

Theological Education

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Dancing a Cosmic Prayer: Creativity, Collaboration, and Spiritlinking in Women’s Leadership

Sharon Henderson Callahan



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The Commission on Accrediting

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DANIEL O. ALESHIRE
STEPHEN R. GRAHAM
ELIZA SMITH BROWN
LINDA D. TROSTLE

Executive Editor
Editor
Managing Editor
Assistant Editor

For subscription information or to order
additional copies or selected back issues,
please contact the Association.

Email: horton@ats.edu

Website: www.ats.edu

Phone: 412-788-6505

Fax: 412-788-6510

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Continuing the Conversation

Theological Education invites responses, of up to 1,500 words, to articles published in the journal in order to foster conversation among its readers. Reader responses may be emailed to editors@ats.edu. Responses are published at the discretion of the editors and may be edited for length.

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Editor's Introduction

Stephen R. Graham

To say that theological education and theological schools are changing is to risk a commonplace and to pile on the frustration felt by those who lead theological schools. In many ways, theological schools reflect the climate of the ecology in which they grow. Theological schools exist to serve the church, and the church in North America is changing rapidly and significantly. Leaders struggle to understand the direction and impact of the changes they experience constantly in congregations and denominational offices. In addition, the work of theological schools is largely patterned after higher education, an industry in the midst of unprecedented change. Diagnosing and identifying areas of change is relatively clear and easy. Prescribing remedies is much harder. A recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on a meeting of “heavy hitters” in higher education who gave a clear and discouraging message about challenges faced by institutions of higher education: declining revenues, especially for state-funded institutions as states cut budgets; higher numbers of marginally qualified students; higher costs; resistance to tuition increases; rigid systems and structures that hamper institutional agility; and competition weighted in favor of those few schools enjoying abundant resources. They all called for significant change in the way schools do their work. When pressed by a questioner from the audience “to give one example of transformative change they would like to see enacted,” however, “most of the panelists demurred,” with one “finally volunteering, ‘More vibrant, multidisciplinary projects for students and faculty.’”¹ So much for the “heavy hitters!”

This issue of *Theological Education* identifies and analyzes some of the challenges facing theological schools and offers some examples of substantive engagement with the challenges in particular settings. Daniel Aleshire offers his reflections on a particular aspect of the process of revising the Standards of Accreditation that prompted extensive and, for many, painful debate at the ATS/COA Biennial Meeting in 2010. Aleshire addresses what he called “the tensest discussion in two decades” that roiled the usually calm waters of that gathering of administrators from member schools. Normally marked for its collegiality and harmony, the Biennial Meeting of 2010, struggled to come to terms with the issue of what language should be used in the standards about the leadership of women in member schools. Aleshire offers his reflections on the underlying issues and implications of the wording.

Three articles come from the spring 2011 meeting of the Chief Academic Officers Society of the Association. Nick Carter, president of Andover Newton Theological School presented “Adaptive Leadership: Planning in a Time of Transition,” a paper describing leadership from his perspective as the chief executive officer of that school. Linda Cannell addressed the same topic from the perspective of a chief academic officer, her position at North Park Theological Seminary. Randy MacFarland, provost/dean of Denver Seminary, led a plenary workshop on changes related to the “bread and butter” academic degree

of nearly all ATS member schools, "MDiv: Still the 'Gold Standard' Degree?" That such a question need even be asked signals the fundamental character of the changes facing theological schools as they seek to serve the church.

In addition, two experienced theological educators offer their reflections on the past, present, and future of theological education. Glenn T. Miller, long-time professor and dean at Bangor Theological Seminary and author of two comprehensive volumes on the history of American Protestant theological education, explores in his "departure lecture" from the seminary the question of whether seminaries are needed any longer in a secular age. Miller poses this question, particularly in light of increasingly discussed and explored "alternative forms of ministerial preparation." Alice Hunt, installed in 2008 as president of Chicago Theological Seminary, reflects on Providence and the presidency in her inaugural sermon on "Waiting for a Divine Bailout: Theological Education for Today and Tomorrow." From their different vantage points, these educators agree that seminary education is indeed necessary but that its forms and practices will be quite different from those to which we have become accustomed. Daniel Aleshire encapsulates the conversation on the future of the theological education with his plenary address at the 2010 ATS/COA Biennial Meeting. He sketches changes in North American religion and the resulting adaptations, both current adaptations and possible changes in the future, by theological schools and the institutions that serve them, including The Association of Theological Schools.

The final article is the single open forum contribution to this issue. Sharon Henderson Callahan offers her insights on women's leadership through three short stories identifying the concepts of creativity, collaboration, and "spirit-linking," as particularly helpful and fitting to women in leadership roles.

We believe this issue contains valuable resources for those who serve in theological schools as they seek to fulfill their schools' missions of service and leadership within the church and the larger world.

ENDNOTE

1. Karin Fischer, "At Forum on the Future, Leaders Dissect What Ails Higher Education Today," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 12, 2011), <http://chronicle.com/article/At-Forum-on-the-Future/130087/>.

Deconstructing the Gender Issue in the 2010 Standards of Accreditation

Daniel O. Aleshire

The Association of Theological Schools

This essay reflects primarily on the issue of diversity and the discussion at the 2010 Biennial Meeting regarding the adoption of what is now section 2.6 of ATS Commission Standard 2, Institutional Integrity. The conversation related to this accrediting standard was the tensest discussion in two decades, according to Aleshire, and led to a formal statement of protest by some of the women in attendance. This report reviews ATS history on this issue, describes the author's perceptions regarding the positions that were argued at the Biennial Meeting, and reflects on what the author understands to be the fundamental underlying issue for the Commission on Accrediting.

History

In 1978 ATS adopted its first statement about women in the accrediting standards. It followed the adoption of a policy statement on women in theological education several years earlier. This initial accrediting statement was as follows:

The Association of Theological Schools has adopted two documents which are related to accreditation matters: "Ethical Guidelines for Seminaries and Seminary Clusters" and "Goals and Guidelines for Women in Theological Schools." Each is concerned with such issues as the employment and/or education of racial and linguistic minorities and women. It is expected that each institution seeking accreditation or its reaffirmation should give evidence of appropriate sensitivity to the issues identified in these statements. Self-studies should contain such data, and the accrediting teams and the Commission on Accrediting will normally consider them in the exercise of their responsibilities.¹

In 1984 the basic 1978 text was altered as follows (indicated in *italics* for additions and ~~striketrough~~ for deletions):

The Association of Theological Schools has adopted two documents which are related to accreditation matters: "Ethical Guidelines for Seminaries and Seminary Clusters" and "Goals and Guidelines for Women in Theological Schools." Each is concerned with such issues as the employment and/or education of racial and linguistic minorities and women.

The importance of these issues is also demonstrated by their frequent appearance within these standards. It is expected that Each institution seeking accreditation or its reaffirmation should shall give evidence of appropriate attention and sensitivity to these concerns and to the issues identified in these statements, including efforts at attaining an adequate presence of such persons, within the definitions established in the statement of institutional mission. Self-studies should contain such data, sections on "Responsiveness to Minority and Women's Concerns," and accrediting teams and the Commission on Accrediting will normally consider them in the exercise of their responsibilities.²

The 1984 statement remained in effect until the comprehensive redevelopment of the standards in 1996. At that time the standard was revised to the following:

Integrity in theological education includes institutional and educational practices that promote awareness of the diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture widely present in North America. Schools shall seek to enhance participation of persons of racial/ethnic minorities in institutional life. According to its stated purpose, the school shall seek to address the concerns of women and to increase their participation in theological education. In all cases, schools shall seek to assist students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in changing cultural and racially diverse settings.³

In the most recent review of the accrediting standards, the Board of Commissioners brought to the 2010 Biennial Meeting the following revision of the statement on women:

While member schools have a variety of stated purposes and theological commitments, each school shall seek to increase the participation and leadership of women in theological education.⁴

As you will note, all previous statements on women in theological education were framed in terms of the schools' stated missions or purposes. The statement proposed at the 2010 meeting acknowledged that there are different missions and theological commitments but was constructed in such a way that these differing commitments did not have a moderating impact on the accrediting requirement that "each school shall seek to increase the participation and leadership of women in theological education." This proposal differed from previous statements in two ways: (1) it did not, at least linguistically, allow for theological commitment to modify the schools' efforts, and (2) it shifted the requirement from the more generic "schools shall" to more targeted language, "each school shall."

The proposed language sparked response from some schools when the draft was circulated, and representatives from these and other schools then raised the question about the intent of the standards during the open hearings. They expressed the desire that the theological language be reintroduced in a way that would moderate the interpretation of this standard.

After significant discussions and procedural issues related to rules of order, the final wording that member schools adopted and that now appears in the General Institutional Standards reads as follows:

2.6 In their institutional and educational practices, theological schools shall promote the participation and leadership of women in theological education within the framework of each school's stated purposes and theological commitments. Schools shall assist all students in gaining the particular knowledge, appreciation, and openness needed to live and practice ministry effectively in diverse settings.⁵

The wording, as adopted, reflects the dual focus that ATS has maintained since 1978 to advance the participation of women in theological education *and* to protect theological confession. The standard thus continues elements that have been part of the standard, but I want to focus on what I perceived as the undercurrent of the discussion at the 2010 Biennial Meeting.

The opposing positions in the discussion

If I heard correctly during the business sessions and informally around them, the opposing positions could be characterized in the following way.

The women present, and the men who spoke to the statement as originally proposed by the Board of Commissioners, think that it is time for ATS to take a stance toward women in theological education that does not provide a theological means for schools to excuse themselves from serious efforts related to gender inclusion. To do less than that is unjust if not oppressive, disenfranchises women, and limits the talent that theological schools need in order to accomplish their missions. Seminaries are schools, not churches, and they should be accredited in ways that foster inclusion, not exclusion. Even though schools are related to church bodies or ecclesial constituencies that make gender differentiations for religious leaders, the schools need not and perhaps should not do the same. The inclusion of a theological reason for excluding women from certain positions is no more acceptable than a theological reason to exclude persons on the basis of race or ethnicity. Some women at the meeting experienced the discussion as an attack on their identity and fitness to be involved in theological education, and what others saw as a theological argument was, for them, an argument about fundamental identity.

The men who spoke on behalf of the standard that was finally adopted (everyone who spoke for the language that was finally adopted was male) either personally hold or are related to ecclesial or other constituencies that hold biblical or theological commitments that exclude women from certain

forms of religious leadership. Many of these schools have close connections to church bodies that directly influence faculty appointment and tenure decisions as well as the election of board members. They interpreted the language as it was initially proposed as disenfranchising them from participation in the Association and a potential threat to their accreditation in the Commission. Representatives from these schools were not interested in imposing their theological commitments on other schools; they did not want the theological confession of the community with which they were associated to become a barrier to accreditation by the Commission on Accrediting.

In many ways, the discussion was between mainline and evangelical Protestants. Almost every person speaking in favor of the language as originally proposed was mainline Protestant, and almost everyone who spoke to the language that was finally adopted was evangelical Protestant. In the fall of 2009, there were sixty-one member schools who had more women enrolled in the MDiv program than men, and of those schools, fifty-seven were mainline Protestant, one was evangelical Protestant, and three were Roman Catholic. (These Roman Catholic schools either do not offer the MDiv for priestly formation or offer both a priestly formation and a lay formation MDiv.) The discussion was primarily a mainline-evangelical discussion, and those voting in favor of the final language, as best I could tell looking across the room, were evangelical Protestants, Roman Catholics, and mainline Protestants who I assumed agreed with the compromise and wanted to move on in the meeting. More than most votes at an ATS meeting, this one reflected the different theological centers of gravity in the diverse communities present in the Association. The discussion and vote reflected theological differences more than differences regarding educational practices.

The underlying issue: associating the theologically unthinkable and theological confession

If my analysis is correct, the underlying issue at the Biennial Meeting was about avoiding the theologically unthinkable, on the one hand, and protecting theological confession, on the other. For some, granting schools the right to exclude women from roles in theological education is unthinkable, even if the confession of the religious community to which the school is related places gender restrictions on religious leadership. For those holding the second position, granting privilege for confessional commitments is fundamentally necessary for their participation in any organization. One group thinks that the Commission standards should take a stand that is reasonable and theologically defensible and quite likely past due. The other group thinks that it can participate in the Commission only if the organization truly honors its confessional community. If forced to choose between theological confession and accreditation in the Commission, these schools will choose theological confession. By my estimate, about 100 schools in ATS either have institutional policies required by their ecclesial communities (i.e., canon law or a binding denominational confessional statement) or denominational practices that limit the participation of women (i.e., only ordained elders can serve on the board,

and the denomination ordains only men, or the denomination does not ordain women for ministerial leadership and wants persons teaching in the seminary who are either ordained or eligible for ordination in the denomination). The question raised for me at the Biennial Meeting is this: Can these two kinds of schools, both with deep theological commitments and a sense of rightness, agree to associate with one another in an accrediting body?

Can ATS/COA hold theologically diverse groups together for the sake of “improvement and enhancement of theological schools”? Obviously, church bodies have not been able to hold differing theological communities together for the sake of common communion. Some denominations with schools in the Commission were formed, in part, because of conflicting views about the ordination of women. I often hear people comment that ATS is the most religiously diverse organization in which they participate. The conversation at the last Biennial Meeting reflected, at least for me, a strain on the willingness of diverse groups to associate in one organization. As a result, I experienced the discussion as an organizational issue and, at times, an organizationally threatening one.

Ecumenical agencies seem to take one of two forms. The first is with groups like the NCC or NAE that are theologically based but negotiate theological differences by identifying theological commitments on which they must agree while allowing disagreement on others. The second is with groups that concentrate on a common mission or task and allow great theological differences to exist—like Bread for the World or World Vision. I had assumed that ATS/COA was the second kind of organization, but the discussions at the Biennial Meeting issued a challenge to that assumption. Does the Commission have the organizational sinew to hold an increasingly diverse community of schools together? The diversity of schools that hold Commission membership is increasing, not decreasing, and the center of gravity has passed from main-line Protestant to evangelical and Roman Catholic. Neither of these latter two groups is monolithic; they vary on their understandings of women in theological education and in the church. However, all of the confessional opposition to women in leadership in theological education is located in these two groups.

I have thought a great deal about the value statements that the ATS Board of Directors adopted in 2007 to guide the work of the Association. They are published each year in the ATS Work Plan and warrant consideration in the context of this reflection. The board adopted four values:

- **Diversity**—ATS values the different expressions of faith that are represented by member schools and seeks to respect the varying understandings of theology, polity, religious leadership, and social commitments.
- **Quality and Improvement**—ATS schools value quality in the practice of ministry and in educational practices. Quality is always linked to improvement; even schools that have achieved a high degree of quality can improve. The Association encourages schools to advance in quality.
- **Collegiality**—ATS values the contributions that schools make to one another. Regardless of differences in theological perspective, organizational complexity, or institutional size, ATS schools, as peer institutions,

can learn from one another, cooperate on common tasks that benefit the broader community of theological schools, and hold themselves accountable to common practices and quality.

- **Leadership**—ATS values leadership and considers it essential for schools to attain their missions. ATS is committed to developing the skills and capacities of administrators, faculties, and boards of member schools.

In addition to these core values, the Association values formal education for ministerial leadership and advocates on behalf of its benefits for religious leaders, religious institutions, and the work of religion in broader publics; values justice in society and institutions and seeks to embody justice in its organizational life; values accountability for student learning; and both values and advocates for quality in the practice of ministry.

It could be argued that the conflict at the Biennial Meeting is internal to the values. Does the organization hold primarily to “diversity”—which in the first core value includes diversity of religious leadership—or to “justice in society and institutions” as indicated in the last paragraph? The values as adopted by the ATS Board of Directors give privilege of place and emphasis on diversity.

These values have never been adopted by the member schools or by the Board of Commissioners, and if they were, additional values would need to be considered because of the unique function of accreditation. Diversity is one thing in the programming and organizational structure of the Association, but it is another in an accrediting body because accreditation imposes normative expectations on all members, regardless of their location in the array of diversity among the schools. Do Commission standards honor diversity of religious practice, and if so, what disciplines must be maintained to ensure freedom of institutional identity within a wide diversity? How is diversity modified by the norm-setting work of accreditation? The membership of the Commission is likely to become even more diverse; how can the Commission accredit effectively with even greater religious diversity? These might be interesting questions for the board to consider as it works on recommendations for changes to the degree program standards during this biennium.

Daniel O. Aleshire is executive director of The Association of Theological Schools. This essay has been adapted from his report to the ATS Board of Directors and Board of Commissioners.

ENDNOTES

1. ATS/COA Standards of Accreditation, 1978–1983.
2. The Association of Theological Schools, “General Institutional Standards,” Standard 2, in *Bulletin* 36, part 6-Biennial Meeting (Vandalia, OH: ATS, 1984), 140.
3. ATS/COA Standards of Accreditation, 1996–2009.
4. The Association of Theological Schools, “Proposed Changes to General Institutional Standards 1 through 9,” *47th Biennial Meeting* (Pittsburgh, PA: ATS, 2010), 45.
5. The Association of Theological Schools, “General Institutional Standards,” Standard 2, section 2.6, in *Bulletin*, part 1 (Pittsburgh, PA: ATS, 2010), 79.

Adaptive Leadership: Planning in a Time of Transition

Nick Carter

Andover Newton Theological School

This address to chief academic officers seeks to explore the role of seminary leadership in a time of transition. After establishing a biblical reference point from the book of Numbers, the author develops the concept of adaptive leadership as it applies in the context of theological education. Key concepts of leadership and the “hidden curriculum” in seminaries, self-change among leaders, the necessity of creating a sense of urgency, and the underlying assumptions in planning and change-leadership are explored.

Numbers 11:24–29 is one of the many fascinating and memorable stories of Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness and is particularly appropriate when addressing times of transition. Here we find the people of Israel in the most significant transition in their history—the defining moment for them as a nation. They have followed their charismatic leader into the wilderness with a vision of freedom and the Promised Land, only to find that the long journey has careened between flashes of inspiration and recurring confusion, hardship, and unending challenges. They have doubted Moses, doubted God, and doubted the entire trip. They have complained loudly and have even thought that returning to Egypt held better prospects than advancing to the new land they were promised. Their complaints and open resistance weigh heavily on Moses. Finally, feeling overwhelmed and exasperated, he turns to God for help. God (who had clearly read Peter Drucker) teaches Moses about delegating authority by summoning the seventy elders and imparting upon them the same Spirit that was upon Moses.

If we go beyond the obvious management sermon, there is another, more interesting story here. There are two otherwise obscure fellows, Eldad and Medad, who are invited to the conference of the seventy. They have registered and gotten their name tags and are expected to attend the keynote address with God and Moses, but they decide to skip out and stay in the camp. Despite playing hooky, they get the power of the Spirit anyway and feel called to begin prophesying right there in the camp.

A young lad spies this and runs away to squeal on them to Moses. Joshua, Moses’s right-hand man, is present to hear the story and, being the good rule follower, joins in asking Moses to condemn the two guys who didn’t follow the rules.

Moses surprises them all when he not only refuses to condemn Eldad and Medad but also cries out, “Would that all God’s people were prophets!” In essence he says to them: Would that all this camp of whiners and complainers, small thinkers, backward lookers, and keepers of jealousies and little rivalries, understand the incredible thing that God is doing in our midst! You people yearn to return to the Egypt you have known, but you are blind to what you

need to learn and what lies ahead of you. God's spirit has been placed upon those who will help you differentiate the small from the grand, from what you were to what you will become. I don't care if they came to the meeting or not, they surely got the message! With what God has in mind we need more of these rule breakers, not fewer!

This is the quintessential lesson in both the challenges and the opportunities of transitional leadership.

As many of you know, Ron Heifetz has written compellingly about leadership in a time of change.¹ In fact, I have heard him more than once refer specifically to the Jews' wilderness experience as a prime example of this challenge.

Heifetz draws a helpful distinction between what he calls *technical change* and *adaptive change*. Technical change, he says, involves an "expert" orientation that seeks solutions to problems, assuming the answers are within our reach. (My sink is leaking, so I go to the plumber; I have a pain, so I go to the doctor.) Adaptive change, however, recognizes that we are in an entirely new situation, where little of our previous experience applies; it therefore asks us to address problems for which we don't yet know the answers. An expert or even a team of experts is not going to help; these are problems that require new insights and new discoveries that are born of new experiments. This adaptive, or transformative, orientation is not merely envisioning a rosy alternative future; it is discerning and learning to live with hard new realities and re-envisioning how we function amid things that can't be changed. It means charting a new course, or completely redesigning our organizations, or even thinking differently about how we lead. As a result, adaptive change can be convulsive for an institution because it can challenge our unspoken core assumptions and force us to clarify our values in light of a dramatically different context. The radical nature of this kind of change is why it is often resisted, deflected, or only partially addressed. Because it is so hard—even overwhelming at times—and feels like a true wilderness experience, adaptive change often goes unaddressed. Despite professions of doing things differently, we methodically move through envisioning new ideas or strategic planning processes with a *Cliff Notes* mentality, outlining new goals and objectives, quoting key sections of the text, submitting our strategic book report, and declaring victory, but never coming to grips with the real issues. This failure is why so many strategic plans are deemed irrelevant the day they are published and end up in a forgotten file in a forgotten drawer: they don't address the most fundamental questions and adaptive challenges the school is facing.

That's why what most schools do is really long-range planning, not strategic planning.

It is critical that we learn to differentiate between *long-range planning* and *transformative* or *adaptive planning*. If your school or organization has decided that you are basically in a good place, that your business model works, and that the core assumptions of your operations and your curriculum are accurate, then the plans you develop are largely projections from where you are into the future. As a result, 90 to 95 percent of what you are doing now will continue into the future. This isn't a transformative plan; it is a long-range plan. It isn't going to bring any fundamental change to your institution. It is

fine if you are fine. But if you are not so fine, then long-range planning may be no more than a nice set of funeral clothes.

In stark contrast is transformative (or adaptive) planning. This kind of planning calls for a “genesis moment.” It is a process of envisioning a new future and designing the means to create that future. Only here, in my mind, does true strategic planning take place, because it is a process that is oriented to significant change or enabling you to adapt to significantly changed realities. It means that not only will you be doing new things, but that some of the things you do now you are likely to stop doing. I find it a telling mark of most “strategic” plans that there is little that they propose to STOP doing; they are filled with new things that they propose to pile atop what they are already doing—thus laying the seeds for the plan’s failure in its very construction. If we can’t stop doing much of what we are doing now, the plan cannot be terribly strategic. True strategic planning is a process that gives us a chance to break free from our school’s *institutional physics*, because it starts with an orientation not to where we have been but rather to where we seek to be. Not Egypt, but the Promised Land.

We have to have the courage to keep asking whether our planning is really oriented to the deep adaptive challenges we face. If our basic business model is broken, are some new courses, a new endowed chair, or a new building going to “fix” it? If two-thirds of our graduates can no longer expect to find a full-time job with benefits in pastoral ministry, does revising our curriculum without considering this make sense? If the Internet is birthing new educational paradigms and business models, thereby eroding the ground under our long-held academic assumptions, how are we responding? With five or six online courses a year all taught by adjuncts? If we are in the horse and buggy business and an automobile drives by, is our response to double down on the way we make whips and pull brakes?

Most of you are keenly aware of the institutional physics that are at work in your schools. The metaphor works best when one considers some of the classic laws of physics. Take, for instance, Isaac Newton’s first law: Every object in a state of rest tends to remain in that state unless an external force is applied to it. This means that there is a natural tendency of objects (or faculties or trustees . . .) to keep on doing what they’re doing (or not doing!). By nature these objects resist change. In the absence of an irresistible force, an object will maintain in its current state. So, if we are interested in substantive institutional change, we must explore the ways in which we can become that irresistible force—or at least be the catalyst for its generation.

Leadership

That’s why *leadership* is the first and most pivotal dimension of adaptive change. I like the way Heifetz draws a distinction between being an authority and being a leader. Every one of us here is looked to as an authority in our respective schools. So we must ask: what are the primary characteristics of a person in a position of authority? We look to them to direct things, control conflict, establish the norms, and maintain equilibrium. We don’t look to them

to cause conflict and generate disequilibrium! This is where we can personally feel the pressure of institutional physics pressing in and keeping us from taking on the risk of dealing with serious issues that require adaptive change. In part this is what forces us to consciously or unconsciously undermine the major adaptive changes that a good strategic plan should call for. So, if we want to really lead change, we have to find ways to overcome those physics. How do you do it? For chief academic officers specifically and the faculty generally, I think there are some important things you can do. To begin with, you can get people's attention—you have the platform! You can frame the debate; and if you can frame the debate, you can significantly influence the outcome of that debate. You can leverage your disciplines and find the roots of a new orientation within your past. You can work with faculty to provide biblical or tradition-oriented reference points for change, rather than the references for resisting it.

Self-change

Perhaps the most important challenge of leadership in the face of an adaptive or transformative moment is the challenge of self-change. Tolstoy once said that "Everybody thinks of changing humanity, but nobody thinks of changing himself." He was right. If we envision ourselves leading transformative change in our schools, then we need to be sure that we are prepared not only to advocate for that change but also to embody it ourselves. Those who are just observers of change are largely irrelevant to those who are in the midst of it—they don't have a stake in the outcome. This is where we need to be more mindful of the whole institution, not just what we teach in the classroom. Some have called this the "hidden curriculum" a school teaches: it is everything else a student learns from us when he or she is not in the classroom. Can they see concrete evidence—in both the big things and the small things—that the school, as an institution, believes in the things its professors are teaching? If I learn about justice, equity, and compassion in the classroom, is it also evident to me in the business office? What about the dean's office or, for that matter, the president's office? Here's a small example: Our school has made a deep and transformative commitment to multifaith theological education. So I've looked at how I might embody that commitment in my personal life and work. Among those things is now a weekly Tuesday morning havruta Bible study with the president of Hebrew College and Rabbinical School.

The commitment to self-change also entails gut checks on our tolerance for taking risks and living with ambiguity. I was always struck by Thomas Aquinas's observation that "If the highest aim of a captain were to preserve the ship, the captain would keep it in port forever." There are many reasons why Moses could have let the Jews stay in Egypt, but had he done so, they could have never become the transformed people that God dreamed they could be. If we seek to be leaders of transformative change, then we must be willing to risk failure—even spectacular failure! *"Would that all God's people were prophets!"*

Urgency

Another key part of being an irresistible force of adaptive leadership falls under the category of urgency.² One of the biggest needs in leading significant change in an institution is creating a sense of urgency. If people don't feel the urgency, they will be complacent—they will stay at rest. Some people will change when they see the light. Others change only when they feel the heat. If we are facing the need to make adaptive changes, then we need to create a sense of urgency that presses for those changes (which is different from creating a sense of terror, by the way).

The other face of urgency is the failure to *expeditiously* do what is needed to be done. We may get people to agree that changes are needed, but you know academic institutions are downright glacial in their approaches to change. This is often true when the president and the CFO are not fully engaging the chief academic officer in the financial and other business realities of the school. It can undermine the academic side of the house from being a full partner in the adaptive change. If your school is going to be out of unrestricted dollars to balance your budget in two years, taking a year to debate the choices is foolish; but if kept unaware of the full nature of the circumstances, that is exactly what a faculty might do.

This is the context we have to consider if we are going to be serious about strategic planning. As my friend William Sloane Coffin used to say, "We have to recognize what's staring us in the face before it hits us in the face." While they are an incredibly valuable tool, we can't be content that we merely have strategic plans. It is imperative that our plans be relevant to our circumstances, that we take our plans seriously, and that we invest ourselves in ensuring their success in a meaningful time frame.

Assumptions

I think it is imperative that we look more closely at the assumptions that underlie our planning. Here I am talking about at least two levels of assumptions. If a school has a strategic plan, chances are that it did a SWOT analysis. It asked the classic questions about its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and then it sought to discover how it might maximize one and minimize the other. But what *independent information* was available to establish that these were, in fact, strengths? And even if they are strengths today, are they *sustainable* in this rapidly changing context? Was time taken to look more broadly at what is happening in theological education, in the church, in society, and in the world to test these assumptions? A weekend retreat with small groups putting their SWOT analysis on newsprint rarely serves as a valid basis for establishing the assumptions that can transform an institution! At Andover Newton we took nearly a year of research and community-wide debate to establish the assumptions for our strategic plan. It gave us confidence about our decisions and ultimate buy-in from stakeholders.

Second, did we ask ourselves what the assumptive model of the church is that underlies our curriculum? Many of our mission statements say that we

exist to serve the church. What church is that? Does that church even exist? And if it does, are we confident that we are training leaders for that church? How do we articulate our assumptions about a church that is experiencing the greatest amount of change since the Reformation?

Probably more than anything else, misplaced assumptions undermine strategic plans and block adaptive change. This is true before you write your plan, but it is even truer after your plan is written. That's why I like to see strategic plans that are regularly updated and revised every couple of years in light of changing circumstances. A school I know had a strategic objective to increase its enrollment, which would strengthen its revenue position, which, in turn, would enable it to hire another much needed faculty member. Three years later it was deep in the search for the new faculty member, because it was in the plan, and it had a date specific for the hiring. The only trouble was that the school never generated even half of the enrollment growth expected in the strategic plan, so the money wasn't there to pay the salary. No one checked the assumptions.

Putting these principles of adaptive leadership to work at Andover Newton has been a breathtaking exercise. When we finished our yearlong study of our assumptions, we were forced to conclude that, other than the gospel itself, almost every one of the assumptions our school had been founded on was in the midst of being swept away (a sobering thought for a school that is the oldest graduate theological school in America). It meant for us that we had to completely redesign our curriculum—not merely adjust it—and thus two years ago our faculty voted to move away from a discipline-based curriculum to a competency-based curriculum. One of those competencies we have called “Border Crossing” skills and the ability to minister and witness to ones’ faith in a pluralistic world. And because we were also committed to see that our entire institution reflected what we were teaching, we launched a dramatic effort to develop a multifaith theological “university” that would bring together Christians, Jews, Unitarians, Muslims, and other faiths in a single academy. It is a bold move that has many heads spinning, and it may not work, but we are undeterred in our vision and the strategic course we are on. We are convinced that the adaptive challenges facing the church and, in turn, facing theological education demand nothing less than boldness.

I am mindful of a passage in Ephesians where we are called to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, to put away the old life and put on the new person that the spirit of God creates in us. I think that this is the same spirit that Moses saw in Eldad and Medad: the power to prophecy and to dream dreams in a strange land. It brings a change to us that implants a new orientation of our hearts and a new disposition of our souls; it imparts to us a spiritual life that enables us to leave the old behind and envision something new—transformative and breathtaking.

Nick Carter is president of Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. He presented this essay at the 2011 CAOS Conference in Orlando, Florida.

ENDNOTES

1. The primary references on adaptive leadership (here and below) are Ron Heifetz and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Ron Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1994).
2. My thoughts on urgency are drawn from John P. Kotter, "Establishing a Sense of Urgency," chap. 3 in *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).

MDiv: Still the “Gold Standard” Degree?

Randy MacFarland
Denver Seminary

The title of this article is the topic addressed in a March 2011 preconference workshop of the Chief Academic Officers Society in Orlando, Florida. Participants worked with conversation partners (after abbreviated opening comments) to address and share responses to the several questions posed at the conclusion of the article. Participants engaged in lively dialogue with the expressed interest of preparing them for future conversation in their institutional contexts in anticipation of discussion of the Degree Program Standards at the 2012 ATS/COA Biennial Meeting.

We recognize that for some of us, and the faculty and schools we serve, there might be a response of “How dare we raise the question.” For others, the response might be, “It is about time someone raised the question.” For most, we suspect that we are feeling pressure to make changes at various points as well as gratitude for some indicators of great effectiveness at doing what we’re currently doing. Most are willing to explore curricular options that will further the mission of our schools because we want to be good stewards of the responsibility entrusted to us.

Daniel Aleshire, in the conclusion of his introduction to *Earthen Vessels*, writes,

Theological schools are hybrid institutions. They are intimately and irrevocably related both to the work of the church and to the patterns and practices of higher education . . . If the church changes, theological schools should change, and if higher education changes, theological schools will change. The case for theological schools will rest on their responses and adaptations to these changes. It is a hopeful future, and the responses to these changes will create a future of considerable opportunities for theological schools.¹

Dislocation of the church (our partner in theological education) in North American society and the church’s challenge “to be true to its purpose and attuned to its context”² is our challenge as well. Dislocation of the church and the seminary in the social landscape may be viewed pessimistically and elicit a longing for the past or be viewed as an invitation for innovation that is both “true to its purpose and attuned to its context.” Walter Brueggemann frames the challenge for the church in *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope*:

Everyone now agrees that we are at a new season in the life of the US church, a new season that is starkly different from what was but that has almost taken us by surprise. That new

season of dislocation is surely to be seen as a profound challenge to the church. It is, moreover, widely felt, not without reason, to be a serious threat. It may also turn out to be a marvelous invitation for newness together that moves past old postures that predictably, perhaps inevitably, produced quarrels. The massive and unarguable dislocation of the conventional institutional church may be an occasion for a common resubmission to the power of God's Spirit.³

Glenn T. Miller, historian and one of our colleagues, reminds us in *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education 1870–1970* that

Schools straddle generations: they transmit to the coming generation the wisdom of the past and prepare the new generation to take leadership. Schools are charged with preparing a new generation to enter not the present world of their parents' culture, but the coming world that current movers and shakers have seen only at a distance.⁴

Miller observes that, as command structures for chaplains were being established in World War I, the wide range of qualifications for ministry became evident. "The Conference of Theological Schools, which began as a place for seminaries to discuss the impact of the war on their operations, became the nucleus of an accrediting agency as the schools themselves struggled with the issue of standards."⁵

It is clear from Miller's review of the past century that external changes in society impacted the trajectory of theological education in North America including

the new specialized university with its highly developed academic guilds, the biological and physical sciences and new engineering, the historical critical approach to the Bible, the new sociology and psychology, and the dynamics of industrial capitalist society with its concomitant large cities, mass transportation systems, and mass population shifts. . . .

... The dominant image of the Protestant minister during the period—the religious professional—itself suggested the schools' and their denominational sponsors' embrace of this world.⁶

The "World Survey," published in 1920 by the Interchurch World Movement of North America and substantially financed by John D. Rockefeller Jr., led to an additional survey of seminary education that precipitated extensive discussion.

The Kelly report [named after Robert Kelly, a former college president who conducted the survey] was the first systematic study of the seminary curriculum to be done after the schools adopted the prevailing college and university practice of di-

viding their work into separate courses that were evaluated individually.⁷

Kelly's survey of curricula from 1870, 1895, and 1922, which was part of his 1924 report titled "Theological Education in America: A Study of One Hundred Sixty-One Theological Schools in the United States and Canada," revealed that clinical training was lacking and that, "in general, the closer a particular denomination was to its European roots, the more likely its seminaries were to concentrate their teaching on the classical theological disciplines."⁸

Miller identifies key persons including William Rainey Harper. Harper, a former Hebrew professor and entrepreneurial president of the University of Chicago, wrote essays such as "Shall the Theological Curriculum Be Modified, and How?" (1899) that would "set the stage for many of the debates that would occupy American theological education for almost a century."⁹ Harper provided a strong appraisal of theological education at the turn of the last century, reminding us that calls for change from different quarters are not new.

Many intelligent laymen in the churches have the feeling that the training provided for the students in theological seminary does not meet the requirements of modern times. These men base their judgment upon what they see in connection with the work of the minister who has been trained in the seminary. Nor is this dissatisfaction restricted to the laity. Ministers who, after receiving this training, have entered upon the work of the ministry, and who ought to be competent judges, are frequently those who speak most strongly against the adequacy and the adaptation of the present methods in the seminary. So prevalent is this feeling that students for the ministry often ask the question, "Is there not some way of making preparations other than through the seminary?"¹⁰

The keywords in this succinct statement stand out: "requirements of modern times," "the work of the ministry," and "present methods." These phrases were almost a shorthand version of Harper's understanding of his divinity school.¹¹

The early standards adopted by the Commission on Accrediting of the American Association of Theological Schools "provide a clear picture of what contemporaries felt was a good theological school: It was an institution that admitted college graduates to a three-year program of study that included biblical, historical, practical, and theological courses. This curriculum should include courses in homiletics, religious education, pastoral theology, liturgics, church administration, and the application of Christianity to modern social problems. The curriculum should be taught by a competent faculty of at least four professors who, together with the administrative officer, have control over the curriculum and the granting of degrees."¹²

H. Richard Niebuhr, who served as director for "The Study of Theological Education in the United States and Canada" funded by the Carnegie Foundation in the 1950s, directed the conversation to the "theology" of theological

education. Niebuhr viewed the problem in theological education as inherently theological. "The Church is never only a function of a culture nor ever only a supercultural community; that the problem of its ministers is always how to remain faithful servants of the Church in the midst of cultural change and yet to change culturally so as to be true to the Church's purpose in new situations."¹³

In Niebuhr, Williams, and Gustafson's second publication on the results of the survey titled *The Advancement of Theological Education*, they concluded that "the curriculum of a theological school may be regarded both as an incarnation of the faith and spirit of the school and as the resultant of complex, material, psychological, and political factors which have combined to produce the decisions and compromises necessary in organizing the course of study."¹⁴

This publication revealed that discussions occurred regarding program duration and actual teaching practices.

Subject to all the objections which arise against a purely quantitative assessment of the curricular problem it may be said that if theological schools could teach everything that they regard as a desirable part of the curriculum and could give as much time to each subject as seems desirable the present period of study would need to be more than doubled. If, however, only the average or median percentages of the number of hours deemed necessary for each course be taken into consideration, then the present three-year course would need to be extended to four years if the overloading of the curriculum were to be taken care of within the framework of present teaching practices.¹⁵

Another conclusion of this study was that "the requirement that academic work in classroom and library be accompanied by active participation in church work has been increasingly accepted during the past twenty years."¹⁶

Gustafson's section of the report focused on the wide array of reasons that students pursued a theological education. Gustafson reminded his readers that "the individuality of students in preparation, personality, and purpose makes the dynamics of education distinct for each person."¹⁷

In the conclusion of *Piety and Profession*, Miller provides an important summary statement that is helpful background for conversation on the MDiv degree:

To their faculties and graduates, the triumph of the college-seminary pattern reflected the coming of age of American theological education. The degree itself would soon proudly become a master of divinity. And for a season, seminaries were able not only to insist on graduates from a bachelor's program but to define some of the elements of a good preparatory bachelor's degree, much as medical schools insisted on some courses in a premed degree . . .

. . . By the 1970s, theological schools—faced with a new round of increasing costs in higher education as a whole and a declining ecclesiastical base—would be again facing financial difficulties. In turn, these would lead some increasingly to question the four-three pattern and the whole degree structure.¹⁸

Finally, we are not the only profession asking questions about our “gold standard degree.” In *Rethinking the MBA: Business Education at a Crossroads*, three Harvard professors document declining enrollments and the changing value ascribed to the degree by employers and multiple delivery systems. The conclusions of this study are striking and call for a serious look at both cherished assumptions and the balancing of attention to various components of business education. The authors summarize their findings:

Increasingly, we believe, business schools are at a crossroads and will have to take a hard look at their value propositions. This was true before the economic crisis, but is even truer in its aftermath . . . To remain relevant, business schools will have to rethink many of their most cherished assumptions. They will have to reexamine their curricula and move in new directions.¹⁹

It is fascinating to read these comments in light of the *Educating Clergy* (2006) study funded by the Carnegie Foundation to examine the preparation of clergy for the responsibilities and roles they assume.

Since the practice of clergy occurs at the intersection of religious and public life, it requires an education that enhances what Mary Fulkerson, also of Duke University’s Divinity School, has called a “social imagination.” For seminary educators, this means helping students not only to learn “how the world works” so they can do more than theorize about the social and political world, but also to see themselves as religious leaders involved in “the action in the world.” From this perspective, clergy education involves more than teaching students a particular way of thinking; it requires that those ways of thinking be linked constructively with ways of being and doing. In this linking we can see in clergy education the necessary interdependence of the cognitive, practical, and normative apprenticeships of professional education.²⁰

In *Educating Clergy*, the authors explore four pedagogies in the teaching practices of educators (interpretation, formation, contextualization, and performance). Their conclusion is that the “five traditions of seminary education exerted a lasting influence on the way clergy have been educated in the United States.”²¹

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Questions of curriculum are impacted by both factors external to theological schools and conversations driven internally by the histories and traditions represented by our institutions. In addition to mission statements and strategic initiatives, schools develop core commitments and values that are clearly delineated or assumed. These commitments usually have a touch point in the history of the institution. Denver Seminary’s experience in the ATS Pilot Immersion Project for globalization of theological education in the mid-1980s continues to impact the current MDiv curriculum and the professional development action plans of faculty.

Daniel Aleshire reminds us of the elements that must be considered in a review of the benefits and liabilities of both current and emerging models of theological education. “Educational Models involve at least four elements: (1) an overarching educational goal, (2) a dominant pattern of educational background deemed appropriate for that goal, (3) a dominant educational process designed to attain that goal, and (4) a dominant pattern of delivery.”²²

In a December 2010 email to deans serving in ATS member schools, Aleshire makes it clear that questions of access surrounding issues of admission, residency, advanced standing, program duration, and the definition of a credit hour are all under review. There are positive and negative implications of changes to standards that will need to be weighed carefully. In addition, there will likely be unintended positive and negative consequences that will need the perspective of time to evaluate. Changes to the MDiv degree must account for complexity and tolerance for change in a system with multiple stakeholders. Effective curricular revision will address questions of purpose, access, formation, and learning outcomes within the context of institutional history. In addition, reflection on changing culture and context and the changing nature of the churches we serve should inform decisions ranging from course content to delivery systems and teaching methods. May God grant wisdom, sensitivity, and creativity for the task before us.

Randy MacFarland serves as provost/dean of Denver Seminary in Littleton, Colorado.

Appendix

Some exercises that faculty might engage in prior to addressing the question posed in this article include the following:

- I. Construct a timeline of curricular changes to the MDiv degree at your institution over the last forty years. Note any pivotal events, persons, or decisions by various constituencies that impacted these curricular changes.
- II. Address the following questions:
 - A. In the last *decade* what *values* most shaped changes made to your MDiv curriculum?
 - B. In the last *decade* what *values* shaped changes made in the content of core courses in your MDiv curriculum?
 - C. In the last *decade* what *values* most impacted changes in the delivery of education at your school?
 - D. In the last *decade* what *values* most impacted your decisions in faculty hiring?
 - E. In the last *decade* what *values* most impacted any changes to vision/mission at your school?
- III. Position your school on the vertical axis of Concern for Changing Culture and Context over against the horizontal axis of Concern for History and Tradition.
- IV. Identify external drivers of the conversation in your context and how you would rank them in importance. Some external drivers to consider include the following:
 - A. Rapid changes in social location of North American Christianity
 1. Shift in religion from being a societal value to being a personal choice²³
 2. Increasing secularization that impacts the role of the seminary
The seminary needs to understand itself not just as a higher education institution whose mission is to provide graduate, professional theological education, but also—and perhaps more so—as part of Christianity’s mission to propagate the gospel.²⁴
 3. Need for reframing mission in a post-Christian era
 4. Shift in center of growth of world Christianity to Latin America, Asia, and Africa
 - B. Concern for increasing access in light of fewer students pursuing theological education and the MDiv remaining flat or in decline
 1. Underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minorities
In 2005, Hispanic/Latino students represented 14.4 percent of the population and only 4.1 percent of ATS enrollment while African-American and Asian percentages were similar to percentage of population.²⁵
 2. Increase in number of laity carrying out parish responsibilities
Possibly the biggest issue facing theological schools is the question of their own mission. To use the language of the marketplace: what business are theological schools in? Do they exist to

provide professional education for ordained clergy and theological scholars; or are they in the business of providing theological education for the church? In light of the changing religious ecology, can theological schools afford to maintain their mission of educating professional ministers much longer? If schools decide in favor of the second alternative, they will need to adjust their missions, programs, and resources to include other emphases: lay and continuing education, nondegree certificate programs, and short-term programs to meet special needs.²⁶

3. Inability of prospective students to relocate for financial/employment reasons
- C. New technologies and delivery systems

At seminaries, online ministry degree programs are tapping into a storehouse of pent-up demand. Those who once dismissed the possibility of full-time ministry can pursue dreams without making drastic changes and piling up a crushing loan debt. Students avoid the expense of moving on or near campus. . . . Congregations retain valuable ministry workers as they learn more. . . . Online distance education greatly increases the pool of potential students of all kinds: the traditional, under-age-30 divinity student, currently employed pastors, lay program staff at churches, and educational and parachurch leaders.²⁷
- D. Changes in entering student population
 1. Lack of clarity in vocational call
 2. Deficiencies in or strong undergraduate academic preparation
 3. Brokenness of incoming students
- E. Changes in credentialing requirements of denominations, churches, agencies (mission/parachurch), and military
 1. Unregulated training

In contrast to the legal and medical professions, the ministry is an unregulated industry. Each denomination (and in some cases, individual congregation) makes up its own rules. For ministry candidates, there is nothing equivalent to the state bar exam or medical boards.²⁸
 2. Proliferation of nontraditional (church-based) training
- F. Changes in standards and accreditation process coming from Department of Education/CHEA/accrediting bodies
 1. Paradigm shift of what constitutes a "good" education

The changing paradigm is that a good education is reflected in assessment of student learning and cannot be assumed because the school has great resources and a good reputation.
 2. "Federalizing" of various standards (i.e., what constitutes a credit hour)
- G. Lack of placement opportunities
 1. Steady decline in number of job openings available to graduates over the past four years
 2. Retirement postponement by pastors in response to the economic downturn

- 3. Limitation of job options for new graduates due to annual income requirement to service educational debt²⁹
- H. Changes in the economy significantly impacting the revenue streams of theological seminaries
- I. Other
- V. Identify internal drivers of the conversation in your context and how you would rank them in importance. Some internal drivers to consider include the following:
 - A. Recent institutional changes in vision/mission
 - B. Desire to increase access through distance/hybrid courses for students unable to relocate for a variety of reasons
 - C. Tensions surrounding access
 - 1. Reaching more people (unable to do a residential program for a wide range of reasons)
 - 2. Commitment to values that are perceived as being fulfilled only in a residential setting
 - D. Disagreement/discussion over fundamental educational process
 - 1. Formational/academic/professional
 - 2. Faculty priorities and institutional value given to “learning that focuses on identity and character (Athens) or learning that focuses on critical assessment and technical professional skill (Berlin)”³⁰
 - 3. Tensions surrounding most effective venue (church or academy) in which to address matters of pastoral formation
 - E. Finances: Increased competition for fewer students converging with declining revenue from sources other than student tuition
 - F. Influential stakeholders
 - 1. Denominations/hierarchy
 - 2. Donors
 - 3. Alumni/ae
 - G. Governance structure: Role of the board (full authority or advisory) and/or seminary accountability to a university structure
 - H. Changing demographics of student body
 - 1. Increase in median age
 - 2. Increase in number of women
 - 3. Increase in commuter students/part-time students
 - 4. Greater disparity in preseminary preparation
 - 5. Increase in ethnic diversity of student body
 - I. Kind of training received in doctoral program in relationship to expectations for teaching and curricular development in a theological seminary
 - J. Other

ENDNOTES

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4. Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education 1870–1970* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 25.
5. *Ibid.*, 303–304.
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Adaptive Leadership: Planning in a Time of Transition

Linda Cannell

North Park Theological Seminary

The premise in this article is that adaptive leadership continues a significant stream in organizational development literature. If, however, underlying values are not understood and accepted, the practices espoused by adaptive leaders will be nothing more than tools mechanically and ineffectively applied. Elements of adaptive leadership that seem helpful when planning in times of transition are highlighted. The appendix describes a number of processes that can be adapted for use.

*Organizations are like leaky boats.
You will spend all your career bailing. ~Ted Ward*

Adaptive leadership is a logical next step in a decades-long stream of organizational development emphasis and practice, and its tenets and practices are worth considering. While focusing on yet another approach to organizational leadership can lead to yet more simple application of technique, two tenets of adaptive leadership are important in light of the challenges that confront theological schools.

First, adaptive leadership is rooted in the recognition that people, not systems, are the engine for organizational development; and, second, planning processes require leaders and members of the organization to suspend tendencies to preserve what is or, at the very least, to make changes that are of such a nature that what is will not be significantly affected. By extension, planning processes always begin and end with people, and they take time—largely because of the hard conceptual work required. A plan is never forced into being; it emerges as people learn how to work together and make decisions together. Planning requires time to reflect, synthesize, observe, and identify patterns.

But isn't this precisely what should characterize higher education in its best state? The enterprises of scholarship, learning, evaluation, and development of people require reflection, connection, and practice across time. Of all the organizations on the planet, theological schools should be among the best at these tasks! The appendix describes selected exercises that can be adapted to foster reflection, connection, and practice. The exercises reflect the realization that the process of identifying problems or limitations that have to be fixed is essentially flawed; "solving" one problem always creates other problems that then have to be fixed, which generates other problems, and so on.

*We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used
when we created them. ~Albert Einstein*

When I began my career in academia and church leadership some forty years ago, the models of change and leadership were mostly static, scientific, predictable, and governed by certain rules or formulae. A basic approach was to identify problems that were troubling the organizational machinery and attempt to fix them. It was simply accepted that leaders could manage change, or create it, through the application of certain techniques. The focus was variously on goals, objectives or outcomes (e.g., Management by Objectives), numbered stages (e.g., Kurt Lewin's 3-stage model; Edgar Huse's 7-stage model), or other models that applied certain treatments to organizations to achieve certain results or to diagnose and fix certain problems. The stars were the managers, and the culture of the organization was the one visible in the boardroom or executive suite. And even if leaders, or organizations for that matter, had a reputation for responding well to events, the inner processes of the organization were sometimes less than hospitable for people—or even toxic.

In any organization, the fundamental tasks of leadership are to discern the capacities of people and to foster an environment where they can test their capacities and learn. Charles Handy¹ has observed that organizations typically operate on the assumption of incompetence. Therefore, instead of developing people, leadership is characterized by control, directives, power over the other, and resolution of conflict or differences by creating memoranda of understanding—which may or may not have been developed collaboratively. When an organization functions on the assumption of *competence*, on the other hand, paying attention to the development of people and the release of creative imagination is at least possible.

Making structures and systems—rather than people—the channels of development is a pervasive temptation and a fatal flaw in leadership. We think structures and systems are easier to control; they give the illusion of efficiency and may help us avoid that necessary dynamic called conflict. If working with people, rather than managing systems, becomes the root task, then essential processes become those of conversation, asking questions, interviewing, discerning patterns and trends, experimenting, taking risks, and so on.

Lessons from the progression of organizational theory

Most organizations, built on the lingering structures of the Industrial Age, require us to spend inordinate amounts of time propping up systems designed often in higher education to sustain uniformity, which may result in uniform ineffectiveness. Some of these systems are counterproductive to what we say we are about: the care of human knowledge, the use of knowledge in the service of humanity, the quest to understand the nature and cultural variability of human learning and development, and the implementation of that understanding in instructional design and practice.

Today, “new theories” of organizational development, organizational change, and leadership styles emerge with stunning rapidity. One website, for example, purports to categorize and describe more than 250 models of management.² In recent years, we have moved astonishingly fast through systems theories, learning organizations, and adaptive leadership. The literature on

change and leadership changes so rapidly that reliance on a model, or even a cluster of models, is tenuous at best. Organizational development is no longer an exact science—if ever it was. For example, in 2004 Jim Collins wrote confidently of companies that were *Built to Last*.³ In 2009 he published *How the Mighty Fall*,⁴ telling the stories of some of those same companies that didn't make it or that were at that time in trouble.

The persisting direction of organizational theories has been toward awareness of the dynamics in an organization that are affected by people and that, in turn, affect the development of people and the outworking of their vocations individually and in working teams. Lewin's earlier contention that leadership style affects social climate influenced the development of theories such as McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y and Schein's views on organizational culture. With the emergence of situational leadership, contingency management, transformational leadership, chaos theory, and their like, organizational predictability and the scientific approach to management almost died. Today, terms such as organizational climate, organizational culture, the learning organization, organism, sustaining innovation, and so on suggest a trend toward fluidity; open spaces; adaptive structures; nonhierarchical, flatter management; and, yes, adaptive leadership. Moving *with* people in organizations has become more important than trying to control them, and creative and fringe thinkers are valued rather than marginalized or fired.

Not surprisingly, adaptive leadership is definitely messier and requires the ability to think and act across multiple layers. One has to be convinced that leadership and planning is more than the application of technique and formulae and that people *must* be involved as dialogue partners, decision makers, and actors.

In this regard, it is worth reading Margaret Wheatley's book, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*.⁵ Wheatley proposes a return to ancient traditions of conversation in which people talk about what is important to them. Central to the process of conversation as she describes it is sharing and listening, seeking together to understand, commitment to responsible action, and reflection together on that action. Wheatley notes that most of what we would consider significant events in history began with small clusters of people talking. It should be noted here that *conversation* in this case is more than just coffee break interaction. A critical skill of leaders is to listen. But listening well involves being able to frame the sort of probing questions that help people respond with something that is worth listening to by others in the organization—something that will actually help move thought, plans, and decisions forward.

Leading people in organizations through times of transition involves fostering a climate in which people can talk about what is worthy, identify what the organization is in service to, and practice skills such as inquiry, accepting and working across difference, observing, diagnosing, and so on. In other words, leaders build strength in organizations when they think and act developmentally—which means investing in building the capacities of colleagues and in the analysis and shaping of systems that affect them. Organizations function best when people are respected and helped to do better the sorts of

things that give organizations their energy and effectiveness. Again, theological schools should be among the best in the world at these sorts of tasks! But . . .

The saga of efforts to reform higher education often seems like a Russian novel: long, tedious, and everyone dies in the end. ~Mark Yudof

Academic culture, like most everything we do and are in our schools, results from decisions made by human beings over the course of time. Decisions can be evaluated and modified, or even overturned. In their book, *Getting to Maybe*, Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, and Michael Quinn Patton tell the stories of several men and women who discerned what was adversely affecting their situations and determined to make new decisions.⁶ The book presents principles learned from their stories. Some *principled practice items* have been adapted and synthesized for purposes of this article:

1. Classic models of strategic planning require certain logical, rational processes before action is taken. The authors make the case that spending days and weeks in data gathering, crunching numbers, creating charts and graphs, writing up a seemingly logical plan, and then establishing dates by which the plan is achieved is not the most useful way forward. Are data needed? Of course. Do we plan? Always. But often in conventional strategic planning we spend more time planning the plan, meeting to plan the plan, then meeting to determine action steps (with precise dates!), then meeting to determine who is going to carry out the action steps and who is going to supervise those who carry out the action steps, and then meeting to ask what went wrong—or why it's taking so long to fulfill the plan! Rather, build your strategy out of responses to such questions as, What data do we really need, and what are the best ways to elicit that data? Who should be involved in design and implementation? How do we secure information and feedback, foster reflection, and obligate decision making toward action that won't grind everything to a halt in the process? (In other words, leaders frustrate people when they force them to stop what they are already doing in order to complete an assignment that is already underway or even completed or to ask for a report or the collection of data that they know by experience will have zero impact on future action. How many strategic plans are languishing in your closets?)
2. For me, the flow of data gathering in an organization is always from qualitative to quantitative—with quantitative used sparingly. Data are derived from some of the following practices used at the beginning of the process and at critical points throughout:
 - Use a personal interview approach wherever possible and LISTEN. There are times when outlining one's convictions and ideas is necessary, but the leader will have greater effect by asking questions, following up with probing questions, and/or eliciting stories.
 - Practice discernment of patterns and trends in what you hear and see. Ask more probing questions and listen.
 - Walk around and observe; "feel" the organization.

- Gauge the pathologies of the organization—what or who is hurting the development of people and, consequently, the capacity of the organization to adapt. Avoid jumping to presumptions about what you see and hear. Talk with some in the organization about what you are seeing and hearing.
 - Identify the influencers and listen to their stories.
 - Engage in work and ministry *with* people. Resist the temptation to be about building your own career or maintaining your own prestige. Be a champion for others.
 - Discover the traditions and forces that have shaped the organization.
3. Development specialists, or social innovators, tend to downplay precise, measurable goals and objectives because they can be limiting. Organizations exploring alternatives and engaged in innovation “realize that they don’t yet know enough to set specific goals or measurable targets . . .”⁷ They are more likely to engage people’s perceptions about where we were and where we seem to be heading and more likely to describe progress and lessons learned about what is and isn’t working. They set up interdisciplinary or diverse teams to examine complex issues and engage in *ongoing* data collection to help people adapt decisions and policies.⁸
4. Try out small-scale initiatives to learn what works and what doesn’t. Release innovation.

There is a technical term for people who do not change. Dead.

We all know that development in schools proceeds glacially and that time to release creativity and imagination is hard to come by in higher education. There are few opportunities in an academic year and in the academic setting for substantive meetings and extended conversations.

Malcolm Warford, director of the Lexington Institute, notes that faculties find issues difficult to engage. The higher education setting is not conducive to the design of intentional strategies. The discussion of issues takes place during “happenstance gatherings at someone’s office door, casual conversations over lunch, or faculty meetings during which much other business must be discussed . . . Such discussions frequently raise great interest, because the issues noted are quickly identified as crucial to the faculty, the students, and the institution. It is even agreed, frequently, that time should be set aside to deal with these issues. Seldom, however, is such time set aside, and so the issues remain unaddressed . . .”⁹

Yet, the forces of change are pressing in upon theological schools. The challenge of the day is to discern directions within those changes, to examine what the changes are revealing in our attitudes and behaviors, and to seek to respond in ways that are appropriate. I would maintain that change is a constant, so in one sense it isn’t terribly productive to talk about creating it or managing it. In my experience, the efforts to create and manage change often lead to implementing procedures to maintain institutional structures rather than to developing processes that engage people effectively in the process.

In this respect, three bedrock principles or values have shaped my own leadership practices and attitudes across the years—hopefully the practice improving across time:

1. Those in leadership ensure that a climate exists where people can flourish, where they can find new abilities in themselves, develop them, and use them. I want to see creativity and imagination and initiative valued and encouraged. In this sense, the organization is more organic and less like a machine.¹⁰
2. Even if we have to do the hard thing with people, such as an admonition or letting them go, it is done in a way that protects humanness and dignity—and, where possible, helps the person move on to the next thing. In rare cases we may have to deal with those who are destructive and confirmed to be so by a variety of evidences. We can protect humanness, but we also fail the institution if that person is allowed to continue as a destructive agent.
3. As we foster conditions that promote and release development, our view is ever on the goal that people are developed *so that* they in turn can develop others (cf. II Tim 2:2). The organization is in service to something, and it is critical that the organization is clear about that—because it is the people who will embody and make tangible that service.

Critical skills of adaptive leaders

Most of the skills identified by Ronald Heifetz and others have something to do with how leaders make sense of the dynamics created by the actions and interactions of people in the organization.

For example, Heifetz says that “the single most important skill and most undervalued capacity for exercising adaptive leadership is diagnosis.”¹¹ He uses the term *on the balcony* to illustrate the advantage the leader has of being able to see more holistically, to view from a certain distance, to offer diagnoses based on a greater array of data. Skillful diagnosis requires the corollary capacities of observing, questioning, listening, risk taking, experimenting, interpretation, and responsible action—capacities that are best exercised in consultation with others.

The art of the question is another critically important skill. Our habitual practice as academic leaders is more like midcourse correction. We think and observe in the midst of action. It will never be possible to have all the data necessary for a complete picture before action is taken. Therefore, it is absolutely vital for academic leaders and faculty members to learn how to frame, and ask, good questions. David Cooperrider and Donna Whitney are correct when they say that human systems grow in the direction of that about which they persistently ask questions.¹² They use several tools (e.g., the World Café) to help all members of an organization learn how to craft useful questions and conduct good inquiries. The appendix provides more exercises that in a variety of ways could help improve the art of the question and stimulate *productive* engagement.

The point that Heifetz and others are making is that complex, messy organizations *require* leaders to develop and practice particular skills: openness, a willingness to be disturbed—to feel unsettled, to take risks, to experiment, to sail into uncharted waters. Such leaders encourage people to ask, What’s possible? instead of, What’s wrong? They look for ways to stimulate conversation about the extraordinary opportunities presented by the forces of change. It sometimes surprises leaders that this encouragement will create various forms of conflict as people test their capacities and ideas. In fact, conflict is a necessary part of change and development.¹³

For example, the responses of people at times of conflict or crisis reveal the array of values, prejudices, and mindsets in an organization. In some cases, what is revealed is consistent with the organization’s founding purpose. In other instances, people feel betrayed by the actions of leaders, and perhaps colleagues, because those actions violate deeply held personal values or espoused, but not practiced, organizational values. Rather than avoid or rationalize away the issues and tensions that surface at these times, adaptive leaders invite members of the organization to explore, to name, to confront, and to seek out those deeply felt values without which the organization has no meaningful existence.

An important description of adaptive leaders is that they can keep the lid on a pressure cooker long enough to allow something to “cook” but not so long as to allow tensions to rise to critical temperature. They learn how to lean into situations, applying subtle pressure to keep things moving but not to the extent that it generates unproductive resistance.

Conflict can create an opportunity for productive response to change. However, many try to avoid the conflict, or squash it by edict, rather than to seize the opportunity presented by it. The March 2010 *AARP Bulletin* features an article by Jim Wallis that speaks to values in relation to the economic crisis.¹⁴ Wallis stresses that the economic crisis has revealed a profound crisis of values and that we should be taking advantage of this opportunity to ask the value questions and to seek moral recovery. The question is not, When will this crisis end? but rather, How will this crisis change us?

Conflict avoidance can cause missed opportunities, while trying to resolve a conflict too quickly can cause loss of ideas and creativity. For example, the recent economic crisis stressed many theological schools and ramped up frustration levels at all levels of their organizations. At such times, the differences between organizations that develop infrastructure to manage scarcity and those that create infrastructure to manage opportunity are more obvious. Those preoccupied with managing scarcity will almost always attempt to reduce the organization to its smallest possible footprint so that it can be easily controlled, and differences of perspective are marginalized. They hoard what little they have and fight with each other internally to protect their share. Organizations willing to manage the opportunities presented at times of crisis will take a chance and work with their people to release ideas and energy for action.

Networking with integrity creates a greater willingness of all parties to be part of a human conduit to serve as energy and resource to one another. Sometimes you will give more than you receive and sometimes you will get back more than you give. ~Chris London

Adaptive leaders network. Many years ago, Ted Ward asserted that the challenge of the twenty-first century will be for institutions to learn how to relate to and work with other institutions. In *The Necessary Revolution*, Peter Senge states what should be obvious by now: the world is shaped by networks or webs of organizations. If you can accept that theological education does not equal theological school, and that theological education is for the whole people of God, then theological schools are one aspect of theological education. This view affects the nature of decisions made in transitional times; it also suggests that the future of theological schools must include significant partnerships across agencies.

In commenting on the consequences of the Industrial Revolution on the twentieth century, Senge observed that “No one had a plan for the Industrial Revolution. No ministry was put in charge. No single business led the way. . . . The Industrial Age was not planned but innovated. The next age will be no different. . . . today’s innovators are showing how to create a different future by learning how to see the larger systems of which they are a part and to foster collaboration across every imaginable boundary.”¹⁵

I skate where the puck will be, not where it is. ~Wayne Gretzky

Few will doubt that we are at another time in history when the structure of academic disciplines, instructional design, the integration of key administrative structures, and the role of faculty must be reviewed and new decisions made. We can learn from people such as Ronald Heifetz, but here, at the end of this article, a word of caution.

In 1903, the Wright brother’s first flight in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, launched us into a new age. To say that applying the skills of adaptive leadership to planning in a time of transition will foster a new age for theological schools is about as useful as saying the Wright brothers applied the skills of woodworking, welding, and canvas stretching to inaugurate the new era of flight. Even the attempt to involve and develop the capacities of people could be a pragmatic accommodation that masks our need to maintain the organization as we know it.

Approaches such as adaptive leadership are valuable only when the skills they highlight are integrally connected to deeply held core values that shape the way we work with people, the way we view and use knowledge, and our commitments to responsible service.

Similarly, the skills that proponents of adaptive leadership stress and the exercises presented in the appendix of this essay obligate us to suspend our desire to maintain the organization as it is, and as we presume it has always been, and to seek clarity about that which is suggestive of future directions. For example, in 2006 I wrote *Theological Education Matters*¹⁶ as a personal re-

cord of a search for key factors that seemed to shed light on why the organization that should be the most adaptive on the planet, seemed to be stuck. I proposed that four factors from the long history of higher education form a complex matrix for theological education that has to be understood as we make decisions about the future. These factors are the rise of institutionalism, influenced by the rise of professionalism (especially in the West), shaped by the rise of academic rationalism, and challenged in every age by the desire to know God. What I am trying to say here is that viewing adaptive leadership as a set of skills or techniques to make people and organizations work better is inadequate. Heifetz and others, when understood rightly, are really getting at the need for leaders to help people develop critical capacities for seeing into situations from articulated values, asking the right questions, discerning patterns and trends, synthesizing findings, determining responsible actions, and reflecting on what happens. These are very difficult capacities for groups of people to learn and practice effectively; but, again, faculty and academic leaders should be among the most effective at this complex undertaking.

The challenges we face in this twenty-first century are significant, and even threatening. Despite the appearance of stolidity and the impression of permanence created by the processing of faculty in ancient garments and bewildering hat styles, theological schools are indeed vulnerable. The vultures are not circling—yet. But the persisting criticisms and the reality that change in higher education tends to move at a glacial pace increase the probability that initiatives rapidly coming to maturity will supplant or forever change theological education as we know it.¹⁷ Planning in such times of transition is enormously complex, demanding, and requiring of more than application of a set of skills. The theory of adaptive leadership is an insightful approach if we dig down below the examples and illustrations to the bed rock of value, principle, and concept.

Linda Cannell is academic dean for North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois. This essay is adapted from a paper presented at the March 2011 ATS conference for academic deans.

Appendix

This appendix offers various exercises that can be adapted to stimulate conversation, to secure thoughtful participation from the people in the organization, and to guide responsible decision, as well as resources for further reading. They are not listed in any order of priority but share fundamental qualities particular to this article:

- They recognize the need for adaptability, flexibility, and fluidity in organizational structures.
- They recognize the importance of human engagement, listening to one another, respecting the ideas and experiences of participants in the process, releasing the creativity of people, giving people a voice in development and idea sharing, and evaluating and using criteria all have had a part in developing.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

This approach represents a cluster of theories that take an asset-based approach to organizational development (as opposed to seeking problems or limitations that have to be fixed). People in the organization are encouraged to use their imagination, experience, and perception to look forward, to reflect on the past in light of an imagined future, to identify key values that give the organization its life, and to identify strengths.

Chip and Dan Heath¹⁸ describe the process very simply: Look for the “bright spots”—those areas, however small, where something is going well. It is looking at a problem not from what is going wrong but from what is going right.

Writing about congregations, but describing an idea applicable to most organizations, Mark Branson adapts a commonly used process in AI. He suggests the use of the powerful imagery from the prophets as a people in exile reflected on their future. For example, Isaiah “offers a vision of a city in which the infants are born into a life-giving environment and the elderly live out full days in honor. The carpenters and gardeners receive the full benefit of their work . . . And those with ancient animosities (lions and lambs) are so thoroughly transformed that they can chill out together.”¹⁹ Branson suggests that one can make use of such images to help a congregation (or in our context, a school) imagine a generation or more into its future.

Rather than look for problems or weaknesses, look for what is working or what has promise. Recognize the creative capacity of people to imagine other realities, to reflect on current realities in light of an imagined future, and to capture the life-giving elements of the past to energize the present and the future. AI stresses that an image of the future always precedes actual change.

Key to AI is the formation of significant questions through a process of dialogue (that is “more than just talk”).²⁰ Questions are powerful tools.²¹ Asked inappropriately they can stifle learning. (What is this text saying?) Asked differently, they can take persons to higher levels of thinking (How would you assess the position of this author in relation to . . .?). Questions can escalate

conflict (Why do you do that?), or point toward resolution (What has brought us to this point, and what can we do about it?).²²

Cooperrider and Whitney²³ suggest that human systems grow in the direction of that about which they persistently ask questions. The seeds for development are planted as questions are asked. Therefore, inquiry is encouraged and time allowed for people to talk together and explore ideas. Various tools or processes are used to stimulate dialogue and reflection. For example . . .

Tools and processes to stimulate dialogue

WORKSHEET: Eliciting questions or tasks

Members of the organization, invited into groups that each represent the diversity of the organization, typically are given certain eliciting tasks or questions to get dialogue started. Prepare a worksheet with prompts such as the following:

- Talk about a time in the organization when you were most energized about the prospects of the organization—its contributions to . . .
- What is it that you most value about the organization and your work within it?
- As a group, determine those factors without which the organization might just as well cease to exist?

EXERCISE: Staying warm

The adaptive leadership people suggest that it is important to maintain reasonable pressure at the right time toward decision and action. The tricky thing here is to discern the right time for the pressure. Structure conversation groups around questions designed to stimulate movement or direction in your organization. Use a Google Doc exercise on an issue where no more than three in a group are writing and editing simultaneously.

EXERCISE: The 4-D model

Jane Magruder Watkins and Bernard Mohr²⁴ suggest four steps in a process of dialogue:

Discovery. “What is the best of what is?” (appreciating). Explore the ways in which the organization provides service, fosters a climate for positive growth of people in the organization, affirms worth, protects dignity, and so on. What values undergird what “we are”? Here you might use a process suggested by Hallie Preskill and Anne Coghlan²⁵: Participants share their stories, at first in pairs or triads and then with the larger group. The group identifies patterns and themes common to the stories and designs an interview protocol—questions that will elicit responses from members of the organization about each of the themes. Participants conduct interviews with as many members of the organization as possible.

Dream. “What might be?” (envisioning results). Envision the organization functioning at its best.

Design. “What should be the ideal?” (co-constructing the future). Based on possible visions for the future, participants draft proposals, suggest strategies, identify areas where key decisions will be needed, and name potential teams.

Destiny. “How to empower, learn, and adjust/improvise?” (sustaining the change). Participants begin to implement ideas and proposals, monitor and evaluate progress, and engage in new phases of dialogue and inquiry. This stage is ongoing.

WORKSHEET: Confronting change in context (a guide for dialogue)

1. *Ideas and ways of thinking are challenged constantly in each of our contexts.* Cooperrider and Whitney suggest that the nature of the persistent questions in an organization tends to indicate its direction of growth.²⁶ Identify at least three significant questions you and others are asking about your current reality. What new directions are suggested by these questions? Given that change is inevitable, what factors are influencing these directions? What opportunities are created as a result of these new directions? In light of these directions, what trends do you see in your context? How will leaders one generation from now describe their current situation?
2. *Each organization has a particular context—a geographical location, a social location, and a temporal location (a place in history).* Describe the ways in which your geographical context frees you, limits you, and provides hope for you. What aspects of your social location free you, limit you, provide hope for you (social class, race, ethnicity, nationality, education, power and privilege, vocation, relationships, etc.) When you think about your time and place in history, name your most important qualities as you think about your hopes for the future.
3. *Each organization confronts new challenges in each new contemporary age.* Inherited assumptions about strategies related to ministry, to education, and to theology are challenged in these times. What, for you, are the most significant areas of challenge? At what points do contemporary factors challenge you most deeply? What now seems irrelevant to you? What has actually become more urgent for you? What are your sources of greatest hope for the next generation of leaders?
4. *What patterns or themes, if any, have emerged in your conversation today?*

WORKSHEET: Imagining twenty years from now²⁷

Juanita Brown and David Isaacs describe an exercise in which participants are asked to describe how their children and grandchildren would describe the world twenty years from today. The idea can be adapted to theological institutions. For example:

It is twenty years from today. Graduates of our institution have moved out into the church and/or world in a variety of ways. They have influenced others just as this faculty influenced them. The world in which they serve has felt the impact of their leadership.

- What does their leadership look like? How and where are they serving? How do they connect with people? How do they continue to learn?

- Imagine you are sitting with the adult child of one of your former students, telling her the story of how her parent became the person he or she is today. What decisions and choices did you and others in the early twenty-first century make? What commitments did you demonstrate that helped to foster what you see in your former student?

Stimulating conversation: The World Café

The following is adapted from Juanita Brown with David Isaacs. *The World Café Shaping our Futures Through Conversations that Matter* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005).

The World Café is a hospitable space to explore questions that matter. The process encourages broad contributions from the team, connecting of diverse perspectives, and listening to and sharing of collective discoveries with a view to responsible action. The World Café design²⁸ incorporates *focused dialogue around substantive questions, shared stories, and case studies; a structured inquiry task; and one or more plenary sessions for synthesis and decision making*. In the rounds of dialogue, ideas build on one another while participants explore questions and issues that matter to them in their life and work. Though possible outcomes are often identified, conversations are not focused, at least initially, on finding solutions. The more important outcome, and one that happens best in conversation, is to discover the right questions to ask in relation to an issue. Though not necessary, some have found it helpful to have a focusing presentation prior to the three rounds of conversation. In plenary sessions, connections among ideas are explored and questions are clarified. Knowledge-sharing, possibilities for further inquiry, and opportunities for research and action may emerge.

Context

The setting is important and should allow for the comfortable face-to-face conversations where relationship and ideas can emerge. A café-style atmosphere is recommended: round tables (seating four to five per table) covered with sheets of paper or layers of paper tablecloths, and a jar filled with pens and non-bleed-through chart markers or crayons at each table. Other features of the café environment are up to the planners.

Conversations that matter: The World Café process summarized

The difference between individual participation and encouraging each person's *contribution* is important. For example, individual participation often becomes the insertion of one's particular opinions and ideas into a discussion. However, when participants are reminded that *contribution* is important, they have to think about what their insight and experience actually contributes to the conversation of the whole. In other words, participants should come to realize that they bear responsibility for moving the process along. They do this through listening, through sharing patterns they see, through offering metaphors, and by helping the group see potential blind spots. Since many adults are unaccustomed to such behaviors, practice may be required.

Round one: The first round of conversation is generally exploratory as people take time to meet one another and get used to the process. Questions are given to stimulate, but not to control, the conversation. A recorder is placed at each table to capture the essence of the table conversation. Pens, crayons, and chart markers allow participants to write notes and ideas and to draw on the paper covering the table.

Participants are at their “home” table (perhaps following a presentation). Prepare a poster for each table that reads as follows:

- Talk together about the following questions. Draw or write on the paper provided if it helps focus thought.
- What did you hear that had real meaning for you? What surprised you? What puzzled or challenged you?
- What’s important to you about what you heard and why? What questions would you like to ask now?

Round two: To begin the second round of conversation, one person stays at the home table as host. All others travel to other tables. The host shares, briefly, the essence of the table conversation with the newcomers. Travelers to other tables link the ideas from their first round of conversation at their home tables to the second conversation. The purpose of the second round of conversation is to encourage people to notice patterns and themes and to identify and record deeper questions. Instruct participants to turn over the poster (you prepared for round one). On the reverse side you will have written the following:

If table conversations get stuck or conflicted, use statements such as the following: “I appreciate what you said about . . .” or “You challenged my thinking when you said . . .” or “I want to better understand your perspective. Tell me . . .” Add to the drawing or writing on the paper at the table if it helps. Ideas and insights will not be organized or even coherent. Make an initial attempt to focus.

Round three: For the third round, participants return to their home tables. Post the following instructions:

Report on what you learned from your conversations at the other tables. Prepare one or two questions or craft a statement designed to sharpen thinking or action. Display your question(s) or statement on flip chart paper provided, writing large enough for others to read from a reasonable distance.²⁹

The plenary session: After three rounds of conversation, the group gathers for a plenary session where the participants share their findings, key insights, and also what the conversations meant to them. Flip chart papers are posted on the walls. At this time the facilitator asks participants to identify the most essential findings from the previous conversations. One table begins and other tables enter the discussion as they have a question or insight that relates. At the end of the

plenary session, determine if there is one overarching question that can take the group to a deeper level, or identify a researchable task or a possibility for action.

All groups contribute to the following questions:

- If there was one thing that hasn't yet been explored but is necessary in order to reach a deeper level of understanding/clarity, what would that be?
- Is there another level of thinking or action we need to address?
- What needs our immediate attention as we move toward our next steps?

Follow-up considerations: Following the plenary, participants may imagine an agenda and focus for continued work on the issue. Participants may be asked to share an idea that they intend to take back to their own contexts. The following questions may assist this phase of the process: Who else do we need in the conversation? What additional perspectives might bring needed insight? Who would benefit from being part of a continuing conversation? What ideas for research and action have emerged? What steps do we need to clarify here in order for these ideas to develop? What examples should we learn more about? How can we learn more about what they are doing?

EXERCISE: Future Present Scenario (FPS)

In most cases, organizations use consultants to help them move from one stage to another. However, in many cases, the consultant is distant from the cultural realities of the organization as a whole and has not had the time to probe adequately the perspectives and dreams and real concerns of organizational members. Many recommendations are in fact statements about what the consultant and a few leaders *presume* is happening in the organization.

The FPS concept is based on having participants in the organization consider the present reality in comparison with an imagined future and to push the limits of what is possible, until their descriptions begin to seem unrealistic or where it would likely be impossible to secure commitment.³⁰

In this exercise, each individual writes his or her own FPS. Members of the various groups in the organization compare their written statements to identify recurring themes, concerns, and possibilities. Participants are asked to consider the following questions: How important are the elements of your description? Just how ideal is it? How much of what you have written is now present? How soon do you want to see your statement happen—immediately? Within six months? Long term? What elements of your statements reveal serious discrepancies between the ideal and the present reality and why?

EXERCISE: Current and ideal states (based on the FPS)

This exercise helps you cast the present reality of your organization against an imagined, though entirely plausible, alternative reality. Identify at least four to five current and ideal states for your organization. For example, "Currently we have a limited understanding of the capabilities of those in our small groups. Ideally, we want to stimulate a commitment to lifelong learning from all those in our small groups." OR "Currently we have a number of leaders who are asking for further training, and we are not quite sure of the next steps. Ideally, we want leaders to be able to equip other leaders."

In light of your list, complete the following task: Develop a future statement of what is possible for your organization or ministry, but write it as if it were already true and happening, now, in the present. Follow these guidelines:

1. Use the present tense and write as if what you are describing is a present reality.
2. Describe the activities, skills, relationships, and organizational structures that were required to bring your organization into this state.
3. Reflect on how you feel living in this new present.
4. Evaluate what you have written: How truly challenging is your statement and in what ways reflective of societal and church realities? To what extent is the statement specific and concrete as opposed to merely general and abstract? In what ways does your statement excite you, inspire you?

EXERCISE: Alert, respond, act

Discuss the following questions as a group:

- What are the characteristics of our society to which we need to be *alert*? What are the characteristics that *you* believe are true of your society? What characteristics do people not familiar with your society seem to notice?
- Beyond being merely alert, because we are Christian, what are the matters to which we must *respond*? What are those things that we ought to have a particular feeling or conviction about?
- Beyond being merely alert, or being attentive to that to which Christians must respond, what are those matters that require *intervention* or *action* now? What do we have to offer as the church in society that will make a difference?

EXERCISE: Identify obstacles that hinder cooperation or partnership

Work through the following questions by describing specific steps that could be taken to minimize hindrances to cooperation or to remove imagined obstacles:

- What sorts of obstacles in your context or organization could be minimized by group effort?
- Which obstacles are insurmountable?
- Which obstacles exist primarily in the minds of members of your organization?

EXERCISE: Looking differently at our problems

The way we talk about a problem or situation is part of the problem. Part of the solution is to talk about it differently. Name two or three of the most frequently talked about problems in your organization.

- What assumptions are present in the way the problems are discussed?
- How might you talk about these problems differently?
- Does thinking differently allow you to view the situation differently?

EXERCISE: Interinstitutional collaboration

Identify obstacles that hinder collaboration or partnership. Identify

- obstacles that could be minimized by group effort;
- obstacles that are insurmountable; and
- obstacles that exist primarily in our minds.

Assuming that it is necessary for various organizations to work together, name specific steps that could be taken to minimize hindrances to collaboration or to remove imagined obstacles.

REFLECTION: Case studies

Ask people to write case studies on issues they believe to be of current importance to the organization. Meet for several days to discuss the cases, looking for patterns and reflecting on action. In the process people are often able to identify blockages. Use open-ended questions rather than yes/no questions. For example,

- What do you perceive happened in this situation? Why?
- How do you feel about . . . ?
- How is this situation or problem similar or different from other situations or problems?
- What do you want to start doing, stop doing, continue doing?
- What went well? What didn't work?
- What happened? Why?
- What will we do differently next time?

REFLECTION: Insights from the stories in Scripture

Many stories in Scripture reveal how people responded to the inevitability of change. Read together Joshua, chapters 3–5. The nation is about to enter the new land. How does Joshua respond to this challenge? What is the nature of the decisions he makes, and how does he prepare the people as they confront change?

It has been observed that a word translatable as “leadership” does not appear in the Greek New Testament. This omission may not be significant, except to underscore that the Scripture’s emphasis is clearly on leaders and not on some abstracted theory of leadership. The more important lessons to be gained from the leaders described in Scripture are found in how they came to understand God’s purposes for the people of God and how they responded—*with considerable variation in style*—to that understanding.

A sampling of resources for further reading

There is so much to read, so much to sift through on the web! The “new” thought or theory becomes the “former perspective” at an ever increasing rate. However, we must read and sift, and read and sift as widely as possible. We won’t and shouldn’t agree with every author’s perspective; but as we wander across the landscape of ideas, patterns will emerge; and we may find that certain enduring principles will begin to take shape in our minds and spirits. The following clusters are more or less pertinent to the theme of this article:

Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008). The book presents a view of leadership that is tied to engagement. Note particularly the last half of the book where the author describes several exercises for group process. This book should be read with Block's earlier book, *The Answer to How is Yes: Acting on What Matters* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003). Then, add a book that deals explicitly with the necessity of knowing how to ask the right questions: Michael Marquardt, *Leading with Questions: How Leaders Find the Right Solutions by Knowing What to Ask* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008). Even if you are not a pastor, consider this book. In my judgment, the use of ethnography is one of the most critical capacities of the leader. Essentially this book is an introduction in accessible language to the skills of interviewing, eliciting perceptions and stories from people in organizations, recognizing patterns and trends, and learning how to analyze findings for development. Ethnography (or qualitative research) provides the larger framework for the processes and skills that Block and others describe.

An emerging movement in organizations is to allow people to create their narratives or stories and to use these for decision making for evaluation, or just for fun. Storytelling is making a recovery as a way to reveal the dynamics and culture, hopes and fears in organizations. See John Seely Brown, Stephen Denning, Katalina Groh, and Laurence Prusak, *Storytelling in Organizations: Why Storytelling is Transforming 21st Century Organizations and Management* (Jordan Hill, Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005). This book should be read with books that describe the art of improvisation: for example, Keith Johnstone, *Impro for Storytellers* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Patricia Ryan Madson, *Improv Wisdom: Don't Prepare, Just Show Up* (New York: Bell Tower, Crown Publishing Group, 2005); Mick Napier, *Improvise: Scene from the Inside Out* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004).

Dallas Willard once said that "We are not here to create a community. God is creating a community." Our role, he argued, is "to redeem community by living in the kingdom of God." More pointedly, he went on to say, "When we set out to produce community, I believe that we are stepping into an area where God will not bless. It is one of the great temptations historically to suppose that human beings are capable of creating community."³¹ Joseph R. Myers, *Organic Community: Creating a Place Where People Naturally Connect* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007) enlarges on Willard's concern for churches and other organizations by discussing the nature of a space where community can be discerned and allowed to flourish. Read this book with Margaret Wheatley's books, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002); and *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2007).

Consider another cluster that deals with the ways we can ride along with change—grasping a moment of opportunity, making an intervention, empowering people to action, and so on: Michael Fullan, *Leading in a Culture of Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001); Moshe Yudkowsky. *The Pebble and the Avalanche: How Taking Things Apart Creates Revolutions* (San Francisco:

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005); David Bornstein, *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas* (London: Oxford, 2007); Ronald Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009); Sharon Daloz Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2005); Christina Baldwin and Ann Linnea, *The Circle Way: A Leader in Every Chair*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010); and Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

Read two books together and let them “speak” to each other. Begin with Malcolm Warford (ed.), *Revitalizing Practice: Collaborative Models for Theological Faculties* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008). In this book, four faculty members deal with four different issues that affect theological schools: the seminary as an endangered habitat, student learning and formation, listening and learning to teach, and the ministries for which we teach. Each chapter describes a different organizational process that can be implemented by a faculty to engage the issue. In the same year, William Bergquist and Kenneth Pawlak wrote *Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008). The purpose of the book is not to change an institutional culture but rather to work with what exists to accomplish goals. Taken together, the books will stimulate questions about the nature of institutional culture in higher education and suggest processes to work with practices in those cultures.

ENDNOTES

1. Among his many writings, see Charles Handy, *The Hungry Spirit: Beyond Capitalism, a Quest for Purpose in the Modern World* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998).
2. Value Based Management.net, last updated January 7, 2011, accessed March 5, 2011, <http://www.valuebasedmanagement.net/>.
3. James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2004).
4. Jim Collins, *How the Mighty Fall* (Jim Collins Publisher, 2009).
5. Margaret J. Wheatley, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002).
6. Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman, and Michael Quinn Patton, *Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changed* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2006).
7. *Ibid.*, 83–84.
8. *Ibid.*, 87.
9. Malcolm L. Warford, ed., *Revitalizing Practice: Collaborative Models for Theological Faculties* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008), viii.
10. Note, however, that organisms are not without structure. In fact organisms are as rigidly structured as—or even more so than—machines; their structures are just less obvious. It is a mistake when applying the organic or biological metaphor to focus on the fruit and try to force the production of it. The leader’s role is to ensure that conditions and nutrients exist for the people to grow and to bear fruit.

11. Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2009), 7.
12. See David L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005); and Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom, *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003).
13. Ibid., 22–23.
14. Jim Wallis, “Good News About a Bad Economy,” *AARP Bulletin* 51, no. 2 (March 2010): 38.
15. Peter Senge, Bryan Smith, Nina Kruschwitz, Joe Laur, and Sara Schley, *The Necessary Revolution: How Individuals and Organizations are Working Together to Create a Sustainable World* (New York: Doubleday, 2008): 9–10.
16. Linda Cannell, *Theological Education Matters: Leadership Education for the Church* (Chicago: MorgenBooks, 2006). Accessed through Amazon.com.
17. It should also be acknowledged that one of the benefits of institutions that care about knowledge and its use in the development of people, organizations, and societies is that they are expected to be places that allow time for reflection, research, and the working through of different perspectives in communities of learners. Higher education institutions serve human societies well when they do that well. However, when the responsibilities of scholars and the need to preserve, enhance, and use knowledge responsibly and effectively are confused or even equated with particular structures and a limited number of instructional approaches, we get stuck and ineffectiveness results.
18. Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things when Change is Hard* (New York: Broadway Business, 2010).
19. Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004), 61.
20. A phrase used often by Chris Argyris and Nancy Dixon.
21. To improve question construction, see such resources as Walter Bateman, *Open to Question: The Art of Teaching and Learning by Inquiry* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990); Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton, *Teaching, Questioning, and Learning* (Routledge, Chapman, Hall Inc., 1991); Neil Browne and Stuart Keeley, *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001); Chet Meyers, *Teaching Students to Think Critically* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986); Stephen Brookfield, *Becoming a Critical Reflective Teacher* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995); Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002); C. Roland Christensen and David Garvin, *Education for Judgment*, ed. Ann Sweet (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1991).
22. Juanita Brown (*The World Café*, 91) tells the story of two different approaches to asking questions in a community development effort: The less dynamic question was “Have you thought about cleaning up the river?” Apart from being the generally unproductive yes/no form, the question would not take the people to useful thinking that leads to action. In this case, the more useful questions were, “What do you see when you look at the river? How do you feel about the condition of the river? How do you explain the situation with the river to your children?” You might be able to frame other or different questions for this situation, but note the effort *not* to ask a question that betrays the agenda of the asker. The question invites the people to make their own judgments about the condition of the river. This approach is more risky for the community

development specialist because it leaves open the possibility that the people will see the problem (and hence possible solutions) differently. But, the reality is that it is most often the people who live with the situation who can see the way through the problem more clearly. The advantage of an outsider's perspective, of course, is when the insider has been blinded by bias, tradition, or familiarity.

23. See David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005); and Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom, *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003).

24. Jane Magruder Watkins and Bernard Mohr, *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination* (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2001): 43.

25. Hallie Preskill and Anne Coghlan (eds). *Using Appreciative Inquiry in Evaluation, New Directions for Evaluation*, no. 100 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

26. See Cooperrider and Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry*; Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry*; and David Cooperrider, Diana Whitney, and Jacqueline Stavros, *Appreciative Inquiry Handbook* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005).

27. Juanita Brown with David Isaacs, *The World Café: Shaping our Futures Through Conversations that Matter* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005): 188–189.

28. The World Café is built on seven principles: the setting must support interaction and engagement; the space must be seen as hospitable; questions must be significant enough to stimulate collaborative interaction; everyone's contribution is needed and expected; cross-pollination of ideas and exploration of diverse perspectives is encouraged while at the same time retaining focus on the core questions; participants are helped to listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions; and that which is discovered in the conversations is harvested, shared, and acted upon (*The World Café*, 40).

29. Question prompts such as the following may be suggested if you feel the group needs conversation helps: What did you most appreciate about your conversations at the other tables? What insights were most significant for you? What do we need more clarity about? What elements are missing? What are we not seeing? What assumptions need to be challenged in our thinking about this situation? What one thing that hasn't yet been explored would help us reach a deeper level of understanding or clarity? What deeper question(s) do we need to ask? Is our question(s) significant enough for what we face in our future? See Brown and Isaacs, *The World Café*, 93.

30. For further information see Tojo Thatchenkery, *Appreciative Sharing of Knowledge: Leveraging Knowledge Management for Strategic Change* (Ohio: TAOS Institute Publications, 2005); Nancy M. Dixon, *Common Knowledge: How Companies Thrive by Sharing What They Know* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000).

31. Articulated as part of a Ward Consultation event.

Does A Secular Age Need the Seminary?

Considerations on Alternative Forms of Ministerial Preparation

Glenn T. Miller

Bangor Theological Seminary

In our present world, alternative forms of ministerial preparation are becoming financially and spiritually necessary for churches. In this world, however, the need for some pastors to receive advanced theological training is more pressing than ever. The more-educated ministers will, in fact, carry greater educational responsibilities than in the past. Further, the church must find ways to carry out theological scholarship.

I spent most of my career teaching in and writing about theological seminaries. The schools and their place in American religious life have fascinated me for three reasons. First, the individual schools, although small institutions, are fascinating social entities that house complex and often convoluted systems of governance, styles of life, and organizational forms. Like congregations, which they resemble in many respects, they are microcosms of the religious landscape. Second, theological seminaries point to the larger macrocosm of American religious life. One can study the larger cultural location of the American churches by studying the schools and their concerns. The seminaries both participate in that larger history and reflect its outlines. American religious life is a vast free market of ideas, institutions, and social movements in which various entities and groups struggle for position and influence. Seminaries are both products of this struggle and participants in it. Third, seminaries were, at least until recently, the primary place where the scholarly study of Christianity took place and where informed people raised and discussed vital questions about the relationship of the churches to the larger intellectual, social, and cultural world. The study of seminaries, consequently, provides an opportunity to study and understand the relationship between religious faith and high culture.

The Protestant theological seminary was an American invention. In Europe and Scotland, Protestants preferred to educate their pastors in university faculties of theology. In contrast, English Christians preferred a strict liberal arts education as their primary ministerial preparation with graduates later expected to pass a theological examination, often pro forma, before their bishop. After establishment, American Protestants, now deeply divided into competing denominations, began to establish independent schools to promote their own theological particularities. Initially, these schools lacked many of the trimmings of public life, such as the right to grant degrees, but by the beginning of the twentieth century, the better seminaries were part of the American educational mainstream. The standards for their degrees, however, remained vague until the establishment of the American Association of Theo-

logical Schools in the 1930s. In the 1890s some of the seminaries, either initially associated with colleges or newly founded by universities, became university schools of theology, often called divinity schools. These included Harvard, Yale, and the University of Chicago. Such schools were self-consciously undenominational and often saw their work as a service to the broader American public. The divinity schools participated in the university world, especially in such areas as research, and they adopted the university's standards for graduate professional education. Although rarely large institutions, these university-related schools wielded significant influence, and many of their standards, such as academic tenure and tuition fees, spread to other seminaries.

The seminaries and divinity schools never educated more than 50 percent to 60 percent of American ministers. The figure is admittedly vague. American Protestantism is a complicated movement. Different theological positions generate new churches and denominations, and ministers have often reflected the entrepreneurial spirit of the larger society. Despite all the theological and cultural attempts at definition, an American Protestant minister is anyone financially supported or recognized by a denomination or congregation.

The larger American religious landscape changes shape frequently. The churches that dominate in one period in the nation's history may not in the next. Further, America has historically generated a host of new spiritual and religious movements. To speak of a secular age, consequently, is to speak cautiously. One might confuse the sidelining of a particular religious group with the decline of religion or religious activity as a whole. Perhaps a sociological definition is most useful: a secular age is one in which religious institutions have less public visibility, prestige, and authority. Marks of secularity include declining institutional memberships, fewer people willing to self-identify as adherents, and a larger percentage of people willing to say that they made key decisions apart from religious considerations. Given the role of tradition in society, such markers will show more rapid decline than the prestige of religious leaders or organizations, although social privilege in the American setting will eventually reflect the relative strength of individual social units.

Secularity, as we are using the term, reduces the market for religious leadership. Clearly, as the number and size of congregations decline, the number of ministers needed to serve those congregations will also decline. In a similar way, as fewer people identify with faith, administrators will find it more difficult to justify hiring chaplains and religious workers for hospitals, hospices, and other agencies or, as in the case of the armed services, to justify hiring as many chaplains as previously. Although some chaplaincies may be justified as interreligious ministries, little reason exists to assume that Protestant privilege will determine appointments to these positions. Indeed, the often-fractious character of Protestantism, particularly in a time of culture wars, makes it difficult to imagine Protestantism functioning again, as it once did, as a generic "civil religion." In many cases, consequently, churches, synagogues, and other religious organizations will be required to finance the remaining chaplains, a difficult obligation to meet with declining revenues. Almost by definition, secularity will make it more difficult to raise money for institutions devoted to the training of Protestant leaders.

The increasingly secularity of American life makes the role of the seminary in educating people for ministry more problematic. Seminaries are expensive institutions that have a high cost per student. While much of the expense of seminary education is borne by endowments and annual fund contributions, seminary students are paying an increasing percentage of the cost of their education in fees and tuition. The economic trap that the combination of costs and increased secularity creates is obvious: the outlay for seminary education is increasing at the very time that the possibility of recovering that outlay is declining. Fewer churches will be able to pay a salary that warrants the services of a fully trained pastor. Another sobering fact about the contemporary church is that people are increasingly favoring larger congregations. As a result, American denominations are composed of a handful of larger, more prosperous churches and a much larger cadre of very small churches. The mid-sized church, the traditional pastor-centered congregation that was the historic mainstay of the American Protestant ministry, is becoming rarer. Larger churches, like larger businesses, have an economy of scale that enables them to use personnel effectively. Again, the market for seminary graduates is becoming smaller as a shrinking percentage of churches need or can afford their services.

Moreover, secularity has decreased the other, largely indirect, benefits of church employment. The ministry appears to have less social prestige than in earlier times and to have lost its capacity to address the public arena. The political influence of individuals or institutions depends, after all, on whether they have popular or economic strength. The supposed economic security of ministry is also no longer something that we can take for granted. There are other erosions as well. As recently as the 1960s, ministry, especially in some college town congregations and in college chaplaincies, offered a place for a few to enjoy the scholarly or intellectual style of life. I remember as a young seminary professor envying Carlyle Marney, the most prominent Southern Baptist minister, and the hours that Myers Park Baptist Church and later Interpreter's House provided him for serious study. If such opportunities were rare then, they are rarer now.

I am not, of course, the only person drawing these conclusions. Since the year 2000, there has been an intense theological debate over alternative paths to ordained ministry. If the demand for every candidate for the ministry to have a full theological education, complete with four years of undergraduate school, is no longer reasonable, what preparation is possible? What preparation is desirable? What type of preparation is economically viable for positions that will be increasingly part-time or bivocational positions? How much time and effort can people withdraw from their primary economic source of income to prepare for a secondary or part-time position?

Seminaries have evaded the economic consequences of this situation by expanding the means of delivery of seminary studies. Our schools today are at the end of almost thirty years of sustained experimentation that has included branch or satellite campuses, new degree programs, electronic delivery programs, shortened or intensive courses, and a host of certificate programs. In some cases, these have enabled specific schools to stay in the game as their

core constituencies have declined. However, they have not solved the problem, only highlighted it. The issue, like the fabled cat, keeps coming back. How can a declining Christian population support a very expensive form of leadership training? Is a good use of Christian resources to continue to invest in small, struggling schools when other possibilities are available?

Many of the most serious alternatives to the full seminary course are what we might call attenuated seminary programs. Particularly in the Midwest and among some minority populations, weekend programs have grown up that profess to cover the Old and New Testaments, church history, practical theology, and pastoral practice. Often the full program takes four or more years of part-time study, usually on weekends, with the promise that the student may be able to begin actual ministry before the program is completed. Usually, local clergy with a scholarly bent teach these programs, often for a small stipend, and church conference centers or camps provide the space. Overhead is minimal. Computer connections make these programs more efficient as teachers can use the Internet to introduce important background materials and to conduct some class sessions. Some programs, especially those for Native Americans, have provided some time in residence on a college or seminary campus. The cost to the student is low, \$200 to \$400 dollars a year, and their churches or judicatories can easily bear this expense. Perhaps equally important, students do not have to sacrifice time from their regular employment and can continue to make progress in their original professions.

Are these programs equal to a seminary program? No, of course not. Yet, what is striking about them is not how far they fall short, but how far they succeed. They give pastors, especially in relatively homogenous congregations, enough material to enable them to provide their congregations with adequate leadership. Where the candidates are dedicated lifelong learners, they provide the foundations that enable pastoral leaders to use libraries and Internet resources to go further. Given a reasonably entrepreneurial spirit, that is enough to build or sustain a small congregation. For part-time ministers, particularly, these programs are a godsend.

Interestingly, the Roman Catholic Church, faced with a significant shortage of priests, has made do with a variety of people with alternative forms of training, ranging from special programs to Master of Arts degrees in various fields. These ministers do the hard work of planning liturgies, conducting religious education, counseling, and managing parish administration with little or no guidance or input from the ordained priest assigned to the parish. In short, these parish workers do everything but administer the sacraments. Many American Catholics are ready for the Church to ordain these parish directors, and I believe that the Church will ordain them within my lifetime.

The most certain sign of the growing acceptance of alternatives is the growing number of seminary certificate programs. Although some of these programs offer graduate-level instruction, most admit both college graduates and nongraduates. Like other alternatives to the Master of Divinity, the primary content of the certificate programs is an attenuated Master of Divinity program, offered at a substantially lower price. Local pastors teach many seminary certificate programs in exchange for time in the classroom and a

small stipend. While the initial rationale for these programs will be to increase declining seminary revenues and perhaps to recruit a few additional degree candidates, over the long run, these seminary-sponsored programs will lead to a reduced faculty core, perhaps concentrated in the traditional disciplines, as seminaries compensate for lower enrollments and tuition fees by cutting fixed costs. As in other alternative programs, the backbone of the instruction is or will become local ministers with interest in teaching.

The most serious flaw in many of these programs is their continued dependence on an educational model drawn from the Master of Divinity. In many cases, both the material and the pedagogy are the same as that found in the Master of Divinity, only with less content and less time. If faculty members in traditional programs have difficulty covering the sweep of their disciplines, those in alternative programs fall even far shorter. However, there are some signs that the alternative programs may be open to some of the newer trends in adult education and, in particular, in corporate training programs. In general, these trends feature more integration between classroom and employment and use past job experience as a resource for new learning.

The most serious alternative is the traditional Methodist Course of Studies. Methodists did not originally build, much less require, theological schools, and they were among the last of the mainstream churches to require seminary education for their pastors. What they provided ministerial candidates was a combination of apprenticeship and study called the Course of Study. The Course of Study required the reading of standard theological texts, including John Wesley's sermons, in a systematic way, often with required essays or other written assignments, as well as work with an experienced elder who served as the student's mentor. The various editions of the Course of Study—and it is regularly revised—have kept pace with American academic theology; hence, the Course has included many of the books read in seminaries, especially in Biblical studies. The program ensured a measure of doctrinal uniformity, biblical literacy, and substantial knowledge of Methodist practices. Recently, the Course of Study has also required a month of residence at a seminary during the summer.

Like all programs of ministerial preparation, including the seminary, the results of the Course of Study are uneven. Some of the more energetic local pastors who completed the program had the equivalent of a seminary course, and many Course of Study graduates developed substantial pastoral skills. The most serious deficiency of the Course of Study was the lack of clinical pastoral education, which often requires two or three days a week or a full summer to complete, more time than many local pastors can spare from their churches or their secular employment. Perhaps one of the less visible outcomes of the Course of Study was that the requirement of year-round study helped establish steady habits of study and intellectual growth. The three or four hours a week devoted to hard study is a habit that is much harder to break than the ebb and flow of seminary studies that often require seasons of intense labor, as assignments come due, followed by periods of comparative neglect.

Like most alternative programs, the Course of Study is inexpensive. The basic costs, not counting the summer session, are the cost of materials and some of the time of an already established elder. Even the summer sessions are

comparatively inexpensive. Neither college nor seminary facilities are fully used in the summer months. Consequently, the number of schools eager to add thirty or forty paying summer customers in their dormitories and dining halls is large. The summer faculties, like the mentors, are practicing elders and moonlighting seminary professors. Where the mentors and teachers are well-chosen—and they usually are—the Course of Studies pastor has the benefit of a skilled senior pastor who can help, not only with the academic studies but also with their implications for practical ministry. Other Wesleyan churches have similar paths to ministry.

The successes of these alternative programs have led me to believe that we need to separate three concepts that we often use interchangeably: ministerial preparation, theological education, and theological scholarship. Ministerial preparation is what a candidate needs to serve a congregation or other ministry site. Increasingly, I am convinced that we can prepare many, perhaps most, candidates through various alternative paths that will enable them to do “the job” with some chance of success at a lower cost. Malcolm Warford, president of Bangor Theological Seminary when I began here, used to tell prospective students that they could learn all they need to function in nine months to a year, and he appears to have been right in that assessment. In fact, insofar as the proposed alternatives place more emphasis than the seminary does on organizational leadership, conflict resolution, and personal growth, they may be able to do a better job than many seminaries in meeting congregations’ expectations. ATS developed its Profiles of Ministry program from questionnaires circulated to judicatory and local church leaders. Almost all of the criteria that the program developed are “characterological” in nature with the ability to do work on time ranked as high or higher than biblical literacy. Since many of the alternative paths require a close attention to scheduling and detail that many seminaries do not, they may prepare people to meet the expectations of parishioners better than the seminaries.

The alternative programs have led me to reconsider what I mean by the phrase *theological education*. It is one of the classic weasel terms in the literature about seminaries, and one is tempted to say that it means what we want it to mean. My good friend, Edward Farley, professor of theology emeritus at Vanderbilt, has been very useful in helping me separate theological education from ministerial preparation. Theological education, as I will use the term, is education in the arts and sciences of Christian scholarship. A person who has a theological education is one who has used the tools and methods of disciplined inquiry to dig as deeply into the substance and practices of faith as time and resources permit. The outcome of a good theological education is insight into God’s Word and God’s Will and not some professional outcome. Some people with a good theological education make good pastors; others do not. Some make effective denominational leaders; others do not. Their skills lie in theological and religious discernment.

Part of the reason that theological education is necessary is that churches easily fall victim to their own desire to please the world, intellectually and morally. One need only consider the liberal culture religion of the 1930s and 1940s or the popularity of prosperity theology among contemporary evan-

gelicals. This problem may be particularly acute in the United States and the Two-Thirds World where religious organizations compete with each other in an open religious market. The reason for providing theological education is that theologically trained leaders may keep the Christian faith alive and vital in a complex and sometimes threatening world. The theologically educated are those who are taught to look beneath the immediate context and find the deeper truths in Scripture and tradition. As in earlier times, those who have made a comprehensive study of the faith are the people responsible for keeping Christianity, Christian. As more and more ministers pass through alternative means of ministerial preparation, those with a thorough theological education will be the primary teachers of the majority of ministers. They will also be the source for the whole church of those in-depth biblical studies, serious historical inquiries, and vital diagnoses of society's problems that are essential to the Church's mission. In addition, the theologically educated ministry will be the principal providers of future ministerial preparation, as they will form the basic cadre of mentors for alternative programs.

As a historian, I am always looking for past examples of what I mean. Let me mention some of those who embody this idea for me, albeit in different times and different places. The first was the great Puritan, Richard Baxter, whose *Reformed Pastor* remains one of the classic meditations on the work of the ministry. For Baxter, the pastor was primarily a person of the study. In the study, ministers greeted individuals in the midst of their books and papers and used the knowledge gleaned from these resources to guide and direct their congregants' spiritual lives. Every Sabbath, the minister would leave his study to mount the throne of the pulpit and instruct the whole community with the fruits of his or her learning. In addition—and here Baxter reminds us of many current educated rural pastors—Baxter was a leader in the local associations and other meetings of ministers, always ready to open up the Word of God to those faithful in the work. Baxter's work as a pastor-educator was effective. After the Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660, the government excluded the Puritans from the universities where they had previously enjoyed social and intellectual privileges. In the midst of that loss, Baxter proved to his fellow dissenters that faithful life was possible, perhaps even desirable, without the trappings of power and class. The loss of privilege was not the loss of substance.

Jonathan Edwards was another theologically driven pastor. To be honest, Edwards was not always an effective congregational leader. His church dismissed him from his Northampton pulpit in an argument that many people, then and now, saw as a senseless dispute between pastor and people, and some of his sermons lacked the gentle touch that might have made his message one of grace and him a bearer of graciousness. Yet, Edwards was able to stir the minds of New England's rural clergy as no one had for almost a century. He dared to tackle the nasty theological problems posed by the Great Awakening and the inherited Reformed tradition. His little book, *A Faithful Narrative*, was one of the principal inspirations of the Great Awakening in America and of the Evangelical Revival in England. Pastors as different as the self-educated Baptist Isaac Backus and the university trained John Wesley learned the craft

of guiding people to saving faith through his writings. George Whitefield, the great revivalist and church leader, made a pilgrimage to Northampton to sit at the feet of the master.

After two Congregationalists, permit me to introduce a Baptist, Harry Emerson Fosdick. The 1920s were a period of spiritual and theological confusion. The new biology had shaken the faith of many, and the new social sciences seemed on the verge of explaining away the benefits of faith. Even the Bible, the foundation of Protestant life, seemed destined to die from the thousand cuts of biblical and historical critics. It was a difficult time, and few ministers were prepared to address the issues with the seriousness that they deserved. Fosdick's nationally prominent position, both as a celebrated New York pastor and as a part-time seminary teacher, permitted him to speak and write convincingly about the contemporary spiritual situation. Ministers as far away as California and Maine followed his Sunday afternoon radio sermons religiously. If some of his theological positions seem distant from us today, they were not for his fellow pastors. His works—whether books, articles, numerous personal appearances, or radio programs—encouraged many clergy to stay at their posts, to continue to guide their people, and to provide inspiration to those outside their flocks.

Carlyle Marney had a similar effect on my generation of young Southern Baptist pastors. Marney was an interesting combination of Texas populist, ethical prophet, and careful scholar. Marney could take the most obscure streams in the Bible and make their meaning appear self-evident and obvious. There was nothing up his sleeves, of course. His sermons and books came from hours of work in his study with his beloved books. An inveterate talker, Marney had the gift of conversation as well as literary talent. If many of those who talked with him or read his books and sermons lacked his sophisticated knowledge of biblical criticism and modern thought, his plain style enabled them to gather fruit from scholars whose German names they could not pronounce.

As the number of pastors with a serious theological education declines, the importance of the church's more scholarly pastors will proportionally increase. Each denomination will need to salt its fields with able students of Scripture and tradition who can teach, counsel, and help deepen the pastors of their district. This was the original function of the district superintendent in the Methodist Church and the various rural deans and canons in the Episcopal Church. Reformed Christians, whose communities often were in the minority in such countries as France, Poland, and Hungary, united education with polity. Scottish Presbyterians saw their meetings of elders primarily as occasions for education, not merely as meetings for discipline and administration, and Congregational Associations in Old and New England once served a similar function. I know that many Reformed Christians idealize the work of John Calvin—and he was an able theologian and teacher—but the educational practices that united much of the Reformed world, in fact, began in Zurich and Strasbourg with Zwingli and Bucer. These pioneers invented the prophesying or corporate biblical study that enabled the Reformed churches to fill their pulpits quickly with biblically literate ministers.

The pastor-theologian program, sponsored by Lilly Endowment Inc., may turn out to be one of the most important contemporary projects in theological education. The program seeks to bring together theologically interested pastors and scholars for extended discussions. The quality of the presentations has been outstanding, a true graduate school experience, for those ministers who take the theological task seriously. In many ways, the program is what theological educators envisioned earlier when they so glibly wrote about continuing education as a mark of ministry, but unlike most continuing education programs, this one was devoted to the life of the mind on the highest level.

Classically, the Reformed and Lutheran churches believed that every church should have a theologically educated pastor. The quest for a learned ministry has been one of the constants in the history of the reformation churches. The pastor, decked out in academic robes and often hooded, was almost as much a mark of these churches as the rabbi with his reading desk and pen was of Judaism. Many of us sense that the ideal has eroded, as ideals often do, into formalism. This is not the place to debate seminary academic standards, but only to note that seminaries, forced to admit and retain every possible student, have not been rigorous institutions. Yet, when all is said and done, the reformation churches will be challenged to find ways to maintain their ethos and particular genius. Historians are bad prophets, but my guess is that the network of theologically trained pastors will be even more important in these churches than in Baptist, Methodist, or Disciples churches. If, for a while, the new forms of ministerial preparation will seem like exile to some in Reformed and Lutheran circles, just as their exclusion from the university seemed to Richard Baxter and his Puritan friends, the new situation may lead these denominations to cherish their more theologically astute pastors and to use them effectively.

One of the most constant themes in my work on the seminary has been the importance of the seminary as a center for Christian thought and scholarship. By serious theological scholarship, I mean the application of the best available contemporary standards of study and thought to the substance of Christian tradition, Scripture, and practice. Perhaps because my own denomination has never been able to educate more than half its pastors, I have always had an inkling that serious theological education was not for everyone who wanted to serve God or preach the gospel. Paradoxically, that has not made me less appreciative of serious theological scholarship, but more enthusiastic about its necessity. Despite all the disputes about the Bible, we know more about that wonderful book than people in any generation since Christ, and I have no illusion that anything less than the best-trained minds can probe the theological meaning of present-day physics and biology or illumine the religious and ethical currents in our current culture. Years ago, my friend, Mark Noll, published a book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. The scandal was, of course, that there was no evangelical mind. One advantage I had over Noll was that I spent much of my career outside of the evangelical ghetto. I know that the deeper scandal was that there was no Protestant mind in America. If the evangelical churches that I have served throughout my career often buried the gospel in the sentimentality of praise songs and pious phrases, the liberal churches that

I have also served buried it in cheap psychology and life adjustment. Both fell prey to American individualism as the hidden norm for theological thought. The term *my theology* is too often used as a substitute for hard thought about the substance of faith, given in Scripture and tradition and illumined by right reason. The fact that individualized religious reflection represents a particular person's theology gives it no more status than would use of the terms *my physics*, or *my poetics*. If there is no content, nothing—no matter how thoughtfully considered—remains nothing.

Since the 1980s, thoughtful observers have noted that serious Christian and religious thought has passed from the seminaries to the university departments of religion. Every time I go to the large book fair at the AAR, the truth of this observation receives informal confirmation. While some seminary-based scholars publish, authors in colleges and universities publish more and more of the creative work. There are reasons for the comparative silence of the seminaries. Seminaries are predominately small institutions, with small faculties, that have multiple degree programs, often in distant locations. Schools with fewer than 100 full-time student equivalents may offer as many as six or seven master's degrees and a doctorate or two. Their faculties can only produce a modicum of serious work. They do not have the time to sit and think, to read and consider, over a wide enough range to do the groundbreaking work that produces originality. Even in the ministerial fields, where the seminary's expertise ought to be unquestioned, nonseminary people often do the fundamental thought that will change the direction of the churches.

I admit that I have fought tooth and nail the migration of serious scholarship to the universities. The Union Seminary of the 1950s and 1960s, Herbert Gezork's Andover Newton, and the aborted beginnings that we made in Southern Baptist scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s formed my sense of the possibility of Christian scholarship in the seminary context. If I had an ideal, it was that of a Union freed from its dogmatic liberalism and able to encompass the best of Protestant orthodoxy as well as its liberal creed, or perhaps of a Southern Baptist seminary with sufficient freedom fully to use its considerable resources. Those were extraordinary times, even in the lives of those institutions, and I confused the exception with the rule. Nonetheless, the ideal died slowly. The basic mantra of my years as a seminary dean was that if we could just get enough financial stability, long enough sabbaticals, or sufficient academic freedom, seminary faculties could publish at a university level. Yet, one cannot serve an unstable market and spend hours in thought at the same time. At a meeting of the Christian Life Commission in the 1960s, Carlyle Marney prayed:

Thou knowest, dear Lord of our lives, that for fifty of Thy-my years, in ignorance, zest, and sin, I lived as if creation and I had no limit. I lived, and wanted, and was, as if I had forever—without regard for time, or wit, or strength, or need, or limit or endurance, and as if sleep were a needless luxury and digestion an automatic process.

But, like Marney, my own energy has run out, and with its passing, the awareness that the only way my vision of the seminary could have been ful-

filled would have been to enlist many people like Marney and myself willing to go full tilt, 24/7. Even at full throttle, despite my efforts, I have only produced a handful of books and articles, and most of those serving seminaries have produced the same or less.

Reality forces us to consider alternatives. That evangelical scholars in the 1960s would penetrate the university seemed almost impossible. Serious Christian scholarship appeared confined to the seminary, if to any place at all. The secular universities and colleges proved, however, more open to diversity in their faculties than I had expected, and the pluralism of university faculties has proved a plus. Serious Christian scholarship cannot occur today without intellectual discussion with people of different faiths and those with none. Perhaps the tools and techniques of scholarship, one of the enlightenment's abiding gifts to later generations, will provide the framework for a theology that can reach new heights in its discernment of the presence of God.

Like many Christian conservatives, I revere the great thinkers of the thirteenth century who were able to weave an apparently seamless robe of faith and reason. That the Reason that they employed was that of Aristotle, not always as friendly to faith as the companion system of Plato, makes their achievement all the more remarkable. It is as if they had confronted the devil with his own tools and made the playing field even. The only way forward for the medieval scholastics, however, was to embrace the Jewish and Muslim scholars who held the secret to understanding the man that Aquinas called "the philosopher." If the Roman church sinned by its veneration of the thirteenth-century achievement—after all, the phrase *perennial philosophy* or *theology* is almost by definition impossible—Protestants sinned by not standing in holy silence before an intellectual miracle.

We face the same task as St. Thomas faced: we must weave the fine treads of cultural reason that bind human discourse together with the substance of faith and show that the best that we know comes together with the Christian truths that we profess. Chesterton wrote in his essay on Thomas: "After the great example of St. Thomas, the principle stands or ought always to have stood established; that we either not argue with a man at all or we must argue on his grounds and not ours." The church must meet the world on the world's own ground or not at all. If Christianity becomes the crutch of the intellectually weak or of the politically ambitious, it deserves all the scorn that its adversaries have poured out on it.

I would not commit the intellectual sin of pretending that the present-day university is more than it is. One remembers the wag who said that the university was a heating system surrounded by a parking lot, and the discussion in the faculty lounge is as often about sports and children as in any office. Yet, if serious thinking is to be found about the human condition, hopefully, such talk may occur where serious people are equipped to think with discipline, clarity, and resources. In addition, the modern research university, with its libraries, computers, and serious students, is one of the few places where such people and resources are to be found. The existence of a possibility or potentiality, of course, is not the same as an actuality. Wastrels and the lazy have ignored great blessings and opportunities. If Christianity is a viable faith for

our world, it must be viable in the midst of the world's wisdom and not only in protected enclaves. After all, the Christian claim is that Christ is the Way and the Truth, not simply a convenient peg for the religious imagination.

To preserve the place of faith in the discussion, the various denominations will have to take more financial responsibility. The cost of training and deploying a Christian scholar continues to increase, and the qualifications for that position, both spiritual and mental, are rising. In addition to the obvious need for scholarships and fellowships, the churches need to find ways to fund more places like the Center for Theological Inquiry at Princeton that enable junior scholars to develop and flourish. If Christians are to compete in the larger intellectual marketplace, they must be as well-equipped and supported as possible. Perhaps some institutions, no longer able to sustain themselves as places of ministerial preparation, will undertake this challenge. The need is great.

Like many evangelicals, I combine a short-ranged pessimism with a long-ranged optimism. In the short run, the current secularity will be a time that tries the soul of the church and sees the decline and perhaps even the closing of many institutions. All institutions that human beings construct are dreams frozen in the realities of past structures, laws, customs, and habits. The decline of institutions is, perforce, the ending of some visions and the beginning of others. I sense that we are in a time of rapid change in theological schools as new alternative means of ministerial preparation become common, even in the Reformation churches, and new standards for ministry evolve. If I can sense some broad outlines of the future before those engaged in ministerial preparation and in the work of theological education, the particulars remain obscure. Doubtless, some schools that everyone sees as being firm as a rock will go into decline and may even close; other schools that everyone considers to be at death's door will survive. Some may redefine their missions in ways that allow them to survive as schools, as many formerly Christian colleges did, although without an explicitly Christian character. Others will learn to live with greatly restricted means. In a world in which survival goes to the quick, those that travel light have the advantage.

Where is my optimism? In part, it lies in the amazing capacity of Christianity to revive itself. We are living in the midst of a period of great Christian outreach in which new peoples are entering the faith and bringing with them new and fresh ideas. The churches of Asia and Africa are growing, and the Russian Church, once given up as all but dead, is reviving. God is doing wonderful things in our world, and God is doing it without the trappings that Americans and Europeans have long considered necessary. More people know the name of Christ than ever before. In the coming years, we will learn much from these new churches, and these new churches will learn much from us. Both, after all, exist where there is a free market in religious faith and participate in a competitive religious framework. Further, American churches have shown remarkable capacity for renewal. Although the religious landscape constantly shifts and changes—no one in 1800 would have prophesied that within a century, more Methodists than Congregationalists would live in New England—new forms of faith are always rising phoenix-like out of the ashes. Will God do a wondrous work in New England once again? I do not know. For some things,

we can only pray. One thing I do know. The great drama of bringing people to saving faith—the divine comedy that Jonathan Edwards called the History of the Work of Redemption—has not seen its final act. The churches’ glory days lie not in their past but in their future.

Glenn T. Miller is Waldo Professor Emeritus of Ecclesiastical History at Bangor Theological Seminary in Bangor, Maine. This paper was originally presented as a “departure lecture” when Miller completed his teaching and administrative career.

Waiting for a Divine Bailout: Theological Education for Today and Tomorrow

Alice Hunt

Chicago Theological Seminary

Almost everything about theological education has changed and faces continual change. The basic assumptions of theological education, including presuppositions about the business model, outcomes, and curriculum of theological education no longer function. And yet, the model is slow to change. This essay examines what brought theological education to this place as well as reflecting on the current state of theological education in light of Psalm 40.

When I was in prayerful consideration of accepting the responsibilities of this presidency, I called many of you to talk about the state of theological education. We had wonderful conversations about the nature of theological education—concluding that theological education is about changing the way we see and be in the world. We talked about the academy, communities of faith, the church, traditions, globalization, and the public square. But we didn't talk about the fact that I would wake up every morning at 3 a.m. (or 4 a.m. when I get lucky) thinking about theological education. What awakens me is the liminality of it all with regard to how we educate women and men for religious leadership now and for the future. The financial situation alone is enough to keep us all up at night. The fact of the matter is—we've got issues. Back-in-the-day—if you had a healthy endowment—you were set! Nowadays, depending on the endowment, payout is shaky at best. Back-in-the-day we needed to produce more and more PhDs to fill positions in the academy. Now the academy is producing an overabundance of PhDs for very few jobs, and we have master's-level students graduating with significant debt to enter jobs paying an average of \$34,000 a year. Plus, we aren't sure if we are meeting the religious needs of our communities of faith or society. The list goes on and on. Clearly, our habitual responses are not working in this transitional period. When we collect our thoughts about these matters, we come pretty quickly to the point where we say that we need to be doing something differently. We've been knowing for a while that we are facing shifts. Why aren't we doing something differently? What are we waiting for?

I waited and waited and waited. I waited for HaShem.
Then HaShem turned toward me and listened to my cry for help.
And then HaShem brought me up out of the roaring pit.
From the deep mire of mud, HaShem lifted me and set my feet on solid ground—making steady my step.
HaShem gave a new song in my mouth—a song of praise unto HaShem.

Psalm 40¹

Waiting for a divine bailout

In the pit

We find ourselves waiting—as individuals and as institutions. Waiting. Maybe we are waiting for something new to happen. Maybe we are waiting to analyze the challenges and opportunities. Maybe we are waiting for things to be like they used to be. We find ourselves—in theological education—waiting. The issues are tough and the context is complicated. It is easy to look like you are depending on God—easy to look like you are waiting on God—when you are in the midst of prosperity, when you have many choices and opportunities: the stock market is up so endowment is good, students are pouring into classes, and so forth. But it is not so easy to wait on God in the lonely, muddy, messy pit. It is easy to wait on God when all is going well—like we *think* it was “back in the good ol’ days.” But often waiting does not happen in easy spaces. Waiting happens where we cannot see clearly. Waiting happens when we can only look at the unknown—watching but not seeing—where things are messy—when the underlying assumptions have changed. As Alan Greenspan said in giving testimony about a very real and recent crisis (paraphrased), “I was blown away. My worldview, my fundamental assumptions, were turned upside down.” And this is where we in theological education find ourselves—in the midst of concerns or even despair: crashing funding structures, decreasing enrollment, decreasing employment opportunities for our graduates, unclarified needs. All of us engaged in theological education may just be looking at the sides of a pit. And sometimes we may not even recognize we are in a pit—that we are waiting in this pit. Or, if we’ve had hints, we might ignore the hints, pretending consciously or subconsciously that we do not see the hard issues at hand. We simply do not have time or energy to deal with them. And besides, we are not the ones who created the pit. We just fell in accidentally while we were going along, doing our job. Notice that for our psalmist in the biblical text, there is no indication of blame. There is simply a recognition of the pit. As my father used to say to me when I was a child (and he still says it to me these days), “It is not what happens to you, Alice, that matters; it is how you respond to what happens that matters.” And, of course, some of us may desperately want to climb out of the pit. We are impatient people. We want to hurry to solutions, maybe sometimes even resorting to seemingly quick fixes that eventually exacerbate the problems. But that does not work either. And we still find ourselves in the pit . . . waiting.

Perhaps the psalmist suggests to us that it is in this pit that we learn new ways of being, perhaps even a new way of being in relationship with God. It is a relationship with God that is not dependent on prosperity or even on clear order. When you are in the deep, dark, roaring pit and you cry out to God—Oh God, how much longer must I wait? I do not understand, God. How long, God? How much longer must we wait?—it is in *that* space that we learn new ways to be.

Think about waiting on a personal level. Waiting sometimes can be difficult—intense and painful. Perhaps there are times when we wait on God, and it seems like God has departed. We do not experience the presence of God.

We feel empty, and we may assume God is not here. And, in the midst of this waiting, this apparent silence from God, our narcissistic interventions come trickling their way in, pushing us to a resorting to spaces of dysfunctional comfort. Such is this waiting on God. Perhaps this waiting is indeed our reality for theological education today. We are waiting as we try to understand our new reality. So how is it that we should see this pit? Please allow me to describe what I believe are the contours of this theological education pit that, perhaps, are hard to see as a pit because we've done some redecorating and made ourselves feel at home. Let's think about how this came to be—take a look at some of the movements that helped create (and even decorate) the waiting pit.

Theological education as we understand it today came into being in a very different era. We do not have to delve far into the religious life and history of the United States to know the model under which we operate today came about in a time when Protestant denominationalism flourished. The core of what we know of as theological education formed at a time when the conversations were between history and philosophy. We came into being to train ministers (men at that time) for pastoral ministry. Denominational funding formed the primary support system for seminaries. Curricula developed around preparing men for eventual pastorates in tall-steeple churches. These ministers were revered in society. Churches grew. Denominations grew. But now, mainline Protestant denominations and churches are in decline, rendering our financial and regulatory models no longer viable. Traditional denominational and church loyalty no longer function. Theological education is deployed in numerous vocational settings. So we must see clearly now that the model that built us will not sustain us. And we, as theological educators, are living lives of quiet desperation as we try to understand, as we try to survive and grow.

Furthermore, while generational analyses present somewhat oversimplified, broad categories, the ways in which various generations engage religious life reflect wide variety. Concurrently, the place of Christianity as a singular dominant religious tradition in US society continues to shift toward one of sitting side by side with other faith traditions. Theological education needs to respond to both of these issues. And yet . . . we wait.

Consider the whole of higher education. Instructional and administrative costs continue to increase as a percentage of total expenditures while, at the same time, expenditures for student support (scholarships and tuition remission) remain flat at best. We have revenue issues on several fronts. We face declining enrollment, particularly as the number of students entering MDiv programs continues to decline. Gifts from religious organizations to support theological education continue to decline. The cost of educating one student at our mainline schools under our current business model averages around \$46,000 a year. Technological advances continue to impact many aspects of life, including the landscape of theological education. Access to information creates multiple challenges and opportunities for persons seeking to grow in theological reflection. Demand for online education continues to increase. Theological libraries (and perhaps theological schools) are moving from an

acquisition-based model to an access-based model.² In fact, technological advances may force a change in our very modes of existence. Theological education must be prepared to respond to rapid change. The impact on curricula and pedagogy can be seen in part but, in all likelihood, the most significant impact remains to be seen. We in theological education must attend to these changes. And still . . . we wait.

Churches are not hiring in the same way they did back-in-the-day. Of course, descriptions of back-in-the-day almost always include oversimplifications, and I acknowledge that up front. Nonetheless, back-in-the-day, churches hired pastors trained in their own denominational seminaries. Today, churches may hire ministers trained at many sorts of seminaries. But that's not all. The alternative paths to ministry continue to increase. But that's not all. Sometimes churches are training ministers in-house. But that's not all. Sometimes churches are hiring ministers who are not trained at all. Each of these scenarios presents different challenges for us, for the churches, for society, and for religion. Theological education must be attentive to these patterns. We must be strong advocates for rigorously educated ministers and teachers. We must advocate internally and externally, even in the public square. But, for some reason, we are waiting.

And consider how people, members of communities of faith and members of society at large, engage religious leaders. Consider how *that* phenomenon has changed. We can readily see a larger societal pattern. Take the medical profession for example. Back-in-the-day, say, my grandparents' day, when you were ill, you went to the doctor. The doctor, held in high esteem in society, examined you and dictated what you were to do to address your illness. Patients rarely asked questions and rarely questioned the prescription. Today, the relationship has changed. Some patients take advantage of the opportunity to do significant research. As a patient, I want to know as much as I can. I learn on my own. (From *where* is the key!) I ask questions. I may or may not do what the doctor says. Without too much effort, we can find similarities in how people approach religious leadership and understanding. Our work in theological education is to attend to two aspects of religious leadership. We must be about preparation—rigorous education of religious leadership. But that is not enough. We must also be about what all people learn—people in communities of faith *and* people in society. And still . . . we wait.

Academic structures are shifting as well. Those structures that supported theological education in the past can no longer maintain that support. Back-in-the-day, the classical disciplines each had their distinct responsibilities—and privileges. Now, we live in a world of interdisciplinarity. Even though our reward structures have not caught up with this phenomenon, the boundaries of scholarship are fluid, organic, and dynamic. We now know that the unnamed core of “real” scholarship is neither the “unnamed” nor the “core.” The theological education that formed around the history-philosophy conversation remains necessary but is insufficient on its own. We live in a complicated, multivalent, overlapping, intersecting, messy world. We have shifted from notions of “us” all melding into “one,” transcending all difference, into contexts of naming and engaging, into work that is play—and play that is work—even-

tuating in mutual transformation. We, in theological education, *must* shift our assumptions. And yet . . . we wait.

Shifts have taken place, and are taking place, on a societal level as well. Back-in-the-day, theological education operated out of the categories, languages, and assumptions of a dominant, privileged view of normativity. That normativity represented, by and large, the values of mainline Protestantism. I've been to see the production *Wicked* several times in this beautiful city of Chicago. What a fabulous production. At one point, Elphaba, the wicked witch of the west, stands in a moment of awakening, seeing that what she had believed about the Wizard—that he would save the world if only he knew what was going on—just was not the case. She says to him, her naivety shattered: "So you lied to them." He replies, "Only verbally. Besides, they were the lies they wanted to hear! The truth is not a thing of fact or reason. The truth is just what everyone agrees on. Where I'm from, we believe all sorts of things that aren't true. We call it 'history.' A man's called a 'traitor'—or 'liberator.' A rich man's a 'thief'—or 'philanthropist.' Is one a 'crusader'—or 'ruthless invader'? It's all in which label is able to persist."

Moving away from our accepted categories of normativity is not easy, to say the least. If, however, we are not intentional about examining our categories and our assumptions, we will fail to survive. And more importantly, we will fail to meet the call of the gospel. Theological education must take huge strides to move from a status of reluctant follower to bold leadership in the disruption of modes of oppression and in the construction of a new way of being. And still . . . we wait.

Another shift appears in our relationships with larger society. The public sphere, the private sphere, and the religious realm overlap and interact in wonderful and mysterious ways. Where public and private were marked by certain distinctions back-in-the-day, those distinctions today are blurred, due in part to shifts in technology as well as other factors. Where religion played an appropriate, understood, and specified role in each distinct sphere, now we see the public and the private intertwine with each other, branching out here and there, and religion multiplexes with them, defining and being redefined, due in part to globalization, due in part to cutting-edge scholarship, and due in part to shifts in the arts. Theological education must explicitly operate out of a new understanding, one that assumes individual and corporate as convergent and overlapping. Major media outlets perpetuate the provision of space for certain voices. Sound bites predominate. The role of theology as it relates to activism and the public square continues to prove a challenge for mainline theological education. We must respond. And yet . . . we wait.

We might characterize the back-in-the-day relationships among religion, seminaries, church, and society as a circle, smoothly rolling forward in the name of progress, with seminaries serving the church which, in turn, gave witness in society. Today the more appropriate geometric figure is probably a triangle: communities of faith, academy, and public square. None strictly leads the other and none strictly follows the other. Theological education must be operative and accountable in each. I believe it is called a creative exchange.³ And the academy must find ways to provide accountability for religious lead-

ers and communities of faith, and the academy must not abdicate its responsibility in the public square. We must be about speaking—and loudly. And we, as the providers of theological education, must hear and see—not just watch to understand and meet—the religious needs of communities of faith and society. And still . . . we wait.

Finally, look at the cultural shifts that have moved seminaries into this season of agonizing waiting. The shifts all are pragmatic in their own way, some appearing more pragmatic on their faces. Let's take the financing of seminaries, for example. Clearly, economic models for theological education have changed and continue to change. Denominational support, which built and sustained seminaries, continues to decrease, as noted above. We have been living with and rehearsing this challenge for some years now. Theological education must establish new funding structures. And yet we are still waiting, hoping we figure out what to do.

Getting out of the pit

I waited and waited and waited and waited. Then . . . God turned to me. God looked at me. God listened to me. God heard my cry. And God brought me up out of the roaring pit. Look at what is being pictured here. The psalmist says: I waited and waited and waited and waited. We can understand that the psalmist was crying out, maybe loudly, maybe in a whimper, but we do not get a hint at the content of the cries. At some point, we can see that something happened to incline God to turn. And here may be a crucial point. The picture painted here is one in which the psalmist was at a point in relationship with God where the psalmist realized God could hear, where the psalmist could cry out and where God could and would turn, and look, and listen, and hear. The picture we get is not of God turning and looking and listening and hearing someone who was in a pit of self-pity. Instead, God turned from watching to seeing and from listening to hearing the one in the pit who was focused on developing a relationship with God. And I believe *that* is what *we* are doing now—understanding our waiting as well as what we need to do in preparation to be out of the pit, so that we are ready.

So, how do we go about our waiting? We can mope while we wait. We can whine while we wait. We can bring destruction on ourselves and others while we wait. We can try to claw our way up the sides of the pit on our own while we wait. But none of these ways makes waiting shorter or gets us out of the pit. How do we wait? We wait by focusing on building our relationship with God, by seeing our work as our worship of God. We wait by making ourselves open and vulnerable to God, to our contexts, to the needs around us. And we wait. We wait by being our best selves, by doing our best to be the leadership we educate our students to be.

The psalmist provides a picture of what will happen after the waiting. God brought me up out of the roaring pit. From the deep mire of mud, God lifted me and set my feet on solid ground, making steady my step. That steadying on solid ground can only come after the relationship that was built by the waiting in the pit. God set my feet on solid ground, making steady my step.

And then there was something that happened for the psalmist after that. The psalmist says, God put a new song in my mouth. I've been thinking about a saying lately, mentioned to me by a friend, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got." We cannot sing the same ol' tune. We know differently now because we've been in the pit. We've waited and waited. And God has turned to us and God has heard our cry and God has pulled us out. And God has set our feet on solid ground. God has made our step steady. And we have to sing a new song, one that tells it like it is now, one that reflects our understanding of God now. Singing the old song will throw us right back into that pit. God will lift us up, and steady us, and put a *new* song in our mouths. We will *have* to, be compelled to, sing the new song. Nothing else will do. Our old stereotypes will be shattered. We will have a new understanding, a new way of being.

I waited and waited and waited. I waited for God. Then God turned toward me and listened to my cry for help. God brought me up out of the roaring pit. From the deep mire of mud, God lifted me and set my feet on solid ground, making steady my step. Then God gave a new song in my mouth, a song of praise unto my God.

Alice Hunt is president of Chicago Theological Seminary. This essay is modified from the sermon preached in October 2008 as she was installed as the twelfth president of Chicago Theological Seminary.

ENDNOTES

1. Thank you to Rev. Michael Walrond, pastor of First Corinthian Baptist Church in Harlem, for helpful conversations about Psalm 40.
2. Thanks to Bill Hook, associate dean of libraries, director of the divinity library, and professor of theological librarianship at Vanderbilt University, for raising this concept for me.
3. Victor Anderson, *Creative Exchange: A Constructive Theology of African American Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

The Future has Arrived: Changing Theological Education in a Changed World

Daniel O. Aleshire

The Association of Theological Schools

This article looks at theological education in the context of the rapidly changing landscape of North American religion. In the face of altered Christian identities, religious pluralism, and the shifting of the center of gravity of worldwide Christianity away from North America, Aleshire advocates diversifying traditional gold standard educational practices to embrace new models and strategies, each with its own educational integrity and capacity to provide the range of religious leadership that the future will require.

The future has arrived. It's an illogical statement, I know. The future is always arriving, so it can never be portrayed in the past tense. Most times, the future arrives as the present passes, like the sun rising in the morning after it sets in the evening. This time, it doesn't seem to be happening that way. It is as if the future has moved faster than the present and the sun has risen in the east before it has set in the west. The future has plopped itself full blown into the present; it has arrived.

Thomas Friedman has told us that the earth has gotten flat; the financial markets have told us that, in a globalized economy, national debt in Greece can depress seminary endowments in North America; the demographers have told us that racial/ethnic composition of the North American population has changed more quickly than anticipated; and flattened mountains in Appalachia and oily waters in the Gulf of Mexico tell us that our fossil-fueled past cannot extend far into the future.

The change has been rapid and ubiquitous, and ATS member schools have been affected by both the scope and the pace. Twenty years ago, theological schools were barely on the Internet; now thousands of students are completing courses online. Schools spent significant amounts of money to wire their campuses just as wireless technology made it possible to do the same thing at significantly less expense. More has changed than technology. Religion has changed, higher education has changed, and students have changed. The Association and its member schools have some catching up to do. *The future has arrived.*

What are the responses that will make theological schools as effective in the future as they have been in the past? Because change has been so massive, theological schools need to focus their attention on the areas where their efforts can have greatest impact: North American religion and the practices of theological education. Religion is awash with fundamental change, but it remains to be seen how faithfully theological schools will change.

This Biennial Meeting is designed differently than most, and this is the only plenary address. I apologize that I'm the speaker, but I have to be here and make the same salary whether I speak or not. I may not be good, but I'm the cheapest option available. The other plenary sessions of this meeting are devoted to the business of the Association and Commission and sorting through proposed changes to accrediting standards and procedures, considering revised policy statements, and discussing the ways in which theological degrees should be changed. As we begin, I want to share my perceptions about how religion has changed and speculate about responses that ATS schools should consider making.

The changed world of North American religion

Religion has changed in North America, if you haven't noticed.

Denominations

Denominations have changed and are changing. The reunion of two US Presbyterian church bodies that formed the Presbyterian Church USA is twenty-five years old, and in little more than two decades, membership is down by one-third. The Assemblies of God, on the other hand, has grown each of the past nineteen years and now equals the PCUSA in size. The Unitarian Universalist Association has charted membership gains during the past two decades, while the US membership of the Church of the Nazarene¹ has been relatively flat. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America membership has declined gradually for many of the years following the merger that formed it,² and membership in the massive Southern Baptist Convention³ plateaued during this past decade and registered slight declines in the most recent years. The United Church of Canada has lost almost half of its membership since its mid-twentieth-century peak. Even stable numbers mask considerable internal change. For example, while Roman Catholics have constituted about 25 percent of the American population across these two decades, almost 25 percent of adults who grew up Roman Catholic no longer consider themselves to be Catholic. (No Protestant denomination has as high a retention rate as the Roman Catholics.) The percentage of the population that is Roman Catholic has been stable because of the large number of immigrants.⁴ Some denominations are stronger, most are weaker, and while each has a loyal constituency, it does not appear that denominations will be the structural center of North American Christianity in the future that they have been in the past.

Christian identities

As denominations have weakened, the Christian identities that denominations cultivated have lessened. People seem less aware of what it means to be a Baptist or a Methodist or a Lutheran. Presbyterians and Methodists move easily from a congregation of one denomination to a congregation of the other, as if Arminian and Calvinist positions are best resolved on the basis of which congregation has the better youth ministry program. The Pew U.S. Religious Landscape researchers conclude that "44 percent of adults have ei-

ther switched religious affiliation, moved from being unaffiliated with any religion to being affiliated with a particular faith, or dropped any connection to a specific religious tradition altogether.”⁵ This denomination switching has resulted in an altered sense of Christian identity and religious practices. At my United Methodist congregation in Pittsburgh, I have seen people cross themselves at the communion rail and occasionally genuflect as they enter the pew. I’m no expert on Methodist piety, but I don’t think these practices are taught on confirmation retreats. Patterns of piety and religious practice have theological homes that shape a way of being Christian, but as practices are separated from those homes and blended with other practices, the theological coherence of any particular Christian identity is strained.

Religious participation

Religious participation in North America has changed. The percentage of residents of Quebec who attend church regularly has moved from higher than the Canadian average in the 1950s to lower than the national average now. The numbers are stunning—from more than 80 percent frequent attendees in the 1950s to far less than 20 percent in the past decade.⁶ People are attending church differently. Reginald Bibby’s data on Canadian church attendance suggest that regular attendees are attending less regularly, and Mark Chaves data on attendance in the United States indicate that an ever increasing percentage of attendees are going to larger membership congregations.⁷ The fastest growing religious preference for adults in the United States is “no religious preference.” Pew Forum’s recent study of “millennials” indicates that these young adults are not only less likely to be religiously affiliated than any other age cohort in the United States, but they also are less religiously active than their parents or grandparents were at the same age.⁸ Folks in North America are still going to church—the United States and Canada have the highest estimated percentage of church attenders of any Western democracy—but they are going to church differently than they used to go.

Christianity as a world religion

Christianity as a world religion has been changing. More than 20 percent of all Christians now live in Sub-Saharan Africa; Christianity in that region grew an amazing seventy-fold during the twentieth century, to almost 500 million adherents.⁹ Because Christianity embeds itself in the culture in which it is located, Christian practices are reinvented and beliefs take on differing hues as Christianity finds new cultural homes. The center of gravity of worldwide Christianity has moved. This will no doubt be the century of the first non-European pope and the one in which North American Christianity will be more influenced by Christianity in other parts of the world than worldwide Christianity will be influenced by North America. The growing influence of the Global South is already affecting the Anglican Communion and US-based church bodies that have significant membership outside the United States. These influences will only grow as the century matures.

Religious pluralism

North America is increasingly experiencing the influence, interaction, and presence of the religions of the world. At the 1990 Montreal meeting, the ATS Task Force on Globalization presented its first report on the project that the Association launched in the late 1980s. In addition to noting the economic and political issues of a globalized world, the project encouraged theological schools to pay more attention to the world as a whole, to worldwide Christianity, and to the presence of the world's other religions. The processes of globalization have brought multiple religions into proximity with each other, and religious proximity can be stormy. Religion has been the basis for prejudice and violence, and in a globalized world, religious tensions threaten not only peace but also the fundamental opportunity for human flourishing. The presence of the world's religions in North America is still limited (about 6 percent of the US population identifies with a religious tradition other than Christianity), but in cultures that value individual expression and do not legally privilege any one religion, the presence of the world's religions takes on an importance disproportionate to its percentage.

Impact on theological education

This catalog of changes is more illustrative than exhaustive, but each has an impact on theological education. The change in denominational strength and capacity has a direct effect on the majority of ATS schools that were founded by denominations to serve particular needs and structures. What is the mission of the denominational seminary related to a denomination that is losing members and institutional capacity? As Christian identity becomes more plastic and amorphous, what is the role of the seminary to clarify what it means to be Christian? Changing patterns of church attendance affect leadership needs in parishes and congregations. They contribute to the increase in bivocational and alternatively credentialed clergy as some congregations become smaller, and to the increase of lay professional staff members as other congregations grow larger. What do these changes mean for degree programs and educational practices? The shifting center of gravity in global Christianity invites North American theological schools both to consider their contribution to a wider world and to embrace the intellectual contributions that the world brings to them. Changed religious preferences call theological schools to reassess their work. How do Christians relate to the growing multifaith character of North America, and what is their role when an increasing percentage of the population shares no religious preference?

Changing theological schools

Of course, ATS schools have not been living some Rip Van Winkle existence in the middle of so much change. Since the last Biennial Meeting in Montreal, ATS membership has grown from 205 to 252 schools. Most of these additional members are new schools, and new schools typically reflect responses to growing or changed religious communities. Enrollment has grown from

slightly more than 56,000 students in 1990 to about 75,000 students this past fall. Perhaps more instructive than the increase in the number of students is the increasingly different forms of theological education in which they were enrolled: far more extension programs than was the case in 1990, a growing number of online courses (which did not exist at all twenty years ago), and a far wider array of degree programs. New degree programs and delivery patterns are institutional responses to changed religious realities and altered patterns of church-related work. Slightly more than 13 percent of all students in 1990 were persons of color, and this past fall more than 24 percent of total enrollment—by the most conservative computation—were persons of color. The percentage of female students has grown less, from 29 percent to 35 percent—but the combined effect is telling: women and students of color account for all the growth in enrollment since 1990. The faculty has changed as well. The percentage of female faculty members has grown from 15 percent in 1990 to 24 percent, and the percentage of faculty of color has increased from 8 percent to 15 percent. Changes in the composition of the faculties and student bodies reflect the changing composition of the population and the shifting roles of women in religious leadership.

All told, this is a great deal of change. ATS schools have not been asleep at the switch, but the world around them has changed faster and perhaps more pervasively than the schools have. Schools have adapted practices and modified structures, but ultimately, realities beyond the schools will require even more fundamental shifts in institutional form and educational character.

Possible responses to a changed world

In the context of these and other changes in the religious reality, how should theological schools respond? I want to offer several proposals, but ultimately, the task of deciding what should be done will be with individual schools. The response must be at least twofold, in my opinion.

Adapting the gold standard

The first broad response is to do better what theological schools have already been doing well. The pattern of theological education developed during the twentieth century, conducted as graduate, professional education in schools that were invented for this kind of education, has demonstrated enduring value. It has served Unitarian Universalists and Roman Catholics, Pentecostals and Presbyterians, Baptists and Episcopalians, Nazarenes and Disciples, Lutherans and Orthodox, and it has served them all very well. It brings students together with each other and talented faculty in courses where wisdom has been shared and learning has taken root. It has effectively supported the leadership needs of churches and made it possible for faculty to conduct research that has expanded the understanding of old traditions and generated the perspective of new insights. This pattern of theological education has become a gold standard, and the first response to the changed realities of North American religion is to continue it, with critical attention to how it should adapt to changed religious realities. I think that some of this attention

should be given to the curriculum and perceptions about sources of wisdom for theological scholarship.

Multifaith understanding and Christian witness. While much of the curriculum should remain as it is, at least two areas related to the new religious realities in North America need attention. The first is the growing number of persons affiliated with religions other than Christianity, and the second is the fastest growing religious preference in the United States: “no religious preference.”

Ministers and priests will need more sensitivity to the nature of Christian ministry in an increasingly multifaith context. Christian pastors, whose job it is to stand in a pulpit and tell people that Christianity has a vision of the world that is worth their devotion and commitment, need to be able to call Christians to faith in ways that do not alienate them from their neighbors of other faiths or nurture religious prejudices. Pastors need to be able to work with families in which more than one faith is represented, to support the common good with leaders of other faiths, and to deal seriously with the questions their own parishioners have about the religious “other.” These pastoral skills will be increasingly important and require more curricular attention.

Ministerial leaders will need to be equally sensitive to what it means to minister in a culture where the fastest growing religious preference is “none.” In the past, Christian pastors have been able to do their work in a North American culture that was broadly Christian. Every indication points to a future in which that will no longer be the case. For an ever expanding percentage of the population, the Christian story will be a revelation, not a recitation. Pastors will need to learn to relate the Christian faith to people who have little religious interest and no religious commitment. What curricular support will prepare future leaders to serve as advocates for faith in a religiously neutral culture rather than as chaplains of a faith that was privileged by culture?

These two needs do not travel together easily. Multifaith understanding is not typically coupled with Christian witness. Pastoral work has never been easy, but it is going to become more complex, more demanding, more in need of what theological schools can teach. The gold standard needs to be progressive, not static.

Pastoral wisdom. In addition to this curricular attention, theological scholarship needs to give increased attention to the sources of wisdom that pastors and church professionals can bring to theological education. As seminaries have leaned into their academic identity, they have increasingly presumed that wisdom accrues from advanced degrees, from research and writing, and from participating in the technical work of academic guilds. Certainly it does. But there are other sources of wisdom, equally intellectually lively and viable, that accrue from the discipline of preparing sermons every week, figuring out what it takes to make congregations work well, engaging a faith community in witness in word and deed, and being with people in the middle of unspeakable pain and sadness. This is hard work, and if pastors do it well, they develop a wisdom that can’t be gained from books and academic presentations at AAR or SBL.

The practice of Christian congregations is changing rapidly, and the wisdom about that practice is not in the seminary. Pastors are on the front lines of change; they and their congregations are inventing new paradigms of congregational ministry that reflect new learning; and they are dealing concretely with many of the issues that will form the next theory of practice. Theological schools simply cannot neglect this source of wisdom. They need to engage talented pastors differently than they have in the past. Fifty years ago, the perception of faculties of ATS member schools was that serious, advanced scholarship was underrepresented—too many pastors and not enough academics. Now, ATS schools have significant academic talent and it is pastoral talent that might be underrepresented. The gold standard for theological education must include both the wisdom that accrues from academic work and the wisdom that emerges only from pastoral work.

A big tent of educational practices

The second broad response is to diversify educational practice to meet an increasing diversity of educational need. Since ATS became an accrediting agency in the 1930s, it has erected a big tent for theological education. Big tents require a large fabric, and for ATS, this has been a common understanding of graduate, professional education for ministry. A big tent also requires tall poles along the center line to give it height. In recent history, these tall poles have been exemplar institutions that embody the gold standard patterns of theological education. It also needs poles around the circumference that maximize the space, and these poles have been schools that have expanded the common educational model to diverse ecclesial communities. This big tent has served denominational Christianity particularly well by providing a standardized model for theological education. The problem for the single standard model is that denominational Christianity is weakening and other patterns of Christian organizing are in the ascendancy. In a recent interview, Michael Lindsay compared bureaucratic denominations to Sears, and some newer forms of Christian expression to eBay.¹⁰ Both retailers were invented to sell products, but one is proving to be more successful than the other. Sears has depended on standardization of products, while eBay depends on diversity of products without standardization. A single pattern for theological education fit bureaucratic denominations very well, but if the future is going to look more like eBay than Sears, then theological education will serve the Christian project best if it provides a diversity of educational strategies.

ATS schools need to consider erecting a new kind of big tent. In this big tent, the large fabric will be an understanding of theological education that serves an even broader range of ministry settings—full- and part-time leaders, leaders who are as likely to be noncongregation-based as they are based in congregations, persons preparing for ministry, and persons already in ministry. The tall poles on the center line will be the current model of theological education, and the shorter poles at the circumference will consist of diverse educational models. I realize that metaphors are risky, and that extended metaphors are dangerous. You may have concluded that I have transformed theological education into a circus, but I will stand my ground. Diversity of educational

practices in the future will be as crucial as uniformity of educational practice was in the past. Diversity of practice, however, is not intrinsically valuable. It becomes valuable only as it serves the multiple needs of a changed religious reality, reflects passionate and thoughtful educational practice, and has intellectual substance. Theological education must have more diverse models, but these models will have limited value if they do not reflect the equivalent of a gold standard for each. What forms might this diversity take?

Baccalaureate theological education. One form might be the development of more theological education at the baccalaureate level. One president of an ATS member school who was struggling with the uniform postbaccalaureate pattern of theological education asked me to explain the difference between a baccalaureate-level funeral and a graduate-level funeral. His point, of course, was that many of the central tasks of pastoral ministry can be learned effectively at more than one educational level. Theological education practices could be broadened to include levels of education other than graduate, professional education, and in so doing, might be strengthened, rather than weakened. Religious communities need more educated leaders who are from recent immigrant communities and some racial/ethnic groups that have a low percentage of baccalaureate degree holders. As compensation in many small and midsized congregations continues to be more stressed, the church may need more leaders who have been theologically educated at the baccalaureate or even associate degree level. What would constitute a gold standard for theological education at this level? How might ATS schools partner with undergraduate institutions to provide ministerial education at this level?

Alternatively credentialed clergy. Another form will be theological education for alternatively credentialed clergy. While Protestantism has always had a large percentage of smaller membership congregations, the percentage of part-time pastors has emerged as a growth industry in mainline Protestantism across the past two decades. Lutherans, Disciples of Christ, United Church of Christ, Presbyterians, American Baptists, and the United Church have all been busy inventing patterns of education for alternatively credentialed clergy, and most of these programs have limited requirements and expectations. While the educational preparation needs to be different for regularly and alternatively credentialed clergy, much of the work of ministry does not vary by congregational size. The family whose child is dying of cancer who attend a small membership church needs skillful pastoral support from an alternatively credentialed pastor just as a family with the same trauma in a larger congregation served by a seminary graduate. Part-time pastors cannot leave their primary jobs for three years to study at seminary and then return to a part-time church, but they need more than the current alternative educational models are providing. They need educational programs that prepare them for the complex tasks of ministry but are designed in accessible and thoughtful ways. What would the gold standard of theological education be for part-time pastoral leaders?

On-the-job education. Theological schools need to give increased attention to the character of education that supports persons who are already engaged in ministry. Seminaries have built educational systems primarily on

the professional school model in which students go to school, get a degree, and then begin work in ministry. For most professions, this is a mandatory model. Not so with ministry. An increasing number of persons who have already begun ministry need theological education to advance their ministerial work. They are lay ecclesial ministers already at work in large Roman Catholic parishes or program staff members of larger membership Protestant congregations. According to the National Congregations Study, while 90 percent of pastors of congregations with at least 200 regular attendees have a seminary education, only 29 percent of education and youth ministers have attended seminary, and 18 percent of music ministers.¹¹ Theological schools need to develop effective patterns of postemployment education that enhance ministerial work already underway. These patterns of education will recognize that the congregation or ministry context is the primary community of formation and will use that community in developing educational practices. It should assume that these students already have ministerial skills and that they are as capable learners as on-campus degree students. What kind of good education practices would form the gold standard for on-the-job theological education?

Lay education. Still another needed form of theological education is for persons who want to enrich their understanding of faith but do not want to pursue vocational ministry or advanced higher education degrees. The deepest layer of identity for most ATS schools is the education of clergy. Most ATS schools have expanded that identity to educate lay persons who want to work vocationally in ministry. Both of these groups are well served by this professional educational model. Many schools also offer academic degrees. The educational aim of professional degree programs is to equip students to exercise religious leadership. The educational aim of an academic degree program is a more thorough and comprehensive understanding of an area of study, often in preparation for advanced study. The students whose educational needs are *not* well met by either of these kinds of degrees are lay persons who are seriously interested in learning their faith but do not want to work in ministry vocationally and do not want a specialized academic degree. Many schools squeeze these students into one of these two programs, but the educational design does not address their real educational motivation. The church is in as much need of educated lay persons as it is educated ministers, and theological schools are among the best environments to provide this kind of education. What would gold standard theological education look like for lay persons who are often better educated in almost every other area of their lives than in their faith?

Tapping a broad array of resources

If ATS schools are to build a big tent of diverse educational practices, they will need to tap a broader array of educational resources.

Higher education conventions. First, theological schools will need to broaden their use of higher education conventions. North American higher education has a variety of educational practices, from community colleges to research universities, but ATS schools have tended to model their work more after research universities than the others. This model includes conventions of

full-time faculty with research expectations, tenure, a nine-month academic year, and periodic time away from instructional responsibilities for reading and research. These are all good educational practices, but as a set, they are very expensive. Some sectors in higher education have never had these practices, and other significant sectors are shifting their practices. Some theological schools may need to pay more attention to these other higher education conventions for financial and missional reasons. While it would be tragic if no ATS schools functioned like research universities, it might also be tragic if others do not develop very different educational practices.

Other theological education providers. Second, theological schools will need to pay closer attention to the educational integrity of other theological education providers. The uniformity of the postbaccalaureate model has led to the perception that theological education doesn't begin until the student enrolls in a graduate professional degree program. That has also led to a tendency to devalue education in other educational settings. In the future, ATS schools will need to reassess this perspective. While schools have learned to value clinical pastoral education, many have tended to undervalue what can be learned in field education, have assigned too little credit for learning in context, and have not required as much contextual learning as ministerial practice requires. Social work education is similar to professional ministry education in its overall educational goals, but it differs in that carefully supervised field work is the organizing educational principle. While most students do not enter a theological school with any baccalaureate education in relevant fields, some do, but their backgrounds do not count for much. The current standards do not permit articulation of any undergraduate work into an ATS-approved degree, except by examination. (I know that many schools have creatively skirted this accrediting limitation, but I'll save commentary on that practice for another time.) Would it be advisable to develop articulation procedures whereby appropriate learning at the undergraduate level could be counted in a graduate degree, as is the case with graduate, professional social work or engineering degrees? Many Latino/a students have attended Bible institutes or other church-based programs and learned a great deal about the Hispanic church and ministry in Spanish-speaking communities. Is there a better way for ATS schools to honor this experience and the learning that it has generated? The answer to these questions is bound to the ability of ATS accredited schools to understand the broader ecology of theological education providers and determine how they participate in that ecology, instead of over against it.

Technology. Third, theological schools need to embrace the full range of educational opportunities that technology makes possible. Information technology is changing higher education and scholarly work. While online resources for theological education are less abundant than they are for medical or legal education, these resources are increasing. Google Books, for example, has digitized most of the holdings of the Andover Harvard Library, one of the premier theological libraries in the country. After the legal issues are resolved, texts that used to be available only at great effort can be downloaded to your Kindle. The American Theological Library Association has digitized the entire series of a core set of theology journals. You can read every issue that ATS has

ever published of *Theological Education* online, if you want, although I don't know of anyone who has ever wanted to. As the literature that theological study requires becomes more available digitally and pedagogical capacity of online courses increases, technology can help theological schools meet many of the needs that the current residential model of education leaves wanting. All educational strategies function in service to educational goals, and technology might advance the effectiveness of theological study, not retard it.

Conclusion

The future has arrived and brought a multitude of changes in cultural norms, educational models, international tensions, business practices, and religious presence. Theological schools need to change to meet the needs of changed and changing religion, and there are a few things worth remembering along the way.

The first is that Christianity in North America is changed but not diminished. Loving neighbor as self is still noble moral guidance. Doing "good" remains crucial to the common good. The Christian message has not lost its power to heal human brokenness or guide the human family in life-giving ways. The Christian message has not been rendered powerless; its promise has not been eviscerated.

The second is that theological schools are needed as much in this changed world, if not more, as they have ever been. As denominational structures weaken, as the organizational center of North American Christianity shifts, theological schools will be called both to educate students for service in a newly ordered religious landscape and to help the church remember its past and envision its future. Religion has an increasing number of organizations, but organizations have a tendency to come and go. It needs institutions that can dig in for the long term and provide the setting where, in Hugh Heclo's words, "the shadows from both past and future lengthen into the present."¹² A historical moment when the sun appears to be rising in the east before it has set in the west can be dizzying, but a place where the shadows from the past and future lengthen into the present can be energizing. Religious leaders will need all the education they can get, and religion will need institutional homes where its vision can be sustained and renewed over time.

The third is that there will be adequate resources to accomplish what needs to be done. It has been a brutal two years for most ATS schools economically, and many are not out of the woods yet. I know that some of you were putting a price tag on everything that I have said this afternoon and wondering how any of it could be done. The economic model that many schools have used in the past will not carry them into the future, and we are not sure what the new model will be. What I am sure of is that providence and hard work and frugal budgets and deep commitments and creative strategies will provide the resources to do what most needs to be done.

Most of the executive leadership of North American theological education is in this room. You have the gift of the future and the opportunity of a lifetime. *The future has arrived*, and it is full of promise.

Daniel O. Aleshire is executive director of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. This article was adapted from his plenary address at the 2010 ATS Biennial Meeting.

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Dancing a Cosmic Prayer: Creativity, Collaboration, and Spiritlinking in Women's Leadership

Sharon Henderson Callahan

School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University

Using three vignettes, or short stories, to introduce the three themes framing her remarks, the author couples these stories with problems women face as they embrace varying leadership roles. The author then considers inspirations for approaching the problems using the three modifiers the essay title implies and concludes with a metaphor for readying women to be the leaders they are called to be.

First story: Creative tension

In July, I read a female student's paper for a class I taught. She lamented her situation as a Roman Catholic woman struggling to remain attached to the ecclesial community she had known her entire life. Indeed, she inherited this ecclesial affiliation from generations of Italian ancestors. Her grief and frustration emanated from the page as she asked herself, her classmates, and me how she could foster community in a church that likened women's ordination to the most grievous of sins, including pedophilia by a priest. As her faculty member, I am also a female leader in theological education. I share her ecclesial community. I did not know how to respond. I've been thinking about her and the millions like her ever since. *The problem: How do women gain esteem in a social construct that is protected from contact with women and theologically suspicious of them? We'll explore this dilemma by considering the creative tension leadership requires.*

Second story: Collaboration

Earlier this decade, Seattle University bestowed an honorary doctoral degree on Corazon Aquino, the president of the Philippines who followed the Marcos regime. She spoke to the faculty and staff, and I had the opportunity to meet her in person. She attested to how her faith supported her through the difficulties of the fall of Marcos, the assassination of her husband, and her decision to run for president. She described how she and other women struggled with the threat of civil war. *The problem: How do women exert their influence in threatening situations? We'll explore this challenge by reflecting on the collaborative-connective aspects that leadership involves.*

Third story: Spiritlinking

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Elizabeth Ann Seton, Frances Cabrini, Madeleine Albright, Condoleezza Rice, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barbara Brown Zikmund, Dianne Kennedy, and Phyllis Anderson all are female leaders who have initiated major paradigm shifts. Since Puah and Shiprah, Sarah, Judith, Deborah, Hannah, and Magdalen, many religious women have dared to risk, to dream, and to ignite passion in others. These ancestresses and pathfinders have lived grace-filled lives committed to justice, community, and care of the universe. We inherit school systems, health care systems, processes to address social systems, indeed our very faith from female leaders in the Church. Yet, at the 2010 ATS/COA Biennial Meeting, the most heated and prolonged debate occurred around naming women as partners in theological education. *The problem: What needs to ignite a shift in theological education so that spiritlinking female leaders can transform their institutions of learning and the ways they impact the universe? We'll examine this opportunity through exploring the spiritlinking vision that sustains leaders who nurture change.*

Creative leadership

In fall 2009, Barbara Brown Zikmund presented her research concerning female leaders in theological education.¹ At the request of ATS and funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., she interviewed fifty-nine of sixty-one female leaders in seminaries and schools accredited by The Association of Theological Schools. As one of her interviewees, I appreciated how she respected the voices of the female leaders who participated in the research. Her overall comments helped each of us understand how we are indeed female leaders who bring collaboration and connectivity, creativity, and deep passion—or spiritlinking—energy to this enterprise.

One respondent's comments jolted me into remembering how creativity was born in me: she compared her leadership to her experience as a mother. At no other time am I more challenged to be creative, collaborative, and spiritlinking than in mothering. As the eldest child of eight, I was entrusted with care of my siblings, and many families sought my assistance as a child-care provider. From the time I was three years old, I bore the responsibility of attending to the safety of my sister. Indeed, I was the one who was punished for her exploration beyond acceptable limits! While at times I can blame my parents for entrusting me with such demands at so young an age, I mostly wonder at the opportunity offered me. I had to consider how to get others to do what I was supposed to have them do from the time I was three. I had to work with a variety of authority structures and with many developing personalities. I learned to develop allies, delegate authority, and reward behavior that supported the outcomes. All this before starting school at age five!

This theological leader who had named the creativity inherent in mothering as a critical aspect of her leadership reminded me of the tremendous creativity available to and accessed by each of us women in theological educa-

tion. I began to reflect again on this essential element of creativity as female leaders encounter and confront difficult situations. In my lifetime, I have often relegated the distinction of being creative to those renowned for their particular gifts in musical, visual, or dramatic arts. Now, I think that to be creative is to evidence a broad capacity to invent or make new possibilities out of changing realities. As writers and teachers, we often put two ideas together and find a third, fourth, fifth, or even a tenth possibility. I find my appreciation of creativity encompasses anything that is innovative, new, resourceful, inspired, inventive, or productive.

Almost always, the creative moment or insight occurs at times of crisis or tension. When I was having a particularly difficult time in my leadership position, a female dean/CEO (Loretta Jancoski) helped me unleash creativity again. She said to me that, while she was appreciative of my capacity for work and for new and adventurous ideas, she also worried that the sheer demands overwhelming me could crush any creative spark. Thus, she explored with me how to manage the tension between pressure and time/space that allowed creative energy to sustain and inspire work without crushing life. I believe this management of tension lies at the heart of creativity.

Most leadership literature addresses this tension as one of balance. In other words, a leader must attend to self and to others. To accomplish this seemingly simple charge, leaders must be able to self-reflect and ground themselves in their own truth. Christian leaders or religious leaders must be able to ground themselves in their belief, yes, but more importantly, in the power of God residing intimately within. Thus, to be truly creative, leaders must take time to ponder, to open space within themselves, to find Sabbath, to pray, to reflect, to walk or ride or run, to attend to God and to life.

Attending is a spiritual practice. It requires openness, curiosity, and deep care. Leah Gaskin Fitchue spoke of her process in a 2000 *In Trust* interview. In response to how she managed her leadership position, she stated,

The most intriguing part of this internal dialogue has been the shaping of a more intimate relationship with my intuitive self. I think of myself as a highly intuitive person and find that my intuitive voice grows louder as I mature. . . . I have learned how to handle silence and not to expect an external companion voice in [my] immediate setting.

She continued:

The action arises out of the ways women redefine and experience authority as an internal possessive rather than an external mandate. When they begin to discover a personal authority, women may hear their own voices for the first time.

Fitchue summarized, "[A] woman's greatest sense of self and sense of agency is the quality of the relationship she has with her interior voice."² Her words reflect on the creative urgency of finding voice and inner authority.

Cultural anthropologist Angeles Arrien speaks to how to cultivate the voice and authority through attending to reality and self in relation to others. Incorporating aspects of Native American medicine wheel imagery, Arrien challenges all leaders to explore and claim the fourfold way: vision as truth-telling; healing as compassion; warrior as showing up and being present; and teacher as being open to the outcome.³ As I ponder these four aspects of creativity, I am constantly amazed how I need to become better at each. To show up, to pay attention, to tell the truth without blame or judgment, and to detach from the outcome—all guide me in all aspects of my leadership. These four ways of leadership are supported by prayer practices, coaching, listening, and evaluation. Yet they are compromised in traps as described by Dede Henley, a leadership consultant and coach.⁴ When I fall into my traps of “busy, busy, busy” or “I can do this myself,” I find that I cease to respond creatively. I’ve allowed the crunch to overwhelm that spark of inner life so essential for creative responses to changing contexts. I need to make room for Sabbath, for retreat, for fun, and for reflective practice of all kinds.

In teaching conflict transformation, I have used Danaan Parry’s *Warriors of the Heart*. Parry quotes Thomas Merton in relation to balancing creative tension. Writing from a masculine perspective, Merton eloquently challenges men *and women* in theological education and pastoral ministry:

. . . There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist fighting for peace by nonviolent methods most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation in violence. The frenzy of the activist neutralizes his work for peace. It destroys his own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of his own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.⁵

Merton contends that we actually “destroy our own inner capacity for peace,” thus killing the root of wisdom and fruitfulness. Parry suggests that the violence of busyness increases conflict and decreases leadership.⁶ Yet, how many times do we as women in leadership find ourselves working twice as hard to achieve the kind of recognition we see men earn more easily? As Zikmund found, female theological leaders experience the tension between too much to do and the need for reflective space. Somehow, this tension urges us to creativity.

Merton, as quoted by Parry, further speaks of how this urge finds itself both reflective and active:

He who attempts to act and think for others or for the world without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, integrity, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others. He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centered ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas."⁷

Thus, as Merton suggests, true creativity arises from deep self-understanding, time for pondering, and, in religious and theological leadership, grounding in the God who transcends all.

Essentially, creativity moves us to something new. The newness in and of itself demands that we let go of something that is already. This letting go often causes pain, resulting in sadness or resistance, grief over loss of what has been and what we may have imagined might be. Thus, as Harvard professor Ron Heifetz claims, the creative leader always walks a "razor's edge"⁸ that threatens to shred the vision and even the leader herself. Yet, creative leaders emanate confidence that insists that the edge can be maneuvered and vision realized.

As I reflect on the first problem as posed by my female student, I think always about re-connecting deeply to the God who has called her, me, and all women to be fully ourselves. The intense authority that attempts to hammer out our own inner authority and voice reminds me of the patriarchal Pharaoh of the Exodus, who seemed to control all things. Yet, as we look more closely to the Scripture text, we discover that women subverted Pharaoh's edicts through their creative connection to God's voice and people. Shiphrah and Puah used their power to deliver children and to hide them; Miriam and her mother found a way to save Moses through Pharaoh's own daughter; and despite a patriarchal society that limited all women, these women together produced the means for creating a people of God. I believe that my student, like all women in this society, needs to continue working in her awareness of her call and her inner authority, trusting the path that opens, and counting on God's strength, courage, and support. This necessarily requires living in the creative tension, attending to the reality, and claiming one's truth without blame or judgment, while nurturing the deeper, inner relationship to God and to all creation.

Collaboration and connectivity

A woman in leadership in theological education needs to admit she is not able to do everything herself. Indeed, leadership and followership go hand in hand. They create a dance of interchanging steps producing beautiful patterns of interaction. The act of leadership, its essence, is necessarily interactive and relational. I learned this first as the eldest child, next as a school leader, and eventually as a mother, pastoral associate, trust administrator, and educator. While it may seem self-evident to most women, the notion of collaboration and connectivity emerges repeatedly from leadership literature. I believe this new emergence reflects the rising influence of both women and indigenous

peoples in our current dominant contexts. At the same time, it builds on ancient indigenous and Christian sensibilities.

Donna Markham suggests that the process of spiritlinking requires leaders to respect the dignity and giftedness of each person in the enterprise. She urges leaders to engage in deep attentive listening to others and invites dominant North American leaders to “[leave] behind the enticement of individualism” so as to enter “the heart of community building.”⁹ She acknowledges that this requires each of us, as female leaders, to lay down some of the egoism that sustains us in our battle for equality, so as to participate in mission and vision greater than any one of us can embody. Barbara Brown Zikmund’s preliminary analysis of female leaders in theological education last October noted how the leaders she interviewed affirmed their commitment to community building, nondefensiveness, attentive listening, and collaboration. She reported that women in leadership in theological education already attend to the creative, connective, and collaborative aspects of spiritlinking leadership.

St. Paul spoke eloquently of early Christian understanding of relationship throughout his writings and in many of those attributed to him but actually written by disciples. The famous and often quoted 1 Cor. 12–13 graphically images connectivity as a human body with the unity of parts and gifts working together for the glory of God. Prior to those passages, Paul challenges the community at Corinth to remember its unity—its connectivity—to each other through and in Christ and Christ’s active Spirit. In the three stories of Paul’s conversion to Christ as recorded in Acts of the Apostles, Jesus asks Saul, “Why are you persecuting *me*?” (Acts 9:4). The story tracks Paul’s witness of Stephen’s death/martyrdom and the subsequent commission to bring to judgment others who denied the one God of Jewish belief. Thus, as Paul pursues his own holiness, he is confronted with the connectivity of his pursuit with all others. To persecute a believer is to persecute Jesus! The unity of Christ’s believers stands in stark contrast to the individualization that allows one person to demean another. Thus, the dead Jesus is living. His living is connected to a reality that transcends or intersects with what humans perceive as their reality.

Ecological theology and spirituality currently invite us to ponder these interconnectivities anew. Increasingly informed by quantum sciences, these theologies and spiritualities call each of us to acknowledge the three laws of the universe: differentiation, individuation, and unity. Margaret Wheatley, an organizational development consultant who has linked systems thinking in organizations to insights offered by quantum sciences, suggests that ultimately we create holograms or force fields of attraction within our organizations. Like her, I think about these connections as fundamental elements of all creation.¹⁰

These new sciences, I think, return us to Celtic spiritualities and most indigenous lived understandings. When I visit Kenya, Nicaragua, Mexico, Vietnam, and the Philippines, for example, I meet female (and male) leaders who seem intuitively to understand relationality as involving followership, empowerment, and leader accessibility. Using Wheatley’s images found in quantum physics, I believe that leaders and followers who act as connectors often impact organizations creating fields of energy that attract and transform whole systems. These force fields of unseen connections influence organizational behavior.

Some would define these force fields as culture or the way organizations or groups make meaning for themselves. Karen Stephenson, a pioneer in the emerging field of social network analysis, agrees that leadership is about recognizing, understanding, and leveraging social networks.¹¹ Her work in identifying and maximizing social organizations leads her to conclude that relationships determine how an organization forms its culture, its path to productivity, its knowledge, all the things that make an organization viable. Thus, she suggests that the leader ask questions: Who is talking to whom before and after meetings and formal agendas? Where do ideas get bottlenecked? Who has authority? Who has the ability to make things happen? Who is mentoring whom?¹²

As I think about how I have developed as a leader, I admit that I thought the old male-dominated model of the single charismatic leader was the only way to lead. I sought and maintained power, certain that my own dominance would orchestrate the changes I envisioned. As a peace and social activist in the early 1970s, I gave everything I had to secure civil rights, equality for women, and peace in Vietnam and the world. Without understanding what Merton warned, I spent voice, personal power, and energy demanding the world change according to Sharon and Christ, who was obviously on my side.

In the early 1980s, a mother and wiser Sharon gradually learned how to participate as one of many. I team-taught for the first time and learned to form small groups. Remarkable women patiently showed me how chocolate chip cookie ministry, childcare ministries, and religious education ministries created collaborative leadership and partnership. I remain grateful to Sisters Roberta, Bridget, and Cele as they loved me into being more collaborative. I treasure my mentor and friend, Mary LaCourse Mauren, who coached me into team ministry. Each of these female leaders provided the corrective, the mirror, the model I needed to learn how to see leadership as a communal, collaborative, connective event.

As Corazon Aquino discovered when she and others went to Cardinal Sin for advice, connection and collaboration are the keys to change. The Filipina women urged the Cardinal to intervene somehow, to use the religious beliefs and positional power at his disposal. Yet, the Cardinal turned to the women and encouraged them to use their connections to the men standing on the street with weapons. Clearly, they understood, as they united with each other and entered the streets with cookies, tea, and conversation. Imagine, she said, how soldiers and resisters met their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and daughters standing between them and others offering tea and cookies. In a few short days, a nonviolent revolution concluded with a new government.

I believe this connectivity reflects the "linking" part of Donna Markham's tremendous work on spiritlinking. Connection/collaboration in leadership demands that leaders and followers embrace a willingness to admit and foster interdependence, shared creativity, reliance on multiple gifts, and a practice of knowing that, in the words of my friend Mary, "There is only one God, and I am not she."

Spiritlinking

Openness to God's work in us as leaders in theological education means that we attend not only to self, those we collaborate with, and those we serve but also to our contexts. The ATS Biennial Meeting in June 2010 addressed contexts for theological education. The Pew Foundation and Hartford Seminary produce data that constantly inform our understanding of our context—globally, nationally, and locally. As Markham articulates, spiritlinking leaders participate in and promote global healing as they choose collaboration and cooperation over competition. She further suggests that this type of leadership requires us to analyze our context by asking questions such as, What in this context, or in the context of any of our realities, attracts us to mobilize energy toward new solutions?¹³

Four articles in the *National Catholic Reporter* of September 3, 2010, caught my eye while preparing this paper. Together, they highlight aspects of the current context in which Roman Catholic women find themselves:

- The front-page article highlighted how Roman Catholic vowed women religious in the United States are responding to their vocational lives in the midst of papal investigation. The picture showed them demonstrating in Dallas against the death penalty. The crisis they faced in a male-dominated church challenged them to find the new reality they could claim as their contribution to the 1.1 billion member ecclesial community. They spoke of hope, courage, conviction, and renewed identity that found expression in evolving collaboration and connection with other women religious. I know for a fact that my position at STM is directly related to the commitment, dedication, prophetic action, and solidarity demonstrated over the past 500 years by vowed women religious. I stand on their shoulders and only hope I can impart a fraction of their collective impact in my own leadership. I know that the first female leaders of Roman Catholic theological institutions have been vowed women religious. Throughout our history, these committed women have led the way—at great cost to themselves.
- The second article, by Rosemary Radford Ruether, articulated two approaches to validating ordination for Roman Catholic women—one more hierarchical and part of the tradition since Irenaeus of Lyons (second century), and one more communal and represented in the tradition through the epistles of Paul and the first-century writings of Hippolytus. It seems these two traditions continue to vie for acceptance. Ruether argues for a third way, a way of holding the tension and accepting both.
- The third article documented a meeting of moral theologians (theologians of ethics) held in Trento, Italy, during the month of June. This meeting, described by John Allen, Jr., gathered moral theologians from around the world. Growing from a group of 375 theologians in 2006, the now 600 moral theologians from four continents and seventy-three countries collaborated on issues of theology that affect practical decision making and justice. What I found most interesting was the fact that, prior to 1950, there were no lay moral theologians in the Roman Catholic Church. At

this meeting, however, more than half of the theologians were lay people. Even more applicable to this gathering of female leaders is the fact that more than a third of the moral theologians were women and another third were from the developing world. These statistics offer hope for our future as spiritlinking female leaders in theological education.

- The fourth article was really a section devoted to lay ecclesial ministries and the emerging gift women and lay men give to the Roman Catholic church, specifically in the United States. I've been following these statistics for nearly twenty years, and I've been involved in listening sessions and in editing conversations concerning the bishops' documents and the final "Co-Workers in the Vineyard" pastoral letter. This document sought to articulate a vision of lay ministry that would elevate the vocational call of lay people who serve within ecclesial contexts. This is a marked departure from the purely outward focus and completely negative definition of previous articulations of lay ministry.

As I perused the last section, I reviewed my own notes and thoughts on this important contribution that the Roman Catholic Church makes to theological education. It is my context. Since the Second Vatican Council, nearly one hundred programs in colleges and universities in the United States have addressed the theological education of lay people. The summer 2010 issue of the CARA report (Center for Applied Research in America, located at Georgetown University) reveals the latest statistics. At this time (2009–2010 enrollment figures), nearly 61 percent of all people enrolled in lay ecclesial ministry formation programs are lay women with an additional 2 percent who are vowed religious women. Another 36 percent lay men with 1 percent religious brothers complete the enrollment statistics, which have purposely excluded priests and deacons, since they are by definition ordained and not lay.

As I consider the numbers, I find that they affirm the role of women in the Roman Catholic Church. Since the 1990s, women have consistently held more than 70 percent of all paid positions (other than pastor) in parishes. The Roman Catholic Church in the United States and in other parts of the world is rapidly expanding lay ministries through educated and formed individuals, most of whom are women.

When I compare the four articles with their statistics and contextual descriptions to the most recent numbers published in Linda Tarr-Whelan's text, *Women Lead the Way*, I note that the overall numbers within Roman Catholic ministries in the United States exceed those endorsed by the promises made at the Women's Conference in Beijing. Tarr-Whelan documents that a 30 percent female presence constitutes a tipping point for women's leadership in organizations.¹⁴ When I look at the 70–85 percent statistic for lay women in leadership in Roman Catholic institutions throughout the United States, I'm amazed at the strength in numbers and the potential impact women can have.

Barbara Brown Zikmund found that almost 27 percent of mainline Protestant seminary leadership is female—a very close approximation of the 30 percent needed to "tip the scale." Yet, a recent study by Duke University found that women pastor only 3 percent of the largest mainline Protestant congrega-

tions.¹⁵ It's interesting to compare these statistics: more than 75 percent of all lay ecclesial ministers in Roman Catholic parishes are women, while less than 2 percent of Roman Catholic seminaries have women in leadership positions. This percentage does not differ much from 2008 figures related to the current CEOs of Fortune 500 companies in which only 2.5 percent were women. Zikmund's study highlighted some startling differences in numbers at the top of our theological institutions, confirming other statistics compiled by Tarr-Whelan and demonstrating that women have a long way to go in almost every context. At the same time, the omission of institutions that prepare lay-ecclesial ministers in the ATS discussion necessarily excludes an additional several thousand students each year and the theological leadership in those institutions, which is considerably more inclusive of female theologians. If we are preparing new vision-linking spirits in theological education toward establishing equal opportunity for all in the community, then these statistics offer hope and sustenance when news and stories deflect our attention. They also challenge the very definitions of ministry and theological education that prepare people for those ministries.

My work in Nicaragua, Kenya, Mexico, and the Philippines, inspires me to recognize the power of connecting the Word with the newspaper. Like other participants in *Comunidades de base*, I am aware of partnering and allying my spirit with those dedicated to effecting social change through their linking of gifts in community. I am inspired by the courage and deep commitment to the poorest of the poor that informs their theological reflection. The preferential option for the poor challenges me, as a leader in theological education, to think and imagine bigger than the limited North American dominant culture experience that limits our imaginations and our ability to respond with hope and love.

I have spent more than twenty years in some kind of theological leadership role. During that time, I have met every kind of resistance known to womankind—criticism by men and women for being too strong, intense, directive, effective, and productive. I made others “look bad,” and some couldn't stand it. I am too abrupt, efficient, conflictual, and insensitive, while I'm also compassionate, a deep listener, and a person who attends to others so structures can change.

Now I claim, and I invite you to claim, in the words of Donna Markham, that I am (we are) a “creative, feisty and fearless folk who will dare to traverse the terrain of predictable resistances in order to lead into the new.”¹⁶ I am ready to accept the mantle of leadership, which means I embrace “the engagement in interdependent, cooperative, and dynamic action on behalf of the good that is held in common. Such creative engagement calls for a spirit of courageous imagination in considering what might be, along with a spirit of humble relinquishment in letting go of what has been.”¹⁷ I know in my bones that spiritlinking is “the deliberate and untiring act of working through resistance to organizational transformation by building the circle of friends, fostering networks of human compassion, and interweaving teams of relationships through which new ideas are born and new ways of responding to the mission take form and find expression.”¹⁸ In this work, I embrace, learn, and hone the

skills required: liberating, loving, listening, telling the truth, taking risks, and solidifying a circle of friends for the sake of the mission. Increasingly, I see myself as a mentor committed to open communication, to serving, and to making sure conflict is managed well.¹⁹

This is difficult work that demands a willingness to work through resistance and conflict toward the common good. Ultimately, I want to do this because, like the women I've highlighted throughout this essay, I want to make a difference. I know that pluralism and diversity must be held in tandem with a binding sense of corporate identity and relationality, solidified by strong, systemic core values and concerted goals. I believe to the core of my being that interdependence is imperative for our survival as a planet. I know, with Markham, that neither hierarchic leadership models nor totally consensual models are effective in this time of rampant change, heightened complexity, and anxiety-provoking ambiguity.²⁰

A metaphor for women's leadership

Henley urges women to claim and wield the power of their choice. She asserts that this means staying awake to our truest priorities and visions. Therein, she claims, lies the real work of a female leader. Choose daily, hourly, and moment by moment to hold on to your power in all circumstances. Choice, she claims, is our gateway to sovereignty.²¹

In my introduction, I promised a metaphor for women in leadership. This metaphor is rooted in the Scriptures, especially the story of the waiting women. It also finds itself imaged in a celebration of the feast of Santo Niño, a Spanish Filipino feast day. In January 1999, I was privileged to participate in the procession that escorted the statue of Mary holding the child Jesus (Santo Niño) through the city of Cebu. It was raining. I noticed about one hundred women in the procession all dressed in blue and yellow. These women proudly sang and danced in front of the statue as men carried it on poles through a city filled with people singing, praying, and holding their own icons for blessing. We all made our way into the basilica and the plaza outside it. Because I was part of a visiting North American delegation, I was one of only five women who sat with the bishops and priests from the United States and the Philippines. The costumed women who had led the procession now gathered in the rain on the plaza below. All others had covering or umbrellas. Only these women knelt throughout the long ceremony. As my own feminist wrath began to boil at the mistreatment of these women, the liturgy entered the time of the *Sanctus* or "holy, holy, holy" sung before the consecration. As the priests and bishops stood on the covered dais, I peeped through to the women below and saw them pull out instruments so they could light the wicks of their pots of incense and oil. These women helped each other and then began to lead the entire congregation of more than a thousand people. They danced in unison, and their smoky incense carried our hearts and hopes, our fears and cares to heaven in a rhythmic, illuminating energy that united a people in praise and prayer before the very altar of God. These spiritlinking women danced a cosmic prayer connecting us all to Christ's mission and collaboration. For women, waiting gives

birth. It is always creative, connective, and spiritlinking. We have been ready and waiting through rain, storm, resistance, and exclusion of every kind. It is time for women in theological education to dare to link spirits for common mission. Let us light our lamps and dance our creative, collaborative, spirit-linking leadership.

Sharon Henderson Callahan is associate dean for academic programs and student life at School of Theology and Ministry, Seattle University. She delivered this essay as a plenary address at the ATS Women in Leadership Conference in October 2010.

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ENDNOTES

1. Barbara Brown Zikmund, "Three Coins in the Fountain: Female Leadership in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 45, no. 2 (2010): 1–60.
2. Leah Gaskin Fitchue, "Inner Journey of a Woman Servant Leader," *In Trust* (Autumn 2000): 7–9.
3. Angeles Arrien, *The Four-Fold Way* (San Francisco: Harper-San Francisco, 1993), 7–8.
4. Dede Henley, *The Secret of Sovereignty: Women Choosing Leadership, at Work and in Life* (Seattle, WA: Ragnelle, 2007), 27.
5. Danaan Parry, *Warriors of the Heart* (Cooperstown, NY: Sunstone, 1991), 41.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 89.
8. Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1994), 123.
9. Donna J. Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1999), 133.
10. Margaret J. Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers, *A Simpler Way* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1996), 10.
11. Karen Stephenson, "Trafficking in Trust: The Art and Science of Human Knowledge Networks," *Enlightened Power: How Women are Transforming the Practice of Leadership*, ed. Linda Coughlin, Ellen Wingard, and Keith Hollihan (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 244.
12. Ibid., 244–5.
13. Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, 43.
14. Linda Tarr-Whelan, *Women Lead the Way: Your Guide to Stepping Up to Leadership and Changing the World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2009), 3.
15. Ibid., 34.
16. Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, xii.
17. Ibid., xiii.
18. Ibid., 5.

19. Ibid., 11.
20. Ibid., 70–71.
21. Henley, *The Secret of Sovereignty*, 157.

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

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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.

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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*, 16th ed., 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 editors@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.

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1. The audience for *Theological Education* includes people from multiple academic disciplines and diverse religious traditions, who share in common their work as theological educators. Have you written with this audience in mind?
2. Is the article timely? Does it contribute significantly to current interdisciplinary discourse about theological education?
3. Does the subject matter represent new ideas or experiences that colleagues at other theological schools can incorporate into their teaching or administration?
4. Will the article spark useful debate on the topic?
5. Is the article well-written with a clear focus and well-developed/supported arguments?
6. Is the research methodology sound and appropriate?
7. If applicable, does the article make accurate use of the data available from ATS and other sources?
8. Does the article conform to the submission guidelines listed above?

