of self-study, both because of their rigor and because of the new model of planning and evaluation that they entail. Members of the ATS have agreed to hold one another accountable for both “the floor and the ceiling,” that is, minimum levels of acceptable performance and concrete efforts toward higher achievement. The much-debated qualifying statements in the standards about diversity demonstrate this tension. The qualifier “insofar as possible” in a standard on inclusiveness may seem at first glance to limit a school’s obligations, but each school is required to identify its purpose, context, and goals, and then explain how it strives to meet those goals—to reach what is possible. Honest, disciplined efforts of self-assessment and increased seriousness in mutual accountability should only make theological schools more diverse, more welcoming, and more consonant with the communities they are called to serve.

Conclusion

Just as each school needs to establish goals and learn from its efforts to achieve them, so does The Association of Theological Schools as a whole. The Quality and Accreditation project launched a bold venture, but also an incremental one—in the end affecting one school, often one course at a time, but cumulatively influencing the leadership of more than 300,000 congregations in North America. Although accreditation always has a conservative cast, reflecting on demonstrated best practices, the Association has chosen to orient its work toward the future, open to contexts that are changing and to the challenges they entail.

Should accrediting standards—this Association’s most powerful tool—genuinely take on the transformation of individuals, our churches, and our society? Or must standards settle for reflecting only the minimally acceptable

levels of attaining the agreed-upon good? Reviewing the Q and A project, Elizabeth Lynn wrote that the ATS has taken the higher road in the redeveloped standards, introducing a “culture of aspiration.” The test of the project’s success, she added, would be the schools’ ongoing willingness to measure themselves against their ideals and to sustain an environment of mutual challenge.

In his address to the 2000 Biennial Meeting in Toronto, ATS Executive Director Daniel Aleshire underlined these values: “We are educating religious leaders whose careers will witness the cultural transition from a predominantly white North America to one in which white will virtually cease to be the racial majority in the United States and will be notably lessened as the racial majority in Canada. . . . If we fail to create the institutional hospitality and educational capacity that racial/ethnic constituents both deserve and need, we will cease to serve the church—or at least the church that a multiracial culture should have.” Success will be measured, just as Elizabeth Lynn has suggested, by ATS’s ability to challenge its members through its accrediting standards and to keep before them the ideals to which the Association has been committed.

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Diversity in Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: Diversity—gender, class, racial, ethnic, theological, sexual orientation as well as personality, learning style, ability, and experience—exists as threat and promise, problem and possibility in theological education. The negotiations of administrators, faculty, students, and school constituencies that make up the dynamics of difference in theological education are particularly intense, and occasionally volatile, in decisions about who should teach, what should be taught, and how we should teach. Reflecting on my conscientization to these dynamics during my own career as theological educator and administrator, I argue that the interdependence of theological school pedagogies of formation and empowerment for ministry must be re-visioned. This means, at least, expanding our assumptions about education and teaching by exploring pedagogical possibilities emerging from the embrace of differences among us and by viewing the community of teaching and learning as an ecology of language processes, cultural patterns, and world views. The essay concludes with three suggestions for altering pedagogical practices in the diverse theological education setting: the diversification of assessment patterns; the clear and expansive articulation of guidelines, criteria, and standards for learning; and the establishment of rules of discourse to ensure the participation of all.

Introduction

I had almost completed the task of writing this paper when the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon shattered our collective illusions about the invulnerability of the nation. In the wake of that incomprehensible event with its origins in the gap between Muslim and Christian, Middle Eastern and Western, pre-modern and post-modern values and sensibilities, I blocked. What could I say about diversity in theological education in the face of a crisis that had everything to do with the encounter of radical and incommensurable differences? What I had completed seemed irrelevant. I could not get started on the concluding and supposedly constructive section. For the next two months in very disciplined fashion I rewrote, edited, and revised what I had written time and again. Finally I set it aside to begin again.

The result is an essay that draws on my own conscientization to the dynamics of difference in the politics of teacher and student negotiations in theological education. In this process I have become increasingly convinced of one thing. The negotiations of administrators, faculty, and students in theo-

logical schools over the influence of the differences that exist among us are most intensely engaged in two places—in our deliberations about who should teach, what should be taught and how we should teach, and in the decisions about how the community shall worship together. Given the complexity of the issues involved, I will limit my attention in this essay to an exploration of the dynamics of difference in the politics of our pedagogies and bracket for the time being, a discussion of diversity and worship in theological education.

The interpretive framework through which I will be exploring the dynamics of difference in theological education is drawn from a common theme in the mission statements many seminaries have posted on their web sites. These schools describe their educational mission in terms of personal, spiritual, academic, and professional (i.e., pastoral or priestly) formation and empowerment for ministry. Practices of teaching and learning integral to these educational goals, however, vary from school to school. For some their interactivity becomes evident in the movement from pedagogies of formation to pedagogies of empowerment. In this movement students typically move *from* practices of knowing that embed them in traditions of ecclesial knowledge and faith *to* practices of doing that embody the character, habits, and competencies required to extend and renew those traditions. Others identify pedagogies of formation with pedagogies of empowerment. In something of a spiral movement students are led to discoveries that engage them in the quest for knowledge and faith while practicing the arts of ministry. Still others highlight the synchronicity of formation and empowerment in practices of teaching and learning that invite students into the dialectic of theory and practice, knowing why and knowing how, becoming and being. In whatever form they take, the pedagogies of formation and empowerment that inform curricular decisions and teaching practice reflect a common concern among theological faculties for deepening and strengthening in students their identification with the Christian story, their knowledge of Christian tradition and belief, their embodiment of Christian character, and their effectiveness as agents of Christian ministry practice. The pedagogical challenge emerges, however, when a faculty developing a curriculum or an individual instructor preparing to teach a class begins to make decisions about which perspectives on the Christian story, what views of Christian character, and what ecclesial expectations for Christian ministry will be emphasized. That challenge will focus our attention in the pages that follow.

I will begin this discussion by describing three incidents that have functioned paradigmatically in my own conscientization to the dynamics of difference in contemporary theological education. This will lead to an examination of how diversity challenges common assumptions we bring to our understanding of education. I will conclude the essay with a brief exploration of insights for theological education from pedagogical practice attentive to the presence of diversity.

Conscientization to the Dynamics of Difference

I approach this discussion of diversity in theological education from a particular vantage point. I am White Anglo-Saxon Protestant and male. I have spent the past forty years in theological education, first as student and then as teacher and academic administrator. Through those years I have discovered existentially that consciousness of variety in the human experience functions differently for those of us who have enjoyed traditions of privilege associated with race, culture, class, religious affiliation and gender—even for those of us who have had painful experiences of marginalization in some settings due to particular faith commitments, theological perspectives, professional choices, abilities, or learning styles. These experiences fade into obscurity in the social, institutional, and pedagogical power dynamics having to do with race, culture, class, belief systems, and gender. This essay, consequently, grows out of challenges to that perspective of privilege in my role as a theological educator and in my subsequent quest for theological perspectives and educational practices that view difference not so much as threat but as gift to the well-being of human communities in general and to the enterprise of theological teaching and learning in particular.¹

My conscientization to the dynamics of difference has occurred primarily in the context of my teaching. Through the years, students and colleagues have confronted me with ways my assumptions inhibited or diminished their learning. Several of these incidents have functioned paradigmatically for me. I return to them over and over again for new insight into the meaning of my teaching experience. Three of these incidents provide the catalyst to our discussion. The first occurred relatively early in my teaching career in a class with almost equal numbers of African American and European American students. It was an exciting semester pedagogically. Most students in the class carefully read the assigned texts. Several students—both Black and white—energized class discussions. A young African American consistently pushed us to probe the depth and complexity of meanings in the texts. Yet when I read the first set of assigned papers, the paper from this student was among the weakest. A series of undeveloped topical sentences indicated the possibilities of a lively imagination but not much more. In a discussion about the paper, the student passed off the problem as due to a lack of time.

The semester continued as it had begun. This student continued to demonstrate both the ability to read texts closely and the capacity to enliven and deepen our collective conversations on our readings. A second paper was no stronger than the first. About the same time I happened to read an essay describing the differences between what the author called the “ocular” learning style characteristic of many Africans and the “auditory” learning style more typical of Europeans.² I was shocked into awareness that my assessment procedures supported some personal and cultural learning styles more than others. Through my teaching I had created the conditions for students from a

variety of racial and cultural backgrounds to learn in the classroom, but I had not created correspondingly hospitable conditions for *all* students to demonstrate what they had learned in graded assignments. Indeed, further reflection led to the insight that my assignments reinforced the academic success of students who most closely shared my own cultural and academic background and diminished the chance for academic success among those students whose background and experience I did not know. The shock was real. In a graduate school seminar, I had “discovered” that all learning theories “worked.” But I had not drawn the obvious implication—different personal and cultural learning styles also “work” if the conditions are conducive to their strengths and/or the guidelines for performance are clear. It was evident in this class. Within the limits of the structures I brought to the task of assessing learning, the intellectual leader in class sessions struggled to maintain a C average. The “problem” in this student’s papers did not originate in a lack of time. I had assumed this student, and all others, knew my version of the academic cultural groundrules for research and writing. In that assumption I perpetuated a classic pattern of academic racism (and later, I would discover, classism and sexism) in the diverse classroom. I had unconsciously, yet clearly, kept hidden from some students methods and resources they needed to perform well while judging their performance against those who had long had access to them.

A second incident reveals another challenge to my understanding of the interplay of teaching and learning in a diverse theological community. In a group meeting with my advisees, one described an incident that had occurred in an exegesis class that morning. During the instructor’s lecture on the historical background of a prophetic text that Christians have traditionally identified with the birth of Christ, one of the members of the group had apparently blurted out, loud enough for many of his peers to hear, that the professor’s interpretation of the historical background for the text “would not preach.” In the past I would probably have dismissed the student’s outburst as a fairly typical example of the tension students experience between academic and popular approaches to sacred texts. As we discussed the incident, however, I realized the issue was much deeper. This third-year student had excelled academically—especially in biblical studies. He had also developed finely honed preaching skills that revealed deep sensitivity to the interplay of biblical scholarship and the cultural traditions of preaching in his denomination. His outburst did not really have to do with the new information he was receiving about this text. It emerged from the painful realization that to preach in congregations of his denomination and racial heritage the hermeneutical task involved more than conveying his academic knowledge through a sermon or leading them through this same exercise of historical criticism in a Bible study class. He was perceptive enough to see that no single sermon or teaching session could first deconstruct, and then reconstruct empowering christological convictions of people who traced their ability to survive racial and economic

oppression, in part, to the interdependence of the prophetic promise in this text and the redeeming activity of Christ.

Questions about theological pedagogy precipitated by this student's outburst have haunted me ever since. How does academic formation in any given theological discipline contribute to the academic, spiritual, and professional formation needed by students for empowered leadership in diverse cultural contexts and ecclesial traditions? Or the reverse. How are academic disciplines influenced by pedagogies of professional formation? Or to the point in this incident. How might academic formation empower students from a diversity of cultural and ecclesial contexts to "preach" (or teach or care) "back home"? The dilemma for contemporary theological faculty is actually more complex. What is required for pedagogies of formation to empower students to preach, teach, or care in congregations or other ministry settings with diverse cultural, racial, class, and gender perspectives and experience? Or to state the issue another way: How will students be prepared to engage in these ministries so that the diversity of the people they serve in ministry might hear the gospel "in their own language"?³ In this situation we are confronted with the possibility that our pedagogies of spiritual, academic, and professional formation are not congruent. Indeed they may be dysfunctional enough to diminish student capacities for empowered religious leadership.

A third incident has led me to ponder the implications in Parker Palmer's description of the quest of teachers and students to be "obedient to truth"⁴ in the diverse theological school setting. In a recent seminary faculty workshop I was reminded that people approach that quest from quite different vantage points. The focus of the workshop was on learning styles. All participants in the workshop shared the goal that their students would learn skills of critical thinking. During a discussion of the findings of a research project on developmental patterns in the ways of knowing among college students, one participant broke into my presentation to say he did not want his students to be "independent" thinkers. In the discussion that followed it became clear that the issue was not actually one of thinking, but of the role of thinking as a way of knowing truth. To be obedient to truth meant for him learning how to separate wheat from chaff, to discern with increasing clarity what his faith tradition had identified as concrete and objective Truth. In the interplay of teaching and learning he assumed the necessary confluence of pedagogies of formation and empowerment. For others in the group critical thinking meant the imaginative capacity to see the limits in human truth claims as resources for the quest toward a notion of truth that existed beyond the capacities of human knowing. Pedagogies of critical thinking from this perspective lead to the "wide-awakeness" as Maxine Greene describes the quest of teachers to demystify taken-for-granted assumptions and perspectives that blind us to the limits of our truth claims. In this quest pedagogies of formation and empowerment function interactively.⁵ For my advisee sitting in an exegesis class, critical

thinking meant, at least in this situation, discerning truth as it has been known to “my people”—in other words, contextually. He sought in other words, a quest for truth large enough to encompass diverse cultural and ecclesial perspectives on Christian tradition. The advocates for each perspective would argue that they were engaged in a teaching and learning effort obedient to truth and critical thinking, but they did not share a common view of truth or how one comes to know it. In how many theological schools do the clash of epistemological perspectives and faith commitments disrupt the interdependence of their pedagogies of formation and empowerment?

I had been pondering insights from these three incidents when the September 11 tragedy immobilized me as I attempted to complete this paper. My consciousness was heightened to the inevitable potential for conflict in the diverse educational setting emerging from the incommensurability of our truth claims and ways of knowing, the range of our expectations for our practices of teaching and learning, and the lack of congruence for many students between our pedagogies of formation and empowerment, and congregational and community expectations for ministry practice. In the traditions of classroom civility these clashes are typically, but not always, ignored, deflected, or suppressed. They exist, however, often beneath the surface of our civility, diminishing both the formative and the constructive potential for our teaching and learning. September 11 chastened my traditional optimism about the positive effects of education by reminding me that the presence of difference in the interplay of teaching and learning always creates the conditions for contesting what we teach and how. The challenge before us, I realized in even more poignant fashion, originates in part, in the assumptions that inform how we think about education in general and how we teach in particular.

Pedagogical Challenges in the Dynamics of Difference

Consciousness of diversity in religious or educational traditions, of course, is not a new phenomenon. The biblical record repeatedly brings to the foreground the deliberations of ancient Hebrews and the early church regarding appropriate responses to neighbors, strangers, and enemies. It has also dominated the attention of theological education in this country for most of its history. In his recent study of university divinity schools, Conrad Cherry identified the unfolding vision of American Protestant leaders in the mid-nineteenth century as being in “the vanguard of a Christian movement destined to shape the culture of the nation.” Although it was not his intent, Cherry’s study could easily be read as a description of the responses of Protestant theological educators to their perceptions of the presence of diversity in the church and nation. Cherry observed that the task of “overcoming” the differences among themselves was in itself a primary challenge to the fulfillment of their vision. They attempted to resolve that dilemma by uniting

themselves in “common causes.” This collaborative strategy—evident in the establishment of such organizations as the American Sunday School Union, the American Tract Society, and the American Missionary Society—emphasized areas of agreement among them that allowed them, at the same time, to ignore the substantive differences distinguishing them from one another.

Cherry notes that one of the causes that caught the attention of these Protestant theological educators was “the Other,” by which they meant people from religious traditions, races, cultures, and nations who did not fit into their collective image of the national identity. The strategic challenge of developing pedagogies of formation that could account for “otherness” proved more complex than they had envisioned. They could not agree on whether their goal was to “understand” or to “convert” the “Other”—to bring them “into the fold,” or to explore their “interconnectedness.” That lack of agreement, and the paternalism characteristic of their efforts, persists into the contemporary discussions about the presence of these differences not only in theological education, but also in most aspects of the life of the nation.⁶

In 1995 Rebecca Chopp, in a landmark essay, observed an emerging strategy for addressing difference that simply sidestepped the quest for strategic consensus around common issues. “One of the most significant changes” in theological education, she wrote, “has been the dramatic rise in the number of women students.” Those numbers provided “the communal support and political leverage” for the emergence of a feminist theological education perspective inside the institutions and structures of theological education that continues to challenge traditional curricular and pedagogical assumptions and practices in our schools.⁷

Similar observations could be made about the influence of Black and Womanist theologies accompanying the significant increase in the presence of Black students in majority white institutions on faculty and student recruitment, curricular decisions, and pedagogical practices. The contribution of theologies rooted in the experience of growing numbers of Asian and Hispanic students and faculty, as well as the quests for a place at the theological table by second- and third-career students, students with “disabilities,” international students, along with students with diverse learning styles and motivations for engaging in theological studies only intensify the challenges to traditional theological education values and practices. In the experience of the schools in which I have taught, we quickly learned that responsiveness to diversity has its limits. Limited resources, time, space, and personnel prevented the addition of enough courses and field education settings to accommodate the preferences of all students. Even as the struggle among faculty, administrators, and students over the distribution of resources continued, however, negotiations over the influence of diversity in theological education increasingly shifted to the classroom.

A recent course I taught illustrates the point. Forty-four students registered for the class. Their presence confronted me with several questions.

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1. What cultural assumptions would inform my pedagogical decisions? One-quarter of the class was African American or Caribbean of African descent. Among the five Korean students, two had grown up and gone to school in Korea, two had been born in Korea but grew up in Canada or the United States, and one was born in this country. Just over one-half of the members of the class enjoyed the cultural privileges of European ancestry.

2. What ecclesial images and theological traditions would influence my expectations for student learning? Members of the group identified with several varieties of Methodist and Baptist, as well as Episcopalian, United Church of Christ, Presbyterian, Catholic, Assembly of God, Church of God in Christ, African Orthodox denominations, and independent new age congregations. Some called themselves liberal; others evangelical. Some had grown up in the church and others were recent converts. Some described themselves as seekers while others had, as Horace Bushnell once advocated, grown up Christian and never assumed themselves to be anything else.

3. How might the course draw on the abilities, interests, and experience of each student for their learning? Some students chose the course to become more proficient in educational ministries. Others chose the course because they were interested in the subject. And others sought to use the course to increase their ability to participate in the struggle against human oppression and domination. All students brought a range of personal experience and abilities to enhance the complexity of my course planning. Perhaps one-third had begun seminary immediately after college. Several had graduated years before and had begun their theological education in the midst of successful professional careers as professors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, officers in the military, and business leaders. Some had been the first members of their families to attend college, while others came from a long line of college graduates. A few had liberal arts degrees; most did not. All socio-economic classes were represented. Some had a clear sense of vocation in and outside the church. Others struggled for a sense of vocation—including some who had already been through two or three prior careers. Some had learning disabilities that required, by law, specific accommodations around course assignments. A variety of class assignments revealed as well a range of learning styles.

Given the range of these differences in belief, heritage, perception, ability, experience, and association, the task of preparing students for religious leadership in congregations or other contexts of ministry with their personal, cultural, and theological expectations seemed forbidding. Unlike our nineteenth-century predecessors, we could not easily rally around a “common cause” to gather our disparate parts into a shared perspective or practice—even when my efforts at professional formation and empowerment focused on the task of nurturing the individual learning goals of students.⁸

These observations bring me to my thesis. In the dynamics of difference in theological education, the interdependence of pedagogies of formation and empowerment cannot be assumed. They must be re-envisioned. This task will

not be easy. Many of the mission statements found on theological school web sites reveal the continuing hold of the assumption that their pedagogies of formation contribute inevitably to the empowered participation of graduates in the leadership of churches and communities. The relationship of formation to empowerment in this view does not necessarily exist in linear or hierarchical fashion. It involves continuity and change, forming and creating, unlearning and re-learning, transformation and liberation—processes that have intensified during the past 200 years and more in technologically sophisticated societies. It does presume, however, that the antecedents of the future of any given community not only are rooted in its past but that the future is a necessary extension of that past. Schools, including theological schools, exist to serve this process of communal continuity and renewal—a process characterized by Edward Eggleston as the transit of cultural controlling traditions.⁹ Controlling traditions may be familial, national, ethnic, or denominational. When congregations expect their pastors to reflect theological commitments and ministry practices consistent with the commitments and practices identified with their particular religious traditions, they expect that their theological education will contribute to their ability to identify with, reinvigorate, and perpetuate those traditions. With the range of diversity that exists in most theological schools, however, this expectation of our educational effort from the diversity of the ecclesial and cultural constituencies of our students is increasingly difficult to meet.

Several years ago in an essay on teaching, I drew on Maxine Greene's philosophical reflections on education to explore something of the social function of teaching in faith communities. Teaching, she observed, involves "purposeful action." This action occurs when people, often, but not necessarily designated by some sponsoring community, assume responsibility to "introduce others...into the community's corporate past, share with them its common vision, and engage them in the interaction of the two in the specific demands of the present moment." From this perspective teachers expect students to "perform in particular ways, to do particular tasks, to impose increasingly complex orders upon their worlds" so that they might participate in and contribute to the well-being of that sponsoring community.¹⁰ The teacher relates to students as the agent of an intellectual tradition, a cultural perspective, a community of knowledge and practice integral to their future. This formative educational process is challenge enough for teachers seeking to account for the range of personal interests, educational experience, learning styles and abilities in this effort. It is an even greater challenge for theological teachers who regularly meet with students who do not share ecclesial or cultural perspectives on the Christian tradition, and yet, expect to be prepared for ministry in their own settings. The ambiguity arising from this lack of shared experience is exacerbated by the range of student cultural learning styles, faith commitments, and gendered, socio-economic, and educational experience, and even more so by the ideological commitments through which

students and faculty understand who they are in relation to the “others” they meet in the academic setting.

Lisa Delpit described this situation for teachers of children in the culturally and racially diverse classroom as teaching “other people’s children.”¹¹ Her insight is relevant for the contemporary theological educator. What does it mean to teach students for ministries in communities that differ theologically and culturally from those to which we as individual faculty members or to which the school gives allegiance? Does everyone have comparable access to the constructive critique of what we teach and how? Will our teaching prepare students to “build up and equip” churches (to draw on a Pauline image of ministry) both as embodiments and reformations of particular cultural and ecclesial traditions? Will our expectations for student performance equip them so that their leadership in ministry might be efficacious and transforming in the variety of their traditions? Will our teaching practices shatter the bondage of religious chauvinism, racism, classism, and sexism on student imaginations?

The definitions of education that inform our practices of teaching and learning further compound the difficulty of teaching in a way that is responsive to the diversity we increasingly experience in theological education. Lawrence Cremin, an influential interpreter of American education, for example, has defined education “as the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any learning that results from the effort direct or indirect, intended or unintended.”¹² Cremin sought to expand popular and academic notions of education beyond the school to include the intentional and unintentional efforts of families, churches, newspapers and magazines, and voluntary agencies in the formation of national character. For our purposes, it is important to note that this definition does not say whose knowledge, values, and attitudes, or what skills and sensibilities are to be subjects of that educational venture. His own research, however, made clear that in the United States, the educational agencies of the nation facilitated “the transit” of English civilization into the new nation. He observed that the education of the nation (including by the way, the education of theological schools) privileged the education of men of European ancestry and marginalized the cultural heritage and experience of women, African Americans, American Indians, and immigrants from south of the U.S. border and Asia who similarly could not fit into its racial framework. This was an education of formation designed to empower the full participation of a privileged group of people in the life of the nation and its institutions while limiting the full participation of others.

Several years ago this insight took on new meaning for me. Through a study of the historical uses of the education of the church among those who did not fit this anglicized image of national and ecclesial identity, I became increasingly aware of the role of education in the power dynamics emerging from the encounter of educational policy-makers with difference. I discovered

several distinctive patterns at work. For example, Catholic and Protestant churches established boarding schools in the nineteenth century for Native American children often forcibly removed from their homes by the military. All vestiges of native culture were prohibited in these schools with the assumption that by *alienating* Native American children from their cultural and religious traditions they would more easily be able to take on the values, sensibilities, habits, and practices of the dominant culture—including an appreciation of their own minority status within that culture. Their educational strategy, in other words, sought to destroy any sense of coherence between tribal identity and American Christian identity and to emphasize the uselessness of tribal ways of knowing for participation in national or church life.

In the creation of slave catechisms, the limitation of instruction to oral practices, and the segregation of schools we may discern another use of education among peoples who differed racially and culturally from those in control of educational policies and institutions. These educational strategies were designed to *subjugate* African American cultural values, sensibilities, habits, and practices to the end that as oppressed peoples, they would perpetuate their own subjugation. This educational effort existed explicitly to demean African cultural values and traditions and to limit African American access to the structures of power and place in churches and other institutions maintained by the dominant culture. Educational goals of formation and empowerment were subverted into goals of de-formation and dis-empowerment.

Most immigrants from Europe experienced a third use of education in schools that discouraged the retention of their cultural memories while *assimilating* them into the values, sensibilities, habits, and practices of the dominant culture. This is an education of access without voice, of place without power—at least until the processes of identification with the shared past and vision of the dominant culture takes precedence in the loyalties of people. The cost of that access is the loss of a particular cultural identity and heritage.

With the civil rights movement school leaders sought ways to acknowledge and thereby to *accommodate* the presence of historically marginalized minority peoples in the institutions of the dominant culture through a strategy of inclusion in which place and power are only obtained through negotiation. Strategies of accommodation promise equity of voice and influence but maintain the power of dominant groups. The consequences are familiar. They are evident in the presence of caucus groups that provide collective strength for negotiating voice and place among those who dominate or control the life of a group or institution. They may be seen in the decisions of teachers to include short essays from diverse perspectives on their reading lists in the final week or two at the end of the semester. They are evident in decisions to let different denominational groups lead chapel “in their tradition” once a year. From this perspective difference is recognized—even celebrated—as long as it can be managed.

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These educational strategies focus much more attention on pedagogies of formation that preserve the place, power, and status of a dominant group than on strategies of empowerment for participation in a diverse community and nation. Their implicit goal to dis-empower the participation of people in the traditions and practices of their own communities, however, has only been partially successful. There is another, and mostly untold, side to the story. The most tragic has to do with Native American children who could not adapt to their tribal communities when they returned. Their alienation was often total—from their birth communities and from the dominant community. Many African Americans, on the other hand, found ways to develop effective counter-educational strategies through schools, churches, and families that sustained, nurtured, and invigorated African American identity and practices. Although most assimilated Europeans eventually lost a sense of their historical cultural identities, many held on to specific cultural traditions through the rituals of extended families, churches, and lodges. And we are undoubtedly most conscious of the persistent patterns of resistance to the strategies of accommodating the “included” but powerless “other” to be found on theological school campuses.

My study focused on the strategic uses of education by church bodies identified with the dominant culture to overcome, reduce, suppress, and diminish the presence of difference in forming a particular vision of a national and Christian culture. Images of education as the transmission of that national culture and its religious agencies dominated the imagination of school and church leaders. Education in these instances served the purposes of those with the power to shape the national imagination. Our challenge occurs in the encounter with differences of tradition, heritage, culture, perspective, sensibility, ability, commitment, and experience in the concreteness of the theological classroom in specific educational institutions. Although congregations continue to be predominantly segregated by race, class, and language, our theological schools increasingly reflect the diversity of the nation. Unfortunately in this new situation our approaches to teaching and learning are often just as insensitive to the pedagogical challenge of empowering students for participation both in their own ecclesial and cultural contexts and in the mediation of the diversity of these contexts as were the decisions of church and theological educators seeking to educate those whom they considered “other” in the past.

Is the experience of alienation from heritage any less real for students whose theological formation never involves texts, experiences, or practices rooted in their own gendered, cultural, racial, religious, or class heritage? Is the experience of subjugation any less for the student whose learning style, or denominational, racial, cultural, or gendered heritage is patronized or diminished by their instructors or by the ethos of the school? Is the sense of loss any less for students whose assimilation into the life of the school is ensured by institutional patterns of acceptance, but who are discouraged from drawing on

their personal and collective religious, cultural, gendered, or socio-economic heritages as formative and empowering sources for engaging the theological curriculum or experience? Is the experience of accommodation any less for students who participate in one-time special events designed to recognize the contributions of some group they represent? So what do pedagogies of formation and empowerment look like in the dynamics of the diverse contemporary classroom?

Envisioning Pedagogies of Formation *and* Empowerment in the Diverse Theological School Community

Several clues from current discussions about the presence of difference in educational settings give promise to the possibility of celebrating difference as a resource for rather than impediment to theological pedagogies of formation and empowerment. These clues may be found in the quests of educators for alternative practices to those embedded in the competitive or hierarchical power dynamics that have traditionally dominated our imaginations as well as in the quests of theologians for interpretive frameworks that take seriously the possibilities and limits in the processes of community formation and tradition transmission. This discussion is necessarily tentative and inconclusive. We have in Jewish and Christian tradition a long history of thoughtful reflection on our relationship to the “other.” We will undoubtedly continue to explore the issues for many years to come. But this is a particularly creative moment in the quest for understanding God more truly, as David Kelsey has described the task of theological education, through the variety of traditions and practices to be found in most theological communities.¹³ Three clues have caught my own attention.

The quest for an alternative metaphor for teacher intentions. Several years ago a colleague and I engaged in an ethnographic study of three intentionally multiracial congregations.¹⁴ When we tried to find a word or phrase to capture something of the character of their common life, we found ourselves returning time and again to the children’s song “We Are the Church.” As we listened to these congregations sing this song through the year, the final line took on intensified meaning. We gradually realized that in proclaiming “we are the church *together*,”¹⁵ they were describing a different ecclesial reality from that to be found in a racially homogenous congregation. Its character was reflected in the confession of one long-time white member that he “wasn’t as racist as he used to be” and in the words of one black leader that what distinguished his southern congregation from others in the neighborhood was that “we eat in each other’s homes all the time.” Later, in a study of leadership in multicultural and multiracial congregations, I struggled for a metaphor that would both reveal a different strategy for incorporating people into their common lives and reflect the experience of these people. I finally decided that in the word

“embrace” we might find an adequate alternative to the traditional patterns of alienation, subjugation, assimilation, or accommodation that have dominated our educational imaginations about pedagogies of formation and empowerment in the diverse theological school community. I soon discovered that others were similarly exploring the potential in this metaphor.

For Peter Elbow the presence of difference poses an epistemological question pertinent to our discussion. He wonders about the “contraries” that exist in the relatively common assumptions of two “contradictory models for knowledge” dominating philosophical and educational debates for centuries. On the one hand, Elbow noted, any “discipline, or hierarchy of concepts, serves as a center which ultimately unifies and organizes around it all others”—often identified with epistemologies originating in notions of Truth. We see this model of knowledge in theological curricula that view Scripture as the organizing center from which students move into historical and theological studies, ethics, and the practices of ministry. On the other hand, another view sees “each unique, concrete event or thing [as] a still center around which all the hierarchies of concepts merely revolve in humble service”—typically associated with epistemologies beginning with human experience. We see this model of knowledge in theological curricula where events or practices of ministry become the impetus to the inductive exploration of the total theological course of study.¹⁶ Elbow concludes that “real learning” must necessarily “embrace” both models. We must not only teach two ways of thinking, he argues, but also acknowledge that in teaching practice we move constantly, albeit implicitly, from one way of knowing to the other all the time. When we teach, in other words, we already engage in the practice of embracing incommensurable ways of knowing. Nowhere is this more evident, Elbow later observes, than in the contrary but simultaneous commitments of teachers to students and to traditions of knowledge and society—commitments compounded by the diversity among the students we teach. Elbow not only illumines a tension I have long felt in the pull of these two epistemological models, he makes clear that in the necessary embrace of both, we are already familiar with practices of engaging diversity in our teaching and learning. Even more, we also have experience in transgressing the boundaries of each model in our quest to be loyal to our students and to the traditions we teach.¹⁷

Miroslav Volf probes the theological potential in the metaphor of embrace for engaging the incommensurability of differences compounded by centuries of distrust, oppression, and violence. For Volf, this exploration into the relationship of identity, otherness, and reconciliation was no academic exercise. Jurgen Moltmann forced the point. Following a lecture Volf gave on the subject, Moltmann asked him whether as a Croatian he could embrace “the notorious Serbian fighters” who represented for his own people “the ultimate other... the evil other”? Although he notes that in some cultures the metaphor of embrace might not work, he responded through this study that for him the metaphor is

adequate to the task of expressing “the will to give ourselves to others and ‘welcome’ them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, [that] is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity.” The metaphor conveys an embodied response, an interactive movement involving the self and an “other.” Volf identifies four structural elements in “the movement of embrace.” They include “opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms, and opening them again.” He continues, “For embrace to happen, all four must be there and they must follow one another on an unbroken timeline; stopping with the first two (opening the arms and waiting) would abort the embrace, and stopping with the third (closing the arms) would pervert it from an act of love to an act of oppression and, paradoxically, exclusion. The four elements,” he concludes, “are then the four essential steps of an integrated movement.”¹⁸

The dynamics of embrace in teaching and learning sound relatively simple when we think of the interactions of a teacher and one student. Perhaps that is one reason why the tutorial or the directed study often proves to be such a satisfying experience for both student and teacher and is often the site of teaching-learning transactions that transform the dynamics of otherness into patterns of mutual learning. In the diverse classroom, however, the variety of expectations and range of demands we encounter can easily overwhelm us. But that feeling, I believe, originates in our attempts to transfer the experience of embracing an individual to the actions of embracing a group. Although the movements are similar the dynamics of embracing a gathering of “others” is quite different. Again we see the possibilities in the four elements identified by Volf. In the metaphorical movement of “opening the arms” we engage in a “purposeful action” to signal to all their inclusion in this experience of teaching and learning. We signal it in quite specific ways—creating a welcoming environment, getting to know student names, requesting that they speak to issues out of their formative traditions rather than in general terms, clarifying the groundrules for participation, making explicit our expectations for assignments, honoring different learning styles, finding ways for students to locate their individual and collective experience in the readings and assignments. In the movement of opening arms we signal as teachers that we recognize and honor the diversity of students’ socio-cultural, economic, and religious experience and traditions as a pre-condition for identifying the perspectives and tasks of their learning. This movement has all the characteristics we associate with hospitality.

In the metaphorical movement of waiting, we create the conditions for mutual respect. We convey our openness to engage others with patience, candor, and humility. To wait illumines the importance of the silence that invites each of us into relationship with each other. It conveys a commitment to listening to each other—which in pedagogical contexts of diversity may be more important than speaking. To wait is to acknowledge that the diversity of

heritage, experience, and ability is welcomed as a resource to the learning of all—even those totally alien or incomprehensible or compounded by a deep sense of mistrust and apprehension. In the movement of waiting the “safe place” so frequently discussed in contemporary educational literature becomes a possibility. It creates the conditions for the dialogue among others that may lead to the possibility for learning from each other by disrupting the power structures that typically influence the ways we perceive and respond to those unlike us.

In the movement of closing the arms we embody or give evidence of the trust that is the relational context for listening that deepens the potential in dialogue—which is not so much the capacity to speak openly to one another as the capacity to listen from inside the experience of others. In this movement we create the conditions for candid conversation, the mutuality of constructive critique, and the development of increasingly complex orders of perception and practice. In this movement intent becomes action. We transgress, according to bell hooks, the boundaries that divide us from each other.¹⁹ Roles of students and teachers become fluid. As teachers we may discover ourselves to be recipients of the teaching of our students. Leadership in teaching and learning may be shared in the mutuality of our quest to know.

In the final movement of opening the arms we convey to each other the mutuality of respect that emerges from our growing recognition of the giftedness of the other whom we have engaged. We release each other. We grant each other the gift of being other to ourselves—even when we do not fully understand, appreciate, or like the other. Surprisingly perhaps, we often see ourselves more clearly as we release each other. That was certainly my student experience of discovering what it meant to be Methodist, a bearer of the Wesleyan tradition, in a seminary dominated by a Reformed theological perspective. It is a common refrain from travelers who discover the depth of their identification with the nation of their birth while visiting other nations. It is the experience of those who discover resources in those they had not trusted for new knowledge and skills. The mutuality we experience in the embrace is simultaneously the impetus to the constructive critique that enables us to be agents not only of the continuity, but the renewal of our various cultural and religious traditions.

To embrace “others” pedagogically, may lead us to imagine alternative ways of thinking about the power relationships of teachers and students in the diverse educational setting. It may challenge us to discern possibilities for pedagogies that embrace the particularity of diverse ecclesial and cultural traditions. And it may inspire us to think constructively about the organization and conduct of our classes, contextual education, or other structures for teaching and learning. We undoubtedly may discover its limits in the process. That discovery, however, should be an invitation to look for a still more adequate metaphor for guiding our reflections on pedagogies that take seriously the diversity in the human experience.

A second clue emerges from the quest of theologians and educators for an

alternative image of the teaching/learning community. A number of scholars have put themselves to the task of identifying an alternative way to envision the “community of teachers and learners” that is the immediate context for our work. Even though many contemporary educational writers celebrate the individual learner, most discussions of teaching ironically portray students as a ubiquitous and collective “they.” My consciousness of this tendency in the educational literature and among those of us who teach occurred during a doctoral seminar I was leading on the works of Paulo Freire. As we read book after book, we became acutely conscious of the invisibility of students even as he argued throughout his work for educational practices promoting student agency in their learning. Students consisted of a collective “them” encountering the individual “I” of the teacher. The insight led us to wonder whether this perspective dominated the writings of other educators. The answer we discovered was basically “yes.” As one example, despite John Dewey’s advocacy for the organization of the teaching/learning activity around the questions of students, he persistently describes students in collective terms.

C.A. Bowers and David J. Flinders suggest another way of thinking about the collectivity of students with teacher(s) in class settings. The classroom, they suggest, is “an ecology of language processes and cultural patterns.” By language processes and cultural patterns they mean “the processes of primary socialization, framing, negotiating, maintaining the order of turn-taking, and the use of humor to strengthen solidarity in the classroom.” These processes facilitate pedagogies of formation. Less obvious, they continue, “are the implicit cultural patterns of thought, behavior, and inner response that influence both what is communicated in the classroom and how it is communicated.”²⁰ These patterns become resources to pedagogies of empowerment. Bowers’s and Flinders’s metaphor reminds us that each student represents and embodies deeply embedded and mostly unconscious structures of thinking, relating, believing, and doing. It brings into our own thinking about teaching and learning not only the range of personalities and learning styles to be found among us, but also the variety of ideological and value commitments shaped by our theological, racial and ethnic, class, and gendered experience and heritage.

Perhaps St. Paul’s notion of the body as a way of thinking about the church puts the ecology metaphor into more familiar theological language. What does it mean to gather into a teaching and learning community the diversity of foot, heart, brain, and eye—or for example, African American middle class urban Baptist male, Irish Catholic working class female, gay Norwegian Lutheran rural male, middle aged American Indian Episcopalian, multiracial seeker of religious meaning and truth—each with a configuration of traditions deeply embedded in the perspectives and practices associated with the functions of their own contexts and enculturating experiences and yet now visibly present as parts of the whole body? This metaphor of body reminds us that even in the confrontation of the most radical differences to be found among us, we

continue to share the common ground of the earth and breathe the same air. We are all children of God and thereby brothers and sisters—even though some of us may be deeply alienated from each other by ideological commitments or a history of injustice, oppression and domination. Despite the depth of these differences, we still live in relation.

In the patterns of interactive interdependence conveyed through the metaphor of ecology we can also begin to account for the dynamic mutuality that exists between the educational tasks of incorporating or forming students into the perspectives and practices of the educating community while equipping them at the same time for empowered, enlightened, and critically conscious agency in ministry. The effects of this educational interplay may be most apparent in comparing the experience of two students of the same age, from the same religious tradition, ethnic heritage, and community, who attend two different theological schools. The formation they receive in their separate schools will distinguish their perceptions, values, and approaches to ministry as much as their common experience as women, African Americans, or Presbyterians establishes a common perspective and approach to their ministries. So if we listen carefully to their conversation during a judicatory meeting, for example, we can often identify that this one went to Princeton and that one went to Louisville, Yale, Howard, or Fuller.

The implications for the way teachers view their role are significant. The teacher is a primary agent of a particular academic culture influenced by its relationship to disciplinary guilds, church traditions and structures, and its own constituencies. Teachers do introduce, nurture, and confirm the increasing competence and confidence of students in appropriating the contents and practices of that school culture's engagement with the diversity in the human and Christian religious experience. At the same time teachers in the diverse theological school are also sponsors of student competence and confidence in a variety of socio-cultural, economic, theological, and ecclesial cultures that will be the contexts of their ministries. Bowers and Flinders describe teaching attentive to diverse backgrounds and expectations as being responsive to these linguistic, cultural, and I would add, ideological patterns—a view that shifts the function of teaching from the management of learning to the creation of events in which students and teachers engage the subjects of their learning in a process of mutually critical appropriation.

The quest for teaching strategies that facilitate the embrace of difference. Much of the multicultural education literature focuses attention on teaching strategies that seek to embrace the diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and experience of students. Generally speaking I must admit that I have not found this literature to be particularly helpful—perhaps because many authors do not identify or critique the cultural assumptions they bring to their descriptions of the educational task and because I have been convinced through the years that individual teachers can radically alter the influence of any teaching strategy

on student learning. Why, I have often wondered, for example, does the lecture method with its hierarchical structure between the knowledge of the teacher and the lack of knowledge on the part of the student sometimes feel much more “welcoming” or “embracing” than a discussion group? I am increasingly convinced that it has more to do with the stance of the teacher toward the engagement of students with the subject of the course through a given teaching strategy than with anything inherent in the strategy. Despite this disclaimer, in the literature and the experience of some faculty we may still find clues to pedagogies of formation and empowerment for teachers seeking to embrace the diversity they experience in the classes they teach. I will briefly describe three of them.

The first two take us back to the first of the three critical incidents I described in my own heightened consciousness to the dynamics of difference in the classroom. My first learning had to do with the prejudicial character of my assessment practices. It is related to the observation of Peter Elbow that one of the responsibilities of the teacher grows out of our loyalty to our students. We become advocates of their learning as persons, as participants in particular cultural and ecclesial traditions, and as agents of particular religious and cultural identities and commitments in the diversity of human experience. We seek for means of assessment that draw on their strengths to enhance their learning. This leads me to suggest that in the dynamics of difference, practices of pedagogical formation and empowerment require *the diversification of assessment practices*. After several years in my own teaching practice, I would typically ask students in a class to do a research paper that assesses critical and constructive skills for both textual and contextual analysis, writing as an act of communication, and the ability to develop and sustain an argument. They would also be expected to prepare a team presentation that would assess their ability to work with others while constructing a communication event that took seriously their shared engagement with texts and the challenge of communicating the results of collaborative reflection. Over the years I have tried take-home exams of different kinds, oral exams, and case study analyses. I typically allowed students to re-write papers as long as the revisions were completed by the assigned day for final exams. And I allowed students to suggest alternative ways of fulfilling assignments as long as I had received a detailed proposal before the mid-term of the semester. I was not prepared for what some might call obvious insights into the interplay of teaching and learning after varying the patterns of assessment over several semesters. Two stand out. When differences of learning style are honored in class assignments, the learning curve becomes a fluid reality. The consequence has been a flattening of the grade curve for the class as a whole. Actually it revealed the presence of several curves—most commonly a curve reflecting the experience of students with so-called analytical learning styles and another curve reflecting the experience of students with so-called relational learning styles. I also discovered over time that collaborative tasks involving a public presentation often provide a “safe place” for students whose relationships with one another are defined by their

radical otherness to begin to listen to one another and to hear one another into dialogue—a source of contextual and cross-contextual empowerment.

Elbow also makes the point that the teacher is the advocate of an intellectual tradition. In the education of religious lay and clergy leadership from diverse ecclesial and cultural traditions, I would also argue the theological teacher becomes the agent of pastoral/priestly effectiveness in those traditions. It took me longer to realize that one of the sources to the racial injustice experienced by the intellectual student leader in my class had to do with inadequate knowledge of some of the groundrules I used to assess academic success. In some ways the necessity of *clearly articulated guidelines, criteria, and standards* for student engagement with a course may be among the most important strategic insights I have had in my quest to understand the pedagogical consequences in the dynamics of difference. Are my instructions adequate for those for whom the task may be unfamiliar? Do students know my expectations for their performance in the assignments I use to assess their learning? Are my criteria for judgment clear? Are my standards evident? Are my own assumptions about the subject of the course evident? Can students readily see the perspective on the subject that I am taking and how I understand its relation to the larger discussion of the same topic among my colleagues? How will I draw on the resources of their experience? Do my examples and illustrations create a circle of exclusion for some students? When most students in theological education do not have a classic liberal arts background in philosophy, literature, and history or have not developed the skills of reading texts, completing examinations, and writing research papers that reflect that particular academic tradition, we cannot expect most to perform well if we do not spell out the criteria and rules for success. With this discovery the length of my syllabi almost doubled. Those detailed guidelines, I soon discovered, functioned to apprentice students into new disciplines of thinking and writing. This insight led to my decision to reemphasize more traditional academic assignments again—with the realization that it is important for all students to learn how to learn in ways that give them access to the intellectual traditions that have informed centuries of theological and ecclesiastical thought and practice while expecting them to critique at the same time, those traditions from the particularities of their contemporary cultural and theological perspectives.

In *Responsive Teaching*, Bowers and Flinders suggest a third teaching strategy in the ecology of the diverse classroom that has to do with the importance of what they call *turn-taking*—by which they mean the pattern of discourse in the classroom. Often those patterns center on the teacher as the “sender” of messages and students either as “receivers” or as “responders.” I have always been intrigued by the rapidity with which these basic rules of discourse are established in the typical classroom—most often, I have concluded, by the end of the second class session.²¹ Without discussion or vote they influence class discourse for the rest of the semester. Given the frequency of this pattern in

academic behavior, Eric Law makes the point in *The Wolf Shall Lie Down with the Lamb*,²² that in the diversity of cultural assumptions about talking in groups this implicit decision always marginalizes some students and diminishes the authority of some voices. He suggests, consequently, that teachers must establish explicit ground rules for conversation as well, to ensure not only equality of opportunity for student participation in class discussion but to deepen student capacities for hearing into the worlds of one another.

Conclusion

The presence of a range of personal, social, cultural, and ecclesial differences poses particular challenges to theological educators concerned with the interplay of pedagogies of formation and empowerment. In this essay I have argued that the pedagogical embrace of threat and promise, problem and possibility in the diversity of the human experience requires a shift in our educational imaginations. In the embrace of difference we may become more attentive to the variety of patterns in the personal, spiritual, academic, and professional formation of students. When we view the classroom or any other educational setting as an ecology of language processes, cultural patterns, and world views or faith commitments, our attention is increasingly drawn to pedagogical strategies that emphasize interactive interdependence in the contributions and critique of all participants in the interplay of teaching and learning. That interactive interdependence, I have further argued, is enhanced when teachers create hospitable environments for teaching and learning with clear guidelines and rules for student participation and work, diversify patterns of assessing student learning toward the empowerment of all students for ministry, and establish rules of discourse that invite the participation of everyone into the mutuality of teaching and learning practices that draw upon and engage the diversity among us.

I believe Rebecca Chopp was right. Theological education is being changed—sometimes by intention, but even more through the daily negotiations of its diverse constituencies over what should be taught and learned and how. I sense the tone of our conversations reflects an increasing sense of intellectual humility—heightened, I am sure, by our engagement with people who do not share our perspectives or experience. Here and there spontaneous as well as formal rituals of forgiveness and reconciliation mark rather than hide our stumbling efforts to be present to one another. Increasingly we are discovering that the giftedness of the diversity we experience in our schools may be a resource to what some call the pluralistic consciousness that necessarily embraces the mutuality of particularity and commonality in human experience. Through that consciousness we may begin to see possibilities for pedagogical patterns of formation and empowerment originating both in the embrace and the encounter of difference that deepen the transformations we are experiencing.

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ENDNOTES

1. The issue of diversity has dominated my attention for some time. Among my publications explicitly on the topic are: "Double-Messages: Ethnocentrism in Religious Education of Cultural Minorities," *Religious Education* 82:3 (Summer, 1987): 447-68; "Imperialism in the Religious Education of Cultural Minorities," *Religious Education* 89:1 (Winter, 1991): 145-55; "Teaching Authority in Cultural Perspective," *Quarterly Review* 12:45 (Fall, 1992): 27-38; with Theodore Brelsford, *We Are the Church Together* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996); *Embracing Diversity: Leadership in Multicultural Congregations* (Washington: Alban Institute, 1997).
2. Clarence Jos. Rivers, "The Oral Tradition Versus the Ocular Western Tradition," in Robert W. Hovda, ed. *This Far by Faith: American Black Worship and Its African Roots* (Washington: The Liturgical Conference, 1977).
3. Acts 2.
4. Parker Palmer, *The Courage To Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).
5. Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1978), 58ff.
6. Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 54ff.
7. Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), ix.
8. An increasingly expansive body of research of cultural and personal learning styles, patterns of intelligence, and capacities for learning challenge the ethics of teaching that privileges one style of learning or one set of capacities. I am unaware of research, however, that explores the distinctive ethical challenge of how people learn professional competencies for ministry in the church in academic settings.
9. Edward Eggleston, *The Transit of Civilization from England to America in the Seventeenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959).
10. Cf. Charles R. Foster, *Teaching in the Community of Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 114.
11. Lisa Delpit, *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflicts in the Classroom* (New York: New Press, 1996).
12. Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1980), ix.
13. David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).
14. Foster and Brelsford, *We Are the Church Together*.

15. Typically when singing this song, children would point to themselves as they sang "I am the church," point to someone else while singing "You are the church," and then in a sweeping motion with both arms to include everyone present would sing "We are the church together." The concluding lines reinforce the point—"All of God's children, All around the world, We are the church together."
16. Peter Elbow, *Embracing Contraries: Explorations in Learning and Teaching* (New York: Oxford, 1986), 142-43.
17. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), bell hooks uses the image of "transgressing boundaries" in describing an educational practice of actively engaging our differences.
18. Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 29, 141.
19. bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.
20. C.A. Bowers and David J. Flinders, *Responsive Teaching: An Ecological Approach to Classroom Patterns of Language, Culture, and Thought* (New York: Teachers College, 1990), 2-3.
21. Bowers and Flinders, 146-8.
22. Eric Law, *The Wolf Shall Lie with the Lamb: A Spirituality of Leadership in a Multicultural Community* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993).

Student Diversity and Theological Education

Introduction

This three-part article offers three observations on racial/ethnic student diversity in theological education. The first essay, by Barbara Leung Lai of Tyndale Seminary, provides a personal reflection by a racial/ethnic member of the faculty on diversity as an educational tool in which practice reinforces theory. The second essay, by Ruth Vuong of Fuller Theological Seminary, reports the voices of students, their experiences of ethnic diversity in their theological studies, and some of their hopes and concerns. The final essay, by Francis A. Lonsway of the ATS staff, presents data drawn from two statistical resources of the Association: the *Fact Book on Theological Education* and the Student Information Project.

A Reflection from an Ethnic Member of the Faculty

Barbara Mei Leung Lai
Tyndale Seminary

ABSTRACT: The views shared below are not my response to specific work on the subject of student diversity and theological education. They are, rather, self-engaging reflections through years of involvement in theological education. To illustrate my window of perception, I first present briefly my career path as a minority person in the profession. This is followed by a student diversity profile of my institution—Tyndale Seminary. From this specific institutional context, I then reflect on three focused areas: (1) diversity as a mutual educational tool for students and instructors; (2) knowing and being a culturally sensitive instructor and administrator; and (3) meeting the needs of a racially and culturally diverse student body: strategies and examples. The examples cited in my reflection are meant to demonstrate that “practice reinforces theory.” It is my hope that through an intentional look at the current state of the diversity issue at Tyndale, I can generate more interest and more engaging dialogues within academe and the community of theological schools.

Personally Speaking

The career path of a minority faculty member shapes the way in which she or he looks at the profession and at the practices within the profession. My shaping began when I was an M.Div. student studying at Fuller Theological Seminary in the early 1970s. As a woman student from Asia, I was the minority among minorities (considering the ecclesiastical climate thirty years ago). This

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minority status had its privileges and disadvantages, and I witnessed both realities through my long student days in the States, Canada, and England. While I enjoyed being treated kindly and with much consideration by most professors, I suffered the inevitable outcome of marginalization. Realizing that I was part of the West's stereotyping construction of the minority student in theology,¹ I tried to break the cultural barrier and sought hard to conform—in retrospect, the most damaging move in my academic life. It has taken me a number of years, until later in my career, to break away from this “conformity” driven-ness. Feeling at home with my own culture, I can truly grasp the art of celebrating diversity within any given institutional/communal context. This belated transformation was the result of my teaching and equipping experience over the past ten years, both internationally and cross-culturally.² One needs to respect and value the culture that one is nurtured in before becoming a truly culturally sensitive person. A culturally sensitive theological educator will dare to risk, to step out of her or his comfort zone in seeking to understand another, unfamiliar culture—responding to the call for the globalization of theological education.

A Student Diversity Profile of Tyndale Seminary

Tyndale Seminary (formerly Ontario Theological Seminary) is the oldest and largest seminary in Canada. Located in the multicultural city of Toronto, it is a trans-denominational theological institution with the majority of students being part-time.³ In a student body of 760,⁴ women constitute 43% and men 57% of the student population. The figures below provide a more precise profile of student diversity at Tyndale.

Winter 2001: Enrollment Summary by Ethnic Origin	
White (non-Hispanic)	381
Chinese	206
Korean	72
Black	51
Middle Eastern	14
Asian Other	8
Philippines	6
Hispanic	4
North American Native	2
Total	744
Not Recorded	6
Non-Declared	10
Total	760

A Brief Analysis

- Nine ethnic groups are represented in the student body.
- Non-white students constitute nearly half (49%) of the student population.
- 79% of the non-white students are Asian and the Asian group constitutes 38% of the nine ethnic groups.
- Chinese students are by far the largest Asian group (28%), with Korean students being next (10%).
- Black students are the largest non-Asian ethnic group (7%).

Intriguing Observations and Issues

Within a supposedly predominantly white theological institution in the West (as with the majority of non-ethnic-specific ATS schools), non-white students make up nearly half of the student population. This may lead one to ask: which group is the majority, and who are the minorities?

With the two largest racial and ethnic groups being white non-Hispanic (49%) and Asian (38%), I believe Tyndale stands out as a unique example of a nontraditional profile of the learner-audience at ATS schools. While English is the common medium of instruction, these two racially and culturally diverse groups are potentially worlds apart in terms of value systems (e.g., the evaluation and assessment of an educational experience) as well as learning patterns.

This profile sets the stage and the specific institutional context for my reflection in three areas.

Diversity as a Mutual Educational Tool for Students and Instructors

Racial and cultural diversity should be regarded as a valued educational tool for both the instructor and students. On the one hand, a successful and rewarding teacher-student relationship should be culturally mandated. On the other hand, a mutually enriching learning and teaching experience calls for the willingness of both parties (student and instructor) to step outside one's own familiar culture and to get to know the other's culture. In the institutional and cultural contexts of Tyndale, this means for the instructor intentionally to learn from the different cultures represented in class and for the students to break away from the constraints of the culturally shaped expectations of an educational experience with more openness. Ignorance in understanding differing cultural traits and values may lead to a clash in cultural assumptions, or more severely, to blocking the channels of teaching and learning. For example, students brought up in the Western culture will highly regard an instructor's performance in lectures. While effective com-

munication and charisma are important factors for a rewarding learning experience, there are still other means of educational tools, such as the empowering of the mind and will to do reflection and exercise discernment, perseverance in the pursuit of knowledge, etc. These impacts on students often extend beyond classroom instruction.

Teaching-learning should be a two-way street. For the instructor, cultural sensitivity means prizing this diversity among students and seeing it as a true asset to meaningful and effective instruction.⁵ This “prizing” requires more than a mind-set. One should view the process of teaching and learning as an educational spiral. The more one engages in teaching a culturally diverse learner-audience, the more effective one becomes in teaching such a group. For an educator in theological education, it entails an intentional seeking of one’s horizon to be continually enriched and enlarged through the teaching experience.

Diversity Yes, Preference NO: Knowing and Being a Culturally Sensitive Instructor and Administrator

Awareness of the cultural diversity of students is one thing, but being a culturally sensitive instructor is another. In a multicultural, global village like Toronto, an average person would be expected to have a certain degree of cultural sensitivity. Given the predominance of white instructors teaching in traditional disciplines (in theology), many of us lack the sufficient repertoire to view the value of things beyond the traditional norms and regularities, which we had learned so well since our student days.⁶ Moving away or stepping outside the homogeneous comfort zone and readjusting our teaching strategies to accommodate the needs of the diverse ethnic student body is often frustrating. It demands additional efforts on the part of the instructor and it calls for commitment beyond the four walls of the classroom—in developing relationships. In reality, for many of us, we welcome the diverse cultural make-up of the student body, but unless we truly prize this diversity as a rewarding educational opportunity for the enrichment of our own teaching, and we are determined to make it work, we cannot afford such a preference. Simply put in practical terms: diversity yes, but preference no.

Meeting the Needs of a Racially and Culturally Diverse Student Body: Strategies and Examples

Tyndale takes pride in drawing a multicultural student body, a true reflection of the diverse population in Greater Toronto.⁷ In response to the needs of the Chinese faith community and with the prominent presence of the ethnic Chinese student body, a well-developed Chinese ministry program has

been in place for almost fourteen years. A Korean Ministry Program is also in preparation. There have been discussions about implementing a Black History Studies program at Tyndale for some time now. Before fall of 2001, I was the only ethnic full-time teaching member of the faculty. As of this writing, two other ethnic persons have joined the faculty, encouraging progress in promoting faculty diversity in a multicultural theological institution.

Ethnic-specific extracurricular activities have been implemented in the past five years to address the needs of the Black, Korean, and Chinese students. Annual cultural events are held to cultivate and celebrate the diversity among us. Mentorship programs for the incoming Chinese students are in place as well as peer-support and study groups. A counseling service for represented cultural groups is provided on campus. The student council also provides writing tutorials for students whose first language is not English. In spite of all these good efforts, there are existing tensions on the institutional, or macro, level:

- We ask whether we are institutionalizing multiculturalism or merely managing differences through the implementation of strategies.
- The ethnic-specific programs, such as the Chinese Ministry Program, still remain marginalized. I would like to see theological schools be able to break through the mind-set of placing the ethnic programs (e.g., Korean Ministry Program, multicultural programs, etc.) on the margin. Theological educators and administrators should regard them and intentionally develop them as a core part of the school's curriculum.
- We face the pressing need for faculty development among ethnic members of the faculty. There is an absolute vacuum in terms of post-hire support. Here at Tyndale, the visible presence of ethnic faculty teaching in non-ethnic-specific programs and disciplines is, in itself, a powerful witness to promoting cultural diversity in theological education. The working-out of this strategy is, in turn, an enriching teaching-learning experience for both instructor and students.

Barbara Leung Lai is professor of Old Testament and director of the Chinese Ministry Program at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto, Ontario.

ENDNOTES

1. For example, that Asian students are very hard-working, but not sufficiently reflective or innovative.
2. During the past decade, I have engaged in formal and informal teaching in the States, England, South and Central America, China, Russia, and South East Asia.
3. Those taking fewer than three (4 units) courses are considered as part-time students.

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4. This is the winter 2001 enrollment figure.
5. Gary C. Powell, *“On Being A Culturally Sensitive Instructional Designer and Educator,”* *Educational Technology* (1997) 14.
6. *Ibid*, 7.
7. Of note is the fact that more than 90% of Tyndale’s students are from the Greater Toronto area.

Student Diversity: An Open Door in Theological Education

*Ruth Vuong
Fuller Theological Seminary*

ABSTRACT: Ruth Vuong, dean of students at Fuller Theological Seminary, reflects on the views registered by the multicultural student body at Fuller concerning the value of diversity; namely, benefits of a commitment to diversity, difficulties encountered as the seminary strives to achieve diversity, and hopes for the future of the seminary's efforts for greater diversity. She argues for a sustained commitment to the goal of diversity with the same passion and vigor that has constituted the academy's embrace of technology to enhance educational quality.

Diversity and Institutional Commitment

Technology affects every aspect of education. We have to understand it in order to participate in contemporary education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* dedicates a section of every issue to it. Everyone is “wired” for it. The necessity of investing significant institutional resources in technology is virtually unquestioned. Technology has not only changed the way we deliver education, it has also changed our thinking and opened new areas of inquiry in nearly every subject area, including theology and ministry.

Like technology, diversity is a fact of life for our students. Students have to understand diversity in order to participate in society, to be educated, and to be professionally competent. Most students are “wired” for it. Their experience of diversity in a global era has shaped their thinking and opened new areas of inquiry in nearly every subject area, including theology and ministry. For our students, education for life in a pluralistic, global society is as pervasive an educational issue as is technology.

One of the questions facing educational institutions, which typically develop more slowly than the societies they serve, is: how does institutional commitment to and investment in diversity compare with commitment to and investment in technology? Do organizations tend to question investment in one and not the other? If so, what accounts for eagerness for change in one, and hesitancy in another?

Student Voices

As dean of students, I frequently hear from students about their experiences of diversity in seminary. Most students mention diversity as an important factor in choosing to come to Fuller Theological Seminary. Students often express that

the diversity here is a significant source of satisfaction in their seminary experience. They feel that they are challenged intellectually and spiritually by engagement with other students from various histories and world views. They feel more competent for ministry by learning to cross cultural boundaries and empathize with others from various backgrounds. They feel their view of God is both deepened and enlarged when it is not limited to a mono-cultural image. Most of the time, they feel these benefits of diversity are derived from conversations and relationships with other students, less often from formal teaching or study assignments. They value the courses that enable them to explore non-western perspectives in theology and ministry. Even in those courses where western views predominate, students appreciate professors who show interest in the insights students from diverse backgrounds bring to the material.

Several students express concern about a perceived gap between student expectations and experiences of diversity and institutional commitment to diversity. As one student bluntly put it, "The higher you go, the whiter it gets." Others wonder where the line is between valuing cultural difference and a cultural relativism that dilutes any sense of common belief. Still others want to know where they fit, whether professors take seriously the perspectives based in a minority student's experience, and how, as a member of a minority, to stay engaged with the majority members of the seminary community when reminded of the historic pain of one's people.

I asked a group of nine students representing seven ethnic groups to respond to three questions about their experience of ethnic diversity at Fuller. The ethnic groups represented included African American, Anglo American, Anglo Latino, Chinese American, Japanese American, Korean, and Puerto Rican. I asked the students to reflect about the benefits they received from student diversity, the difficulties they faced, and the hopes they had for the future of diversity in theological education. The following is a sampling of the students' comments in abbreviated form, keeping as close as possible to the original tone and words.

Benefits

- Learning from people who see things in different ways, have different histories (which often include tragic suffering), and who therefore could challenge some of the accepted ways of thinking within the white middle-class evangelicalism in which I had been nurtured. (Anglo American student)
- [Having relationships across cultures which enable us] to discern together which beliefs we hold are truly worthy of the way of Christ and which are simply cultural attachments. (Anglo American student)
- [Being reminded of] painful areas that are the result of the shared experiences of my people [and having the opportunity to] acknowledge my wounds and deal with the difficult areas. (African American student)

- Learning to be slow to judge, slower to assume things about others, and slower to criticize when things aren't done the way I think things should be done. (Anglo Latino student)
- Confronting my own prejudices and false concepts. Learning to empathize and embrace the other . . . enlarged me as a person and helped to prepare me for ministry. (Puerto Rican student)
- Ethnic diversity . . . [contributed] to enhancing my perspective of the Christian ministry and understanding of theology toward a wider spectrum. Otherwise, I would have been confined in my mono-cultural experience and world view. (Korean student)

Difficulties

- Facing the discomfort that results from letting someone of another ethnicity really enter my life Of course, I would say that I value diversity in principle, and that all God's people have something to contribute to the whole, but what if they should say something I don't like? (Anglo American student)
- I have found that the higher one goes . . . the more homogeneously Caucasian things become. (Chinese American student)
- I am tired of professors who single me out to speak for "my people" or when I bring up ethnic issues give patronizing answers that show no true insight or consideration. (Chinese American student)
- Most of our professors and classes present the European American viewpoint as *the* American viewpoint. (Japanese American student)
- I want people to understand that I am just as American as an European American even though I am Asian American. (Japanese American student)
- Remaining open to God and others while addressing [painful] areas is difficult. (African American student)
- Because I am bi-cultural and because people tend to congregate within their own ethnic groups, I can't always fit into certain groups. (Anglo Latino student)
- The opportunities for racial dialogue provided by Fuller's rich environment . . . many times fall through the cracks [due to] disunited efforts of the faculty and the student body. (Puerto Rican student)
- The greatest disrespect to diversity is that at each tier of seminary leadership [one finds] lone, token ethnic representatives. (African American student)
- There is a danger of encouraging diversity in a bland way, in order to feel good about ourselves, without really giving minorities a chance to shape us. (Anglo American student)

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- The absence of ethnic diversity in places of power—e.g., areas of decision-making and establishment of policy. There is a real need to recognize and respect the power of various constituencies—students, staff, faculty, administrator, and trustee. (African American student)

Hopes

- Submitting to each other so that we will both be changed, helping each other to grow into the fullness of Christ. Minority perspectives influencing the form, methods, and content of theological education itself. Valuing all voices. All have equal standing. (Anglo American student)
- Valuing alternate experiences and viewpoints. (Chinese American student)
- Sensitivity to the needs of the changing population. (Chinese American student)
- Addressing the needs of people who are mixed race or bi-cultural. (Anglo Latino student)
- Significant ethnic diversity in the administration and faculty. (Japanese American student)
- Taking full advantage of our diversity. Being open to learning about ourselves through the perspectives of others that are different from our own. (African American student)
- More courses in the theologies of various nations and cultures. (Anglo Latino student)
- Required classes on ethnic diversity for all seminarians. (Puerto Rican student)
- The development of more courses to meet the needs of international students so that we can do some thinking and learning here that is directly applicable to our contexts. (Korean student)
- Seeing the incarnate truth of the *Imago Dei*—in leadership, curriculum, fiduciary justice, and post-seminary placement. (African American student)
- Hearing the gospel anew in new cultural contexts. (Anglo American student)
- Christians conversing across cultures with keen curiosity rather than fear. (Anglo American student)

For the most part, these responses are consistent with the kinds of comments I have been hearing over the last several years. However, I recognize that most students who talk about diversity, either in casual conversation or when directly asked, as in this exercise, are those for whom diversity is vitally important. I am sure there are other students who give diversity little thought, or who consider the fact of our diversity a matter needing no special

inquiry. What their proportion is, I am not sure. What I do know is that the student voices are growing in volume and clarity each year, and a consensus seems to be forming among those voices that diversity is essential to educational effectiveness, and that the gap between student diversity and faculty and administrative homogeneity needs to be closed.

Present Situation: Our Snapshot

Fuller Theological Seminary was founded fifty-four years ago, and its first graduating class consisted of twenty white men. About thirty years ago, the seminary's student diversity started to increase as women, ethnic minority, and international students began enrolling in greater number. The seminary is located in Southern California, on the edge of Los Angeles, a beneficiary of the Pacific Rim boom of the eighties and nineties. In this environment, it takes effort *not* to be diverse. The fall 2000 enrollment for the Pasadena campus for all programs (except D.Min.) was about 48% *White, Non-Hispanic* (825 students) and 52% all other categories of ethnicity (888 students). From 1990-1999, the *White, Non-Hispanic* student population decreased by about 180 students, and the other constituencies increased by about the same amount. The second largest enrollment is *Asian/Pacific Islander* (488 students). *Asian/Pacific Islanders* include a very large number of language and culture groups, and the seminary does not disaggregate the data to determine how many different groups are represented or what their size might be. Based on data from other reports, we assume that students from Korea and students of Korean descent comprise by far the largest group within this category. The third largest category represented at Fuller is *Hispanic* (167 students). This category also includes several specific groups and has not been studied further. For that matter, all the categories, including *White, Non-Hispanic* may contain several national or cultural subgroups that are not identified. Fuller collects no data on students of mixed racial heritage, though the category *Other* has increased over the past ten years from a very few up to 98 students in 2000. These figures include American citizens, permanent residents, and students with non-immigrant visas. The seminary conducts additional and separate research on international student enrollment, which will not be discussed here.

The Future of Student Diversity in Theological Education: An Open Door

I am very encouraged by the student diversity at Fuller Seminary. It enriches the educational and spiritual environment in innumerable ways. Fuller is a wonderful crossroads where theological thinking and practices from many places meet, combine, influence one another, and are carried forth

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to new places throughout the world. The diversity of our student body is a tremendous gift of which we are called to be wise and grateful stewards.

At the same time, student diversity is only the first step toward becoming a multicultural seminary capable of equipping men and women for the manifold ministries of Christ and the church in the twenty-first century. Student diversity is the open door through which leadership, planning, resources, curriculum, and pedagogy must pass, quickly and decisively, while the opportunity for change remains available. The door will not remain open indefinitely. Our times plead for the kind of theological reflection and ethical understanding within and across ethnic boundaries that can challenge both the unjust excesses of a hyper-connected, hyper-commercial world, and various violent, fragmenting reactions to it. When technology began to take hold in the educational world, I recall seminary administrators and members of the board of trustees urging the seminary to make a commitment to acquiring the necessary resources and acting quickly so the seminary would “not be left behind.” As one leader put it, “We’re going to have to do whatever it takes to get this accomplished.” When the seminary has the same level of resolve regarding diversity, all our students’ hopes voiced here—and more—will be realized.

Note: I borrowed the example of institutional commitment to technology and diversity from Daryl Smith, professor of education and psychology, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California. She used the example in a presentation on “Diversity and Educational Effectiveness” at a meeting of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, April 13, 2000, San Diego, CA. I expanded on the comparison for this essay.

Ruth Vuong is dean of students at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

Student Diversity and the Data

Francis A. Lonsway

The Association of Theological Schools

ABSTRACT: Francis Lonsway, director of student information resources at ATS, offers his analysis of student diversity drawing upon the data resources of the Association, the Fact Book on Theological Education, and the Student Information Project. He compares this information with other information on demographic trends available from the U.S. Census Bureau and Statistics Canada reports. This information provides a helpful "snapshot" of diversity in the student populations served by ATS member schools.

The focus is students and the question is: To what extent are member schools of ATS achieving racial/ethnic diversity within their student bodies? The General Institutional Standards of the Association articulate the value of diversity across the range of aspects of institutional life. Statement 2.5 of Standard 2 states, "Integrity in theological education includes institutional practices that promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America."¹ That statement goes to the heart of any school's mission and, indeed, to its institutional integrity. The text of the statement goes further: "Schools shall seek to enhance participation of persons of racial/ethnic minorities in institutional life."² Standard 7, "Student Recruitment, Admission, Services, and Placement," provides the sharper focus for this essay when it states that "Schools shall give evidence of efforts in admissions to encourage diversity in such areas as race, ethnicity, region, denomination, or gender."³

The intent of the standards is to take the issue of diversity seriously. That is as it should be. Having addressed the question of the intent of ATS with respect to ethnic diversity, it is reasonable to ask just how ethnically diverse are the schools of ATS?

There are two principal sources for these data, the *Fact Book on Theological Education* and the Student Information Project with its entering and graduating student questionnaires. The *Fact Book* reports total enrollment by racial/ethnic group, and when the "Race Unknown" category is eliminated, the following represents the enrollment pattern for the fall of the 2000-2001 academic year. Asians comprised 7.3% of the total enrollment; Blacks, 10.4%; Hispanics, 3.9%; Native Americans, 0.3%; Non-Resident Aliens, 8.5%; and Whites, 69.7%.⁴

The five-year studies of the Student Information Project present much the same picture.⁵ There are differences, however, insofar as these two studies do not aggregate the total enrollment in all ATS member schools but focus

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specifically on students who are entering or graduating from participating schools in the Student Information Project in any given academic year. Furthermore, schools using the *Entering Student Questionnaire* and the *Graduating Student Questionnaire* report a higher percentage of M.Div. students than is reflected in the total enrollment of all ATS schools. This is likely a useful benchmark because “The Master of Divinity degree is the normative degree to prepare persons for ordained ministry and for general pastoral and religious leadership responsibilities in congregations and other settings.”⁶

With these two differences in mind, the question about racial/ethnic diversity can be sharpened to explore whether the patterns of this diversity among students have changed for either or both entering students or graduating students over the last five years. The percentage of Asians graduating in 2000-2001 increased from 6.6% in 1996-97 to 9.4% while the percentage of Black students in the same period declined from 9.1% to 7.6%. The percentage of Hispanics remained steady at 2%, Native Americans at 0.5%, and Non Resident Aliens at 2.5%. The percentage of White students remained fairly steady over the five years of the survey. In 2000-2001 the percentage was 78% of graduates. The portrait from the *Entering Student Questionnaire* was much the same.

What does one make of this? Do the percentages in ATS seminaries reflect the overall racial/ethnic mix of people in North America and in that light, are the schools of ATS, in general, on target or off the mark? Put another way, is the pattern of enrollment of ATS schools representative of the population as a whole? The questions cannot be easily answered because data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Statistics Canada report ethnic backgrounds in substantially different ways. However, if we use data from the U.S. Census Bureau as one useful snapshot of the ethnic diversity within the United States we learn that approximately 3% are Asians while Blacks or African Americans represent approximately 12% as do Hispanics or Latinos, and Whites comprise 72% of the population.⁷ A coarse analysis of ATS enrollments, which would have as its goal to match this racial/ethnic mix, would lead one to state, in general, that the seminaries of ATS enroll a higher proportion of Asians than are present in the population, a lower proportion of Blacks, and a considerably lower proportion of Hispanics—the most underrepresented racial/ethnic group in theological education.

As with any broad stroke of the brush, the fabric of the canvas has been met. While the ATS Standards are sensitive to the contextual settings of schools, nonetheless, they continue to call the member schools to work toward achieving greater diversity. The data above accomplish a similar end. However, it is the details that complete the painting and so, too, the possibility of a more thoughtful and enriched analysis.

First, it is clear that racial/ethnic clusters differ widely within the States and Provinces. For example, according to *Census 2000*, 49 % of Asians lived in

the West and over half (51%) lived in just three states, California, New York, and Hawaii.⁸ The pattern for Blacks is also specific. According to the same source, 54% of Blacks lived in the South and only 10% in the West with New York and Chicago being the cities with the largest Black populations.⁹ The distinctive story for Hispanics is that more than three-quarters lived in the West (43.5%) or South (32.8%) and half of all Hispanics lived in just two states, California and Texas.¹⁰ It is reasonable to assume, then, that the impetus for recruiting racial/ethnic minority students relates in good measure to where a particular seminary is located and where the congregations are for which it prepares its seminarians.

But there are other details that must be part of a reasonable landscape for a seminary committed to making racial/ethnic diversity a reality within its seminary community. For example, irrespective of their percentages throughout North America, neither Asians nor Hispanics have a history of establishing seminaries for their racial/ethnic families as do the Black/African American communities in the United States. Furthermore, denominations vary widely not only in the racial/ethnic communities they have served historically but in the likelihood that different racial/ethnic groups have or would become members of their congregations and parishes. These and other reasons must necessarily be taken into account for there to be any useful analysis of the overall racial/ethnic situation among students in ATS seminaries.

Let me be clear. None of these special circumstances, geographic distribution, the historical pattern of seminary education, nor the absence of racial/ethnic persons served by a denomination frees a seminary of ATS from the stated goal of racial/ethnic diversity. They do, however, suggest some additional evidence that a seminary must have in mind as it strives to become more diverse.

Francis A. Lonsway is director of student information resources at ATS with responsibility for the Entering and Graduating Student Questionnaires of the Student Information Project, the Profiles of Ministry Program, and the evaluation of the accrediting standards of the Association.

ENDNOTES

1. *Bulletin 45, Part 1* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2002), 50.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 66
4. Louis Charles Willard, ed., *Fact Book on Theological Education* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2001), 38-39.
5. Francis A. Lonsway, *The Entering Student Questionnaire: A Study of Five Years of Use and The Graduating Student Questionnaire: A Study of Five Years of Use, 1996-97 through 2000-01* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2001, 2002).
6. *Bulletin 45, Part 1*, 95.

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7. U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Redistricting Data* (Washington: U. S. Department of Commerce, 2001), Table 1.
8. Jessica S. Barnes and Claudette E. Bennett, *The Asian Population: 2000* (Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002), p. 4.
9. Jesse McKinnon, *The Black Population: 2000* (Washington: U. S. Department of Commerce, 2001), pp. 3 and 5.
10. Betsy Guzman, *The Hispanic Population: 2000* (Washington: U. S. Department of Commerce, 2001), pp. 2-3.

Reflections on Institutional Issues Related to Race and Ethnicity in ATS Schools

Introduction

In March 2002, the ATS Committee on Race and Ethnicity (CORE), in conjunction with the Faculty Development Committee, planned the first *ATS Workshop on Diversity* for ATS schools that identify their student enrollments as being predominantly white, and have either five or more racial/ethnic faculty members or a faculty with 20% or higher racial/ethnic composition. Thirty-five schools met these criteria, and some 80 participants—presidents, deans, and faculty—from thirty-one of these schools attended the workshop. The goals of the workshop were: (1) sharing cases from predominantly white ATS institutions about racial/ethnic diversity, (2) conversing as a means of extracting hopeful principles of institutional change in this area, and (3) identifying how such principles become best practices communicated to the broader ATS membership. Work in preparation for this event was illuminating. For example, it was learned that 92 ATS schools have no racial/ethnic faculty member. This and other relevant statistics created an awareness that this event had to be structured as an authentic workshop in which the participants worked toward the provision of resources for other ATS institutions interested in pursuing this concern. Accordingly, ATS staff solicited “cases,” met ahead of the event with small-group facilitators, and drove a forward-looking process. From printed cases, processed discussion notes, and the following commissioned articles emerging from this workshop, written by Julia Speller of Chicago Theological Seminary and Jack Seymour of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, ATS staff are developing resources for schools to use in working with trustees, faculty, and other constituencies of the schools with regard to racial/ethnic diversity.

These articles by Julia Speller, an African American church historian and religious educator, and Jack Seymour, a European American academic dean and Christian educator, provide us with reflections from their role at the workshop as participant/observers. They reflect here theologically and practically about how what they witnessed can serve ATS schools and the wider publics, and how ATS can better serve these constituencies through its programs. They each provide valuable insights into the complexities of bringing the reality of diversity into the center of theological education.

—Marsha Foster Boyd

Increasing Diversity in Theological School: A Reflection

*Julia M. Speller
Chicago Theological Seminary*

ABSTRACT: Julia M. Speller, assistant professor of church history at Chicago Theological Seminary, shares her reflections on the first ATS Workshop on Diversity. In the effort to increase diversity, schools must take the risk of overcoming "barriers that prevent diversity." The story of Peter's encounter with the Gentile communities serves as a paradigm of this ever present challenge for the Christian community of faith. Speller highlights key principles to guide schools in the appropriation of the gift of diversity: a commitment, first of all, to diversity; secondly, cultivation of "attitudes" that foster diversity; and thirdly, creating "new policies and practices" that encompass all facets of institutional life from admissions, to staff hiring, trustee recruitment, and the "canon" that organizes the theological curriculum.

Introduction

There is a proverb of the Bantu people of Cameroon West Africa that says, "Those who never visit think that mother is the only cook." It implies that persons who do not leave the familiarity of their own culture have difficulty conceiving of any reality outside of their own. It also suggests the need for a new attitude that is not threatened by the presence of difference and that honors and respects the diversity and giftedness in others. Within these words we find a message that speaks to the current challenge of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS). This African proverb complements the ATS goal that seeks to "promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America [while] gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in changing cultural and racially diverse settings."¹ This ATS goal and the African saying both challenge the fear of difference and invite a radical move toward positive and transformative change in theological education.

During the ATS Workshop on Diversity in March 2002, representatives from thirty-one schools were challenged to consider seriously the implications of abandoning a closed "kitchen etiquette" in exchange for a more diverse educational banquet. These institutions that have a predominantly white student enrollment and 20% (or five or more) racial/ethnic faculty members met for two days in a workshop setting. The sessions consisted of small discussion groups that focused on case studies written by selected partici-

pants. The groups were asked to describe best practices and identify useful principles from their institutional settings. My role at the event was as participant-observer. My major task was to listen and record insights from group discussions that summarized both practices and principles to help white institutions think critically about the problems and promises of increasing racial/ethnic diversity. Throughout that weekend, I heard energetic dialogue and I also felt moments of tension as this very critical topic was discussed. This paper is a reflective interpretation of that event. I will begin by citing a theological base that will help frame key issues highlighted in the sessions. I will then go on to suggest three broad principles that I believe will point to the kind of values that need to be cultivated by theological schools as they tackle the awesome task of increasing and sustaining racial/ethnic diversity.

A Theological Consideration

The problem of being confined in mother's kitchen and being bound by certain eating habits is not a new one, for we find a similar dilemma facing Peter and the early church in Acts 10. You know the story. While waiting to be served a meal at the home of Simon, the tanner in Joppa, Peter fell asleep and dreamed about a sheet being lowered from the sky filled with animals that he considered unclean. When the voice of Christ beacons him to "kill and eat," he refused, attempting to be faithful to the dietary laws of Judaism. Then he was chided by his master who said, "What God has made clean you must not call profane." (Acts 10:15b) After two additional exchanges, he awoke and was very perplexed. Before he could figure it all out, the voice told of a man who would approach him with a request to go to Caesarea to meet with a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Although this trip would mean venturing into Gentile territory, Peter remembered the dream and the voice and complied. Once he arrived, he not only preached a message about the impartiality of God but also welcomed the Gentiles into the fold through Baptism.

In this story, Peter was faced with the confusing and perhaps painful task of embracing diversity as he witnessed to Gentiles. Worse yet, the dream that preceded the visit suggested more than a casual encounter: it would likely involve the intimate experience of sharing food and fellowship. Peter knew the importance of obeying the Jewish dietary laws, and his major concern was to remain within the limits of the Law. This very strange dream and this equally difficult command challenged Peter to rethink his traditional dietary habits and to risk the reinterpretation of what he had accepted as part of his religious formation and obligation.

In a similar manner, our attempts at diversity in theological education are fraught with risk as we consider what we must rethink and what traditional boundaries must be transgressed as we prepare effective religious

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leaders. In our American society, the myth of the melting pot has created the illusion of cultural homogeneity and sameness in the minds of many and it supports an unrealistic desire to view our American culture as monolithic. But as institutions of theological education that are gifted with the lenses of faith and values, we are challenged to identify, reinterpret, and dismantle barriers that prevent diversity. If our mission is to prepare women and men for effective and liberative ministry in the world, we miss the mark with educational experiences that do not reflect the realities of diversity in our daily lives.

As with Peter, we are challenged to embrace the vision of God's realm as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. When we do, we discover the connection between authentic, intentional diversity and progressive, transformative education. Upon this theological foundation we see the value of a reinterpreted educational mission that is *committed to the vision of diversity*, that *cultivates new attitudes that honor diversity*, and that *willingly creates policies and practices that support ongoing diversity*.

Commitment to the Vision

Peter the apostle, who was called to witness to the Gentiles in the story, was first and foremost a devout Jew. He had studied the Torah as a young man and faithfully practiced his faith throughout his adulthood. He had heard Jesus say that his mission was not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it and he had also seen the reinterpretation and broadening of the Law, first hand, as Jesus healed on the Sabbath and communed with the unclean. The dilemma that Peter faced in Acts 10 was to discover how to reconcile his loyalty to his faith tradition, that focused on exclusion and sameness, with the new vision of ministry seen in the ministry of Jesus, that honored inclusion and diversity.

This challenge faced by Peter is not unlike that of many of our schools in the ATS, as we make a *commitment to the vision of diversity*. This first principle is seen in light of educational institutions that have honored and upheld a tradition of exclusive curriculum, a homogeneous faculty make-up, and a static student population but are now confronted with the realities of America's growing pluralism. Educational models and foci that were designed to perpetuate cultural exclusivity are now obsolete as new voices emerge and broader life experiences demand consideration. This issue was very apparent in the small group workshop sessions as participants discussed the differences between diversity and tokenism and struggled to articulate the impact of a philosophy of diversity on curriculum and pedagogy as well as administration and policy. An even more tension-laden challenge that was apparent in varying ways in every group centered on the politics of diversity and the accompanying ethical implications. It was here that the real-life experiences of racial/ethnic participants in the case studies enlightened, informed, and even convicted the participants. Many hard questions emerged such as: Does

increasing diversity open institutions to charges of reverse discrimination? Will increased diversity dilute institutional traditions? How will a more diverse faculty influence curriculum and pedagogy? What new expectations for individual and institutional change are implied? Although we left the workshop with these questions still unanswered for the most part, the very fact that they were articulated in an open forum was indeed a good first step.

Peter probably would have loved to remain in the realm of philosophy as he considered his dilemma with diversity. He chose instead to face it head-on in spite of his doubts because of his commitment to the larger vision of God's Reign. Truly embracing diversity in our theological schools requires this same kind of courage and insight that is committed to the larger vision. But what precisely is the vision? To say simply that it is one of diversity is not enough. One of the recurring queries in all of the groups was—How does one define diversity? Is it a matter of balancing numbers? Is the goal to reach a certain "critical mass"? How do we know when we have achieved it? We must remember that our primary vision is one of education and transformation. Diversity is a way that ATS has given us to reach that goal, fully aware of the need to reinterpret our educational missions and goals in ways that will keep our institutions relevant and on the cutting edge of society. As institutions of theological education, therefore, we must first and foremost be committed to the vision of diversity and inclusion and be truly convicted that it will enhance the educational mission while preparing effective religious leadership for the twenty-first century.

Cultivation of New Attitudes

A commitment to any cause is only as good as the attitudes and perspectives that support it, so a second principle in our efforts toward diversity is to *cultivate attitudes that honor diversity*. Once Peter committed to reexamine the implications of his cultural exclusiveness in his new and changing context, he was challenged to adjust and realign his attitude. Some of the very things that he accepted as profane under the Law were now viewed in a different light under grace. It became apparent that his encounter with Cornelius caused a change in his thinking as he made the profound theological statement, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality but in every nation, anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is acceptable to [God]." (Acts 10:34-35) The beauty of this proclamation is that Peter began with a solid theological statement not a speculative human position. He stood on the firm ground of the Gospel message that provided reassurance in the unfamiliar waters of cultural diversity.

Likewise, as we consider the awesome challenge of diversity, we must be aware of the need for attitudinal changes in our institutions. Beginning with Peter's theological posture of impartiality, we have a model for the kind of

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attitudes that will support and sustain an educational environment that prepares effective religious leaders. Unfortunately, once institutions face the full magnitude of diversity there is a temptation to adopt a “color-blind” or “a-cultural” posture that will shield them from differences rather than help them appreciate and learn from the experience. This attempt to neutralize cultural particularities in an educational environment creates instead an ethos that favors the comfort of uniformity through commonality rather than the dynamism of unity within diversity. One group stated that the academy should look like a “banquet table,” but the questions that must be asked are, what is being served and who is doing the serving? Another group, however, cautioned the adoption of a “food-court” attitude because of its tendency to commodify cultural differences. In both instances, fear can creep in and manifest itself as indifference and selective non-involvement, thwarting attempts at diversity.

A perspective departing from a divine locus of impartiality rather than human indifference and non-involvement seeks equal access and equal appreciation. It can reshape our attitudes and prepare us for more honest and authentic engagement. Here the overwhelming recommendation from the workshop groups was for intentional and ongoing faculty development such as diversity and anti-racism training. The challenge of understanding and responding to various “cultural codes” is ever present in a learning environment that honors diversity. Also facing the realities and implications of “privilege” is another important consideration that was discussed. In each instance, attitudes about “cultural differences” must be reconceived and understood as “group assets,” making a grand step toward diversity in our theological schools. In addition to being committed to the vision of diversity, institutions must also be open to changes in attitude and perception about the realities as well as the results of such changes.

Create new policies and practices

If commitment is the first step and new attitudes set the pace, policies and practices are the actualized outcomes of honest and authentic efforts toward diversity. So the last principle in this passage that speaks directly to our challenge of increasing diversity is to create practices and policies that will invite and support ongoing diversity. After Peter’s sermon, he was moved to extend the hand of fellowship to the Gentile sisters and brothers as well as invite them into fellowship through the waters of baptism. While this may be a natural progression in the evangelistic efforts of many twenty-first century churches, this simple act of welcome and acceptance was a major shift in policy and practice in the first century. Up to this point, Gentiles were invited to become a part of the early Christian community by first being circumcised—in other words by becoming a Jew. This courageous gesture by Peter paved the way for a meeting in Jerusalem that dealt with the problem of Gentile

conversion to Christianity without first becoming Jewish (Acts 15).

In a similar manner, in our institutions we are compelled to create or amend policies and practices that invite and welcome as well as celebrate and support diversity. As some of our workshops have indicated, this must be done on a variety of levels to be effective. Starting at the top with an inclusive board that seeks to integrate cultural sensitivity and competence into the larger framework of the institution is a must. There must also be creative mobilization of human resources throughout the administration that intentionally hires and effectively supports a diversified staff. It goes without saying that faculty searches and student recruitment must be open to concerns about diversity but there also must be honesty about how this new sensitivity will change practices and policies. One of the major points of discussion in several groups was the concern about maintaining the current theological “canon” and the tensions around broadening the dialogue to include other voices. This very critical issue is much deeper than simply adding racial/ethnic scholars to the syllabi. It has major implications for the shape of theological discourse, the redefining of who should be the “gatekeepers,” and the “de-colonialization” of curriculum, as one group described it.

The diversification of the faculty, board members, students, and staff is essential but an even larger challenge is to create policies and practices that reflect a true commitment to faith and values. This suggests that the task of creating policies and practices should be done with a “sacramental” eye. As a sacred act, practice and policy-making become more than simply a means to an end or a way to comply with ATS regulations. They become an opportunity to “live out the Gospel, institutionally,” as one group so prophetically stated. It is a chance to fashion an educational environment that can be a space for debate and learning as well as dissonance and reconciliation, and it holds the promise of an emerging new religious leadership that will be an active part of God’s Realm on earth.

Conclusion

Clearly, Acts 10 gives us clues about some of the steps involved in our efforts to increase and sustain diversity. This is indeed a powerful passage that speaks to the challenges of cultural diversity that were faced by Christians in the first century and that remain for us in the twenty-first century as well. But this passage also reminds us that this task, as overwhelming as it seems, is not something that we must do alone. Acts 10 is known by many as the story of the Second Pentecost because it is in this account that the power of the Holy Spirit descended upon the Gentile Christians. Those involved were reminded that in spite of their differences, the ultimate power to actualize the kind of transformative leadership needed for their diverse time was found in

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the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Likewise as institutions of theological education, it is this dimension that sets us apart from other schools and universities, as we acknowledge that our efforts are ineffective without the empowerment of God's Spirit. As we face the challenges of diversity in theological schools, we recognize that because of our faith claims, our efforts cannot take place in the absence of the common faith values that we share. This reflection has identified three principles to be considered in this process: *commitment to the vision of diversity, the cultivation of new attitudes that honor diversity, and the creation of new policies that support and sustain diversity.* They should not be considered exhaustive but only a first step toward living out the ATS expectation.

"Those who never visit think that mother is the only cook." This African proverb implies that *theological schools* that do not leave the familiarity of their culture have difficulty conceiving of any reality outside of their own. But it suggests the need for new attitudes within *institutions of theological education* that are not threatened by the presence of difference and that honor and respect the diversity and giftedness of others. This proverb complements the ATS goal that seeks to "promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America [while] gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in changing cultural and racially diverse settings."

Is your theological school ready to leave Mother's kitchen?

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ENDNOTE

1. Statement 2.5 of Standard 2, "Institutional Integrity," Bulletin 45, Part 1, *Standards of Accreditation* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2002), 50.

Addressing and Embodying Diversity in Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: Jack Seymour, academic dean, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, offers his reflections on the ATS Workshop on Diversity. The question of diversity raises the fundamental questions of “who” matters and “what” matters in this ongoing conversation. He offers a theological assessment of diversity as embodying a distinctive theological anthropology that values the “wideness” of God’s action in the world. In order to broaden the conversation, theological schools must intentionally embrace the gift of diversity. He offers the helpful metaphor of the “banquet table” as a means of accentuating the hospitality and inclusiveness that are necessary for welcoming and nurturing the gifts of faculty and students.

How do administrators and boards of trustees lead theological institutions toward more inclusion? How do we address and embody diversity? Simply, we ask the fundamental questions of what matters in theological education and who matters.

Have you heard the following comments about or criticisms of efforts toward diversity in theological education?

“What can we expect? Our denomination is not diverse and neither are our students.”

“Our faculty reflects our church.”

“Isn’t the call for diversity more influenced by economic globalization, than faith?”

“There is a scarcity of ethnic persons who can teach in theological schools. We are all competing for the same few.”

“Ethnic hires require a special process. That’s not fair to other searches.”

“We have to find the best person for our position.”

What do these phrases reflect? Some sound outrageous. Others appear to be statements of fact. Yet, they are not rhetorical resistance. Beneath them are real fears and concerns about the mission of theological education that must be engaged.

Questions of diversity and inclusion point us to fundamental conversations about the faithfulness and mission of theological education. We ask (1) what matters and (2) who matters. And there will be consequences. Such

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conversations are difficult and painful. Conflicts emerge and assumptions are revealed.¹ Answers will be concrete and particular about actual practices schools take and about deep commitments they hold. Yet, only through these conversations new possibilities for theological education and congregational life may be opened.

I. What Matters? Defining Vision and Mission

At its heart, the question of what matters is a theological question. Why does diversity matter? What does it mean? Who decides? For what purpose, for what church, for what ministry? All of these are theological questions. Reflection about diversity begins with exploration of theological visions of the seminary and its education, or more concretely, the responsibility of the seminary to the mission of the church. Moreover, this theological conversation is not only for faculty members, rather it is a broad and multifaceted conversation for the whole church, involving faculty, administration, church leaders, board members, and students.

What does diversity mean? Diversity is a relationship of mutuality, an open space where persons contribute simply because they care about the mission of the church to the whole world—to those created as children of God.

First, the focus on diversity does benefit individual groups by highlighting and considering the particular practices of ministry, for example, by

- adding focused training on leadership in Korean congregations to the curriculum;
- encouraging students to explore practices of inclusion in the worship services of multi-cultural congregations;
- comparing patterns of youth ministry and their theological commitments in African American, Korean American, and European American congregations of the same denomination; or
- communicating and exploring the implications of Womanist theological convictions emerging within congregations for Christian ethical decision-making.

Diversity makes curricular tasks particular. It expands scholarship and includes ecclesiological practices in theological reflection.

Second, the focus on diversity also recognizes our interconnections and brokenness. Diversity means resisting the homogenizing of racial, ethnic, cultural, and class differences into uniformity. Honoring diversity means honoring particular practices of the faithful persons engaging in the religious and practical issues of everyday living. Honoring diversity reflects the multiple conflicts and commitments that emerge as Christian communities bound by time and place seek to witness and be faithful to the saving presence of the Christ in their lives.

For Christian theology, the question of diversity involves

- an awareness of theological anthropology, of God's work in creating the "children of God,"
- an affirmation of the wideness of God's mission,
- a recognition that the faith is itself a community of traditions and practices,
- a desire to resist pressures of globalization that amalgamate and commodify people,
- a recognition of the gifts differing cultural patterns bring to faith and ministry,
- a reaching out to understand the particular contexts in which God's mission occurs,
- an honoring of particular practices of Christian communities,
- an affirmation that each tradition is better understood when it is seen in the midst of, in contrast to, other traditions,
- a hope that God's great banquet table can be embodied in moments of communication, justice, and mission, and
- a desire to relate the faith tradition to the contemporary context of ministry.

Broadening the conversation: Seminaries need to broaden the conversation of what matters to their wider constituencies of church leaders, board members, students, and community leaders. The answers will be particular, exploring a particular theological tradition, context, and school—a particular story of mission—and the impact of theological education on that mission. The very act of broadening the conversation to these constituencies reveals that most seminaries already embody forms of diverse cultures:

- the culture of the denomination is present;
- the faculty share an academic culture and its expectations;
- the perspectives and practices (the cultures) of academic disciplines define what methods are taught and what content is important; and
- members of the board of trustees may share the culture of the church, or a part of it, and the culture of the business world.

How these differences are engaged and respected communicates much about how mission is practiced. Moreover, learning how diverse constituencies use power to control and shape the agenda of theological education and its mission is critical.

For the wider community of theological education, ATS needs to sponsor conversations about diversity as a theological and missional term. One group of theological educators at the workshop on diversity suggested that this wider conversation would consist of (1) exploring the canon of theological education represented in ATS, (2) cracking open the hegemony of the enlightenment paradigm of theology and theological education, and (3) supporting communication among church leaders, seminary board members, and faculty about effective and faithful practices.

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Responding to God's call: We confront diversity by simply living and working in the present world of expansive and immediate communication and of cultural and religious differences. Seeking to fulfill God's call for mission and justice intimately involves us all in both communicating the perspectives of one's faith community and seeking to understand the perspectives of the groups to whom one communicates and witnesses. To witness we need an ability to see, understand, and respond across cultures.

"Minority persons" in this culture have spoken about their need for a "double consciousness," that is, having to learn both the language and meanings of their communities as well as the language and meanings of the mainstream culture. Yet this need to live and communicate within multiple contexts is broadly true today. For example, persons of "white" ethnicity need to deal with the hegemony and meanings of "whiteness." That is itself a "consciousness." Secondly, persons need to be open to cross-cultural communication with others whose communities and/or religious traditions are different from theirs. Communication itself expects openness and listening, seeking to participate in more than one perspective. Finally, the Christian community itself consists of a perspective that differs from public cultural traditions and meaning patterns. We need to know the faith and know the world in which we live. They are not the same.

Therefore, for communication, the "norm" is diversity. We seek to be faithful and we seek to live and communicate amidst differing perspectives and meanings, some of which are in direct conflict with each other.

Theological curriculum and scholarship: To be adequately trained for ministry, students need to understand the Christian theological tradition and practices of ministry. This tradition is itself multiple and wide. The shared commitments of the ecumenical church can be summarized, but even the summary reveals particularity and diversity. As the commitments are summarized, the particular foci and commitments of each contributing denominational tradition are acknowledged.

The focus on diversity merely illustrates the history of Christian faith and the embedded conversations and conflicts that occurred over differing commitments and traditions. These commitments and traditions were born in historical moments, affected by cultural patterns and practices, and sought to faithfully witness to and live out the revelation in Christ. For example, it is obvious that the practices of Japanese Christianity in the 1700s that had been learned from Portuguese Jesuits and practiced underground in a hostile environment, with little contact with the wider world, would have different emphases than a religion of the state church supported by the prince of a European state. Similarly, the phrase "separation of church and state" means little outside of the United States. Moreover, evangelistic practices emerging within the United States culture differ from evangelistic practices emerging in Malaysia where proselytizing is illegal.

The focus on diversity is faithful to the methods of historical theology. It enlivens the communities that witness to God's action in Jesus and their efforts to make their faith real in their context. Therefore, learning the practices of the people of God as they seek to be faithful is a key task in the preparation for ministry.

II. Who Matters? Who Belongs at the Table?

Each theological school is called to address the question: who matters?

- Who is welcome?
- What do we expect of students and faculty?
- Which students belong and why (part-time, full-time, young, second career)?
- To whom do we listen?
- What scholarship do we respect?
- What contributions do we honor?
- What congregations and ministries do we highlight?
- Through whom do we connect with the realities of parish life?

Each school has a character and temperament that embodies an answer to these questions of hospitality. In setting admissions standards and in recruiting faculty and students, answers are given. Often outside consultants are needed to assist in recognizing patterns of welcome, hospitality, and meaning as well as in exploring and expanding practices.

Preparing people for the table: An institution committed to diversity will encourage

- the participation of faculty, administration, and students in training in cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication;
- training in practices and patterns of conflict engagement;
- recognizing and affirming the differing expectations, perspectives, and reward systems of differing cultural and ethnic groups; and
- learning differing pedagogical practices that honor differing learning styles.

These activities are a first step to taking seriously the persons who are part of a school and their commitments and stories.

Inviting, nurturing, and affirming persons at the table: In particular, these practices will be embodied in patterns of hiring, nurturing, and promotion. In fact, we, faculty and administrators in theological education, have contributed to the scarcity of racial/ethnic faculty by creating hiring, tenure, and review processes that are competitive, rather than nurturing. For scarcity to be overcome, we simply need to redirect our perspectives and have the will.

Hiring and tenure should be moments of celebration, not crisis. The processes should be transparent. We need to create systems of support and

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traditions of mentoring for all faculty members in an environment of hospitality and integrity. We need to expand the ways persons are prepared for theological teaching. And we need to do more to identify and nurture particular persons within our own schools and churches to prepare to teach and lead as faculty and administrative colleagues.

We also need to engage directly the realities of institutional racism. Frankly, at the same moment we call for expanding the persons at the table of theological education, we reinforce practices of hiring and promotion that inhibit that call. We have forgotten real practices within theological education even 30 and 40 years ago. Present practices of hiring, promotion, evaluation, and connection to churches are in contrast to those realities. Remembering some of these older practices and circumstances provide more opportunity, thus addressing, what is called, the scarcity of candidates.

Inviting and hiring colleagues: For example, in the 1960s as theological education expanded, a need for more trained faculty members was experienced. As a result, many faculty members were “homegrown.” Persons were identified, encouraged, and supported in gaining a higher education and the leadership skills needed. Therefore, to draw candidates from the church or from former students and to support them as they prepared for leadership is not strange. The process of special hiring is not at all unusual.

In fact, in the 1970s denominations and schools provided more scholarship resources to assist those to prepare for leadership, e.g., Fund for Theological Education, Rockefeller Foundation, and denominational scholarships. One of the seminaries that became part of Garrett-Evangelical had scholarship resources to help some of their own graduates move onto further education, hoping they would then be invited to return as faculty. Recovering these activities of identifying and supporting persons who might take a leadership role at the school is critical.

Nurturing persons for tenure and promotion: Moreover, for many schools, tenure emerged as an institutional practice in the 1960s. At first, tenure was an attempt to protect the freedom of critical scholarship (which is now protected by accreditation).

The way tenure has been defined and expanded has had an affect on the perception of scarcity. For schools, tenure has too often become a competitive process pitting faculty against the mythical “best” scholar at the “best” institutions. While the competition is a way schools highlight their own quality and do seek to enhance it, the competition puts more weight on factors defined by scholarship and academic disciplines, rather than by the mission and needs of schools.

As we have emulated the university, publishing standards have expanded at the same time that the content of scholarship has narrowed and the appropriate consumers of scholarship have been defined as one’s peers. How do we encourage scholarship for the church? How are the insights of schol-

arship made available to the church? How do the practices of faithful Christians become sources of reflection and scholarship?

We need to ask how we balance church and academy—how we balance missional needs and creative and critical scholarship—in tenure and promotion processes. How do we judge tenure and promotion in terms of theological categories, rather than cultural ones? Our increasingly competitive practices tend to limit the kinds of research considered, seek to promote individualism, and exclude community responsive and advocacy work—the particular work that many theological colleagues need to engage if we are to really honor diversity. Moreover, for faculty, these processes tend to make persons think about “earning tenure” and “protecting oneself for a future job and possible move,” rather than building a “banquet table”—a community of ministry and scholarship within the school.

Our practices have created the environment of scarcity. How do we, in contrast, create practices that widen rather than narrow scholarship, that identify and encourage persons, that nurture and support colleagues as they prepare to be partners in teaching and institutional leadership, that provide mentors from one’s own community and culture, that make expectations clear and provide support, that assist faculty to recognize the cultural expectations within theological schools and within academic disciplines, that honor contributions to church and culture, and that encourage participation in enhancing and fulfilling the seminary’s mission?

We need to recognize and hold ourselves accountable to the common tasks theological educators share. Moreover, we need to develop intentional processes of identifying and supporting future faculty to enhance seminary diversity. We need to develop adequate strategies of nurture and community. We need processes of promotion that build the community of the seminary and its mission.

III. The Banquet Table

The biblical image of the great banquet highlights the importance of diversity—a banquet open to strangers, concretely sharing the gifts of the table, and expecting fulfillment. The commitment to diversity honors Christians seeking to live faithfully within their situations. The commitment honors the impulse in Christian faith to witness and evangelism. The commitment expands the content of historical, theological, and practical scholarship available to theological education.

Too often our excuses and our guilt get in the way of risking new practices of hiring, of enhancing the ways we nurture and affirm our colleagues, and of reaching out to learn more about how the faith is concretely lived and practiced in various communities. The challenge is to begin to converse within the constituencies of the school about the missional claim and vision

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reflected in the call for diversity. It is also a challenge to invite and support persons to become colleagues and leaders in theological education.

Few of the schools that have a strong record of diversity believe that they have done well. Rather, they would say they simply tried. They pray that their small steps expand the witness of the faith and the training for ministry. They have identified the task: ask what matters, ask who matters, and actually take some small steps—simply begin the practices of diversity.

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ENDNOTE

1. The following reflections are profoundly informed by the depth of sharing that occurred at the ATS Workshop on Diversity. People felt open and free to tell their stories, to be both critical and hopeful. Their comments revealed the depth of pain and the expansiveness of hope. Their dialogue was personal, concrete, and committed.

The Theological Education of U.S. Hispanics

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ABSTRACT: Using data from the National Survey of Hispanic/Latino Theological Education, the authors recommend that accrediting agencies convene alliances of seminaries and theological schools that are publicly committed to increasing the number of their Hispanic students, faculty, and administrators. Seminaries can expand their pool of students by partnering with Bible and diocesan training institutes and their pool of faculty by forming alliances and collaborating with Latino/a professional and educational organizations such as the Hispanic Summer Program and the Hispanic Theological Initiative.

[This article draws upon much of chapter four of the forthcoming title from the University of Scranton Press, The Leaning Sacred Tower: The Challenge and Promise of Latino/a Theological Education by Edwin I. Hernández and Kenneth G. Davis.]

Introduction

At the center of the Latino community stands its churches. They maintain meaning, communicate values, sustain cultural identity, and organize for empowerment and justice.¹ The health of that community often mirrors the vitality and strength of the local church.² And that strength is determined in large part by its leadership.³

The strength of that leadership depends upon vocation, commitment, and experience, but also upon appropriate education. Who will train the future pastors of virtually the last stable institution in the barrio? Who will articulate the unique contributions that a Latino/a perspective brings to theological discourse? Who will represent the interests and perspectives of the largest minority group in the country? We think that sufficiently supported Hispanic faculty and scholars are the only ones who can do this.

The Theological Education of U.S. Hispanics

The number of Hispanic and Latino/a faculty and students in ATS member schools, while desperately needed, remains limited. In 1996, the enrollment of Hispanic students in the M.Div. and professional masters' programs was 956 or 2.7% of the total head count enrollment in these programs. In fall 2000, there were 1,322 Hispanic students enrolled in these same degree programs or 3.3% of their total enrollment. While enrollment of Hispanic students is increasing, both in terms of actual numbers and as a percentage of the total, it is far from representative of the percentage of Hispanic presence in the U.S. population, nor is it growing as fast as the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States. In 1996, there were 69 Hispanic faculty members in ATS schools, of a total of 2,883 (or 2.3% of all faculty), and in 2000, there were 91 Hispanic faculty, of a total of 3,286 (or 2.7% of all faculty).⁴ Part of this growth in both students and faculty was a function of new schools being admitted to membership in the Association, and part was an increase of Hispanic enrollment in other member schools. Regardless of the reasons for these small increases, Hispanics remain the most underrepresented racial/ethnic group in ATS schools, both in student enrollment and among faculty members.

U.S. seminaries and schools of theology have not successfully recruited and retained Hispanics to either their faculties or student bodies. Confirmation of this reality also was provided by the results of the National Survey of Hispanic/Latino Theological Education (NSHLTE). Supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, this 1995 bilingual survey of Hispanic religious leaders, including clergy, religious educators, laity, and scholars, provided demographic information, as well as personal experiences, educational struggles, and levels of attainment of educational aspirations from approximately 2,000 respondents.

This article is based on the findings of that survey and the principal recommendation emerging from its analysis: accrediting agencies should create and convene alliances of schools publicly committed to demonstrably increasing the percentage of Hispanic students, faculty, and administrators. This survey revealed an interesting profile of its respondents and their perceptions.⁵

- More than three-quarters of respondents were married with families.
- Most were working in addition to attending school; 60% were working as ministers.
- The combined income for 62% of married respondents was \$35,000 annually or less.
- More than half were born outside the United States, although most were not recent arrivals.
- Even those highly acculturated maintain strong ties to their heritage.
- Eighty-two percent held a four-year college degree. A majority desired further education.

- Hispanic faculty have a significant impact on Latino/a students' ability to affirm their cultural identity, believe in their own potential, and negotiate with other faculty and administration.

The conclusions derived from the NSHLTE survey provide strong arguments for restructuring accredited theological education in order to reach and better serve the Hispanic community. Tuition and fees for the Master of Divinity degree in ATS schools averages approximately \$7,000 per year, (*Fact Book*, Table.4.1), yet in 1999, Hispanic workers' median annual earnings were only \$30, 735. Typical seminary class schedules can be inconvenient to work schedules and child care needs. The English skills of Hispanics are often insufficiently addressed, and few Latino/a role models or mentors are available. Some non-traditional schools, however, are responding to this challenging situation. Catholic diocesan training institutes and Protestant Bible institutes, for example, educate Hispanic religious leaders, the latter particularly among Baptists and Pentecostals. These institutes are inexpensive, are located in the barrio, are controlled by Latino/as, and have flexible requirements. There is much that can be learned from these types of programs.

Despite their success, we contend, these non-accredited institutions are insufficient for the adequate education of Hispanic ministers and professors. Furthermore, their graduates may not be accepted at accredited schools, and the data indicate that when they are accepted, there are significant challenges to their academic performance. Without accredited theological degrees, Hispanics will continue to be limited in church leadership.

The NSHLTE survey data indicated that the greatest barrier to theological degree completion was related to finances. Married students with children often simply could not afford to support their dependents and also pay tuition. Of those surveyed as part of the NSHLTE survey, 38% said that they overheard faculty make inappropriate remarks about minorities; 35% were excluded from school activities due to their culture; 22% were insulted or threatened; and virtually all respondents felt that they were not prepared by seminary to minister to their own people because the seminary did not include adequate attention to Latino culture, church, and community needs. Even if financial barriers could be overcome, the problems that contribute to a sense of unwelcome remain. Both deter entrance and success for Hispanics in the academy, and the result is poorer preparation of future ministers and theologians.

Not all of the survey findings were negative, however. The research identified key actions that could be undertaken by various institutions and groups that would contribute to the accessibility and enhancement of theological education among Hispanics. This article examines existing efforts to support both Hispanic students and faculty, and offers recommendations for educational institutions, recommendations for recruiting and retaining Hispanic students, recommendations for accrediting agencies, and the need to build alliances among schools that are committed to increasing the number of Hispanic faculty and students.

Hispanic Faculty and Existing Efforts to Support Latino/a Faculty and Students

The Hispanic religious community cannot influence the larger academic world (or its own community) without the contributions of Hispanic scholars in key academic positions. That impact, moreover, is multiplied when highly visible scholars serve the community as leaders, models, and mentors to future scholars and leaders.⁶ The representative presence of Hispanics in seminary faculties and administration, therefore, is the single most important measure by which we judge how well the theological education system is meeting the needs and challenges of the Hispanic community. Hispanic faculty, however, often experience peculiar stress when they are the only Hispanic on a given faculty.

In addition to their teaching and administrative responsibilities, for example, Hispanic faculty members are frequently expected to serve in liaison roles between their school and the community and are often expected to focus on minority issues. Moreover, these faculty are expected to support minority students and, in the best of circumstances, to contribute to the development of intercultural understanding among non-minority faculty, administrators, and the majority student body. These are roles that non-racial/ethnic faculty are rarely expected to assume. As a result, Hispanic faculty are often overburdened, which affects their scholarly productivity and academic accomplishment necessary for promotion or tenure. If schools had greater numbers of Latino/a faculty, they would be better able to provide more productive and just arrangements.

We suggest three efforts to retain current Hispanic faculty and to attract new ones. First, doctoral-granting theological schools should recruit Hispanic candidates for doctoral training by identifying highly motivated individuals who are committed to a life of learning and scholarship. Second, schools need to support the educational work of the most capable students, especially those who have the greatest potential for the earliest return to their communities with degrees in hand, that is, those who need only to complete the dissertation and its defense. Third, schools should provide opportunities for young Latino/a scholars to conduct and publish meaningful research that will contribute to their fields and to their careers. Not every school has the assets or knowledge to take the initiative on each of these fronts, but there are four existing resources that can be helpful.

Funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI) provides a group of outstanding Latino/a students with fellowship support for up to three out of five years in accredited, doctoral programs. Moreover, competitive scholarships are provided to those students who, for financial or other reasons, have not completed their dissertations and are in need of financial support to take the time to do so. HTI also supports scholar-

ship leading to significant publications by junior, non-tenured Hispanic faculty.⁷ Such support can enable junior faculty to demonstrate scholarly capabilities and contributions, thereby increasing the likelihood of their being granted tenure and achieving a permanent presence in the academy. HTI also provides mentoring and networking events to support and nurture a scholarly community among Latina/os. While this is the most ambitious program related specifically to the graduate theological education of Hispanics, at least four others are worthy of mention.

The Hispanic Summer Program (HSP) is “. . . an accredited, graduate, ecumenical series of courses offered at participating seminaries in various parts of the country. . . . At present, approximately half of all Latinos and Latinas pursuing academic doctorates in religion are alumni/ae of the Hispanic Summer Program.”⁸ The oldest of the initiatives mentioned here, HSP attracts top Hispanic faculty and capacity enrollment each year. Although initially supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the HSP was so well received that it is now funded by a consortium of schools of theology and seminaries and has its own board of directors and administration.

The managing agent for the HSP is the Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana (AETH), another Pew supported program. Its mission is “[to respond] to specific needs and goals in Protestant theological education,” and its “membership and participation is open to all who share in the goals and aims of the Asociación.” Of its ten objectives, eight deal specifically with theological education.⁹ AETH is ecumenical in membership and includes accredited seminaries and Bible institutes, as well as individual students and educators. It has been particularly helpful in assisting junior scholars to publish their research.

The Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States (ACHTUS) is “. . . an association of scholars dedicated to promoting research and critical theological reflection within the context of U.S. Hispanic Experience. . . . In order to carry out its mission, the Academy seeks to. . . [s]upport Hispanics currently engaged in theological research and studies.”¹⁰ This is accomplished through its *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* and awards granted annually that recognize Hispanic theological scholarship and institutions that support it.

Most recently, the Louisville Institute (www.louisville-institute.org/grants.html), supported by Lilly Endowment, has established a first book grant program for non-tenured minority faculty. Seminaries and universities interested in diversifying their faculty would do well to cooperate and form partnerships with educational groups such as these. The following are recommendations to help educational institutions enhance Latina and Latino theological education.

Recommendations for Educational Institutions

On the basis of the findings of the NSHLTE, the unique problems experienced by Hispanic faculty, and our experience, we have several recommendations to make to theological education institutions that will increase and enhance the presence of Hispanic/Latino/a faculty and students in accredited, graduate professional theological education.

1. Institutions should set specific, quantifiable goals for improving low racial/ethnic representation with realistic timelines for their attainment. One such goal might be, for example, "By the hundredth anniversary of our school the percentage of Latino/as graduating will be at least proportional to the Hispanic population of our denomination."
2. Schools should establish accountability procedures for measuring progress toward the attainment of more inclusive participation of Hispanics in theological education. A population that includes more Latino/a students and faculty will address part of the concern Fumitaka Matsuoka raised about globalization: "Globalization of theological education in North America is . . . overcoming the unjust and unfair stratification of groups within . . . ministerial leadership of our churches. It is no less than our conscious theological act to witness to an emerging new order in the midst of an increasingly pluralistic world. . . ." ¹¹ These efforts will require detailed strategies for each goal, with periodic assessment of institutional progress. Because leadership is crucial to implementing institutional change, senior administrators should oversee the goals and strategies, and expect accountability for realizing these goals. Schools will need to initiate aggressive and targeted recruitment efforts that incorporate personalized outreach. This effort will require working closely with "feeder" institutions that include, in the context of the Hispanic religious community, churches, religiously affiliated high schools, colleges, universities, Bible institutes, and lay diocesan training programs.
3. As we have noted, Bible institutes and diocesan training programs educate a large portion of the Latino/a religious leadership. Seminaries could enhance their effectiveness within the Latino/a community by developing creative venues for relating to these informal institutions. ATS member schools can enter into dialogue by facilitating student transfers, offering faculty development programs, sharing library resources, facilitating the transfer of credits, and developing mutually beneficial growth strategies.
4. Schools can enhance or introduce Latino/a presence by establishing visiting professorships to attract Latina/o scholars to teach and thus provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas and experiences across the campus. This is particularly important for institutions that do not have any Latino/a faculty.
5. Schools should review the curriculum and field education opportunities to ensure that all students represented within the institution can find a voice in the

educational experience. Faculty should critically examine their pedagogical approaches to determine whether they primarily reflect values that emphasize individualism and competition, as opposed to community and collaboration, or that limit bibliographic references to white authors, as opposed to including works by racial/ethnic authors. Institutional hospitality will increase as faculty address the values and histories of Latino/as and other racial/ethnic communities and the contributions they make to theological discourse and religious life.¹²

6. Institutions need to facilitate the learning of the faculty, administration, and staff about the various communities represented in the school or the church/denomination and thereby increase their ability to articulate and integrate the unique contributions of Hispanics and other racial/ethnic communities. This effort should include an examination of the institution's educational culture to determine ways in which it enhances or impedes theological education for racial/ethnic students. These efforts would ameliorate one of the greatest barriers minorities experience in graduate education: an environment in which they lack support and affirmation.

Recommendations for Recruiting and Retaining Hispanic Students

According to the National Survey of Hispanic/Latino Theological Education research, a large percentage of persons who decided to become religious leaders were highly influenced by local churches and their pastors. Hispanic alumni/ae of the resource partners mentioned above are also important sources for recruitment and for providing supportive networks, as are summer high school camps and youth retreats. Recruitment of Hispanic students requires attention to church and church-related contexts.

As Hispanic students are recruited, schools need to attend to a number of factors that can help to retain them. One important factor is substantial financial assistance. Another is academic and social support services. Seminaries and graduate schools of theology need to have a special office or designated administrator who attends to racial/ethnic issues and provides leadership, orientation, and guidance to students, as well as serving in a liaison role with the administration. This person could also help to organize and facilitate support groups that allow Latino/a students to share life experiences and academic work, in addition to other cultural and social activities. Such an office or person can also help to develop a culture that encourages and supports the mentoring of students by faculty members. These recommendations follow the model that was developed from discussions at a 1998 Council of Graduate Schools meeting, as well as strategies suggested in 1992 by the American Council on Education.

In order to develop a critical mass of Latino students within an institution, we also recommend that institutions:

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- Study the policies and practices relating to financial assistance for those with limited economic resources.
- Create financial aid strategies that increase the participation of low-income and minority students, implementing, where possible, lower tuition policies. Provide students with better information on financial aid opportunities and give early notification of awards made.
- Build relationships between predominantly white institutions and the faculty and administrators of traditionally minority institutions. In the context of the Hispanic community, this includes institutions that belong to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (www.hacu.net). Members are institutions whose enrollment is at least twenty-five percent Hispanic. Expand relationships with Latino/a community and religious leaders, Latino-owned businesses, civic organizations, and graduate programs with large numbers of minority doctoral candidates.
- Assist the process of community-building by creating opportunities to listen to the needs and concerns of Hispanics and to learn about their culture and particular history. Understanding that history, current economic trends, and the educational and religious challenges of the Hispanic community enhances dialogue. Seek to create partnerships, bridges, and opportunities to bring together representative leaders for dialogue and mutual planning.
- Give recognition and appropriate compensation to faculty of color who bear additional burdens already noted. This could take the form of additional stipends and faculty development initiatives such as research funds or extra teaching/research assistants.
- Engage in community-building efforts to counteract Hispanic students' experiences of marginality by promoting community among the school's Latino/as and between them and others. Seek to create learning communities where students and faculty of every cultural and racial background feel welcomed and are encouraged to reach their highest potential.

Recommendations for Accrediting Agencies of Theological Schools

Accrediting agencies of graduate schools of theology and seminaries, both ATS and the regional accrediting agencies in the U.S.,¹³ should address the issue of underrepresentation of racial/ethnic persons by making members accountable for increasing the cultural diversity of their faculties and staffs. Because of the special mission ATS has to theological and ministerial education, we recommend that ATS consider the following actions:

- Create a network of theological schools committed to enhancing the presence of Latino/as among students and faculty. Such alliances increase possibilities for institutional change through public commitments to attract, retain, and graduate Hispanic students. Students from such institu-

tions could create strong academic, cultural, and social support networks for Hispanics. This alliance is our principal recommendation.

- Institute ongoing monitoring procedures to measure the progress of member schools in increasing racial/ethnic representation among faculties and administrations.
- Make this information publicly available to ensure accountability, e.g., through publications such as the *ATS Fact Book on Theological Education*. This would encourage others to address these concerns and educate the larger theological community on these important issues.
- Conduct cultural awareness training for faculty and administrators. Help faculty in various disciplines to understand the perspectives of other ethnic communities and to begin to integrate these insights into their research and teaching.
- Establish a student satisfaction evaluation instrument to gauge progress in creating a welcoming environment for all students. The ATS “Profiles of Ministry Program” and “Student Information Project” provide data on students, but at present these instruments do not specifically address issues such as a welcoming environment for racial/ethnic students.
- Develop leadership-training seminars for potential racial/ethnic candidates for deanships and presidencies. Such programs could help to develop the leadership potential of under-represented individuals and advance the administrative skills and experiences of men and women who would otherwise have more limited experience. Showcase these participants to provide maximum visibility both inside and outside their institutions in order to create a pool of qualified individuals who could be recruited for senior administrative positions.
- Establish and sustain an exchange of successful strategies among institutions. Schools can learn from both the successes as well as the failed attempts at racial/ethnic recruitment and retention. ATS and its staff could help to identify best practices and share them with the member schools.
- Provide opportunities for Latino/a religious scholars to find a voice at important gatherings of administrators in order to forge support and alliances among organizations and institutions working toward similar goals.

ATS has sponsored some venues for individual collaboration and professional development for ethnic/racial faculty. Past efforts included a series of seminars on “Developing Your Role as a Scholar,” two of which (in 1993 and 1995) focused on racial/ethnic faculty members. The seminars brought together groups of faculty not only to discuss and learn about aspects of scholarship, but also to address concrete issues such as the role of institutional administrators in supporting faculty research. Recent ATS programmatic efforts have included larger workshops and conferences on diversity in the

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faculty and student body, including one for racial/ethnic faculty in predominantly white ATS institutions and a seminar on Black/Hispanic dialogue. In 2000, the Association identified Race and Ethnicity in Theological Education as one of its “targeted areas of work” to help “theological schools improve their capacity to educate future religious leaders for the emerging demographic reality in North American culture.”¹⁴ These efforts can help to heighten awareness about this issue. Other agencies, such as the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion and the Louisville Institute, have also focused attention on racial/ethnic issues in theological education.

In addition to these programmatic initiatives, we recommend that ATS use its accrediting function to promote and monitor progress toward greater inclusion of racial/ethnic participants in theological education. The ATS accrediting standards, adopted in 1996, integrated attention to racial/ethnic concerns as a recurring theme throughout the text. The concern is introduced in Statement 2.5 of Standard 2, Institutional Integrity:

Integrity in theological education includes institutional and educational practices that promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America. Schools shall seek to enhance participation of persons of racial/ethnic minorities in institutional life. According to its stated purpose, the school shall seek to address the concerns of women and to increase their participation in theological education. In all cases, schools shall seek to assist students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in changing cultural and racially diverse settings.¹⁵

The value of racial/ethnic diversity and inclusion is evident in various other standards, particularly those that have to do with individuals within the institution. These include the following statements from the standards:

- 3.1.2.2 Instructional methods should use the diversity of life experiences represented by the students, by faith communities, and by the larger cultural context. Instructional methods and the use of technology should be sensitive to the diversity of student populations, different learning styles of students, and the importance of communities of learning and the instructional goals.
- 4.4.1.1 Programs that do not lead to degrees should remain appropriate to institutional purpose and will differ according to their student audience: for example, continuing education for clergy, programs for racial/ethnic or linguistic minority groups, or programs for enrichment.
- 5.1.2 To ensure effective growth of the [library] collection, schools shall have an appropriate collection development policy. Collections in a theological

school shall hold materials of importance for theological study and the practice of ministry that represent the historical breadth and confessional diversity of Christian thought and life. The collection shall include relevant materials from cognate disciplines and basic texts from other religious traditions, and demonstrate sensitivity to issues of diversity, inclusiveness, and globalization to ensure that theological learners and researchers have access to the variety of voices that speak to theological subjects.

- 6.1.3 Composition of the faculty should be guided by the purpose of the institution, and attention to this composition should be an integral component of long-range planning in the institution. Faculty should be of sufficient diversity and number to meet the multifaceted demands of teaching, learning, and research. Hiring practices should be attentive to the value of diversity in race, ethnicity, and gender. The faculty should also include members who have doctorates from different schools, and who exemplify various methods and points of view.
- 7.2.4 Schools shall give evidence of efforts in admissions to encourage diversity in such areas as race, ethnicity, region, denomination, or gender.
- 7.4.3 The institution should, in the context of its purpose and constituency, act as an advocate for students who are members of groups that have been disadvantaged in employment because of their race, ethnicity, and/or gender.
- 8.3.1.3 Members of the governing board shall possess the qualifications appropriate to the task they will undertake. In accordance with the school's purpose and constituencies, the governing board's membership should reflect diversity of race, ethnicity, and gender. As fiduciaries, they should commit themselves loyally to the institution, its purpose, and its overall well being. They should lead by affirming the good that is done and by asking thoughtful questions and challenging problematic situations. New members of the board should be oriented to their responsibilities, and the structures and procedures the board uses to accomplish its tasks.
- 8.3.2.3 Administrative leaders and staff shall include, insofar as possible, individuals reflecting the institution's constituencies, taking into account the desirability of diversity in race, ethnicity, and gender. They should be sufficient in number and ability to fulfill their responsibilities. They should have adequate resources and authority appropriate to their responsibilities.

The standards can guide schools to assess a range of issues regarding the inclusion of racial/ethnic participants at all levels of the institution, and they provide the context for external review through accreditation visits and decisions.

Building Alliances of Schools

As helpful as the accrediting standards are, our strongest, overall recommendation is that schools publicly dedicated to increasing the presence of persons of Hispanic origin in their faculties and students bodies build alliances with one another, perhaps through their membership in ATS. These alliances could assist member schools in several ways.

1. By coordinating data-gathering initiatives with the Latino/a religious community, an alliance could facilitate understanding of the Latino/a educational experience, both among those who complete degrees and those who do not, which is of crucial importance for developing new or enhanced retention strategies. In addition, rigorous data-gathering would help to document the success or failure of particular programs and serve to strengthen the rationale for continued funding of such efforts.

2. By supporting administrators' leadership in the development of appropriate institutional policies and procedures, an alliance could strengthen overall institutional strategies to enhance participation of persons of color. Consequently, school leaders must initiate and sustain the creation of supportive environments, increased recruitment efforts, expanded financial accessibility, enhanced mentoring opportunities, increased communication between administration and students, and better accountability for each specified goal.

3. By providing benefits to participating institutions, an alliance could facilitate:

- Visibility and publicity as institutions committed to the advancement and development of Hispanic religious leaders and scholars.
- Incentives for grant-makers or donors.
- In-depth understanding of the Latino/a cultural values, traditions, religious ideas, and educational experiences that enrich the institutional missions and cultures of the member institutions.
- Access to Latino/a scholars in theological and religious studies.
- Assistance and mutual support from other participating institutions on the best strategies to improve access, retention, and development of Latino/as scholars.
- Increased diversity of student and faculty populations.
- A large and largely untapped market of new students.

4. By coordinating strategies, an alliance could facilitate the recruitment and retention of students:

- Distributing and sharing information about Latino/as who are interested in doctoral studies. This information could be used to develop a pool of prospective graduate students who could be contacted and recruited by the member institutions.
- Facilitating the application process among members of the alliance. The National Survey of Hispanic/Latino Theological Education showed

that only twenty-one percent of Hispanic students applied to more than one graduate program. An identified alliance of schools that are committed to nurturing and supporting Hispanic graduate students could serve to encourage multiple applications and provide students with a broader range of possible financial aid opportunities to consider.

- Allowing Latino/a students from member institutions to spend a summer, semester, or year teaching and conducting research at other partner institutions.
- Encouraging Latino/a doctoral students to serve as visiting scholars and/or mentors for students at the M.A. or M.Div. level in their own or surrounding schools. This exposure could provide valuable teaching and advising experience for the doctoral students as well as opportunities for them to encourage masters' level students to consider future doctoral work.
- Establishing faculty development and interchange programs to facilitate interaction and cooperation among Latino and non-Latino faculty on individual campuses as well as across institutions. These programs could entail research enhancement seminars, short- and long-term faculty exchanges, joint and visiting faculty appointments, and collaborative research activities.
- Providing specialized training to admissions and faculty search committees in recruiting both Hispanic students and faculty.
- Creating and sustaining a professional organization of directors of Hispanic ministry programs among the members of the alliance. Such an organization could monitor and assess how well the programs are functioning, how they are being integrated within the larger scholarly and curricular programs of the schools, and how faculties teaching within the Hispanic programs are supported, including issues related to workload, scholarly expectations, and so forth.

Alliances such as we are advocating have proved successful in other areas of higher education. Seminaries can learn from collaborative efforts such as the Committee on Institutional Cooperation's (CIC) Alliance for Success experience.¹⁶ This project has shown that efforts such as we have proposed for an alliance of theological schools have been successful in other areas of higher education.

Forming an alliance of significant numbers of institutions will require considerable attention, cross-institutional communication, and coordination. These are roles that accrediting agencies, such as ATS, are uniquely positioned to provide in supporting and facilitating such an effort.

These recommendations are meant to create an agenda for the future and to ignite the present imagination regarding what can happen if there is commitment and cooperation. They do not exhaust all possibilities, but invite

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dialog about facilitating greater and better-prepared Hispanic religious leaders. Such a dialog could lead to greater collaboration among institutions and accrediting agencies of higher learning, denominations, foundations, and community-based organizations.

The challenge for seminaries in this new century is to be lighthouses, to act with goodwill, and to embrace responsively the promise of diversity. Clearly, the struggle for inclusion is an uphill battle. Cultural predispositions and networks among like-minded folks are hard to disentangle. Non-diverse educational institutions naturally seek the path of least resistance—allowing traditions and taken-for-granted-realities to dictate a “business as usual” mode of operation. The situation is made worse by a pervasive individualistic culture that encourages coldness, distance, and indifference. Yet against all odds, person of color—women and men—whose ancestry is not solely European, still value seminaries and schools of theology. They want to enter them and offer their hearts, minds, and souls to serve the greater good. Our recommendations are simply suggestions about how to open the door to them.

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ENDNOTES

1. See Sara Mar Murrieta, *The Role of Church Affiliated Hispanic Organizations in Meeting Some Significant Needs of Hispanic Americans in the United States*. A dissertation presented to the United States International University, 1977.
2. See Eduardo Fernández, S.J., *La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology (1972-1998)* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 26f.
3. Business Wire, Inc. “Hispanic Educators Meet in Washington, D.C.” 29 March 2001. The following general conclusion is also applicable to church leadership: “By sheer numbers alone, it is all too clear that the nation’s economic and social success will hinge on the academic and career success of our Hispanic communities.”
4. *2000-2001 Fact Book on Theological Education* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools).
5. Edwin Hernández and Kenneth G. Davis, “The National Survey of Hispanic Theological Education,” *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* vol. 8, 4 (May 2001): 37-59.
6. See Benjamín Alicea-Lugo, “Salsa y Adobo: Latino/Latina Contributions to Theological Education,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 52 (1-2) 1998: 129-144.
7. In collaboration with the University of Scranton Press, the Hispanic Theological Initiative has inaugurated the Hispanic Theological Initiative award and book series.

New Latino/a scholars can submit manuscripts on the religion of U.S. Hispanics. The winner receives the award, along with a cash stipend, and his or her manuscript is published in the new book series through the University of Scranton Press. For information: www.htiprogram.org.

8. Justo González, "A Concluding Word: Good Shoulders for Our Mantle," *Theology Today*, 54 (4) 1998: 517-518. This issue was dedicated to newer Hispanic theologians. For information on the Hispanic Summer Program: www.aeth.org/summer.html.

9. For information: www.aeth.org.

10. For information: www.jhlt.org/achtus. Note that the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame announced three new annual fellowships for outstanding U.S. Latina and Latino applicants to the Ph.D. and M.T.S. programs. The fellowships include full tuition and living stipend and are renewable for five years within the Ph.D. program and two years in the M.T.S. program.

11. Fumitaka Matsuoka, "Pluralism at Home: Globalization within North America," *Theological Education*, Vol.26: Supplement 1 (Spring 1990):35. By the time this was written, theological educators had already been discussing the issue of globalization for almost a decade. See also William E. Leshner and Donald W. Shriver, Jr., "Stumbling in the Right Direction," *Theological Education* 35:2, Spring 1999.

12. See Justo González, *The Theological Education of Hispanics* (New York: The Fund for Theological Education, 1988).

13. The U.S. regional accrediting agencies include the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) [www.neasc.org], Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACS) [www.msache.org], North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS) [www.ncacihe.org], Commission on Colleges & Universities of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NASC) [www.cocnasc.org], Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) [www.sacs.org], and Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) [www.wascweb.org].

14. *Colloquy: The Newsletter of the Association of Theological Schools* (Volume 9, Number 4) March/April 2001.

15. *Bulletin 45, Part 1, Standards of Accreditation* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools), 50.

16. "The Alliance for Success represents the joint efforts of twenty-two institutions of higher education dedicated to increasing the minority presence in graduate schools and on the faculties of colleges and universities across the country. The consortial approach utilizes the strengths, resources, and commitments of each participating partner from among the member institutions of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), five historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and two Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs)." [www.cic.uiuc.edu/programs]

Theologies in Dialogue— Building Bridges

*ABSTRACT: This three-part article continues the conversation begun by Anthony Pinn and Benjamin Valentin in their acclaimed monograph, *The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theologies in Dialogue*. It begins with an essay by Anthony Pinn, who suggests that theological reflection requires an expansive field of engagement in which to test its central claims and values. This arena of critical conversation needs to be an “extra-mural” process that goes beyond, while remaining anchored to, the richly textured religious theological discourse that characterizes African American and Hispanic American experience. These privileged locations, however, can mask patterns of discrimination, for example, heterosexism and homophobia, otherwise exempt from critical voices outside these locations. Thus, an argument is made for external critique that would enable fresh perspectives on the meaning of the body as it is enfolded in concrete, particular settings. Benjamin Valentin offers an argument for an expansive understanding of “cross-cultural exchange and alliance-building in our society,” stating that the task of theology must move beyond “ecclesiocentrism” and address “extra-church” realities and sources. Authentic accountability to the theological task requires the courage to confront the church’s own shortcomings in sexual politics and other oppressive dynamics that otherwise go unexamined. He further argues that there are many “theologies” that need to be welcomed because of the distinctive audiences, “publics,” they bring into conversation. The temptation to flatten or “essentialize” the diversity of the African American and Hispanic American cultures and identities needs to be resisted so that the root meaning of the word religion, “religare” (to bind again), engages a pluralistic, diverse “public” reality, and truly becomes “a bridge over the difference divide.” Both authors then engage in a lively dialogue that explores these rich themes in more depth, an exchange that is both enlightening and provocative.*

Facing Competing Claims: Thoughts on a Theory of Theological Discourse

Anthony Pinn
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As is the case with all authors and editors, Benjamin Valentin and I are delighted by the attention our text, *The Ties that Bind*, is beginning to receive.¹ We were particularly pleased to receive an invitation from The Association of Theological

Schools to participate in a conference (October 4-6, 2002) committed to theologically unpacking themes and challenges presented in the book—a text that is really the culmination of a personal conversation and wish for greater dialogue that Benjamin and I first entertained roughly a decade ago, while studying at Harvard University. This conference, which involved African American and Hispanic American scholars from schools of theology and seminaries across North America, was an opportunity for Benjamin and me to share some of the motivations for and rationales behind the construction of the book.

It was and remains clear to us that there are shared existential and epistemological realities that “children” of the New World such as African Americans and Hispanic Americans might discuss and utilize in theologically productive ways. However, such recognition, if it is to have felt meaning, must involve more than narrowly contextual materials and insular conversations. We must face and address the silences that punctuate our collective reality, and maneuver through the uncomfortable, and at times awkward, gaps in our mutual knowledge that represent another dimension of what it has meant to be “othered.” Mindful of this need and an already shared theological language and grammar, *The Ties* represents our effort to stimulate dialogue among African American and Hispanic American scholars of religion.

In addition to sharing contextual thoughts on this book, we were invited to provide informal comments on the conference’s successes and areas for growth, and on possible strategies and frameworks for the next phase of dialogue. It was also suggested that these informal reflections be shared with a larger audience through two articles published in *Theological Education*. Maintaining the rather informal tone used during the conference, I offer the following reflection revolving around the possibility of a new, more comparative, theological discourse.²

There is little doubt that Hispanic Americans and African Americans share a similar socioeconomic and political position—related existential and ontological “spaces”—within the United States. Both have undergone a “second creation,” to borrow a phrase from Charles Long, through which contact and conquest began the formation of over-determined and fixed identities for the ancestors of both communities. In simple terms, African Americans and Hispanic Americans bare in their flesh, perhaps to differing degrees, the consequences of forced travel across the Atlantic Ocean. Both wrestle against the terror and dread associated with the warping of self-consciousness, of one’s sense of being, that stem from being rendered the “other.” Both face destruction of their physical bodies stemming from an unequal distribution of economic resources, while both are plied with the rhetoric of politicians who recognize the significance of these voting blocks, but who offer little in the way of renewed and vibrant life options. Furthermore, and of significance with respect to the purpose of the conference and my vision for theological discourse, both groups have responded creatively to ontological and socioeconomic trauma through the praxis of liberation theology.

There is within this theological work of liberation a concern with sustained reflection on the proactive dimensions of humanity and well being captured in both communities' religious life. In this way, theological studies at their best within both communities have highlighted the manner in which African American and Hispanic American religious experience and identity entail a healthy tension between reaction and creativity (or initiative). In fact, when theological books and articles by thinkers within these two communities are compared, substantial similarities of theoretical framework and approach are noteworthy. But a shared sense of what it means to do theology, how ones does theology, and for whom theology is done, has seldom resulted in African American and Hispanic American theologians initiating and sustaining deep or "thick" exchange.

Some might speak of this disconnect as the result of differing cultural sensibilities that promote, if not necessitate, insular conversations and encourage the maintenance of an insider/outsider paradigm for discourse. (Perhaps the saying popular in African American communities—"It's a black thing; you wouldn't understand it."—has affinity with a similar sentiment in Hispanic American communities.) Yet this, even if one recognizes cultural distinctions, should not point to an inability to converse but to rich differences that might play a role in healthy and complex theological exchange. Furthermore, both African American theologians and Hispanic American theologians operate from a position of stability and intellectual "legitimacy" that makes possible dialogue. That is to say, the theological work of both communities is recognized in the academy—with the presence of groups devoted to both within the American Academy of Religion serving as only one example—and this provides a "space" in which to wrestle with theological issues of mutual concern.

The conference sponsored by ATS afforded an opportunity to clear the air, so to speak, regarding the lack of dialogue and the need for a corrective. Through a mixture of presentations and small group conversations, those in attendance probed deeply into various questions: What is the purpose of theological education? What are the similarities and differences between Hispanic American theological sensibilities and African American theological sensibilities, and how are these differences played out with respect to perceptions of oppression and the conceptualization of liberation?

Competing Faith Claims

At its best the exchange stemming from these and other questions involved a genuine and "gloves off" approach to exchange—the sharing of theological agreement and disagreement—with the intention of increased understanding and greater cooperation. And what I found most intriguing about those three days in October was the rather reluctant recognition of competing faith claims within our communities, and the implications of this diverse religious terrain for the doing of theology.

Christianity dominates the religious landscape of both groups, but there are other traditions that are supple and vibrant, and very much alive. The boundaries between these various traditions are soft, allowing for some ritual, theological, and doctrinal exchange among them. The process of making meaning, of developing a fuller sense of humanity, that marks all of these traditions allows for overlapping intent that on some level makes the “soft” elements of these various traditions translatable and transferable. I have addressed this issue elsewhere, and so I will not push the point here.³ Instead, I would like to move to what I consider one of the more challenging realities of competing claims—the manner in which they are both externally and internally driven. They are externally driven in that they involve a response to systemically orchestrated socioeconomic, political, and cultural arrangements that often short circuit efforts to achieve a greater degree of “fulfillment,” to borrow a term from Victor Anderson.⁴ But these competing religious claims also involve a creative and internal forging of institutions, rituals, and strategies by which these communities make meaning. This creative effort is not simply a response to external forces. I hope to remain mindful of this complexity and its ramifications in my remaining remarks and the question I pose: What does one do theologically with this recognition of, or confrontation with, competing claims?

In response to this question, I would like to propose briefly, as a prolegomenon of sorts, a theory of theological discourse, beginning with a word of caution. The importance of this conversation on the level of abstract considerations is important, although all too often the tendency is to quickly jump to issues of applicability. Put bluntly, some will suggest academic conversation is useful. . .but how “does the information preach?” How does one make use of this academic inquiry in the context of some type of practiced ministry? This, of course, is usually understood within the context of Christian ministry.

I want to suggest that even those who are committed to Christian forms of expression and ministry (or ministry within any other religious context) ought to be aware of and sensitive to the presence of competing claims within the larger community. Consider the following: during the course of any given weekend, in large cities such as New York, one can find Pentecostal churches in which the spirit of God is expressed with energy and through dance, speaking in tongues, and by hot tears rolling down the faces of the sanctified. On the other end of the block, on this same day, one might encounter the worship of Black Catholics guided by different historic and doctrinal structures, and marked by different aesthetic sensibilities. While these practices take place, still others gather and celebrate the wisdom of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. In still other locations in the same city, one might encounter practitioners gathered in celebration of the African gods, orishas, brought to the new world by enslaved Africans. The Dahomean gods, Iwas, associated with Vodou might possess others in the same city. Still others gather or reflect as individuals on the merits of their humanist leanings and the ramifications of these commitments. The list of possible ex-

amples could be expanded, but I hope the examples provided serve to make my point. Even if we in the academy miss the point, there is recognition within segments of our communities that religious possibilities abound because there are so many vibrant and supple religious traditions.⁵

Mindful of the religiously rich communities in which we live, work, and for which we train thinkers and ministers, the kind of dialogue we undertake ought to be sensitive to and comfortable with paradox and difference. Hence, we must recognize the epistemological centrality of competing claims if theological education is to progress in ways beneficial to the dialogue recently started by Hispanic American and African American theologians.

Competing Claims and the Dilemma of Truth and Knowledge

Are some modes of religiosity more meaningful than others? Implicitly tied to this question is a concern for “truthfulness,” or authenticity, and ultimately reliability. But as we should know at this point, truth is not “discovered.” It is made. We should have learned this much from the work of historians such as David Brion Davis who speak to the manner in which religion and theological arguments were used to suggest the “truthfulness” or “rightness” of chattel slavery.⁶

It is important to recall, as sociology of knowledge makes clear, knowledge is conditioned by historical circumstances, and is never value free. By extension, I propose that irrespective of theological attempts to ground reality in a stable and transcendent “something,” truth remains forged by human hands, for human purposes, to fulfill human needs. There is no ultimate truth, just resonating claims and assertion that hopefully serve to improve life options. Mindful of this, can we develop a creative tension between these various ways of being in the world?

Responding to this question is in part the work of the theologian who is sensitive to the thickness of religious experience. Liberation as a way of wrestling with competing claims must be multidimensional and ideologically flexible. We need something bigger than two-dimensional transformation of life—each to herself and to her own community. Furthermore, religious claims (as assertions of truth) must be tested in the arena of human experience, that is how they “wear” on the human body. Yet, theologies within these two communities have often been a pedantic enterprise, the obsession of African American and Hispanic American theologians with a particular theory of religion has been problematic in that it has meant little serious academic attention to “non-church” related forms of religious experience.

While celebrating the importance of these traditions, we must also recognize their flaws. True, there is much that is vibrant, vital, useful, and liberating within these religious faiths—Christian and otherwise. But these are also places that often house the demonic as expressed, for example, in the overt heterosexism and homophobia within African American and Hispanic churches. Both African

American and Hispanic American churches have adopted, for the most part, the stereotypes and biases of the larger society, the major difference being the “sacred” rationale used by churches to condemn lesbians and homosexuals. When not met with silence—an “I won’t ask and don’t you say” policy—lesbians and homosexuals within the context of these churches are often condemned and/or ordered in sermons to save themselves from their sin. Perhaps the most popular perspective is that this sexual orientation is not natural; it is a perversion that can be surrendered with proper guidance and prayer.⁷ It is safe to say Hispanic American and African American churches as collective entities have at worst acted with hostility toward homosexuals and lesbians, blaming them for their own victimization. In other cases, overt homophobia is masked by a heterosexism couched in the language of “we need to save and grow our young men for their God-ordained roles in families and society.” The paradox and hypocrisy of this position escapes many congregations whose “machismo” oppresses a segment of the population and forces many to implicitly (if not explicitly) reject loved ones, neighbors, and co-workers.

Bodies have merit and theological weight, so to speak. Yet, the sense of embodiment articulated in connection to liberation theology is highly spiritualized and/or discussed in terms of the historical (i.e., socio-political and economic) placement of these bodies. I suggest that theologians from both communities have fallen short through their inability to articulate theologically the value of these bodies as both sources of pleasure (including relationship with the “divine”) and as pleased. Again, there remains a less than creative tension within African American and Hispanic American churches with respect to sexuality and sex. As Kelly Brown Douglas notes, although Christian churches have avoided discussion of sex and sexuality, it has not meant that sex is not an issue. If sex and sexuality were not an issue, many pastors could spend less time in counseling sessions with church members, and fewer pastors would lose the moral and ethical authority of their pulpits due to “indiscretions.”

The kind of theological discourse I call for here requires celebration but also a sustained critique and recognition of the demonic wherever it is. In part this rethinking of theology’s nature and task requires a greater sensitivity to the merit of external critique—challenges and questions from those who do not hold the same faith commitment and theological sensibilities. For example, perhaps the theologian committed to the Christian faith might gain insights from scholars of Candomblé regarding issues of sexuality and religious engagement. This is not to say that the Christian theologian or scholar of religion will directly apply the doctrinal/theological sensibilities of another tradition. But at the very least, recognition of other perspectives might allow for a more creative engagement with her or his own community of faith.

Theological Language and Categories: Considering the Body

I am pushing for a post-apologetic modality of theological discourse, entailing a method of exploration that can respond to our religiously complex and shifting terrain. I am not suggesting the complete removal of Hispanic American and African American liberation theologies as a method of exploration. Rather, I am calling for the “death” of a certain illusion regarding theology’s work, a deconstruction of a myopic, religiously chauvinistic, and provincial understanding of theological discourse. This entails a movement beyond African American and Hispanic American theologies as general (and religiously biased) theory of religious experience, and the recognition that *Christian* liberation theology speaks to and about only one dimension of what it means to *be* and be religious.

Liberation theology as done in both communities has involved, to some extent, an expansion of theological language to include culturally informed nuances and alterations to categories of meaning and perception. Yet, we have maintained the same theological grammar—new theological language but the same rules of usage.

It strikes me that theological dialogue sensitive to competing religious claims can only develop through a willingness to creatively adjust both theological language and grammar. Case in point: transformation as expressed in liberation theologies done by African Americans and Hispanic Americans—even in its limited articulation as two-dimensional—is housed in flesh. These two modalities of liberation theology are in fact theologies of embodiment. There is an explicit and profound appreciation for the physical form, for black and brown bodies. By body I mean both the physical form (flesh) and the mega-symbol connoting all things foreign and dangerous in the popular imagination of modern (white) America. In this sense the “raced” body represents the physical world of work and pleasure, and also serves as a prime symbol of chaos. In either case, in physical terms or as symbolic representation, African Americans and Hispanic Americans connote something both appealing and repulsive, and “things” to be controlled vis-à-vis categorization as inferior. Hence, language used to discuss the placement of “raced” bodies serves to reinforce social sensibilities and structures. Theology done in these two communities might benefit from more sustained attention to the theological “weight” of flesh as a way of signifying popular depictions of raced bodies.

Concluding Thoughts: Now, what about pedagogy?

Those who participate in theological discourse research and publish as part of the process of inquiry. And many of these same persons share with students—or members of religious communities, or both—the content of this theological inquiry. Hence, the pedagogical ramifications of this proposed theory of theological discourse should be given some consideration. To do so, I would like to

conclude with a few remarks concerning the ways in which attention to the body as suggested above fosters an appreciation for non-written resources in the teaching of theology.

The shape, makeup, and appearance of bodies within the classroom have changed over the years, moving from a space of same-ness to a marked space of difference (some difference anyway). And the presence of these new bodies points to societal, political, and other changes—signs of which are often borne in the flesh. As Franz Fanon and Hortense Spiller have argued, the body is a site of memory and meaning that, through its markings, speaks concretely of racial, political, and social dynamics.⁸ The presence of these different bodies has perhaps resulted in new attention to the significance of the body's presence that could no longer be taken for granted. Because of this, teachers come to recognize that pedagogical issues must take into consideration not only curricular concerns, but must also understand that the learning experience is shaped by the "space" in which learning takes place, and the meaning of bodies inhabiting that space.

Education comes to involve individual and group actualization. In this way, the body becomes an important means of basic data related to body-culture existence. The teaching moment moves away from a traditional mind/body split.

Through this shift, a concern with mutual exchange takes on greater importance. The teaching process affects both those who teach and those who learn because in real ways they are the same: teachers learn and learners teach. Attention to the body also highlights the expression of beliefs and ideas beyond written textual forms. It forces an understanding of religion as intimately connected to concrete settings, housed in concrete forms. It allows one to hold in creative tension the material and non-material concerns of religion. Perhaps, for example, a course on African American or Hispanic American religion (or a comparative course on both) should include study of doctrine and dance, institutional structures and decorative culture. In this way we trace our similarities and differences through the supple contours of our bodies.

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ENDNOTES

1. Anthony B. Pinn and Benjamin Valentin, editors, *The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theologies in Dialogue* (New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2001).
2. Those interested in my more formal attention to the issues addressed in this essay should see, for example: *Varieties of African American Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998); *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Minneapolis:

Fortress Press, 2003); *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002); "Black Theology, Black Bodies, and Pedagogy," *Cross Currents*, Volume 50, Nos. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 2000): 196-202.

3. See *Terror and Triumph*, especially chapters 4-7.

4. Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 1995), 17-38.

5. This information is drawn from "Black Bodies in Pain and Ecstasy: Terror, Subjectivity, and the Nature of Black Religion" in Anthony B. Pinn, guest editor, African American Religion Symposium, *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Spring 2003, forthcoming. This article summarizes much of what I argue in *Terror and Triumph*

6. See, for example, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966). Readers may also be interested in his more recent book titled *In the Image of God: Religion, Moral Values, and Our Heritage of Slavery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

7. This is drawn from *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 108-109.

8. See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove, 1967). In terms of Spillers, I have in mind the framing of her work offered by G. M. James Gonzalez in "Of Property: On 'Captive' 'Bodies,' Hidden 'Flesh,' and Colonization," in Lewis Gordon, ed. *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 129-133.

The Bridge Over The Difference Divide: African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino/a Theologies in the Service of a Coalitional Public

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As the “nature” of postmodern social oppression presents itself in a more highly sophisticated, differentiated, and confusing manner, there is a greater necessity for members of subordinate groups to incorporate a differential mode of oppositional consciousness in order to build expanding alliances of struggle.¹

—*Antonia Darder*

Caring About The Quality of Our Lives Together

Increasingly, I see a need for discourse and ministries that dare to explore the possibilities of cross-cultural exchange and alliance-building in our society. The increase of social antagonism, the apparent deterioration of a spirit of solidarity, and the increasing chasm between the haves and have-nots in our society make the task of alliance-building and the need for coalitions particularly pressing today. That being so, I believe that our times call for serious dialogue between different social groups and that those interested in theology and ministry should make the facilitation of cross-group communication a priority.

The fact is that these kinds of cross-group dialogues still remain in short supply in our centers for theological study, our churches, and in the general society. The result of this lack is detrimental to the vitality of our public life as distinct social groups fail to acknowledge “the ties that bind” them together: white Anglo-Americans fail to realize how the struggles of disadvantaged ethnic groups eventually affect their own quality of life; members of different racialized groups fail to identify the shared concerns and interests that unite them; and the sense that “we are all part of one garment of destiny”² becomes more and more difficult to cultivate. Although all of our social members and groups would stand to gain from more public exchange and the sorts of cross-difference cooperation that it can foster, I will suggest that the utopian dream of connection and alliance-building is especially pertinent for those historically subordinated groups that lack the power to transform present institutional structures single-handedly.

Acknowledging this exigency, I have dedicated a good part of my academic analysis and political practice thus far to the goal of facilitating discussions between African-American/Black and Hispanic/Latino/a theologians and religious scholars in the hopes of sparking more large-scale conversations among

members of these two social groups. Although not often acknowledged, the experiences and identities of these two groups are linked by a unique web of historical relations that began to develop even before the founding of the United States. Most historians and cultural analysts acknowledge that current African-American and Latino/a cultures and identities are the result of a “fusion” of Iberian, Ameri-Indian, African, and Euro/American cultures that began to transpire at the end of the fifteenth century with the arrival of European explorers in the Americas. This historical and cultural linkage accounts in large part for the sharing of many similarities among members of these two U.S. social groups that can be evidenced at times in their racial composition, religion, music, art, fashion, food, and other socio-cultural mores and idiosyncracies.

African Americans and Latino/as are also linked by a parallel history of struggle against multiple forms of jeopardies that have threatened, and in many cases circumscribed, the well-being of the two groups’ members. African Americans and Latino/as have frequently inhabited the bottom of the economic well and, therefore, have tended to share dwelling space in some of the most impoverished areas of our inner U.S. cities/barrios. Consequently, these two groups share a history of subversive agency that promotes life, health, and meaning in spite of oppressive forces. Moreover, it is important to note that African Americans and Latino/as are the two largest so-called “ethnic minority or minoritized” groups in the United States, each group individually accounting for more than thirty-five million U.S. citizens or residents and both groups collectively accounting for approximately twenty-seven to twenty-eight percent of the total U.S. population. This growth in numbers carries with it certain social, political, and economic implications and possibilities. Despite these connections and details, substantive dialogue and meaningful alliances between both groups have been relatively scarce. In the absence of dialogue, African Americans and Latino/as have at times succumbed to false and hurtful notions of group competition and to perceptions of suspicion instead of seeing themselves as closely linked neighbors and potential allies.

This dialogical inadvertency is certainly evidenced in the realm of African American and Latino/a religion, theology, and ministry. African American and Hispanic/Latino/a theologians and religious scholars have rarely inquired into the possibility and desirability of cross-cultural communication with respect to these communities. In addition, ministerial and ecclesiastical collaboration continues to be uncommon between these two communities. This omission is confounding especially in light of what these two communities implicitly and explicitly share with respect to historical, racial, cultural, social, and religious geographies. It is further perplexing given the fact that within the theological analogues of these two groups there are both tendencies that advance a dialogical understanding of theology and also ample basis for comparative and collaborative analysis.

Noting synchronously the previous lack of dialogue between these groups, the present need for social solidarity, and the possibility for parallel analysis between African American and Hispanic/Latino/a theology, religious scholarship, and ministry, Anthony Pinn and I decided some years ago to gather various theologians to initiate a cross-cultural conversation in a project titled *The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theologies in Dialogue*. We saw such an undertaking as an initiative, and it was our hope that it would spur further dialogue among African American and Latino/a religious scholars, theologians, and ministers. This is why I was personally overjoyed when I received word of the ATS's desire to sponsor a conference ("Black and Hispanic Dialogue: Our Congregations, Our Classrooms, and Our Collaboration") in Pittsburgh, and when I learned of its interest in my participation in and reflections on the colloquium. This is precisely the sort of symposium that I had been hoping for as I worked on *The Ties that Bind*. To be sure, it is my hope that these sorts of "rap sessions" will continue to occur: our aim should be that of continued and ripened dialogue rather than just a one-time conversation. More of these initiatives are needed to spark substantive verbal exchange and meaningful collaboration not only between African Americans and Latino/as but also among all of the varied constituencies that make up the population of our nation. The renewal of our public life, the academy, and our churches depends on these kinds of dialogues.

Three Pointers for Future Dialogic Consideration

Although this particular gathering has undoubtedly helped the cause of cross-cultural exchange between our two scholarly communities, I suggest that there are certain challenges, directions, and issues that deserve closer attention in our future dialogic encounters. In what follows, I will offer some general observations and comments in support of the further maturation of our African American and Hispanic/Latino/a theological dialogue.

My first point pertains to what I deem a matter of theological epistemology: our understanding of the character and tasks of theology. I noted that much of our discussion at the conference tended to restrict theological discourse to the internal concerns and interests of the institutional churches in our communities: the Black Church and Latino/a Church. That is to say, our colloquies have generally assumed that theology is solely and entirely a reflective endeavor of the church and for the church. My personal concerns with this kind of theological ecclesiocentrism are that first, it does not serve to motivate our theologians to reflect upon the full spectrum of African American and Latino/a religious experiences and what may be called "extra-church" realities and sources. Second, it can also serve to divert our attention away from the larger sociocultural matrices that make up our theology's reflective context. Third, I noted that our ecclesiocentric theological conversations that weekend focused on the theologian's

responsibility and/or accountability to the church. Yet, strangely missing from these discussions was a critique of the church—a critique of the sexism, the homophobia, the anti-intellectualism, the racial segregation, and the other kinds of oppressive dynamics that can at times be found in our churches. It seems to me that, if we are to devote much of our theological attention to ecclesiastical matters, these sorts of issues deserve our scrutiny. Fourth, I suggest that by restricting theological reflection and conversation to the concerns and interests of the church we may unknowingly slight the possibility and desirability of varying theologies that can address the needs of distinctive dialogic publics. We need to allow for the existence of different theologies—theologies of and from the church, academic theologies, and public theologies. And we need to acknowledge that each of these can and should address distinctive concerns and issues. Moreover, I believe that we need to recognize the need for these different kinds of theologies. Increasingly, for instance, I see a need for theologies that can adequately engage, respond to, and influence the broader public discourse of the United States in the realm of civil society. Yet this can only be accomplished if our theologies reflect on more than just the concerns and interests of the church. Although we need theologies that reflect on the existence and condition of the church, we also need theologies that address issues that transcend the confines of our local churches.³

My second observation has to do with the need to further account for the complex and diverse natures of our two groups in future conversations. That is to say, we must continue to struggle against the tendency, the temptation, to essentialize and ontologize African American and Hispanic/Latino/a cultures and identities. Our two groups contain within them much variety, and this inner melange needs to be further recognized in our discussions. Latino/as, for instance, are in point of fact an ethnicity of ethnicities, an ethnic group that, as Juan Flores puts it, “does not exist but for the existence of its constituent ‘subgroups.’”⁴ In short, the term “Hispanic” or “Latino/a” is an ethnic label that lumps together the histories and racial-cultural idiosyncracies of different peoples. Although there is legitimacy and even profit in the use of an all-inclusive term such as “Latino” or “Hispanic” to speak about the experiences of those people in this country who can in some way trace their ancestry to one or more Spanish-speaking countries, the problem that may arise with the prolonged and unnuanced use of a term such as “Hispanic” or “Latino/a” is that it could divert attention away from the varied historical, racial, class, linguistic, and gender experiences of the different nationalities to which it refers: the Mexican American/Chicano(a); Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Central American, South American, and, in some rarer instances, even Spanish and Brazilian peoples living in the United States. And although it is certainly true that to a large extent the stories of each of these groups converge within the national context of the United States (when we either cross the border or, as in most cases, the border crosses us), the Latino/a experience nevertheless is composed of various internal subnarratives. In a similar way, we should note that there is historical, cultural, religious, and

economic/class distinction within the African American population. Our dialogic representations of these two groups, therefore, should allow for more fluid and complex portrayals of “culture,” “identity,” and “experience” so as to give better accounting for the variety, distinctiveness, and even incoherence found within the African American and Hispanic/Latino/a population.

Third, and finally, I will suggest that we could perhaps continue to expand the thematic range of our future dialogue by bringing into our discussion topics such as sexuality, the broader variety of religious experience found within these two groups, and the wider cultural creativity and agency of African Americans and Hispanic/Latino/as. On this latter point, it would be interesting to look into the popular cultural production of these two social groups—beyond, that is, merely the popular religious expressions found within them. These topics are not often considered in written and verbal communication stemming from our scholarly communities, and it would be both fascinating and profitable to explore them together in future dialogues.

Concluding Remarks

It is my hope that the observations I have articulated above will prove to be helpful for our continued African American and Hispanic/Latino/a theological dialogue. To be sure, I encourage us to continue to seek the possibilities both for extended verbal exchange and practical collaboration between our two communities in our churches, the academy, and in our general society. It is my belief that theologians and ministers can facilitate conversations to journey across the boundaries of difference in our society. Our efforts in this area may be greatly enhanced, however, with a renewed conception of theology and church ministry. Theologians can and should envision theology as a mode of discourse that seeks to encourage holistic imagination, notions of self and communal integrity, and social solidarity. Meanwhile, ministers can and should envision their churches as public spaces that permit for pluralistic, inclusive forms of citizen discourse and association. And both theologians and ministers should deem this undertaking not as an aspect that is external to their religious traditions or faith(s), but rather as an integral element of faithful living. If we can manage to incorporate this last insight into our views of the vocation of the theologian and the mission of the church and/or our religious institutions, then perhaps we might appropriately permit theology and ministry to become an authentic form of “religare”—in short, *a bridge over the difference divide*.⁵

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ENDNOTES

1. Antonia Darder, "The Politics of Biculturalism: Culture and Difference in the Formation of Warriors for Gringostroika and The New Mestizas," in *Culture and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Bicultural Experience in the United States*, ed., Antonia Darder (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1995), 11.
2. I borrow this line from Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 11.
3. For more on the topic of theological epistemology/methodology and the possibilities of theology as public discourse, see my book *Mapping Public Theology: Beyond Culture, Identity, and Difference* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002).
4. Juan Flores, "Pan-Latino/Trans-Latino: Puerto Ricans in the New Nueva York," in *Centro: The Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 8 (1996): 176.
5. For further sources on matters of diversity and/or cross-cultural theological communication and ministry, see the following works: (1) *The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theologies in Dialogue*, eds. Anthony B. Pinn and Benjamin Valentin (New York: Continuum, 2001); (2) *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America From The Margins*, eds. Eleazar S. Fernandez and Fernando F. Segovia (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001); (3) Fumitaka Matsuoka, *The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1998); (4) *Ending Racism in the Church*, eds. Susan E. Davies and Sr. Paul Teresa Hennessey (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1998); (5) Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Agents of Transformation: A Guide for Effective Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996); (6) Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *Coming Together: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1995); and (7) Cornel West, *Race Matters*.

Pinn and Valentin, Phase Two: Dialogue¹

Pinn: I appreciate and agree with your attention to the possibility of doing theology inside and outside the church context, but I'm wondering how you see this recognition of "academic" theology developing. How might we go about lessening anti-intellectualism in both communities, and particularly the ways in which we academics play into this scheme?

Valentin: I think that the process of "lessening anti-intellectualism" and "recognizing the importance of academic theology," to paraphrase your words, can begin within our own academic communities through the valuing of the vocation and role of the intellectual. Indeed, at times I feel that we often fail to grasp the dignity, importance, and relevance of our vocation as scholars and theorists. This inadvertency expresses itself in varying ways, at times through an evasion of theory, through a tendency to quickly jump to issues of applicability, and at still other times through a sort of dooming vocational anxiety that obstructs our ability to take ourselves and our work as intellectuals seriously. A place to start might be to better think about and talk about the intellectual's role in society. To recall and paraphrase something from Antonio Gramsci here, I agree that "all women and men are intellectuals. . . but all women and men do not have the function of intellectuals in society." We need to recover the unique function and value of our intellectual vocation, and to redeem the worth of theory in our communities. As I see it, an intellectual's task is to analyze, work with, develop, and apply theory and, in the end, theory has to do with our attitudes and ways of approaching the world. If this is so, then intellectuals are in a position to exert some influence over both the creation and contestation of outlooks and values in society. As intellectuals we can and should put forward comprehensive visions, analyses, and speeches that provide orientation to people's lives and promote the cultivation of a concern for the quality of our lives together in society. I find this to be in and of itself a religious striving. Yet, we can add to this the subtlety that as religious intellectuals we can help people to better understand their religious experience and/or faith, and then to link their religious traditions or faith to the consideration of both existential questions and urgent public problems. But my point is, to use Cornel West's words, that "this role requires a deep commitment to the life of the mind." Once we have redeemed the value of this commitment among ourselves, then—and perhaps only then—we can proceed to convince others in our classrooms, our churches, and society of the relevance of our and other's intellectual strivings. Finally, I will suggest that our longing to "lessen anti-intellectualism" and to get others to recognize the value of academic theology in our communities might be aided by the attempt to strike a balance in our writings and speech between intellectual profundity and rhetorical accessibility. Thus, the task might be that of adopting a style of reflection that, although erudite, profound, well informed, and nuanced, is accessible and valuable to a general

audience of thoughtful people. This is a difficult task, but it is, I think, one that is possible or at least worth pursuing.

Pinn: I appreciate your response to my question, and I agree with you. I wonder, however, if the notion of praxis operating in both communities holds the same assumptions and connotations. Does the sense of praxis present in both rely too heavily on the activism dimension of the term and thereby fail to recognize the value of critical reflection? To be prophetic, I would suggest, requires both a commitment to some mode of activism and critical reflection on that activism. Do you think theologians in both communities work based on a theory of praxis that is capable of the type of intellectual movement you suggest? What must be done in order to foster the level of appreciation you advocate? Does the project you suggest require a reimagining of the “space” in which theology takes place as well as its audience?

Valentin: I believe you are right. I do think that the notion of praxis largely operating within both of our academic communities has tended to lean more toward the practical/activist dimension of the term. The result unfortunately is an inadvertent decoupling of practice/activism from theory, and the relative eclipse of the latter by the former. This of course is ironic and confounding since praxis is a concept that aspires to link both, envisioning analysis and practice as a conjoint activity. But perhaps it is precisely with a recovery of the fuller meanings and implications of this term that we can start to foster a deeper level of appreciation for the guiding value of theory and intellectual work. My suspicion is that a more careful scrutiny of the concept of praxis could lead us to a consideration of the last point you bring up—a “reimagining of the space in which theology takes place.” And yes, I do think that this latter understanding needs to be taken up in our potential talk about the role(s), space/place, and publics of theology.

Valentin: I am lured by your longing, as expressed in your essay, for theological work that is “multidimensional and ideologically flexible,” and that is about more than simply “two-dimensional transformation of life—each to herself and to her own community.” First of all, can you say a little bit more about this particular insight? And then second, I note that the sensibility you seem to be describing here has materialized in my own work as an interest in the conceptualization and possibility of what might be called “public theology.” In short, I’ve defined that as discourse that couples either the language, symbols, narratives, or background concepts of a religious tradition with an overarching, integrative, emancipatory, and coalitional sociopolitical perspective. To what broader, more comprehensive, discursive or hermeneutical religious project would you link your call for “a multidimensional view of liberation?”

Pinn: What I suggest through those two phrases is a commitment to theology outside the realm of a particular faith commitment. I want to push for a mode of theology that, in keeping with your proposal, is comfortable with its status as an academic enterprise revolving around the study of a particular dimension of religion/religious experience. I say this because I want to take seriously the critique of theology proposed by Charles Long in *Significations*,² but I want to embrace a greater sense of optimism regarding the possibilities for useful theological inquiry than one typically finds in history of religions. Furthermore, I'm interested in extending Dwight Hopkins's recent consideration of globalization as an issue of theological weight and concern. And I want to couple this with Paul Gilroy's turn to the "Black Atlantic" as a way of thinking about theological reflection done within a certain cultural context but in creative tension with other dimensions of life in the "New World." I think this possesses wonderful possibilities with respect to categories, norms, and methods for unpacking religious experience and expression.

I am intrigued, but not completely convinced, by your notion of "public" theology. Perhaps I'm not appreciating fully the nuances involved, but it seems to me that liberation theologies by their very nature are modalities of public discourse. If one takes your definition of public theology—"discourse that couples either the language, symbols, narratives, or background concepts of a religious tradition with an overarching, integrative, emancipatory, and coalitional sociopolitical perspective"—isn't this the idealized framing of liberation theology done within our two communities? It isn't clear to me that this terminology offers a substantive alteration to the manner in which theology is done. Rather it seems to more clearly articulate the long-held notion of liberation as a "second order" enterprise. I want to push for a more elemental alteration in the sources, resources, and methods that inform the doing of theology within both communities. And referring to it as public theology, while valuable in some respects, does not fully capture the nature of my proposed re-thinking. I want to affirm clearly that theology within our two communities can be conceived of as a mode of inquiry regarding which a certain form of celebratory skepticism is important. That is to say, the type of theological inquiry I want to promote involves the theologian recognizing the value of various modes of religious life, while holding them to critical scrutiny. While I certainly need to give this more thought because this essay is one of my early attempts to outline this theory of theological discourse, I want to suggest that it must involve a rejection of the "how does this preach?" paradigm.

I think we are in agreement on the need for a radical rethinking of the nature of theological discourse, but we differ with respect to the proper label for that shift.

Valentin: I think that we are both calling for a radical rethinking of the character of theological discourse. But we do differ with respect to the proper labeling of that shift, as well, I think, as to our approaches in actuating this shift. You seem to be

calling for a more foundational alteration and expansion of the sources and resources of theology. While there is some of that in my pursuit, I am more focused on matters of discursive methodology or discourse analysis in theology. We also go about making our call for a rethinking of the character of theological discourse through differing means: you by way of a deeper conversation with critical work stemming from the history of religions and comparative religion, and me through a deeper conversation with critical work stemming from literary, cultural, and political theory. I do think, however, that both callings intersect.

In regard to your linking of “public theology” and “liberation theology,” I do wish to note that my desire is not necessarily to counterpose these in an irreconcilable manner. I see the first as pointing to a method rather than a school of thought. Thus, these two approaches to theological reflection can intersect and blend. I will note, however, that in spite of the ameliorative and social commitments declared by U.S. liberation theologians, and, therefore, their implicit public aspirations, these theologies have not often exhibited a public perspective and/or public discursive quality. Nor have they paid much serious attention to the complexities involved in doing theology as public discourse. In brief, few liberation theologies have looked into the possibility of theology becoming public discourse in ways that may be adequate to the justice demands of our age, connecting the task of theology to some conception of public discourse theory, to a general understanding of the idea of the public of civil society, and to a credible comprehensive sociopolitical project for justice that could harmonize the emancipatory interests of diverse and currently fragmented constituencies. My work is about calling liberation theologies toward these sorts of considerations, and in a sense, to use Nancy Fraser’s words, it is about “knitting disparate discourses together in order to help create a new, larger, amalgamated public.”

I’m greatly intrigued by your strivings, and by the link that seems to exist between our distinct yet related calling. It seems that we are both essentially calling for the creation of “bridge discourses” and “hybrid publics” within theology. This of course also means that we are both calling for a radical rethinking and expansion of the theological task. In this and many other ways our callings merge. And I look forward to our continued exploration of this potential intellectual coupling together.

Pinn: I think you properly note our similarities. But I think you downplay the strength of our disagreements. It seems to be that we have a fundamentally different orientation with respect to theological dialogue, and I think these strong differences—if maintained with respect but firmness—allow for equally strong dimensions of growth. It remains somewhat unclear to me exactly what is *public* about the public theology you propose. Perhaps I’m overlooking something of elemental importance in the distinction you make, but it seems to be a matter of semantics as opposed to a radical shift regarding the sensibilities and orientation liberation theologians should assume. Rather than a shift as just described, it

seems to me you are calling theologians to be true to their stated commitments. I want to agree with you concerning the manner in which liberation theologians in both communities fail to take note of the “complexities” involved in public discourse. However, I would like to push for greater clarity with respect to the nature and substance of these complexities.

I am intrigued by the possibility that some of our difference with respect to the doing of theology stems from our personal orientations. And while I want to problematize an unchecked application of personal faith commitments in the doing of theology, I must recognize that my humanism and your theism lurk in the shadows of our stated theories of theological discourse. It might be interesting to give additional attention to the ramifications of this, if it is in fact accurate. Perhaps, without taking this too far, there are ways in which my humanism as a marginal reality in African American communities (and I would assume Hispanic American humanists hold a similar position) allows for or might even encourage a certain type of deconstruction with regard to theological categories, spaces, and so on. I assume based on our years of friendship and conversations that your theism requires a different type of deconstruction with regard to these same elements of theological discourse. Our differences in terms of personal orientation might also suggest differing levels of comfort in traditional arenas of theological conversation, and also a different sense of what it means to be “marginal” within marginal communities.

Even in light of my statements concerning our differing orientations, I agree with you that there are areas of intersection. Our challenge, I believe, is to better (and more completely) determine and utilize those things we share intellectually. This, however, must be done in a way that recognizes the manner in which theology is in fact a “messy” and incomplete business.

Valentin: I appreciate your noting the differences existing between our personal orientations, and your highlighting the potentiality inherent in a possible future exploration and comparison of these. I would like that indeed. I suspect that the differences found between your humanism and my theism may not reveal themselves as chasm-like, given my preference for what William Jones labels a “humanocentric theism.” My theism is in line with the sort of humanism you have previously described as “soft or weak humanism,” in your book *Why Lord?* I do understand, however, the differences signified by your preference for a strong humanism.

I wish to end, however, by calling attention to my belief that my call for a public theology among theologians concerned with liberation suggests more than just semantics. It does entail a shift—a shift in how we construct our notions of identity, and community; a shift in how we conceptualize difference; a shift in thinking about the linkage between local-community interests and a broader public good; a shift in thinking about the connection between the cultural and the social, the discursive and the institutional; and so forth. Thus, I am not merely

asking theologians to be true to their stated commitments. Rather I am asking them to reconsider and revise their commitments in light of the justice demands of our current climate: that is, in light of the rampant cynicism and apathy that afflicts our public life, the strengthening of global interests and forces, the deterioration of a spirit of solidarity, the fracturing of utopian energies along group lines of difference, and the increase of social antagonism we have witnessed. It seems to me that my call to take these matters seriously requires a shift in vision, in discursive methodology, and in our conceptualization of the character and tasks of theological reflection. I would call this a radical shift in vision and methodology rather than just a semantic tweak.

Indeed, I agree with you my dear friend: theology is a messy and incomplete business. It is so good to know that we are willing to tread into this “messiness” together!

Pinn: This is interesting, but I don’t want to belabor the point. I cannot resist, however, a comment concerning “strong humanism” and “weak humanism.” In *Why, Lord?* I attempt to speak about there being only a subtle distinction between weak humanism and the theism of liberation theologians. From my perspective, and I have been accused of pushing this too far, there are significant distinctions between my humanist orientation and even your humanocentric theism. And, to repeat myself, these distinctions allow for differing levels of deconstruction with respect to a rethinking of theological discourse. In short, your theology could never be confused with “atheology.” I make this distinction while continuing to advocate the necessity of both approaches. My interest in the theological significance of competing claims requires this openness, and our conversations help me keep this focus.

Valentin: We have both in passing mentioned the importance of considering in African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino(a) theologies matters of sexuality, embodiment, and what I believe you have referred to as “the politics of pleasure.” Can you say something about the significance and consequence of these issues and thematics? And how might a discussion of these matters proceed within our two religious/theological communities? Also, what categories within religious theory and theology might provide good entry points into a rich discussion of these topics?

Pinn: Ben, this is an important area, and these are excellent questions. And I’m not going to let you off the hook. After I respond, I’ll expect a few words from you on the topic. As you know based on my essay and our conversations prior to writing these pieces for this journal, I am concerned with the epistemological and particularly the theological importance of the body—as both physical, biochemical reality and as mega-sign/symbol. I push this point because liberation theologies in our communities speak about embodiment, but they fail to fully

appreciate the requirements of this language and position. To take this position seriously, I believe, one must think about liberation as the full expression of our humanity. Both communities have been dehumanized in ways that include the demonizing or eroticisation of the sexual self. Think, for example, of the manner in which black and brown bodies have been absorbed into the “sex trade” for the benefit of tourists in places in the Caribbean, United States, and elsewhere. This desire for the flesh of African Americans and Hispanic Americans is an old obsession, as old as the trade in Africans to the New World. If, then, this “devouring” of our bodies has played a role historically in the dehumanization, the “thingafication” or objectification of our communities, should not liberation entail a reimagining of our sexual selves as a part of our humanizing?

The question becomes one of how theology can best help to achieve this restoration of healthy sexual selves. We might begin dealing with this complex issue through attention to the ways in which our religious institutions have embraced troubling depictions of sex and sexuality, such as heterosexism and homophobia. Deconstructing the perceptions of sexuality must involve a reexamination of the appeal to Scripture for justification. In addition, it must involve attention to the theological categories, resources, and norms that guide our work and conversation. And related to this point, I would argue for an overhaul of our theological tools. For example, I would propose the alteration of theological language and categories based upon the centrality of the body. Hence, body fluids become theological signs and symbols needing discussion. We have given some attention to the theological value of blood, particularly as it relates to the Christ event and atonement. But what, for example, is the theological importance of semen? Sweat? What might a theological investigation, with the help of the social sciences, philosophy and history of religions, of body fluids say concerning the construction of meaning? Theologians in our communities, while wrestling with such questions, should take as conversation partners figures such as René Girard, whose work on scapegoating holds great promise for the type of work we must undertake. All of this, of course, requires a commitment to a more comparative form of theology.

I’m certain this response is less than satisfying, but I hope it gives some sense of my direction and theological agenda.

Valentin: I’m with you all the way, Tony. And I’m intrigued by the direction and agenda your comments provide. I do believe that theologians who are interested in liberation cannot/should not evade these topics. I think that often when the term “liberation” is uttered, those employing it think about helping to liberate others. In this particular case I believe that we ourselves, we who are religious scholars and theologians within these two communities, need to be liberated: liberated from our limiting outlooks about sexuality, and liberated to talk about matters of the body and sexuality in an open and substantive manner. As I see it, liberation is a material, “fleshy” thing. Stated otherwise, we must acknowledge

that matters of the body and sexuality have everything to do with justice. Thus, a comprehensive, emancipatory, theo-political project must address these themes.

There are some important works that can be resources for such a conversation. Theological titles such as *Sexuality and The Black Church*, *The Good News of the Body*, *Journeys by Heart*, and *Indecent Theology* come immediately to mind. Yet, more attention to and work in this area is needed. And it would indeed be interesting to enter into comparative and collaborative work in this area from the perspectives of African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino(a) theology. You've done well in pointing to the reasons why these two communities in particular should enter into further conversation on sexuality and embodiment. In closing, I will note that within Christian thought the "immanence" and "embodiment" implied by Christology offer an opening for consideration of these themes in a theological way. And beyond this, I am sure that other categories across the religious and theological spectrum of orientations can be found to facilitate dialogue about sexuality and body. I know for sure that this topic deserves our full attention—after all, it is our bodies that hang in the balance.

ENDNOTES

1. In *The Ties that Bind* and during our presentations at the ATS conference, we emphasized the need for dialogue as a dimension of our theological projects. In keeping with that agenda, we decided to end our contributions to this volume with an exchange related to our essays. This dialogue is "rough." It is printed exactly as it developed—unrefined. But for us this unpolished component of the work is important. For us, this exchange is not an "add on." Rather, it is an essential component of the doing of our theologies.
2. Charles Long, *Significations* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

Cultivating a Culture of the Call: A Model for Lay Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: Wesley Theological Seminary has begun a new lay education program called "Equipping Lay Ministry," which is a part of an overall emphasis on partnerships with congregations. It is one of the things Wesley is doing to cultivate a "culture of the call," renewing a commitment to invite persons to acknowledge and explore their calls to ministry, both ordained and lay. Equipping Lay Ministry differs from previous models of lay education in that it seeks to meet an immediate need for lay leadership in the church.

Theologically speaking, vocation is a call from God. The call in a person's life is a call to become something and to do something, a call to faith and discipleship. Christian vocation is the call that comes from being made new in Christ, a call to all baptized Christians to do God's work in the world and in the church. A *culture of the call* to ministry is an atmosphere of invitation, a way of being that encourages all God's people to consider that, yes, they do have a call from God, and it prevails upon them to pray, study, and reflect upon what that may be. At Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, a concerted effort is being made to foster that culture of the call to all kinds of ministries.

The Future is Now

In a study in 1984 supported by a Lilly Endowment grant on theological seminaries in the future, John C. Fletcher reported that sixteen Protestant seminaries shared four goals for the future. These goals were (in order of priority): (1) to continue to offer professional degree programs, (2) to offer continuing education for clergy, (3) to offer theological education to the laity of the churches, and (4) for seminaries to be "centers of theological and ethical reflection for the churches, denominations, and the communities in which the seminaries are located."¹ In 2000, Wesley Theological Seminary pioneered a new way for us to enact that third goal of extending theological education to laity by establishing the Equipping Lay Ministry (ELM) program. First envisioned by academic dean Bruce C. Birch, Equipping Lay Ministry, with the opportunities it provides lay people for study and discernment, became one of the primary ways in which the culture of the call is nurtured and supported at Wesley.

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Fletcher wrote that the last three goals of continuing education for clergy, theological education for laity, and engagement with congregations for theological dialogue are relatively new as serious goals for schools of theology. It used to be that schools concerned themselves mostly with providing a professional degree program. Faculty saw themselves as biblical scholars and theologians. Fletcher attributes the addition of the last three goals to a reaction to the decline of theological schools (both financially and in quality) in the sixties and the seventies. He said that badly needed reform of theological schools and seminaries made them diversify their goals to include preparing persons for ministry in the church. Fletcher recognizes that there is another school of thought which claims that diversification of goals diminishes theological scholarship and hence education because it stretches the faculty too much. He, however, does affirm such diversification as necessary for the future.² J.D. Fite also asserted in 1996 that educating lay persons is “a new paradigm” in Southern Baptist seminaries. He noted the move toward a more inclusive understanding of ministry.³

The history of Wesley Theological Seminary also reflects that shift in emphasis. The first catalog of Westminster Theological Seminary (the precursor of Wesley) in 1882 states that its purpose is to “prepare men for the Christian ministry.” Further statements implied that it was preparation for the ordained pastoral ministry. In 1923 the catalog repeated the 1882 purpose statement, but added, “the seminary is open to men and women of all evangelical (later Christian) denominations.”⁴ By the 1950s the emphasis on the pastoral ministry continued, but the creation of other degree programs such as the Master of Religious Education indicated a shift toward a broader curriculum. The 1969 catalog represents a dramatic change in the language used to describe the purpose of the seminary:

The Wesley Theological Seminary is a graduate professional school preparing men and women for the ministries of the church....Trained Christian ministry is taking various forms, new and old. Even church pastorates differ widely according to the special needs of members and of the surrounding communities. Besides pastors, the church has need of teachers, directors of youth work, administrative assistants, specialized personnel in mission abroad... church musicians; and innovating ministers of other kinds.

While the emphasis on the pastoral ministry is still there, there is an intentional recognition of other ministries and Wesley’s role in providing preparation for them. It is quite possible that other schools of theology may have experienced a similar evolution.

The mission statement of Wesley Theological Seminary today reads, in part, that we are to “prepare persons for Christian ministry, to foster theological

scholarship, and to provide leadership on issues facing the church and the world." It seems our goals have become increasingly diverse. Wesley's lay education program is not an attempt to be trendy, but to honor our mission and to respond in an innovative way to our longstanding commitment to the church as the whole people of God. Our student body is also very diverse, ethnically and ecumenically, but it is our Methodist identity that attempts to "unite the two so long disjointed, knowledge and vital piety" as Charles Wesley wrote, that forms our commitment to the life-long process of spiritual formation.

Partnership Between Theological Schools and Churches

G. Douglass Lewis, who retired as president in 2002, and David McAllister-Wilson, Wesley's new president, wanted to connect Wesley with congregations in a more significant way, as other schools are also finding a need to do. In May 1997 the Board of Governors of Wesley adopted a Strategic Plan to guide the seminary's planning process for the near future. The Joint Planning Committee, consisting of faculty and administration, developed the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan of Wesley Theological Seminary states:

We believe the church and the seminary are presented with some unique challenges in the final decade of the 20th century. To meet these challenges, we believe Wesley must take some bold steps over the next five years.

The Strategic Plan reports that Wesley would adopt several goals, including making more effective use of its academic resources in service to the church and generating an institutional advancement campaign in order to fulfill the ambitious goals. Wesley committed to move from being a church-related seminary to a church-centered seminary. This campaign came to be known as the "Generation to Generation" campaign, which would enable Wesley to enlist and educate a new generation of exceptional ministerial leaders. Specifically, the Generation to Generation campaign seeks to recruit 200 congregations and 2000 individuals into a formal partnership program with Wesley Theological Seminary. The office of seminary development spearheads the Wesley Partners program, inviting churches and individuals to become "Wesley Partners," to covenant with Wesley to work together to encourage ministry, to ensure that people hear and answer God's call. Hence, Wesley began sensing, identifying, and talking about a culture of the call. David McAllister-Wilson explains:

God is calling people into ministry. What we have discovered in our work is that the church forgot to talk about the call. In a previous generation pastors would hold ministry Sundays once a year and talk about their call to ministry. Sunday school

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teachers would encourage young people to think about Christian vocation, and then they'd go off to camp where many came to a decision about ministry. All together that was a system the church used to channel God's call to ministry. Over a period of forty years, we lost what I've come to call the culture of the call. We want to recreate a "culture of the call"—a higher awareness of ministry among youth, young adults, and persons of all ages.⁵

Renewing a "culture of the call" has become a vision for Wesley Theological Seminary. Any really good idea soon takes on a life of its own and becomes bigger than its original source so that it can no longer be contained. A culture of the call is not limited to Wesley, so the seminary has invited congregations to become communities where a culture of the call permeates the ministry and mission. Through the formation of a network of partner congregations, many churches are *claiming* a culture of the call and moving to a charismatic understanding of ministry based on the gifts given to God's people rather than an institutional one. They are transformed from the work of institutional maintenance to the ministry of changing lives. The Equipping Lay Ministry program at Wesley is part of this larger partnership that we have developed with local congregations. Wesley's partner churches help us to build a church-centered seminary.

With that mandate, several converging requests and opportunities led to the development of the new lay ministries certificate program. Church judicatory boards expressed a great need for expanded lay training programs. A pastor in a large African American Baptist church asked Wesley to offer a curriculum for lay people who are engaged in various ministries of their congregation. And in response to the growing number of churches that want a parish nurse, a professional organization for parish nurses asked Wesley to provide theological education to nurses. United Methodist churches, district superintendents, and bishops lament a growing shortage of pastors and seek alternative ways to meet ministerial needs. These requests represent an emerging need for trained lay leadership in ministry alongside of ordained leadership. Equipping Lay Ministry is an attempt to ground diverse needs for lay ministry in a common biblical and theological core while recognizing the need for distinct skills in particular ministries.

Wesley and its partner churches share a vision of a faithful, renewed church. The Partners program is not a thinly disguised recruitment or fundraising strategy; rather ministry partners remind us of our mission and hold us accountable to the church. Wesley partners are very involved in the life of the seminary. They receive regular updates on seminary news, participate in convocations on ministry, and take advantage of study opportunities through Equipping Lay Ministry and other offerings. Churches are encouraged to hold "Ministry Sundays" in which congregations celebrate the call to ministry and

are provided resources for planning them. Wesley has produced a video, *Culture of the Call*, for use in classes and discussion groups to stimulate thinking on the theology of ministry and how laity and clergy can fulfill the church's mission to transform lives, bring about justice, and work for the realization of the reign of God. Equipping Lay Ministry is not limited to participants in our partner churches but is particularly promoted to them as a resource for theological education.

Why Would Lay People Want Theological Education Anyway?

Creating a lay theological education program in a way begs the question, "Why would lay people want theological education, anyway?" This is a question Sally Simmel addressed in the book, *A Lifelong Call to Learn: Approaches to Continuing Education for Church Leaders*, edited by Robert E. Reber and D. Bruce Roberts.⁶ In a complex and changing world where chaos and tragedy are always within a hair's breadth, where our towers of meaning come crashing down both literally and metaphorically, people face the difficult task of finding meaning and interpreting the faith. An understanding of vocation helps answer the question. The church teaches that God calls all Christians by virtue of their baptism. The Bible is replete with "call stories," God's personal and collective summons, some of the best-loved stories in all the biblical material. God calls some to work in the church in professional ministry. Others God calls to work in the world, to connect the church and Christianity with the world. The word vocation is rooted in the Latin for "voice," and Parker Palmer points out that a sense of vocation comes from listening.⁷ He repeats an old Quaker saying, "let your life speak."⁵ If we listen closely, we will hear God's call. Retired United Methodist Bishop Richard Wilke says that society is so complex and the needs are so great that it is "all hands on deck."⁸ We need everyone where they are gifted and have graces and skills to be helping with the work of the Gospel.

There is a sacredness to work, whatever kind of work it is, if God needs it done and it contributes positively to the world. Frederick Buechner's famous line puts it so well, vocation is "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."⁹ James Fowler, in *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*, talks about vocation as the response a person makes to the address of God and to the calling to partnership to use our gifts to bring about God's vision for the world.¹⁰ We who are called are expected to show in our daily life and work that we are called. The divine call is the call to conversion, to a life of faith and a call to live out that faith in a particular way. Equipping Lay Ministry professes to be one way that people can figure out how to live out their faith as leaders in the faith community, whether "out front" or behind the scenes, and as witnesses to the kingdom of God.

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Despite the rhetoric about how we are all ministers, there has not been widespread understanding of and even less actual practice of that theology of ministry. In practice we still mostly reserve ministry for the clergy. There is the misguided notion that only ordained clergy have received a call from God. Because of clericalism, the inappropriate giving of higher status to the ordained, lay people have been conditioned to expect that ministry will be done to them or for them, certainly not by them. For the “average person in the pew,” vocation is one’s chosen career rather than what is chosen *for* one by God. There is little sense of the partnership with God that Fowler was addressing. One might take a job just out of a need to make a living for sheer survival. Or, in an achievement-oriented society, one might choose the career that will promise the most income or status. We do not seem to understand that God has a hand in the vocation of all Christians and that discernment is necessary for all Christians to determine how we can best serve and do our work. David McAllister-Wilson, however, sees a change on the horizon. He is clear, the call is not limited to the ordained ministry, so if Wesley is going to be faithful to that understanding, it has to see itself as more than a school to prepare professionals and ordained clergy.

In a 1996 *Review and Expositor* article, Jack R. Cunningham alluded to a gulf between clergy and laity. Though clergy are not respected and revered the way they used to be, lay people still view clergy as closer to God. Some clergy might feel threatened by educated laity, if they want to be seen as the “resident expert,” but Cunningham believes that getting laity into the seminary and providing them access to theological education will actually improve relations.¹¹ Laity will have a better understanding of ministry and the theological basis for it and will be able to partner with clergy to allow for more effective ministry. Together, the laity and clergy work as partners to bring the message of the church in the world. Most clergy, Cunningham senses would welcome this. Yet there is some fear and trembling about sending lay people to seminary, the perception that seminaries can rob good Christian men and women of their faith. The ordained sometimes fear that if lay people knew what was *really* being taught in the seminaries, they would leave the church. While it is true that seminaries do challenge assumptions or even rattle the foundations that may undergird faith, it is preposterous to withhold theological education from lay people on the grounds that they cannot handle it or need to be protected. Lay people are entitled to the same information as clergy! Not only can they handle it, they relish it. My experience of more than twenty years in the ministry tells me that lay people want to wrestle with truth issues, and they are interested in sharpening their intellectual tools and building practical skills. Yes, some may have their faith rattled, some even may leave, but most will come to a deeper, dynamic and owned faith in which they will act to build up the Body of Christ and further the mission of the church in the world. I would add that while the laity stand to gain much from the seminary, the seminary stands to be enhanced by the presence of lay students. We learn a lot from lay people, the challenges

they face and the needs of their churches. They hold us accountable to our commitment to church and to our mission by being in dialogue with us, sharing how Wesley can best support their leadership efforts.

Why do lay people seek theological education? At least two reasons are readily apparent and spur on the kind of lay education that Wesley is doing. One reason is that lay people of all ages and cultures are searching for meaning and purpose. According to Sally Simmel, the church risks losing people if the only theological reflection available to them is the Sunday School, which is usually less than an hour per week and poorly attended by adults.¹² People are seeking to find meaning in their lives. Call it a spiritual longing or call it a disillusionment with modern culture, people are desiring more meaning than the world alone can give them. Mary Catherine Bateson in *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* suggests that learning can be a way to a meaningful life:

Learning is perhaps the only pleasure that might replace increasing consumption as our chosen mode of enriching experience. Someday, the joy of recognizing a pattern in a leaf or the geological strata in a cliff face might replace the satisfactions of new carpeting or more horsepower in an engine, and the chance to learn in the workplace might seem more valuable than increased purchasing power or a move up the organizational chart. Increasing knowledge of the ethology of wolves might someday replace the power savored in destroying them.¹³

People are trying to find a purpose, as Walter Brueggemann said, “for being in the world that is related to the purposes of God.”¹⁴ One might go further to say that we want to find a purpose that is not at cross-purposes with God. Participants in Wesley’s ELM program say:

I have been thinking for some time that God wants me to do something different, something more. I’m taking classes so I can find out what that is.

This has been a mountain-top experience for me; it has energized me! Now I want to go into action.

I have been looking for something like this for a long time to help me in my lay ministry.

I wanted a place where I could talk with others about faith, but even more than that, to learn about how to live out my faith through being involved in ministry.

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Secondly, people want to serve. They want to find meaning in service, not just by being busy. They want to use their gifts and to hone their gifts and gain knowledge to serve in a better way. There is precious little training and education provided by the church to help laity serve more effectively. Students say:

I enrolled in these classes because I want to be taken seriously as a youth minister. The certificate will strengthen my credibility as I work with youth and their parents.

My pastor encouraged me to take more of a leadership role. The ELM courses help me to feel confident to do so.

The classes are practical and I am learning how I can serve effectively, while at the same time growing spiritually.

The Equipping Lay Ministry Model

Equipping Lay Ministry differs from conventional understandings of lay continuing education. Rather than being primarily a form of personal, spiritual enrichment and growth in discipleship, Equipping Lay Ministry addresses the different concern of forming and preparing lay leadership for ministry. Earlier in this article I wrote about Wesley's continued mission to preparation for ministry and our commitment to lay education. Wesley established the Lay Resource Center in 1981, using the enrichment model of lay education and operated it until 1994. The Lay Resource Center was one of many such endeavors that sprang up in seminaries and institutions of higher learning, perhaps spawned by the growing adult education movement in the '70s and '80s. Malcolm Knowles may be the best known leader or interpreter of that movement in his theory of andragogy, "the art and science of helping adults learn." He proposed andragogy as a model of assumptions about learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions.¹⁵ The adult education model emphasized life-long learning, and the church particularly picked up on this notion as being especially important for those who are called to ministry. Indeed, "life-long learning" became a kind of mantra for adult education. Increasing difficulties, such as those named by Reber and Roberts in *A Lifelong Call to Learn: Approaches to Continuing Education for Church Leaders*, and the availability of other church-based opportunities, which met the need for enrichment and growth in discipleship, meant there was less need for such programs as the Lay Resource Center. Also, because these courses were relatively inexpensive, the mindset was "come if you can."

Bruce Birch recognized the need for a more concerted, intentional, planned and structured course of study for lay people who serve as leaders in their congregations. The Equipping Lay Ministry program reaffirms the call to life-long learning, but seeks to respond to immediate needs. More and more

churches depend on lay leadership. United Methodist congregations are turning to lay missionaries and lay speakers for ministerial leadership. Sometimes these are temporary “fill-ins” until a pastor can be found, but lay-led congregations are becoming more commonplace. We do, however, take seriously Robert Reber’s caution against offering only the “how-tos,” the quick fix.¹⁶ Equipping Lay Ministry provides a sustained curriculum of biblical and theological foundations for formation and information. Out of a conviction that the church is at its best when it has lay leadership that is enthusiastic, spiritually centered, informed, and biblically and theologically well grounded, Equipping Lay Ministry was born. Though Wesley’s program distinctively stresses equipping for lay ministry, other ATS schools likely are involved in education that extends to lay people in a variety of ways. Wesley’s response to the need may not be the best for everyone. Denominational schools often provide courses for lay professionals toward certification in Christian education, youth ministry, and other areas. Others, like Auburn Theological Seminary, offer extensive continuing education in which lay people participate. Some of these focus on faith in the workplace and include special programs aimed at certain professions, for example bringing attorneys together for theological reflection on the practice of law. It would make an interesting study to ascertain exactly what the schools have done and are now doing in this area.

The Equipping Lay Ministry curriculum consists of six required courses: three core courses in Bible, Theology, and Spiritual Formation (*Biblical Foundations for Ministry*, *Theology for the Practice of Ministry*, and *Spiritual Formation in the Christian Tradition*), and three courses in a specific “track.” Currently one may choose from eleven tracks:

- Small Group Bible Study Leadership
- Youth Ministry
- Congregational Care
- Parish Nursing
- Older Adult Ministry
- Hispanic/Latino Ministry (taught in Spanish)
- Christian Education
- Congregational Development
- Evangelism (new in 2001-02)
- Worship and Liturgical Arts (new in 2001-02)
- Mission Leadership (new in 2001-02)

Most of the tracks are self-explanatory. The Congregational Development track includes church planning, growth, and stewardship. We continue to add new tracks and extension sites each year. Students can also choose a “General Leadership” track, which allows them to mix and match their track courses. The Equipping Lay Ministry courses run on a quarter system. A new schedule

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of courses and sites comes out every fall, winter, spring, and summer. Usually students alternate between a track course and a core course. The courses rotate on a cycle so students can “jump in” at any quarter. An advisory board, consisting of local clergy and lay people, and seminary staff guide the development of the program. A faculty committee also gives input. Wesley faculty and others who may have particular expertise and are noted in their field teach Equipping Lay Ministry courses. Wesley faculty are not required to teach in the Equipping Lay Ministry program, but many volunteer because they enjoy and benefit from a relationship with the lay people.

A Wesley Theological Seminary Certificate of Lay Ministry is awarded upon completion of twelve semester hours. These courses may be taken for graduate credit (if the student qualifies) or may be audited. To take courses for seminary credit, a student must complete an application for admission and be admitted as a special student. A certificate may be earned whether the courses are taken for credit or noncredit. Anyone may take one or more courses, but to earn the certificate the six courses must be completed. Most courses are taught on the weekends, Friday evening and Saturday. Each course consists of three weekends, one a month for three months; some courses are taught on four Saturdays. In our summer school we offer Equipping Lay Ministry courses on a one- or two-week intensive format. The fees for the courses are the same as regular seminary courses for credit and audit. Some scholarship help is available from the seminary and many students receive some funds from their churches with the idea that the church will benefit from their training.

Extension sites and online courses allow us to redefine the “community in which we are located” (see goal 4 from the Fletcher article). The Wesley Ministry Network is an online resource that allows people in our partner churches access to “best practices,” faculty expertise, online discussions, and other tools for ministry. We are experimenting with some online courses in the program that use a combination of face-to-face sessions, discussion, and virtual chats to create community. While online courses are in demand and offer great convenience, there are benefits in the communal classroom experience. In fact that is what many Equipping Lay Ministry students are seeking, so the majority of the courses are taught at one of our physical sites rather than in cyberspace.

Extension sites are chosen by several criteria. The sites invite us to consider them as a location for Equipping Lay Ministry classes often because they have a number of people who live nearby and want to take the courses. Our sites include churches, retreat centers, a retirement community, and an undergraduate school. We choose sites that are conveniently located and accessible. There has been discussion recently of making churches into “teaching churches” or “virtual seminaries.” While our church sites cannot claim to take the place of seminaries, our presence there (and in the other sites, as well, outside the walls of the seminary) show that we care about and are invested in the theological education and spiritual formation of lay people.

For some lay people, studying in the Equipping Lay Ministry program gives them the opportunity to discern another kind of repressed call to the ordained ministry and so they move from the ELM program into a degree program. Because they are allowed the option of taking the ELM courses for credit, they are able to “bank” some elective credit hours toward their degree. Moreover, since the Equipping Lay Ministry courses are graduate-level courses, seminary students in our degree programs can petition the academic dean to take ELM courses if those courses are not offered elsewhere in our curriculum, such as in the older adult ministries track. It should be said, however, that most people in the ELM program seek to be better equipped for lay leadership, and our purpose is not to recruit for the degree programs through ELM. Because Wesley is a United Methodist seminary we work with conferences and judicatory boards toward offering denominational courses, but one of the features of the Equipping Lay Ministry program is that it is ecumenical and allows for rich exchange. The United Methodist Church has lay people called “lay missionaries” who are trained to provide expertise and leadership and who itinerate to various churches that need their help. Equipping Lay Ministry provides preparation for these lay missionaries.

Who participates in the Equipping Lay Ministry program? In the 2000-2001 school year we had more than 250 course registrations, and now have more than 200 people who have participated in the program. Currently, they come from Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, North Carolina, and New Jersey (see Figure 1). They come from a variety of professions. We have lawyers, school teachers, government workers, a retired physician, a school bus driver, a corporate executive, a hairdresser, and a store manager, among others. What they have in common is a growing recognition of a call from God and a desire to pursue study in a specific area of ministry (see Figure 2). The ELM program is the second largest at Wesley behind the M.Div. degree program in terms of numbers of students. Figure 3 shows the breakdown. The figures for 2001-2002 are as of December. We had ten persons complete the certificate in 2001 and expect another thirty to finish this year. In May 2001, Wesley had an Equipping Lay Ministry “Certificate Dinner” where the dean handed out the certificates that had been earned. More than 120 people were in attendance to cheer on the first class of ten receiving their certificates. The numbers seem to indicate that we are touching a cord and meeting a need, but the Equipping Lay Ministry program really is not about numbers. It is more about the drive within the human spirit toward God, toward answering the call. Though our motives for this venture are altruistic, I should note that Wesley does receive ELM income beyond the direct instructional and administrative costs of the program. The real benefit, more than profit, for Wesley is being able to fulfill our call and mission to strengthen the church while at the same time receiving a wealth of insight and wisdom from the laity.

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Our “marketing plan” consists of direct mail to a database that the seminary maintains consisting of about 2000 churches in the surrounding area. Many find Equipping Lay Ministry on our website at <www.wesleysem.edu>. Wesley staff often speak about the program at conferences, meetings, and church gatherings. Partner churches are also key in spreading the word. Many lay people hear about the Equipping Lay Ministry program by word of mouth. They may be encouraged to attend by their pastor, or another lay person may recommend it to them. God calls people into ministry through the church. When people hear of the ELM program or are encouraged to participate they often report a serendipitous understanding that “this is the right thing for me to do.” An Equipping Lay Ministry catalog outlines the program, describes the tracks, provides scheduling and registration information, and answers “frequently asked questions” about the program. To summarize, I believe the program is successful because:

1. It meets a need.
2. It provides a purposeful curriculum so that students are not taking courses randomly.
3. It offers tangible results.
4. It creates a community of learners. It is formational as well as informational.
5. It offers high-quality instruction.

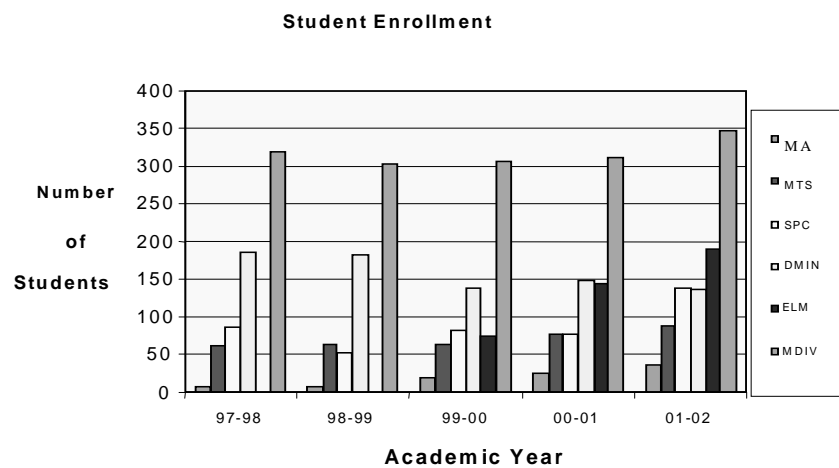
Figure 1
2000-2001 ELM Breakdown of Students by Location

Maryland	88
District of Columbia	44
Virginia	47
Delaware	35
Pennsylvania	16
West Virginia	3
North Carolina	3
New Jersey	2

Figure 2
2000-2001 Breakdown of ELM Students by Tracks

Small Group Bible Study	28
Youth Ministry	48
Congregational Care	24
Parish Nursing	17
Older Adult Ministry	16
Hispanic/Latino/a Ministry	16
Christian Education	47
Congregational Development	28
General Leadership	14

Figure 3



Continued Formation

Corporate worship, devotion, and prayer are a part of most of the courses taught in the Equipping Lay Ministry program. An opportunity for communal witness came the weekend following the September 11 tragedy. Equipping Lay Ministry courses were scheduled on campus for the weekend following September 11. The administration debated about canceling them because many people were reluctant to drive into Washington, but elected to carry on as planned. It seemed appropriate to have a student-led prayer vigil in our outdoor quadrangle before classes began that evening. Students expressed that

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they were glad they came together to experience the comfort and strength through community. Future plans include a lay ministry rally and day of formation in conjunction with the Office of Covenant Discipleship at the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church.

Challenges for the Equipping Lay Ministry Model

I can readily identify three challenges for the future for ELM. One is the challenge of the scope of the program. We receive many invitations from churches and other church-related organizations to be extension sites, and we receive many ideas and suggestions for new tracks. The growth of the program has implications for administration, faculty, and staff. While we want to be receptive to increasing needs, we have to consider questions such as how many tracks we can successfully run at one time, and how many extension sites are feasible. Rapid growth presents its own problems. We will have to plan and choose wisely. Wesley will want to be able to expand its lay education opportunities and stay on the cutting edge, while at the same time keeping the personal touch.

A second challenge is keeping our finger on the pulse of the laity to find out what is really needed and to avoid being faddish. One of the ways we plan to do that is by inviting lay people and clergy to campus for “partner convocations” and by talking with and listening to them, both here and in the field, as our staff visit churches, lay events, and judicatory meetings. The Advisory Board plays a key role in bringing issues and needs before us. We also plan to keep in touch with ELM graduates, following up with them on their ministry for insights into directions for the program. Wesley’s mission includes being a prophetic voice in the church as well. Faculty may see a need or an unmet challenge and design a new track and courses to address it. Teaching lay people is becoming one of the primary ways we fulfill our mission to be a center for theological and ethical reflection on the issues facing the church and the world.

A third challenge is reconciling Wesley’s ecumenicity with the needs of denominational requirements. Although we are a United Methodist school and are committed to providing courses required by the denomination, many of our ELM students come from other denominations, and we must be sensitive to that theological diversity. While this is true of our regular degree programs as well, in lay education it is a particular challenge to be both inclusive and practical. We continue to strive to balance both of those needs in the certificate program and to minimize confusion about the different programs and requirements. Open and in-depth communication with our constituents is essential. One of the greatest blessings, the students say, is being around and learning from those from many different traditions with different vocational goals. Through Equipping Lay Ministry we hope to continue to touch many lives, to broaden hearts and minds, and to cultivate a culture of the call.

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ENDNOTES

1. I've summarized the four goals. See John C. Fletcher, "Theological Seminaries in the Future," *Theological Education* 21:1 (Autumn 1984), 71.
2. *Ibid.*, 73, 77, 79-80.
3. J.D. Fite, "A New Paradigm: The Seminary Educating Lay Persons," *Review and Expositor*, 93 (1996), 51.
4. The first two women were admitted to the seminary that year (1923), according to *Pilgrimage of Faith: A Centennial History of Wesley Theological Seminary 1882-1982*, edited by Douglas Chandler and C.C. Goen (Bethesda: Seven Locks Press, 1984), 79.
5. David McAllister-Wilson, "Culture of the Call," video produced by Wesley Theological Seminary, 2001.
6. Sally Simmel, "Why Would Laypeople Want Theological Education, Anyway?" in *A Lifelong Call to Learn: Approaches to Continuing Education for Church Leaders*, Robert E. Reber and D. Bruce Roberts, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).
7. Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 2000), 4.
8. Bishop Richard Wilke, "Culture of the Call," video produced by Wesley Theological Seminary, 2001.
9. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker ABC* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1993), 119.
10. James Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), 95.
11. Jack R. Cunningham, "The Future of Seminary Education: Training the Laity," *Review and Expositor* 93 (Winter, 1996), 64.
12. Simmel, 130.
13. Mary Catherine Bateson, *Peripheral Visions: Learning Along the Way* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 74-75.
14. Walter Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation," *Interpretation* 33 (April 1979): 126.
15. Malcolm Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (New York: Cambridge Books), 42.
16. Robert E. Reber, "Educating Out of the Future: Where Are We Headed in Continuing Theological Education?" in *A Lifelong Call to Learn: Approaches to Continuing Education for Church Leaders*, Robert E. Reber and D. Bruce Roberts, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 42.

Theological Education Submission Guidelines

The Association of Theological Schools is a membership organization of schools in the United States and Canada that conduct post-baccalaureate professional and academic degree programs to educate persons for the practice of ministry and advanced study of the theological disciplines. The Association's mission is to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public.

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

Unsolicited submissions are reviewed by members of the journal's Editorial Board, who then make recommendations regarding their publication. The Editorial Board will not consider articles that are being submitted simultaneously to other publications.

Article Formatting Requirements

1. Articles should be approximately 6,000-8,000 words in length.
2. Follow *Chicago Manual of Style*, using endnotes.
3. Convert footnotes to endnotes, if necessary, using author's given name and then the surname with no intervening comma.
4. The *American Heritage Dictionary* and the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* are the references for preferred spellings.
5. Provide a paragraph abstract at the beginning of the article in approximately 80 words.
6. Add a short (2-3 sentence) paragraph at the end of the article identifying the author(s), institution or relationship to the project/topic, position held, and/or other information relevant to the experience of the writer(s).
7. Articles should be e-mailed to the managing editor <merrill@ats.edu> followed by a hard copy sent by conventional mail to: Nancy Merrill, Managing Editor, *Theological Education*, The Association of Theological Schools, 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103.

