

# Theological Education

Volume 45, Number 1  
2009

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#### **Lifting Up Difference and Unmasking Division**

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## *Continuing the Conversation*

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# Editor's Introduction

*Stephen R. Graham*

Each fall, the Association hosts a roundtable seminar for newly appointed faculty. It has been my privilege to be involved in those events for the past three years. One of the most striking and notable characteristics of those meetings has been the remarkable racial and ethnic diversity of the participants. There is wonderful energy in the room, lively conversation about the work of being theological educators, and exploration of the discoveries, both positive and negative, that these new faculty have made about their institutions, their colleagues, and themselves in their first year of service. The diversity of the participants adds a unique richness to the event and is a sign of hope for the future of theological schools and their faculties.

Of course, that is not to say that all is as it should be. Far from it. Along with this sign of hope, other signs reveal much work remains to be done and many foundational changes needed if theological schools are to serve effectively and fruitfully in the future. A quick survey of tables of contents from past volumes of *Theological Education* reveals attention given to issues of race and ethnicity in theological education since 1970. Every four or five years on average, the journal has published either full volumes focused on these issues or collected articles either reporting on a project led by ATS or a related organization, or giving voice to particular concerns. A noticeable characteristic of these volumes is the expanding understanding of diversity they reveal. The earlier volumes focus attention on "the Black Religious Experience," and "Black Pastors and White Professors." Later volumes expand the view to include black, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific and Asian American, and Christian feminist concerns. The most recent volume was in 2002, a more comprehensive look at "The Promise and Challenge of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Theological Education."<sup>1</sup>

This issue of *Theological Education* surveys the landscape of theological education in the United States and Canada and reports on a variety of events, experiences, and projects related to the Association's work on race and ethnicity. It begins with ATS Executive Director Daniel Aleshire's survey of issues, efforts, and prospects and concludes with ATS Director of Leadership Education Janice Edwards-Armstrong's look forward to the work planned by the Association for the next few years and envisioned for the coming decades.

Aleshire briefly surveys the work of the Association and its member schools related to race and ethnicity since the middle of the twentieth century and calls for the schools to take a distinctively *theological* approach to this work. After affirming the theological, educational, and regional virtues of diversity, Aleshire calls on the ecclesial communities represented in the Association (mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Roman Catholic/Orthodox) to bring their distinctive theological insights to bear on the challenges and benefits of diversity. Beginning with what *has* been accomplished during the past decades, theological schools should provide leadership within

the church to accentuate these virtues and to serve communities of faith as effectively as possible. Aleshire ends his article by noting the three ways the Association will continue to support theological schools as they move toward the future.

Following Aleshire's article that provides a "big picture" look at theological education, three articles take closer looks from the perspectives of their particular locations. Gary Riebe-Estrella of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago uses the image of "engaging borders"—rather than simply crossing them—to explore with necessary depth the hindrances that block substantive and structural change in institutions. Our challenge, he asserts, is "not to solve a sociological problem but to create a new way for people to live with one another, respecting our differences while living across them."

David Maldonado of Perkins School of Theology traces his own experiences of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, noting both how much has changed and how little has changed. He uses the image of the table: defining it, finding a place at it, and urging that various commitments and crucial issues be "placed at the table" for discussion. He concludes that "there's still room at the table," but that better means of support, mentoring, communicating, and connecting are still needed and that schools must be held accountable for their efforts in this area.

Christopher R. Hutson shares a case study of Hood Theological Seminary and notes the crucial nature of President Albert J. D. Aymer's leadership in the development of Hood's remarkable inclusive character and the diversification of its faculty and staff. Aymer courageously urged Hood's faculty and staff boldly to "cross the color line" themselves and not to wait for invitations that might or might not come. Crucial also was the connection to Hood's sponsoring denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and to reaching out beyond that body to constituencies from other denominations.

In their insightful and carefully nuanced article, Lester Edwin J. Ruiz and Eleazar S. Fernandez ask, "What do we do with the diversity that we already *are*?" Looking at population trends in the United States and statistics for students within ATS schools, they explore "the futures of Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships" in the schools of the Association. They conclude their article with probing questions about the teacher, the students, pedagogy, curriculum, and institutional life and governance in the midst of the diversity that is already present in theological schools.

Roger Nam of George Fox Evangelical Seminary moves the conversation to the rapidly growing and complex realm of online education. Nam studied first generation Asian American students enrolled in online courses at George Fox, particularly focusing on their experiences in asynchronous discussion forums. He discovered numerous cultural complications, from the obvious challenge of language difficulties to more subtle but similarly important issues. One fascinating example is the students' vulnerability to shame, knowing that not only the professor but also their peers will have access to their postings. This vulnerability is particularly acute if the students have concerns about their facility in English. In addition, the online format tends to level the traditional status difference whereby Asian students honor and respect the posi-

tion and authority of professors. Nam concludes, surprisingly, that despite the distinctive challenges they faced, all of the students enjoyed the overall online experience and believed that their education was enriched by it.

Janice Edwards-Armstrong brings this volume of the journal to its conclusion with a summary of the Association's past work on race and ethnicity and a look to the future. She describes five phases of work stretching from 1978 to 2013, with Phase V (2009–2013), "Preparing for 2040: Enhancing Capacity to Educate and Minister in a Multicultural World," anticipating the turning point when U.S. population projections expect the white population to be less than 50 percent of the total and urging and assisting schools to prepare for that future.

Many within the Association are to be commended for their work, faithfulness, and persistence over the past decades. We hope that this volume of *Theological Education* contributes to the ongoing conversation and to embracing the diversity that we "are" and that continues to develop as we seek faithfully to embody God's realm.

#### ENDNOTE

1. "The Black Religious Experience and Theological Education," *Theological Education* 6, no. 3 (Spring 1970). "The Black Religious Experience and Theological Education for the Seventies," *Theological Education* 6, no. 3, Supplement (Spring 1970). "Issues in Theological Education—1977," *Theological Education* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1977). "Black Pastors/White Professors: An Experiment in Dialogic Education," *Theological Education* 16, no. 1 Special Issue (Winter 1980). "Unity, Pluralism, and the Underrepresented," *Theological Education* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1983). "Part 1: The Search for Unity in our Pluralism," *Theological Education* 21, no. 1 (Autumn 1984). "Curriculum Development in Multicultural Theological Education," *Theological Education* 26, no. 1 (Autumn 1989). (The journal presented a number of volumes in the 1990s concerning the Association's emphasis on globalization in theological education.) "New Perspectives on Theological Education," *Theological Education* 34, no. 2 (Spring 1998). "The Promise and Challenge of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 38, no. 2 (2002).





## Continuing the Conversation

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### Mastery or Foundation

By Dirk Felleman

In his paper “The Academic Teacher and the Practical Needs of Clergy” (*Theological Education* 44, no. 2), John Bright displayed such great wit and insight in producing an engaging existential analysis of the “tensions” of teaching in a seminary that it has an almost prophetic resonance nearly fifty years after it was authored. Any seminary professor who has found himself or herself on the cross of such tensions will likely share in the kind of catharsis of anxiety-relieving identification provided by the experience of reading such a revealing, even confessional, tragic account. This is a rhetorical work of which Kierkegaard would likely be proud, and perhaps one would expect no less from such a distinguished professor from Union Theological Seminary in the 1960s. But later, at a bit of remove, readers might well wonder if their initial feelings of conviction—that these tensions were in fact the product of such timeless and necessary structural conditions as they first appeared to be—were correct or if this might not be a case instead of the relative intransigence of institutions.

No doubt there would be much to be gained here by an in-depth genealogical analysis of the historical development of the institutional norms of seminaries, but perhaps it will be enough for our immediate pragmatic interests to follow up on some of Professor Bright’s illuminating insights to make some hopefully pointed inquiries. First, if the religious aspects of our lives are, as Jesus taught, the highest priorities of our lives (over,

say, our economic, civic, legal, health, and even familial interests), then why do we settle for less in the way of admissions standards for seminarians, as the future shepherds of our devotional lives, than we do for, say, medical or law students? If the answer is that this is because academic standards are not the best measure for the quality of future clergy abilities, as they might not be for a musician or a master carpenter, then why not enroll them instead in apprenticeship programs that are in fact more directly relevant to their future roles? But if, for educational purposes, being a clergy person is not enough like being a musician, as it is not enough like being an academic scholar, then perhaps it is more like other vocations such as medicine, business management, or education, which benefit from graduate level professional education. And if this is so, then why not look to these kinds of programs for some models of applied learning? As it stands now, with no directly related prerequisites and only three years of study, seminary education is, as it was in Professor Bright’s day, a kind of advanced standing bachelor’s degree of divinity, and not properly speaking a degree of graduate level practical mastery.

John Bright’s paper offered us the state of the art in thinking of the human condition from his times, but surely some twenty years after all of the advances in our understanding of education, such as Donald Schön’s foundational *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, we now have the ability to improve the fit of seminary education to the specific needs of the callings to which seminarians, and so their educators, are charged with answering. As that great

educational philosopher John Dewey has taught us, these kinds of matters are not of the sort of existential categorical necessities of life and death to which we must submit, but rather are those to which we may fruitfully apply our God-given gifts of adaptation: experimental imagination, mutual reflection, inherited practices, and personal experience. The choice is ours whether to accept this responsibility and consciously change our ways of educating seminarians so that they are better

equipped to handle the many challenges of leading our faith communities in an ever changing world, or to ignore this calling of conscience and rather choose to do what is easier for us and to carry on as if we were merely creatures of inherited habits fated to bear certain unavoidable tensions.

*Dirk Felleman is an existential analyst and consultant to nonprofit organizations regarding organizational ethics.*

# Gifts Differing: The Educational Value of Race and Ethnicity

*Daniel O. Aleshire*

*The Association of Theological Schools*

*Race and ethnicity have been and continue to be important issues for theological schools. By the 2040 decade, demographers predict that persons of color will outnumber whites in the United States and increase significantly in number in Canada. This future requires theological schools to assess race and ethnicity theologically, to find the theological resources within their respective traditions to become more inclusive environments of faculty and administrators, and to become better educators both of racial/ethnic students and white students who will minister in increasingly racially and culturally plural contexts. This article identifies social, psychological, theological, and educational issues that influence the responses of both theological schools and the Association in preparing students and churches for the increasing gifts of racial diversity.*

## Religion and race

I was a student at Belmont College in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1968. Back then, Belmont was a small Baptist college, and most of the drama of the sixties remained a safe distance from campus. It was not a countercultural kind of school, and I don't remember a single campus protest during my years there. It was late spring semester, and I heard on the radio that Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated in Memphis. I was leaving campus to go to work amid news that the city might be placed under curfew later that evening. I passed two students, whom I did not know, and overheard one say to the other, "Well, the n — got what he deserved!" I was shocked speechless. It was not the first racist remark I had heard on that campus, but it was calloused and heartless. I wanted to stop and say something, but I didn't. I have gone back to that moment time and time again, thinking about what I wish I had said, what I should have said, and always feeling the pain that I said nothing at all. How do we speak about race and the tangle of human failure that is associated with it?

For all of us, United States and Canadian, white and African descent, Asian and Hispanic descent, race is personal. It is a huge social issue to be sure, constructed differently in Canada than in the United States, but it is not an abstract, social phenomenon. It is personal. We have individual histories of our own prejudices, we know people who are racially intolerant, we have seen the harm that racial prejudice causes, and most of us have, quietly or noisily, worked in our corners of the world to do something about it.

I wish I could say that the Christian religion was the answer for our social struggles over race, but that doesn't seem to be the case. A few years after that terrible spring night in Nashville, I was in graduate school, studying social and developmental psychology. My first serious research project was on Chris-

tian religion and racial prejudice. Most of the psychological and sociological studies suggested that religious people were more racially prejudiced than nonreligious people. There was a smaller number of studies that suggested that religion might be associated with higher degrees of racial tolerance. My major professor, who had introduced me to the issue, worked with me over a period of several years. I did what graduate students do best—search and systematize every piece of literature that could be found, and he did what experienced professors do—provide guidance and theoretical insight to the issue. The result was a literature review and analysis that had a relatively long life as a resource for other research on religion and racial prejudice.<sup>1</sup> The article concluded that the way in which religion related to racial prejudice in these studies was influenced by many factors, especially the way in which religion was measured. A simple measure of religion, like the number of church members in a given population, resulted in a positive relationship between religion and prejudice. A more nuanced measure of religion, like how frequently people attended church services, resulted in a mixed relationship. Occasional attenders were more prejudiced than either nonattenders or frequent attenders.

It was not a happy conclusion for me. I wanted any religious affiliation to lessen racial prejudice, but that clearly wasn't the case. Culture is apparently so embedded in religion that the prevailing attitudes in the culture are resistant to the countercultural affirmations of the Christian faith. Religion and prejudice are not strangers to each other, even though you would think they should be. When we talk about race and ethnicity in theological education, we must begin with the recognition that, while the church may not cause racial prejudice, it has been a carrier.

I want to talk about race and ethnicity in theological education. That is not the same subject as racial prejudice and religion, but I don't think it is possible to talk about one without noting the presence of the other. There are many reasons why theological schools need to attend carefully to race and ethnicity. One is that an important understanding of our faith is justice, and racial/ethnic groups have had far less of it in North America than whites have had. Another is about institutional survival. North America is on its way to a kind of racial plurality that has never existed before. If theological schools don't learn how to be effective educational institutions for racially and culturally diverse students and effective theological institutions for the communities they will serve, they will simply waste away as viable institutions by the end of this century. As schools attend to race and ethnicity, they will be influenced by the long history and current reality of racial prejudice.

### **ATS efforts on race and ethnicity from the 1970s through the 1990s**

In one way or another, ATS has been addressing the issue of race and theological education since the late 1960s. For all practical purposes, ATS member schools and the Association were white institutions in the 1960s. In 1977, when ATS first began gathering data about the race of students, about 4 percent of the total enrollment was black and another 2 percent Hispanic or Asian. Much of the black enrollment was concentrated in the three historically black seminar-

ies that were accredited members at that time: Howard, Interdenominational Theological Center, and Virginia Union. In 1970, fifty years after the Association was founded, Allix B. James of Virginia Union University School of Theology became the first African American elected president of the Association.

In the 1970s, ATS began efforts to enhance black enrollment in theological schools by policies that encouraged schools to admit students who had been denied adequate baccalaureate education. A grant-funded program addressed the needs of Hispanics, African Americans, and the growing presence of women in theological education. When the grant concluded, the Association ceased program efforts but formed the Committee on Underrepresented Constituencies, whose task was to keep ATS and its committees attentive to the issues of women and racial/ethnic students, faculty, and administrators. During this time, the Association tended to use the rhetoric of justice to call the schools to action on behalf of racial minority students, faculty, and administrators.<sup>2</sup> The focus of this work in the 1970s and 1980s was inclusion—to redress the institutional patterns and prejudices that had excluded primarily African Americans from enrollment and employment in many member schools. During most of these years, every ATS committee included at least one racial “minority” member, and at least organizationally, ATS had “included” persons who had previously been excluded.

Early in 2000, ATS convened several of the persons who were then on ATS committees to discuss the kind of work that needed to be done in the future.<sup>3</sup> Among other things, these people noted that ATS was still “white” space and that the organization should create more space for persons of color. This group also recommended that the committee on underrepresented constituencies be replaced with a committee on race and ethnicity, thereby naming the issue of concern. They recommended that ATS avoid majority/minority language—in part because future decades will change which race is which, and in part because of the fundamental flaw of identifying groups by majority or minority status. The group also decided that the persons who had previously been identified as “underrepresented” be identified as “racial/ethnic.” All human beings have race and ethnicity, but the group proposed this language for persons whose race/ethnicity differs from white race and ethnicity in North America.

With the staff leadership of Marsha Foster Boyd through 2006, Bill Myers, and most recently, Janice Edwards-Armstrong, ATS has conducted a major programmatic initiative on race and ethnicity. With support from Lilly Endowment, ATS has expended approximately \$1.3 million in this area. The earliest efforts were with persons who were among the first racial/ethnic faculty members appointed by historically white schools, then with schools that had the highest percentages of racial/ethnic students and faculty, followed by a series of meetings of African American, Hispanic/Latino/a, and Asian/Asian North American faculty and administrators. The work has also included two cross-racial dialogue conferences, meetings of racial/ethnic women, and most recently, programming to enhance the capacity of ATS member schools as employers of racial/ethnic faculty and staff.

These efforts have had several goals. One was to attend to the growing number of racial/ethnic faculty and administrators in member schools and en-

courage them in the contribution they are making. Another was to begin helping schools to enhance their capacity as employers of racial/ethnic faculty and staff. Over the past forty years, the ATS focus has changed from inclusion to institutional capacity. At the same time, the rhetoric has changed, at least the rhetoric I have been using. Rather than talk about justice and inclusion—both of which are central and, for the most part, agreed upon—I have been talking more about the demographic realities.<sup>4</sup> Already, 35 percent of the student population of ATS member schools is racial/ethnic, if international students are included, which I think they should be. By midcentury, white will no longer be a racial majority in the United States, which is already the case in several population centers. The pastors who will lead congregations through this huge cultural shift are in our schools now. The future of the North American church and theological schools is dependent, in part, on our getting race and ethnicity right.

### **Some convictions about race and ethnicity in theological schools**

As I have participated in the work these past eight years, experienced the blessing of racial and cultural plurality, heard racial/ethnic faculty bear witness to the persistence of racial prejudice—even in ATS member schools—and thought a great deal about the complexity of the human fabric of racial diversity, I have decided that I have no special wisdom or insight about this issue. It is one of those issues that requires everyone at the table, thinking faithfully, acting gracefully, and engaging the future hopefully. Nonetheless, the following are some convictions I have developed about this work.

#### ***Race, as Cornel West reminds us, “matters.”<sup>5</sup>***

In a television interview with Billy Graham not too many years ago, the interviewer asked Graham about the worst sin he had seen. Graham replied “prejudice.” I think the interviewer was expecting something like “sex” and seemed a little surprised by Graham’s response. The evangelist said that he had preached on most of the earth’s continents, and that everywhere he had preached, there were forms of prejudice that were destructive. I think Graham is right. It may be tribe or clan, ethnicity or race, religious identity or culture; while the basis varies—prejudice abounds. And wherever it exists, it distorts the human family, works against the purposes of God, and tears the fabric required for human flourishing. The modern age, even the postmodern one, has not succeeded in inventing structures in which prejudice withers and dies.

Many people can claim some aspect of their identity that has attracted prejudice. They are Catholic in a Protestant culture, or rural in an urban setting, or blue collar in a white collar exurbia. Prejudice can attach itself to almost anything, and many people claim to have been the recipients of some sort of prejudice. But in North America, race trumps all other identities that attract prejudice, and the prejudice that gets attached to race is ubiquitous and persistent. Race is a particular issue and requires particular attention, both in the church and in theological schools. Race matters. In this culture, race matters a lot.

Race is a social construct, not a biologically determined category. There is no better example of this than the U.S. president, Barack Obama. He has a white mother, whose whole ancestry is white, if I am correct in my details, and an African father, whose whole ancestry is African. Obama is half white and half black, but because race is socially constructed, he is considered black, not white. And, in this social construction of race, different groups are perceived differently. Some social psychologists use a construct—social distance (the closeness that social groups feel toward other groups)—as a way of gauging the amount of prejudice that one group has toward another (the more social distance, the more racial prejudice.) Consider intermarriage, for example. In your experience, will more eyes turn at the sight of a white-black couple walking into a worship service, a white-Hispanic couple, or a white-Asian couple? Differences in the “eye-turn” factor serve as informal indicators of social distance. If an Asian-white or Hispanic-white couple would draw less attention than a black-white couple, that would suggest less social distance between white and Hispanic or Asian than between white and black. All of these groups experience racial prejudice from whites, but the prejudice takes on different and sometimes less virulent forms toward one group than another.

Race is not a problem, of course. Racial prejudice (the personal and behavioral expression of the abstract and communal phenomenon of racism) is the result of the sinful tendency to make one group superior to another. It results in undeserved privilege for some and social degradation for others, and it tears at the social fabric that God had in mind when human beings were created to be a relational community. When I first mentioned that race matters, I was making the point that race is not just one among many forms of diversity. But race matters in another way. Race matters because the human family is not whole without the participation of all. The story of Israel is, in part, the story of movement from tribe to nation. The story of the early Christian community is, in part, a story of finding the common Christian element across race, tribe, and gender. On the one hand, race cannot be ignored because North America has done too much sinning with it, and on the other hand, race cannot be ignored because the wholeness of the human family does not exist without it.

***Theological schools must deal with race and ethnicity theologically.***

Theological schools do their work best when they attend to the theological dimensions of their efforts. This is not done as much as you might think. Theological schools think a lot about theology, but they think less about theological implications of curriculum, education, institutional practices, or organizational habits. Theological schools should think theologically about their work, and when they do, they will think very differently. ATS member schools reflect a wide theological spectrum, and their theological construals differ on almost any issue. While the functional work of running specialized post-baccalaureate institutions has considerable commonality across the schools of the Association, the theological systems advocated by these schools differ markedly. So, while there may be theological agreement that racial prejudice is morally wrong and that theological schools need to address the issues of racial/ethnic communities, there is less theological agreement about how to do it.<sup>6</sup>

When I was studying for my PhD, I worked as an intern for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. It was the Christian moral concerns agency of the denomination. In those days, the primary issues were race, poverty, the Vietnam War, and the environment, along with sexuality and alcohol—two long-standing Baptist favorites. The agency worked with the motto “Helping Changed People Change the World.” It was a traditional Baptist understanding of how to deal with social problems. Salvation and sin are personal. Racial prejudice is a personal sin, its remedy begins with sinners changing their ways, and if enough of them mend their ways, society will change. In this theological worldview, we deal with the wrong of racial discrimination by looking inward, dealing with our personal prejudices, living more justly in the world, and working to make the world more just.

A similar agency for a more liberal Protestant denomination would not have the same motto. Sin and salvation, for them, have deeply social dimensions. Racial discrimination is more than the sum of the personal prejudices; it is a function of power, class, and systems of domination. Even if all the individuals stopped sinning, the social systems that sustain racial discrimination could continue virtually unabated. In this theological worldview, we must address social structures and systems, which if corrected, will ameliorate the effects of personal racial prejudices, whether or not individuals get more righteous.

It is hard to think what a Roman Catholic agency would have as its motto, especially when it comes to race. The Roman Catholic Church in North America is, for the most part, the most recent immigrant church. The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigration brought Roman Catholics to North America who immediately encountered prejudice, and the Church has remembered this. The Church has been an advocate and haven for movements that addressed the working, living, and social conditions of these immigrants, and most recently, it has been decisive in its welcome of Hispanic and Latino immigrants—legal or not. Unlike Protestants, Catholics deal with prejudice from the receiver’s side in North America and as a worldwide Church beyond North America, and that makes the Roman Catholic Church fundamentally different on this issue from virtually all U.S. or Canadian Protestants.

These characterizations exaggerate the differences, and many of us use some combination of these perspectives. However, very different theological presuppositions are at work in different schools, and if the schools are thinking theologically about their work, their theological construals will influence how they address race and ethnicity. Because ATS privileges the theological perspectives of member schools, it must address race and ethnicity in ways that do not make one of those theological perspectives normative for all.

*Difference adds value.*

*Racial diversity is a theological virtue.* It is one thing to conclude that racial prejudice and the discrimination that it causes are wrong and another to conclude that diversity is a theological virtue. I am committed to both positions.

The twentieth century began in North America with the cultural assumption that homogeneity was better than diversity. New immigrants needed to leave their language and culture behind and become American, which was



defined in a kind of white Protestant way. The parts of their past that southern and eastern European immigrants could not shed, like their Catholic or Orthodox faiths, became the subject of Protestant suspicion and prejudice. The social forces at work pushed toward homogeneity. Although it played out a little differently in Canada, the treatment of indigenous people reflected the same tendency. I grew up in a world that, intentionally or not, favored racial homogeneity. Ethnic cleansing in the Balkan states, in Iraq, in Africa, and elsewhere suggests, in the most painful of ways, that something in human social systems pushes toward homogeneity. Is that “push” a social good that gets distorted by sinful behavior or is it, at its root, a social sin? Are racial homogeneity and racial diversity commensurate theological virtues, depending on culture and context? Or is one more virtuous than the other?

The Bible’s preeminent story about diversity is early on, as the human family is finding its way through the most ancient of times. It is the story of Babel. As always, the text invites more than one interpretation. By a less common reading, Babel represents a failure of the human family to do what God had commanded people to do after the flood: “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen. 9:1). Instead, they “came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there” (Gen. 11:2).<sup>7</sup> They built a city and a tower and had a common language. God disrupts their project and introduces multiple languages so that they will do what they were commanded to do in the first place—scatter and fill the earth. This reading leads to the conclusion that diversity is something that serves the purposes of God for the human family, and when the human family attempted to avoid it, God intervened.<sup>8</sup> The other, more common interpretation, argues that the problem in Babel is that pride and ambition dominated human action, and God’s judgment is to confuse the common language and scatter the people as a response to sinful pride.

By either reading, diversity is good. In the first interpretation, human diversity fulfills the command of God, and in the second, it prohibits the human family from succumbing to pride. The human family was invented to be richer than any one expression of it. The birth of the Christian project at Pentecost affirms diversity—each heard Peter’s sermon in his or her own language. The new religious movement would not make ethnic homogeneity the price of admission; rather it would take a common message to increasingly distant and different people. Then, of course, there is the very nature of the triune God. The integrity and wholeness of God is evident only in the persons of the Trinity—the one God in three persons.

I am not a theologian or biblical scholar, which I may have just successfully proved to those of you who are. But it seems to me that diversity is a theological virtue, and if that is true, then it is not a “problem” that theological schools have to “deal with” any more than humility or honesty are problems they must deal with. If diversity is a virtue, it is a way in which we seek to live if we want to be virtuous. If diversity is a theological virtue, then not all diversity counts. There is sufficient cultural value on diversity in some circles that any “diversity” counts. I am inclined to think that the kind of diversity that has theological virtue is diversity that reflects fundamental human identities, like race and gender, or disability, not diversity that reflects human choices—like different positions on the Trinity.

***Racial diversity is an educational virtue.*** Diversity in theological education does not change conjugation in Greek or vowel pointing in Hebrew, and it doesn't affect the outcome of the great Councils of the Church. Diversity in theological education is a virtue, and I want to suggest two reasons why this is the case.

First, it educates students about the ways of others. Students of different races learn about each other's worlds by the close interaction that theological schools can provide, and that knowledge will be invaluable as they move into ministry. A recent study about medical education and diversity, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and summarized in *Inside Higher Education*, says:

[W]hite students who attend medical schools with greater racial and ethnic diversity in the student body are more likely to rate themselves as highly prepared to care for minority populations. Those white students within the highest quintile for student body diversity, measured by the proportion of underrepresented minority students, were 33 percent more likely to rate themselves as highly prepared to care for minority patients than were those in the lowest diversity quintile.<sup>9</sup>

I think the same is true for theological education. The article drew a number of responses in the "add a comment section," and one struck me as especially helpful. A physician, whom I presumed was a person of color, wrote, ". . . if the question is whether those who have been exposed to diverse groups during their training make better doctors, I would have to say, all other factors being equal, yes. A doctor who sees me as a person rather than an Other is more likely to try harder to save my life. . . . A doctor who knows that different groups share different traditions and values is more likely to listen attentively to me and my family to discover what ours are, rather than assuming I would want what s/he wants."<sup>10</sup> It is exactly those kinds of sensitivities that inform ministry as well.

Second, diversity provides the context in which persons are able to challenge their own racial stereotypes and presumptions. Elizabeth Aries has recently completed a study that was published as *Race and Class Matters at an Elite College* and summarizes some of her conclusions this way in a recent interview: "My study shows racial stereotypes to be prevalent on campus . . . but that the development of cross-race relationships and interactions inside and outside the classroom can make an important contribution in breaking down these stereotypes and changing students' notions about race."<sup>11</sup> Gordon Allport, who did some of the first psychological research on religion and racial prejudice, once said that people are "down on what they are not up on." Nothing helps seminary students be open to persons of other races like being with them, over time, in the formative environment of theological studies.

***Racial diversity is a regional virtue.*** One of the debates in virtue ethics, as I understand it, is whether virtues are universal "goods." If they are true sources of the good, then they should be universally applicable. While virtues have considerable similarity across religious traditions and the different cul-

tures that they reflect, it is not clear that they are universally the same. For our purposes, that is just fine. I want to argue that as important as racial/ethnic diversity is, it is regional virtue, not a universal virtue, and it is not the only diversity virtue to which theological schools should attend.

Diversity, particularly racial/ethnic diversity, is not possible in all settings. Diversity is not a virtue when it requires importing a racial/ethnic faculty member or students into a regional setting with no other racial/ethnic representation or where the school does not know how to integrate this faculty member or educate these students. The kinds of diversity that have educational benefit are anchored in reality. There are places in North America where the population is almost exclusively white. ATS has member schools located in Saint John's, Newfoundland; and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and in Dubuque, Iowa; and all of these areas have very small minority populations.<sup>12</sup> If the racial/ethnic population is further divided by major ecclesial families and the number of baccalaureate holders, it is likely that a seminary in these areas will not have any racial/ethnic students. These schools should not be understood as educationally deficient because they lack racial/ethnic diversity. Racial diversity as virtue is modified by region and ecclesial community.

However, this point cannot end here. Not all the students educated in Newfoundland or Sioux Falls are going to stay in those settings, and wherever they go, the region will likely be more racially diverse than the setting in which they were educated. If realized eschatology is a way of perceiving how the future breaks into the present, education is a practice by which the present breaks into the future. These students need sensitivities and understandings related to racial diversity that will travel with them into the future. And, as my colleague Lester Ruiz reminded me and would remind all of us, the fundamental character of the faith that binds us is relational, which means that white folk in Saskatoon are deeply and fundamentally related to black folk in Nairobi and Asian folk in Kuala Lumpur and Latin folk in Caracas. From before Babel to after Pentecost, the human family has a common lineage, and we are kin in flesh, if not brothers and sisters in a common faith. We are all embedded in a global context, and theological educators need to understand that global is the starting point, not the destination, in our understanding of context. While we should not assume that an all-white theological school in a 99 percent white area somehow lacks an important virtue, that school should not be excused from helping students understand the importance of diversity in the human family and develop the skills and sensitivities necessary for the flourishing of that family.

*Theological diversity is a virtue.* Racial/ethnic diversity is not the only diversity in theological education that should be understood as a virtue. The diversity that I have noticed is often the most difficult in ATS member schools is theological diversity. I was at a member school once, listening to a panel that was racially diverse, gender diverse, and denominationally diverse, but absolutely politically and theologically homogeneous. I listened as panelists commented about their great diversity while agreeing with one another on virtually every nuance of the topic they were addressing. I wondered if the diversity that was most absent in the panel's conversation—theological and

political diversity—would be honored if it were present. I don't want to confuse diversity of theological commitments—that reflect human choices—with diversity of gender and race—that reflect fundamental human conditions, but theological schools do not serve their missions by assuming that racial diversity is automatically more virtuous than other forms of diversity. As I have watched schools over these years, it seems to me that racial/ethnic constituents are often more theologically conservative than white constituents in the same school. It would be tragic if schools celebrated racial differences but forced racial/ethnic constituents, yet one more time, to “pass” (this time on their theological identity) as the price for their acceptance in the community.

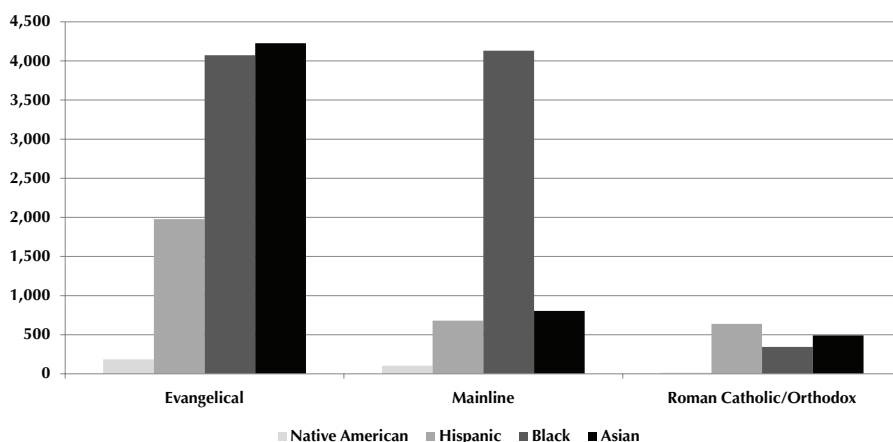
***Racial diversity varies by ecclesial communities in theological schools.***

Racial diversity is distributed in very different patterns across ATS member schools. The member schools have a total of 35 percent racial/ethnic students. These students, however, don't attend all seminaries in equal percentages. Member schools can be grouped into three broad ecclesial families (evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Roman Catholic/Orthodox). As shown in Figure 1, different racial/ethnic groups are represented among schools related to these ecclesial communities in different ways. The largest racial/ethnic group in mainline Protestant seminaries is African American, the largest racial/ethnic group in evangelical Protestant schools is Asian/Asian North American (by a few hundred more than African American), and the largest racial/ethnic group in Roman Catholic seminaries is Hispanic/Latino.

***The way theological schools should address race and ethnicity has multiple layers.***

I have made three assertions about race and ethnicity as they relate to theological schools: (1) not all racial groups experience the same social dis-

**Figure 1** Head count enrollment by racial/ethnic category and ecclesial family, fall 2007



tance from whites, and social distance influences patterns of prejudice and discrimination in this culture; (2) theological schools should do their work theologically, and because they have differing theological perceptions, their work related to race will likely differ in strategy; and (3) the dominant racial/ethnic group in ATS member schools varies by the ecclesial family of the school. Each of these factors affects how race influences a social system like a school. While there are palpable and dramatic similarities across schools and the experience of racial/ethnic groups, one strategy or analysis does not fit all. How an evangelical Protestant school, with its theological construals, deals with its largest racial/ethnic group, Asians, with their perceived social distance from whites in this culture, is different from how a liberal Protestant school, with its theological construals, deals with its largest racial/ethnic group, African Americans, with their perceived social distance from whites in this culture.

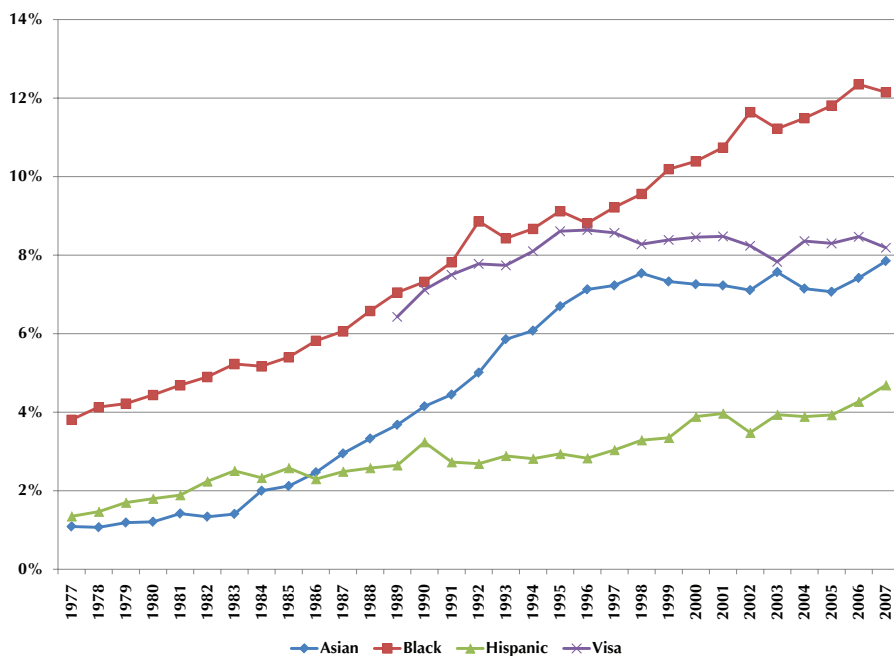
Like all typologies, this one creates overly clean lines that oversimplify both the complexities within each of these communities and the overlap among them. However, if ATS is to (1) help schools deal effectively with race, (2) commit itself to working on behalf of all three dominant racial/ethnic groups, as well as indigenous persons in the United States and Canada, and (3) privilege the differing theological perspectives of the schools, then its strategy must have multiple dimensions and carefully disciplined normative expectations. This is very important work to be done, work that must be done, and ATS cannot jeopardize it by making the strategies and perspectives that are central to the effective work of one group of schools normative for all of them.

***The schools should begin the next phase of work by affirming what has been accomplished.***

Significant progress has been made in enrollment. Schools have increased racial/ethnic enrollment significantly over the past thirty years. As Figure 2 shows, the percentage of enrollment comprising racial/ethnic students has grown from about 5.8 percent in 1977 to 33 percent in 2007. Many ATS member schools have also developed specialized programs for racial/ethnic student constituencies. Figure 2 documents the steady and significant growth of these racial/ethnic groups over the past three decades.

As I have already noted, ATS began attending to racial/ethnic constituencies primarily with a focus on including groups that had been excluded. If one assumes that inclusion should mean that the percentages of students in theological schools should approximate the percentages in the broader population, this goal has basically been accomplished with the exception of Hispanic/Latino students. The data in Table 1 show enrollment by degree category for racial/ethnic students as a percentage of the total enrollment in each degree category and of total enrollment. There is a higher percentage of Asian students enrolled in ATS member schools than the percentage of Asians in the United States and Canada combined. The percentage of African decent students is nearly the same in member schools as it is in the U.S./Canadian population, but the Hispanic/Latino/a percentage is significantly underrepresented.

**Figure 2** Percentage of racial/ethnic presence in ATS schools, 1977–2007



If the comparison is to the proportion in the population, ATS schools still have room for improvement; if the comparison is with the rest of higher education, including community colleges, public colleges and universities, and private colleges and universities, then ATS schools are doing about as well as higher education as a whole.

There are several potential reasons for the Hispanic underrepresentation. A smaller percentage of the Hispanic community holds baccalaureate degrees, and so a smaller pool is available for post-baccalaureate degree programs. The dominant religious expression in the Hispanic community is Roman Catholic, which has a much larger ratio of church members to seminary students than most Protestants. For example, there is one United Methodist in seminary for every 1,500 UMC members but one Roman Catholic in seminary for every 10,000 Roman Catholics. The other dominant religious expression in the Hispanic community—Pentecostal—does not require theological education for ordination. While these reasons contribute to the underrepresentation, the need for more and more meaningful theological education for Hispanic students is crucial.

Progress on the inclusion of faculty is not as far along as the progress on student enrollment. The percentage of racial/ethnic faculty has been running between 15 to 17 percent of the total full-time faculty of member schools for the

**Table 1** Percentage of enrollment of racial/ethnic students compared to percentage of racial/ethnic people in total population of United States and Canada

Degree	Asian Descent	African Descent	Hispanic/Latino/a
Master of Divinity	6.1%	14.0%	3.5%
Professional MA	5.6%	9.0%	7.2%
Academic MA	6.9%	7.3%	3.7%
Professional Doctorate	10.1%	10.8%	2.7%
Advanced Research	7.2%	5.6%	2.6%
<b>Total of Enrollment</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>Percentage of U.S. and Canadian Population*</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>13.8%</b>

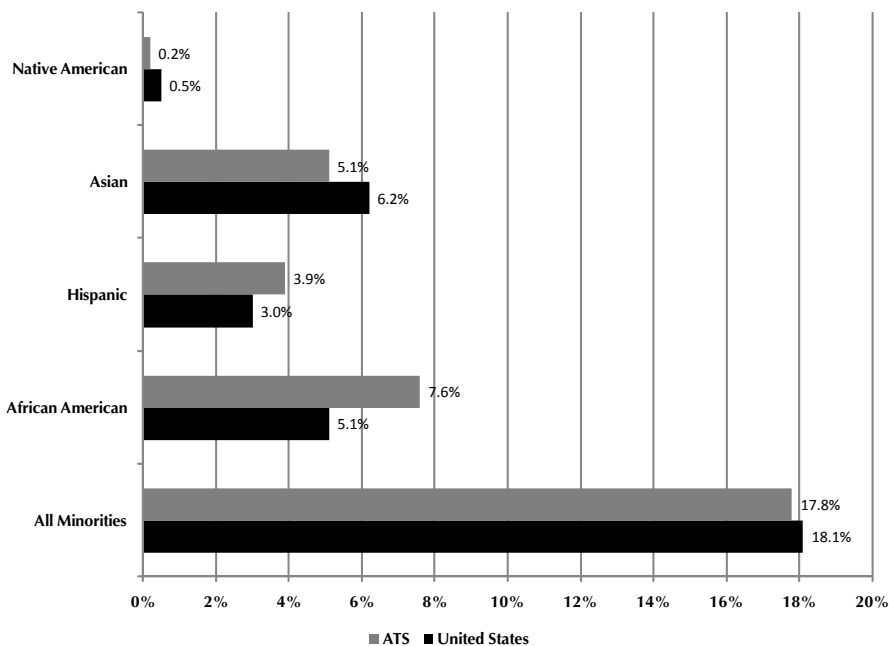
Source: Annual Data Table 2.12-A, fall 2007

\* The Canadian data are from Statistics Canada for 2005 ([www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/dem052a.htm?sdi=visible%20minority](http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/dem052a.htm?sdi=visible%20minority)); and the U.S. data are from the estimated 2007 population, U.S. Census ([www.census.gov/popest/states/asrh/SC-EST2007-04.html](http://www.census.gov/popest/states/asrh/SC-EST2007-04.html)). The percentages of Asians, African Americans, and Hispanics were computed by adding the populations of United States and Canada (331,260,000) and adding each racial group total in the United States with the appropriate visible minority group in Canada. For Canada, Asians (which are counted by several Asian regions) total 8.9 percent of total population, while African comprises 2.2 percent and Hispanic less than 1 percent of the Canadian population. Asians comprise 4.4 percent of total U.S. population, African Americans 12.8 percent and Hispanic origin 15.1 percent. The ATS Annual Report Forms submitted by schools list the race as “unknown” for nearly 10 percent of the total enrollment. This 10 percent was included in the number to determine racial/ethnic percentage, which has the effect of treating all “race unknown” students as if they were white. Because it is likely that not all are white, the percentages of racial/ethnic students in each cell are as conservative as they can be computed.

past several years. A few years ago, when the percentage of member schools’ racial/ethnic faculty was compared to U.S. higher education as a whole, member schools had a larger percentage of Hispanic and African American faculty than U.S. higher education, and a smaller percentage of Asian faculty (see Figure 3).

The work isn’t done, and as the percentage of racial/ethnic students and faculty has increased, much of what has been learned is about what *not* to do. ATS member schools should avoid either denying what has been accomplished (which some are inclined to do because the numbers don’t fit their personal experience) or thinking that all that needs to be done has been done (which some are inclined to do because there is some diversity in the faculty and significant racial/ethnic enrollment in their schools). Inclusion continues to be a crucial agenda in theological schools, but inclusion—sheer diversity, as virtuous and necessary as it is—cannot be the only goal.

**Figure 3** Racial/ethnic faculty in ATS member schools and U.S. higher education, fall 2004



Source: Data are from the U.S. Department of Education for U.S. higher education and from the ATS Annual Data Tables for ATS member school faculty.

***Racial diversity is important to the church as well as to theological education.***

It is important to the church not only because it is just and right but because it is a dominant part of the future of North America. As I mentioned earlier, by midcentury, white will cease to be the majority race in the United States, and while white will still be a majority in Canada, visible minorities are growing five times as fast as the majority population. Racial/ethnic Christian communities are lively and, in many denominations, represent the growing edge of membership and vitality. Racial/ethnic congregations often provide a stabilizing presence in urban communities—with after-school tutoring, care for the elderly, Christian social ministries, and attention to youth. Last year, David Gonzales wrote a telling series of articles about one storefront Hispanic Pentecostal church in Manhattan,<sup>13</sup> and it is a story that could be told of thousands of similar congregations that have similar capacity and integrity in meeting the needs and struggles of an immigrant community.

Most racial/ethnic congregations are not in storefront locations. Some are among the largest membership churches in the United States or Canada. Last month, I preached at a twenty-year-old Chinese Baptist congregation in Toronto that had just dedicated a new \$17 million facility. I asked Brian



Stiller at Tyndale Seminary if there was a majority white Baptist congregation in Toronto that could have done the same thing, and he thought not. Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago has emerged during the past forty years as the largest congregation affiliated with the United Church of Christ and is a strong, vital, and growing community of faith. Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, Concord Baptist Church of Christ and Greater Allen AME Cathedral in Brooklyn, Allen Temple in Oakland, and Shiloh Baptist in Washington, DC, are just a few of the many impressive, innovative, and historic large African American congregations.

If the broader Christian community is to have strength and vitality in the twenty-first century, it will be because it has learned to value racial/ethnic diversity. Valuing diversity means that racial/ethnic congregations are understood in their rightful role as leadership congregations. Valuing diversity will honor the many forms of the racial/ethnic character of congregations. Some will become multicultural. Others will serve primarily one racial community. Valuing diversity will require leaders to be comfortable with a wide array of congregational types and will require congregations to learn the communities for which they have the gift of ministry and develop those ministries.

Racial diversity is crucial for effective theological education. Ministerial work in the future needs to be informed about cultural realities and cultural differences. Future pastors and church workers will need to be transcultural in ways that past generations did not need to be. In order to learn these skills, seminary students need teachers who have them. The growing percentage of racial/ethnic students need professors who understand the religious and cultural contexts from which they have come to seminary and the settings to which they likely will go when they complete their studies.

### **What can the Association do to support theological schools as they move toward the future?**

ATS will seek to work in three different ways with regard to race and ethnicity in theological education.

#### ***Continue to provide space***

ATS has spent a great deal of time and programming resources over the past eight years to increase the space of color in the life of the organization, and it needs to continue this effort. ATS will convene conferences of racial/ethnic faculty and administrators with the goal of providing a venue to address particular needs and issues.

#### ***Support programs that serve racial/ethnic doctoral students and support the institutional skills related to employment of racial/ethnic faculty and administrators***

The Association will continue its support and collaboration with The Fund for Theological Education and the Hispanic Theological Initiative as FTE continues its long-standing work with the black doctoral and minority scholars programs and HTI continues to find ways to support Hispanic and Latino/a

doctoral students. Racial/ethnic faculty members are key to the preparation of racial/ethnic students, most of whom will serve racial/ethnic congregations. During the past two years, ATS began a series of workshops to help schools build their capacity as employers of racial/ethnic faculty and administrators. Data from faculty surveys conducted by the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education suggest that racial/ethnic faculty share in the generally high degree of satisfaction of ATS faculty in general, so this work begins from strength, not weakness. ATS will continue this programming. The data on education, employment, and retention of racial/ethnic faculty in higher education document the need not only to increase the pipeline of racial/ethnic faculty candidates but also to keep holes from developing in the pipe as these persons move through careers in theological education.<sup>14</sup> As the accrediting standards are reviewed over the next four years, the task force will be asked to consider issues related to promotion and tenure that are perceived in some institutions as obstacles to advancing careers of racial/ethnic faculty and administrators. There are many ineffective ways to bring racial/ethnic faculty to ATS schools, as well as good ways. ATS will seek to help schools learn the good ways and avoid the ineffective ones.

### ***Increase capacity of ATS schools to educate racial/ethnic students***

Because the racial/ethnic percentage of the population in North America is increasing, it is imperative that ATS schools provide the kind of theological education that these communities need for their religious leaders. At last year's Asian/Asian North American gathering, much of the time was used to address issues related to education of Asian/Asian North American students, and ATS is using this same strategy with a conference of Hispanic/Latino/a theological educators this fall. In addition to encouraging and serving these communities, ATS needs to tap their wisdom about theological education. ATS should give increased attention to the growing number of schools whose mission focuses on racial/ethnic students. ATS has six historically black institutions; it has two uniquely Hispanic institutions and four that serve Asian constituencies. These schools, with their special missions, have learned a great deal about educating religious leaders who serve racial/ethnic religious communities. ATS will also seek to convene the program directors of schools with specialized programs for Asian, Hispanic, and African American students. These directors may be among the best persons in the Association to give guidance about the practices that can enhance educational effectiveness.

### **Working toward the future with humility**

As theological schools address racial/ethnic diversity as a virtue, they need to do so with the virtue of humility. Getting race and ethnicity right is crucial to the future viability of religion in North America and the vitality of theological schools. The history of efforts of theological schools give witness that good intentions are not enough and that white guilt accomplishes very little. Where do we find the wherewithal for the task ahead?

As the ATS board was working on the Association's work plan for 2008–2014, William McKinney, president of Pacific School of Religion, commented—aptly—that ATS is planning to teach what it does not know. ATS does not have the answers, but in different ways, in service to different ecclesial and racial/ethnic communities, ATS can be the nexus through which the learning of the schools is shared and amplified. There are many alligators in theological school swamps these days—finding the money that is needed, adjusting to the multiple learning styles of a changing student body, meeting the increasing accountability of outcomes-based theological education—but race/ethnicity is not one of the alligators.

Racial/ethnic communities in ATS schools are gifts differing, and if we pay careful attention and work on diversity as an act of devotion, they will pull the schools toward the future to which God is calling us.

*Daniel Aleshire is executive director of The Association of Theological Schools. His essay is an adaptation of two presentations he made: one to the chief academic officers of theological schools and one at a Committee on Race and Ethnicity consultation, part of the Enhancing Ethnic Diversity in Theological Education project themed Building Multiracial Employment Capacity in Predominantly White Theological Schools.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. Richard L. Gorsuch and Daniel Aleshire, "Christian Faith and Ethnic Prejudice: A Review and Interpretation of Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13, no. 3 (September 1974): 281–307.
2. The first statement in the Commission's accrediting standards regarding race and ethnicity was adopted in 1978 and stated that ". . . each institution seeking accreditation or its reaffirmation should give evidence of appropriate sensitivity to the issues identified [in two policy statements that were not part of the standards, one dealing with ethical guidelines and the other with goals and guidelines for women in theological education]. . . ." In 1984, the standard was expanded by adding, "including efforts at attaining an adequate presence of such persons, within the definitions established in the statement on institutional mission."
3. This group included Edward Wheeler, John Kinney, Efrain Agosto, Emily Townes, and Marcia Riggs.
4. While I have been shifting the rhetoric to more attention to demographic realities than issues of justice, the Association is equally committed to concerns about justice, and this year the ATS board identified justice as one of the values that should characterize ATS work.
5. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993, second edition, 2001).
6. If deep theological differences among ATS schools must be respected—I must then make room for theological construals that come to different conclusions about the character of diversity. But the Association has taken a stand on the limits to these differing perspectives. When ATS was working on the redevelopment of the accrediting standards in the 1990s, the steering committee discussed how the priority on diversity would be expressed in the standards. If racial diversity is an educational value, would that mean that historically black seminaries would be held accountable for racial diversity? (None of them has ever excluded white students or faculty, and all of them have

some of both.) The committee thought that the mission of these schools, and others that subsequently have come into the Association that serve primarily Asian or Hispanic communities, should be encouraged to focus on service to these communities. However, the standards are written so that a school that is intentionally racially segregated would not meet the accrediting standards.

7. Both Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

8. Cynthia Campbell reviews this interpretation in *A Multitude of Blessings: A Christian Approach to Religious Diversity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), see 23–29.

9. <http://insidehighered.com/news/2008/09/10/jama>.

10. Ibid.

11. <http://insidehighered.com/layout/set/print/news/2008/09/12/aries>.

12. According to the U.S. Census Bureau and Statistics Canada indicate racial/ethnic or visible minority populations for these cities as between less than 1 percent to slightly more than 5 percent, including all racial/ethnic groups.

13. [www.nytimes.com/2007/01/14/nyregion/14storefront.html?scp=6&sq=Hispanic+Pentecostal+churches&st=nyt](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/14/nyregion/14storefront.html?scp=6&sq=Hispanic+Pentecostal+churches&st=nyt).

14. See, for example, Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner and Samuel L. Myers Jr., *Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn&Bacon, 2000).

# Engaging Borders: Lifting Up Difference and Unmasking Division

*Gary Riebe-Estrella*  
*Catholic Theological Union*

*In dealing with cultural diversity in theological education, the reigning metaphor is to “cross the borders” of difference. This article argues that crossing borders implies first the identification of what constitutes the borders and then the project of “engaging those borders.” Uncovering the substantive differences between Latinola and black theologies may be the most effective means to lay bare the pretensions to universalism and noncontextuality of theologies coming from the dominant culture and the ways in which they construct our classrooms and curricula.*

In 2002, the theme that guided our CORE seminar was *Our Congregations, Our Classrooms, Our Collaboration*. In many ways it was an initial “let’s get to know one another” time of sharing. We had a chance to find out what cross-cultural strategies we were employing in our teaching and in our work with colleagues; how we were introducing material that reflected our specific cultural backgrounds, particularly in classes in which the majority of students were white; how we might identify the hermeneutics of suspicion and of affirmation in our work on campus and with other racial/ethnic colleagues; and how we were responding to our communities of accountability.

As I remember it, the discussion was lively and substantive. We focused heavily on what was *cross-cultural* in our work, where we *crossed* boundaries in our collaboration with colleagues, and where we *crossed* the border between academy and community. I’d like to use a different metaphor from that of “crossing borders,” one which, in some senses, is oppositional to that predominant metaphor of our 2002 conversation. With this seminar’s theme of *Examining Institutional Cultures: The School and the Classroom*, I invite you to examine the cultures of our schools and classrooms by using the metaphor of “engaging borders.”

## Engaging borders

I think that the more popular, or perhaps even preferred, image today as it was in 2002 in focusing on racial and cultural diversity is that of “crossing.” I believe that to be true in U.S. society in general and in our churches and schools in particular. Crossing the borders of difference certainly is the goal of our efforts here and back home in our institutions and classrooms. But, as the desired outcome of our efforts, it does not necessarily map the journey we have to make to get to that outcome. In fact, as the reigning metaphor, crossing borders may substitute the outcome for the journey and, therefore, effectively keep us from ever making the outcome a reality.

Too exclusive an attention to crossing the borders of difference can risk our not seeing the substance of the border in the midst of our rush to cross it. The international border between Mexico and the United States is in most places a line in the desert sand or a knee-deep creek (depending on the season) and, in those cases, it can be easily crossed. However, the political, historical, and socioeconomic dynamics that create the border remain invisible in these crossings. But build the “Tortilla Curtain,” a thousand-mile metal barrier from California to the Gulf of Mexico, and one is forced to engage the border and to engage the forces that have turned it from a border into a barrier: the arrogance of Manifest Destiny, the insensitivity of government to the poverty of its own people, economic imperialism, classist economic structures, racism. If you cross the line in the sand, you will eventually face the symptoms of those same forces: migrant labor camps, the spraying of toxic chemicals on the fields in which you work, the “migra” raid the day before payday, segregated and below-standard housing, high police response times, redlining for loans and auto insurance. But these symptoms flow from the dynamics that have given birth to the Tortilla Curtain. They are not the forces themselves. If you want to deal with the forces that have turned an international border into a barrier, you need to engage the border, which demands intentionality and analysis.

Analogously, in our institutions and in our classrooms, a too facile crossing of the borders of racial and cultural difference risks our allowing to remain invisible the forces that have turned those differences into divisions. For just as the international border between Mexico and the United States has been turned from a border into a barrier, so the racial and cultural differences we embody in our schools and in our classrooms have been turned from differences into divisions.

As people of the Bible, we know how this game of turning differences into divisions takes place. When God creates humanity in God’s image and likeness, God does so by creating a couple, that is, persons who by their nature are intrinsically relational; and God places them in a garden where they are in harmony with nature and nourish themselves with the fruit of the trees. But they are not satisfied to have been created in God’s image and likeness; rather, as the serpent formulates it, they want to “be like gods” (Gen. 3:5).<sup>1</sup> When they eat from the forbidden tree, Scripture tells us, their eyes are opened and “they realized that they were naked” (Gen. 3:7)—a curious result from eating a piece of fruit! But not so curious here. For, created in God’s image and likeness in their intrinsic relatedness where their differences (here, of gender) are complementary, because they wanted to “be like gods” and not to be God’s likeness, their differences become divisions: first as they sew loincloths for themselves and then, confronted by God, the man blames the woman, the woman blames the serpent. The differences that were meant to be a complementarity in relatedness now become the distinguishing marks that divide the man from the woman and the two of them from the garden—differences have become divisions. The dynamic repeats itself in the story of the two brothers, Cain and Abel, in which Cain refuses to let God be God (that is, to accept that in his relationship to his brother he is made in God’s image and likeness) and, because of their differences before God, he kills his brother and attempts to redefine

himself in his contemptuous question to God: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen. 4:9). Time and time again humanity commits this same original sin (actually the sin against our origins) as we claim the rights of God to determine what makes one person more human and another less human, turning differences into divisions by weighting them with value and disvalue rather than accepting that God has already decided what it means to be human when God created us in relationship across our differences. If we want to dialogue, we have to engage the borders, that is, lift up our differences and unmask what has turned them into divisions.

The importance of engaging borders in our schools and in our classrooms lies in the fact that the challenge before us is not to solve a sociological problem but to create a new way for people to live with one another, respecting our differences while living across them. The challenge before us is ultimately a theological one. Too often, I fear, our white colleagues, and perhaps we too, see only the need for our schools to adapt some procedures in order to respond more effectively to students’ needs and the need for our classroom instruction to include some content modules that reflect theological perspectives distinct from those of the dominant culture in the United States. That is, the fundamental worldview of our institutions and of our pedagogy remains the same, while some accommodation is made for those who come from diverse cultures and ecclesial experiences. No new vision of theological education is being proposed in which differences are lifted up and divisions unmasked—original sin taken on for what it is! Rather, the institutional culture remains one that privileges those whose ethnic cultures gave it birth and who have held the power to maintain their dominance, making the educational enterprise fundamentally reflective of that same group. The fact that our schools and classrooms make only superficial accommodations for those who are different racially and culturally, rather than entertain radical change, clearly reveals that these differences are understood by the dominant group as divisions, because what reflects the world of the dominant group is considered normative, while what is different is considered as peripheral and of less value. In too many of our schools, if the financial situation calls for a reduction in the number of courses per semester, it is the courses that reflect nondominant theological perspectives that are the first to go—most likely they were only electives in any case. Without a commitment to end the domination of one group over others, we are satisfied with sociological solutions to what is fundamentally a theological problem, the perpetuation of original sin.

### **Institutional culture**

Every institution has a culture. By culture, I mean more than an ethos or esprit de corps that might distinguish one of our schools from another. I mean a worldview, a way of understanding reality that deeply informs our mission and its implementation. This worldview is founded on assumptions, patterns, values, and myths that are usually unconscious and so remain generally unarticulated. It is embodied in what we can see, hear, and touch in the life of an institution: its explicit organizational structure, its policies and procedures,

the physical plant, its scheduling. But these embodiments of the worldview are not the worldview itself; they are only symptoms of it. Eric Law uses the image of an iceberg to help us understand the relationship between what we can see, hear, and touch and that worldview that serves as the foundation of institutional culture. Noting the difference between the tip of the iceberg and its immense base is instructive. It allows us to understand why, when we want to take into consideration those who are different culturally and racially in our schools and classrooms, we find colleagues who are willing allies in revising some sections of the student handbook but few who will join with us in mounting a full schedule of evening and Saturday classes—it's one thing to extend library lending hours; it's quite another to ask faculty to teach at "nontraditional" times and on weekends. Reapportioning faculty teaching time challenges assumptions about the "fundamental" role of faculty and the "normal" kind of students we are called to serve—that is, it touches parts of the worldview of the institution.<sup>2</sup>

I would suggest that our task is to begin to identify the assumptions, patterns, values, and myths that make up the worldview of our institutions, because it is those that need to change if the diversity we experience in our schools is to be converted back into the originating differences and not allowed to be the source of division. The best way, I believe, to get at the components of our schools' worldviews is to use an inductive methodology. That is, we need to identify the neuralgic issues, the ones that cause tension and create resistance when we try to deal with racial and cultural diversity. After we have articulated those neuralgic issues, we need to look below the water line (returning to Law's iceberg analogy) to articulate the values and myths that are the sources of tension and resistance to the changes we advocate. The greater the resistance to the suggested change, the closer we are to the link between current procedure, structure, policy, and the underlying worldview. This is where the real probing needs to take place, for not only is the worldview generally held without reflection, but it also creates the contours of our institutions' world, provides stability, and ensures security. It serves to draw the map that allows everyone to know his or her place and the organization as a whole to run smoothly and efficiently. It may do so at the cost of the human dignity and rights of the other, but it does give at least the illusion of institutional stability. And if there is one value held close in the heart of every theological school it is institutional stability. For ultimately, stability is the preferred atmosphere for the exercise of power by the dominant group, for it is they who have created the structures and systems that reflect their values and which privilege them over those who are different.

What might some of these neuralgic issues be? Competitive rather than collaborative learning models. Privileging written tools of evaluation over oral ones. The implementation of the Commission's 10 percent rule regarding those without bachelor's degrees.<sup>3</sup> The role of cultural diversity versus "competence" in the hiring of new faculty. You're welcome to freely add your own to the ever-growing list.

Probing beneath the water line to get at an institution's most deeply held values and its most trusted sense of self is no easy task, and I doubt that, in



most cases, it can be done without a combination of outside help and inside risk-takers. We need the skills for in-depth institutional analysis that groups such as Crossroads Ministries can provide. But even more, we need someone with a bit more distance. We personally and professionally have suffered the results of being on the downside of division, and our emotional investment can create a detour from the process of naming the foundational values and myths and toward an assigning of blame and a stereotyping of the dominant other (division cuts in both directions). The outsiders need to provide distance not only *for* us but *from* us, because in many if not most cases, our very presence in predominantly white institutions implies some co-option with the dominant structure. We need to engage the borders in our institutions not only by unmasking the ways of white privilege but also by honestly facing what may be our own complicity by omission.

Inside our schools we need a band of risk-takers (of sufficient number to shield one another from reprisals by the institution) who have the capacity to learn the tools of organizational analysis and who can live with the tension that comes with truth-telling and stand-taking.

### **The classroom**

Let me turn to the culture of the classroom, the second part of the subtitle. Few of us would challenge that in too many of our classrooms the learning/teaching style privileges the values of the Western Enlightenment (a term that contains in itself a value judgment on persons and things non-Western; that is, they are not enlightened) such as the prizing of the individual over the group, individual creativity and initiative over interdependence and collaboration, rational thought over emotional response, writing over orality, the universal over the particular. In these cases as with the culture of our schools, the classroom structures and procedures that embody these values appear to the dominant group to be both normal and normative. Accommodations are seen as concessions. And rarely does this underlying value system and its historical and cultural contextuality come up for faculty discussion and critique—understandably, though wrongly, so. For it is the value system that produced the educational system in which most faculty have been trained and which has shaped their understanding and practice of education. That is, it is the value system that undergirds their self-understood identity. To challenge the worldview is not only to introduce change but to threaten the fundamental stability of the educational enterprise of which faculty see themselves as the center—a challenge that will sometimes be met with some technical, though rarely adaptive, change and which almost always meets with stiff resistance.

How might we get below the pedagogical waterline to the base of the educational iceberg? Here I think we have primarily a task for insiders and, I would suggest, you and I are they. What I would like to suggest is that perhaps the most effective means to engage the border of universalist and noncontextual theology up against the intrinsically contextual nature of all theology is to engage the border between black and Hispanic theologies. The move of North Atlantic theologies to hold on to their dominance is achieved by their relativiz-

ing the value of context as being of significance only to those in that context. A mutually critical engagement of black and Hispanic theologies opens the possibility of identifying the sources of our differences, without privileging one over the other. In doing so, we are also identifying the elements that reveal the equally contextual nature of the theology done by the dominant culture and so unmask the division created by valuing the context of the dominant group over the context of less powerful groups.

In a sense, we are a possible laboratory for conducting experiments in the contextual nature of theology that can result in the identification and role of the more important elements that shape theology. We know that there are common elements in our theologizing as blacks and Latinos/as: historical, socio-economic, political forces; the question of method; pastoral interests and foci; our struggle for liberation; gender; the everyday lived reality of our people. The conversation that has led to the identification of these common elements is clearly evident in *The Ties that Bind*.<sup>4</sup>

What is also clear is that these elements, though common, are not the same. While more work remains to be done on identifying our commonality, I also believe that a fertile path lies open by more clearly identifying our differences. I think that we should not too quickly pass over our differences in a rush to emphasize a kind of “generic contextuality” (an oxymoron in itself) because it is in engaging our differences, not just in crossing them, that the lessons are learned. As we engage the differences, we have the opportunity to move from a dialogue with each other, which effectively has little influence on theology done within the dominant culture, and from a dialogue between us and them, which runs the risk of being perceived as our wanting a share of their pie, to a triologue in which our differences expose their differences and reveal the contextuality of all three theological worlds and so take one step further in leveling the theological playing field—allowing differences to be differences without becoming divisions.

It is this attention to the engagement of the border of black, Hispanic, and Euro-American (not to mention Asian and American Indian) theologies that needs to be central to our doing of theology with our students in the classroom. In the first place, I believe that means that each of our courses needs to balance content with method and sources. We need to be sharing with our students how to *do theology*. While risking a slight caricature, North Atlantic theology’s pretense to universalism has been supported by its predominant attention to content, with only implicit focus on method and sources. Because it deals preeminently with theological conclusions without attending to the contextual vectors that helped shape the contours of those conclusions, it can offer itself as the universal answer to universal questions.

But it won’t be enough for those of nondominant cultures to emphasize more programmatically in our courses the issues of method and sources. One of the reasons for this seminar is that we are numerical minorities in our schools. While we might engage the contextual border of theology, the rest of the curriculum is either ignoring the border or rushing to cross over by adding two lectures on ethnic theologies and appending to the bibliography at the end of the syllabi some references to non-Western sources.

We need to engage the contextual border of theology as a curricular issue, not simply as an issue in some individual courses. The question of context needs to be a determining factor in the shaping of the curriculum as well as in the pedagogy of individual courses. At Catholic Theological Union, we recently took a step in this direction by creating an MDiv curriculum with a core of twelve courses that systematically and repeatedly deal with the place of context, method, and sources in the doing of theology. We employed the strategy of creating a core to the curriculum, because we believed that the conversion of at least some faculty to acknowledge and explore the contexts that operate underneath their theologizing was going to be an understandably long road. With the core, we give students early and repeatedly the tools for and examples of exploring the contextual nature of all theology because we know that many of their more discipline-based courses are still going to emphasize content and pretend to universalism.

We might do well to explore our own attention to context, method, and sources; borrow from the pedagogical strategies of colleagues; and initiate the exploration of the connection between curricular design and the engagement of our theological borders.

## Conclusion

As I bring these reflections to a conclusion, I'd like to offer a couple of friendly admonitions.

While I realize that resources for seminars are not always easy to come by, I think that the potential fruit to be gained calls for a more sustained conversation, resulting in concrete objectives as the desired outcomes. We then ought to entrust the refinement and implementation of them to the Committee on Race and Ethnicity (CORE) or to an ad hoc committee.

Second, I would suggest that the Association adopt "the contextual nature of theology" to its set of themes within the standards, perhaps as a partner to the theme of "globalization."<sup>5</sup> If Eric Law's analogy of the iceberg for institutional culture is at all accurate, and I think it is, it will take outside pressure on our institutions to get them to deal with what is below the waterline. If the base of the iceberg is maintained by power and maintains some in power, then it will take another force to effect change.

Last, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. As this dialogue invites us and our schools to examine the biases and prejudices of the cultures of our institutions, ATS's own sponsorship of this dialogue would seem to invite the Association to the same self-examination. This may be an opportune moment for the Association and its staff to do its own cultural audit, exposing what is operating in the base of its own cultural iceberg.

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ENDNOTES

1. All biblical quotations are taken from The New American Bible.
2. Eric H. F. Law, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change: Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), 35–37.
3. Degree Program Standard A, section A.4.1.2.
4. Anthony B. Pinn and Benjamin Valentin, eds., *The Ties that Bind* (New York: Continuum, 2001).
5. General Institutional Standard 3, section 3.2.4.

# Latino/a Theological Education: Defining the Table

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*As Latinos/as join the table of theological education, all of us are challenged to ensure that Latino/a presence reflects institutional commitment to inclusiveness and the incorporation of issues important to this population. Institutional cultures will need to demonstrate welcoming spirits and affirming actions. Latinos/as will also need to be clear as to their role at the table. There is much at stake for both our institutions and Latinos/as. It is only through mutually embracing each other that theological education will effectively address the diverse reality.*

## **The birth pangs of racial unrest**

**F**orty-three years ago I entered Perkins School of Theology as a young 21-year-old, newly married and beginning a journey that I never dreamed was possible. It was 1965, and by the time I graduated in 1968, we had witnessed the burning of Watts in California and other urban centers, giving witness to the racial rage churning across the nation. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in April 1968, and Bobby Kennedy later in June of that same year. The civil rights movement challenged the moral grounding of our religious and social institutions. Race was a civil rights issue, a justice issue, a moral issue. It was a time of activism, fervent debate, and serious reflection. For the first time, our institutions were openly challenged by the undebatable issue of racial injustice. And many of them sought to take those first baby steps of reform and transformation. We all learned to sing “We Shall Overcome.”

The Vietnam War and the antiwar movement tore at the core of the nation and its political leadership. Antiwar demonstrations crowded the streets and dominated newspaper headlines. Many young men flocked to Canada or the alternative: theological education! President Johnson decided not to run again.

Hippies in Height Ashbury in San Francisco and communes throughout the country challenged our social values and family structures. The era of pot and free love challenged our mores and social fabric. The family was being re-defined. What was success? What was the American dream? “The times, they were a-changing.”<sup>1</sup>

Our hero, César Chávez, was organizing farm workers in California and leading the grape boycott throughout the nation. His fasts became sacred moments and Delano became a pilgrimage destination. Farm worker marches following the banner of La Guadalupe called us out to the streets. We all wore Boycott Grapes pins.

Our jails were full of traditional criminals but also social and civil rights activists, pot-smoking youth, antiwar demonstrators, and anyone who dared challenge the way things were.

After five years of living on the U.S.–Mexican border, my fiancée, Charlotte, and I married as soon as we could after graduation from Texas Western College (UTEP). We spent our first summer, in 1965, in western Kansas. We were hired to lead an antipoverty program (OEO) with the farm workers. We developed a childcare program, well-baby clinics, adult education, and remedial education for the youth. The dream was to eradicate poverty. When we arrived in Kansas, we learned several things. First, we had to live in a motel because no one would rent to Mexicans unless they were farm workers; the farmers controlled the housing market, and if you wanted a home for your family, you had to agree to work for the grower on his terms. Otherwise, you were homeless. For the well-baby clinics, we had to go to the next county because the local doctor would not treat Mexicans. When Charlotte became ill with abdominal pains, we took her to the local hospital controlled by that doctor. He placed her under observation and did not touch her or conduct any tests. No blood pressure readings, no blood tests, no temperature monitors. Instead, he told her that her problem was that “you people eat too much chili.” When we got to Southern Methodist University, she was placed in the university hospital.

As you can imagine, our first summer experience with the farm workers and the turbulent atmosphere in the nation was challenging and, yet, made for an exciting time to be alive. Times were indeed changing and we were right in the middle of it. I was going to seminary. Charlotte enrolled at SMU to complete her undergraduate education. As I entered Selecman Auditorium at Perkins for the orientation program, I looked around and quickly discovered that I was the only Latino in the crowd. White males with a few white females and several international students filled the room. The only other Latino in seminary was a doctoral student who never finished his graduate program. So much for social change and institutional transformation; had they not heard what was happening outside in the streets?

I did not know anyone. No one looked liked me. Where will I sit? Will there be room at the table? My first challenge was to find a place at the table.

I was fortunate in that I had a full scholarship because I belonged to the Rio Grande Conference of the Methodist Church. I had the option of working on campus—not as a research or teaching assistant, nor as a dorm monitor, but as a yardman, as other Latinos had done in the past. I chose to not mow lawns and rake leaves, but rather, to tighten my belt and study.

I suspect that my story is shared by many of you. I am not that different or special. Well, maybe I am a little older. I recall hearing Martin Luther King, Jr., speak at SMU, and I marched and demonstrated with César Chávez.

### **Finding a place at the table**

Your story may have occurred at a different period in our social history. But we share many of the same social dynamics and realities. Our nation con-

tinues to be at war; “when will they ever learn?”<sup>2</sup> Each generation seems to have its own war. Racial issues have not disappeared. They may have found expression in new ways, even during presidential campaigns. The immigration debate exposes nativistic ideologies and negativity toward the latest newcomers. There is fear that immigrants are changing the American culture. All of us feel the racial cloud that surrounds us. Poverty and injustice remind us of the continuing lack of fairness. We wonder about our place at the table. We have all walked the same journey.

However, some would suggest that Latinos and Latinas have made great progress in theological education since I was a young seminarian in 1965. ATS member schools now can boast of Latino members in their faculty. We have deans, scholars, full professors, and students scattered throughout the schools. We celebrate the Hispanic Theological Initiative, The Hispanic Summer Program, Asociación para la Educación Teológica Hispana, and Latino centers among some of the schools. Latinos are publishing as never before. What more could we possibly want? We are living the dream! Or are we?

As Latinos and Latinas enter seminary today, I suggest that they face situations similar to those I did. Edwin Hernandez has done an excellent job of documenting their isolation and loneliness, their lack of financial support, and struggles to make sense of their theological education in the context of their cultural communities and intended ministry. Identifying persons who share their experiences is difficult. Finding their place at the table is most challenging. Finding themselves in seminary, Latinos/as face at least two questions of identity and purpose: Who am I, and what am I doing here? How does this place connect with my reality?

Attending a theological seminary requires making a daily adjustment between our ethnic cultural settings (nurturing systems of family and cultural communities) and settings in which we are challenged to live and maneuver in social environments quite different from our formative natural environments. Our ethnic cultural environments may be real or perceived, yet they are strong sources of our ethnic self-identities. Ethnic self-identity refers to a sense of self as part of a larger cultural community and people. It is a sense of peoplehood. There is a sense of sharing past and current realities. Ethnic self-identity involves not only powerful internal sources but also external forces that define us. We perceive and define ourselves through distinctive ethnic lenses that help us understand our external environment and how we relate to it. Ethnic self-identity is an important aspect of being a Latino or Latina. How we manage it can contribute not only to our mental and social health but also to our ability to successfully maneuver through the maze of higher education, theological education, and the modern environment. To some extent, finding room at the table may well begin with us.

By beginning with us, I mean to say that we must be clear as to who we are and what we are about. Ethnic identity is not something to take lightly. It is not something chic or to be treated as politically correct in certain circles. Many have paid a price for being Mexican, Puerto Rican, Latin American immigrant, or Latina. Many have had to hang around for being brown and have been denied their place. “Wait. Be patient.” Yes, we do celebrate our cultures

and ethnicities and enjoy all of their richness. But, let us not forget that our history has been a sad case of differentiation and the denial of our place as rightful members of this society, including our religious institutions. Many of our *abuelitos y abuelitas* (grandfathers and grandmothers) could only dream that you and I would be here. Let us not forget our heritage, the dreams of our ancestors, the price of our predecessors, and the pain still experienced by our brothers and sisters in the *barrios* (neighborhoods) of America. Finding a place at the table begins with us.

Ethnic identity is also externally defined and imposed. The broader social environment does an excellent job of defining us. "You are Latino. Latina." And thus you are attributed the many impressions, assumptions, and prejudices that go along with being Latino/a. And, may I add, not necessarily the best attributes. You are given a role; expectations are built around your socially defined identity. Some of us may react against this type casting. "I am not Mexican. I am not Puerto Rican. I am not an illegal. I came here legally!" To engage in such posturing can be problematic to you as well as other Latinos/as. Ah, but "you are different!" we are told when people want to be kind to us. "You are not like the others." And the risk is that we might believe it. But whether you like it or not, you are still defined externally in ways that you cannot always control. You are still that bright Latina! You are still the Latino professor.

But we are Latinos and Latinas. We do not want to deny or reject our heritage. We have a sense of identity and commitment. Because we accept who we are and define ourselves as part of that larger Latino community and identify with its history, struggles, and faith journeys, we openly accept the challenge of making our world and the places where we work places where we and our fellow Latinos can feel free to be who we are and to be fully engaged in the calling we have received.

However, the challenge is also on the institutions. To simply say that the theological seminary is a welcoming institution without recognizing and making room for cultural realities is misleading and quite deceiving. To promote your institution as liberal, open minded, and affirming of diversity does not necessarily mean an open mind and welcoming spirit. Formal policies can be instituted without ever changing informal organizational cultures that function to define who belongs and who does not belong; what research is acceptable as legitimate and appropriate scholarship, and what research is not considered significant for the academy; who gets appointed to which committee, and who gets appointed to the diversity committee. Unspoken assumptions, established traditions, unwritten rules, and whispered expectations can be more powerful than all of the carefully worded job descriptions, institutional statements, organizational policies, and diversity goals. Glass walls are powerful barriers that separate and keep you in your place. You can even be president and be defined as not belonging.

To be a person of color in historically white institutions is not for the faint of heart. You may be seated at the table with much ceremony. Your appointment may well be celebrated as a commitment to diversity and all of the good things that the school represents. But things can change quickly. Quietly and subtly, questions are raised and impressions are whispered. Students com-



plain about your accent. Faculty and supervisors begin to ask about your research and its Hispanic focus. Your publications raise questions because of their subject or perspective. You begin to get a sense that you are being judged by different standards and expectations that become self-fulfilling prophecies. Whispered concern that you were an affirmative action or diversity hire suggests that you are not really qualified. The expectation is that you will fail. You will be measured by those expectations of failure.

A related dynamic is that of fitting in. "You are just different." You do not fit into our institutional culture. You associate with Latino students and preachers; you are more evangelical than we thought. You find that you have more in common with Latino students than with the faculty. You may even be left out of friendships, social networks, and social events.

Latinos/as also soon find themselves torn by their commitment to Latino matters and their own professional careers. When you were hired, there was the expectation that you would address the Hispanic issue. You are called on every time there is a Latino problem, either internal or with the external community. You become the Latino expert! Oh, by the way, the Latino community will expect you to resolve all of the past problems it had with the seminary. You are thrown into the middle of an issue you did not create. Was all of this in your job description? Do not get me wrong. Most of us want to be helpful to our Hispanic communities and schools. But can we really do it all? At what cost?

You will have to learn the system just to survive. You will have to overcome the system in order to succeed and to thrive. You will have to live out your commitment to Latino issues despite the system! Finding your place at the table may well mean claiming and defining your space in the institution as a Latino/a and as a scholar. Finding that fine balance between your ethnic identity and professional identity, between your ethnic commitment and scholarly work, is our constant challenge. Most Latinos and Latinas have to constantly balance competing priorities and commitments. You serve a variety of constituencies and strongly identify with a community beyond the walls of the seminary. As Latinos we struggle to balance the expectations of the institution, the academy, the Latino community/church, and our own sense of identity and purpose. All four lay claim to big chunks of who we are. How we manage this balance and keep our sense of integrity will shape our lives and careers.

One of the challenges is to help define the agenda on the table. Just being at the table can change the table and its dynamics. Your presence can remind others of your concerns and what you represent. However, it will require speaking up. There is always the danger that you will be typecast into a single song player. "There you go again." And because of that, our contributions can be diminished. But, I suggest perseverance. There is too much at stake.

### ***Suggested commitments to be placed at the table***

***Common mission and purpose.*** The mission and purpose of theological education is primarily to prepare persons for ministry and religious leadership. Theological education cannot be confused or replaced by religious studies. Seminaries that take on the religious studies framework destroy the his-

toric purpose for the establishment of theological schools. Let's not forget why the table exists in the first place.

***Partnership with the church.*** As institutions prepare religious leaders, ongoing dialogue and relations with the church are essential. Mutual respect is crucial. Seminaries are not churches, nor are congregations theological schools. Each has its own role. What is important is mutual recognition and openness to each other. Recognition of the Latino church is critical for us. For many denominations such as the Catholic Church, Latinos are a most significant component of denominational population.

***Contextual theological education.*** It is essential for theological education to prepare persons for today's world and realities. This includes racial and ethnic presence, justice issues, ecumenical dynamics, and other aspects of the real world. Recognition of the Latino presence, its impact on our communities, and the challenges for ministry with this particular population are urgent. We need a deeper understanding of Latino religious expression and life. All seminary graduates should be prepared for a society that is increasingly "Latinoized." The Latino religious reality is urgently needed to be on the table and should be a central part of theological education.

***Global theological education.*** Global theological education has become a popular component in many theological schools. However, many times this is reduced to immersion trips of a few days of sightseeing and brief conversation with people with whom our students and faculty do not share a language. Global theological education begins at home in our schools. For example, is Spanish offered or even required? Is it possible to teach courses in Spanish? Bilingually? Does our curriculum include material from other parts of the world? These questions apply to the issue of contextualization as well.

***Latin American theological studies.*** Many of our pastors are immigrants from Latin America. Many come with theological training in their native countries and desire additional theological studies in ATS member seminaries. However, their training in Latin America is not recognized. Thus, they are discouraged, do not move forward, or are subject to much repetition in their course work. We lack a helpful system that recognizes their Latin American education. How can ATS and its member schools design a smoother transition for urgently needed immigrant pastors?

***Latin American partnerships.*** Many ATS member seminaries are continually invited to be in partnership with Latin American seminaries. There is a desire to work cooperatively in preparing pastors and religious leaders for a globally connected reality. How can ATS member schools partner with Latin American schools?

***Institutos Biblicos.*** Historically, Bible institutes have played an important role in preparing a vast number of Latino pastors at the grassroots. Yet, they are treated as totally different and as existing in a foreign world. It is time to begin exploring ways to work cooperatively in the preparation of pastors for the Latino church in the United States and maybe even beyond. Because of the current reality, our ATS schools are out of the loop and irrelevant to the major community Latino churches.

*Latino faculty.* The well-being and survival of Latino faculty is a critical issue. We are scattered, however, and our communication is word of mouth and subject to who we know and where we are. Some of us are isolated and thus vulnerable. We depend on ATS, the AAR (La comunidad), or some other professional setting for communications. Can there be a more systematic and effective means of connecting, sharing, and communicating? Mutual support? Mentoring? What means of appeal are available? How can schools be held accountable?

### **There's still room at the table**

When I entered Selecman Auditorium at Perkins that very first day of my involvement in theological education, please know that there were individuals there who made room for me. Some of them have remained lifelong friends and colleagues. Perkins Latino students and Anglo faculty pushed for my hiring at Perkins; I taught there for sixteen years. I remember with gratitude how numerous members of the Perkins faculty took me under their wings and mentored me. Some became more than colleagues. They are my friends.

I have been a student, a faculty member, an academic dean, a president, and now a staff member of a theological school. The journey has been exciting, challenging, and, yes, most rewarding. I have enjoyed the pleasures of incredible moments and highs and also the pain and loneliness of dark days and lonely valleys. I have been challenged by the enthusiasm and curiosity of seminarians and felt the embrace of colleagues. It has been a journey I never dreamed of experiencing and one that I would not exchange for another.

To those of you who are just entering and approaching the table, welcome to theological education! And may your journey be as exciting, satisfying, and challenging as mine. Well, maybe some of the challenges and excitement you can do without. To those of you who have the experience of years in this enterprise, I challenge you to renew your passion and keep the faith. The stakes are too high and the rewards too valuable to do otherwise.

*David Maldonado serves as director of the Center for the Study of Latino/a Christianity and Religions at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. He presented this essay in October 2008 at the ATS Consultation for Hispanics/Latinos/as in Theological Education.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. Paraphrased from Bob Dylan, "The Times, They are A-Changin'."
2. With homage to Peter, Paul, and Mary, "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?"



# Case Study: Hood Theological Seminary

*Christopher R. Hutson*  
*Hood Theological Seminary*

*Hood Theological Seminary, founded in 1879 as Zion Wesley Institute, has experienced explosive growth during the past decade and a half. The author identifies reasons for that growth and describes the extraordinary leadership and example of President Albert J. D. Aymer. Since his appointment in 1994, Aymer led the Hood administration and faculty to “cross the color line” by living, worshipping, and serving in contexts beyond his own African-American community, while keeping the school firmly connected to its denominational body, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.*

## Historical overview

In 1879 a group of ministers from the AME Zion Church created the Zion Wesley Institute in Concord, North Carolina, to train ministers for the church and develop laity into industrious Christian citizens. By 1887 the Institute had been relocated to nearby Salisbury, granted a charter by the state of North Carolina, and renamed Livingstone College in honor of the noted Scottish physician and missionary to Africa, David Livingstone.

In 1903 thirty-five students enrolled in the first class of a new Bachelor of Divinity program. In 1904 the theological department of Livingstone College was upgraded to a school, and in 1906 the seminary was named in honor of AME Zion Bishop James Walker Hood.

In 2001 the seminary began operating with its own board of trustees independent of Livingstone College, and in 2005 Hood relocated to a new campus that could accommodate the explosive growth of the previous decade.

## Early interracial involvement

The AME Zion Church is known as the Freedom Church because of the role played by some of its early members in the abolition of slavery, including Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass. By the 1950s, Hood began to reach beyond its traditional constituency in the AME Zion Church. In 1951 the Inter-Seminary Movement in the United States held its first meeting at Hood. Also in 1951, Dean John H. Satterwhite led the faculty in developing racially inclusive workshops on pastoral care for the North Carolina Council of Churches. At this time, Hood began advertising that it was “open to Christian men and women of all races,” a move that was ahead of the times but quite in keeping with the traditions of the Freedom Church. Hood also began hiring white faculty members. Notable among these was J. Roy Valencourt, who began teaching New Testament at Hood in 1961 and who served as spiritual counselor for civil rights workers and National Council of Churches staff participating in the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project.

A few white students were among the student body beginning in the 1970s, but in the past ten years things have changed dramatically. Hood has experienced explosive growth in overall enrollment, approaching 300 students. Although they are coming in record numbers, AME Zion students now compose only about 35 percent of the student body, which now represents some fifteen denominations. Even more surprising is that some 35–40 percent of Hood students are Anglo. How did these changes come about?

## **Strategies for inclusion**

### ***Vision from top leadership***

Hood's remarkable growth began when the Livingstone College board of trustees had the vision to look outside of the AME Zion Church in 1994 to hire Albert J. D. Aymer as the dean of the seminary. A native of Antigua, Aymer was reared in the British Methodist Church and became a member of the United Methodist Church when he came to the United States to pursue further studies. His academic credentials included a twelve-year stint as associate dean of Drew University Divinity School. In choosing him, the bishops intended to bring in an experienced theological educator who could raise the academic quality of the school. But in addition to raising the academic bar, Aymer also brought a broader vision of Hood's value as a training ground for ministers of every ethnicity and denomination. In the first few years, some of Hood's traditional constituents criticized Aymer's academic reforms by accusing him of making Hood into a "white elitist school," despite that the influx of white students came slowly. Yet the board stuck with Aymer's academic agenda and eventually came to embrace his more ecumenical and more racially inclusive agenda. By the time the seminary separated from its parent Livingstone College in 1991, Aymer was named president, and the new, eighteen-member seminary board fully reflected the new vision: six bishops from the AME Zion Church, six lay persons from the AME Zion Church, and six persons from other denominations, including several white board members. The seminary has been sustained by this combination of a chief executive and a board with a strong vision of a seminary rooted in the AME Zion tradition and open to all without regard for denomination or ethnicity.

### ***Focus on quality programs***

Before a school can attract students from new constituencies, it must have solid academic programs, the fundamental reason for any students to come in the first place. Aymer began by revising the curriculum, then building up the library and the faculty—there was no money for buildings, shrubbery, or bells and whistles. The focus was on the academic core. Aymer's initial academic reforms concentrated on the MDiv and MRE programs with an aim to ensure that they complied with ATS Commission on Accrediting Standards and reflected the best practices of such divinity schools at Drew, Duke, and Yale. The accreditation self-study process caused us to examine the MRE more closely. While Hood had a long-standing strength in Christian education, the expanded faculty brought new levels of expertise in other areas, so that the

MRE was eventually replaced with an MTS program that allowed students to choose any of five possible concentrations, one of which was still Christian education. These two master's programs remain the core of the seminary.

But Aymer also led the faculty in developing two new programs. First, a Diploma in Christian Ministry would not be ATS approved but would fill a need by providing basic theological instruction to church leaders who had not completed a bachelor's degree. Over the years, this program has given new confidence to a stream of lay and ordained ministers, some of whom have subsequently finished their bachelor's degrees and returned to Hood as master's students. Second, after much study of what was good and bad in various programs around the country, Hood launched a DMin program in 2002 that has regularly attracted ten to fifteen students every year who form strong bonds across denominational and racial lines.

### *Diversification of faculty and staff*

Aymer's first hire in 1994 was the school's first professionally trained theological librarian, Cynthia Keever, a white, Presbyterian (PCUSA), trained at McCormick Theological Seminary and UNC–Chapel Hill. Then he started building up the faculty: Dora R. Mbuwayesango, an Anglican scholar in Old Testament, trained at the University of Zimbabwe, Harvard Divinity School, and then still ABD at Emory University; Tony Jenkins, a white, Southern Baptist church historian with a PhD from Duke University Divinity School; Christopher R. Hutson, a white Church of Christ scholar in New Testament with a PhD from Yale University; Reginald D. Broadnax, an AME Zion scholar in philosophical theology, then ABD at Garrett-Evangelical/Northwestern University. When Jenkins moved away for family reasons, his replacement came in the form of Horace Six-Means, an AME scholar in early Christian history, then ABD at Princeton Theological Seminary. Within a few years, all those who were ABD finished their PhDs, and these scholars formed a new core, who merged with the existing faculty and brought new energy and competencies, pushing students to the highest academic standards.

Since those days, the full-time faculty has grown to eleven: they are seven men and four women; they are six black (two native Africans), four white, and one Korean; they are from the AME, AME Zion, American Baptist, Anglican, Church of Christ, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and United Methodist traditions. These are supplemented by a line of high quality and dedicated adjuncts who are similarly diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, and denominational affiliation.

And the same is true of the administrative staff, which includes both women and men, white and black, representing various denominations: American Baptist, AME Zion, Roman Catholic, Missionary Baptist, Nondenominational, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), UCC, and United Methodist. The effect of all this is that in every part of their seminary experience, students from widely diverse backgrounds should be able to identify with various fellow students, faculty, and staff members on some level. We tell students, "If you have a problem, you should talk to your academic advisor or any other member of the faculty or staff with whom you feel comfortable," and we can be fairly confident that every student will be supported.

### ***Crossing the color line***

Too often attempts at racial integration consist of invitations to people from across the color line to come over and join us. One secret of Hood's success has been the willingness of Hood administration and faculty to cross the color line themselves, rather than simply inviting others over to their side. Aymer arrived in 1994 and immediately settled in at the First United Methodist church downtown. As it happened, one of his former DMin students at Drew, Robert Lewis, was the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church downtown, who immediately invited him in and treated him as if he were a member of that congregation as well. So right away, Aymer was routinely worshipping with many of the white movers and shakers in town. Aymer also bought a house in a section that was not an ostentatious neighborhood by any means but was exclusively white. Though some of his neighbors were skeptical at first, within a year they elected him president of their homeowner's association. Soon, Aymer was invited to join the Rotary Club and was invited onto the hospital board in a town that was very proud of and dedicated to its independent hospital. His willingness to participate in the lives of the white citizens of Salisbury caused many people to see the seminary differently and some of them to see it for the first time.

Aymer set a tone that was reflected also among the faculty, several of whom have placed membership in congregations with racial identities different from their own and most of whom commonly preach and teach in such settings. And this attitude trickles down to students, who form friendships across racial lines in classes and then invite one another to their pulpits or who form joint projects between black and white congregations.

In 2006 Hood launched an extension program to train AME Zion students in Alabama. Although the initial student body was all AME Zion students, Hood immediately started cultivating relations with leaders of other denominations, beginning with the pan-Methodist family. When the first cohort was ready for supervised ministry placements in 2008, there was an opportunity to build diversity into the program. Onsite Coordinator Claude Shuford and Associate Director of Supervised Ministry Sondra Coleman set up an assortment of parish placements across ethnic and denominational lines, recruiting Baptist, CME, and United Methodist pastors as field supervisors. Among their nonparish placements was a chaplaincy at Huntingdon College, affiliated with the United Methodist Church. The decision was intentional not to wait for a diverse student body to come to Hood but to build racial and denominational diversity into the program by sending Hood students out into diverse field placements.

The main idea here is that, if you want to reach out to people in another racial or ethnic group, start by joining them in their institutions and building relationships of trust, so that when they cross over to visit your institution, they come not as strangers but as friends who already feel a sense of belonging.

### ***Sensitivity to sponsoring denomination***

All of this diversification has had potential to create an identity crisis for Hood, so that it has been necessary for the seminary to pay special attention to its roots and its original mission—to prepare ministers for the AME Zion



Church. Hood's AME Zion identity is underscored in a number of ways. First, two-thirds of the board are AME Zion members, including six bishops. Second, as president, Aymer attends and makes a report at all the connectional meetings of the AME Zion Church and often preaches and teaches at various annual conferences. Third, by invitation of Aymer, a retired AME Zion bishop is a "bishop in residence" and teaches in the master's and diploma programs and serves as a mentor to AME Zion students. Fourth, an AME Zion bishop preaches in chapel at least once each semester, and other public events on campus often prominently feature AME Zion leaders. Fifth, although all students are encouraged to bring their own denominational traditions into chapel when they preach, the default liturgy is from the AME Zion hymnal. Sixth, the seminary launched an MDiv extension program in Alabama specifically to serve the needs of the AME Zion Church for preparing ministers in a state that has no other Wesleyan-oriented seminary. Seventh, Hood offers AME Zion history and polity courses and works with the AME Zion Church to be sure that the AME Zion graduates are well trained to meet the needs and expectations of their denomination. Eighth, the seminary is routinely represented at AME Zion denominational events on all levels and actively works to raise scholarship money earmarked specifically for AME Zion students. Ninth, the active bishops of the AME Zion Church participate in the leadership of an annual endowment service on the campus to which they bring substantial sums of money from their respective Episcopal districts to help build up the permanently restricted endowment of the seminary. In these and other ways, Hood seeks to maintain its AME Zion identity. The result is that, although the percentage of AME Zion students has fallen to about a third of the whole student body, in real numbers, Hood is now training more AME Zion pastors than ever before in the history of the school. An important secondary result is that every student who comes to Hood is clear that this seminary is rooted in an African American church, so that the non-African American students who come tend to be self-selected for wanting to understand better African American perspectives on Christianity.

### *Reaching out to other denominations*

In general, Hood tries to have in place courses, faculty mentors, and supervised ministry opportunities that will support students from any denomination. But some denominations receive specific attention because of their historic ties to Hood, their shared theological tradition, or the fact that they are strongly represented in the school's geographical area.

Historically, Hood has also had a strong constituency among some Missionary Baptists in North Carolina, and it has been important to respect that relationship by making sure that they are represented on the board and the president's Advisory Council and that Baptist polity courses and Baptist mentors are in place for those students.

Diversification in the past decade initially focused on the pan-Methodist family of denominations. Although Hood already had a few white students from various denominations, it was the approval of the University Senate of the United Methodist Church (UMC) that brought a critical mass of white stu-

dents beginning in 1999. And this critical mass made it easier to attract other white students, so that in 2005 the proportion of white students reached an all-time high of 40 percent. Hood has been diligent in fostering its relationship with the UMC, including hiring new UMC faculty members, working with the boards of ordained ministry in the UMC conferences from which the school draws large numbers of students, cultivating UMC alumni/ae, and so on. More recently, Hood has begun similar efforts to reach out to the AME and CME churches. One major selling point for prospective students in any of the Methodist denominations is that the school's pan-Methodist atmosphere provides all of them a broader perspective on their related traditions.

It happens that Hood is located in a region that has an especially strong concentration of Lutheran (ELCA) churches. In recent years, therefore, Hood has been cultivating relationships with denominational leaders and exploring opportunities for partnership with the nearest ELCA seminary. Hood administrators have been learning about the ELCA ordination process so they can properly advise ELCA students.

Looking beyond black/white relations, Hood has attracted occasional Native American, Latino, and Asian students, and recently hired a professor of pastoral care who is a native Korean. It remains to be seen which of these may emerge as the next area of broader diversification for Hood, but the community remains open to God's leading.

*Christopher R. Hutson is associate dean for extension programs at Hood Theological Seminary. He presented this essay at the September 2008 CORE Consultation, Enhancing Ethnic Diversity in Theological Education.*

# What Do We Do with the Diversity that We Already Are? The Asian and Asian North American in Accredited Graduate Theological Education

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*The multicultural diasporic Asian and Asian North American experience in accredited graduate theological education may be interpreted as a three-fold challenge of (1) contextualizing diverse and multi-stranded normative aspirations, (2) developing strategic frameworks or plans for learning, teaching, and research consistent with these aspirations, and (3) (re)presenting institutional leadership that is inclusive, dialogical, and formational.*

## Introduction

It is not our goal to offer yet another narrative of “Asian and Asian North American experience,” which, in this essay, we specify in terms of communities, theologies, and leaderships.<sup>1</sup> For these important narratives, we depend both on the many who have gone before us and on our contemporary companions from whom we have learned much.<sup>2</sup> Our context-specific task in addressing this journal’s theme, race and ethnicity in theological education, is much simpler: to raise some questions, offer some observations, and identify some elements of a present and future agenda for those who wish to be seriously and thoughtfully engaged in accredited graduate theological education.

### *Diaspora and contextualization—how we enter the conversation*

One way to enter into a serious and thoughtful, not to mention engaged, conversation about the place of Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships in accredited graduate theological education in the United States and Canada is to ask not, How can accredited graduate theological education become more racially and ethnically diverse? but rather, What do we do with the diversity that we already are?<sup>3</sup>

Posing the question in this way does at least two things that we believe are important for the future of this ongoing, turbulent, and necessary conversation. By accepting the multiple locations and “positionalities” of “our” multi-stranded diversities as the methodological and spiritual starting point for understanding Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships as they relate to accredited graduate theological education, we are signaling our refusal to enter into the extremely well-rehearsed disputes about whose claims

take precedence or which diversity is more important—disputes that we have found largely unhelpful, sometimes debilitating, and frequently polarizing.

At the same time, we are recognizing that the boundaries, territories, and containers of accredited graduate theological education, in general, and of Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships, in particular, are far more permeable than has often been acknowledged. Moreover, we are finding that the virtue of living in leaky containers lies in the strength it provides to refuse the temptation of essentializing or homogenizing both accredited graduate theological education and Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships. Such essentializing tends to accompany assertions about the desirability of impermeable, uncontaminated boundaries, territories, and containers—a temptation that continues to this day to hold many captive under its enchanting spell.<sup>4</sup>

Entering the conversation in this way is not without a specific context. Asian and Asian North American “experience” has often been intimately associated with diasporic multiculturalism: the diverse and plural worldwide dispersals, displacements, and dislocations of individuals, peoples, and institutions from their historic locations or origins.<sup>5</sup>

One side of diasporic multiculturalism certainly evokes images of “border crossings,” invasions, and estrangements; of co-optations, negotiated settlements, and uncompromising refusals; and of hybridities and logocentrism. It reveals global deterritorializing trajectories as well as local reterritorializing insurgencies, especially under conditions of an imploding transnational capital. Diasporic multiculturalism underscores existing political, economic, and cultural contradictions and antagonisms at the same time that it intensifies their asymmetries and unevenness. Perhaps the most innovative metaphor deployed for diasporic multiculturalism has been that of turbulence, suggesting not mere motion, activity, or movement, but disruptive, unpredictable, volatile speed.<sup>6</sup>

The other side of diasporic multiculturalism, which arguably has been largely undertheorized, is its subjective effects on individuals, peoples, and institutions: the normalization of the ideology of unlimited “permanent” change; the cultivation of cultures of mobility and improvisation; the reinscription of codes and symbols of dispersal, displacement, and dislocation (e.g., money, maps, information technologies, online and distance education) on peoples’ hearts, minds, and bodies; and the seemingly endless invention and reinvention of unfulfilled desires for “home” — multiple homes, to be sure, but homes, nonetheless — often accompanied by the inevitable yearnings for the innocent safety, security, and rest, of an idyllic Garden of Eden.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, entering into this conversation in this way is not without its normative, constructivist preferences. Here, we want to assert that by definition, as much as in practice, both accredited graduate theological education and Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships contain a normative project [*proyecto*] of contextualization.<sup>8</sup> This methodological and spiritual assumption — variously interpreted to be sure, though commonly respected — offers the possibility not only of shared understanding but also of transformative collaboration along the vast stretch of the multistranded

diversities that mark accredited graduate theological education and Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships.

Contextualization, particularly religious and/or theological contextualization exercised under the sign of Christianity, is concerned with how the gospel and culture—broadly conceived—relate to one another across space, time, and place.

Biblically, theologically, and pastorally, our orienting metaphor for contextualization is not only the Incarnation (John 1:1–14) but also the metaphor of *kenosis* (Philippians 2:1–8).

Stephen Bevans, theologian, missionary, and teacher, has been extremely helpful in mapping the multistranded and complex reality of theological contextualization.<sup>9</sup> Before joining Catholic Theological Union, Bevans spent nine years in the Philippines teaching theology at a diocesan seminary. By his own admission, his interest in contextualization—particularly in the areas of faith and culture, the Trinitarian roots of mission theology, and ecclesiology and ministry—were shaped by his immersion in Philippine society.

Bevans offers four models of theological contextualization that illustrate how he understands the relationship between gospel and culture:

1. Translation Model: The primary characteristic of this model is the discursive to-and-fro of multiple fields of meaning, which assumes the relative autonomy of different cultures and languages as well as the possibility of transferability and correspondence—in other words, mutual translatability—of these multiple fields of meaning.
2. Anthropological Model: The primary characteristic of this model is the fundamental assertion of the necessary and unavoidable preservation of the uniqueness of any culture that “receives” the gospel, based on a theological affirmation of the presence of God within any culture.
3. Praxis Model: The primary characteristic of this model is the recognition that human action, in its engagement primarily with the world of human need and reflection, shapes and reshapes different fields of meaning.
4. Synthetic Model: The primary characteristic of this model is the creation of new and better understandings, say of the gospel, through a creative act of synthesis between the different traditions of culture and Scripture, incorporating the “values” of the gospel and culture where they are most appropriate.

While deeply appreciative of Bevans’s work on contextualization, we take a somewhat different methodological direction. With Bevans, we understand that contextualization is a dialogic, hermeneutical event involving the interplay of thinking, feeling, and acting—a performative event that comes into being primarily through its enactment as a practice. Contextualization is also an event of transformative competence—that is to say, it has structure, process, and agency—that is about continuity and change, conflict and collaboration, and the creation of justice.

However, because of our profound “incredulity about the metanarrative” underlying all knowledge and power (including construals of both gospel

and culture) as well as a deep appreciation of their complexity, contingency, and fallibility, contextualization, for us, becomes fundamental critique, on the one hand, of the imbrications of power and privilege in theory and practice, and, on the other hand, of the articulation of identity and subjectivity within a wider ecology of life. Thus, where Bevans may be more confident about the preservation of essential expressions of the gospel, we take a less confident, more critical stance. And while we appreciate his sense of the importance of the local as a site for the application of these essentials, we understand it as the site of engagement “in search of the gospel.”

In other words, the spiritual sensibility required of contextualization is similar to what Clemens Sedmak calls “doing local theologies” construed as “walking, talking, doing theology” as if the theologian is a “local village cook” who is deeply involved in the entire ecology of his or her village—including not only its apparatuses of politics, economy, and culture but also the everyday engagements required for the preparation of meals for the entire village.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the local cannot be reduced to place or habitus, as the image of the local village cook may suggest. In fact, the local is a web of structures, processes, and agencies—closer to what Michel Foucault calls a *dispositif* and, therefore, always and already intimately connected with other localities. In this sense, the local is more than origin or trajectory; it is composed of the multiple spaces of contingent engagements that are always and already intimately related to how one encounters the multistranded diversities and pluralities of space, time, and place, and their embodiments in everyday life: rhetorical forms, gestures, procedures, modes, shapes, religious rituals, food, music, the plastic arts, dance, and lovemaking.<sup>11</sup>

### **The multistranded diversities of Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships in accredited graduate theological education**

At the risk of sounding trite, it bears repeating here that theological education in the United States and Canada is not limited to accredited graduate theological education, embodied, for example, in the work of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS), and the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE). In fact, some of the most interesting, not to mention innovative and relevant, forms of theological education are occurring below the postgraduate level: seminary-based certificate programs in cooperation with local religious communities, chaplaincies, and church-based or sponsored programs—across denominations and ecclesial families—as well as independent institutes and programs, some of which are housed in theological schools.<sup>12</sup> Such programs are not only addressing the theological needs of specific communities, but they also, by their existence, are challenging the very nature and boundaries of accredited graduate theological education.

Still, the institutions of accredited graduate theological education are far from withering away in the foreseeable future, especially if they can reinvent themselves in response to the challenges of location, position, and context, and

if they can realign themselves with the shifting identities and histories of the religious communities that want them.

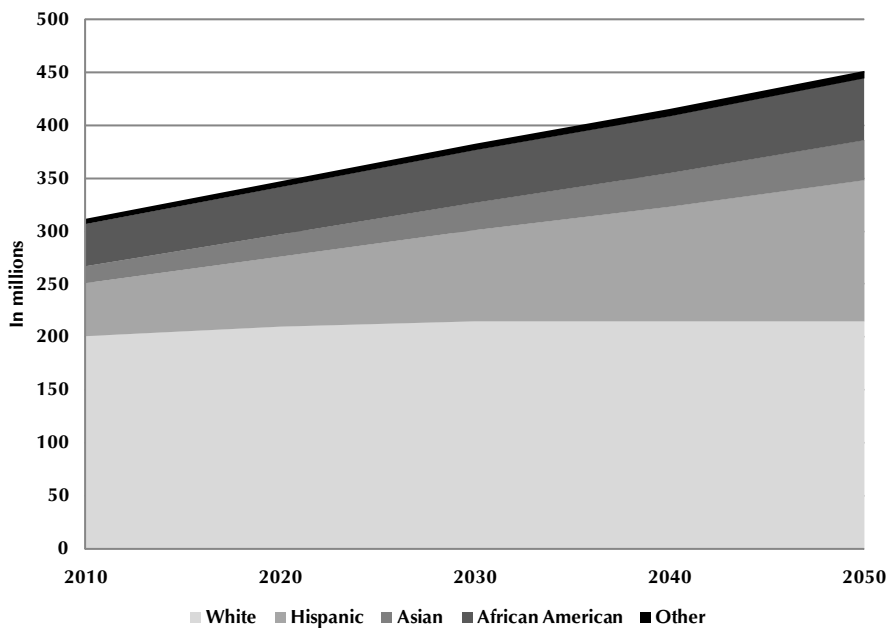
### *The numbers game*

Where are the Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships in graduate theological education today? What do the numbers tell us about ourselves?

U.S. population projections by race/ethnicity provided by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2008 give a rather dramatic perspective of race in the United States. With 2010 as the baseline, the white population of 201 million is expected to reach 215 million by 2050; African Americans will grow from 40 to 59 million, Asians from 16 to 38 million, and Hispanics from 50 to 133 million. This means that by 2050, the 2010 population projected at 312 million will reach approximately 452 million. By midcentury, whites will be approximately 48 percent of the population; African Americans, 12 percent; Asians, 8 percent; Hispanics, 30 percent; and Others, 2 percent.

Numbers, of course, do not tell the whole story, but they do suggest trajectories that invite thought. If the projections in figure 1 are accurate, even leaving room for variances in the unreported or undocumented U.S. population, they indicate that whites still will remain the largest ethnic group in 2050. And while all four groups show an increase in number, with Hispanics being the

**Figure 1** 2008 U.S. population projection by race



Source: Chart 1, 2008-09 Annual Data Tables, [www.ats.edu](http://www.ats.edu)

fastest growing group, these increases remain circumscribed by the predominantly white population. Still, as Daniel Aleshire, executive director of ATS, recently pointed out, this is a demographic sea change that has huge implications not only for accredited graduate theological education but for polity and economy as well.<sup>13</sup>

The figures reported by ATS member schools are equally revealing.<sup>14</sup> In 1997, 6.25 percent of the total student enrollment in ATS member schools was from populations traditionally classified as racial/ethnic: African American, 3.81 percent; Asian, 1.09 percent; and Hispanic, 1.35 percent. By 2008, 33.54 percent of the total student enrollment was distributed as follows: African American, 12.64 percent; Asian, 7.27 percent; Hispanic, 4.49 percent. Visa student enrollment, which member schools began reporting in 1989, was 6.43 percent that year and 9.14 percent by 2008.<sup>15</sup>

Fall 2008 enrollment data for all degree programs reported by all member schools placed the total at 77,861, of which approximately 7 percent or 5,208 were Asian. Of this number, 3,725 (72%) were male, and 1,483 (28%) were female—a ratio of about 2.5:1. Other breakdowns of this data are shown in table 1.

**Table 1** Asian student enrollment by degree and gender, fall 2008

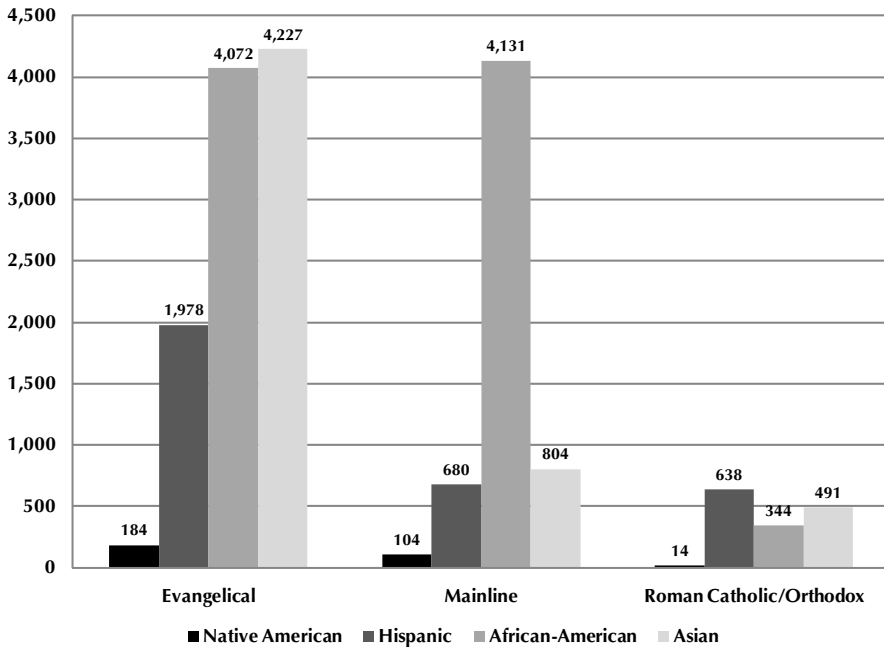
	<b>Male</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
<b>MDiv</b>	1,674	80	428	20	2,102	4:1
<b>Ministerial non-MDiv</b>	242	40	362	60	604	1.5:1
<b>General Theological</b>	341	58	252	42	593	1.4:1
<b>Advanced Ministerial</b>	801	87	117	13	918	7:1
<b>Advanced Research</b>	370	78	105	22	475	3.5:1
<b>Other</b>	297	58	219	42	516	1.4:1

Source: 2008-09 Annual Data Tables, [www.ats.edu](http://www.ats.edu)

What is most dramatic in our view is the fall 2008 head count enrollment by race/ethnicity and ecclesial family in all ATS member schools. As figure 2 shows, Asian enrollment in self-identified evangelical schools was slightly more than 4,200 students, followed by African Americans approaching 4,100, Hispanics nearing 2,000, and Native Americans closing in on 200. In contrast, Asians in mainline schools numbered slightly more than 800; African Americans, approximately 4,100; Hispanics, nearly 700; and Native American, slightly topping 100. In the Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools, Asians numbered slightly less than 500; African Americans, nearly 350; Hispanics, surpassing 600; and Native Americans, less than fifteen.



Figure 2 Head count enrollment by race/ethnicity and ecclesial family, fall 2008



Source: Chart 6, 2008-09 Annual Data Tables, [www.ats.edu](http://www.ats.edu)

The full-time Asian faculty demographics are equally dramatic, reflecting a 6:1 ratio of men to women as compared with a 3:1 ratio among all racial/ethnic professors.<sup>16</sup>

While these numbers may not establish a solid trend of what appears to be some kind of steady growth of Asians at accredited graduate theological schools, they raise a number of important issues. First, except for enrollment in the ministerial non-MDiv programs (the so-called professional MAs), men remain the dominant consumers of accredited graduate theological education, reflecting a lack of gender parity that is partially rooted in the confessional diversity among ATS member schools. Second, while the percentages of Asians in society and in accredited graduate theological education are currently more or less at par, other racial/ethnic populations still do not have parity and are not aligned with demographic trends and trajectories. This raises a question not only about adequate representation but also about the future relevance of accredited graduate theological education and its struggle with racialized and sexualized notions of learning, teaching, and research. In addition, the contrasts between faculty-student ratios among Asians and white non-Hispanics point to the profoundly uneven and asymmetrical structure of graduate theological education, raising concerns about pedagogy, curriculum, and quality of instruction (e.g., the importance of mentors). Third, clearly, the majority of

Asians and Asian North Americans in accredited graduate theological education are now attending evangelical schools, raising the question about the need for both faculty and leadership development that will be adequate to meet the future needs of these constituencies. Finally, this projected demographic sea change resulting from the absence of a clear majority and from a proliferation of cultural, racial/ethnic, and gendered populations will raise fundamental questions about the need to move beyond majority-based understandings and practices of leadership toward strategic, diversity-oriented, and “coalitional” institutional leadership.

***What’s in a name?—dilemmas and aporias***<sup>17</sup>

The work of scholars noted previously reminds us of both the difficulty and the necessity of understanding Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships in accredited graduate theological education, not to mention the making of inclusionary comparisons. Among the many dilemmas and *aporias* raised in the vast literature of Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships, one in particular invites our attention because around it cluster several key issues with which we are concerned in this essay.<sup>18</sup>

Timothy Tseng observes that the terms *Asian American* or *Asian and Pacific Islander American* are used to identify East Asians, Central Asians, Southeast Asians, and Pacific Islander peoples. In fact, these names are ciphers for communities with vast and complex diversities of distinct, though interrelated, cultural, political, and economic realities that are often contested, competitive, and incommensurable—and implicated in the capitalist and patriarchal circuits of power, capital, labor, and knowledge. And while these linguistic devices have become part of the identities of Asians and Asian North Americans in their struggles for racial justice since at least the 1960s, these devices remain creatures of colonialism and neocolonialism against which their liberative and transformative potentials are often interpreted and negotiated. These linguistic devices are also part of larger discursive and strategic formations that embody actual “relations of ruling.” The point, of course, is not only that language is not innocent—nor the one who speaks it or whose spoken language shapes the political agenda—but also that language is both productive and performative.

The weight of these linguistic devices cannot be underestimated. They are, for example, associated with the sexualized racial and gendered stereotypes like “the model minority,” or the “middle minority,” or the “forever foreigner,” or the “honorary white”<sup>19</sup> that have historically shaped Asian and Asian North American communities in perverse ways. At the same time, these very devices have set the stage for developing new and culturally appropriate identities and strategies for transformation. Taken as a “social totality,” they are what Rita Nakashima Brock calls a “palimpsest with multiple traces written over a single surface (135).”<sup>20</sup> The final report of the ATS-Wabash Center-sponsored project, “Developing Teaching Materials and Instructional Strategies for Teaching Asian and Asian American/Canadian Women’s Theologies in North America,” completed in 1999 by a group of Asian and Asian American women

scholars, is illustrative of Brock's methodological insight. In its self-organized, self-directed structure and process, the report addresses "as a single surface" the problems of teaching and learning in accredited graduate theological education, giving full play to the multiple locations and positionalities of the project team, while offering a set of shared recommendations on how to overcome the problems they identified.<sup>21</sup>

Happily, these names are not only *limit situations* that regulate Asian and Asian North American identities and practice, but they also provide clues to their wider diversities. In the context of the implicit challenges posed by the numbers noted herein, it is helpful to be reminded, as we are by Jonathan Tan, that the multistranded character of Asian American theologies has a generational element. "The first-generation Asian American theologians," he points out, "grounded their theologies on the issues of social justice and liberation from all forms of institutional and structural racism and discrimination."<sup>22</sup> Issues of assimilation, integration, and autonomy loomed large, as well as concerns for "Asian Christian identity" in relation to both sides of the Pacific within a largely church-based and mediated movement arising mainly out of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean contexts in the 1960s and 1970s.

Second generation Asian American theologians include among their ranks a much wider, more diverse group of Asians and Asian North Americans reaching into multiple and overlapping constituencies, disciplinary fields, ecclesial families, and political and religio-moral commitments. Influenced, to some extent, by the rise of the cultural studies movement of the 1980s and 1990s,<sup>23</sup> second generation Asian American theologians, not surprisingly, are more intentionally interdisciplinary in their approaches to issues of reconciliation and community transformation, focusing on the relations between faith, the Bible, and evangelism as well as ethnicity, culture, economy, and interfaith/interreligious dialogue. Moreover, while not oblivious to the call to engage with the claims of a Pacific and global world, second generation Asian Americans have a clear substantive, methodological, and political/institutional commitment to their particular locations and positionalities that sees the local and the global as co-constitutive.

This commitment is shaped by the subtle interplay between a post-Newtonian, post-Kantian understanding of space, time, and place characteristic of postmodern postcolonial thought, and the deep experiential rootedness in ancestral traditions and countertraditions tied to land, body, and even food. It is not surprising that one of the dilemmas running through Asian and Asian North American academic and intellectual discourses on identity and practice is how one positions one's self vis-à-vis the temptation not only of essentializing and homogenizing what it means to be Asian but also of locating one's self in the certainty of claims made by the so-called native informant.<sup>24</sup> This temptation is rendered more complex by the geopolitical and geostrategic legacy of colonialism that limits Asian mainly to its Pacific and Indian Ocean rims, despite the historical reality that Asia runs through southern Russia to the Caspian Sea.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it is methodologically and spiritually refreshing to be reminded that the term Asian American is not only a polymorphic, multivalent palimpsest but also a sociohistorical object whose forms, capacities, behaviors, gestures, movements,

and potentials ought not to be limited to geographical and biological determinants or unchanging social, political, and geostrategic statuses.

### *Where is home?*

The dilemma about one's name, associated with one's generational and methodological location, is also a question about one's home within the larger ecology of the social totality that is constantly being (re)interpreted. In fact, Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships are deeply rooted in religio-moral communities shaped not only by specific generational and disciplinary interests but also by ecclesial commitments. As noted previously, of the three ecclesial families within the Association, the fastest growing is the evangelical community, followed by the mainline community, with the Roman Catholic/Orthodox community weighing in as a small third.

With the majority of Asian and Asian North American students being shaped by their evangelical heritage and taught by faculty who largely self-identify with liberal (some would say postmodern, postcolonial) Asian Christianity, but who are embedded in communities that have to address a less than hospitable cultural ethos, the challenge of finding religious, intellectual, and spiritual homes (or identities) that are responsive and accountable to a multicultural society looms large. For most Asian American theologians serving under the flag of evangelicalism (however understood), the main task is to discover what it means to be "resolutely and vigorously" Asian, American, and evangelical all at once. For Amos Yong, this means building one's identity and practice on the historically mediated tenets of evangelicalism as they are appropriated within particular Asian American contexts.<sup>26</sup>

The institutional side of finding a home is equally important. This is the question of the future of Asian and Asian North American Christianity, which itself is changing. The dilemma may be put polemically in this way: one could conceivably argue (1) that Asian and Asian North American Christianity cannot be extricated from its historical and, therefore, colonial past; (2) that Christian identities in the United States and Canada that have arisen out of this history, despite the long century between the time the first missionaries "Christianized" Asians in their homelands to the time Asian American Christianity planted itself in North America, still hold sway; and (3) that the many waves of Asian migrations and immigrations to the United States, in particular, represent nothing more than the return of the colonized to their (colonial) home. Indeed, one may observe that an Asian's inherited Christian identity was often aligned with whichever missionary group had occupied one's homeland.

Our point is not to return to the old contestation about the American imperial and colonial project. That is a discussion for another day. Our point is a slightly different one: given our Christian inheritance, what are the conditions under which an authentically transformative Christianity or religious identity and practice can be articulated, and what is the role of accredited graduate theological education in this articulation, considering its tendency to be disconnected from the historic communities (e.g., the churches) that give rise to the need for accredited graduate theological education in the first place? And should this question be answered, however provisionally, that accredited grad-

uate theological education needs to be attentive—if not accountable—to the churches and to other religious and faith-based communities, then we would also have to ask, What in the current practice of our learning, teaching, and research needs to be revisited in order to begin to address the larger questions of what Asian American Christianity ought to look like at midcentury's end?

The challenge of these multistranded diversities is at least threefold: (1) how one understands such diverse locations and practices; (2) whether one can or ought to link these diversities; and (3) how one negotiates the linkages, especially since what is at stake is not only their plurality but also their inextricable, mutually challenging and enhancing relations, under conditions of change, which can be uneven and asymmetrical. In accredited graduate theological education, such asymmetries—particularly in institutional resources that affect learning, teaching, and research, as well as access to power and privilege—can no longer be addressed as if they were external to Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships.

### **The futures of Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships in accredited graduate theological education**

In the context of a future that is both a constantly moving horizon and an *aporia*, the challenge for accredited graduate theological education today, it seems, is to rediscover, yet again, the importance of learning as an orienting metaphor for accredited graduate theological education. For both of us, this means paying even closer attention to the issues presented by Eleazar Fernandez in his work currently underway titled, "Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World: Reflections on Doing Theological Education in the Interstices."<sup>27</sup> While we may not agree entirely on what the interstitial signifies or the relative importance of the cultural (as a gendered/sexualized and class-based construction) vis-à-vis the racial/ethnic for our understanding of the Asian and Asian North American, we both resolutely and joyfully affirm the need for multiple pedagogical frameworks or agenda that dialogically address directly the concerns we have articulated in this essay.<sup>28</sup> What follows are the questions we hope will yield future collaboration within our communities of responsibility and accountability in the service of transformation—the creation of the fundamentally new which is also fundamentally better.<sup>29</sup>

### ***The general landscape of theological education in relation to cultural and racial/ethnic diversity and racial justice***

What is the status of accredited graduate theological education in the United States and Canada with regard to cultural diversity, racial/ethnic diversity, and racial justice? Has it challenged the hegemonic, essentializing, and homogenizing power of the Enlightenment paradigm and the dominant white culture, and has it explored alternative ways of doing theological education? Has theological education progressed in ways that match the increasing racial/ethnic diversity of its wider social context? Has it been responsive to the needs of its culturally and racially/ethnically diverse constituencies? Is it preparing women and men for a culturally, racially/ethnically, and religiously

plural world? Where is it in terms of developing racial/ethnic minority scholars-teachers of religion and theology? What kind of training are they getting from major, resource-capable theological institutions? How are they being treated or valued as faculty members and as part of the institution? What are the major challenges, the concerns that need to be addressed, the directions that must be pursued, and the steps that need to be taken?

### ***Knowing the teacher: The identity of the teacher***

The identity of the teacher is an important factor in the teaching-learning process. What transpires in the teaching-learning process is filtered through this identity. Awareness of the crucial place of this identity in teaching is heightened, especially when one is identified as a culturally, racially/ethnically “marked body.” In order to explore in depth the relationship between teaching and identity, the following questions may serve as useful guides:

- What experience(s) lead to a teacher’s discovery of race or ethnic identity?
- What impact does that discovery have on one’s body as a teacher in classroom interaction when that body is “marked” by racial-cultural difference?
- How might a teacher’s marked body affect evaluations of intellectual competency?
- How might one’s marked body affect cultural, racialized, and sexualized knowledges in the classroom?
- How do culture and race/ethnicity shape one’s interactions with students, colleagues, and institutions?
- What do they mean for one’s teaching?

### ***Knowing the students: Who are our students?***

Knowing one’s students is crucial in the teaching-learning process. Effective teaching demands that teachers know their students and their backgrounds, appropriate personal life experiences, and learning styles. With relevant and appropriate knowledge of one’s students, teachers are able to teach in ways that best respond to their learning styles and to their current levels of awareness, assumptions, expectations, and information. Teachers are also able to judge whether they are using appropriate and realistic learning goals and outcomes as well as anticipate questions or areas requiring clarification or further attention. Moreover, teachers are able to anticipate student reactions to specific class-related social group activities.

What do teachers need to know about their students? What issues are of greatest concern to them, and what is their motivation for being in class? What is their prior experience with the range of social justice issues, and what are their expectations? What are the multiple social identities of their students? What is the social inequality mixture of their students?

Finally, what do we want students to know about themselves and about each other? What theories are useful for teachers to understand their students and for students to understand themselves, particularly their cultural and racial/ethnic identities in relation to other social identities?

***Curriculum: What shall we teach?***

What is the content of our curriculum and our courses? What are we teaching to our students? What are the fundamental assumptions (e.g., educational and theological) underlying the school's curriculum? Are these stated or unstated? Do these various sets of assumptions about curriculum and about cultural and racial/ethnic diversity clash? Does the curricular content include preparation for ministry in culturally and ethnically diverse settings? Are the experience, history, and perspective of racial/ethnic and cultural populations present and honored? Do courses and syllabi include materials from racial/ethnic sources? How are racial/ethnic groups represented? Are the courses that deal with racial/ethnic concerns integrated in required courses?

Racial/ethnic scholar-teachers need to develop critical consciousness about what they teach so as to use the resources of various racial and cultural heritages in ways that are respectful and appropriate and to avoid reproducing the assumptions of the dominant culture. Reacting to the dominant paradigm is not enough. Racial/ethnic scholar-teachers need to offer alternative content to the curriculum.

***Pedagogy: How shall we teach?***

With the increasing cultural and racial/ethnic diversity of society brought about by the forces of globalization, greater sensitivity and responsiveness to the diverse student body is demanded by effective, empowering, and transformative teaching and is an act of justice. How shall we teach in ways that honor and celebrate cultural and racial/ethnic diversity in predominantly white institutions? How shall we teach in ways that honor and celebrate racial/ethnic and cultural diversity in racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse classrooms? Do our racial/ethnic students recognize their racial/ethnic identities in our courses and classrooms? Do our curriculum and teaching prepare them for ministry in their communities?

How does one's cultural and racial/ethnic identity affect/inform pedagogy? How shall we teach as racially/ethnically and sexually marked bodies in ways that honor our identity as well as take our students' life experiences and multiple identities seriously and promote racial/ethnic diversity and racial justice? How shall we teach as racial/ethnic scholars and teachers in ways that do not perpetuate our marginalization and that prepare our students to do ministry in culturally and racially diverse contexts? How shall we teach a course in which our experience and identities are so wedded to the subject matter so as to become integral to the teaching method? How shall we model what we teach?

Do we have a broad repertoire of teaching methods to address various learning styles? What teaching methods are culturally sensitive and respectful of ethnic differences? How do we assess effective teaching in a multicultural classroom? What approaches, exercises, and evaluative or assessment tools are we going to use? What kind of teaching-learning environment are teachers creating? What is the classroom environment? What is the classroom culture, and what are the classroom norms? Are teachers creating not just "safe" environments but also learning communities in which all members are committed to mutual learning and transformation?

### ***Institutional life and governance***

What are the structures and processes of governance that frame learning, teaching, and research? What is the overall institutional climate? Does it proactively promote cultural and racial/ethnic justice and diversity? What has been the general experience of racial/ethnic scholar-teachers with regard to the issues of institutional life, governance, and faculty vocation? How is institutional citizenship assessed? What forms of leadership have they assumed or exercised? How has their participation in institutional governance been perceived? In which areas have they made a difference, if any? What are some of the institutional barriers or challenges toward becoming a culturally and ethnically diverse and racially just institution? How are these issues of institutional life and governance directly related to issues of learning, teaching, and research?

### ***Participation of companions, partners, and allies***

It is crucial for advancing the cause of cultural and racial/ethnic diversity and racial justice to include in the conversation scholar-teachers from the dominant racial/ethnic group who have become companions, partners, or allies. These are individuals and institutions that not only recognize their own unearned power and privilege but also are working to eliminate or transform these privileges into rights for all racial groups to enjoy. Companions are those who are willing to take risks to try new ways of thinking and living and take actions against social injustice in their own spheres of influence. Racial/ethnic scholars and teachers are not alone in the journey toward a theological education that affirms racial/ethnic diversity and racial justice, and they are not alone in exploring alternative teaching-learning practices that are responsive to the needs of our varied cultural and racial/ethnic groups. They have educator-teacher partners from the dominant racial group whose voices are of crucial importance and need to be included in this project.

### **Reprise: What do we do with the diversity that we already are?**

We wish to return to where we began, with the affirmation that the question, What do we do with the diversity that we already are? posed within the context of accredited graduate theological education carries with it a three-fold challenge: (1) articulation of the normative aspirations of Asian and Asian North Americans in accredited graduate theological education, (2) development of a strategic framework or plan for learning, teaching, and research consistent with these aspirations, and (3) (re)presentation of Asian and Asian North American leadership that shifts its center from the charismatic to the institutional, and recognizes—because of its minoritarian status—the need for inclusive, dialogical, and formational leadership.

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ENDNOTES

1. While pluralizing these terms may be grammatically awkward, we intentionally do so to linguistically underscore the diversity and plurality of Asian and Asian North American “experience.”
2. The published literature on this subject is as vast as it is varied. See, for example, Jonathan Y. Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, Seung Ai Yang, eds., *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religion and Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Peter C. Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003); D.J. Chuang and Timothy Tseng, eds., *Conversations: Asian American Evangelical Theologies in Formation* (Los Angeles, CA: L2 Foundation, 2006); Timothy Tseng, et al., *Asian American Religious Leadership Today: A Preliminary Inquiry*, Pulpit and Pew Research on Pastoral Leadership (Durham, NC: Duke Divinity School, 2005). See also Gary Y. Okihiro, *The Columbia Guide to Asian American History* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001).
3. “We” refers not only to Asian and Asian North American students, faculty, administrators, and staff involved in accredited graduate theological education but also to the inclusive “we” of all those involved in the latter.
4. See, for example, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, “Margins and (Cutting-)Edges: On the (Il)Legitimacy and Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and (Post)Colonialism,” in Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2005), 114–65; Nakashima Brock, et al., *Off the Menu* (see n. 2); Namsoon Kang, “Who/What Is Asian? A Postcolonial Theological Reading of Orientalism and Neo-orientalism,” in Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera, eds., *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 100–117.
5. Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, “Diaspora, empire, resistance: peace and the subaltern as rupture(s) and repetition(s)” in Shin Chiba and Thomas J. Schoenbaum, eds., *Peace Movements and Pacifism after September 11* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2008), 49–76; Eleazar S. Fernandez, “America from the Hearts of Diasporized People: A Diasporized Heart” in Fumitaka Matsuoka and Eleazar S. Fernandez, eds., *Realizing the America of our Hearts: Theological Voices of Asian Americans* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003), 253–273.
6. Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization, and Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 3–21.
7. Our notion of inscription has its origins in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1977).
8. Religious and theological contextualization in Asia has been associated historically with theologians like Shoki Coe, M.M. Thomas, D.T. Niles, Emerito Nacpil, Kosuke Koyama, and C.S. Song, leading Huang Po Ho in more recent times to identify a “contextual theology movement in Asia”: *Minjung* theology from Korea, Homeland theology and theology of *Chhut Thau Thin* from Taiwan, Theology of Struggle from the Philippines, and Dalit and interfaith dialogue from India. Institutions like The Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia, the Program for Theology and Cultures in Asia (PTCA), the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), the Asian Church Women’s Conference (ACWC), the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) have also been seen as part of this vital movement, as has been the critically important work associated with

names like Virginia Fabella, Aruna Gnanadasan, Marianne Katoppo, Sun Ai Lee Park, MaryJohn Mananzan, and Anna May Say Pa. The spirit of contextualization is no less evident in the so-called West, though some Asian and Asian North American religious and theological scholars may not self-identify with this movement. See, for example, Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006); R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Asian Faces of Jesus* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 2004); Su Yon Pak, Unzu Lee, Jung Ha Kim, Myung Ji Cho, *Singing the Lord's Song in a New Land: Korean American Practices of Faith* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Tat-siong Benny Liew, *What is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics? Reading the New Testament* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2008); Peter C. Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face*, 3 (see n. 2); Kwok Pui-Lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Matsuoka and Fernandez, *Realizing the America of Our Hearts* (see n. 5).

9. Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

10. Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

11. Situated in the context of a postpositivist, postempiricist, poststructuralist tradition, we deploy the term practice much in the same way Foucault used the term *dispositif*— “a resolutely heterogeneous assemblage, containing discourses, institutions, architectural buildings (*managements architecturaux*), reglementary decisions, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions . . . said as well as non-said (*du dit aussi bien que du non-dit*) . . .” —to signify “the simultaneous identity/difference” of theory (speculative reason), and praxis (practical reason), and their interplay with the personal, the political, the historical, and the sacred—in the service of transformation. See Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed., Colin Gordon (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1980), 194–228. This relocates “contextualization,” as well as “the Asian and Asian North American” within a wider polymorphic discursive formation, the resulting ambivalence of which allows for a more inclusive analysis and, therefore, their transformation.

12. We have in mind here institutions like the Institute for Leadership Development and Study of Pacific and Asian North American Religion (PANA); the L2 Foundation; the Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (PANAAWTM); and the Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity (ISAAC), as well as the Asian and Pacific Americans and Religion Research Initiative (APARRI) and the Asian American Women on Leadership (AAWOL). In addition, many seminaries and theological schools across the United States and Canada have centers for Asian American studies/ministries that often offer degree specializations in conjunction with regular course and degree program offerings or serve as resource sites for churches and groups interested in Asian American issues and concerns.

13. We are grateful to Chris Meinzer, ATS director of finance and administration, for providing valuable assistance in preparing the data from the ATS database for public presentation.

14. While our preference in this section would have been to compare the Asian population vis-à-vis the other racial/ethnic groups in accredited graduate theological education, space in this essay constrains us to focus only on the former.

15. ATS member schools have a slightly better record in terms of Asian student population compared with the rest of U.S. higher education, with the former reporting 7.8 percent of Asians in their programs, and the latter with 6.7 and 6.6 percent in graduate

and professional degree programs and all degree granting institutions, respectively. Of course, it is necessary to be prudent in drawing conclusions from such a limited sample.

16. Of the 3,676 full-time professors in ATS member schools, 2,825 (77%) are male, and 851 (23%) are female—a ratio of 3.3:1. Of this total, 187 (5%) are Asians, of which 143 (76%) are male, and 44 (24%) are female. The ratio of male to female Asian faculty classified by rank is professor, 5.7:1; associate professor, 2.8:1; and assistant professor, 2.6:1. If one combines the traditionally classified racial/ethnic faculty and compares them with their white non-Hispanic counterparts, the number is 606 (16%) of which 456 (75%) are male and 150 (25%) are female. The ratios of faculty to students are also instructive. Among Asians, the ratio of total students to faculty is 28:1; for males 26:1, and for females 34:1. In contrast, among white non-Hispanics, the ratio of total students to faculty is 16:1, for males 13:1, and for females 23:1. To be sure, numbers sometimes mask important textures and sensibilities at the level of their concreteness. 2008–09 Annual Data Tables, [www.ats.edu](http://www.ats.edu).

17. As David Campbell notes, “An *aporia* is an undecidable and ungrounded political space, where no path is ‘clear and given,’ where no ‘certain knowledge opens up the way in advance,’ where no ‘decision is already made.’” See “The Deterritorialization of Responsibility: Levinas, Derrida, and Ethics after the End of Philosophy,” *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Humane Governance* 19, no. 4 (1994): 475. It is what we might find at the center of our historic biblical faith.

18. Partly in the interest of brevity and largely because of our limited capacity to be exhaustive, this section is intended primarily to be illustrative of what we consider productive guideposts for understanding and negotiating the rituals of Asian and Asian North American communities, theologies, and leaderships in accredited graduate theological education. In effect, it is an exercise in selective cartography or mapping.

19. Jonathan Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies*, 36–56.

20. Tat-Siong Benny Liew, “Review of *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religion and Theology*,” by Rita Nakashima Brock. American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (2007), 4.

21. Rita Nakashima Brock, et al., “Developing Teaching Materials and Instructional Strategies for Teaching Asian American/Canadian Women’s Theologies in North America” (final report, ATS and Wabash Center grant project, November 1999). Accessed online at <http://www.panaawtm.org/images/final.report.doc>.

22. Tan, *Introducing Asian American Theologies*, 93.

23. Political and intellectual movements in the 1980s and 1990s are complex, often contradictory. Still the legacies of critical theory and hermeneutics, as well as feminist, womanist, and queer theory, and their myriad delineations along poststructuralist, postpositivist, postmodern, and postcolonial lines have shaped, for good or ill, the work of Asian American scholars, academics, and public intellectuals.

24. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

25. If “Asian” were to be fully “extended” methodologically and spiritually to correspond with this wider geography of “Asia,” then, a (re)articulation would be required in our understanding of who Asian Americans are. This will mean, for example, that Islam will become a much larger part of Asian and Asian North American self-understanding and practice—a sea change of huge proportions.

*What Do We Do with the Diversity that We Already Are?*

26. Amos Yong, "The Future of Asian Pentecostal Theology: An Asian American Assessment," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 10, no. 1 (January 2007): 22–41. The challenge of Asian American evangelicalism is particularly strong in Chinese and Korean Christianity with the exponential growth they have experienced in the past ten to twenty years.

27. This text, with minor revisions, was originally prepared for a research project. We include it here because it addresses directly the concerns we have raised in this essay.

28. We are grateful for the work of others that address similar concerns from multiple locations and positionalities. See for example, Rita Nakashima Brock, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang, "The Future of PANAAWTM Theology," [http://panaawtm.org/images/Future\\_of\\_Panaawtm\\_theology.doc](http://panaawtm.org/images/Future_of_Panaawtm_theology.doc). Accessed October 31, 2009; Young Lee Hertig, "Why Asian American Evangelical Theologies?" (paper presented at the American Academy of Religion, Philadelphia, PA, November 20, 2005). In this regard, the collection of reports and papers from the ATS-sponsored Asian and Asian North American seminary faculty consultations held in 2005 at Redondo Beach, California, and in 2007 at Dallas, Texas, provide a richly textured picture of the concerns noted in this essay.

29. Manfred Halpern, *Transforming the Personal, Political, Historical and Sacred in Theory and Practice*, ed. David Abalos (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2009).

# Online Theological Education: Perspectives from First-Generation Asian American Students

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*This essay explores the use of online asynchronous discussions from the perspective of first-generation Asian American seminarians. The pedagogical paradigm implicit in these online forums assumes values that compete and even contradict the values these students bring from their native educational experiences. Combined with the language difficulties, asynchronous discussions can present a serious challenge to the educational goals of both the institution and the student. Despite these barriers, first-generation Asian American students often see the incorporation of the asynchronous discussions as a welcome enhancement to their theological education.*

## Introduction

Theological institutions are increasingly turning to nontraditional delivery systems for their educational product. Whether out of financial necessity or future vision, these pedagogical innovations have quickly made their presence known in seminary classrooms. As of press time, The Association of Theological Schools lists an astounding ninety-six member schools that offer some sort of distance education, primarily using e-learning.<sup>1</sup> By providing flexibility far beyond the logistical constraints of a face-to-face classroom, these offerings ultimately can serve the seminary in accessing a larger portion of potential students who cannot fit under the traditional educational setting. In addition, proponents of online pedagogical systems point to the ability to harness resources and capacities to maximize learning outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

But as theological institutions embrace these technological advances in education, they also must consider the potential liabilities when implementing such systems across the broad sociocultural enrollment that often composes significant portions of theological institutions. This essay explores the use of online asynchronous discussions from the perspective of the first-generation Asian American student whose native culture embodies honor-shame ideology. For simplicity, this study will analyze the experiences of a focus group of seven first-generation Asian American students at George Fox Evangelical Seminary enrolled in various master's degree programs. These seven students represent four nationalities and varying degrees of English fluency. All immigrated to the United States after completing some amount of postsecondary education in their native lands. Through interviews, these participants described their own involvement in asynchronous discussions across a broad spectrum of theological categories.

Individually, each student had unique personal perspectives on the struggles and triumphs in the online experience. Collectively, they indicated that the pedagogical paradigm implicit in online asynchronous discussion assumes values that compete and even contradict previous educational experiences. Combined with language difficulties, asynchronous discussions can present a serious challenge to the educational goals of the student and the greater institution. Despite these barriers, asynchronous discussions often serve as a welcome modification for Asian students compared to their traditional teacher-student learning paradigm. Hopefully, this examination of a singular component of an online delivery system from a particular cultural vantage point can raise awareness and increase cultural sensitivity as seminars contemplate future technological innovations in pedagogy.

### **Asynchronous discussion in a theological environment**

The asynchronous discussion is one of the simplest and most popular tools in online pedagogy. Typically, students can access a dedicated course site via a password. In accordance with assignment prompts, students can make online posts and respond to other student postings, using rubrics that regulate the nature and length of the posts. In their most opportune examples, these asynchronous posts can add a certain depth to the theological enterprise. When a professor assigns a complex prompt (“In Romans 13:1–7, how does Paul understand the role of state authorities as serving the purpose of God?”) within an allotted space (“post no more than 300 words”), the student must carefully construct a concise response. The open forum ideally serves to help regulate the quality of work, and the multiplicity of readers and venues for response can create a rich discussion beyond the constraints of face-to-face time in class. Most importantly, the asynchronous dimension allows students to carefully craft their contributions to the ongoing dialogue without the pressure of face-to-face interaction.

Because asynchronous discussions are a recent innovation in higher education pedagogy, institutions realize that many students require a formal introduction to the process. In the Virtual Learning Community for distance learners at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, students must physically attend a comprehensive orientation at the campus and invest significant time learning the methods and expectations of the online learning process. This orientation capably serves to acclimate traditional students into a new paradigm of learning. But for standalone hybrid or online courses, the acclimation process is often left entirely to the professor. Not surprisingly, first-generation Asian American students are often slower to adjust to this new paradigm.

To a certain extent, language difficulties serve as the main reason for this impeded adjustment. Linguists have long pointed out the extreme difference between English and the various dialects of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and other East Asian languages, both in syntactical structure and in lack of shared lexicography. Although English education is requisite in all the aforementioned cultures from early childhood education, only rarely does any English education come from native speakers. In addition, the online environ-

ment eliminates several crucial elements of communication such as immediate feedback, body language, and tone of voice. The colloquial nature of much of the online dialogue further aggravates these struggles. Therefore, anxieties over language easily emerge in an online classroom entirely dependent on written communication.

But these language frustrations represent only a portion of the adjustment difficulties for Asian students. Social scientists have long recognized that learning processes are highly cultural. Barbara Rogoff and Pablo Chavajay have studied the role of culture in cognitive development and trace the scholarly movements from looking at culture as a single variable among many in cognitive development to the current position that recognizes culture as the essence of the cognitive process.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Raymond Wlodkowski summarizes, "The language we use to think, the way we travel through our thoughts, and how we communicate cannot be separated from cultural practice and cultural emotion."<sup>4</sup> In essence, all pedagogical systems carry implicit presuppositions on values within education, although professors rarely explicitly think about such concerns. But as theological institutions strive to attract more international students in order to enhance ethnic diversity, these efforts must include pedagogical examination.

### **Honor-shame in an asynchronous discussion environment**

Asynchronous discussions have an intrinsic method of quality control, as all postings remain visible to the entire learning community. In contrast to the ephemeral nature of a face-to-face discussion, posted comments remain accessible in cyberspace indefinitely. Moreover, not only do students read each others' posts, but professors often require them to upload a minimum number of responses as well. The knowledge that fellow students will read and critique each others' content often motivates students to compose higher quality writings than in traditional homework assignments.

But such quality control by the learning community can create a threatening environment to students from an East Asian culture. Sociologists have long recognized that Asians have greater awareness of shame compared to Caucasians.<sup>5</sup> While in Western cultures shame stands out as a socially unacceptable emotion that indicates weakness and inferiority, in Asian cultures, the sense of shame is much more pervasive.<sup>6</sup> Within the Taoist background of Asian cultures, the sense of shame emerges as a reflex of a true sense of conscience. Shame helps the Taoist achieve self-realization, by comparing the self to the ideal. Although Asian cultures continue to migrate from this Taoist perspective to more Western conceptions of self, the presence of shame remains unmistakable, and these values lie deeply embedded within Asian international students.

Not surprisingly, these students require major adjustments when initially exposed to peer-review learning environments. A traditional assignment for the instructor alone protects the honor of the student, as the merit of the assignment remains in anonymity to the rest of the class. But when the student makes an online post, he or she exposes the work to a classroom of peers,

who in turn must critique the quality. This process conflicts with two implicit values in East Asian education. First, the peer review violates the large power-distance in schools, where the teacher initiates and sustains feedback for the students. Second, the peer review may threaten the totality of the group. Asian culture is highly collective with emphasis on values of group effort, harmony, and compassion. The online discussions implicitly value the American cultural norms of self-reliance, assertiveness, and competitiveness.

The focus-group students of George Fox Evangelical Seminary all confirmed the confrontation of shame in their experiences with online asynchronous discussion. Of the seven first-generation Asian students from George Fox Evangelical Seminary interviewed for this article, none of them had ever participated in an online discussion during their higher education experiences in their native cultures. One student commented that he was “very, very embarrassed,” during his first month of participation in a hybrid class. When pressed for specifics, the student pointed to both the content of his postings and uncertainty as to whether he was doing the assignment correctly. This student also experienced stress and depression that he believes contributed to an extended hospitalization. Although this particular response was extreme, all of the focus-group students expressed significant levels of worry that other students might make insulting remarks about online content.

In addition to the content, the first-generation Asian American students also worried that their participation in asynchronous discussion exposed flaws in English. In a long-term study on Korean nationals studying in the United States, Hae Jeong Yu identifies the magnitude of the issue of shame in the U.S. classroom and the tremendous resources required to overcome it enough to successfully complete a graduate program.<sup>7</sup> In Yu’s study, shame and English were inextricably linked together. Yu explicitly states that her own experience with English and shame motivated her study. In particular, she recounts the physical anxiety from class discussions: “In the course of class, I was sweating so badly and I was so nervous that my face got red. My heart pumped, and my tongue became stiff. My shame caused me to be frozen, to become speechless, thoughtless, and powerless. I felt I was nobody.”<sup>8</sup> For Yu, the classroom discussion was a source of neither enrichment nor community but rather a dangerous venue that could expose her English deficiencies. Consequently, she safely chose to avoid participation.

Surprisingly, Yu’s study finds that mastery of English did not reduce the level of shame. She claims, “The Korean students’ shame in English speaking is grounded in a psychological understanding of themselves and others, rather than in their actual English speaking abilities.”<sup>9</sup> This suggests that the issue with asynchronous discussions roots itself in a deeper level associated with identity. Interviews with several international students at George Fox Evangelical Seminary validated Yu’s hypothesis to a certain degree. Even first-generation Asian students who have mastered English at a high level (as evidenced with near-native reading, writing, and speaking fluencies as well as outstanding grades) continue to express feelings of inadequacy and exposure when communicating in English. But overall, the first-generation Asian American students perceived that their gradual mastery of English may have mitigated their own anxieties associated with asynchronous discussions.



## Learning “online” English

The difficulties of learning informal “online” English further exacerbate the potential exposure to shame of the first-generation Asian American student. When completing asynchronous discussion assignments, students typically make their initial posting in some degree of formal expository prose. Consider the following student response to a prompt on the Exodus narrative in a hybrid Hebrew Bible introductory class:

God is portrayed as the one in total control of the drama that is unfolding. Though he allows Moses to argue with him, and says things like, “If they don’t believe you” (4:8), which suggests there’s some element of unknown in the story, God is still seen as the one making the moves. The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is one of the more perplexing parts of the story, but it does reinforce the fact that God will be the deliverer of his people one way or another.<sup>10</sup>

Each of the focus group students could comprehend the basic message of the above posting by sight reading, even without any context. Three of these students were in a probationary status due to not achieving a sufficient TOEFL score during the admissions process, yet they still understood the essential nature of the post. Such a relatively high comprehension to the initial student response is hardly surprising. All of the students in the focus group had at least ten years of rigorous English language training, primarily centered on reading expository prose similar to the initial post.

But whereas the initial posts often read in clear expository prose, the subsequent responses reflected much more colloquial patterns of English. These responses often were written in first-person and used humor both to deflect tension and to draw community intimacy. Consider the following third and fourth responses to the above post:

**Respondent** [third item in thread]: Ha! You just can’t fully buy into the “relational” thing can you?

**Original Poster** [fourth item]: Yeah, Jane\* (my wife) says I’ve been cynical lately :)

In contrast to initial posts, responses often drew on personal experiences, thereby engaging on a more personal level of English prose. This informal use of the English language in subsequent responses carries tremendous benefits within an online environment. Engaging in colloquial talk helps to foster intimacy and builds a sense of community. This practice is especially beneficial for theological education, which by its nature requires communication, perspective, and intellectual safety. Consequently, the language on the discussion boards typically emerges in a casual, conversational tone, which then nurtures an atmosphere of discussion and affirmation. For the native English speaker,

such language is easier and fluid and far less burdensome to read and write than formal expository prose.

But many international students have never studied casual, colloquial English. Asian students spend multiple years beginning in grade school studying English reading and writing. Except for rare instances, however, their own teachers are nonnative speakers and rarely introduce colloquial expressions. When students do learn idiomatic language, they use outdated expressions that are linguistic relics. English education grammars and dictionaries serve as the sources for English learning, with minimal or nonexistent exposure to media and other sources of colloquial English. As a result, this colloquial mode of English is extraordinarily challenging for the international student. Consider the eighth entry in the above online thread:

Not too long ago Len Sweet did a Napkin Scribble podcast on the subject of eternity "One Helluva Napkin Scribble." It's worth a listen.

Whereas every participant of the focus group could identify the initial post, only one of the seven could confidently assess the meaning of this eighth entry. What is a Napkin Scribble? Is it capitalized because it is the name of a person? Why is "Helluva" not in my dictionary? What's a podcast? How can a "Len Sweet" do a "Napkin Scribble?"<sup>11</sup> Even when looking up all of the various lexical components in a dictionary, the array of possible interpretations is bewildering. Through a combination of dictionaries and Google searches, the students were able to collectively find the meaning, but only after considerable effort. The difficulties of constantly having to engage and navigate online English frustrate the first-generation Asian American students.

Such difficulties are hardly surprising with international students, as computer-mediated education largely depends on informal written language. A Korean student observed, "The English that we learned in Korea is very different from the English we need to master at the seminary. Reading textbooks is easy, but reading colloquial English is very difficult. Dictionaries often do not help." One Japanese student who has lived in the United States for the past six years remarked, "I think for most people, it takes thirty minutes for a good posting, but for me it takes over two hours." Interestingly, this student believes that he can accomplish all other tasks of the class at a pace more similar to that of native English-speaking students. Another student earned an A- in a class, but confessed, "It probably takes American students one hour to read all posts [of a given assignment], but the same reading takes three or four hours for me." Although the asynchronous nature of the dialogue allows international students to benefit from having more time to adequately prepare their responses, the focus-group students preferred the face-to-face interaction. They indicated the benefit of nonverbal cues, the ability to interrupt and ask clarification questions, and the intimacy of the live encounter. Therefore, online English almost serves as a third language that the first-generation Asian American student must master in order to successfully complete the virtual components of a theological degree.

## Perceived benefit of asynchronous discussions

But despite the formidable challenge of their honor-shame culture and English struggles, the focus group wholeheartedly embraced the pedagogical use of asynchronous discussions. One student on probationary status due to her lower English abilities stated, "I love all discussions including online discussions." This study posed the following question to the focus group, "What would you rather complete for a weekly assignment: (a) a four-hour written assignment for submission to the professor; (b) four-hour participation in an online forum requiring an initial post and two responses." Five of the seven participants chose the second option. These five claimed that their desire to participate in the online classroom overcame their anxieties with asynchronous discussions.

The preference for online discussion is difficult to reconcile with the vast challenges that first-generation Asian American students face. But the interviewees all expressed an appreciation on the value that asynchronous discussions place on the learning community. All of them progressed through an Asian educational system that emphasizes the authority of the teacher and places the role of the student as a consumer of information.<sup>12</sup> All of them attended highly homogenous educational institutions in their native lands where any "diversity" was an anomaly. Additionally, in Korea, most major seminaries dogmatically defend their own denominational traditions, and consequently, the concept of multidenominational learning communities remains quite foreign. After arriving from such a theological culture, these students quickly recognize that Western theological education sometimes prioritizes the experiences of the greater learning community over the professor. This shared sense of learning serves as a huge benefit to their own theological experiences. All members of the focus group expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn from the rich experiences of their peers from different family backgrounds, diverse denominations, and multifaceted ministry experiences.

In addition to learning from their educational community, the first-generation Asian American students appreciated the opportunities to voice their opinions and share their own experiences with colleagues. Ken Morse's study on asynchronous learning in a multiethnic business course supports this perceived benefit from Asian students.<sup>13</sup> Morse divides an online classroom between a low context learning group comprised of Western backgrounds with English as the primary language of origin, and a high context learning group of various Asian nationalities with English as a secondary language. Morse then surveys the participants in three major categories in comparing online versus face-to-face classrooms: advantages, disadvantages, and overall learning experience. Whereas both groups made similar observations on the disadvantages and overall learning experience, they made vastly different observations for the advantages. Specifically, the high context subgroup perceived that the "ability to say things I think appropriate" served as the prime advantage that online classroom environment can offer. This stands in stark contrast to the Western low context subgroup who best appreciated the student convenience of online education. In addition, members of the high context subgroup pri-

criticized their ability to reflect on their own postings before uploading them, whereas the low context group valued the concept of having others read their post. Morse suggests that this split shows the inward orientation of the high context subgroup concern of “losing face” contrasted with the outward concerns of the low context subgroup that is more interested in “What do others think?”<sup>14</sup> The fact that the two subgroups gave parallel answers for nearly every other section highlights these stark differences.

But what does one make of their difficulties in shame and English? What about their exposure? For all of the students, the embarrassment and stress was very real during their initial exposure to the asynchronous discussion. This initial exposure quickly dissipated, however, when they realized the pedagogical shift from their native higher education experiences. Several specific factors helped to further facilitate this adjustment. Focus-group students quickly pointed out that the first response to their post served as a tremendously empowering moment. Two of them recall reading the words, “Nice post,” for the first time in response to their writing. Although seemingly generic, such a response acknowledged that the Asian American student’s post was not only comprehensible but productive as well. When the “American” students began to interact with the Asian student within the context of asynchronous discussions, the latter viewed himself as a genuine part of a learning community.<sup>15</sup> Thankfully, none of the students ever received a direct response that criticized their English. But the unsolicited mention of this possibility during the focus groups suggests that they were all wary of such a response. Soon after their first online interactions, several of the Asian American students made conscious decisions to embrace these pedagogical tools. One student claimed, “I was so embarrassed [by having to do online posts], but I made a determination to work even harder that I may do well in the discussions.” For this student, the decision had religious implications, recognizing that study time was a gift from God and that he wanted to appreciate this gift. Once they made such a determination, the generally positive responses from students allowed for a rather rapid assimilation of the process.

## **Recommendations**

Overall, the focus group of first-generation Asian students provided helpful information in assessing the use of asynchronous discussions in their theological education. At the outset, it must be emphasized that despite the cultural and language comprehension difficulties, all of these students enjoyed the asynchronous discussion and viewed this innovation as an important tool to enrich their theological education. Such a conclusion should help motivate faculty and administration of seminaries to continue to seek new ways to effectively deliver instruction across cultural boundaries.

From reviewing the first-generation Asian American students’ experiences at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, this study offers three suggestions for theological educators.

### ***Consider the honor-shame barriers***

First, professors should consciously consider the cultural barriers of the honor-shame background in the student and their negative implications. In terms of their initial foray into online discussions, several students used terms such as “nervous, tension, embarrassed, shameful” to describe their own experiences. By fostering care and empathy, professors can help to establish a certain degree of safety for these students that will help to mitigate their challenges. For example, a private email of encouragement from the professor to the struggling international student may greatly help to assuage anxieties and express acknowledgement of the difficulty of studying in a foreign language.<sup>16</sup> In certain cases, professors should recognize that the cultural values within a particular assignment may deeply conflict with a student’s cultural values. In an extreme example, one student refused to participate in an online wiki exercise. Although this student had a high degree of English proficiency and maintained a stellar GPA, he could not get himself to correct other people’s work as the assignment mandated. He cited a differentiation between the culturally “acceptable” task of a mere online response and the “unacceptable” task of fixing someone else’s work. For such cases, a professor may consider whether it is appropriate to give alternative assignments.

### ***Set clear expectations***

Second, professors must set clear expectations. Several students expressed the need for some sort of guide to help acclimate themselves to online pedagogy. For many of these students, they admit that much of this information may have been given during their initial orientation, but this is precisely the moment when their English comprehension is the weakest and their assimilation into the scholastic environment is most overwhelming. Because none of our Asian international students had to navigate online learning in their education experience before coming to seminary, successful communication of the process would be immensely helpful. A simple two-page handout containing a typical prompt and an array of initial posts and responses can give international students a tangible example of expectations. For most of these students, the topic of suggestions opened up greater discussions, signaling that their difficulties transitioning to the asynchronous discussions were merely a subset of their greater difficulties with assimilating into American theological education. Certainly, discussions on this overall process must include adaptation into the learning pedagogy of an online environment.

### ***Encourage students to engage material from their native contexts***

Third, professors should make efforts to create assignments, which allow students to engage the material from their own native contexts. In a study on Korean students participating in online learning, Doo Lim suggests such custom assignments as the single primary recommendation for cross-cultural online learning.<sup>17</sup> He identifies that assignments that incorporate the students’ own experiences greatly enhance student motivation. Such an assignment can potentially fully realize the benefits of an asynchronous discussion. The Asian student can reflect on his or her own contextualization of theology and present

it with confidence as an expert in the native culture. At the same time, the rest of the online class can learn and listen to a student from a contextual background very different from their own. These types of assignments can fully embrace the benefits of cultural diversity within the seminary classroom.

## Conclusions

As with any topic in as nascent a field as online pedagogy, this study suffers from certain limitations. The lack of potential sample size of first-generation Asian Americans makes rigorous survey difficult. As theological institutions continue to implement asynchronous discussions into the theological pedagogy, a statistical sample of critical mass could serve to more scientifically identify these disadvantages, with delimiters according to factors such as specific ethnicity, English fluency, and attitude toward native cultures. All of these issues may contribute to students' abilities to successfully harness asynchronous discussion as a learning tool. Also, out of simplicity, the categories of *Asian American* and *honor-shame* have such multifaceted expressions that any such categorization restricts their truer essence.

Despite these acknowledged limitations, however, I hope that the voices of this focus group have helped to convey some of their struggles and catalyze a deeper sensitivity to their unique needs. Along a wider scope, this study reveals how implicit values within pedagogical innovations can impede the international students that seminaries so greatly want to court. With sustained effort, further technological innovations, such as the incorporation of asynchronous discussions, can continue to bring benefits to the theological enterprise for all students.

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## ENDNOTES

1. For an articulation of the important distinction between distance learning and e-learning, see Sarah Guri-Rosenblit, "'Distance Education' and 'E-Learning': Not the Same Thing," *Higher Education* 49, no. 4 (June 2005): 467–493.
2. For representative articles on asynchronous discussions, consult bibliographic references in Alfred P. Rovai, "Building and Sustaining Community in Asynchronous Learning Networks," *The Internet and Higher Education* 3, no. 4 (2000): 285–297; Alison Black, "The Use of Asynchronous Discussion: Creating a Text of Talk," *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* 5, no. 1 (2005): 5–24; Ken Morse, "Does One Size

Fit All? Exploring Asynchronous Learning in a Multicultural Environment," *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 7, no. 1 (Feb. 2003): 37–55.

3. Barbara Rogoff and Pablo Chavajay, "What's Become of Research on the Cultural Basis of Cognitive Development?," *American Psychologist* 50, no. 10 (Oct. 1995), 859–877.

4. Raymond J. Wlodkowski, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 2.

5. Francis Inki Ha, "Shame in Asian and Western Cultures," *American Behavioral Scientist* 38, no. 8 (1995): 1114–1131; Anthony J. Marsella, Michael D. Murray, and Charles Golden, "Ethnic Variations in the Phenomenology of Emotions: I. Shame," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 5, no. 3 (1974): 312–328.

6. Ha, "Shame in Asian and Western Cultures," 1115–1116.

7. Hae Jeong Yu, "My Shame is My English: Understanding Korean Students' Shame in English Speaking" (PhD dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2007).

8. *Ibid.*, 2.

9. *Ibid.*, v.

10. The examples of asynchronous postings arise from an introductory Hebrew Bible class, delivered in hybrid format. They all are verbatim reproductions with the exception of the names, to preserve anonymity.

11. All of the international students easily identified the relatively difficult word *eternity*. Incidentally, the fact that *Sweet* typically functions as a common adjective, but here serves as a proper name, adds to the interpretive complexity.

12. This study does not intend to demean such a system. I, myself, completed my Master of Divinity degree in Korea, and I recognize many of the benefits of such a traditional educational program. For example, I had to thoroughly answer the question, "Describe Karl Barth's concept of revelation," but I never had to address the question, "What do you think of Karl Barth's concept of revelation?" Seminary students too often jump to the second question, before they can adequately answer the first!

13. The online classroom was conducted entirely through the use of asynchronous discussions. Morse, "Does One Size Fit All?" 37–55.

14. *Ibid.*, 47.

15. One of the students, though, noted that the intimacy within the online environment is not necessarily achieved in the face-to-face classroom.

16. Such an email could even offer grading leniency over the issue of grammar on online posts. Because most asynchronous discussion grading rubrics have a section on proper grammar, these standards generate considerable anxiety among first-generation Asian American students.

17. Doo Hun Lim, "Cross Cultural Differences in Online Learning Motivation," *Educational Media International* 41, no. 2 (Jan. 2004): 163–175. In addition, Ling Thompson and Heng-Yu Ku incorporate this strategy among Chinese e-learners. Ling Thompson and Heng-Yu Ku, "Chinese Graduate Students' Experiences and Attitudes toward Online Learning," *Educational Media International* 42, no. 1 (March 2005): 33–47.





# CORE: An Evolving Initiative

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*The work of the Committee on Race and Ethnicity in Theological Education has been evolving since its original appearance in 1978 as the Committee on Underrepresented Constituencies. The initiative began as an effort to encourage inclusiveness in institutional and educational standards. In the ensuing decades, it has responded to the changing needs of the communities it was intended to serve by expanding its scope and shifting its focus, from curricular change in the 1980s, to the lived experiences of racial/ethnic individuals in theological education in the 1990s, to institutional capacity building in the new millennium.*

**A**TS work supporting racial/ethnic faculty and administrators over the past decade has been highly valued by the racial/ethnic participants in this programming. Each time the program is evaluated, the findings from those in attendance have been the same: the experience has been meaningful, and more is needed. Past programming has met needs for affiliation and support that few other events have provided for racial/ethnic faculty and administrators in member schools. While we know that these efforts have been appreciated by those faculty and administrators in attendance, we are not as well-informed of the effect these conferences have had on the environment for African American, Asian/Asian North American, and Latino/a faculty, administrators, and students in theological education. Put another way, while the conferences have been highly valued by participants, it remains to be seen whether this programming has helped to build institutional capacity on behalf of the racial/ethnic constituencies it was designed to serve.

## History

The Committee on Race and Ethnicity in Theological Education (CORE), originally named the Committee on Underrepresented Constituencies (URC), began in 1978 to provide leadership in the development and implementation of programming to support, educate, nurture, and enhance racial/ethnic leadership in theological schools while simultaneously working with the broader community to address issues raised by racial and cultural diversity in the church, theological education, and society.

## Goals

Between 1978 and 1982, the major tasks of the committee revolved around the review and monitoring of standards and procedures intended to encourage social, cultural, and gender inclusiveness in institutional and educational standards. Clearly, as was true with the Women in Leadership program, the

Committee on Race and Ethnicity has similarly progressed through a variety of phases over the years.

## **Programs**

### ***Phase I (1978–1990)***

During the first stage of programming for racial/ethnic constituencies, the committee began to identify the need to make instructional programs more applicable for the communities they were intended to serve. This was the major impetus for workshops at the time and led to an expansion of the URC mandate to include programmatic concerns. The aim was to investigate the potential for inclusiveness in the theological ministerial curriculum, and the program focused its objective on an exploration of the content and resources of multicultural learning in selected disciplines.

Looking ahead to the future, the committee identified the following as the major concerns facing underrepresented constituencies in theological education:

1. Faculty development
2. The role of women
3. Development of deans and presidents
4. Recruitment of underrepresented students
5. Curricular change
6. Nonracial/nonethnic faculty development
7. Development of board members

The committee viewed its mandate as expanding from one of advisement to one of program development in the future.

### ***Phase II (1991–1999)***

By the time ATS had moved into the second phase of work with underrepresented constituencies, the committee had begun to think less about curricular change and more about the lived experiences of racial/ethnic groups in theological education. Issues of recruitment, retention, and leadership development became recurring themes at each of the annual events. ATS Executive Director James Waits convened four consultations with specific populations to discuss the problems of each group's underrepresentation in theological education. The consultations were designed to generate concrete strategies that the Association might take toward a broader inclusiveness among its member schools. The meetings were held with African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and women leaders and focused on four basic questions:

1. How can the presence of racial/ethnic persons and women within ATS schools be increased?
2. What kinds of support can the Association offer to underrepresented groups in theological education?
3. With limited resources, how should Association resources be focused in this area?

4. What three or four specific goals could ATS establish to address the problem through the URC?

### ***Phase III (2000–2004)***

As the decade changed and we moved into a new millennium, so, too, did the work of the Committee on Underrepresented Constituencies change and evolve in significant ways. In March 2000, ATS redoubled its work in the area of race and ethnicity in theological education by convening the first “Consultation of Racial/Ethnic Members of ATS Committees.” Six committee members and three ATS staff met, and in their proposal to the Executive Committee (the forerunner to the ATS Board of Directors), five areas of concern emerged:

1. The name Committee on Underrepresented Constituencies should be changed to the Committee on Race and Ethnicity in Theological Education to reflect the committee’s work, thus broadening the concerns beyond *persons* to include *practices*.
2. The purpose of the committee should be expanded beyond advocacy to include meeting annually to plan programs for leadership development of racial/ethnic persons as well as programs for the nurture and support of racial/ethnic persons in ATS schools.
3. Data should be collected on the hiring, retention, and promotion of racial/ethnic persons at ATS member schools.
4. The committee should emphasize mentoring by and for racial/ethnic persons to ensure their retention and enhance their well-being.
5. The issue of race and ethnicity should be addressed throughout the work of all ATS committees and leadership education programs and not limited to the agenda of a single committee.

It was during this phase of work that the ATS *Diversity Folio* was published, marking the beginning of a broader publication agenda for the sharing of strategies and approaches designed to serve target populations.

### ***Phase IV (2005–2008)***

In 2007 the ATS Leadership Education staff hosted an Asian/Asian North American Consultation titled “Effective Theological Education for Asian/Asian North American Seminarians.” What made this event unique was a shift in the format and paradigm for the development of CORE’s annual events. This new format—one that, while continuing some of the prior emphases, was designed to address the issues of institutional skill—was a first attempt to work deliberately toward capacity building within ATS member schools. Planning committee members identified four issues that they felt needed consideration in the theological education of Asian/Asian North American students:

1. Asian North American congregations, parishes, and their communities;
2. Intergenerational issues;
3. Asian gender dynamics in North American classrooms; and
4. Educational assets and stereotypical deficits that Asian/Asian North American students bring to theological education.

The data gathered at this consultation will allow ATS to prepare a set of guidelines for member schools regarding the agreed-upon educational approaches and strategies that will enhance the theological education of Asian/Asian North American seminary students in specific and all CORE constituencies in general.

***Phase V (2009–2013)***

The work ATS has undertaken for the 2009–2013 grant cycle titled “Preparing for 2040: Enhancing Capacity to Educate and Minister in a Multiracial World” represents a shift in strategy. Moving from the previous emphasis on offering support to individual racial/ethnic faculty and administrators, developing networks of racial/ethnic peers across schools, and gathering information about the needs of racial/ethnic populations, the new strategy emphasises the work of building the institutional capacity to hire, retain, and support racial/ethnic faculty and administrators and to educate all students more effectively for ministry in an increasingly multiracial society. Enhancing capacity of schools in any area requires institutional leadership and allegiance and takes institutional effort over time. During the next four years, ATS will work with teams from a minimum of thirty-six schools on enhancing institutional capacity to educate for ministry in a multiracial world.

The significance of building institutional capacity has grown in importance as the percentage of racial and ethnic students in ATS member schools has increased, mirroring the increase in the percentage of racial/ethnic persons in North America. Indeed, this constituency is the fastest growing population in theological education, with racial/ethnic students comprising approximately 34 percent of total enrollment in theological schools in 2007.

In an August 2008 report presented by the Brookings Institution, William H. Frey, Senior Fellow in the Metropolitan Policy Program, forwarded the following prediction:

The Census Bureau’s new projections through 2050 portend a more accelerated transformation of the nation’s population on race-ethnic dimensions than was previously supposed. These new projections show that the minority majority tipping point—the year when the white population dips to below half of the total—will occur in 2042, eight years sooner than in the Bureau’s projections just four years ago.<sup>1</sup>

While the number is different in Canada, the direction is the same. North American demographics are changing much faster than was anticipated a decade ago when ATS began the previous cycle of work on race and ethnicity. The missional future of theological schools rests, in part, in their attending to this major demographic transition.

ATS will invite four cohorts of nine schools each to participate in a series of two conferences and engage in some institutional work between them. Each cohort will consist of a team of three persons from each school, which must include the president and/or dean. The initial conference will have two major elements. The first will be content presentations about shifting demo-

graphic realities and effective strategies used in other institutions. The second will be work with a coach on the analysis of individual institutional contexts and goals and development of a *process* to address diversity within individual institutions. Potential points of entry to these process discussions include faculty culture; teaching and learning, or understanding educational efforts in the contexts of race and ethnicity; conflict resolution; and international student presence. Each school team will identify an area of work that holds greatest promise, develop an action plan, and pursue that plan following the conference. Each cohort of schools will then meet again two years after the first conference to assess how the work is proceeding and explore other relevant issues. One coach will work with three schools and will initiate contact before the first conference, between the first and second conferences, and following the second conference. As the teams begin to develop strategies, ATS will develop ways to make their learning available to other schools.

The goals of this conference design are as follows:

1. Institutional leaders will be supported in their efforts to increase the capacity of schools to educate students for ministry in a multiracial world.
2. Schools will develop increased educational skill in their efforts with racial/ethnic students, with particular attention to the ministry contexts in which they will serve (including predominantly racial/ethnic settings, multiracial settings, and predominantly white settings).
3. Schools will develop increased educational skill in working with white students to increase their ability to work in transracial ministry settings.

## Conclusions

The Association of Theological Schools has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to the work of the Committee on Race and Ethnicity. Conferences, consultations, and workshops have supported and strengthened racial/ethnic faculty and administrators for many of the challenges that they encountered in their professional capacities. These supportive elements, however, have not always translated into an enhanced capacity to educate in an increasingly multiracial world.

Institutional leaders must work to become more fully aware of the challenges that will confront them as they prepare their students for ministry in a multiracial society. Fumitaka Matsuoka states in his book titled *The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society* that

[This] inquiry seeks to move away from the divisive politics of race toward a responsible and just citizenry and peoplehood that respects shared values and differences and ultimately affirms the root form of humanity: basic relatedness one to another. Envisioning such a “peoplehood” is a necessary theological task for today. The challenge is how to shape our society in a way that may reconfigure the racial differences that have long divided this nation.<sup>2</sup>

As we move rapidly into this new millennium, during which currently underrepresented populations will move from minority to majority status, it becomes critical for leaders in theological education to seek solutions to this dilemma, think carefully about how these demographic changes will affect their institutions, and plan accordingly.

*Janice Edwards-Armstrong is director, leadership education for The Association of Theological Schools.*

ENDNOTES

1. William H. Frey, "The Census Projects Minority Surge." (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, August 18, 2008). Accessed online at [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0818\\_census\\_frey.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0818_census_frey.aspx).
2. Fumitaka Matsuoka, *The Color of Faith: Building Community in a Multiracial Society* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1998), 5.

## ***Theological Education* Submission Guidelines**

*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.

### **Format of the Journal: Theme Focus and Open Forum**

The **theme focus** section of the journal contains articles that have been **solicited** by the editors or the editorial board. These articles address current topics and issues in theological education, identified areas of the Association's work, and/or reports of work undertaken by ATS projects.

**Unsolicited** submissions are generally considered for publication in the **open forum** section. These articles may focus on any of a variety of subjects related to graduate, professional theological education in North America. The open forum may also include articles drawn from presentations at ATS leadership education events and other Association venues in order to make them more widely available.

### **Submission Guidelines**

*Theological Education* invites submissions of articles that are consistent with the journal's purposes as enumerated in its mission statement. Unsolicited submissions are reviewed by at least two members of the editorial board, who make recommendations to the editors regarding their publication. The editorial board will not consider articles that are being submitted simultaneously to other publications.

1. Recommended length of articles is 3,750 words (approximately 15 double-spaced pages).
2. Follow *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed., for style and formatting, using one-inch margins, left justification, and endnotes. Convert footnotes to endnotes.
3. Write in the third-person form when possible.
4. If quoting Scripture, include the Bible translation with each reference.
5. The *American Heritage Dictionary* and the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* are the references for preferred spellings.
6. Provide a paragraph abstract of approximately 80 words at the beginning of the article.
7. 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).
8. Submissions should be emailed to the managing editor, Eliza Smith Brown, at [brown@ats.edu](mailto:brown@ats.edu).

**Responses** to prior articles are encouraged and are published at the discretion of the editors. The suggested length for a reader response is 1,500 words; responses may be edited for length.

### **Author's Checklist**

1. Does the article contribute significantly to discourse about theological education?
2. Does the article represent new ideas or experiences that colleagues at other theological schools can incorporate into their teaching or administration?
3. Will the article spark useful debate on the topic?
4. Does the article have a clear focus, and are the arguments well-developed?
5. Does the article make accurate use of the data available from ATS and other sources?
6. Does the article conform to the Submission Guidelines listed above?

