Theological Education

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The Association of Theological Schools is a membership organization of schools in the United States and Canada that conduct postbaccalaureate professional and academic degree programs to educate persons for the practice of ministry and advanced study of the theological disciplines. The Association's mission is to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public. The Commission on Accrediting of ATS accredits schools that are members of ATS and approves the degree programs they offer.

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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.

Editor's Introduction

Stephen R. Graham

The mission statements of theological schools are remarkably similar in many ways. Nearly all, in one form or another, state their goal to prepare leaders to fulfill God's work in the world, from the perspective of a particular Christian tradition, and through a community of learning that provides graduate theological education. To be sure, there are distinctive emphases and characteristics named in the mission statements, but despite the wide-ranging diversity of the schools within the Association, their statements of mission are remarkably consistent.

Another consistency is the search for adequate resources to keep those missions alive. Theological schools have always been somewhat underresourced for the vital service they perform, but the squeeze is being felt particularly keenly these days by many member schools. Financial resources are strained as traditional suppliers, including denominations, find it ever harder to provide the funding needed to support the work of their schools. Some of the burden has been shifted to students in the form of higher tuition, but this has led to a serious problem of graduates overburdened by debt. ATS projects in recent years have convened schools to find ways to connect them more effectively with the church, to seek sustainable economic models, and to address the problems of student debt and the relative financial illiteracy of seminary students. The theme of the 2014 Biennial Meeting of the Association and Commission is *Resourcing Theological Education*, and the meeting is designed to focus attention not only on financial resources but also on the broad range of resources to which theological schools have access.

This issue of *Theological Education* offers reflections on the resourcing of theological education from a variety of perspectives. Responding to a call for papers, a wide range of submissions addressed this broad topic, from which the editorial board selected these eight representative articles. John (Jay) Phelan, former president and dean of North Park Theological Seminary, explores the distinctive circumstances of those theological schools "embedded" in larger colleges or universities. He notes that both the theological school and the "host" institution experience benefits and challenges from the relationship. Three administrators from the Earlham School of Religion, Dean Jay W. Marshall, Director of Recruitment and Admissions Matthew S. Hisrich, and Theological Librarian Jane Marie Pinzino, present a case study that explores the wide-ranging impacts of technologies on their school, from teaching and learning through online and hybrid classes, to recruitment strategies that utilize social media, to possible plans to encourage faculty to model the use of e-books as a way to encourage students to utilize that resource.

Three librarians from Trinity International University, Stephanie Fletcher, Kevin Compton, and Rebecca Miller, present a model for consortial sharing of e-books that they believe could greatly expand the resources available to students while at the same time containing costs. Michael S. Hogue from Mead-

ville Lombard Theological School recounts the story of that school's re-invention of itself by utilizing the TouchPoint℠ model of theological education that embraces social and cultural changes rather than viewing these changes as impediments to effective theological education. Two scholars from McMaster Divinity College, theologian Steven Studebaker and Lee Beach, director of ministry formation, employed field research to study emergent Christian leaders and their desire for theological instruction at the same time that they reject traditional models for theological study. The authors explore effective ways for theological schools to connect with this new constituency. Scholars from Iliff School of Theology, Dean Albert Hernández, with faculty members Edward Antonio, Kelly Arora, and Carrie Doehring, present their "Authentic Engagement" model of organizational development that finds meaning through "theologically grounded theory" that can be applied to organizations improving employee engagement and satisfaction.

Two articles address issues of human resources. Administrators from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, former HR director Janet Craigmiles and deans James R. Moore and Tite Tiénou, describe a solution they developed to the growing demographic challenge of aging faculty: phased faculty retirement. The authors outline demographic trends, potential benefits to institutions of their plan, and a number of ways the plan could be of benefit to faculty members. Finally, two researchers from Vanderbilt University, Naomi H. Annandale and Erik W. Carter, offer reflections from their extensive study of the ways theological schools address (or do not) disability in their curricula and broader institutional life.

Obviously, this collection of articles presents only a handful of possible approaches to resourcing theological education, but each piece of the puzzle brings greater clarity to the whole picture, and we thank each of these colleagues for their contributions.

Correction: In the editorial introduction of the last issue of *Theological Education* (48:1), author Carmen Nanko-Fernandez was mistakenly referred to with male instead of female pronouns. We apologize for the confusion.

Seminary and University: Challenges and Opportunities

John (Jay) Phelan
North Park Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: After the Reformation, Roman Catholics and Protestants located theological education in the university. During the nineteenth century in the United States, freestanding seminaries arose to prepare pastors for ministry in churches. Did this separation of "secular" and "theological" learning impoverish both? Many seminaries remained linked with universities in the United States and Canada. Some seminaries are considering pursuing such links. This paper suggests advantages and disadvantages of such a relationship and how both seminary and university can contribute to one another's mission.

A brief history

The origin of the modern seminary may be traced to the post-Reformation era. In his book *God's Ambassadors*, E. Brooks Holifield argues that both the fledgling Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church recognized their need for an educated clergy. "In 1563," he writes, "the Council of Trent decreed that every diocese was to establish a seminary in which boys destined for the clerical office would receive instruction in 'ecclesiastical studies,' including scripture, canon law, the delivery of homilies, the performance of rites and ceremonies, the sacrament of penance, singing, church finance, grammar, 'and other useful skills.'"[1] It took awhile for this to get off the ground, but by 1626 the Jesuits alone had founded 444 colleges and 100 seminaries. Catholics founded fifty new universities between 1550 and 1700 "continuing a tradition of combining university training with apprenticeships to form the clerical elite."[2]

Protestants were equally energetic. "Between 1550 and 1700, Protestants in Europe founded thirty-three new universities, which took theological education for the clergy as a central aim."[3] Over the next century, a university-educated clergy became increasingly the norm within the larger Reformed community—with predictable results. Some complained the clergy were overeducated and incapable of identifying with the simple members of their congregations. Their interests seemed to lie in theological controversy and esoteric speculations. Others complained that university-educated clergy lacked piety. Such complaints led the German Pietists to form their own university at Halle where piety and learning were assiduously integrated. These complaints suggest there is nothing new under the sun.

Formal theological education arrived in the new world with the founding of Harvard in 1636. "Leading colonists," Holifield writes, "'dreaded' to 'leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers should lie in the dust.'"[4] Virginia chartered William and Mary, he continues, "so that

'the church of Virginia may be furnished with a Seminary of Ministers.'"[5] Many ministers were still educated in England or on the continent of Europe, depending on their denominational affiliation. But as the century passed, colonial colleges grew in numbers and effectiveness. "To a marked degree," Holifield writes, "American colleges served as training schools for ministers. During the first fifty years of the [eighteenth] century, over half the graduates of Harvard and Yale went into the ministry. . . . The story was similar at the College of New Jersey, founded by Presbyterians in 1746 to ensure a supply of educated clergy."[6] During the colonial period many, if not most, of the faculty were themselves ministers "as were all the presidents of Yale, the College of New Jersey [Princeton], Kings College (Columbia), William and Mary, Queens College (Rutgers), Georgetown, and the College of Rhode Island [Brown]."[7]

All this changed dramatically in the nineteenth century. Fewer and fewer students attended universities for the purpose of going into the ministry. As the prestige of the ministry declined, students were drawn to more attractive and lucrative careers in law, medicine, and business.[8] Denominational officials were increasingly concerned that university education itself was not sufficient for ministerial preparation. This led to the foundation of Andover Seminary in 1808 as a separate school for theological education beyond university education. By 1850 there were forty-four, mostly small seminaries founded by eight Protestant denominations.[9] Theological education once again was offering educational leadership. These were "the first American educational institutions designed for a graduate education."[10] Nevertheless, the founding of such freestanding seminaries opened a significant fissure between university education and theological education.

The academic rigor of these early schools was uneven. Many students lacked college degrees and often failed to complete their courses before heading into ministry. Nevertheless, American seminaries heard the same complaints as their European colleagues. Critics in America as in Europe argued that overeducated clergy lacked the common touch and the evangelical fervor of their more populist brothers (I use the term advisedly). Nevertheless, the number of seminaries in the United States continued to grow. "Between 1850 and 1900, the churches founded 119 new seminaries, and by the turn of the century 159 schools offered ministerial training."[11] Debates raged, as ever, about the nature of the curriculum. At the turn of the century, William Rainey Harper of the University of Chicago, among others, sought to move ministerial preparation from a "scholarly" to a more "professional" model. Harper thought ministers needed more "practical skills" than "theological learning."[12]

For much of the twentieth century, theological education for Protestants was primarily located in the seminary as a separate institution. Some schools continued to be linked with major universities, while most were independent institutions. Roman Catholics began preparation for the religious life in minor seminaries, high schools that educated boys interested in the priesthood. Those with a vocation to the priesthood were later educated in major seminaries. The major seminaries were similarly linked with Catholic universities or were independent diocesan institutions. Among very conservative Protestants, fundamentalist Bible schools provided ministerial and missionary

training. Eventually, fundamentalist and evangelical churches formed their own seminaries. Some were linked with Bible colleges; others were independent. Increasingly, theological education became something disconnected from undergraduate education. Some colleges offered pretheological courses of study or majors in Bible, theology, or some form of ministry. But in every tradition as the century progressed, colleges, universities, and Bible schools alike increasingly delegated theological education to the seminaries—to the impoverishment of universities, the seminaries, and the students themselves.

Practical and theological advantages

The course of theological education in the United States has, then, resulted in the separation of the seminary and the university. Should the trend be reversed? Should seminaries and universities seek renewed connections? Universities are now decidedly "secular." Departments of Religion within the university, in fact, want it to be abundantly clear that what they are doing is nothing like what is going on in the offices and classrooms of the local seminary. Biblical scholars in secular universities sniff at the efforts of their more "confessional" colleagues and wonder if they are worthy of membership and participation in organizations like the Society of Biblical Literature. Why would *they* be interested in linking their institutions in any way with seminaries? University trustees and administrators are interested in anything that will bring prestige and money to their institutions. In the current environment, seminaries are likely to bring neither. So why would they, or should they, be interested in adding the challenges of the seminary to their institutions in an already challenging higher education environment?

Seminaries contemplating such a merger may have their own worries. How will being part of a larger institution impact their ability to carry out their unique mission with a measure of independence? Will the larger institution and its leadership understand the significant contemporary challenges of theological education—let alone the church? Will resources be enhanced or siphoned off? Will the ecclesiastical and donor constituency understand and support the move to consolidate with the university or see it as a betrayal of the seminary's mission? And what will happen if the seminary struggles to meet the goals set by university administrators and boards? Will the school be cut adrift once more or even eliminated without recourse? These are realistic and challenging questions.

Despite such concerns, I would suggest that there are practical, theological, and cultural advantages for such a linkage for both universities and seminaries. There are also significant dangers and pitfalls that need to be explored carefully and addressed. In what follows I will first address the practical, theological, and cultural advantages for the freestanding seminary to join a university. I will then address the same advantages for a university taking on the responsibility of a freestanding seminary. In this section, I draw on my own fourteen-year experience as president and dean of North Park Theological Seminary as well as on formal and informal personal interviews with a number of colleagues and also

on responses to a simple survey. In keeping with an agreement I made with those interviewed and surveyed, I will not name any institution.

Practical advantages for the seminary

Freestanding seminaries are similar in ways that university-related seminaries are not. The most significant differences within the community of university-related seminaries have to do with money and leadership. Some seminaries in the United States and Canada are rather lightly linked to the larger institutions. Like some of the federated schools in Canada, they have historic relationships with the larger institutions that grant them significant privileges but are otherwise on their own with regard to funding their own operations. They may have a seat or two on the governing board and a voice in setting academic policy. They may have access to the significantly larger institutional facilities of the university. But the university takes no responsibility for their funding and expects them to largely "pay their own way."

Another set of schools in the United States and Canada began as schools or departments within larger universities. They are little different in the eyes of university administration from the School of Nursing or the School of Education. The dean or director of the school reports to a provost or other academic official in the university. Their funding, academic policy, development efforts, faculty hiring, assessment, student admissions, and student life are all coordinated and developed within the context of the larger institution. They may be integrated with an undergraduate program in religion, Bible, or theology and may offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees. They also may suffer from a lack of identity and clarity of role within the larger institution. They may feel invisible to the church.

A third group of seminaries falls somewhere between these two extremes. For historic reasons, although they are linked with larger institutions, they have a greater measure of freedom than the second group while enjoying a more significant level of institutional support than the first. Many of these schools were there at the beginning as the founding institutions of their universities rather than being added later. These schools are frequently denominational schools. They must give an account to the church as well university administrators and boards. At the same time, university administrators and boards must give an account to the church for the health of their seminaries. In such schools, the chief administrative officer of the seminary may report directly to the president rather than a provost or dean of the university. She or he may also report to a denominational educational board or executive committee.

In all three cases, money and leadership are handled in a variety of ways. Some seminaries are largely on their own regardless of their relationship with the university. Others are significantly supported financially by the larger institution and/or by the church. Some are able to develop and set their own budgets. Others must submit their budgets to complicated university processes and live within challenging university financial realities. Some seminary chief executive officers have a great deal of freedom in setting the academic agenda for the seminary. Others are further down the organizational chart with lesser authority and responsible to university administrators who may

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have little understanding or interest in theological education. There are, of course, university administrators who do appreciate and support theological education. Their value to the seminary is greater than rubies. Some schools are significantly represented on the university board. Others could not get near a board member if their lives depended on it. Some have their own committee within the university board. Others have developed a "board of visitors" or other such advisory board to make up for the lack of attention from the university board. Some are significantly supported by a denomination. Others are ignored or held at arm's length by the denomination.

It will become obvious in what follows that, given these differences, the practical advantages that I mention do not apply to all seminaries. These are *potential* advantages and are not realized in every situation. They amount to a checklist to be considered by those contemplating a merger with a larger institution. I begin with the potential advantages for the administration of the seminary.

Back office. Many smaller freestanding seminaries struggle with sufficient professionalism and skill in back office operations. Larger institutions offer significantly greater oversight and expertise for back office operations. Perhaps most importantly, the university chief financial officer is much more likely to be a skilled professional. But there are many other positions that could be considerably upgraded for the smaller seminary. This is especially true where the seminary has depended on a handful of persons doing a number of jobs, many for which they have had little or no training. Most universities will offer professional expertise in the following:

- chief financial officer
- human resources
- student loan office
- compliance officer
- international office
- institutional technology office
- physical plant/engineering
- legal services
- admissions/records
- food service
- student services office
- distance learning office
- communications office

Even if the seminary has to pay fee-for-service, it will likely receive better service and greater expertise than if it were hiring and training people to undertake these activities as a freestanding school. While there are attendant frustrations possible in each of these areas, in the main this represents a significant advantage for a small to medium freestanding seminary. Among other things, professionals are much more likely to know the laws governing their areas of expertise and be current on the most recent challenges and most successful approaches. They will, however, need to be educated about

the realities of theological education to be fully helpful. If they treat the seminary, its administration, students, and faculty like an undergraduate college, they will be not simply less than helpful, but in fact harmful.

Development. Another potential significant advantage is in development. While there are significant pitfalls to be avoided, the development effort at a small- to medium-sized seminary could be significantly aided by the larger resources of a university development office. Many smaller development efforts lack the personnel, technological resources, and expertise to be successful. A larger development office can provide the following:

- coordination of development effort
- supportive colleagues who will speak for the seminary
- additional resources/technology
- new markets and donor opportunities
- grant writing expertise
- larger institutional profile
- use of university president for seminary development effort

While there are clear advantages to the larger and more sophisticated development office of the typical university, the seminary *must be able to tell its own story.* The seminary has a unique mission and a unique constituency. It cannot and should not frame its message in the same way as the university. If this happens, the seminary could end up losing rather than gaining ground. This will require careful conversation and thoughtful cross-training for the university development officers, the university president, and other university personnel to be fully conversant with the seminary and its mission.

Faculty/academic. A third significant potential advantage is in academics. A larger institution *may* provide access to greater opportunities for faculty development. The university may encourage the development of greater pedagogical skills, scholarly achievement, and general professional development within the faculty. The larger university also may provide opportunities for unique academic programs not possible in a freestanding seminary. In addition to faculty development, consider the following potential academic advantages:

- faculty relationships with a wider range of disciplines within the university
- larger and richer research facilities for faculty research
- relationships with undergraduate faculty and students
- dual degrees (e.g., MDiv/MBA, or MSN or MNPM, etc.)
- extension rights at university off-site facilities
- adult degree completion programs for second-career students
- English as second language programs for international students
- peers for administrators as well as faculty, thus aiding in continuing professional development for seminary administrators
- distance education expertise
- assessment expertise
- academic lectureships, workshops, and training opportunities

Faculty may also benefit from the rich social life of a university. Most universities offer multiple concerts, sporting events, lectures, and plays that could enrich the life of faculty members and their families. In addition, many universities offer significant tuition discounts for spouses and children of faculty members.

Each of these areas may need to be cultivated. It is possible for a seminary to be on a university campus and not take advantage of many of the academic and cultural advantages I have mentioned. Seminary academic leadership and faculty may need to be aggressive to take advantage of what is available on the wider campus. University academic leadership should also encourage and support such efforts on behalf of the seminary faculty and staff.

Students. Students may also benefit significantly from being a part of a university campus. Of course, they can also sequester themselves within the walls of the seminary and take little part in the life of the larger institution! Nevertheless, consider the following potential advantages:

- additional facilities: food service, recreation center, health clinic, counseling center, student center, and so forth
- work opportunities on campus for students or spouses
- ministry opportunities for students through university ministries or other support services: At North Park, for example, seminary students have served as Bible study leaders, worship leaders, musicians, pastoral counselors, and chaplains to the various athletic teams of the university.
- richer library and other resources for research
- international student support: It is invaluable to have on campus someone who is well versed in the complex laws regarding international student matriculation.
- diversity resources for underrepresented groups: A larger university will also offer a greater community for such students.
- student aid: Here as well it is invaluable to have someone on campus who knows the laws regarding student aid and loans.
- intramural and intercollegiate athletics: At North Park we have had students with athletic eligibility available to play for a university team.
- social opportunities such as concerts, lectures, and sporting events
- opportunities for students to act as teaching assistants for university faculty: This, obviously, is also an advantage for the faculty members!

One of the tasks of the student life program of the seminary attached to a university may be to encourage seminary students to take advantage of the wider university. Students need to see how significant the advantage really is and what is actually available to them and to their families. I have talked with our graduates who have regretted failing to take advantage of what the university had to offer.

Reports from the field

The interviewees and respondents to the surveys had a good deal to say about these advantages. Specifically mentioned in the personal interviews as advantages of the seminary/university relationship were "interdisciplinary conversations with university faculty"; dual degree opportunities; greater cultural and ethnic diversity of faculty; greater diversity of the larger community; interreligious dialogue (depending on the school); opportunities to teach both graduate and undergraduate students; seminary student support for university chapel and wider university ministry to undergraduate students; institutional infrastructure; public awareness of the university; coordinated development, recruitment, and admissions; and more significant resources financially and technologically.

In response to the question "What is working particularly well for you?" a seminary leader wrote,

> The relationship between all administrators is great and the university supports the seminary. Such an arrangement also takes care of many services that are shared by all schools on campus (registrar, development, student services, cafeteria, library, etc.).

Another wrote,

> To be a part of a university opens immense possibilities for interdisciplinary academic work. It means that academic standards for hiring and promoting faculty are very high. It means that benefit packages (health care, retirement, tuition reduction, etc.) are not only more generous but also more comprehensive, for they are built on a larger pool.

A third thought,

> In lean times, like these, the cushion of a larger institution with hard tuition dollars is great. . . . We also share services like the university's attorneys, IT, libraries, and so forth.

It should be said that not all arrangements work so favorably or so well, but for those that do, these are significant benefits. The same advantages were mentioned over and over again in the survey.

Practical advantages for the university

The potential advantages for the freestanding seminary joining ranks with a larger university are clear. But what are the advantages for the university? Given the challenges facing theological education, one would think universities would want to stay away from seminaries. But there are more advantages than one may think.

1. By adding a seminary, a university adds significant faculty expertise in an area of life and thought growing more rather than less important within society.
2. The university adds the possibility of unique degree programs not only by adding the seminary degrees to its menu but also through the possibility of dual degrees.
3. New student markets are the result of such new degree programs.
4. New development markets are possible through the alumni/ae base and donor base of the seminary as well as its relationship to a church or churches.
5. Seminary faculty and students offer additional resources for university ministry programs, for community outreach programs, and for teaching or research.
6. A seminary library added to a university collection deepens the theological, biblical, and other research resources. In a major city, as is the case in Chicago, this could also mean adding the resources of an entire consortium of theological schools to the benefit of university students and faculty alike. The Association of Chicago Theological Schools provides a rich selection of courses for cross-registration as well as additional research facilities for students and faculty.
7. For a denominational university, adding the seminary would potentially improve its relationship with the church and/or give it further insight into the church and, in the seminary administration and faculty, a potential set of advocates with the church.
8. For some schools, adding a seminary would mean adding its first graduate program and additional prestige.
9. Seminary personnel can contribute to the total publishing efforts by administration and faculty.
10. Adding a seminary raises the potential of a renewed mission focus.
11. Seminary faculty could teach classes on ethics and pastoral care in undergraduate and graduate programs such as business or nursing.
12. A seminary can provide additional worship resources and opportunities for students, faculty, and staff.
13. Additional lectureships may arise by adding a seminary.
14. Adding a seminary may provide a new potential stream of undergraduate students interested in theological education.

Reports from the field

Both seminary and university leadership bear witness to the positive impact of the seminary on the university: one seminary leader reported that when the university was faced with questions about Islam and the presence of Muslim students on the campus, it was able to turn to the seminary faculty for expertise and advice. The university president greatly appreciated the help he received from the seminary. He also turned to the seminary faculty to address hot button issues regarding sexuality and social justice. The dean of this seminary told me he thought his job was to make the president and the university look good. A university president expressed appreciation for the use of

seminary faculty with undergraduate students. Another said it was good for undergraduate students to be with seminary students. The seminary students not only offered pastoral care but modeled a spiritual life that was attractive to many college students. Another seminary leader said both seminary and university faculty helped each other improve their teaching. Seminary faculty publishing, one said, gave the university president something to brag about.

Participants in the survey responded to the question "What value do you add to the larger institution?" as follows: "We add great value. Most of the graduate students are in the seminary. The strength of the library is basically because of the seminary. We also bring a great amount of financial stability, as the church heavily subsidizes the seminary programs for ministry training." Another wrote, "As a school of theology, we offer intellectual breadth to the academic life on campus. We bring a set of academic disciplines not otherwise available in other departments or schools." Another suggested that a broader mission and connection with the church were advantages for the university. Another wrote, "We contribute to community relations and to the moral tenor of the university. We are often called upon to either make the university look good, or better, actually be good." More than one leader mentioned something like the following: "we anchor historical memory and embody social conscience in the life of the university. We also provide important networking to churches and civic institutions in our area."

It is true here, as it was above, that clearly not all seminaries provide their universities with such advantages. Each of these areas must be an area of intentional focus on the part of both university and seminary leadership. But for both institutions potential riches are available. In these last few comments we moved from more practical advantages in the direction of theological and cultural advantages. It is now time to address these more directly. The questions raised here are profoundly challenging for the leadership of the university, the seminary, and the church. What would it mean for the cultural and academic life of the university and indeed the larger community if seminaries and theological education played a larger role in the life of the mind? What would happen if theology once again played a role in the wider academy and was no longer an intellectual stepchild?

Theological and cultural advantages

According to Stanley Hauerwas, "Seminaries are in trouble." "Free-standing seminaries," he continues, "are particularly in trouble."[13] They are in trouble, Hauerwas argues, because of the growing distance between the more "academic" and more "practical" sides of the curriculum. They are in trouble because of the pressures of the churches to "dumb down" the curriculum to "make seminaries more responsive to pastoral care." This is disastrous because "the challenges confronting the church in a consumer society demand more not less formation in the intellectual skill the church calls theology."[14] Seminaries are also in trouble because they are not attracting the best and brightest to their schools or sufficiently challenging them when they get there. Hauerwas bluntly argues,

> Freestanding seminaries seem to me to be particularly susceptible to the demand to turn out more "caring" pastors. They are so because they are too close to their constituency. University-related seminaries have their own pathologies, but at least being in the university means the faculties in those institutions can give reasons why theology should remain an intellectually demanding enterprise.[15]

One could, and in fact should, challenge Hauerwas on these points. Some freestanding seminaries do a superb job of educating their students in theology and biblical studies. Some university-related schools do a poor job. And many readers have perhaps seen the recent studies critiquing universities and colleges for lack of rigor in certain programs, notably business and education. It is clearly unfair to generalize. One could also wonder if he has drawn the line too clearly between the theological and practical disciplines. I have argued that in a sense there is only one discipline within the seminary, "practical theology." Be that as it may, with all these caveats, Hauerwas still has made a point worth debating. Could seminaries, whether freestanding or university-related, benefit from the academic rigor and challenge of a university? Could they even benefit from the skepticism of their colleagues and the necessity to defend their place in the university? And could they do all this and remain faithful to their mission of preparing persons for ministerial service?

Hauerwas also notes that seminaries struggle with students who are poorly prepared for the rigors of graduate theological education. This in part is the fault of the university and the fissure opened between university and seminary. The universities in many cases are failing to prepare students for the intellectual challenges of theological engagement. He recalls a conversation with a first-year student who had graduated from a major university with a business degree. Hauerwas asked what courses he had taken in the humanities. He said he had taken a few. When Hauerwas asked if he had taken any philosophy, he answered, "I am not sure." Hauerwas writes, "I thought that was either the smartest or dumbest answer I had ever heard." When asked if he had ever read Plato the student responded, "Who?"[16] Students who are interested in "caring for" or "being with" people may, Hauerwas suggests, be annoyed by the challenges of academic theology and required courses in Greek and Hebrew. They will find a good deal of support, unfortunately, in local churches and denominational offices. Sponsoring churches may put tremendous pressure on seminaries to focus more on personal skills and piety than on intellectual achievement. As suggested above, this is nothing new.

Being part of a university will not guarantee that questions of academic rigor and adequate preparation will be addressed. On many campuses it is far too easy for theological schools to isolate themselves and remain untouched and unchallenged by the academic rigor demanded by the university. It is also true that not all universities, and certainly not all university programs, are given to the sort of academic rigor that would challenge theological faculties to higher levels of academic expectation and accomplishment. But Hauerwas is right that one clear potential advantage for a theological school is to be forced

to make a case for the rigor of its work and the competency of its students, not only for its churchly constituency but also for a more skeptical university constituency. This does not mean, as I hope to prove, that all university critiques of seminaries are apt or fair. But interacting with a university community may encourage seminaries to, as Hauerwas puts it, "overcome the false division between academic and pastoral courses in the seminary curriculums."[17]

What about the universities? What are the theological and cultural advantages of the presence of a theological seminary on a university campus? In his article "Theological Knowledge and the Knowledges of the University: Beginning Explorations," Hauerwas argues that modern universities lack a coherent intellectual formula or moral vision. Hauerwas argues that "by using the description 'incoherent,' I mean to do no more than suggest that no one has the authority or the intellectual resources to say what the university is for or whom it serves."[18] The postmodern university has even called "reason" into question. Utility is the all important measure of value and significance. For the postmodern intellectual, Hauerwas writes, quoting Zygmunt Bauman, "the authority that now characterizes the intellectual is not the Cartesian *Cognito*, but rather, 'I am talked about, therefore I am.'"[19] This is not to say that "modernism" is dead in the contemporary university. In fact, Hauerwas argues, in the university it is ironically the "religious studies" departments that "often are the last representatives of modernist presumptions about objectivity and rationality."[20] He did not mean this as a compliment.

He goes on to cite John Milbank, who rather audaciously argues that theology is the only discipline capable of reclaiming the purpose of the university. For Milbank this is because "truth for theology is the adequation of knowledge with the real, but only God is the entirely real reality who is infinitely actual and infinitely knowing."[21] Milbank insists that unless all the other disciplines "are (at least implicitly) ordered to theology (assuming that this means participation in God's self-knowledge—as in the Augustinian tradition) they are objectively and demonstrably null and void, altogether lacking in truth, which to have any meaning must involve some sort of adequation."[22]

Hauerwas acknowledges that Milbank's position does not have "a snowball's chance in hell" of being realized in the university.[23] Nevertheless he agrees with Cardinal Newman that "to withdraw Theology from the public schools is to impair the completeness and to invalidate the trustworthiness of all that is actually taught in them." In fact, "theology is not just another subject, but it is the condition of general knowledge."[24] Hauerwas comments, "Newman helps us see that our theological task is to help the various disciplines of the university explore their limits, possibilities, and connections with other subjects."[25] Theology is not, then, to show how everything fits, but has a much humbler task: to raise questions and make connections. While theologians have been the "bottom feeders of the university" they should reclaim their courage and their audacity and refuse to be intimidated by the sneers of outmoded modernist attacks on their vision, even from their erstwhile colleagues in the schools of religion. Given the disorder of the university and the space opened by the incoherence of much of postmodern thought, Hauerwas argues, things could actually be "quite favorable to the task to which we are

called as theologians."[26] The seminary can and should claim this space for its intellectual, moral, and spiritual vision.

In another essay, Hauerwas cites Wendell Berry, who has written critically and well regarding the failures of modern education and culture. Berry bemoans the modern emphasis within the university on "work" over "life" with the implicit costs to both the individual and the community. He alludes to a poem of William Butler Yeats called "The Choice."

> The intellect of man is forced to choose
> Perfection of the life, or of the work,
> And if it take the second must refuse
> A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.
>
> When all that story's finished, what's the news?
> In luck or out the toil has left its mark:
> That old perplexity an empty purse,
> Or the day's vanity, the night's remorse.[27]

The presence of a seminary on a university campus can encourage both students and faculty to consider—in the midst of a consumerist, individualistic, utilitarian, lonely, and competitive culture—that one can make a life. That life is found in the larger purposes and intentions of God for this battered creation. We can offer community over against isolation, hope over against cynicism, love instead of wariness, faith instead of fear. We can, in short, bear witness.

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ENDNOTES

1. E. Brooks Holifield, *God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 32. One can see that the curriculum was even crowded back then.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 53.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 75.
7. Ibid., 75, 76.
8. Ibid., 116.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 117.
11. Ibid., 173.
12. Ibid., 174.

13. Stanley Hauerwas, "Seminaries are in Trouble: Chastened Reflections on the Centennial of Bethany Theological Seminary," in *The State of the University* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 206.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 207.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 208.

18. Stanley Hauerwas, "Theological Knowledge and the Knowledges of the University: Beginning Explorations," in *The State of the University* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007): 21, footnote 20.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 21.

21. Ibid., 22, 23.

22. Ibid., 23.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 27.

25. Ibid., 29.

26. Ibid., 31.

27. Stanley Hauerwas, "What Would a Christian University Look Like? Some Tentative Answers Inspired by Wendell Berry," in *The State of the University* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 97.

A Changed Game, and Changing the Game: Adapting to New Realities and Innovating New Solutions

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ABSTRACT: *The advent of online education was only the launching point for a revolution of resourcing theological education for one small ATS member school. Technology continues to ripple outward into all parts of the institution's operations. As technological innovation continues, seminaries face opportunities for continued change of operation and delivery of services. As is to be expected, these new opportunities surface questions that will require answers as schools balance mission and survival.*

During the spring 2013 semester, three administrative faculty members at the Earlham School of Religion enrolled in a massive open online course (MOOC) based on a graduate course on leading strategic innovation offered at a major university. The group viewed this as an opportunity to experience a new trend in online education as well as an opportunity for professional development. For the required class project, the group addressed a recent request from the theological librarian that faculty model the use of e-readers as a means to facilitate the library's intended transition from print material to electronic resources wherever feasible. The subtle but firm resistance to the idea provided a genuine opportunity to think about strategic innovation in the face of pending change. An unintended outcome of the course was extended conversation within the group about the ongoing pressures for institutional adaptation and the questions that arise in response. The reflection prompted by those conversations gave rise to this article.

Reconfiguring the boundaries of the classroom

The Earlham School of Religion (ESR) faculty opted into the world of online education with the approval of the school's strategic plan in June 2001. The very thought of such a move was anxiety producing, as it seemed to depart from the core of an ESR experience in which community was a significant component of the learning experience. The group agreed to a three-year experiment, after which the teaching and learning would be evaluated. Questions of pedagogy and community remained central to the experiment, as did assessment of learning. The program could be terminated following the review, if that was determined to be the appropriate step. In 2005, ESR applied to the ATS Commission on Accrediting for approval to offer a comprehensive distance-learning program. After graduating its first distance-learning students, in 2008 the school petitioned for and received ongoing approval for its distance-learning program.

Twelve years after the initial launch, questions of pedagogy and community have been sufficiently allayed. Reflecting the biases of a residential program where formal lectures are minimized and class discussion is highly utilized in the teaching process, the "guide on the side" pedagogical approach in online learning was not a huge step, though it still produced moments of stress. Those stresses resulted from the loss of the usual communication cues and the effect their absence would have on the educational process. To address that concern, ESR's online classes gravitated to threaded discussions as a way of creating student interaction. A recent analysis of Moodle course logs indicates that students spend the most time in this section of the course.

This strategy can be effective but is not automatically so. The use of an email forum with required participation can produce shallow responses in which students do not engage the topic, particularly when assignments are not completed until the deadline approaches. In ESR's online experience, there are at least three keys to successful forum discussions:

1. the crafting of open-ended questions, which should be created with course content and objectives in mind;
2. the creation of a rhythm of participation so that students engage in discussion rather than merely generating a flurry of postings at the end; and
3. the practice by which faculty think through and communicate in advance their manner of response to these postings.

By far, the greatest lament of ESR faculty with regard to online learning is the excessive time that can be spent with online posts.

The dean discourages faculty from routinely responding to every online post. One practice that has proven to reduce faculty time spent in these discussions is the use of a summary post at the end of the designated time period. In such a post, either by video or in text form, faculty can affirm salient points, correct false conclusions, and redirect attention where key issues have been missed. Informal surveys of students have affirmed this strategy, noting it provides regular, substantive contact with the professor and also reduces their workload.

Much evaluation within Western education relies heavily upon the craft of writing to the academic standards of the field. Whether that is a good practice can and should be debated; it is certainly true at ESR. So long as that is true, one strength of online education is its compatibility with this model of evaluation. ESR online classes regularly require writing in a variety of genres—research papers, theological reflection, case studies, and journaling, to name a few. The time and available resources for the projects resemble those available to residential students. Electronic transmission makes submission easy. It is rumored that instructor feedback on writing assignments is easier to read when typed rather than scribbled in the margins!

Many ESR faculty members now utilize video in their courses; that has been a learning process that has proceeded organically. The move began when an instructor decided to record lectures from a residential class to supplement his online class. The provision of video material helped to make the instructor

more personable and provided an audio visual learning resource. It was a good first step, but as anticipated, hour-long talking-head presentations were not stimulating educational experiences. Helpful student feedback suggests that twenty-minute videos are the optimal length in terms of student attentiveness and that the use of graphics to illustrate and emphasize instructor commentary is beneficial. Informal, conversational videos can work well if the video and audio quality are good. As the comfort level with available technology has increased, several faculty members have been incorporating videos into their online teaching. More challenging for a small institution such as ESR is to create and edit more polished, complex course materials. The greatest challenge is not the cost of software but rather the expertise to use it and the ability to coordinate the schedules of necessary participants to accomplish the feat. This is a point where ESR continues to experience growing pains, alongside the matter of balancing value with remaining competitive.

At this point, the assessment of online student learning compares favorably with that of the traditional residential model. Even so, technology continues to reorganize, even revolutionize, the possibilities and processes of this institution, requiring ongoing adaptation throughout the seminary.

In the beginning, online classes at ESR were clearly distinct from residential ones. Class members either gathered in a specific place at a specific time for instruction, or they participated at a distance without necessarily ever being physically present with the instructor and other class members. This demarcation may be a vanishing one. This past year, two classes experimented with a blended classroom in which some of the students were present on ESR's campus with the instructor while others participated from various locations around the country via Skype or AdobeConnect. In one case, the faculty member was the motivating factor; in the other, a student request drove the change. The blended classes required less advance preparation than an online course, but more attentive tech support presence was needed at each class session. One faculty member was capable of managing the various technology details while teaching but acknowledged that it distracted from the task of teaching; the other faculty member required additional support. Student feedback to the experiences was positive, resulting in a request for more blended options in the curriculum. For the institution, the innovation was worth the risk because the blended class strengthened the curriculum available to distance students, provided another point of intersection for distance and residential students, and supported individual faculty members' professional development. The ESR faculty now finds itself contemplating how to best distribute course delivery and manage its work load in light of this shift.

Online course delivery is being affected in other ways. In 2001 when ESR began experimenting with online learning, high-speed Internet access was much more limited than it is now. The school consciously chose to create largely text-based courses. This was framed as a justice issue, making the courses most functional for those with the lowest level of Internet access. The principle behind that decision still rings true to ESR, but as Internet accessibility has improved and competition from peer schools has increased, ESR now ponders how to balance those two issues—remaining as widely accessible as

possible while also remaining competitive with its peers. The move toward more complex design and flashier presentation comes at a cost of institutional dollars and faculty time, but it also raises deeper questions: Does the extra investment create a better product or merely a more seductive one? What are the school's limits for participating in a consumer-driven market where sizzle sells and sways decisions to purchase?

The accessibility issue now extends beyond the question of Internet accessibility to the question of means of accessibility. The question of means has at least two dimensions: apparatus and avenue. For now, personal computers and laptops remain integral to online learning, but smartphones and tablets are changing user expectations. As the ESR faculty became more comfortable with online learning and accessibility improved, some began experimenting with simple, self-produced videos as a means of providing minilectures or personal responses to the class's work. Before the first semester was concluded, a student contacted the instructor to say that, while the videos were appreciated, she would appreciate a separate audio file that she could add to her iPod so that she could listen to class materials while on the go. Fully outfitted computer labs are giving way to wireless workspace as students bring their own laptops and tablets to campus. Moodle 2.0 is available in app form, which means that online courses can step into the mobile universe. As a consequence, not just audience but also mode of delivery must be kept in mind as resources are created. Designing files to function on tablets and smartphones is not the same as designing web pages. How urgent is it to design an ESR app? If one were designed, what resources should be available? Online courses? Student support? Payment and billing?

Surveying the future of online learning in theological education cannot help but raise the issue of the massive open online course (MOOC). The three ESR faculty members who participated in the spring 2013 MOOC found it to be a satisfactory learning experience from the standpoint of knowledge gained, but it largely felt like an independent study—ironic given that thousands were enrolled. The experience also yielded valuable insights on ways to improve ESR's current online course delivery as well as a glimpse into the depth of support needed to successfully deliver such a course.

Based on this very limited experience, MOOCs may be challenged to accomplish the formational objectives of an MDiv, but they could have value within theological institutions both as an institutional resource and for the questions they raise. For instance, the economic and class issues may be more compelling than questions of quality. The justice emphasis that led to the initial text-heavy online courses should herald the availability of knowledge and opportunity to those who may not be able to avail themselves of an accredited seminary degree, particularly in the face of escalating seminary debt. At the same time, one is left to query as to the effect of a degreed (pedigreed) class of minister versus a nondegreed MOOC alumnus/a who has similar knowledge and skill, but no sheepskin. This may actually be less of an issue in the church, where many congregations are satisfied with nonseminary trained leadership, than in the operating room of a hospital, where most are likely to prefer pedigreed credentials. If such a move did succeed, would expensive seminary

degrees find an even smaller market than their currently shrinking applicant pool?

A brief survey of institutions offering MOOCs through the two main courseware forces, Coursera and edX, found few seminary offerings. Though not yet convinced that this mode of learning is right for graduate credit-earning courses, the ESR faculty can imagine the utilization of MOOCs for raising faculty and institutional visibility, plus contributing to outreach to and education of its constituent base. ESR will likely experiment with its first MOOC in the coming months.

Organizational operation

Technology has encouraged or coerced organizational adaptation in other ways. Email was an early gift of technology that changed communication processes and delivery times. At the outset it seemed like a step toward efficiency. In retrospect it introduced other challenges, such as creating a sense of constant availability and an expectation of immediate response, but those seem minor compared to the impact of social media on organizational communication.

A clear casualty along this path of revolution is the ability to plan, time, and control the dissemination of information. For example, a much beloved weekly publication of seminary news and events made the necessary transition from paper to digital format. With the move from a centralized data entry point (which was always a lightning rod for complaints) to a decentralized approach in which every member could input data for real time distribution, this vehicle for information fell into disuse. Community calendars and email are regularly ignored. A student generated Facebook page has become a primary outlet for community information—at least for those who use that form of social media! It has opened some incredible doors for community building but has also contributed to increasing communication gaps.

In terms of internal communication, ESR is not unlike a neighborhood with multiple communication cul-de-sacs. Much information is circulated. It has not all been vetted; indeed it may not be for public distribution. Once the process is set in motion, it can hardly be canceled. In this emerging context, the challenges of effective communication and the challenge of managing the message are constant. The school must develop a strategy that nuances and nudges this new reality in ways that create the informational networks it desires, cultivate interactivity in order to fully benefit from these changes, and resign itself to the reality that multidirectional communication can be more time consuming without necessarily being more productive.

These broadly changing dynamics impact virtually all departments of the seminary with regard to the work unique to their areas. Here are two examples of how ESR is responding to them.

Collaborative virtual recruitment

A recent disappointing experiment in virtual recruitment prompted ESR to pursue an exciting new collaborative effort among ATS members that

illustrates the impact of technology beyond the classroom. This section of the article explains the background and current status of this venture.

Over the years, ESR has shifted its approach to recruitment in significant ways. While building a personal relationship is still a crucial component of the school's efforts, the ways in which ESR makes the initial contacts upon which to build those relationships have changed. Travel remains important, for example, but its role has diminished as technology has allowed the school both to be more easily discovered and to more easily identify likely prospects.

The 2012–2013 academic year was an important one for ESR's recruitment strategy on the technology front. The school breathed new life into its blog and expanded its use of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. ESR now sees LinkedIn, for instance, not only as a means of maintaining professional contacts and cultivating prospective student relationships but also as a vehicle for distributing original content to new audiences. ESR's first student who found the school through Twitter enrolled this year in an online degree program. Finally, in April, ESR participated in its first virtual recruitment fair. As mentioned above, it is this last experience that will shape the focus of this section.

ESR's first venture into virtual recruitment was the Golden Key Virtual Fair for employers and grad schools. The Golden Key International Honour Society1 hosted the event, which was run by a company called CareerEco.2 ESR decided to participate based on three factors:

- They made a good pitch about the event: "The event will be attended by more than 2,000 scholars interested in continuing their education and developing in their profession. The event will be marketed across a select network of 200,000 members in the top 15 percent of their cohort, including alumni and students who are graduating in between 2011–2015."
- Their technology seemed comprehensive, flexible, and user friendly. The event is built around a central chat room for each institution where multiple staff members can interact with multiple students at the same time. From there it is possible to pull out individuals into private chat boxes and even engage in live video chatting, all while continuing to oversee and interact in the main chat room.
- The fees ($250) were minimal compared to the registration fees and travel costs associated with many other in-person grad fairs.

Once our director of recruitment and admissions, Matthew Hisrich, signed up for the fair, he was able to develop a page about ESR for those registered to explore. This included descriptive text, links, and photos, and it was even possible to add video and upload documents. Participants were then able to review registered institutions and express their interest in advance of the event. As a registered school representative, Hisrich had access to a listing of all participants, including notice of whether they had shown interest in the school. ESR was encouraged to, and did, contact these individuals before the event using a click-and-add email feature on the website to thank them for their interest and invite them to chat with Hisrich during the times he had posted he would be available.

So what were the results? On the technological side, all went smoothly and ESR was very satisfied with the experience. On the recruitment side, things were different. Of the thousands registered, only about sixty expressed some interest in ESR. ESR was able to cross-reference these prospective students with those who expressed interest in religion and other areas to see if there were others to whom the school could reach out, and the overlap was essentially complete. Of the sixty who expressed interest, our director of recruitment and admissions had interactions with only two individuals. One of these was primarily interested in job opportunities rather than graduate programs. From a recruitment standpoint, greater participation definitely would have been preferable. The advantage of this being a virtual fair, though, was that Hisrich was able to monitor the chat activity (what little there was) while answering calls and emails and performing other functions in the office.

At the end of the day, Gayle Oliver-Plath, CareerEco CEO, joined ESR's chat room and opened a private chat box to ask how the event went. Hisrich shared honestly that, while it was a valuable experience for him to participate in a virtual fair and worthwhile from that perspective, ESR probably would not pay to join another event given the disappointing response—unless, that is, it was a targeted event focused specifically on those interested in exploring seminary education. This started a dialogue about developing just such an event. As Oliver-Plath explained, CareerEco had recently begun hosting a number of such niche fairs for very specific programs (bio-med and public health, for example), and ATS member schools could be a similarly good fit.

This led Hisrich to reach out to the ATS Student Personnel Administrators' Network (SPAN) listserv with the idea. He received some initial feedback, including an enthusiastic response from Alison McCarty at Andover Newton Theological School. McCarty helped coordinate the recent collaborative Seminary Fair at the 2013 SPAN conference in Phoenix and is very interested in seminaries working together on recruitment.

Oliver-Plath arranged a conference call webinar to go over the details of what CareerEco could offer and discuss possible next steps. She agreed to work on developing an email list for all ATS admissions contacts, and McCarty and Hisrich began developing a strategy of identifying and recruiting a core group of anchor schools before issuing a general invitation to all ATS members. This group identified a general timeframe (early October) and a minimum number of schools to participate for a viable event (fifteen).

ESR views this as an experiment worth pursuing, with the understanding that if it does not succeed, there may be other opportunities to explore. The assumption is that many of the other registered schools share a similar perspective.

At the time of this writing, twenty-seven schools have registered to participate for the event, which has been moved to fall 2013. The organizers have already exceeded their expectations for school registration so far, and others may yet join. The question that remains is whether the enthusiastic initial response among schools will translate into an equally enthusiastic response among potential applicants.

Extending the library's reach

ESR extends its educational reach through library resources facilitated by technological innovation for communication together with investment in electronic, in addition to print, collections. As in any academic institution, the library represents one of the more expensive resources to grow and sustain. In light of the seminary's increasing number of student enrollments in its distance learning program, *ESRAccess*, the challenges of both successfully financing the library and delivering its resources to patrons benefit from deliberate strategies for innovation and outreach as outlined below.

Lilly Library on the Earlham College campus was built in 1962 and houses collections and librarians serving the humanities and social sciences, including ESR's theological disciplines. A separate library serving the natural sciences is located in the science building complex on the Earlham campus. All members of the Earlham and ESR communities are entitled to the full complement of library resources and services. In addition, ESR and the college house their special collections and archives in a secure and climate-controlled suite in Lilly Library that is staffed by a full-time archivist and a Quaker historian. The theological librarian, together with teaching faculty members, serves on a seminary library committee that oversees decisions regarding collections, policies, and the budget.

When ESR began offering online courses and instituted its distance degree programs, the seminary library committee developed a document delivery service that delivers circulating items to an *ESRAccess* patron's mailing address via USPS. The patron is obliged to return the books by the due date, though renewals may be done online and up to five times, totaling a six-month check-out period before the item must be returned. As *ESRAccess* enrollments continue to increase, marketing for this useful service is also increasing to fully ensure that distance students enjoy the same access to library print materials that residential students do. When the service was first instituted more than a decade ago, journal articles were mailed to students in hard photocopy, and eventually they were more readily and swiftly sent as scanned attachments to an email, while today users may request and access materials through a self-service portal in the library resource-sharing management software, ILLIAD.

The advent of electronic books in academic libraries has offered opportunities for patrons to access materials in ways that more fully meet demand at both the place and the time of need (i.e., where and when a specific research question requires investigation). While Lilly Library leases and purchases sizeable numbers of e-books, a 2013 survey of the seminary student population indicated that a majority had not used and/or did not know how to use them. In response, some but not all ESR faculty have agreed to model use of the e-books in their teaching and course assignments, and faculty and students alike are encouraged by the theological librarian to own an e-reading device. Any device that reads a PDF serves this purpose, from a lower-end Kindle (under $100) up to a higher-end iPad (from $500). E-books may of course be read on any computer screen, though the backlit monitor and the issue of portability makes an e-reader more user friendly. For patrons who do not purchase an e-reader, an open-source software that goes by the name

of "f.lux" is available to reduce the eyestrain caused by a desktop or laptop screen.

For electronic books and monographs, Lilly Library subscribes to ebrary's Academic Complete collection and purchases individual items through ebrary for perpetual access. Ebrary's prices and selection, naturally useful for the undergraduate curriculum, have also proven to be a real boon for graduate-level theological collection. On the weaker side, the scan quality of ebrary books is not as sharp and clear as that of other e-book vendors. In summer 2013, the library is also acquiring the ACLS Humanities collection through a special consortia discount offered through ATLA.

The theological librarian instructs distance students through Skype software that provides free screen sharing and through support for students as a teaching partner on Moodle course pages. ESR caught the early wave in offering online classes and establishing distance education programs. Library services are now in place that can fully accommodate the seminary's wider pedagogical reach.

However, the recent swell in MOOC offerings across academic disciplines at major universities poses a fresh and vital challenge to libraries. The large numbers of students worldwide who sign on for any particular MOOC offering is far more than any librarian or small team of librarians can serve. ESR has begun exploring the possibility of a MOOC, but the role of the library in that venture is unclear. The copyright and contractual agreements to which an academic library is bound prohibit posting licensed electronic materials to a website that serves individuals apart from the institution's direct affiliates (i.e., faculty, staff, and formally admitted students). Students enrolled in any MOOC do not have library privileges at the host institution. One of the potential, positive impacts of MOOCs would be greater support for the now international, democratic movement toward open-access scholarship that seeks to place the corpus of scholarly content in the hands of all who wish to use it, regardless of institutional status or the ability to pay for it. Researchers in the natural sciences have already taken strides in the direction of open access, while those in the humanities including theological disciplines remain rooted in traditional publishing models.

Next steps under consideration in ESR's library e-book initiative include providing each faculty member with a budget to purchase an e-reader. With a simple budget of $100 per faculty member, each instructor might either purchase a Kindle or apply the funds toward purchasing a higher-end e-reader/gadget of their own choosing. The hope is that with a "free" e-reader as an incentive, more faculty will use and model use of e-books to their students. Additionally, the theological librarian intends on visiting faculty members in their offices and offering to demonstrate use of the library's e-books in a one-on-one setting rather than expecting the faculty to visit the physical library for instruction.

Questions for further consideration

Clearly, technology continues to open new doors for how seminaries do business. As those institutions revel in new opportunities, new or persisting questions demand attention.

- Beyond pledging allegiance to the mission-must-drive-the-use-of-technology banner, how does a school balance commitments to justice, equity, and stewardship as it competes in increasingly consumer-driven markets?
- If the current trend toward the provision of free online courses were to persist and develop offerings related to ministry preparation, how would that affect seminary education, particularly in light of increasing student debt levels and decreasing employment opportunities?
- How will technology continue to change strategic outreach such as recruitment?
- How do collaborative models, in recruitment or elsewhere, impact what is, in effect, a competition for students and funds?
- What might the role of the library and theological librarian be in a MOOC offered by the seminary?

The game has changed in theological education as a result of technological innovation. Clearly, the end is nowhere in sight. Building on the insights gained from participation in the spring 2013 MOOC course, Leading Strategic Innovation, ESR chooses to be intentional about adapting to these changes. The pace requires both flexibility and a willingness to experiment, combined with a heightened awareness of mission focus and resource limitations. The goal is not only to survive but also to thrive in a reality that is equally demanding and dynamic.

Jay W. Marshall is dean of Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Indiana, and coauthored this article with Matthew S. Hisrich, director of recruitment and admissions, and Jane Marie Pinzino, the theological librarian.

ENDNOTES

1. http://www.goldenkey.org/.
2. http://careereco.net.

Toward a Model for Consortial Sharing of E-books among Theological Libraries

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ABSTRACT: As theological education continues to transition increasingly from residential to online, theological libraries struggle to provide adequate resources for both residential and online/distance students, all during a time of diminishing or static budgets. Theological libraries can better meet the needs of both student groups by purchasing e-books directly from publishers through a consortium that allows use by patrons in all consortium member schools. This consortial model of sharing e-books could reduce costs even further by incorporating patron-driven access into its model.

Introduction

Theological education is in a time of transition. The decentralization that began with the establishing of multiple campuses and extension centers continues apace with the move toward online education. More and more students do not reside at the main campus and may in fact reside anywhere in the world. As a result of this continuing decentralization, theological libraries are also in a time of transition. Libraries are being asked to provide resources to support not only the residential students at main or satellite campuses but also those students taking online classes who cannot access print resources at the physical library. These increased demands are occurring at a time of diminishing budgets, a more-for-less model that is not sustainable.

The rise in online education has fortunately occurred simultaneously with the rise in the availability of electronic books (e-books) and journals. The advent of the tablet and the smartphone means that students access library resources from their electronic devices, instead of from the physical library itself. Not only do many students prefer or require electronic resources to complete their studies, but they expect the library to supply resources in this format. Journals have largely made the transition from print to electronic, and students reasonably expect they should be able to access journals online. The greatest resource challenge for theological libraries at this point is making e-books available.

E-books are a challenge for theological libraries for a number of reasons. First, many theological titles are not available as e-books in a format libraries can acquire. This problem is illustrated by the fact that many current and older titles from American evangelical publishers are available as Kindle titles but not through e-book aggregators for libraries. Libraries are forced to continue purchasing print copies of these titles, which serve the residential students but not the online students.

Second, libraries' budgets are already strained, so libraries simply cannot afford to lease many of those e-books that are available.[1] For the past ten years, theological libraries have been struggling with shrinking or static budgets alongside steadily rising prices for electronic journals, print books, e-books, and professional services.[2] The downward trend of library budgets combined with the inflating cost of resources challenges libraries' ability to continue providing access to sufficient resources.

Third, many of the e-books that are available are often priced higher, and sometimes much higher, than the corresponding print editions. Publishers routinely price e-books up to 300 percent more than the print book price.[3] Given the choice between an $89 print copy and a $275 e-book, libraries can be excused for choosing the former; it is harder to excuse those publishers who price their e-books along these lines. Libraries are required to support both residential and online students, yet they cannot afford to purchase duplicate formats, especially when e-books are priced so exorbitantly. Only affordable e-books can support both student populations.

Fourth, the increasing prevalence of e-books makes the sharing of titles through interlibrary loan impossible in most instances. Traditionally, libraries have not been able to afford every title that a student or faculty member might need and so have relied on the ability to borrow and lend some titles from and to other libraries. Under the standard model of individual libraries leasing e-books through aggregators, sharing of e-books is not possible. Given the current and inescapable trajectory of print to e-books, libraries will find it increasingly difficult or impossible to borrow titles they do not individually own or lease.

Theological libraries must develop a new model that solves these challenges, one that makes as many titles as possible available online and that does so in a shareable, and thus affordable, manner.[4] This article proposes that theological libraries acquire e-books by means of a consortium and via the patron-driven acquisition (PDA) model. A consortium of theological libraries could negotiate with publishers and purchase e-books that would be shared among member libraries. Patron-driven acquisition would allow the consortium to purchase e-books only when they are used, a further cost-saving measure. This article describes the e-book situation at one theological library and then recommends how a consortium and PDA program could meet the e-book challenge that many theological libraries face.

E-books at Trinity International University

Trinity International University's (TIU) Rolfing Library provides an example of how one theological library is currently addressing the challenge of e-books. Rolfing Library serves both a seminary (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) and a liberal arts college and graduate school. The school has a total of 2,800 students at three different campuses and multiple extension sites. The main Deerfield campus has 1,200 seminary students and 750 undergraduate students. The seminary began providing distance education through correspondence courses in the 1970s, and classes were offered online beginning in

the 1990s. There are current plans to expand the number of seminary classes and degrees offered online. For the library, this means considering how services, particularly access to books, can be extended to distance students.

The library's mission statement also suggests the importance of acquiring e-books. It states that "we acquire resources and develop services in an effort to stimulate robust scholarship, equip students for vocational ministry, and prepare them for thoughtful participation in a global society." In response to its growing distance student population, the library recognizes that online resources are essential to fulfilling its mission of fostering scholarship, ministry, and participation in a global society.

In a conscious effort to increase electronic services to TIU students on campus, across the country, and around the world, the library started offering e-books through the aggregator ebrary in late 2012.[5] This program expanded the existing e-book collection that, at the time, consisted primarily of Over-Drive and EBSCO*host* titles. The ebrary pilot program lasted seven months. In that time, the library purchased 168 e-books that subject specialists selected on a title-by-title basis. At the end of the 2012–2013 fiscal year, the ebrary collection accounted for 10.2 percent of the total materials budget.

Despite a positive experience with ebrary, the collection still lacked theological books in electronic format. E-book aggregators like ebrary offer limited theological titles because many American evangelical publishers sell their e-books exclusively through their websites to individual consumers or through Amazon in Kindle format. They do not make them available to libraries or to the aggregators that supply theological libraries with e-book services.[6] This creates a problem for libraries that want to make these titles available to a large audience. How can theological publishers be encouraged to distribute their e-books to theological libraries? How can e-books be acquired in an economical manner? One solution is a consortium of theological libraries that collaborate to encourage publishers to provide them with affordable and sharable e-books.

A consortial model for purchasing e-books

In a 2012 essay published in *Theological Librarianship*, James Wiser encourages libraries to create consortia that leverage the libraries' collective buying powers. A successful library consortium, he states, achieves more than individual libraries can accomplish alone.[7] The consortium can serve its member libraries by increasing their purchasing power and expanding theological e-book circulation. Individual libraries have little power when negotiating with publishers, but a consortium of theological libraries could wield greater influence on the decisions theological publishers make about their business models.

There are a variety of ways a consortium could assist libraries with their e-books. First, a consortium could negotiate with publishers to encourage them to provide more theological publications in e-book format. It could also urge the publishers to establish practices that would be beneficial for libraries. For example, the Association of Research Libraries created a list of principles

that are important to libraries, including the ability to permanently own and archive e-books, easy access via different devices, and permission to interlibrary loan e-books.[8] A consortium would be able to negotiate more effectively with publishers to achieve these goals.

Theological libraries are in an excellent position to develop a consortium that purchases e-books and circulates them to member libraries. In an effort to develop its collection, the consortium could buy e-books directly from the publisher and then store them on a shared server. The e-books would then be available to all of the member libraries. Titles could be purchased outright or offered as PDA, which means the consortium would only purchase an e-book once a patron uses it. The consortium could also purchase a certain number of copies to share among its libraries, then purchase additional copies as the need arises. This arrangement can increase the circulation of e-books to member schools while simultaneously decreasing the amount of money that each library spends on its respective e-book collection. For graduate programs that need access to obscure books, it would be more cost-efficient for rarely used books to be shared among libraries, rather than each library purchasing individual copies. As a result, the consortial model supports collection-building across all member libraries while strengthening critical areas of libraries' collections at a lower cost than each can achieve independently.[9]

This idea may seem too radical to be accepted by publishers. However, the concept of directly purchasing digital files and circulating them independently from the publisher's platform was successfully implemented by the Douglas County (Colorado) public library system.[10] This model hinges on the ability to purchase e-books directly from publishers, so the library actually owns its own digital copy. The process is revolutionary because most libraries simply lease their e-books from an aggregator, which hosts the e-books on its own platform. In this traditional model, libraries do not own the digital files, nor do they have the right to archive them or index them. In contrast, the Douglas County model allows libraries to own e-books and to copy them for archiving and indexing purposes.

Douglas County Libraries sign agreements with publishers that grant them ownership of a digital copy of each e-book they purchase. The library staff also negotiates prices directly with publishers and renews them annually. They often receive the same 45 percent discount that they receive for print books.[11] In return, Douglas County Libraries promise to loan each e-book to one user at a time, and to purchase multiple copies if they want to simultaneously loan it to multiple users. Finally, they require that e-books be delivered to them in ePub format, which is a format that most mobile devices and e-readers support. These specifications enable Douglas County Libraries to integrate their e-books into their own online catalog more easily and to serve their patrons more efficiently.[12]

Like Douglas County Libraries, a consortium can serve patrons by developing a customized platform that delivers e-books in a customized manner. Due to specific requirements, such as the need to "check-out" the e-book to patrons and the desire to easily and quickly catalog it, academic libraries purchase the majority of their e-books through aggregators like ebrary or

EBSCO*host*.[13] These companies provide a platform that hosts the e-books, a dedicated link that leads the patron directly from the library's online catalog to the digital content, and ready-made catalog records. In contrast, a consortium can purchase its own server and develop a customized e-book platform in the Douglas County style.[14] In agreement with the publishers, the consortium can also assign specific digital rights management to the digital files, so the e-books can be loaned to consortium members, yet protected from public access.[15]

The consortial model is beneficial because it commands greater buying and lending power than a single library. Although the initial start-up costs for the server and customized platform may be high, the consortial system is ultimately cost-effective and sustainable. Member libraries save money because they don't need to purchase e-books individually; the cost of e-books is lower because member libraries split the bill; they use a single customized platform, so their staffs do not have to spend time learning how to navigate multiple platforms from multiple vendors; and they avoid paying annual hosting fees to aggregators.

Theological publishers are currently in the process of testing the e-book market, so this is an ideal time for theological libraries to propose these types of arrangements.[16] A consortium could play an important role in addressing the challenges theological libraries face in their efforts to acquire and circulate e-books. In particular, negotiations over prices and consortial purchases could lessen the financial burden of buying e-books. Another way for libraries to save money on e-books is with patron-driven acquisition.

Patron-driven acquisition

Patron-driven acquisition (PDA) ensures that libraries purchase e-books only when they are used.[17] With PDA, a preselected list of books is included in the library's catalog, but the books are only purchased when a patron accesses them. In some libraries, approximately 50 percent of books that are purchased are never checked out.[18] If libraries pay for books only when they are used, they could potentially spend a smaller percentage of their materials budget, yet still meet the demands of patrons.[19] A PDA program can help theological libraries save money, serve a growing population of online students, and focus their collections to include e-books that patrons actively use.[20]

Many e-book aggregators, including ebrary and EBSCO*host*, offer PDA programs in addition to the traditional "perpetual purchase" model. These PDA programs promote "just-in-time" collection development. The library receives an invoice for the e-book when a patron triggers the purchase by actively using the digital file (e.g., turning ten pages or printing a chapter). This model contrasts with traditional "just-in-case" collection development, when librarians select and purchase books without a guarantee that anyone will ever read them. A PDA program also serves on-campus and online students equally because it can provide e-books to all enrolled students, regardless of their location. Popular titles or titles on course reading lists can be purchased as multiuser e-books, so an unlimited number of students can access and read

a single e-book simultaneously. Finally, librarians can select a wide range of e-books and offer them in the PDA program for no additional cost. In short, a PDA program ensures that every e-book the library purchases is being used by a patron. As a result, the library's materials budget has greater purchasing power because it purchases fewer e-books with PDA than with a subscription, or even with careful title-by-title selection.

The PDA program at Rolfing Library exemplifies a successful pilot program and provides real evidence of PDA's cost-saving opportunities. In its first seven months, the PDA program included 255 ebrary titles selected by the library's subject specialists. Of these 255 e-books, twenty-one were triggered and purchased for a total cost of $1,844.23. In the traditional just-in-case collection development model, the library would have spent more than $22,282.85 to purchase the same 255 titles. The PDA program, therefore, saved the library more than $20,000 in seven months. The e-books that were not triggered remain in the online catalog, so patrons can still access and trigger them in the future. Librarians can review these lists regularly and remove books that may no longer be useful or relevant.

Rolfing Library's PDA program also demonstrates how this collection development model can be particularly helpful for theological study. Faculty and students in graduate programs often desire immediate access to obscure titles and foreign publications, which may or may not be used. For example, TIU faculty wanted access to a German theological series. However, many of the titles in the series were never used in their original print format. Rolfing Library no longer purchases titles from this series in print format but, instead, includes them in the library's PDA e-book collection. As a result, faculty and students have ready access to the series, and the library does not need to pay for unused titles. Thus, the PDA program at Rolfing Library is an effective cost-saving measure and collection-building tool.

The PDA model for purchasing e-books can be effectively combined with the consortial model. The consortium can offer to member libraries access to a broad range of theological e-books and then only purchase a title when the book is used. This would ensure the most effective use of its funds, while still providing access to the books students need.

Conclusion

The consortium and PDA models described in this article would address the problems libraries presently face with e-books, including the availability of theological e-books, limited budgets, high costs of e-books, and interlibrary loan issues. A consortium could wield greater power in persuading publishers to provide more e-books and to offer favorable terms for libraries. Purchasing books with the consortial model would help libraries cut costs, easily share e-books, and readily serve a growing online student population, while a PDA program would ensure that money is prioritized toward the most beneficial resources.

A model such as this would require collaboration among theological libraries, and the support of administrators and faculty in such an endeavor

is important. The trend toward online education makes affordable access to e-books increasingly imperative. As theological publishers determine the future of e-books, it would be in the best interests of theological educators to have a voice in the decision-making process. Together with publishers and librarians, educators can develop a sustainable plan for acquiring e-books that support theological schools in their mission to provide a high-quality education to an increasingly diverse and widespread student population.

All three authors worked at the Rolfing Library of Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois, at the time of this writing. Stephanie Fletcher is the collection management librarian, Kevin Compton is the former theological librarian, and Rebecca Miller is the head of public services.

ENDNOTES

1. Materials budgets in theological libraries are shrinking or remaining flat, as they are in academic libraries across the country. See Tim Collins, "The Current Budget Environment and Its Impact on Libraries, Publishers and Vendors," *Journal of Library Administration* 52, no. 1 (2012): 19–20.

2. The Association of Theological Schools, *Annual Data Tables* (2012–2013), http://www.ats.edu/resources/institutional-data/annual-data-tables.

3. The cost of e-books is the number one e-book challenge for academic libraries. *Library Journal*, "Survey of Ebook Usage in U.S. Academic Libraries" (New York: *Library Journal*, 2012): 83.

4. There will long be the problem of the "gap" titles, those out-of-print but not out-of-copyright titles that cannot be legally digitized, or at least distributed, by outlets such as Google but for which there is little financial incentive for the publishers to digitize themselves.

5. Other libraries are also working to meet e-book demands. According to *Library Journal*, 95 percent of academic libraries carry e-books, and the average number of e-books in a graduate library is 138,800. In 2012, 69 percent of academic libraries experienced an increase in demand for e-books. *Library Journal*, "Survey of Ebook Usage in U.S. Academic Libraries" (New York: *Library Journal*, 2012): 5.

6. For more information on the reluctance of publishers to sell e-books to libraries, see Stanley M. Besen and Sheila Nataraj Kirby, *E-Books and Libraries: An Economic Perspective* (Report to the American Library Association, September 2012), 14.

7. James Wiser, "'Playing Well With Others': New Opportunities for Library Consortia," *Theological Librarianship* 5, no. 2 (July 2012): 46–7.

8. Charles B. Lowry and Julia C. Blixrud, "E-Book Licensing and Research Libraries—Negotiating Principles and Price in an Emerging Market," *Research Libraries Issues* 280 (September 2012): 11–9.

9. See the discussion of consortia in Marshall Breeding, "Observations, Trends, and Ongoing Challenges," *Library Technology Reports* 49, no. 1 (January 2013).

10. Monique Sendze, "The E-Book Experiment," *Public Libraries* 51, no. 1 (January 2012): 34–7.

11. Rochelle Logan, "Working Directly with Publishers: Lessons Learned," *American Libraries* (June 2013, e-content supplement): 9.

12.   Douglas County Libraries, "Statement of Common Understanding for Purchasing Electronic Content," http://evoke.cvlsites.org/files/2012/03/CommonUnderstanding-PurchaseEbooks2012Jan11.pdf and Douglas County Libraries, "Dear Publisher Partner," http://evoke.cvlsites.org/files/2012/06/Dear-Publisher-Partner-May-2012.pdf.

13.   For a discussion on aggregators and the types of e-books available from them, see Stanley M. Besen and Sheila Nataraj Kirby, *E-Books and Libraries: An Economic Perspective* (Chicago: American Library Association, Sep. 2012), 7. Their essay also discusses major concerns of libraries regarding e-books, such as lack of access to content, delayed distribution of the digital copy, higher prices, PDA acquisition programs weighted heavily toward popular trade books and not academic books, and preservation of content.

14.   Collins, "The Current Budget Environment," 31–2 (see n. 1). He reports that 80 percent of librarians polled in the 2011 EBSCO Publisher Survey believe that the ability to access e-books through a single, integrated interface is "somewhat important" or "very important."

15.   Mary C. Radnor and Kristine Jo Shrauger conclude that it is nearly impossible to loan a copyright-protected e-book, and when the licensor does allow sharing, the digital files often must be broken into separate chapters, which complicates the process. They suggest that librarians need to investigate interlibrary loan of e-books by achieving a better understanding of e-book resource sharing models, customer preferences, and local licensing terms. Mary C. Radnor and Kristine Jo Shrauger, "EBook Resource Sharing Models: Borrow, Buy, or Rent," *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Electronic Reserve* 22, nos. 3–4 (2012): 156–61.

16.   A handful of library consortia already supply e-books to their member libraries or have plans to do so. Examples include Califa in California, the Kansas Digital Library Consortium, the Massachusetts Statewide eBook Project, the Digital Arizona Library, and the Orbis Cascade Alliance in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. See Matt Enis, "Declaring Independence," *Library Journal* 138, no. 12 (July 2013): 27–9; and Matt Enis, "Technology: Califa Launches Enki for Ebooks," *Library Journal* 138, no. 11 (May 2013): 2.

17.   Michael Levine-Clark outlines a model for a successful PDA program. See Michael Levine-Clark, "Developing a Model for Long-Term Management of Demand-Driven Acquisitions," *Against the Grain* 23, no. 3 (June 2011): 24–6.

18.   A study at the University of Pittsburgh showed that 40 percent of its collection had never been used, and at Cornell University, approximately 55 percent had not been used. Allen Kent et al., *Use of Library Materials: The University of Pittsburgh Study* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1979); *Report of the Collection Development Executive Committee Task Force on Print Collection Usage* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library, 2010).

19.   Thirty-one percent of libraries surveyed in 2012 offer a PDA option, compared to 23 percent in 2011 and 16 percent in 2010. *Library Journal*, "Survey of Ebook Usage in U.S. Academic Libraries" (New York: *Library Journal*, 2012): 48.

20.   For a discussion of PDA in academic libraries, see David W. Lewis, "From Stacks to the Web: The Transformation of Academic Library Collecting," *College & Research Libraries* 74, no. 2 (March 2013): 170.

From Resistance to Resurrection: Meadville Lombard's TouchPoint℠ Model of Theological Education

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ABSTRACT***:*** *The author opens this article with a satirical account of the reasons denominational seminaries can be so resistant to institutional change then tells the story of how Meadville Lombard Theological School, a Unitarian Universalist seminary, moved from near death to new life. Explaining the methodology, hypotheses, and theological commitments that guided the transformation, the author discusses how the school's new TouchPoint℠ model of theological education integrates the changing demographics and needs of ministry students with the challenges and opportunities of progressive religious leadership in a multicultural world. The author's intention is to show how Meadville Lombard embraced contemporary social and cultural changes as catalysts of, rather than impediments to, theological enrichment and the empowerment of new religious leaders.*

Introduction

When the expression "change or die" becomes a cliché, we should know there's something deeply wrong with denominational seminaries.[1]

Institutional change is difficult in any kind of institution, given that most institutions are structured in inherently conservative ways. Even the most liberal institutions, *qua* institutions, are driven fundamentally by a will to conserve and transmit their status quo. Yet when it comes to denominational seminaries, generic institutional resistance to change is magnified three times over. This seems to be a result of the tendency to idolatry in seminaries, the peculiarities of theological educators as an academic subspecies, and the mystic nostalgia of alumni/ae. Let me explain.

As religious institutions, seminaries are sometimes seduced by the idolatry that "the way we do things" is ultimately the way things should be done. The tendency in seminaries to transmute the status quo into an ultimate concern is part of what makes resistance to change in seminaries so *fanatical*, (or *enthusiastical*, as we liberals used to put it). This fanaticism is further compounded by the fact that seminaries tend to be populated by *faculties*. It just seems to be in the nature of most theological faculties to resist institutional change. Perhaps this is because they belong to a relatively clever but generally impractical human subspecies that is oblivious to its own material conditions. Of course this is only worsened if a majority of faculty members are *tenured*—(whether by works or by grace seems to be a committee decision). In any event, with faculties in the picture, *fanatical* resistance becomes *fanatically reified.* It wouldn't seem that changing a seminary could become any more difficult, but it can.

Consider the alumni/ae. The alumni's/ae's very identity has been formed by some form of mystical experience described as "the-way-things-were-done-when-we-were-students." Thus when the alumni/ae are taken into account, the result is *fanatically reified resistance, on stilts*.

Of course it doesn't have to be this way. After all, rather than being univocal, how a seminary responds to the imperative to change or die depends on its functional soteriology. At Meadville Lombard Theological School where I teach, our soteriology would be considered (euphemistically) dysfunctional by various traditional standards—after all, we're Unitarian Universalist. While in certain times and places this would no doubt have its disadvantages, it turns out that with respect to institutional change it has its benefits: when we face death, we have to really, really take it seriously.

So at Meadville Lombard when it became clear that we needed to change or die, we chose to do what we could to change, and not simply incrementally. We went down to the bone and with fear and trembling took it upon ourselves to completely reshape our educational model. Our enrollment was shrinking nearly as fast as our endowment was being drawn down. Our physical plant was deteriorating. The antiquated boiler that heated our building quit in January, in Chicago! And yet, as a forward-looking bunch of religious liberals, we chose to face our circumstances squarely and bravely and to apply our best and most creative thinking to our various problems. We brought aboard the best consultants we knew and collaborated (nonviolently) to undertake a "gut-rehab" and "flip" our pending death into new life. While our soteriology may be unorthodox, I'm happy to confirm that there *is* new life on the other side of change. This is our story.

Approaching change: Methods and theses

The first thing that should be said about Meadville Lombard's approach to change is that it was facilitated by the leadership of our president, Lee Barker, and our provost, Sharon Welch. Their methodology of change reflected their catalytic style of leadership. They didn't impose a program onto the faculty. Instead they trusted in creative collaboration. But this wasn't an ungrounded trust. It was rooted in the priority they knew we all gave, and continue to give, to our school's mission—educating students in the Unitarian Universalist tradition in order to bring into the world our vision of justice, equity, and compassion. Our change methodology was thus missionally rooted in a common desire to develop an educational model worthy of our churches, our students, and the world they were being formed to serve.

It is also important to say that our methodology compelled us to reach out to work with and learn from others, rather than trying to go it alone. We were, and continue to be, well aware of our limitations. At many different points we consulted with seasoned senior Unitarian Universalist ministers, denominational leaders, educational assessment specialists, present and former students, and colleagues from other theological schools. And in light of our understanding of the moral ambiguity of institutions, we also organized meetings to listen and learn from the experiences of students, educators, scholars,

and religious professionals of color. Since even the most well-intentioned institutions can be vectors of oppression, we committed ourselves to meeting regularly with and holding ourselves accountable to racially and culturally diverse and socially marginalized friends and colleagues.

These shared commitments—to collaboration, mission, and accountability—framed several hypotheses about how to rebuild our educational model. The first of these was the idea that *there is no formula for ministry*.[2] What we meant by this was that ministry is less about the depositing of knowledge and skills than about the formation of particular dispositions.[3] To be an effective progressive religious leader in today's world and to be equipped to serve the ideals of justice, equity, and compassion requires, among other dispositions, the eagerness to work across boundaries of cultural and other forms of difference; the ability to thrive in conditions of ambiguity and change; an entrepreneurial spirit; curiosity about diversifying forms of identity and community; facility with social analysis, community organizing, and collaborative problem solving; openness toward emergent forms of spiritual inquiry and practice; multifaith and multicultural inquisitiveness; vigilance toward the holy; and strong doses of humility and fallibility. With dispositions such as these as our objectives, our education model would need to be deeply experiential and offer to students the space for experimentation.

Our second hypothesis held that we humans are the kind of creatures who *act ourselves into new ways of thinking rather than think ourselves into new ways of acting*. This is related to our first hypothesis insofar as dispositions are settled integrations of intellectual, affective, and moral tendencies formatted by habits and practices.[4] With this in mind, we believed our educational model would need to be organized around practices and the formation of habits. This would entail, among other things, designing learning experiences for students that would encourage them to become more critically aware of both their existing learning styles and the cultural paradigms within which they are embedded. As our professor of religious education, Mark Hicks, likes to point out, this approach to learning often means that students will spend as much time *unlearning* old habits as they will devote to learning new ones: the art of unknowing is at the heart of the art of ministry.

Though our third hypothesis might seem to conflict with the first and second, it actually directly interrelates them. This is the idea that in order to make theological education more financially and geographically accessible to the changing demographics of ministry students, not to mention more relevant to the world, *we would need to develop a low-residency, high-intensity hybrid educational model*. As one of only two Unitarian Universalist denominational seminaries in the United States, it was especially important for us to find a way to make our degree program more accessible to students who live all over North America. The challenge was to do this in a way that supported rather than undermined our commitments to practices and the formation of dispositions.

This challenge, of course, is one that many seminaries and theological educators are currently facing. The dilemma concerns the possibility of creating and sustaining the kind of learning community necessary to ministerial

formation in a world in which community is being reconfigured by new forms of interconnection. We seem to be moving toward a postphysical form of community in which the virtual has become the real. Whether or not this is so, it is certainly the case that we are living in a time in which the very idea of community is being relentlessly unformed, reformed, and transformed. We chose to interpret this as an opportunity rather than an impediment. After all, why should it be assumed that a formative learning community must take a particular kind of shape, such as traditional residency on or near a physical campus? Might limiting the contextual form of theological education actually constrict our encounters with the sacred? Why can't or shouldn't the context of theological learning take a variable shape, determinate and bounded at certain times, dissipated and unbounded at others? Might there be spiritual and even pedagogical value in a form of learning that is designed to be experienced as a series of transformations, shape-changes—a form that is perforated, open, and protean, more like the holy, more like the actual world? We believed so.

It became clear to us through our conversations that there were theological shifts embedded within our methodology and pedagogical hypotheses. Foremost among these was the yearning to recover theology as *a religious praxis* from its reduction to a *religious science*.[5] The history of theology's reduction is a long and convoluted one that most readers of this journal know well enough. As a result of it, however, one of the longstanding tasks of modern theology has been the apologetic one of articulating and then justifying a place for theology within the modern academy's ordering of disciplines. This is not an unimportant task, but it wasn't ours. Our task was to facilitate among our students a shift from theology viewed as science to theology embodied as a critical expression of religious life.

Getting clear about the importance of theological praxis helped us to identify another theological problem and another important theological shift. Our emerging model both reflected and entailed a critique of the individualist excesses of liberal theology and Unitarian Universalism. One of the theological sources of this individualism is liberal theology's general suspicion of external authorities such as Scripture and tradition. With the suspicion of external authority, liberal theology turned inward to individual experience (reason and conscience) as a primary theological source. But it turns out, of course, that experience is no less opaque or less controverted than tradition and Scripture. The individualist religious culture that is the legacy of liberal theology's experiential turn makes the always difficult work of building and sustaining religious communities even more difficult. Besides, this experiential turn has privileged conceptions of reason and conscience that universalize the particular experiential standpoint of white male privilege.

It is important to say here that Unitarian Universalism's spiritual individualism and liberal theology's theological experientialism, and the social dilemmas they breed, parallel the cultural dynamics and the social contradictions of political progressivism. Political progressivism has for at least three decades been dominated by an expressivist politics of identity. This is no doubt partly why political progressivism is so fragmented socially. It has also made it difficult for the left to articulate a coherent progressive vision and to get

organized around it.[6] The importance of this in this discussion is that within Unitarian Universalism, and within liberal Protestantism more generally, spiritual individualism, theological experientialism, and the politics of identity overlap and intensify one another. They can't really be addressed in isolation from one another. Movement through and beyond these problems could be aided by designing an educational model that shifted the center of liberal theology from individual religious experience to the religious (and political) work of building mutually empowering relationships across difference.

TouchPoint℠: An unapologetically progressive, academically rigorous, and spiritually grounded model of theological education

The Meadville Lombard TouchPoint℠ educational model is much more than an expression of Meadville Lombard's will not to die. It is instead a dynamically charged effort to equip Unitarian Universalist ministers to lead religious communities of justice, equity, and compassion and to vitalize progressive religious engagement with the broader world. It is an approach to theological education built on a praxis model of learning that integrates the theory and practice of ministry through the whole of the curriculum. This contrasts with most other models in theological education, such as our former one, in which classroom learning and field work are staggered. In addition to integrating theory and practice, it offers a hybrid residency format that combines intervals of intensive on-campus classroom learning with independent, small-group, and mentored learning off campus. This hybrid format makes it possible for students to experience formation within an identity-based seminary while also learning with and from diverse communities and congregational environments closer to their homes. Students no longer need to choose between moving their homes and families to attend a denominational seminary and staying at home and "making do" with whichever seminary is closest to them. Here's how it works.

Students from all over North America, and from other countries such as Japan, India, Azerbaijan, and Norway, come to Chicago to take intensive weeklong courses during three to four learning intervals each year—in the fall, during January, in the spring, and in the summer. Rather than discuss each of these in detail, I will focus on the fall and January experiences as representative of the others. The fall interval is structured around cohort learning. Early in September, incoming and returning students meet together with faculty for two days of intensive community building, advising, and some initial classroom work introducing the cohorts to their thematic tracks for the year. Once students return home after the fall convocation, they commence to prepare for their weeklong January intensive courses and to participate in the community or congregational internship appropriate to their cohort. The fall work that precedes January intensives is multimodal. In addition to reading and writing assignments, most courses include practical field work of some kind, periodic conference calls facilitated by faculty, the viewing of films and YouTube videos, and the use of Facebook and Twitter for student-student and student-faculty interaction.

In early January the students return to campus for a two-day learning convocation preceding three consecutive weeks of intensive courses. The whole community participates in the learning convocation: students, faculty, teaching ministers, and other invited guests. During this time we worship together, hear from keynote speakers, dialogue in small groups, and engage in integrative aesthetic exercises (e.g., improvisational theater and found object storytelling). Each year's convocation is organized around a different theme. Past themes have concerned the role of worship in shaping a multicultural congregation and ministry in a time of economic uncertainty, and this year we'll focus on the diverse cultural images of power that influence ministerial authority. In addition to the intrinsic value of the convocation's content, the experience binds the learning community together and helps students and faculty to integrate the three weeks of intensive courses that follow it.

The experience of January (as well as summer and spring) intensives is, well, *intense*. There was a time, not long ago, when I had some misgivings about the possibility of creating and sustaining a learning community without a residential student body. It turns out that these misgivings have been proven wrong. To the contrary, in fact, the high-intensity format of our low-residency model actually deepens community. We call it the "summer camp" effect. During the relatively short time that students are on campus together, they are with one another almost constantly. They take classes together, they cook and share meals, they share rental housing, they attend evening lectures and other functions on campus, and they partake of the richness of Chicago's extracurricular opportunities. While it does take more effort and ingenuity to sustain this communalism once students return to their various homes, this effort only leads us all to be more intentional about the process, which in turn positively feeds back into the learning community. Students stay in touch by phone, email, and social media. And we as a faculty and staff stay in constant contact with them as well, guiding student preparation for intensive classes and advising them by phone, podcast, and social media.

While our model includes courses in theology, history, pastoral care, religious education, and the arts of ministry, the curriculum is anchored by our Signature Courses, a sequence of three yearlong, multicredit, multidisciplinary, multimedia, collaboratively taught internships: Community Studies, Congregational Studies, and Leadership Studies. These courses combine rigorous cohort-based seminar teaching and learning with sustained field educational experiences in community and congregational settings. At the beginning of each Signature Course, the faculty subdivides each cohort into smaller dialogue groups, groups of three to four students who work together in various ways through the year. Learning is organized around weekly assignments. Each student is expected to complete the assignment individually, but then students process their work in their dialogue groups and submit a collectively written summary. There are several pedagogical advantages to this small group structure: it promotes more student interaction; it allows students to learn deeply about one another; and because each student is doing work in a different setting, it provides each student with at least two additional "worlds" (diverse community sites around the country and globe as well as

large and small congregations throughout North America) through which to consider their assignments. The faculty provides weekly written feedback to each dialogue group, produces a weekly podcast, and facilitates monthly teleconferences and intensive on-campus workshops twice each year.

In what follows, rather detailing each Signature Course, I will focus on Community Studies, which I coteach with Sharon Welch. Community Studies is intentionally taught as the first course in the Signature Course sequence. It thereby initiates the process of formation for ministry not only outside of congregations, but even outside of religion altogether. The idea is to shake things up early by providing experiences that unsettle student assumptions and challenge their prejudices, thereby laying the groundwork not only for deeper vocational insight but also for reimagining what church can and should be. Students commit to working eight to ten hours a week in a local community service organization. These have included everything from local hospice programs to animal shelters, from AIDS counseling centers to afterschool programs, from centers for victims of torture and refugees to homeless shelters, from food kitchens and addictions rehabilitation to immigrant farmer networks and job training facilities. Whatever the community organization happens to be, we expect that it will be staffed by and serve populations with whom the student has little prior experience. In addition, students are expected to take up tasks and work in their community sites in ways that move them out of their comfort zones. For example, though some of our students have considerable community nonprofit leadership experience, they are guided to work on projects that allow them to feel and to see things from a different perspective. As a way to encourage open-mindedness and an entrepreneurial approach to learning, we as a faculty like to reinforce that there is nothing from which we can't learn. There's much to be learned from peeling potatoes with a coworker, for example, about the critical importance of seemingly menial work to the building of community rapport and morale. There's wisdom to be found, almost always, in sharing a meal with coworkers and clients who have experienced the world through the veil of differently colored skin, or class location, or sexual orientation. In these and other ways, students in Community Studies are immersed in defamiliarizing experiences and relationships that generate vital questions about the nature of community engagement, leadership, service, and the vocation of ministry. Complementing these questions and experiences, faculty lead students through diverse assignments that provide students with new ways of seeing and thinking about beauty and suffering, agency and social capital; about the forms and uses of social analysis, identity, and difference; about public theology and the changing configurations of the religious and secular; and about the boundaries of the sacred and profane.

Community Studies facilitates intentional encounters between students and diverse populations whose wisdom has been and continues to be marginalized by traditional theological practices. Students learn many lessons through these encounters, the risks they entail, and the courage they demand. Not infrequently, however, this learning comes through failure and miscommunication. It's good for students, especially students in formation for

ministry, to learn how to learn from their mistakes rather than to be derailed by them. Above all, perhaps, students discover in Community Studies how essential empathy, risk-taking, social initiative, and humility are to truly being of service to others. These insights, and the habits they catalyze—such as listening before speaking, building trust and establishing rapport before managing or organizing, taking time to celebrate and to notice and share beauty, doing *with* rather than doing *for*, presuming the presence of wisdom in unexpected places, expecting the unexpected—are critically important to forming the dispositions required of effective ministry in our changing, hurting, glorious world. Community Studies seeks to move students to the critical ministerial insight that *ministry is not about them* (we sometimes refer to the course as "getting over yourself 101") and to the critical theological imperative to reimagine and to activate *new ways of being the church and living religiously*.

Congregational and Leadership Studies are structured in basically the same way as Community Studies—they are team-taught, cohort-based, multidisciplinary, praxis courses that combine independent, small-group, and whole class learning. Differently, however, students in these courses work for as many as twenty hours a week in their teaching congregations, transitioning through the two years from the role of observer, to participant, to ministerial leader. In terms of the sequence of the Signature Courses, students can advance to Congregational Studies only after Community Studies, and to Leadership Studies only after Congregational Studies. The intention behind this sequence is for students to move into congregational work with a deepened attunement to the world's diversity and needs and to their own gifts and talents. The pedagogical arc of the Signature Course sequence is designed to form students into Unitarian Universalist ministers who not only are committed to justice, equity, and compassion as ideals, but who also have the capacities and dispositions necessary to undertaking the difficult work of bringing those ideals to reality.

Conclusion

Meadville Lombard's TouchPoint℠ model of theological education provides a low-residency, high-intensity educational experience that empowers students to integrate theoretical learning with the realities of professional ministry in a multicultural, religiously diverse, and politically and morally tumultuous world. It provides a laboratory within which students learn to become more *attuned* to the contextual nature of learning and ministry; *aligned* with the values of Unitarian Universalism and the Meadville Lombard mission; *alert* to the strategic roles, tasks, and callings of liberal religious ministry; *aware* of the need for collaboration with communities both within and outside Unitarian Universalism; and *attentive* to the complex cultural factors and dynamics that shape human experience and systems. Our institutional self-assessments and student assessments indicate that we are meeting our objectives: students are more satisfied with their seminary education; they appreciate the relevance of praxis learning to ministry in the real world; and they are more confidently equipped to work across the various lines of

difference that shape our world. External assessments have also been very positive. In August 2013, for example, the ATS Commission on Accrediting reaffirmed accreditation at Meadville Lombard for the next ten years and highlighted as some of our "distinctive strengths" our Signature Courses, our commitment to team teaching and service learning, our "integration of praxis and theological reflection in multicultural contexts," and the development of an "agile" educational model "that is mission-driven, market-sensitive, and monetarily sustainable." In these ways, the Meadville Lombard TouchPoint℠ model is infusing new life into our school and is seeding the world with a host of new ministers prepared to lead progressive religious communities in the joyful struggle of realizing a more just, equitable, and compassionate world.

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ENDNOTES

1. Important studies providing context for this claim include Barbara G. Wheeler, Sharon L. Miller, and Daniel O. Aleshire, *How Are We Doing? The Effectiveness of Theological Schools as Measured by Vocations and Views of Graduates*, Auburn Studies (December 2007) and James P. Wind and David J. Wood, *Becoming a Pastor: Reflections on the Transition into Ministry*, Alban Institute Special Report (2008).

2. Craig Dykstra evokes similar ideas in his excellent essay, "Pastoral and Ecclesial Imagination," in *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, eds. Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

3. Our faculty has been strongly influenced by John Dewey's philosophy of education as well as by Paulo Freire's argument against the "banking concept of education" in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970), and by other critical pedagogy theorists such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and bell hooks.

4. This hypothesis reflects the influence of pragmatism on our thinking, especially John Dewey's. See especially *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1922). We've also been informed by theorists who take up the broader societal significance of practice and habits such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, and Anthony Giddens. In addition, we've been paying increasing attention to new work in the neurosciences, which supports the role of practice and action in the shaping of thought patterns. See, for example, Bruce Wexler's *Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology, and Social Change* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006) and James E. Zull's *The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching the Practice of Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2002). More generally, our commitment to action and practice is related to the emphasis in liberal religion on orthopraxy over orthodoxy.

5. Of course a classic critique of this, which deeply informs us, is Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973).

6. This is well argued, and provocatively so, by Lisa Duggan in her book, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

Friend or Foe? The Role of the Scholar in Emerging Christianity

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ABSTRACT: This article employs grounded theory to field research on emergent churches in Canada in order to understand their distinctive features and to uncover the reasons why emergent Christians have abandoned traditional forms of the church. The results show that emergent leaders demonstrate a desire for theological instruction but reject hierarchical ways of imparting knowledge. Theological educators can respond to the needs of the emergent church by cultivating collaborative learning environments, the practice of academic hospitality, and the character of theological educators. Furthermore, theological scholarship needs to become more integrated, oriented to the practice of the faith, and missional.

Introduction

In a generation, the church moved from the center to the margins of North American culture. Now the Christian church is in a period of adaptation to its new cultural environment. This period of transformation has consequences for both the role and the public image of the church. Peter is one example of the type of Christian emerging from this process. He is a self-proclaimed communist Christian who attended seminary for several years but feels more at home with crack addicts on the streets of Vancouver, British Columbia, than at most evangelical churches.[1] Paul is a hip, early thirties guy with a cool goatee and tattoos. He left a successful youth ministry position in a megachurch in Calgary, Alberta, to start a church in the Great Lakes Rust Belt town of Sarnia, Ontario. But it is not a typical church. The church primarily provides small business incubator space and a venue for local artists and musical events. He also attends seminary on a part-time basis. Mary is a seminary student from an upper-middle-class professional family. She lives in an intentional community in an impoverished neighbourhood of Hamilton, Ontario. Once a prosperous industrial city, it was left among the poorest in Canada by the decline of the steel industry. What do a young political radical with dreadlocks, a thirty-something pastor, and a graduate student share in common? They represent the emerging face of Christianity in North American culture. A culture that once gave Christianity a privileged place in its center now increasingly pushes it to the margins. The critical question for theological educators is, What does this change mean for theological schools and scholars?

Though these emerging Christians share a common commitment to the Christian faith, they are not monolithic. *Emerging* is not limited to the "emergent church" movement, though many of them began in, and may still fit within, that movement. The term refers to new alternatives to traditional

forms of the church. The term is as fluid and difficult to define as alternative music. Emerging Christians represent a diversity of backgrounds, interests, social lifestyles, and age groups. They have a vibrant faith and a desire to develop their spiritual lives and theological perspectives. They are the kind of people who will increasingly populate classes in Christian seminaries and will bring very different challenges than students who came from a background shaped by the Christendom mindset that prevailed in Western culture for generations. These emerging Christians also carry a suspicion toward established religion that the traditional seminary can sometimes embody. They reject so-called experts, authorities, and gurus. But if this is the case, what role will the theological scholar play in these emerging initiatives? Is the scholar a friend or a foe to emerging Christianity? Answering these questions first requires a description of these emerging Christians and their churches. After that, we suggest four adaptations to theological education capable of supporting this new breed of Christian leaders and their churches. But first we describe the research project that provides the source of our data on emerging Christians and churches.

The basis of this article is a collaborative research project funded by a Lilly Endowment grant on the emerging church in Canada titled, "Alternative Churches: New Expressions in the Canadian Church." The primary source of data for identifying the theological themes and motivations at the heart of these churches is direct participation and interaction with emerging churches and their leaders and congregants—the analytic-inductive sociological method of grounded theory.[2] Our research included churches all across Canada—British Columbia, the Prairie Provinces, Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritimes. Our data derive from interviews with and observations of more than 100 leaders and practitioners during site visits to twenty-seven emerging churches. These visits provided an opportunity to immerse ourselves as much as possible in the everyday life of these churches, enabling us to gain an intersubjective understanding and appreciation of the social meanings and experiences of our participants.

Emerging Christianity

Who are the emerging Christians?

Peter, Paul, and Mary represent three key demographic categories of emerging Christians: Bohemians, Metros, and Misfits. The Bohemians are artistic people. They wear alternative clothing and join co-op farms to grow their own fruits and vegetables. They eat local and organic. They tend to be politically progressive or liberal. They are back-to-the-earth and eco-conscious. Theologically they tend to be oriented to issues of social justice, and they are willing to experiment with their beliefs. The Metros, also called Hipsters, range in age from midtwenties to midthirties. They sport trendy haircuts and clothes (e.g., wear skinny jeans). They use an array of electronic gizmos (preferably Apple products). They are probably enrolled in a postsecondary school or already have a degree. A graduate education is common. They are in or on their way to professional careers. They are often highly engaged in

the arts and are open to new theological ideas. The Misfits are people from a variety of backgrounds. They include young people who do not fit the cool hipster crowd to middle aged and retired folks. What they share in common is a sense that they are *mis-fits* in the traditional church (i.e., they do not fit). They regard middle- and upper-middle-class suburban Christianity as not merely banal, but misguided. It converts Christianity into a consumer religious therapy. People with mental and physical disabilities also fall into this category. A striking feature of the emerging churches is not only the presence but also the visibility of people with disabilities. Most churches warmly receive people with physical and mental disabilities but do not usually provide them with central roles in public activities. Not so with the emerging churches.

Though emerging Christians are the focus of our research project, considering why they abandon the traditional church is also important. Emerging Christians are dissatisfied with the established church. Most of the people we encounter, leadership and parishioners, have backgrounds in more traditional evangelical or mainline Protestant churches. For most of them, that experience was negative. Whether their perspectives on the church are accurate is in many respects irrelevant. The salient fact is that these experiences cause emerging Christians to leave traditional churches in favor of alternative forms of church life. Their rejection of the traditional church is not a rejection of the church per se but only of the late-twentieth-century, North American versions of the church. In certain ways, emerging churches are not radically different from the churches they reject. The traditional church is a sell-out to modern consumer culture, according to the emerging Christians. Emerging churches, however, can be understood as an adaptation to postmodern and post-Christian culture. Whether they will be as successful as the modernist churches they reject is an open question.[3]

Admittedly, creating these categories and characteristics entails making some generalizations. They do, however, denote key demographic characteristics of emerging church culture. Moreover, they represent a significant number of current and future students seeking theological education.

What are the emerging churches?

Like the diversity found among emerging Christians, the emerging churches have numerous forms. Matthew 25 House is an intentional community in Hamilton, a struggling industrial city in Southern Ontario, Canada. The Crossings church combines a coffee shop, community center, and affordable housing for people on public assistance in the downtown area of Acton, a small town on the northwest outskirts of Toronto. Eucharist is a congregation of young professionals colonizing a dilapidated neighborhood in downtown Hamilton. It meets in a Presbyterian church that was once a flagship of Canadian Christendom. The Story inhabits two storefronts in the old city center of Sarnia, a small city across the border from Port Huron, Michigan. St. Benedict's Table meets in a traditional Anglican church in Winnipeg. It seeks to engage its context by blending traditional liturgy with contemporary music and innovative ways of presenting the Christian message. These new forms of the church include intentional communities, colonizing churches, social

enterprise churches, and third space churches. Though they are diverse, they reveal common theological values and patterns of practice.

Intentional communities or new monastic communities are an important form of the emerging church. Matthew 25 House is an intentional community in Hamilton. A group of seminary and university students, with the financial support of a couple from the Maritimes, started Matthew 25 House. The group consists of single young adults and a married couple. They live according to a covenant of community life. They pool and share their resources. Their vision of community life also includes serving and connecting with their neighbors through undertakings such as organizing activity days for neighborhood children.

Colonizing churches enter once-thriving middle-class communities and Christendom churches. The Little Flowers community in Winnipeg represents this form of emerging church. Central to the vision of the Little Flowers is living and working in the neighborhood of the church. Suburban evangelical churches are often commuter churches. Parishioners travel from various middle- and upper-middle-class suburbs to attend them. In contrast, the members of Little Flowers believe that being a part of the local community is essential. Many of the members have relocated to the immediate vicinity of the church. Some have started small businesses in the community. This active participation in the revitalization of the neighborhood helps them to build relationships with people in the community.

Social enterprise churches endeavor to enhance community life. The Story, an innovative church in Sarnia, Ontario, is one such church. The Story inhabits two storefront spaces in the old downtown center. Based on the petro chemical industry, Sarnia boomed in the middle decades of the twentieth century but has ever since steadily declined. Like many former and dying industrial towns in the Great Lakes Rust Belt, Sarnia faces a shrinking population, poor air quality, and economic atrophy. The Story is part of the town's effort to revitalize its urban core. The Story promotes microbusinesses, local artists, and community initiatives.

Third space churches meet in nonchurch venues such as community centers, coffee shops, and youth centers. Their goal is to reach people who are unlikely to enter a traditional church. Café Church in Kingston, Ontario, is a third space church. Kingston is a professional and university town. The church meets in a coffee shop in the business district of Kingston. Its goal is to provide a church for unchurched professionals.

Suggestions for theological scholarship and education

The emergence of new church models and expressions of the Christian faith has a direct impact on the work of theological education and the Christian scholar. At least it should, if for no other reason than that many of these emerging Christians question the value of traditional theological education and scholarship. Expressing this doubt, Daniel Aleshire writes, "One version of this concern questions whether theological education is needed for the practice of ministry, and another questions whether schools are the best place

for theological education to be located."[4] Both suspicions are alive and well within the new forms of church evolving throughout Canada, the United States, and Europe. Many emerging Christians regard theological schools and their scholars as museum pieces of Christendom. We understand this sentiment but disagree with it. Theological educators and scholars are not detritus of a lost world called Christendom. They, along with pastors and others, are part of the rich diversity of gifts that enable the church to embody God's grace in this world. They have a vital role in helping the church adapt its faith and practice to the culture of the post-Christian West. We offer four suggestions for theological educators and scholars who want to serve the next generation of church leaders.

Not forsaking theological education

A leader of a small but innovative church in a midsized Canadian city shared with us his need for training in theological and biblical reflection. Disenchanted with his traditional, suburban church, he connected with a new emerging congregation and soon made it his primary Christian community. When a leadership opportunity opened, he became the church's pastor. With no formal theological training, he feels the need for a good, though perhaps not a traditional, theological education. Although committed to serving the people of his church and to teaching them the practical nature of the Christian faith, he longs for a deeper knowledge and understanding of it. He is not alone in this sentiment. Like their counterparts serving in more traditional churches, he and many other emerging church leaders sense a need for theological education. Though denominational schools of ministry provide an initial level of ministry preparation, they cannot take the place of the deeper and broader learning that takes place in a seminary or even undergraduate Christian college or university. Peter Wyatt is correct: "the church cannot do without the disciplined learning and teaching of credentialed professors, 'the tenured eggheads.'"[5]

Emerging communities also want to recover ancient Christian practices and learn from figures of the church's past. The thought and practices of St. Francis of Assisi inspires Little Flowers, an intentional community and church in the prairie city of Winnipeg, Manitoba. A second example is St. Benedict's Table, an Anglican congregation in Winnipeg, that mingles historical liturgical practices with contemporary expressions of worship. Both congregations share an interest in theology, biblical studies, church history, and deep theological reflection on ministry practice. Both seek to attune their practices to the current culture and to root them in the tradition of the church. Seminary education can cultivate the art of theological reflection necessary for this kind of contextualized and historically informed Christian life and ministry. Based on their expertise, Christian scholars and educators can help emerging churches and their leaders draw connections between the history of the church and contemporary issues of Christian spirituality, life, and ministry. The changes in culture, the church, and approaches to ministry do not negate but rather heighten the need for leaders to have solid foundations in the theological traditions of the Christian faith.

Yet, at the same time, significant numbers in this movement of young churches have a negative view of professional theological education. This perspective distrusts the model of theological education that Edward Farley calls the "clerical paradigm," developed under the influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher's goal was to give theological education the same legitimacy as the other sciences. He believed that theology could be pursued as a science in a way similar to medicine or law. Thus, the study of theology is legitimate because it trains people for a profession that benefits the common good. The adoption of this model by most seminaries in subsequent years resulted in equating theological study with training for a profession.[6]

Emerging church leaders reject this idea. For them, theological education is the cultivation of wisdom, and it is valuable for all Christians. They believe that theological education is not primarily technical training for a professional vocation but rather cultivation of wisdom for the sake of deepening one's faith and ministry in the world. Capturing the spirit of this movement, David Kelsey notes that "the end to which theological education is ordered, whatever it may be, is an end that is basic to the well-being of far more walks of life than just the peculiar calling of the clergy."[7] Although not new, this perspective toward theological education reminds Christian educators and scholars that their constituency takes in more than people training for traditional roles in church ministry. The good news is that the Christians involved with emerging congregations value theological reflection. Indeed, they often leave mainstream evangelical churches because they deem them banal and vacuous. They long for teaching in the church that derives from sophisticated theological reflection.

The need for theological education, educators, and scholars has not disappeared. The decline of Christianity and conventional forms of church in North America may mean fewer overall students attending Christian schools. The irony, however, among emerging Christians is that although they are suspicious of traditional ministerial education, they crave what theological schools provide—the opportunity for serious and sophisticated theological reflection on contemporary Christian life and ministry. Emerging Christians have little patience for what they regard as arcane academic squabbles and doctrinal minutia. They nonetheless want robust engagement with doctrine, Scripture, Christian history, and ministry practice. The traditional route of preparation for ministry took a student from an undergraduate degree to a residential Master of Divinity program and then to ministry in an established church. Today, fewer and fewer church leaders travel that path. The desire for a theological education, even a formal one, nevertheless remains strong. Christian schools and theological educators must continue to serve the church by offering foundational theological education through teaching, writing, and mentoring. This role will not change, though much else will. Christian theological schools can engage and nurture emerging Christians in the arts of theological reflection but need to do so with new and creative approaches and programs.

Community creators, not classroom sages

A consistent characteristic of the new churches is informality and, at least on a functional level, de-centered leadership. Gatherings often take place in settings that do not reflect religious tradition. Some groups do gather in church buildings, but they transform the space so that the ambience is untraditional. Instead of pews, people sit on couches. A casual ethos, reflected in dress and worship style, is the norm, not religious formality. Dress and visible prominence up front and on the stage do not identify these leaders. They most often sit among the rest of the group. At St. Benedict's Table, where worship is slightly more formal, the rector sits in the front pew when he is not directly involved in leading the liturgy or preaching. This practice is conscious symbolism. It expresses the equal relationship between priest and people. When at the front teaching, leading, singing, or giving announcements, the leaders are often self-deprecating and earnest in their desire to be seen as equals with the people in their congregation. They show solidarity with them. They, like everyone else, face the challenges and struggles of life. Emerging churches are marked by informality, egalitarianism, and the desire for a sense of equality. They believe the church should be a community of Christian cosojourners; they are a community of people endeavouring to follow Christ together. They reject the cult of the guru with its passive audience pandered to and entertained by a charismatic leader. In fact, most emerging churches that we visit prefer to call themselves a "community" rather than a church. Their misgivings about the label *church* are varied. A common sentiment is nevertheless behind it. They desire to be part of an inclusive fellowship of Christians who travel together on a journey of faith. In short, informality, egalitarianism, and the desire for equality mark the emerging churches.

The premium emerging Christians place on egalitarianism and community should impact the manner of theological education. The challenge for theological educators is that emerging Christians want theological education but see seminaries as ill suited to provide it. Why is this the case? The modern university is the model for the structure of seminary education, according to emergent leader Tony Jones. He regards this influence as negative:

> There's nothing particularly theological about the structure of the seminary institution. Instead of reflecting some theological convictions or virtues, seminaries are entirely reflective of secular universities. The schools are run by presidents, provosts, and deans. Professors (stratified into adjunct, assistant, associate, and full) compete for tenure by writing abstruse monographs for their own guilds. And students are run through the gauntlet of papers, exams, and compulsory—if marginalized—field education.[8]

Notice the way he describes seminaries and their professors: "entirely" secular, competitive, "abstruse," and draconian.

The stereotypical scholar is the voice from on high reigning down authoritative pronouncements on dutiful students. The classroom, moreover, is formal and perhaps even tense and not a nurturing and mutual learning community. Although in many cases this caricature is unfair, the perception is nevertheless that the scholar-expert model is prevalent in theological institutions. Emerging Christians regard traditional seminary classrooms as formal, authoritarian, and often monological places. Sitting passively before professors who deliver lectures on their academic specializations does not interest them. Stereotypes exaggerate, generalize, and simplify, but they also capture something true. Outside of field education, the scholar-expert model is the primary pedagogy of seminaries. The longer this perception and method persist, the longer new generations of Christians will have an aversion to Christian higher education. The spirit of the age in combination with their ecclesiastical experience brings emerging Christians to reject top-down, authoritarian, and know-it-all institutional systems and leaders. We propose three ways that theological education and scholarship can adapt to the characteristics of emerging Christians.[9]

Theological education and scholarship need to engage students as mutual learners. Theological schools need to create more informal learning environments that can cultivate community formation among collaborative learners. Theological educators must establish this tone in the way that they teach, write, and run their classrooms. They face the responsibility of becoming community creators and cultivating learning environments that reflect the values that drive the ethos of these new and innovative church models.

According to Darren Cronshaw, effective education, especially for adult learners, should move to participatory teaching methods and away from the lecture-based learning experience. He maintains, "conversation is a foundational metaphor for theological education."[10] As a general rule, active learning is superior to passive learning. For this reason, the proposal here calls for a transition from monologue to dialogue. But neither professors nor students are general rules. Most students know the satisfaction of listening to professors who deliver outstanding lectures. The pesky person who invariably asks the tangential question that takes the discussion down a rabbit hole does not contribute to but rather detracts from learning. Theological schools should recognize the variety of gifts and talents possessed by their professors. Moreover, some students learn better in a lecture than in a discussion group. For others, reading a book between the library stacks is more productive than cooperating with others in a group project. A dialogical approach also may cause anxiety for introverts. A caveat, therefore, is in order. Avoiding the new Groupthink that extols the virtue of community and collaboration above all else is as important as including participatory learning methods in theological education.[11] Schools should not cram the diverse teaching gifts of faculty and the learning styles of students into one rigid pedagogical paradigm. Notwithstanding this fact, however, theological education adapted to the emerging culture will be more conversational and communal than it has been in the past.

Theological educators can cultivate the practice of academic hospitality in their classrooms. Hospitality is essential for developing genuine community. Hospitality is the act of making the space for relational connections to grow

between human beings. Scholars must envision their classrooms like a home where they welcome guests for a potluck supper. They provide the place. They invite friends—some new, some old—to come, make themselves comfortable, and share their contribution. The professor as host replaces the professor as expert. A learning environment of hospitality does not negate scholarly expertise or the expectation that professors know more about certain subjects than their students. Hospitality in theological education is a way to adapt scholarship and pedagogy to the changing nature of students. It transforms the learning setting from dutiful charges listening to the oracle behind the podium to something that feels more like a gathering of friends in a living room.

Emerging Christians value character over competence. They care more about who you are than what you know. They can forgive a professor without absolute knowledge of a subject but not arrogant know-it-all*ism*. They appreciate honesty and humility. Ignorance and insecurity masquerading under the guise of pompous conceit is a turn-off. Christian scholars and teachers must do more than assign the texts to be read in their classes. They must be the text that students read and study.[12] Students want to rub shoulders with academic leaders who embody what they teach. They want to learn from professors engaged in the pilgrimage of Christian life in an authentic and transparent way. Becoming an open book for students can create a learning experience that nurtures hospitality and an egalitarian community of mutual learners.

Integrative practitioners, not just scholars

Emerging Christians emphasize practice over doctrine. Social justice, cultural engagement, and tangible expressions of faith are more important to them than denominational and confessional differences. They are less concerned with the intricacies of doctrinal orthodoxy than they are with the way theology can shape Christian life and ministry. The traditional paradigm saw theory informing practice or theology informing ministry. The emerging paradigm thoroughly believes that practice informs theory. They believe that the pragmatic demands of ministry can and even should shape theology. Theology arises from the warp and woof of life. Credible theology, moreover, is functional. It helps people follow Christ in the concrete circumstances of their lives. This section suggests two ways that theological education can adapt to the way emerging Christians understand the nature and function of theology.

Embrace integrated approaches to theological education. The modernist paradigm of siloed scholars will not fit the nature of emerging theological education. The atomistic specialist is the standard bearer of the modernist academy. The dutiful scholar becomes the global authority on specialized topics like the nuptial brooches of aristocratic Venetian women during the early Renaissance. Their counterparts in the theological academy are scholars who study arcane Puritan pastors or jots and tittles in the Prophet Obadiah. In the era of Christendom, the theological academy could afford to engage in scholarship for the sake of scholarship. That day has passed. Deep scholarship and integrated theological education are not, however, mutually exclusive. Without serious scholarship, professors have little to say. Without integration, what they say matters little (at least to those beyond the academic guild). The problem is not

digging deep, but rather never returning to the light of day. The paramount questions for theological educators are, How will this scholarship help the church in its mission? How does it further the cause of the Gospel?

Integrated theological education requires theological scholars, like the institutions they serve, to develop hybrid skills. They need academic abilities to mine the lode of biblical and theological sources. They also need the art of crafting that yield into actionable insight for contemporary Christian thought, life, and ministry.[13] Writing to biblical scholars in particular, Susanne Scholz presses her colleagues to move past antiquated notions of content description and the historical-literal method. She argues that being a biblical scholar should be about doing work that equips people to participate in their world from a biblically informed perspective.[14] Not every lecture and article needs to have direct application to the practice of the church. But a vision for helping the church fulfill its ministry in the world should drive the enterprise of theological education and scholarship.

Integrated theology is not a simple reversal from a theory-to-practice to a practice-to-theory model of theological education. Neither is it an antitheological one. Theological convictions motivate many of the functional or practical changes taking place among emerging Christians and their churches. A theology of the Incarnation, for example, leads young people at the new monastic community of Matthew 25 House to live in postindustrial urban Hamilton, Ontario. They are not interested, however, in simply *believing* Chalcedonian orthodoxy. They want *to live* its implications in the concrete circumstances of their lives. Integrated theological education carries on the rich theological traditions of the church but does so for the sake of empowering people to embody the Christian faith in their lives and ministries.

Theological scholarship and teaching should be oriented to the practice of the Christian life. Emerging Christians want to see how the Bible addresses the realities of life, how theology can inspire behaviour, and how ministry theory actually works. Integrated scholarship and teaching requires that scholars have a clue about such matters too. Theological education, therefore, begins with the scholar's life of discipleship and participation in the life of the church. Being engaged in the life of faith raises questions that call for theological answers that can equip the church for its mission in the world. Theological educators need to attune their attention to the issues of Christian discipleship and ministry and not only the academic guild.

Daniel Aleshire suggests that theological schools can mine the wisdom of ministry practitioners and craft ways to employ that wisdom in their schools.[15] Aleshire declares that ministry "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."[16] Aleshire's point is on the mark. For theological scholarship to serve the emerging and future church, the wisdom that promotes authentic Christian life and ministry cannot be the purview of the pastor alone. Scholars must engage in the life of the church so that practical wisdom, accrued from theological reflection on the practice of ministry, is intrinsic to the task of theological education and scholarship. Theological scholars can participate in the production of a living theology that equips the church for its mission in the world.

Equipping for change and new realities

Most theological institutions and their faculty are aware of the rapidly changing realities confronting theological education. Most schools and faculty are familiar with discussions about static and declining numbers of students matriculating to traditional residential programs; the new demographic and ethnic diversity of the typical seminary student; and the diversification of delivery methods, new curriculum formats, course offerings, and teaching approaches.[17] Exploring creative ways to make theological education more accessible and worthwhile to the diverse range of people in emerging forms of the churches should be part of this discussion. This section addresses the fact and consequences of change and proposes an adaption that theological education can make to them.

Accept the fact of change. In today's rapidly changing times, the ability to "learn as we go" and adapt to new sets of circumstances is crucial. Without the integration of the more academic course content with the pastoral studies and field education dimensions of the curriculum, and particularly teaching the craft of theological reflection on Christian life and ministry, education ossifies and becomes outdated. Modes of Christian practice and ministry also need to change because the cultural habitat is dynamic. The disciplines of biblical studies, church history, and theology can help current and upcoming Christian leaders to discern appropriate and innovative ways to adapt life and ministry to new contexts and challenges. To minister in today's world requires the ability to adapt practices to new circumstances and think in fresh and creative ways. Training received in 2012 certainly will not work as well in 2032, or even 2022. For example, the youth ministry methods Steve learned while a student at a Christian College in the late 1980s and early 1990s is out of date today. Accelerated change is a dominant characteristic of contemporary culture.

What are some of the consequences of the changing cultural context for theological education? Phillip Clayton, dean of Claremont School of Theology, forecasts fewer people in traditional church teaching ministries and more becoming community creators that facilitate spirituality among diverse people.[18] Daniel Aleshire recommends that theological curriculums need to prepare ministry leaders to enable Christians to embody the gospel in a context of increasing religious diversity and indifference.[19] What can theological institutions do? Equipping students with skills in effective reflection and the efficient integration of new knowledge will help them stay abreast of the dynamic context of contemporary Christian life and ministry. Rooting theological education in reflective practice can foster the conversation between theology and practice, which coheres with the orientation of many emerging leaders.

Elevate field education. The critical need is to help students make the art of theological reflection on Christian life and ministry a lifelong practice. This discipline has often been relegated to field education, which lingers on the margins of the academy. The theological curriculum often treats field education as a second-class citizen. Of course, no Christian school would say that. But look at how they count field education for credit in the curriculum; it does

not count like course work and thesis writing. Field education should be integrated with the more academic side of the theological curriculum and not only run parallel to it.

Placing field education and embedded ministry formation experience at the center of the theological curriculum also calls for theological scholars to consider ways to implement experiential learning components into their teaching and, at times, into their writing. The scholar's role is to help students cultivate the art of converting their ongoing learning into practice. Techniques that can facilitate integrated learning include the use of case-based learning experiences throughout the curriculum, field trips, and directed reflection on bridging personal experience with theoretical knowledge.[20] The benefit of making these adaptations is that theological educators, along with their scholarship, will reach and equip emerging leaders.

Conclusion

Is the scholar a friend or a foe of the type of Christianity emerging in Western culture? The answer depends to a great extent on the way theological institutions and educators respond to the new expressions of the church. Emerging Christians often reject traditional forms of the church. Despite their diversity, they share in common a turn toward forms of Christian community adapted to post-Christian culture. Many of them doubt the value of theological institutions for the church of the future, regarding them and their scholars as relics of Christendom. At the same time, they embrace theology; they want faith with vigour and intellectual vitality. These dual realities present a challenge and an opportunity to theological educators. Theological schools and scholars need to create learning environments and strategies that can deliver theological education to the new breed of Christian leaders. Achieving this goal does not mean abandoning the traditional academic disciplines. It does call for methods that integrate these disciplines with one another and, most importantly, with the realities of contemporary Christian life and ministry. If they endeavor to meet this goal, theological educators and scholars can provide emerging Christian leaders with the theological resources to discern authentic ways of embodying Christian life and ministry in the dynamic culture of the twenty-first century.

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ENDNOTES

1. All names are pseudonyms.

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3. For a more extensive treatment of this material, see Steven Studebaker and Lee Beach, "Emerging Churches in Post-Christian Canada," *Religions* 3, no. 1 (2012): 862–79.

4. Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 18.

5. Peter Wyatt, "The Canadian Ecology," *Theological Education* 44, no. 1 (2008): 18.

6. Edward Farely, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 85–8.

7. David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 223.

8. Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2008), 209.

9. Drawing on his experience with theological schools in Australia, Darren Cronshaw outlines the ways that fostering community among students and faculty creates relationships of trust, collaborative learning environments, and the personal relationships that provide the basis for ongoing resource and support networks. See Darren Cronshaw, "Reenvisioning Theological Education, Mission, and the Local Church," *Mission Studies* 28, no. 1 (2011): 95–7.

10. Cronshaw, "Reenvisioning Theological Education," 98.

11. For a superb discussion of the importance of personality on learning styles, see Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), 71–94.

12. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels*, 33. Aleshire writes about professors being texts that their students study.

13. Ibid., 5.

14. Susanne Scholz, "Redesigning the Biblical Studies Curriculum: Toward a 'Radical-Democratic' Teaching Model," in *Transforming Graduate Biblical Education: Ethos and Discipline*, eds. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 290.

15. Aleshire is executive director of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and gave this suggestion in the 2010 address to the ATS/COA Biennial Meeting.

16. Daniel O. Aleshire, "The Future Has Arrived: Changing Theological Education in a Changed World" (lecture presented at ATS/COA Biennial Meeting, June 2010), http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/publications-presentations/documents/aleshire-the-future-has-arrived.pdf.

17. See for example Barbara G. Wheeler and Anthony T. Ruger, "Sobering Figures Point to Overall Enrollment Decline," *In Trust* 24, no. 3 (Spring 2013): 5–11.

18. Philip Clayton, "An Emergent Seminary for an Emergent Church," *Patheos* (October 17, 2011): 3, http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Emergent-Seminary-for-an-Emerging-Church-Philip-Clayton-10-17-2011?offset=1&max=1 (accessed February 12, 2013).

19. Aleshire, "The Future has Arrived."

20. For further suggestions on the kinds of things that could be possible in this area see Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI : Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 176–81.

Theological Education and Economic Revitalization: Creating Sustainable Organizations through Authentic Engagement

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ABSTRACT: *Iliff School of Theology's organizational development program, Authentic Engagement™: Empowering People and Culture, uses theologically grounded theory and practices to help business leaders address the problem of employee disengagement by making work more meaningful for individuals and organizations. This curriculum prepares leaders to develop and nurture a flourishing culture in which the self, others, and the whole organization bring espoused and enacted values into alignment and embrace a new paradigm of diversity through interconnected and inclusive otherness and "relationscapes."*

Since the financial crisis of 2008, business leaders have struggled to overcome economic fallout, loss of confidence, and general employee disengagement within their organizations.[1] They want a more authentic business culture that emphasizes personal meaning, empowers employees, and promotes sustainability. Hearing their laments, Iliff School of Theology (Iliff) considered how theological schools—with their historical grounding in reflective practices and pedagogy—are in a unique position to help.

Since the early Middle Ages, theological schools have applied the pastoral gifts of the church and the ancient knowledge of the liberal arts to intellectual and spiritual formation in the service of society. Today, theological schools and seminaries across The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) are the repositories of this millennium-long quest. In its own ways, ATS has promoted theological education as the professional development of leaders who can strategically engage the self, other, and whole by marshaling the resources of a church, an organization, or an entire community for greater connectedness with and service to the wider world. As Linda Cannell notes, we now need to "accept that theological education does not equal theological school, and that theological education is for the whole people of God . . . theological schools are one aspect of theological education . . . [and] the future of theological schools must include significant partnerships across agencies."[2]

In consultation with an advisory board of professionals from a variety of fields, Iliff designed an organizational development program: *Authentic Engagement™: Empowering People and Culture*. This curriculum helps business leaders create a deep sense of connectedness and purpose among self, others, and the whole through clarity of personal values and a sense of meaning (self), inclusive relationships of trust (others), and a culture/ethos fueled by individuals

aligned with the organization's mission and objectives (whole). In this paper, we describe the theory and research behind the Authentic Engagement™ (AE) process and the way it benefits employees and organizations by reorienting them around values, rather than productivity and profits (although these are also expected gains).[3]

Authentically engaging the SELF

Authentic engagement at all levels helps organizations live out their values—guiding principles based on enduring beliefs about what is most important in life for individuals, social groups, and cultures. Likewise, organizations that highly regard authenticity and engagement will actively nurture these characteristics in their members. The reciprocal relationship between personal and organizational values suggests that one could develop authentic engagement from either vantage point. Iliff begins at an individual level in order to establish the personal payoff for investing in this process.

In order for people to be authentically engaged at work, they need to find their work meaningful.[4] People work for extrinsic gains (e.g., keeping a roof over their heads and food on their tables), and they hunger for intrinsically meaningful work connected with their deepest values and beliefs. Although many factors make work meaningful, the Authentic Engagement™ process focuses on values. Reflecting on values helps people articulate what has ultimate significance for them. For some people (and organizations), values may be explicitly linked with spirituality and religion. In her 2010 presidential address to the American Academy of Religion, Ann Taves described religions "as more or less formalized, more or less coherent systems of valuation that people call upon consciously or unconsciously when making claims regarding what happened, what caused it, and whether and why it matters."[5]

Values provide an entrée to talk with business leaders about spirituality in theologically sophisticated ways. Iliff uses a multilayered and dynamic approach to values and spirituality that fosters respect for religious and spiritual diversity. Such respect overcomes the often implicit imposition of values that occurs between individuals and within institutions, and it helps build the relationships of trust that undergird flourishing organizations. In teaching business leaders how to think critically about their values, we equip them with the self-reflexivity at the core of an Iliff theological education. Recognizing that values do not always function in benevolent ways, business leaders learn to discern which values are most life-giving and sustainable for them, their organizations, and the world.

Our premise is that work becomes especially meaningful—it has authenticity—when one's personal values are assessed and intentionally practiced. Values awareness is critical in a business context: "Findings suggest that people who possess greater self-knowledge about their personal values exhibit equally high levels of commitment even when organizational values are unclear[.] Individuals with the clearest personal values are better prepared to make choices based on principles—their own or the organization's."[6]

Awareness is the beginning of the Authentic Engagement™ process; the next step is values alignment.

Ideally, values *enacted* in the workplace are congruent with *espoused* values. When this happens, people are empowered by the motivating energy of living out core values, they remain resilient under stress, and they flourish—the personal payoff of being authentically engaged. Conversely, when enacted values clash with espoused values, people experience intrapersonal stress and disengage from work emotionally and spiritually. One source of intrapersonal stress is the clash between espoused values and deeply embedded values from childhood—values believed to be long since rejected. Identifying and reassessing such values can help people clarify which values promote flourishing in their work. Another source of stress is dissonance between one's personal espoused values and the enacted values of the organization. In extreme situations, work that violates a person's core values becomes existentially and spiritually toxic.

Exploring the multilayered and sometimes hidden quality of one's values imbues them with a sense of mystery or otherness. Acknowledging the otherness of their enacted values helps people become more aware and respectful of their colleagues' values, especially when these values are radically different from their own. Reflecting on values also helps people become more aware of the deeply significant—even sacred—quality their values have for them, and this enhances their sensitivity to and respect for the sacred nature of others' values within the workplace. When people revere others' values for their inherent worth, a system of shared values becomes possible, contributing to new levels of meaningfulness within the workplace.[7] Developing shared values is a challenging process, however. Personal values are necessarily relational: they are created and informed by, as well as lived out, in the context of social interactions with others who are more or less different from the personal self. As organizations increasingly operate in diverse global contexts, the potential for conflict increases as values differ on personal, social, and cultural levels. Diversity exerts tremendous pressure on value systems and challenges leaders to be sensitive to different ways of assessing and applying values.

Authentically engaging the OTHER

Both personal and organizational approaches to diversity affect how people authentically engage one another in the workplace. Many organizations have achieved some level of diversity in policies, practices, and general organizational ethos.[8] Diversity has been championed on purely ethical and moral grounds as a tool for achieving inclusion, equity, and justice. This is particularly true in the United States, where diversity is seen as an important way to redress historical injustices against those who are different. In the business arena, diversity may be associated in positive or negative ways with productivity, innovation, competition, profit margins, employee engagement, and socially rich organizational cultures.

For all its benefits, there is now also a widespread sense that diversity has entered a *cul-de-sac* in which the same tired approaches are recycled (e.g.,

establishing diversity councils, gathering statistical data as hard evidence of diversity, and providing diversity training). Increased diversity does not always lead to greater productivity and performance.[9] Edward Antonio contends that current diversity efforts are failing because understandings and practices of diversity are fundamentally flawed: they are grounded in conflict, reductionism (defining human beings by social and cultural identity), a transactional view of relationships, and mere tolerance.

The Authentic Engagement™ program offers a new paradigm of diversity: *interconnected and inclusive otherness*.[10] This paradigm helps business leaders transcend diversity that focuses on difference at the expense of healthy relationships. In the AE paradigm, "relationscapes" represent the intended and unintended cultural profile, pattern, and structure of human relationships that constitute the heart and soul of an organization. Organizations with dynamic, well-integrated, and robust relationscapes enjoy greater levels of meaningful diversity and employee engagement. *Interconnected and inclusive otherness* provides an innovative framework to develop healthy and effective relationscapes.

In the social sciences, humanities, ethics, and religious discourse, *otherness* characterizes people as significantly different—to the point of being noticed—in terms of religion, race, gender, and so forth. Recognizing otherness means recognizing that people do not share a uniform identity or set of values. There is no individual, social, or cultural group that escapes otherness, and no identity can serve as an absolute reference point for what is not otherness.

As unique as people are in their otherness, they are also compelled to form relationships. Growing evidence supports the idea that humans are neurologically and socially hardwired for connectedness.[11] Today, the value of connectedness is dramatically illustrated by the activity on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social networks. This lived reality demonstrates the necessity of social connectedness for human well-being, and it supports the notion that connectedness is a source of meaning and purpose.[12] Authentically engaging differences with the understanding that people are driven to be interconnected supports a more complex and accurate understanding of humanity than traditional approaches to diversity that focus on demographics, tolerance, and inclusive excellence.

Demographic (or representative) diversity involves recruiting underrepresented groups (e.g., ethnic populations or gays and lesbians) to achieve a critical mass of different "species." This approach often results in the social aggregation of different groups that lack connections beyond working for the same organization. A tolerance approach to diversity teaches employees to accept and accommodate (even endure) one another's differences as a way of lessening conflicts and encouraging collaboration in the workplace. Inclusive excellence suggests that diversity is a key driver of success, but it is difficult to find a coherent articulation of the features, processes, pitfalls, and exemplars of inclusion. Pre-existing structures within which inclusion is to be accomplished are not always friendly to people who are excluded. For this reason, people often perceive inclusion practices as assimilation and resist implementation.

Interconnected and inclusive otherness begins with inclusion as the normative process through which people who are socially marginalized and discriminated against are actively and intentionally brought into organizations as full participants with voice and equal access to all the benefits of membership. It may appear that *inclusiveness* and *otherness* are mutually exclusive concepts. Otherness always involves *exclusion*: all social identities are marked by distinctive features and characteristics that are more or less *exclusive* to that identity. However, otherness also delineates how one is always other *in relation to an*other. Because *everyone* is other, there is no privileged identity that serves as the basis of inclusion, and there can be no acts of discrimination and exclusion on the basis of difference. *Inclusive otherness* also addresses assimilation by offering a multifaceted practice that requires *every* member of an organization to participate in the emergent global culture of difference.

Within the context of Authentic Engagement™, inclusion means learning to understand, respect, and engage the values of one's colleagues, employees, customers, other stakeholders, and the diverse society represented by the aggregate of these and other groups. Inclusion recognizes that when people join existing organizations, their presence, values, interests, attitudes, and behaviors introduce changes that—to the extent that diversity is taken seriously—reshape and transform the culture of these organizations. *Interconnected and inclusive otherness* is then characterized by intentional and active collaboration among all members of an organization, incoming and established, to create a space in which reciprocal difference (other positively relating to other) is seen as a powerful resource for productive organizational transformation.

In contrast to traditional approaches to diversity, the *interconnected and inclusive otherness* framework supports a multistage process to create an organizational culture in which people are authentically engaged with one another. Elements of this process include

- appropriating and affirming diversity;
- transforming diversity from coexistence and tolerance into positive difference;
- creating a culture of interconnectedness rooted in shared values and mission; and
- applying *inclusive otherness* to maximize employee engagement and collaboration.

Each stage of this process utilizes specific relationscapes and relationscaping practices (e.g., identification, recognition, communication, and participation). This innovative paradigm offers a complex way to understand human differences, overcome the stagnation and resistance associated with traditional approaches to diversity, and integrate diversity and employee engagement through relationscapes. Fostering healthy relationscapes through *interconnected and inclusive otherness* creates a climate in which individuals and the whole of the organization can flourish.

Authentically engaging the WHOLE

Current business periodicals have observed the "rise of the Happiness Movement"[13] as people seek answers to today's crises of meaning and engagement. This year, Gallup reports that 50 percent of American workers are generally disengaged ("just kind of present"), and 20 percent are actively disengaged ("spreading discontent").[14] Yet people desperately want to be part of a business culture in which they experience happiness, live out their values, find meaning in relationships, and—ultimately—flourish. In the Authentic Engagement™ program, Iliff examines how *flourishing* is possible for individuals and the organization as a whole, beginning with an overview of how the concepts of happiness and flourishing have captivated leaders across time.

The ancient Greek term *eudaimonia* is derived from the prefix "*eu*" meaning "well" and "*daimōn*" meaning "spirit," literally "well-blessed" or "being in good spirits." Often translated as *happiness*, *eudaimonia* was commonly used in ancient Stoic, Epicurean, Cynic, and Skeptic moral treatises, the ancient world's equivalent of modern self-improvement or positive psychology manuals. Over time across the Hellenistic-Roman world, *eudaimonia* was equated with human flourishing[15] in which one engaged life, experienced connectedness, honored the Spirit of the human heart, and achieved one's highest potential.

From about 800 BCE to the late fourth century BCE, thinkers questioned whether Greek ideals of civic duty, moral virtue, and respect for community had been undermined by the greed and fragmentation that accompanied the wars, empire building, and economic expansion of Greek civilization under Alexander the Great and his successors. In their analyses, many thinkers and spiritual visionaries turned to Aristotle's question: What is Happiness? Aristotle believed there were *instrumental* values or goals (e.g., money, education, or political influence) that people used (as "instruments") to pursue loftier goals. He believed that *eudaimonia* was an *intrinsic* value or goal that human beings pursued for its own sake. Like the ancient quest for *eudaimonia*, leaders today wonder how best to achieve intrinsic goals of happiness, meaning, and flourishing.

When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire (395 CE), flourishing was a lofty and elusive ideal among political, philosophical, religious, and economic leaders.[16] It was challenging to nurture understandings of self, other, and whole that genuinely promoted human flourishing over and against greed, corruption, and selfishness. As the early Christian movement spread across the ancient world, talk of *eudaimonia* among preachers and philosophers shifted to talk of *salvus* (Latin). Each word alludes to the concepts of wholeness and salvation. The Latin connection came from medical dictionaries of the era and signified the act of fixing that which was broken or incomplete. From this came the deeper meaning of Christian salvation, restoring spiritual health or wholeness to a person or community. Today, seminaries and theological schools embody the values and practices of spiritual formation that promote individual and organizational wholeness through values alignment and connectedness, making us ideal partners for business leaders seeking organizational regeneration.

After the fall of Rome and throughout the Middle Ages, *eudemian ethics* remained an aspirational goal. Human flourishing was also included in dialogues among Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and Humanistic ethical traditions. In Thomas Aquinas's highly influential *Summa Theologiae,* human beings are described as creatures created for happiness in relation to a higher reality of meaning, purpose, and ethical integrity. This was radically different from the stereotypical conception of medieval thinkers wallowing in notions of sin and human moral depravity. Aquinas did not know Greek, so he used the Latin *beatitudo* for happiness and human flourishing, a term nearly identical to *eudaimonia.* Indeed, Aquinas's Christian convictions in the importance of this ancient ideal were so strong that he argued for the people's right to revolt if their ability to strive for happiness and wholeness was denied them by the ruling elite.[17]

In the early modern era (ca. 1600–1780), interest in Hellenistic philosophy and culture attracted the attention of revolutionary thinkers and neoclassical scholars, and the idea of human flourishing resurfaced. It may have found its way into the "unalienable rights" clause of the *Declaration of Independence*: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." Given the tendency among eighteenth century legal and republican scholars to promote "life, liberty, and the protection of property," no one is completely certain why Thomas Jefferson chose "the pursuit of happiness." His turn of phrase may have been less than noble, an expression of Jefferson's opportunistic caution about promising the masses too much in a colonial society in which property ownership was not yet widespread. However, given his interest in the works of Aristotle and the Stoics, Jefferson's choice of words may have had something to do with Hellenistic ideals about human potential and happiness—*eudaimonia*.[18]

As history reveals, the ancient philosophical and religious ideal of human flourishing signifies a set of cherished and embedded moral values and leadership goals that civilization has been trying to honor and achieve for centuries. Although no two historical agents or historical moments are ever identical, the teleological challenges that human consciousness and human societies face across time and place do reappear. Today's leaders again seek ways to revive communities where people harmoniously live out core values, find meaning in their work, and contribute to a greater good. It is important to note, however, that a leader's self-awareness and commitment to individual human flourishing do not magically lead to organizational flourishing. Organizations always have embedded and unexamined assumptions, entrenched power relations, and systemic patterns of behavior that necessitate carefully planned and executed strategies to foster meaningful change and sustainable relationships for the whole. In the Authentic Engagement™ program, Iliff faculty members work with participants to clarify and align values at all levels, leverage diversity, cultivate supportive relationscapes, design engagement strategies, and re-envision policies and procedures unique to each organization. Our partnership prepares leaders to develop and nourish an organizational culture in which the self, others, and the whole organization flourish.

Development and implementation of the Authentic Engagement™ program

Iliff faculty initially spent one year actively listening to representatives from the local business community to assess their organizational development needs. This listening process helped us discern the deeper undercurrents of their concerns, and we helped business leaders better articulate what was at the core of their discontent. Year two focused on ongoing collaboration with a business advisory board as we developed the first iteration of the Authentic Engagement™ program. Following the inaugural pilot test with local business people and members of the advisory board, we revised the program. Specifically, we focused on communicating less like academics and more like the business leaders we wanted to serve.

Three additional pilot offerings helped us crystalize the messages within each of the modules, develop meaningful assessment tools, create memorable graphics, and reinforce key ideas through participant experiences. We shared the AE program and solicited critical feedback from nearly fifty participants during this phase of implementation. Our clients included the South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce (primarily small business owners directly responsible for cultivating the culture in their workplaces), Leadership Wyoming (C-Suite executives [CEO, COO, etc.] who have applied to and been selected for a nine-month leadership development process), and the senior management team for the City of Littleton, Colorado. (This was a paid pilot.) Feedback from these seminars affirmed our assumptions that organizations and individuals in the workforce desire greater connection, community, and purpose.

These successful pilot offerings led to additional paid offerings with the South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce and Leadership Wyoming. We have also presented the AE seminar to leaders of the City of Laramie, Wyoming, and to high-level officers in six military organizations in Wyoming. Impressed with their experiences, these groups have also requested additional training. Table 1 summarizes responses to selected feedback questions from eighty-one participants in AE seminars (representing an 89 percent or higher response rate per seminar).

Table 1. Authentic Engagement Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Statement	% Participants Who Agreed with the Statement
The seminar improved my knowledge of how to motivate and engage the employees of my organization.	98
I would recommend this seminar to others.	95
I will use the material I learned in this seminar to create a culture of engagement.	90

Initially skeptical about what a school of theology might have to offer, business leaders have affirmed the power of Iliff's explicitly reflective approach. For example, a Leadership Wyoming participant commented, "I was uncertain what to expect and frankly didn't believe I had the time walking in the door. The reality is that I needed the time for thought and reflection." A participant at the Wyoming military departments' seminar "was pleasantly surprised by the level of thought it packed in me. I will find it useful as I prepare for a new position." Authentic engagement principles around self, other, and the whole resonate with the longings business leaders have for their individual careers and for the lives of their organizations. A Leadership Wyoming participant recognized the unique approach Iliff offers: "I describe this training as a nontraditional leadership training that strengthens the skillset of leaders." Another evaluator noted, "We moved from theory, philosophy, and values to action, practice, and strategy. It goes outside of professional organizational development and rearticulates my personal values as well."

Walking the talk of authentic engagement, Iliff has begun an internal series of AE seminars, beginning with the Iliff board of trustees. Board members have seen many leadership and organizational development seminars in their storied careers, so they can cast a critical eye on such offerings. However, 100 percent of trustees who have participated in an AE seminar said they would recommend it to others. Comments included remarks like "My expectations were exceeded by the quality and content of the program." At the November 2013 board meeting, three trustees gave testimonials describing how their AE experiences have strengthened their commitment to creating a flourishing culture at Iliff and positively affected the way they interact with board colleagues.

In the summer of 2013, Iliff offered the first two-credit-hour Authentic Engagement™ course to master's students. The course benefits Iliff in three important ways: future spiritual leaders benefit from learning authentic engagement principles, shared values are articulated and reinforced within the Iliff community, and Iliff faculty are able to further explore the theoretical underpinnings of the AE process, reinforcing its theological integrity. Students in the course were strongly in favor of community-wide participation and particularly praised the self- and organizational-assessment tools and the opportunity to develop specific action plans.

Iliff is currently negotiating with a number of repeat and potential clients. Our preparation for each seminar includes meeting with organizational representatives to learn about team members and organizational dynamics. Together, we personalize the AE program to address their particular concerns, such as tailoring the length of the seminar, which ranges from one-half-day to two-and-one-half-days. Future work on the AE program includes developing more sophisticated evaluation instruments, providing follow-up consultations, and creating tools for clients to use within their organizations. Iliff is forging a unique partnership with organizational leaders who have rallied behind Authentic Engagement™ principles that can help them create a more authentic business culture in which they emphasize personal meaning, empower employees, and promote sustainability.

At Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado, Edward Antonio is the Harvey H. Potthoff associate professor of Christian theology and social theory, associate dean of diversities, and director of justice and peace programs; Kelly Arora is adjunct faculty; Carrie Doehring is associate professor of pastoral care and counseling; and Albert Hernández is associate professor of the history of Christianity and academic vice president and dean of the faculty. This team developed and delivers the Iliff Authentic Engagement™ program.

ENDNOTES

1. The following reports are replete with examples of current business concerns: "2012 Global Workforce Study: At a Glance," (Towers Watson, 2012) and "State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders" (Washington, DC: Gallup, Inc., 2013).

2. Linda Cannell, "Adaptive Leadership: Planning in a Time of Transition," *Theological Education* 46, no. 2 (2011): 32.

3. Conversely, when engagement is devalued at an organization level, there will be higher turnover, along with lowered productivity and discretionary effort.

4. For a recent review of research on the meaningfulness of work, see Brent D. Rosso, Kathryn H. Dekas, and Amy Wrzesniewski, "On the Meaning of Work: A Theoretical Integration and Review," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 30 (2010).

5. Ann Taves, "'Religion' in the Humanities and the Humanities in the University," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 2 (2011): 292.

6. Gordon E. Dehler and M. Ann Welsh, "The Experience of Work: Spirituality and the New Workplace," in *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance*, eds. Robert A. Giacalone and Carole L. Jurkiewicz (Armond, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003), 115.

7. Barry Z. Posner, "Another Look at the Impact of Personal and Organizational Values Congruency," *Journal of Business Ethics* 97, no. 4 (2010): 535. See also Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Transforming Giants: What Kind of Company Makes It Its Business to Make the World a Better Place?" *Harvard Business Review* (January 2008): 43–52.

8. Consider, for example, Diversity Inc.'s ranking for the top fifty companies for diversity in 2012 as well as previous years: http://www.diversityinc-digital.com/diversityincmedia/201206#pg4. The list includes Price Warehouse, Sodexo, AT&T, Kaiser Permanente, and others. Also see Leslie Kwoh, "Firms Hail New Chiefs (of Diversity): 'CDOs' Join Senior Ranks to Include More Women, Minorities; Some Report Directly to CEO," *Wall Street Journal* (New York), January 5, 2012, http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052970203899504577129261732884578.html.

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10. Edward Antonio is currently working on a book-length description of this model.

11. William G. Braud, "Human Connectedness: Research Indications," *ReVision: A Journal of Consciousness and Transformations* 14, no. 5 (1992): 140–8.

12. John F. Helliwell and Robert D. Putnam, "The Social Context of Well-Being," in *The Science of Well-Being*, eds. Felicia A. Huppert, Nick Baylis, and Barry Keverne (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 435–59; Manuel London, *Self and Interpersonal Insight: How People Gain Understanding of Themselves and Others in Organizations*,

Industrial and Organizational Psychology Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Daniel J. Siegel, "Toward an Interpersonal Neurobiology of the Developing Mind: Attachment Relationships, 'Mindsight,' and Neural Integration," *Infant Mental Health Journal* 22, no. 1–2 (January/April 2001): 67–94; and Robert Gilman, "The Next Great Turning: A Growing Awareness of Our Interconnections Could Revolutionize Our Culture," *Context Institute* (Winter 1993), http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC34/Gilman.htm.

13. See the following cover stories focused on happiness: "The Value of Happiness: How Employee Well Being Drives Profits," *Harvard Business Review* 90, no. 1 (January/February 2012); "The Pursuit of Happiness," *Time* 182, no. 2 (July 8/July 15, 2013): 24–45; and "Laughing All the Way to the Bank: The Giddy Rise of the Happiness Movement," *CNBC Business* (April 2012).

14. *State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders* (Washington, DC: Gallup, Inc., 2013), 5.

15. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15.

16. See Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament, Volume I: History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 146, 150, 414.

17. See Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship, To the King of Cyprus,* trans. Gerald B. Phelan (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949).

18. In the early 1800s, after the American Revolution and the end of the neoclassical phase of the Enlightenment and romanticism, the concept of human flourishing became associated with modern political philosophy.

Phased Faculty Retirement: A Positive Solution for Faculty and Seminaries

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ABSTRACT: Recent studies by Fidelity Investments® and TIAA-CREF reveal that three-fourths of higher education faculty intend to delay retirement past age 65. Data collected by The Association of Theological Schools indicate that two-thirds of seminary faculty will reach age 70 in the next twenty years. Aging seminary faculty, combined with retirement delays, is a gargantuan resource challenge for tomorrow's theological education. This article details one positive solution to this coming crisis—the phased faculty retirement plan—and provides an illustrative model successfully implemented in one institution.

Fidelity Investments® in June 2013 announced results of its Higher Education Faculty Study. "The research found that 74 percent of [baby] boomers plan to delay retirement past the age of 65, or never retire at all. When asked the reasons for this delay, they not only cited professional reasons (81 percent), but also economic concerns (69 percent)."[1] Fidelity's research indicates that 66 percent of faculty think their institution's retirement program options are important; and 76 percent cite health care benefits in retirement as a necessary aspect of the retirement options. Continued access to institutional facilities (53 percent), emeritus status (45 percent), and financial guidance and retirement planning (43 percent) are each cited as critical components to faculty retirement programs.[2] A TIAA-CREF study released in December 2011 found a similar response: 75 percent of faculty expect or desire to work past normal retirement age. The financial downturn of 2008 is one contributing factor to delayed retirement.[3]

Engaging questions of faculty retirement is not new. Surveys, conferences and white papers, book chapters, and a plethora of articles in higher education publications describe variations and angles on the subject. Much of the discussion has been precipitated by the 1967 passage of the federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act. The Act, and subsequent 1994 decision to eliminate the mandatory retirement age for tenured faculty, has also had far-reaching effects on theological education. Upon the end of mandatory retirement in 1994, the Committee on Retirement of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) took up the matter with earnest. Their 2000 survey attempted to identify trends in retirement policies and practices.[4] Changes in retirement plans after the 1994 decision were further identified in a 2007 AAUP survey.[5] The "2011–2012 Inside Higher Education Survey of College and University Chief Academic Officers" noted the retirement of older faculty as a critical institutional strategy.[6]

Thanks to funding provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the American Council on Education (ACE) initiated a multifaceted project on faculty retirement transitions. ACE-sponsored conferences in 2011 for institutional leaders identified institutional retirement practices, with subsequent funding for further initiatives.[7] More broadly, conference white papers on faculty retirement are often read at professional gatherings throughout higher education.[8] Reports and articles following these conferences, as well as opinion pieces often based on personal experiences, together with institutional profiles related to faculty retirement, proliferate the pages of trade publications such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and InsideHigherEd.com.[9] Book publishers as well are taking up the issue.[10]

The vast number of studies and focused attention to faculty retirement broadly in higher education calls theological schools in particular to action. No comparable studies examining faculty retirement at The Association of Theological Schools have been conducted. Therefore the need to attend to the reality of our aging theological faculty is critical.

The Auburn Studies Series of reports generated from a study of theological school faculty (which uses ATS data) confirms the trend of aging theological faculty. The 1996 study noted that 35 percent of seminary faculty were age 51 or older in 1970.[11] This percent had increased to 54 percent by 1991[12] and 55 percent by 2001.[13] ATS data further indicate an increase to 63 percent by 2007 and 67 percent by 2012.[14] The table below summarizes this data.

TABLE 1. Ages of theological school faculty

	1970	1991	2001	2007	2012
Age 51 and older (Auburn 1996, 4)	35%	54%			
Age 52 and older (Auburn 2005, 9)			55%		
Over age 50 (ATS data July 2013, n = 3,500–3,600)				63%	67%
Over age 60 (ATS data July 2013, n = 3,500–3,600)				24%	30%

The data plainly reveal that nearly one-third of seminary faculty will be age 70 in the next ten years, and an additional one-third in the following ten years. A full two-thirds of seminary faculty will be age 70 or over in the next twenty years.

Faced with this reality, how then do we resource theological education for tomorrow's world? The question brings challenges from many angles; however, one innovative solution is to embrace phased retirement as a positive option for both faculty and seminaries.

Retirement options and issues in phased retirement

The AAUP Committee on Retirement identified three general forms of retirement practices in higher education institutions: (1) regular retirement

programs consisting of both defined-contribution and defined-benefit (pension) plans; (2) retirement incentive programs ("buy-outs"); and (3) phased retirement programs.[15] In 2007, AAUP found that approximately one-third of higher education institutions had a phased retirement program.[16] According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Hewitt Associates report that 45 percent of employers (broadly beyond education) have some type of phased retirement in place for employees.[17] There is little question but that phased retirement options are increasingly of interest across higher education and provide a viable option for theological schools.

Any retirement plan developed by an institution should be created in close consultation with human resource professionals and legal counsel. Due to federal law, issues of age discrimination can complicate the offering of retirement plans if care is not exercised. Faculty handbook parameters relative to tenure, teaching loads, eligibility, and expectations must be considered.

Faculties bring concerns to the discussion. Perhaps most importantly are issues of personal identity of both an emotional and a social nature. What may be perceived by administration as minor may be a principal concern for a faculty member. Larger issues may not immediately emerge in the thinking of a faculty member. Matters such as tax implications, housing allowances, office space, and community engagement are due thoughtful resolution. Teaching load and regular salary may be on the forefront of the faculty person's mind.

Eligibility for a phased retirement contract is an initial issue institutions must address. The number of years of service a full-time faculty member has served is often the criterion for eligibility. The upper and lower range of eligibility should be considered in light of additional entailments (such as health insurance needs, etc.) with a top range as well (e.g., no eligibility after age 70). Institutions must clearly maintain the right to change retirement offerings on an annual basis, ensuring that modifications can be made to accommodate new realities. Plan options should be announced and available with plenty of time allowed for consultation with an external financial planner before a decision must be made. The further option of contract termination at any time (at an appropriate time during the academic year) by the faculty member and by the institution with cause may alleviate unforeseen future realities.

Phased retirement plans can benefit both the faculty member and the institution. Faculty who wish to be free of administrative committees and responsibilities can immediately be relieved. Opportunities for teaching flexibility across semesters and locations provide faculty the ability to travel during nonteaching periods. Mentoring possibilities with younger faculty enable the senior faculty member to pass on both professional expertise and institutional ethos. Decreasing institutional commitments help a faculty member ease into retirement slowly and at an anticipated pace.

Institutions gain by retaining senior faculty who have served the institution well, and they can continue to draw students who are eager to study under a particular professor's tutelage. Retiring faculty help smooth an institution's transition in both ethos and personnel via a natural progressive move, rather than a sudden transition. Progressive faculty transitions may provide flexibility to an institution for addressing strategic changes, such as diversity

issues and new hires. It may also free up dollars from senior faculty salaries to recruit younger faculty. Retiring faculty often offer a wonderful resource for alumni gatherings where former students can renew relationships with their teaching faculty.

The remainder of this essay will consider the faculty member's responsibilities, explore salary and benefits, and offer some concluding observations as well as an illustrative model for seminaries wishing to develop phased faculty retirement programs.

Responsibilities of a faculty member

Teaching

The primary concern of retiring faculty is the teaching load they will carry. A phased retirement contract should describe the teaching load over each of those years and is best determined at the outset by each faculty member's regular contractual load, with a decreasing percentage over the time period. Year one might call for 75 percent of the normal load; year two 50 percent; year three 25 percent; and year four one or two courses.

Institutions with varying delivery modes (such as distance education) or geographic locations of sites or campuses may enable contractual obligations to be filled in a combination of these ways. Or, particularly as faculty members enter years three and four of their contracts, teaching the complete contractual obligation during one semester and/or in summer months would provide them opportunities to spend their winters in the Caribbean while remaining under contract.

Often an institution has faculty-administrators whose responsibilities are principally administration with some teaching responsibilities. A variation for this type of individual may include a regular teaching load during the first year, with no additional administrative responsibilities, followed by a teaching load decreasing annually for the duration of the contract.

The question is often raised, Can I continue to teach at the end of the phased contract period? This question of adjunct teaching should be addressed carefully. A possible way forward, honoring the dedication of the faculty member to the institution, is to engage him or her as an adjunct, when arranged with the department and the dean, at 150 percent salary of the regular adjunct rate. This enables the institution to use the faculty in the future if there is need and provides remuneration beyond the normal amount.

Some institutions may have other types of teaching expectations stipulated or implied as part of the regular contract that need to be addressed. These may include required or optional overload teaching; advisement of various capstone events such as internships, major papers, theses and/or dissertations; distance education teaching; leading new student groups; teaching independent study courses; and so forth. The stipulated duration and level of responsibility in each of these areas, including the remuneration scale, all of which may change and likely decrease over the duration of the contract, should be clarified in writing.

Availability and office hours

Both the opportunity and the level of availability to students should be clearly determined. The level at which a faculty member is available and/or expected to provide students counsel by serving as their academic or spiritual advisor should be clarified. Expectations both from students and from the faculty member can be alleviated through modern technology in some cases; however, lack of clarification can lead to frustration for students seeking a faculty member who is not always present in the campus community. Methods by which students can reach off-campus faculty and their availability should be clearly communicated on the internal website or through the student handbook.

Institutional committees and faculty meetings

Most faculty members are engaged at some level in one or more faculty or broader institutional standing or special committees. Often this is an area where faculty desire immediate relief, and such can be readily accommodated during year one of a retirement contract.

Alternatively, some faculty members desire for their voices to be heard on an ongoing basis. The context of department or faculty meetings or tenured-faculty meetings many times provide adequate opportunity for this, while still reducing the overall meeting load of a retiring faculty member. Over the course of the contract, the number of required committees the extent to which a member has a voice and/or a vote, and the expected level of participation can be decreased.

Honorary events

The highlight of the academic year for many faculty is the commencement celebration. Continued faculty involvement in this, institutional convocations and installations, and other formal academic events provides continuity with the community for the retiring faculty member. Even after the contract period, a personal invitation from the dean or president can go a long way in ensuring continued support of the faculty member for the initiatives of the institution.

Faculty benefits

Regular compensation

Regular compensation is, of course, the primary concern of the retiring faculty member. The institution desires both the equity of the salary extended to faculty, as well as ensuring it is commensurate with the work load produced, while honoring the faculty member's service to the institution. If a phased contract results in a 75 percent—50 percent—25 percent—10 percent teaching load, then a similar formula makes sense for computing the base salary remunerated to the faculty member.

Variations abound in faculty salary scales. Some faculty may have a portion of their salary designated as a teaching faculty member and a separate or additional portion designated for administrative responsibilities. In a seminary context, a large number of faculty may have clergy housing allowance

provisions (as approved in advance by the institution's board of directors), which substantially reduce the taxable income base for the clergy person. Generally, it may make sense to simply base computation of the contract on the base teaching salary of the faculty member.

Additionally, the institution often desires to entice faculty to accept a phased retirement contract. Placing additional cash up-front can be a motivating factor to encourage faculty participation in such a plan. A percent of the regular base salary (in addition to any regular salary payout) can be added at the time of signing or upon beginning the phased retirement contract. This bonus can be distributed in one lump sum, distributed in two tax years during the first academic year of the contract, or even spread into the first two years of the contract.

Consideration may also be given to any annual salary increases that may be distributed to regular employees. While adding this annual cost-of-living increase may be appropriate, it may make future budget planning more challenging. Alternatively, and in light of recent market downturns and even pay cuts in some institutions, simply ensuring that the dollar figure will remain at the contracted amount may be adequate.

As noted above, the availability of the Internal Revenue Service clergy housing allowance is substantive for many seminary faculty. This provision can continue during the phased retirement plan for a faculty member; however, the designated amount cannot exceed the salary received from the institution. This benefit can also be in place after the phased retirement plan expires, if the retired faculty member wishes to designate an annual amount equal to the expected wages he or she will earn by continuing as an adjunct professor.[18]

Additional compensation and sabbaticals

Faculty professional funds and opportunities for sabbatical should also be considered in phased retirement plans. Professional funds might continue through the duration of the contract, be reduced at some point in the contract, or be discontinued from the beginning. A review of actual use of professional funds, the engagement of the faculty with their professional societies, and institutional representation might inform this consideration. Sabbaticals are substantial expenses for institutions but also provide great return in the form of writings, research, and public relations that advance the institution. Many faculty are particularly productive in these areas as they enter retirement and desirous to pass their wealth of knowledge to the next generation.

A unique opportunity to consider is the possibility of a retiring faculty member having responsibilities or volunteering to mentor a younger faculty member. Such should be arranged with the dean or president and might be considered part of the load of the faculty member. Team teaching with a new or younger faculty member is also a possibility during this period.

Health care and primary benefits

Health insurance and matters related to Medicare "gap" policies (group supplemental health plans) and the like are unquestionably a great concern

for any individual facing retirement. The new health care legislation in all its facets, changes, delays, and implementations makes any discussion quickly outdated. There is, however, some guidance that may be provided in this area.

Benefits in general are usually linked to employment status. When an employee passes into part-time status, usually defined as less than half-time work (except in the changing world of health care), employees are often not eligible for other group benefits. Careful consideration and a thorough examination by human resource departments will greatly aid in working through these many nuances.

The objective of many entering retirement is to enroll in the government-sponsored Medicare program. Medicare, when combined with a robust supplemental health plan, often provides adequate coverage during retirement. Changes in faculty status lead to faculty challenges involving both paying for supplemental insurance and ensuring continued health coverage for other members of the household who may not be eligible for Medicare (younger spouse or children). The availability and use of a flexible spending plan, health savings accounts, health reimbursement arrangements, and medical savings accounts can further add to the issues surrounding retirement for faculty.[19]

Institutions may address health insurance concerns in phased retirement plans in several ways that can be economically beneficial to both the individual and the institution. If the faculty member is eligible and chooses to go on Medicare, a taxable stipend toward individual supplemental insurance or spouse or dependent care health insurance can be issued by the institution. Often faculty need to be reminded that the initial enrollment period for Medicare begins three months before their 65th birthday; it is likely they will be paying higher premiums if they delay.

If, during the phased contract, the faculty member moves into part-time status and is no longer eligible for the institutional health plan, the institution may elect to continue to contribute the normal employer rate toward an alternative health plan or the state medical continuation plan (COBRA) for the duration of the contract period or until Medicare eligibility. This contribution would be taxable income.

Other insurances are often part of the primary benefit package for faculty, either as part of the health insurance plan or available separately. Consideration of dental, eye, life, and disability insurance should be given. Again, these are often linked to an employee's full- or part-time employment status.

Two very large benefits for most faculty are retirement contributions and tuition benefits (particularly in the case of younger children in the family). Even as faculty enter the retirement phase, these are of utmost concern. As AAUP has pointed out, retirement programs vary widely and include defined-contribution plans, defined-benefit (pension) plans, and variations of each.[20] While these—particularly if any employer match is involved—may also be linked to full- or part-time status as an employee, continued voluntary participation in contributions—whether or not they have begun to make withdrawals—may be of interest to phased-retirement faculty. Regardless of the type of plan, phased or otherwise, attention must be given to ERISA guidelines[21] to ensure

they are properly set up, not only for a particular employee group such as faculty but also to account for unique provisions such as the clergy housing allowance.

Tuition benefits for dependents may be offered by the institution and are a huge financial benefit. While graduate-level-education benefits are taxable, an institution may elect to continue them during the phased retirement period. Such could have tremendous benefit for younger children pursuing undergraduate education (possibly available in an embedded seminary) or for older children completing graduate-level work.

Perks and soft benefits

Soft benefits, those not necessarily directly linked to monetary value, but of tremendous value in terms of morale, may be more critical to faculty easing into retirement than some traditional benefits. Studies too numerous to mention have described the psychological impact of moving into retirement. Seminaries educating men and women for service in the faith community ought to be particularly in tune with the communal needs of their retiring faculty.

Space considerations may be paramount. While office space is often severely limited, the possibility of shared office space, with room for a shelf of books, a drawer of files, operating phone, and current computer, will reap many affirming benefits. Readily accessible and visible parking space, often a premium on urban campuses, can be designed for retiring (or emeriti) faculty.

Some faculty may wish for the continued use of a student research assistant or teaching assistant as they continue their research. This can enable a retired faculty member to be exceedingly productive with writing and provide an ongoing link to the student community at a relatively low cost to the institution.

Access to campus technology—whether that includes a computer, or at minimum a campus email box and network availability—speaks well for an institution. Availability of a printer and copy machine with key and passcodes should be provided.

An institutional identification card, with the amenities that normally come with it, is necessary. These are usually accompanied by library privileges, discounts or free admission to campus events, and cafeteria discounts.

The academic life of the community should continue to be available. Some faculty may wish to audit classes (at no charge), join weekly faculty prayer or lunch meetings, and participate in formal academic events such as graduations, convocations, and installations. A special invitation from the dean or president will help affirm the faculty member's presence.

Tenure and retirement

The precedent for most institutions has been to ask faculty members to forfeit their tenure at the time they sign their phased retirement contracts; however, Jean McLaughlin of the American Council on Education asks the question, What about keeping tenure for the years of the phased contract?[22]

Despite the overwhelming preponderance of institutions requiring the forfeiting of tenure, are there real negative implications of allowing it to continue during the phased contract?

Questions also need to be resolved for the benefit of the faculty member and the institution related to the actual retirement date. "When am I actually retired?" one person asked. Institutions need to consider whether the retirement party or similar recognition should occur early or late in the phased period. If institutions recognize retired professors as emeriti faculty, at what point in time is such a designation awarded?

Conclusion

Faculty retirement can be a frightening experience for both the individual, who has long been part of the academic community, and the institution, which has benefitted from the gifts of the academician. The overwhelming percentage of seminary faculty reaching age 70 in the next twenty years, combined with the ongoing fiscal challenges of seminaries, demand that careful consideration be given to faculty approaching their retirement years. As illustrated in this article, phased retirement plans are a positive solution for faculty and for seminaries as we resource theological education for tomorrow's world.

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Appendix

At least one seminary has found offering the phased retirement plan to be a success. After five years of offering some sort of phased plan, six faculty (approximately one-third of the eligible faculty) have opted for the plan. Those who have not opted for phased retirement generally indicate a desire to teach full time (with accompanying other responsibilities) until their age becomes prohibitive. Circumstances have varied in the lives of the six individuals: two have relocated, at least for several months of the year, into a retirement home context; two have moved a considerable distance from campus to be near children; one has been free to travel for several consecutive months in international ministry; and one has been able to care for a home-bound family member.

The institution has been able in the ensuing years, despite economic strictures, to recruit and hire several new faculty. With the addition of some extra dollars in year three of a four-year plan, adequate monies have been available through the reduced salary of the retiring faculty member. The planned retirements have also enabled four- to five-year academic budget planning. The institution has also benefitted from the part-time presence of the retiring faculty, who have exhibited a spirit of encouragement to their colleagues and visibly express their relief at being freed from the daily concerns of institutional life.

Some modifications have occurred during these five years with the phased retirement plan. The length of the plan option has varied from three to five years; the percentage and bonus pay has varied; and the attempt to address health insurance concerns in a changing context has produced some modifications. The model that follows reflects a recent plan offering.

Four-year Phased Retirement Plan Option
for contract year beginning July 1, 2013

- Available to regular full-time teaching faculty (teaching 18 hours) employed by the seminary for at least five years. (Other faculty by arrangement.)
- Eligibility for four-year plan is age 62–70 by July 1, 2013, of the year of the contract. (No eligibility after age 70.)
- Dean must be advised by February 1 prior to the July 1 start of a retirement contract.
- Retirement plan is a four-year contract but can be terminated by the faculty member by choice at the end of any academic year or by the institution with cause.
- Retirement plan options subject to change on an annual basis.

PROVISIONS	Regular FT Load	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Future
		Full-time employment status		Part-time employment status		Adjunct status
RESPONSIBILITIES						
Teaching load	**18 hours teaching** over FA, SP, SU (at least two semesters) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean	14–16 hours over FA, SP, SU (at least two semesters) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean	8–10 hours over FA, SP, SU (one or more semester) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean	6–7 hours over FA, SP, SU (one or more semester) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean	3–4 hrs. FA, SP, SU at any seminary location as arranged with the dean	available in consultation with department and dean
	administrative faculty with director or department chair responsibilities also teaching 12–14 hours over FA, SP, SU (at least two semesters) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean	no admin responsibilities; 12–14 hours over FA, SP, SU (at least two semesters) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean				
	14 hours teaching faculty over FA, SP, SU (at least two semesters) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean	11–12 hours over FA, SP, SU (at least two semesters) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean	6–8 hours over FA, SP, SU (one or more semester) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean	4–6 hours over FA, SP, SU (one or more semester) at any seminary location as arranged with the dean		
		Note: courses must be taught during the year of the contract				
Overload teaching	sometimes	optional at overload rates	optional at overload rates	optional at overload rates	optional at overload rates	n/a
Thesis load	2–3 completed per year	2–3 completed per year	2–3 completed per year	optional, paid at current external reader rates	optional, paid at current external reader rates	optional, paid at current external reader rates
Dissertation load	expected	optional, paid at current external reader rates	optional, paid at current external reader rates	optional, paid at current external reader rates	optional, paid at current external reader rates	optional, paid at current external reader rates
Formation Group/ Advisees	expected	as desired if faculty member makes themselves available	as desired if faculty member makes themselves available	n/a	n/a	n/a
Reading/guided research courses	expected	expected	some expected	optional	optional	n/a
Standing committee	one or more	no appointment	no appointment	no appointment	no appointment	n/a
Special committees	one or more	optional	optional	no appointment	no appointment	n/a
Faculty meetings	expected	expected voice and vote	expected voice and vote	voice	voice	n/a
Tenured faculty senate participation	expected	expected	expected	voice	voice	n/a
Commencement/ convocation/etc.	expected	expected	expected	optional	optional	optional
Office hours	at least 3 posted hours for student appointments per week	at least 3 posted hours for student appointments per week	at least 3 posted hours for student appointments per week	as desired to support teaching	as desired to support teaching	n/a

BENEFITS						
Bonus pay		one-time bonus of 30% of the base pay paid on July 1 (or divided equally July 1 and January 2) of first year of retirement contract; AND one-time bonus of 10% of the base pay paid on July 1 of second year				
Base pay	100%	65% of last full-time teaching portion of contract	50% of last full-time teaching portion of contract	35% of last full-time teaching portion of contract	10% of last full-time teaching portion of contract	contracted at 150% regular adjunct rates
New faculty mentoring	none	as arranged with dean	as arranged with dean	optional	optional	none
Sabbatical	teach six semesters, one semester off	eligible as per normal rotation	eligible as per normal rotation	discontinued	n/a	n/a
Professional allowance monies	as announced annually to regular faculty	as announced annually to regular faculty	as announced annually to regular faculty	none	none	none
Minister's housing provisions	yes	available, not to exceed Trinity salary	available, not to exceed Trinity salary	available, not to exceed Trinity salary	available, not to exceed Trinity salary	available, not to exceed Trinity salary
Health insurance	provided at regular rates	if Medicare enrollment eligible, seminary will contribute up to $400/month toward individual gap, spousal, or dependent child insurance; regular seminary plan optional	if Medicare enrollment eligible, seminary will contribute up to $400/month toward individual gap, spousal, or dependent child insurance; regular seminary plan optional	due to part-time status, not eligible for seminary insurance or flex spending plan; seminary will contribute up to $400/month toward individual gap, spousal, or dependent child insurance; if faculty member is not Medicare eligible, seminary will contribute the employer rate toward the medical insurance plan under state medical continuation for this year	due to part-time status, not eligible for seminary insurance or flex spending plan; seminary will contribute up to $400/month toward individual gap, spousal, or dependent child insurance	n/a
Dental insurance	provided at seminary rates	at regular faculty rates and benefit	at regular faculty rates and benefit	part-time faculty not eligible	part-time faculty not eligible	n/a
Life insurance	provided at seminary rates	at regular faculty rates and benefit	at regular faculty rates and benefit	part-time faculty not eligible	part-time faculty not eligible	n/a
Disability insurance	provided at seminary rates	at regular faculty rates and benefit	at regular faculty rates and benefit	part-time faculty not eligible	part-time faculty not eligible	n/a
403b matching	provided at seminary rates	at regular faculty rates and benefit	at regular faculty rates and benefit	part-time faculty not eligible for match, but can participate	part-time faculty not eligible for match, but can participate	n/a
Tuition benefit	provided at seminary rates	at regular faculty rates and benefit	at regular faculty rates and benefit	part-time faculty not eligible	part-time faculty not eligible	n/a
Office space	personal office, phone, computer, and standard office supplies	personal office, phone, computer, and standard office supplies	personal office, phone, computer, and standard office supplies	shared personal office, phone, computer, and standard office supplies	shared adjunct office space with phone	shared adjunct office space with phone
Graduate assistant help	as announced annually to regular faculty	as announced annually to regular faculty	as announced annually to regular faculty	as arranged with dean	as arranged with dean	none
ID card	yes	continued	continued	continued	continued	continued
Library privileges	yes	continued	continued	continued	continued	continued
Special event privileges	yes	continued	continued	continued	continued	continued
Email	yes	continued	continued	continued	continued	continued
Network access	yes	continued	continued	continued	continued	continued
Campus parking	yes	continued	continued	continued	continued	continued

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ENDNOTES

1. "Three-Fourths of Higher Education Baby Boomer Faculty Members Plan to Delay Retirement, or Never Retire at All," *Inside Fidelity*, June 17, 2013, http://www.fidelity.com/inside-fidelity/employer-services/three-fourths-of-higher-education-baby-boomer-faculty-members.

2. Ibid.

3. Paul J. Yakoboski, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? The Faculty Retirement Decision," TIAA-CREF Institute Trends and Issues December 2011, https://www.tiaa-cref.org/public/institute/research/trends_issues/ti_shouldstayfacultyretirement_1211.html.

4. Ronald G. Ehrenberg, "The Survey of Changes in Faculty Retirement Policies," American Association of University Professors 2000, http://www.aaup.org/issues/retirement/survey.

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7. See the ACE website for program details: http://www.acenet.edu/leadership/programs/Pages/Faculty Retirement Transitions.aspx.

8. White papers include Joseph A. Kloba's helpful "Aging Faculty: Issues and Recommendations for Action" presented at The Council of Independent Colleges, Institute for Chief Academic Officers and Chief Financial Officers in Williamsburg, Virginia, November 8, 2010. Conferences include those sponsored by the American Council on Education and supported by the Sloan Foundation during 2011. For details see the ACE website and the following articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*: Kathryn Masterson, "Encouraging Faculty Retirement Goes Beyond the Financial, College Presidents Say," March 13, 2011, A19; and Audrey Williams June, "College Leaders Discuss One Last Faculty Transition: Retirement," July 12, 2011, http://chronicle.com/article/College Leaders Discuss One/128190/.

9. Helpful articles have been particularly abundant in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, including the Personal Finance Supplement of February 27, 2004; Christopher Phelps, "We Need to See Retirement as a Hiring Issue," April 30, 2010, B11; Audrey Williams June, "Professors Find Buyouts are Not All About Money," June 4, 2010, A1; Audrey Williams June, "Aging Professors Create a Faculty Bottleneck," March 23, 2012, A1–A8; David D. Perlmutter, "In Search of a Professor's Legacy," March 23, 2012, A9; and Alma Acevedo, "Gray Matters," March 23, 2012, A9.

10. Publications in recent years include the following: *New Directions for Higher Education* 132, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Winter 2005), various articles on faculty retirement and phased retirement; Philip G. Altbach, Liz Reisberg, Maria Yudkevich, Gregory Androushchak, and Iván F. Pacheco, eds., *Paying the Professoriate: A Global Comparison of Compensation and Contracts* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Claire Van Ummersen, Jean McLaughlin, Lauren Duranleau, Lotte Bailyn, eds., *Faculty Retirement: Best Practices for Navigating the Transition* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2014).

11. Barbara G. Wheeler, *True and False: The First in a Series of Reports from a Study of Theological School Faculty*, Auburn Studies (January 1996): 4.

12. Ibid.

13. Barbara G. Wheeler, Sharon L. Miller, and Katarina Schuth, *Signs of the Times: Present and Future Theological Faculty*, Auburn Studies (February 2005): 9.

14. Data furnished to the authors by The Association of Theological Schools in July 2013 from the Annual Report Forms.

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Disability and Theological Education: A North American Study

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ABSTRACT: *This article reports findings from a study examining the ways in which disability is addressed and experienced in theological schools across North America. Despite numerous calls for addressing disability in theological curricula and providing a more inclusive environment for students with disabilities, a majority of theological educators have indicated that their graduates receive relatively limited preparation to address disabilities in ministry. Moreover, many seminary students with disabilities face challenges regarding accommodation and support on campus. This article offers recommendations for strengthening the extent to which attention to disability permeates the theological curriculum.*

Disability is central to the human experience. While much theological support for this statement can be offered, it is also evident in demographic metrics. According to national censuses, more than 56 million US Americans and 4 million Canadians—almost one in every five North American citizens—identify as having a disability.[1] Moreover, more than one of every four families has at least one relative who experiences a disability.[2] Although the nature (e.g., cognitive, emotional, physical) and impact (e.g., minimal to pervasive) of these disabilities varies widely, it is clear people with disabilities and their families have a presence in every community in both countries. Over the last few decades, myriad legislative, policy, and advocacy efforts in North America have focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities and their families have the opportunities and supports needed to participate fully in all aspects of community life.[3]

Theologically, attending to disabilities is a critical concern for any endeavor seeking to understand the human person and to strengthen human communities for authentic life and ministry. Attention to disabilities presents an opportunity to resist cultural addictions to unrealistic qualities such as invulnerability, perfection, and conformity and to find strength and integrity in accepting the reality of human difference, struggle, and sometimes suffering. And disabilities bring to the forefront some of the most critical, eternal questions for faith communities: Will they welcome, affirm, incorporate, and celebrate all people? How will the larger community care for those with particular vulnerabilities? Will all people be open to receive care as well? Clearly, questions related to disability point at the heart of what it means to be human and to live in human community, including in faith communities.

Sadly, the presence and participation of people with disabilities and their families within faith communities are often described as uneven.[4] While half of all Americans with disabilities attend a church, synagogue, mosque, or

other place of worship at least monthly, a clear participation gap exists relative to the attendance of Americans without disabilities.[5] And while many parents of children with disabilities have found welcome and support within their congregations, nearly one third report having changed their place of worship because their child with a disability was not included.[6] Two important themes cut through available research into this dimension of the lives of people with disabilities: (a) having a place within a community of faith is important to many people with disabilities,[7] and (b) many congregations struggle to welcome and weave people with disabilities into their faith communities.[8]

Much recent attention has been directed toward addressing those factors that limit the active participation of people with disabilities and their families in faith community life. For example, barriers of awareness, architecture, and attitude have all been cited as pervasive obstacles to congregational inclusion.[9] The essential role of congregational leaders in addressing these barriers has been highlighted as especially salient in a number of studies.[10] Clergy can play a powerful role in spurring (or stifling) efforts to ensure that people with disabilities and their families are invited, welcomed, and supported within a faith community. The degree to which clergy are committed to and confident in these roles may depend in part on the extent to which they have had prior training and experiences that have equipped them well to lead a congregation that will inevitably involve people with disabilities and their families as members.

Theological schools provide the primary training ground within which future clergy receive their preparation for leadership and service within congregations across North America. Theological education seeks to engage students in a process of formation that incorporates ever-deepening and complexifying engagement and reflection upon ancient texts and rituals, historically developed understandings, and contemporaneous life experiences and challenges for persons and communities. Students are called to learn a new way of seeing and responding to a world searching for meaning, justice, and human flourishing.[11]

The persistent movement between tradition and experience, and action and reflection, makes theological education a rich context for the development of an embodied commitment among clergy to justice and care for persons with disabilities and their families and loved ones. Ministry students can be formed as they learn about, for example, the roles disabilities have played in our sacred texts or the history of cultural treatment of persons with disabilities. They can be formed by the practical, embodied understandings that emerge when experiencing worship with persons with disabilities or helping a congregation learn new ways of supporting families facing disabilities. They can be formed by moral imperatives that arise from witnessing injustice, cruelty, or neglect. Together, these three types of formation represent what has been called "three apprenticeships" (cognitive, practical, and normative) of theological education.[12]

Good learning in theological education can lead to a sort of embodied wisdom, or *phronesis*, in which one not only acts out of one's intellectual understanding, but also enacts and reenacts what one has come to understand

by witnessing and experiencing life-giving practices of faith. "Experience the practice, practice it, tell about it, ask questions about it, read about it, write about it, practice it, do it, empower others to do it."[13]

Unfortunately, seminaries have historically paid little attention to persons with disabilities. In fact, for more than thirty years, calls have been issued for greater inclusivity for people with disabilities—in enrollment, in curriculum, and in faculty.[14] In 2008, The Association of Theological Schools issued a policy guideline inviting its member schools "to live toward a vision of inclusion of all God's people in theological education." ATS challenged theological schools to both "welcome people with disabilities into the communal life and mission of the institution" and "prepare men and women for ministry with attention to the unique gifts and needs of persons with disabilities who will be present in their congregations and communities."[15]

To date, few efforts have been made to document the extent to which these calls have penetrated theological school curricula across the United States and Canada. In 2001, Robert Anderson and W. Daniel Blair surveyed ATS member schools[16] and found little representation of disability concerns (via curricula or by accommodation for students with disabilities) in North American theological education. Anderson used these data to argue for what he called "infusing" graduate theological education with disability. Similarly, between 1999–2000, Laura-Jean Gilbert studied fourteen United Church of Christ seminaries, using a combination of interviews (faculty, students, administrators, alumni), a survey, document analysis, and site visits to learn about acceptance and accommodation of students with disabilities. She found that seminaries were making progress regarding physical accessibility, but that little was being accomplished in terms of curriculum, even while schools typically had courses on women, gender roles, and sexualities.[17] Additional studies are needed to describe the current landscape of theological education in relation to disability.

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which disability is addressed and experienced in theological schools in North America. We sought to answer four research questions by querying theological school leaders:

1. To what extent is disability addressed within the theological education curriculum?
2. What factors might hinder or support addressing disability within theological education?
3. To what extent are people with disabilities present and participating within various aspects of theological education?
4. How confident are theological leaders in the preparation of graduates to include people with disabilities in congregational life?

Such information could help seminaries better prepare students to work with persons and families facing disabilities, to welcome the gifts of students with disabilities into seminary communities, and to facilitate the transformation of faith communities so they can offer life-giving ministries to all, and thus more truly represent the human reality of diverse abilities.

Method

Participants and theological schools

Participants included 118 academic deans, deans of student life, faculty, and other administrators from theological institutions accredited by the ATS Commission on Accrediting, the leading accreditor in graduate theological education. Among these participants, 41.5 percent identified themselves solely as academic administrators, 4.2 percent solely as faculty, and 47.5 percent as both faculty and academic administrators; 6.8 percent reported other roles (e.g., director of student services). The majority (76.1%) indicated they were *highly* involved with setting curriculum, 19.7 percent were *somewhat* involved, and 4.3 percent were *not at all* involved. When asked about their involvement in setting school policy, 64.9 percent indicated they were *highly* involved, 32.5 percent were *somewhat* involved, and 2.6 percent were *not at all* involved. However, only 19.1 percent were *highly* involved in leading or guiding student organizations, 43.5 percent were *somewhat* involved, and 37.4 percent were *not at all* involved. In their leadership roles, participants reported strong knowledge of the ministry preparation curriculum at their schools: 81.2 percent described their knowledge as *very* broad, 16.2 percent said it was *somewhat* broad, and 2.6 percent said it was *adequate*; no one said their knowledge was *not very* extensive. Anticipating that many academic leaders would be serving in both faculty and administrative roles, we asked about their academic background. Among these leaders, 26.7 percent reported having specialization in the area of biblical studies, 26.7 percent in pastoral or practical theology, 23.3 percent in theology, 8.6 percent in historical studies, and/or 14.7 percent in other areas (e.g., bioethics, higher education administration, philosophy).

Most respondents had served in their current roles for an average of 5.6 years (*SD* = 6.1). However, the average number of years they had been employed at their current institutions was 12.5 years (*SD* = 7.7). Only two respondents reported having less than one year of experience at their current institutions. We asked participants whether they identified as having a disability and, if so, how this had impacted their thinking and practices related to theological education. Twelve (10.6%) leaders said they had a disability, 101 (89.4%) said they did not have a disability, and six did not answer the question. Half of those with disabilities said it influenced their thinking about disabilities and theological education *quite a bit*, four said it influenced them *somewhat*, two said it influenced them *a little bit*, and one said *not at all*. Four indicated that having a disability impacted their practices as leaders at their institutions *quite a bit*, five said *somewhat*, and four said *a little bit*. [Missing data are due to skipped items.] Finally, we asked participants about their personal experience with persons with disabilities and prior training. More than two thirds (69.8%) of participants reported having extensive personal experience with persons with disabilities. More than half (53.4%) of participants had some training related to working with persons with disabilities. The primary avenues of training were conferences and workshops (70.9%), practica or fieldwork (50.0%), their own research (45.2%), course work (35.5%), and some other avenue (17.7%; e.g., online tutorial, colleagues).

Most respondents (82.2%) represented theological schools from a particular denominational or theological tradition. Indeed, approximately thirty-nine different traditions were represented. These schools varied widely in student enrollment (*M* = 313 students; *Mdn* = 200 students; range, 20 to 6,500). Specifically, 18.0 percent had enrollments of less than 100, 50.0 percent between 100 and 250, 20.3 percent between 251 and 500, and 10.2 percent more than 500; enrollment was not provided for two schools.

Survey instrument

We invited respondents to complete a print- or web-based survey addressing the intersection of disabilities, theological education, and ministry. In addition to soliciting the demographic information described previously, the main sections of the survey addressed (1) where and how disability was addressed in the curriculum, (2) potential challenges to addressing disabilities within theological education, (3) the preparation of students related to including people with disabilities in future ministries, (4) interest in accessing resources related to religion and disability, (5) the involvement of people with disabilities in activities at the school, and (6) the availability of accommodations for people with disabilities at the school. We estimated completion time for the survey to be approximately twenty minutes.

Curriculum. We asked respondents to rate the extent to which disabilities were addressed in each of six potential areas of the school's curriculum: biblical studies, theology, historical studies, pastoral care/pastoral theology/congregational care, religious education, and spiritual formation. Responses were provided on a four-point, Likert-type scale (i.e., not at all, infrequently, occasionally, extensively). Respondents could indicate which (if any) of the areas were not offered within their schools' curricula. We asked two additional questions to gauge students' access to disability-related information: Does your library offer resources related to disabilities and/or disabilities and religion? In the past three years, has your school offered any courses specifically focused on disabilities? For this last question, we asked respondents to list the titles of those courses.

To determine the extent to which issues related to disability might be addressed outside of course work in the past three academic years, we asked whether their schools have offered any (1) internships specifically focused on disabilities, (2) fieldwork specifically focused on disabilities, (3) lectures (outside of particular classes) specifically focused on disabilities, (4) service/outreach specifically focused on disabilities, (5) student groups specifically focused on disabilities, and (6) student publications specifically focused on disabilities. Responses were provided on a four-point, Likert-type scale (i.e., not at all, infrequently, occasionally, extensively). For each activity, an option of "I don't know" could also have been selected. Additional activities not listed on the survey could be added.

Challenges. To gather information on why the topic of disability might not be addressed explicitly within theological education, we asked participants to rate the extent to which they agreed with each of seven potential reasons for this omission (e.g., "Other issues are more important." "We don't have any

faculty with interest or expertise in this area."; see Table 3). For each statement, responses were provided using a five-point, Likert-type scale (i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree). Additional reasons could be added by participants, if desired.

Ministry preparation. We asked participants to rate how well prepared their schools' graduates are to integrate individuals with disabilities into the full life of a congregation in each of five areas: worship and ritual, leadership roles, fellowship, religious education, and service. Responses were provided on a four-point, Likert-type scale (i.e., not at all prepared, a little prepared, adequately prepared, highly prepared). In addition, participants rated how well prepared their graduates are "to respond to spiritual and theological questions resulting from human experiences such as a loved one's disablement, the birth of a child with a disability, or the potential challenges of living with their own disability." The same four-point scale was used.

Resource needs. We invited participants to gauge the level of interest there would be in accessing six types of resources to help address issues related to religion and disability, if such resources were offered to them. These resources included curriculum resources, books, internships/fieldwork ideas, examples of nondiscrimination policies, resources for community life (e.g., worship, discussion groups), and guest speaker recommendations. Responses were provided on a four-point, Likert-type scale (i.e., not at all interested, a little interested, somewhat interested, very interested). Additional resource ideas could be added by respondents.

Inclusion of people with disabilities. We asked respondents to rate the extent to which awareness of disabilities and related issues is part of the ethos of their schools using a four-point scale (i.e., not at all present, a little present, somewhat present, very present). We asked whether people with physical disabilities, emotional or behavioral disabilities, learning disabilities, and intellectual or developmental disabilities were (1) present among students enrolled at their school and (2) present among people employed at their schools. And we asked participants to approximate the percentage of the students, faculty, and staff at their schools who had disabilities (i.e., none, 1%–5%, 6%–10%, 11%–15%, more than 15%). We asked about the extent to which individuals with disabilities participated in each of four aspects of theological school life: worship leadership, student governance, student organizations, and service opportunities. Responses were provided on a five-point, Likert-type scale anchored to the involvement of students without disabilities (i.e., much less than, somewhat less than, about the same as, somewhat more than, much more than).

Accommodations. We asked participants to describe the level of accommodations their schools had made for students and faculty over the last three years in five different areas (e.g., physical structures, student housing, flexibility in worship practices; see Table 6). Response options included no accommodations were needed; accommodations have been needed, but we haven't made them yet; some of the needed accommodations have been made; or all of the needed accommodations have been made. Additional accommodations made by the schools could be noted in an open-ended section.

Miscellaneous questions. We also asked whether each school had its own written nondiscrimination policy, whether such a policy explicitly addressed disabilities, and whether disabilities were addressed in the life of the community in other ways. In the final section of the survey, we asked respondents whether they were aware of the policy guideline, *Disability and Theological Education,* adopted by members of The Association of Theological Schools.

Data collection procedures

We conducted this study with support from The Association of Theological Schools, the primary accrediting body for graduate theological education institutions. ATS provided us with email and mailing addresses for academic leaders at each of its 274 member institutions. In fall of 2012, we sent by email a brief invitation letter describing the study, outlining steps for completing the survey, and assuring participants that all responses would be kept confidential. All invitations were addressed to academic deans; however, we noted that the survey could be completed by another person if the dean felt someone else would be better positioned to respond on behalf of the school. A link to a web-based version of the survey was included in this invitation letter.[18] Approximately three weeks later, we mailed a paper version of the same survey to all individuals who had not yet responded. In addition, the electronic survey was distributed on two more occasions approximately three and nine weeks after the first invitation. Data collection was carried out over a fourteen-week period.

The invitation letter indicated that respondents could complete either a web-based or a print version of the survey, but that only one should be submitted on behalf of the organization. We assigned a numbered code to each organization and included it on the bottom of each print survey. We did this to track incoming surveys and to identify any duplicate submissions. We did not ask for names of respondents.

To promote participation, we promised each of the first fifteen respondents a $25 Barnes & Noble gift card. We also indicated that participants would receive a resource guide on disabilities for theological schools that we would prepare based on our study findings. Overall, representatives from 118 theological schools participated in this study, for a strong response rate of 43.1 percent.

Data analysis

We used descriptive statistics to summarize findings for individual survey items across all 118 respondents. Although missing data was minimal, we report percentages in Tables 1–7 and in the narrative based on the number of responses provided. We calculated Pearson correlation coefficients to examine the association between seminary size (i.e., total enrollment) and relevant survey items. Similarly, we examined the correlations between school size and the ways in which disability is addressed within the curriculum or as part of enrollment.

Results

Disability within the theological education curriculum

Although most schools offered course work in all six areas, a relatively small percentage of respondents indicated that their schools addressed disability extensively within each of these curricular areas (see Table 1). When disability is addressed, it appears to be most prominent within the areas of pastoral care/pastoral theology/congregational care (*occasionally* or *extensively* addressed in 91.3 percent of schools) and religious education (*occasionally* or *extensively* addressed in 70.4 percent of schools). On the other hand, 27.9 percent of schools never addressed disability within historical studies, 22.4 percent never addressed disability within biblical studies, and 14.7 percent never addressed disability within theology. When considering all six areas concurrently, all but eleven respondents indicated that disability was *occasionally* or *extensively* addressed in at least one of the six areas. School size (as measured by total enrollment) was not significantly correlated with the extent to which disability was *occasionally* or *extensively* addressed in these areas (r = -.16). Thirty schools indicated that they had offered a course specifically focused on disabilities in the past three years. Example course titles included *Welcoming People with Disabilities in Worship Communities, Cultivating Communities of Inclusion, Theology of Disability and Suffering, Ministry to the Disabled,* and *Bioethics: Sickness and Disability*. Most respondents (72.0%) indicated that their libraries offered resources related to disabilities and/or disabilities and religion.

Disability was specifically addressed outside of course work less extensively (see Table 2). For example, more than one third (37.7%) of schools had not offered fieldwork specifically focused on disabilities during the past three years, while 80.0 percent of schools had not offered student publications specifically focused on disabilities in the past three years. When disability-focused activities were offered, they largely occurred *infrequently* or *occasionally*. School size was not significantly correlated with the extent to which disability was *occasionally* or *extensively* addressed in these activities (r = .08).

Those schools that named experiences related to disabilities in an open-ended question, however, often cited interesting activities that seemed to have a potential for meaningful impact. For example, one seminary partnered with a university center on developmental disabilities[19] to advance disability education in worship communities; several hosted lectures from prominent disability theologians; two encouraged participation in camp programs for youth with disabilities; one held student/faculty training on receiving deaf students into the seminary community; and one had a certificate of ministerial formation in American Sign Language. Several schools offered fieldwork in a variety of settings to facilitate student engagement with disabilities and one school developed an inclusive residential program that brought together adults with developmental disabilities and theological students in a living community.

Barriers and supports related to addressing disability

Respondents varied widely in the degree to which they considered each of the six statements to reflect salient barriers to addressing disabilities explicitly within the theological curriculum (see Table 3). Nearly half of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that an already crowded curriculum (48.3%) or the lack of faculty with expertise (46.2%) limited the extent to which their schools could explicitly address disability within theological education. On the other hand, the majority of respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that new clergy could best learn about these issues on the job (67.0%) or that their students were unlikely to work with people with disabilities after graduation (86.1%). Among the eight open-ended responses, three additional reasons were raised (i.e., a denominational office takes responsibility for helping clergy learn about disability in the field, disability is simply "not on the radar" of schools, and students fear stigma or discrimination if they identify as having a disability). School size was not significantly correlated with ratings of any of these potential barriers (*r* range, -.12 to .17).

At the same time, respondents indicated being fairly interested in accessing most of the identified resources for addressing issues related to religion and disabilities. More than three quarters of respondents indicated that they were *somewhat* or *highly interested* in accessing books (81.2%), resources for community life (78.6%), and internship/fieldwork ideas (75.8%). According to respondents, 93.9 percent of schools had a written nondiscrimination policy and 90.8 percent had a policy that specifically addressed disabilities. School size was not significantly correlated with interest in accessing resources (*r* range, -.01 to -.14).

Participation of people with disabilities in theological education

When asked whether students with disabilities were enrolled at their schools, 89.0 percent indicated their student bodies included students with learning disabilities, 81.4 percent included students with physical disabilities, 61.0 percent included students with emotional or behavioral disabilities, and 22.9 percent included students with intellectual or developmental disabilities. When asked about faculty or staff, 47.5 percent indicated that they employed people with physical disabilities, 24.6 percent employed people with emotional or behavioral disabilities, 20.3 percent employed people with learning disabilities, and 5.9 percent employed people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. When asked to approximate the percentage of students, faculty, and staff at their schools with disabilities, 4.4 percent said none, 59.6 percent said 1%–5%, 23.7 percent said 6%–10%, 7.9 percent said 11%–15%, and 4.4 percent said more than 15%.

As shown in Table 5, the majority of respondents perceived that people with disabilities participated in worship leadership, student governance, service opportunities and student organizations to a similar extent as did students without disabilities (range, 72.0%–82.5% across activities). Almost all other respondents indicated that participation in these activities was somewhat less than to much less than relative to students without disabilities.

Schools varied widely in the degree to which various accommodations had been made (or were needed) for students and faculty with disabilities (see Table 6). More than one third of all schools reported that accommodations were needed in each of the five areas but had not yet been made or were only partially made. The highest percentages of these two responses were found in the areas of accessible physical structures other than student housing (54.8%); flexibility in class/curriculum requirements and practices (46.9%); and accessible student housing (44.1%).

Preparation of graduates for future ministry

Overall, the majority of respondents perceived that their graduates were *not at all* (3.4%) or *only a little* (70.7%) prepared to respond to spiritual and theological questions resulting from disability-related human experiences (see Table 7). Only 42.2 percent of respondents said their students were *adequately* or *highly* prepared to integrate individuals with disabilities in fellowship, 29.1 percent in worship and ritual, 25.6 percent in religious education, 24.8 percent in service, and 23.9 percent in leadership roles. School size was not significantly correlated with any ratings of preparation (*r* range, -.04 to .08).

Discussion

A central charge of theological education involves preparing students for ministry in myriad contexts with a broad range of people. Present within the future congregations and communities these leaders will serve are numerous individuals impacted directly and indirectly by disability. Indeed, nearly one fifth of all North Americans have a disability, and more than one in four families has a close relative with a disability.[20] As the presence and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society continue to steadily increase,[21] it is important to consider the avenues through which congregational leaders are equipped to minister to and with people with disabilities and their families. We designed this survey to ascertain where and how disability appears in the curricula and overall life of theological institutions, to identify barriers that function to keep disabilities from penetrating the theological curricula, to examine how students with disabilities access campus life and learning opportunities, and to gauge the interest of theological school leaders in supports and resources designed to assist them in addressing disabilities. We focus on five primary findings of this study that extend the literature on religion and disability in important ways.

First, our findings suggest a focus on people with disabilities often receives relatively limited attention within the theological curriculum. Relatively few leaders indicated that disability was addressed extensively in any of the six curricular areas. Although occasionally addressed in courses addressing pastoral care, religious education, and spiritual formation, disability was less frequently addressed in the disciplines of theology, biblical studies, and historical studies. This represents an important omission in terms of student preparation for ministry. When coverage is constrained to particular curricular areas, students may not access the growing volume of scholarship at

the intersection of disability, theology, and religion.[22] This growing interdisciplinary field addresses the degree to which people have long struggled to understand mental and physical differences and asks how the human experience of disability intersects with, affirms, and challenges major historic theological perspectives and traditions. By limiting attention to disabilities to a particular area, theological educators may be sending a subtle message that disability, an experience of embodied difference which in fact lifts up some of the most important questions of the human condition, has little to do with the broader theological tradition. This reinforces a long tendency in the theological fields to split the so-called practice disciplines (e.g., homiletics, pastoral care, Christian education) from the so-called academic disciplines. These findings are disappointing given Robert Anderson's call, mentioned earlier, for a focus on disability to "infuse" the graduate theological curriculum. He argues that "interweaving knowledge about the human experience of disability throughout the existing curriculum" would open the door for critical, multifaceted dialogue about a ubiquitous and complex human experience.[23]

Second, theological schools offered relatively few opportunities for direct involvement with persons with disabilities and disability-related issues outside of the classroom. Fieldwork and internships related to disabilities were reported as being fairly limited during the prior three years. Specifically, less than one quarter of schools offered internships focused on disabilities at least occasionally, while fewer than two fifths offered fieldwork focused on disabilities at least occasionally. Lectures, service and outreach opportunities, and publications related to disabilities were fairly infrequent. Such personal encounters represent powerful opportunities for deepening understanding of disabilities and ministry because they hold potential to facilitate relationships between seminary students and persons with disabilities. Indeed, decades of research on attitude change in multiple areas suggest that contact is among the most consistent factors influencing awareness, understanding, and intentions.[24] Personal encounters add affective learning and experience to the knowledge gains made within the classroom, and thus can contribute to growth in interest and empathy. The impact of the limited availability of these experiences is amplified by the fact that a large proportion of schools not offering field-based experiences also lacked course work. As a result, many students will progress through three or more years of theological training with no exposure to the significant ministerial issues related to disability and few opportunities to develop a theological outlook on disability experiences and how these relate to the call of faith communities.

Third, we identified several potential challenges associated with addressing disability in the theological curriculum. Limited time, faculty expertise, and available resources were all cited by school leaders as being among the most prominent barriers. In light of these findings, it was not surprising that many respondents also expressed high levels of interest in accessing books, community life resources, internship/fieldwork ideas, and speaker recommendations. While numerous resources on disability and spirituality have been developed over the last decade, accessing them remains a difficult undertaking as this work is published across disciplines and there is not yet a national

clearinghouse where resources related to disability and theology are compiled and disseminated.[25] Such resources could be incorporated within the formal curriculum or shared in order to equip faculty to address disability well in their work with students. At the same time, we considered encouraging the responses of school leaders to two particular survey items listed as potential challenges. Nearly 70 percent of respondents disagreed that disability was an issue clergy could best learn on the job, and nearly 90 percent disagreed that students at their school were unlikely to work with people with disabilities after graduation. Such responses reflect at least implicit recognition among theological school leaders that disability is a relevant and timely issue in the education of future clergy.

Fourth, many students with disabilities require accommodations to meaningfully access postsecondary schooling, including theological education.[26] Theological schools in our sample varied widely in the degree to which they viewed themselves as having already made or not actually needing to make particular accommodations on their campuses. However, between one third and one half of respondents indicated that the following accommodations were needed, but they were not yet or only somewhat made: accessible buildings and student housing; flexibility in classroom, curricula, and/or worship practices; and access to needed services and assistance. While some structural renovations can be costly, most accommodations related to classroom and worship activities are not. Indeed, guidance and support to make needed changes could be accessed through partnerships with community agencies and advocacy organizations with deep expertise related to disability. Yet, the absence of these accommodations can prevent students with disabilities from participating fully in theological education and classmates from learning with people with disabilities.

Fifth, and perhaps most striking, we found that most academic leaders felt that their graduates received little or no preparation that would help them to include people with disabilities into multiple dimensions of congregational life (i.e., fellowship, worship and ritual, religious education, service, and leadership) or to respond to spiritual questions resulting from disability experiences. Although people with disabilities are participating more fully in their wider communities,[27] many clergy in North America are not leaving seminary well-prepared to address the needs of a growing proportion of their congregation members. While we acknowledge the very real complexities associated with ensuring that theological schools prepare students for the myriad aspects of ministry they may undertake, we are convinced that the ubiquity of disability calls for much greater attention than is currently provided. Better preparation for ministry with persons with disabilities might involve incorporating strong readings and resources related to disabilities into existing course work; making hands-on experience with disabilities available through fieldwork and internship options; providing service and outreach opportunities; and, perhaps most importantly, enabling peer relationships that can only happen when students with disabilities are fully welcomed, supported, and respected as full participants in theological education. While these efforts hold potential to greatly enhance student preparation for ministry in communities that certainly will

include people with disabilities, they also will greatly expand students' understanding of what it means to be human—diverse in gifts, inevitably imperfect and inescapably vulnerable, and bound to one another by a moral fabric not of our own creation.

Limitations and future research

Several limitations to this study suggest areas for future inquiry. First, information about the programs, practices, and preparation available through theological schools reflected the perspectives of a single administrator from each school. Although these respondents reported having considerable involvement in programming and policy at their schools, it is possible that disability is addressed in other avenues unknown to these school leaders. Future researchers should query individual faculty and ministry leaders to identify whether and how disability appears within specific courses, programs, and campus activities. Second, we were unable to explore exactly how disability is considered when it does receive attention within the curriculum. Disabilities can be addressed in both helpful and hurtful ways, as many authors have noted.[28] Thus, *how* disability is addressed in course work, field placements, and elsewhere is as important to consider as *whether* it is addressed. Future studies might focus on sampling syllabi, assignments, and programmatic materials to better understand what particular efforts communicate about disability. Third, while we obtained a strong overall response rate, it is possible that we heard back primarily from those institutions already focusing greater attention to issues related to disability. It may be that nonresponding schools are even less attuned to this area. Additional research is needed to identify those factors influencing how and why disability is on the agendas of some schools but not others. Fourth, the strengths and needs of people with disabilities are diverse. Although we did not distinguish between types of disability (e.g., intellectual, emotional, physical, and learning disabilities) when querying school leaders, it is important to emphasize that people with disabilities are a heterogeneous group. The approaches used to support individuals with autism within congregational life may look quite different from those used to include individuals with physical disabilities or visual impairments, for example.

Conclusion

Theological schools comprise a principal training ground for clergy throughout North America. Although important reflections on the processes, promises, and pitfalls of theological education have been voiced in recent years,[29] relatively little attention has focused on the place of disability within the theological curriculum.[30] Findings from this study suggest that additional efforts are needed to ensure that this training adequately prepares congregational leaders with the knowledge, attitudes, and practices needed to serve within faith communities that will certainly include people with disabilities and their families. This study offers a current glimpse into where disability appears in theological school curricula and administrators' overall sense of

student preparation to be in ministry with persons with disabilities; it points to the lack of direct experience with disabilities in the more "hands-on" aspects of theological curricula; it uncovers some of the barriers that keep disabilities out of the curriculum; and it offers some sense of how students with disabilities are participating in theological education.

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Table 1. Extent to which disability is reportedly addressed in six curricular areas

Curricular area	Percentage of responding theological schools				Area not offered[1]	Missing data[2]
	Not at all	Infre-quently	Occa-sionally	Exten-sively		
Pastoral care/pastoral theology/congregational care	0.9%	7.8%	63.5%	27.8%	3	0
Religious education	7.1%	22.4%	60.2%	10.2%	17	3
Spiritual formation	5.7%	29.2%	59.4%	5.7%	9	3
Theology	14.7%	33.0%	48.6%	3.7%	9	0
Biblical studies	22.4%	46.7%	29.0%	1.9%	10	1
Historical studies	27.9%	46.2%	24.0%	1.9%	11	3

Note: Percentages are based on the number of participants who completed the given item.
[1]Total number of schools reporting not offering this curricular area.
[2]Total number of surveys with missing information on this item.

Table 2. Extent to which schools offered activities specifically focused on disabilities in the past three years

Has your school . . .	Percentage of responding theological schools				I don't know[1]	Missing data[2]
	Not at all	Infre- quently	Occa- sionally	Exten- sively		
offered any fieldwork specifi- cally focused on disabilities?	37.7%	18.9%	41.5%	1.9%	10	2
offered any lectures (outside of particular classes) specifically focused on disabilities?	37.8%	28.8%	29.7%	3.6%	5	2
offered any service/outreach specifically focused on dis- abilities?	45.8%	26.2%	25.2%	2.8%	10	1
offered any internships specifi- cally focused on disabilities?	54.1%	20.2%	24.8%	0.9%	8	1
offered any student groups spe- cifically focused on disabilities?	67.0%	17.4%	11.0%	4.6%	7	2
offered any student publications specifically fo- cused on disabilities?	80.0%	12.7%	7.3%	0.0%	6	2

Note: Percentages are based on the number of participants who completed the given item.
[1]Total number of surveys indicating I don't know.
[2]Total number of surveys with missing information on this item.

Table 3. Potential challenges related to addressing disability explicitly within theological education

Challenge	Percentage of responding theological schools					*M* (*SD*)	Missing data[1]
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree		
There just isn't time to address everything in the curriculum.	6.0%	25.0%	20.7%	38.8%	9.5%	3.21 (1.11)	2
We don't have any faculty with interest or expertise in this area.	7.7%	29.1%	17.1%	40.2%	6.0%	3.08 (1.12)	1
We lack the resources to address this issue.	6.0%	25.9%	27.6%	37.1%	3.4%	3.06 (1.01)	2
We don't know how to address disabilities and questions related to people with disabilities within the church.	7.0%	32.2%	33.0%	27.0%	0.9%	2.83 (0.94)	3
Other issues are more important.	8.7%	39.1%	38.3%	13.0%	0.9%	2.58 (0.86)	3
This is an issue new clergy can best learn about "on the job."	12.2%	54.8%	25.2%	7.0%	0.9%	2.30 (0.81)	3
Our students are unlikely to work with people with disabilities after graduation.	46.1%	40.0%	10.4%	2.6%	0.9%	1.72 (0.82)	3

Note: Percentages are based on the number of participants who completed the given item.
[1]Total number surveys with missing information on this item.

Table 4. Interest in accessing resources related to religion and disability

Resources	Percentage of responding theological schools				*M* (*SD*)	Missing data[1]
	Not at all interested	A little interested	Somewhat interested	Highly interested		
Books	3.4%	15.4%	43.6%	37.6%	3.15 (0.81)	1
Resources for community life (e.g., worship, discussion groups, etc.)	5.1%	16.2%	37.6%	41.0%	3.15 (0.87)	1
Internships/fieldwork ideas	6.9%	17.2%	37.9%	37.9%	3.08 (0.91)	2
Curriculum resources	2.6%	23.1%	39.3%	35.0%	3.07 (0.83)	1
Examples of nondiscrimination policies	12.1%	13.8%	25.0%	49.1%	3.11 (1.05)	2
Guest speaker recommendations	10.5%	28.1%	30.7%	30.7%	2.28 (0.99)	4

Note: Percentages are based on the number of participants who completed the given item.
[1]Total number surveys with missing information on this item.

Table 5. Participation of individuals with disabilities in theological school activities relative to students without disabilities

| Activities | Percentage of responding theological schools | | | | | | |
	Much less	Somewhat less	About the same	Somewhat more	Much more	Not offered[1]	Missing data[2]
Worship leadership	9.3%	18.7%	72.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5	6
Student governance	2.9%	20.6%	74.5%	2.0%	0.0%	10	6
Service opportunities	2.9%	17.1%	78.1%	1.9%	0.0%	5	8
Student organizations	1.0%	16.5%	82.5%	0.0%	0.0%	8	7

Note: Percentages are based on the number of participants who completed the given item.
[1]Total number of surveys indicating that the school does not offer this activity.
[2]Total number of surveys with missing information on this item.

Table 6. Level of accommodations made for students and faculty with disabilities in past three years

| Efforts | Percentage of responding theological schools | | | | |
	None needed	Needed but not yet made	Needed and some have been made	All needed have been made	Missing data[1]
We have redesigned/rebuilt physical structures (other than student housing) to make them more accessible.	19.1%	3.5%	51.3%	26.1%	3
We have redesigned/rebuilt student housing to make it more accessible.	35.3%	10.8%	33.3%	20.6%	16
We have offered flexibility in class/curriculum requirements and practices.	10.6%	0.9%	46.0%	42.5%	5
We have offered flexibility in worship practices.	36.4%	2.7%	36.4%	24.5%	8
We have offered access to services and assistance for those who need it.	9.7%	4.4%	34.5%	51.3%	5

Note: Percentages are based on the number of participants who completed the given item.
[1]Total number surveys with missing information on this item.

Table 7. Extent to which graduates are perceived to be well prepared to integrate people with disabilities into the full life of the congregation

Area of preparation	Percentage of responding theological schools				M (SD)	Missing data[1]
	Not at all prepared	A little prepared	Adequately prepared	Highly prepared		
Integrating individuals with disabilities in the areas of						
Fellowship	3.4%	54.3%	38.8%	3.4%	2.42 (0.62)	2
Worship and ritual	9.4%	61.5%	27.4%	1.7%	2.21 (0.63)	1
Religious education	7.7%	66.7%	23.9%	1.7%	2.20 (0.59)	1
Service	7.7%	67.5%	23.1%	1.7%	2.19 (0.59)	1
Leadership roles	15.4%	60.7%	22.2%	1.7%	2.10 (0.66)	1
Overall preparation to respond to the spiritual and theological questions resulting from human experiences such as a loved one's disablement, the birth of a child with a disability, or the potential challenges of living with one's own disability	3.4%	70.7%	24.1%	1.7%	2.24 (0.54)	2

Note: Percentages are based on the number of participants who completed the given item.
[1]Total number surveys with missing information on this item.

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Theological Education Mission Statement

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, provocative reflection pieces, 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.

Submission Guidelines

Theological Education invites submissions of articles that are consistent with the journal's purposes as enumerated in its mission statement. Unsolicited submissions satisfying initial review by the journal editors will be sent for blind peer review to members of the review board, who make recommendations to the editors regarding their publication. Articles that are being submitted simultaneously to other publications will not be considered.

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, footnotes, and 12-point Times New Roman.
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 (1–2 sentence) paragraph at the end of the article identifying the author(s), institution(s), current position(s), and, when appropriate, the author's relationship with the project/topic.
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.

Author's Checklist

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?