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Economic Equilibrium in Theological Schools

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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The **ISSUE 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.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION invites responses, of up to 1,500 words, to previously published articles 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.

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.

Theological Education invites manuscript submissions 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. The editorial board will not consider manuscripts that are being submitted simultaneously to other publications.

Theological Education Mission Statement

Theological Education, the journal of The Association of Theological Schools and The ATS Commission on Accrediting, 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.

Submission Guidelines

1. Recommended length 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 pt. 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 latest editions of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate 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. Bibliographies are typically not published, especially when they list sources already present in the footnotes.
9. Submissions should be emailed to editors@ats.edu.

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 the article 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?

Economic Equilibrium and Theological Schools: A Project Report

Stephen R. Graham
The Association of Theological Schools

ABSTRACT: *The Economic Equilibrium and Theological Schools project was funded by two successive grants from Lilly Endowment Inc., to respond to the long-standing economic challenges faced by schools, especially following the economic downturn of 2008–2009. The project was designed to gather wisdom, explore options for sustainable financial models, and encourage long-range adaptive changes. It involved revision of the Strategic Information Report to provide a more dynamic tool for analyzing annual data, a survey of 119 financial officers to determine how schools responded to the downturn, and a series of coached consultations with 27 schools.*

Much has been written in recent months about the financial challenges facing educational institutions. A few schools have ceased operations, others have cut expenses and programs, and a few have found new markets for their services and expanded their missions to incorporate a broader constituency.

Theological schools have struggled with financial issues almost from their beginning. In the 1850s, Philip Schaff (later well known as a leading historian of Christianity and founder of the American Society of Church History), as a young teacher at Mercersburg Seminary in Pennsylvania spent his summers touring the country preaching in congregations to raise funds to support the school. Similar stories abound of poorly paid faculty members in theological schools struggling to make ends meet, presidents of those institutions working long hours to find support from denominational bodies and individuals, and boards wrestling with their fiduciary responsibilities to keep schools on solid financial footing.

The Standards of Accreditation

Schools within The Association of Theological Schools that are members of the Commission on Accrediting are required to fulfill standards about financial viability. Standard 8 says that "In order to achieve their purposes,

institutions need not only sufficient personnel but also adequate financial, physical, and institutional data resources."[1] The Standard goes on to specify particular financial expectations of every school.

According to the Standards, "quality education and sound financial policies are intimately related," and principles of good stewardship should guide the planning, development, and use of a school's financial resources. Financial resources should be adequate to support programs, personnel (faculty, staff, students), and physical plant/space both in the present and for the long term, as well as to anticipate and respond to external changes in the economic, social, legal, and religious environment.

The Standards stress that "schools should maintain economic equilibrium over three or more years" and have the financial resources necessary to respond to unexpected challenges. Sources of revenue should be stable and predictable so that educational quality is maintained. Projected increases in revenue, including gift income, should be realistic, and wise stewardship is expected in the wise use of revenues.[2] The Standards warn against budget deficits and require a plan to eliminate them when they occur.

Finally, for those schools "embedded" in colleges or universities, the relationship should be of mutual benefit. "These theological schools should enhance the well-being of the larger institution, while the larger institution should demonstrate appreciation for the special characteristics of theological schools. The larger institution should provide adequate financial resources to support the mission and programs of the theological school."[3]

The challenge

In recent years, financial struggles have intensified due to a number of factors, including an overall decline in denominational funding as many denominations have seen membership and resources shrink. Increasingly schools have relied on the contributions of individual donors, draw from

1.   ATS Commission on Accrediting, *General Institutional Standards* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2010), Standard 8 opening paragraph.

2.   A common and customary understanding of a "prudent" use of endowment return is to budget as revenue 5 percent of a three-year average of the market value of endowment and board-designated quasi-endowment. Member schools should seek legal counsel regarding law applicable to the use of endowments.

3.   ATS Commission on Accrediting, *General Institutional Standards* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 2010), Standard 8, section 8.2.1.5.

endowments, and tuition revenue from students to balance their budgets. Unfortunately, since 2000, the percentage of stand-alone schools reporting a surplus has dropped from slightly more than 50 percent to less than 40 percent in 2014.[4] Not only are fewer schools ending the year with a surplus, but the size of the deficits is growing significantly as well. The number of schools, for example, with deficits in excess of $500,000 nearly doubled from 2000 to 2014. The problem, however, is not confined to a few schools. It challenges the whole "industry" of theological education, and even the most well-resourced schools can experience difficulties in fulfilling their missions.

Reliance on funding from individual donors requires the additional administrative time to nurture multiple relationships, in contrast to an earlier pattern of maintaining an institutional relationship with a school's sponsoring denomination. Net tuition revenue has increased dramatically in ATS member schools, but many students struggle with the long-term implications of educational debt. In addition, declining overall enrollment challenges the assumption that, for most schools at least, increasing enrollment can provide adequate revenue for the school to thrive. Steadily rising expenses and declining enrollments exacerbate already keenly felt financial stresses.

On the other hand, ATS member schools received from all sources nearly $1.7 billion in revenue in 2014. The larger question, therefore, may be how effectively the schools steward the remarkable resources they have at their disposal.

The plan

In order to confront the range of issues creating financial uncertainties in member schools, the Association embarked on a project to engage and support a group of schools seeking solutions. While envisioned since the middle of the 2000s, the project gained urgency with the economic downturn of 2008–2009. Lilly Endowment responded to the Association's request for funding with a grant in 2009 and a follow-up grant in 2011. The

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4.   This calculation is adjusted by calculating a 5 percent draw on investments for each school. Some schools have balanced their budgets during this period by drawing more from their endowments than the recommended 5 percent. The financial structures of schools "embedded" in larger institutions are quite diverse and much more complicated to calculate.

program was designed to take advantage of a number of resources, including expertise of personnel from the schools themselves, from ATS, from the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education, from In Trust, and from the larger higher education community.

The project was designed to gather wisdom from those involved in theological education and beyond, to explore options for sustainable financial models, and to encourage *adaptive* changes for the long run rather than settling for *technical* changes to address immediate problems.[5] The project gathered information needed by the schools to address financial difficulty and attain financial strength. It also worked to enable leaders to interpret and use these data as effectively as possible in order to be good stewards of the institutions in their care, making them financially sustainable through difficult times and into the future. While many tended to address the problems by simply becoming more efficient and effective in the typical processes of raising more revenue (e.g., through increasing enrollment and/or raising funds and reducing expenses through cutting particular staff positions), the project sought to help schools realize that these typical solutions are inadequate for the present challenge. Throughout, the project worked to generate ideas, gather best practices, and discover effective and sustainable financial models for all theological schools.

The activities

Revision of the ATS Strategic Information Report

The *Strategic Information Report* (SIR) gathers data from the schools' Annual Report Forms and presents it in usable form to the schools. For more than 15 years the Association has provided this valuable resource for member schools. Chris Meinzer, ATS senior director of administration and CFO, has revised the instrument completely[6] and made it significantly more user friendly and relevant. A key feature of the revised instrument is the ability of leaders to segment the report with data appropriate for particu-

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5.   The terms *adaptive* and *technical* change are used in Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

6.   Barbara Wheeler, former president of Auburn Theological Seminary and founding director of the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education; Tony Ruger, former senior researcher of the Auburn Center; and Daniel Aleshire, executive director of ATS, also contributed to the revision.

lar audiences. Utilizing Microsoft Excel, the new SIR is a dynamic tool permitting live data to be used to create reports that can be reviewed and revised as needed. The new SIR provides basic school data along with a range of comparative data including breakdowns by ecclesial family, size of institution, and other important factors.

Survey of chief financial officers

The project's first step was an online survey of chief financial officers of ATS member schools (or chief executive officers for those schools without a chief financial officer) to gather information about how schools responded to the financial downturn of 2008–2009. Respondents were asked to describe their institutions' immediate responses within the 2008–2009 budget year, their schools' plans for the 2009–2010 budget year, and more general projections for the next two or three years.

One hundred nineteen schools from the 251 members (at that time) responded, a 47 percent response rate. It became clear that many, perhaps most, of the schools were responding quickly and taking immediate action to address the challenges. Many schools had made budget cuts, but they were concerned about the potentially paralyzing impact of those cuts. At what point do the cuts cripple the institution's ability to fulfill its mission? For a number of schools, the cuts led to the relatively short-term benefits of deferred expenses in such areas as maintenance, library acquisitions, and compensation.

The impact of the downturn was severe.

- Of the 119 survey respondents, 53 percent saw their endowments drop 21–30 percent from June 2008 through March 2009; another 15 percent saw even greater drops.

- In response, 63 percent of respondents made immediate cuts to their 2008–2009 budgets. Of those 63 percent, 12 percent made cuts in excess of 10 percent.

- Even with these significant efforts, only 45 percent of respondents expected to end fiscal year 2008–2009 with a balanced budget.

- The most commonly selected budget-cutting strategies were hiring freezes, salary freezes, reductions in travel, administrative and staff reductions, deferred maintenance, and library budget reductions.

It should be noted that, with a strong desire to maintain academic quality and perhaps the recognition of the relatively unassailable job security of many faculty positions, reductions in faculty were well down the list and viewed by most schools as a last resort.

Gathering information

On May 14–15, 2009, the project's first meeting gathered chief financial officers from a representative group of schools at the ATS offices in Pittsburgh to help clarify issues, gather best thinking, and develop strategies to address them. The CFOs were Anne Brown (United Theological Seminary), Kurt Gabbard (Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary), John Gilmore (Princeton Theological Seminary) Jack Heimbichner (Denver Seminary), Robert Landrebe (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), Winston Ling (Tyndale University College & Seminary), Kelly McCormick (Iliff School of Theology), and H. Lee Merritt (Fuller Theological Seminary). The consultation also included one library director, David Stewart (Luther Seminary), and staff from ATS (Daniel Aleshire, Carol Lytch, Stephen Graham, Chris Meinzer, and Bill Miller), Auburn (Barbara Wheeler and Tony Ruger), and In Trust (Christa Klein and Amy Kardash).

The CFOs reported on their work and the challenges each school faced in its particular context. The composite of these reports gave the group a fair representation of the issues faced by schools of different sizes, types, and ecclesial families. Participants agreed on a number of fundamental issues including the following:

1. Having adequately sophisticated financial expertise within the institution is a necessity.
2. It would likely be four to eight years before a recovered market and overall financial stability could be attained.
3. The survey of CFOs had enabled the discussion to be based on data rather than anecdote.
4. The relationship of many schools to a university or college (about one-third of the membership) could be a two-edged sword. The

larger institution was both a source of resources and ballast to help to weather the financial storm *and* a structure that could (and normally did!) impose discipline that forced the theological school to make significant and difficult reductions.

5. The expectation of many schools that they could increase enrollment to raise revenue was likely *not* viable given the enrollment declines across the industry in recent years.

6. Likewise, overly aggressive fund-development goals might not be realistic given a particular school's history of fund-raising and future prospects.

7. Financial stresses can prompt asking hard but important questions about the institution's core mission.

8. Given the volatility of financial structures, rigid planning beyond two or three years could be problematic and unrealistic. Long-term planning is crucial, but it must remain sufficiently adaptable and flexible.

9. Schools need basic common language and concepts to discuss and address financial challenges.

10. The financial situation of 2009 might well represent a "new normal" to which schools will have to adapt.

In order to bring some insight from beyond the community of theological education into the project, the advisory committee selected five "coaching faculty" who come from outside theological education but have worked closely with higher education. The coaches and their positions at the time of the project were

- Michael Townsley, dean of business at Becker College in Massachusetts, and author of *The Small College Guide to Financial Health: Beating the Odds*
- Nick Wallace, a partner with Capin Crouse, an Indianapolis-based consulting firm that does extensive work with Christian organizations
- Tom Dwyer, chief financial officer at Johnson and Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island, with extensive experience as a member of accreditation teams for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- Helen Ouellette, chief financial officer at the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University, who brought considerable experience as a member of accreditation teams for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and her work with a number of nonprofit organizations

- John Camillus, Donald R. Beall professor of strategic management at the Katz Graduate School of Business of the University of Pittsburgh, who contributed from his extensive experience as a consultant for a variety of nonprofit organizations including colleges, museums, and galleries

The coaches gathered with the ATS and Auburn staffs for an orientation to the distinctive world of theological education and to plan the project's activities. The project utilized the concept of "economic equilibrium" as a foundational concept that schools could apply in their individual contexts. Economic equilibrium is present when a school has sufficient resources to conduct its mission with quality, preserve the purchasing power of its financial assets, maintain its physical assets, and provide fair compensation to its employees. Equilibrium is maintained through an ability to adapt year-to-year to changing circumstances.

The project was implemented in two phases, 2009–2011 and 2012–2014. Prior to the meetings, the Association hosted a series of webinars to orient participants to the project, to acquaint them with the concept of economic equilibrium, and to survey the financial circumstances across the membership of the Association.

The project's first phase invited all of the Association's stand-alone schools to write letters of interest describing their financial circumstances and why they believed they would benefit from involvement in the project.[7] In all, 46 schools submitted letters of interest. The project's steering committee (Daniel Aleshire, Carol Lytch, Chris Meinzer, Stephen Graham, Barbara Wheeler, and Tony Ruger) selected the 15 schools for participation in the project.

The selection committee selected schools representing a cross-section of schools within the Association. Consideration was given to achieving an appropriate balance among

- the three ecclesial families represented in the Association's membership (mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Roman Catholic/Orthodox);

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7. Schools associated with universities or colleges would not normally be selected for the project because of their shared resources and access to expertise within the larger institution of which they are a part.

- different patterns of revenue sources: enrollment/tuition, fund development, endowment, denominational support, and so forth;
- regions within Canada and the United States;
- school sizes; and
- mission emphases.

The selected schools committed themselves to sending three representatives (president, chief financial officer, and an appropriate representative from the board of trustees) to a series of three meetings over an 18-month period and to focusing their energy for intensive work on their financial situations during that time. While the coaches, ATS and Auburn staffs, and selected additional authorities shared their expertise with participants, a key element of the project was peer learning from colleagues serving other participating schools.

In 2012, ATS and Auburn staff members met to review more than 30 applications to participate in the second phase of the project. The committee selected 12 institutions to participate based upon several factors, including the institution's financial situation, the quality of administrative leadership, and the perceived likelihood of learning that would benefit the broader ATS membership. Schools were notified of their selection, made commitments to the requirements of the project, and began work to identify and report their past and current financial realities.

For phase two of the project, Helen Ouellette and Tom Dwyer continued as coaches and were joined by Chris Meinzer and Tony Ruger.

The consultations

The three representatives from each school formed a team that was matched with teams from two other schools possessing similar characteristics and facing comparable challenges. A coach worked with each peer group of three teams, and the ATS and Auburn staffs provided support.

The project's first phase included 15 schools that gathered three times within an 18-month period for face-to-face work. Each meeting was preceded by consultations with coaches, preparatory work by the school, and a report describing their actions, progress, and challenges. The consultations included presentations by experts and conversations, both within the peer groups and within each school team with its coaches.

The second phase of the project included 12 different schools that also met three times. The second phase included site visits to their schools by each coach so that the coaches could gain a more complete understanding of the school, its personnel, and its operations.

Findings

Some significant insights emerged through the program's two phases and the outstanding work of staff, coaches, and the personnel from the 27 schools.

- The vastly different financial circumstances of the schools made it very difficult to develop models that were transferable from one school to another.
- Generally, the schools counted on typical solutions of increasing enrollment, raising tuition, and increasing annual fund giving. All three have problematic aspects and limits that must be faced.
- Schools named their clearer understanding of their financial challenges as a key benefit of the project as well as a sense of urgency to address what, for many schools, had been long-standing problems.
- The economic equilibrium concept and model was extremely helpful for the schools. Many spoke of the value of having an easily understood and adaptable concept that helped them communicate their school's financial challenges to a wide variety of stakeholders. Staff affirmed the value of the model but continued to stress that achieving equilibrium represented only a beginning point and that to flourish schools needed not only to maintain equilibrium (hard enough for many) but to develop financial strength beyond it.
- Clearly, the schools are remarkably resilient, and their leaders are deeply dedicated to their work. They were willing to take necessary, often painful steps to place their institutions on a more sustainable financial footing.
- Personnel cuts have affected staff more than faculty. Only in a very few cases did schools believe it necessary or prudent to cut faculty positions.
- The coaches from outside the theological school community brought fresh eyes to the situation with frank, honest evaluation and new ideas.

- Participants emphasized how important it is to have skilled administrators, especially presidents and CFOs, in order to address the complex challenges facing schools.
- Schools appreciate hearing from ATS. They look to ATS for information about the larger industry of theological education in order to understand better how their schools fit within the broader context. They also appreciate guidance about innovation and experimentation and what is acceptable, or not, according to the Standards of Accreditation.
- Accountability was a crucial element in the project. Schools frequently noted that they were more attentive to financial issues and did better work knowing that they had to report to peers and coaches in a timely way.
- Many schools noted the project's emphasis on long-range planning that pushed them to think beyond annual balancing of budgets. Such planning is particularly important in theological schools, which are institutions that are not normally able to adapt quickly to changed circumstances.
- Schools also developed contingency plans for possible implementation in case circumstances did not allow their original plans to mature as expected.
- Some noted that the project helped give them the courage to make tough decisions.
- Many leaders noted strong resistance from some groups, including faculty, to what the leaders perceived to be needed changes.
- It was commonly noted that having the teams of presidents, CFOs, and a member of the board was a very effective way to approach the financial challenges. Each perspective was crucial to the process, and having them present and working together ensured fuller investment by those they represented.
- A number of schools noted that the project led to more active involvement by their boards.
- The peer group model worked well, and schools appreciated the opportunity to learn from one another. It was also valuable for schools to be able to compare themselves with other schools and the industry as a whole.
- Participants valued the opportunity to take time away from normal routines in order to focus on financial issues during the consultations with limited interruptions by other concerns.

- A number of schools called on ATS to support innovation as schools seek to reinvent themselves.

Participants developed a range of strategies to achieve and sustain economic equilibrium. Some sought to increase enrollments through developing new degree programs, particularly those that emphasized the school's distinctive characteristics and strengths. Some utilized consultants to develop more sophisticated processes of enrollment management and marketing.

Expense reduction strategies included elimination of poorly performing programs and, in a few cases, redevelopment of curricula to achieve more sustainable educational models. Others explored a variety of collaborations, including consolidations and mergers, while a few were able to sell assets such as unused property or underutilized buildings.

Conclusion

While one might wish that this report could claim that the project solved the financial challenges of the participating schools and provided a clear path toward economic equilibrium for schools across the Association, such lofty goals, unfortunately, were not attained. The project's success was in helping the schools clearly to identify their challenges and the causes behind them, and to begin the long process of finding enduring solutions. Leaders gained important understanding and, in some cases, the courage to take the actions that were necessary for the long-term good of their schools.

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Core Components of Successful Doctor of Ministry Programs

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ABSTRACT: *This phenomenological study explored ATS Commission-approved Doctor of Ministry programs in the United States to discover the core components of these programs. Interviews with program directors and focus group interviews with students resulted in the identification of several core elements of successful Doctor of Ministry programs: developing reflective practitioners, creating learning cohorts, offering specialized tracks consistent with institutional ethos, integrating core professors into the soul of the program, increasing affordability through church partnerships, and expanding curriculum to address various ministry fields.*

Current Doctor of Ministry program components

The Doctor of Ministry degree was first approved by The American Association of Theological Schools (now named The Association of Theological Schools [ATS]) in 1972, with significant growth occurring in the number and scope of these programs soon after its inception.[1] The degree was never intended to be a super-sized Master of Divinity program, nor was it created to be the equivalent of a theological PhD program. Jackson Carroll and Barbara Wheeler indicate that the degree was originally created in response to a strong demand for continuing education that would provide advanced skills for clergy.[2]

The newly revised *Degree Program Standards*[3] approved in 2012 by the membership of the Commission on Accrediting describe the primary goals of Doctor of Ministry programs as

> an advanced understanding of the nature and purposes of ministry, enhanced competencies in pastoral analysis and

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1.   Jackson W. Carroll and Barbara G. Wheeler, *A Study of Doctor of Ministry Programs* (Hartford, CT: Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 1987), 9.

2.   Ibid.

3.   ATS Commission on Accrediting, *Degree Program Standards* (Pittsburgh: Commission on Accrediting, 2012), Standard E, section E.1.2.1, http://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/degree-program-standards.pdf.

ministerial skills, the integration of these dimensions into the theologically reflective practice of ministry, new knowledge about the practice of ministry, continued growth in spiritual maturity, and development and appropriation of a personal and professional ethic with focused study on ethical standards and mature conduct in the profession.

These Standards clearly indicate that three primary components of a Doctor of Ministry program would be

1. learning new knowledge in the field of ministry ethics, purpose, and competency;
2. attaining spiritual growth and development resulting in mature conduct; and
3. acquiring applied, practical ministerial skills.

Current trends in prospective Doctor of Ministry students

One of the largest recent studies of prospective Doctor of Ministry students was conducted in 2011 with 600 Protestant senior pastors. According to this important Barna Group study (known publicly as the Pastor Poll), the target market for Doctor of Ministry programs is pastors who are 55 years of age or younger, are seminary graduates, and have been in ministry more than three years. However, the pastors more likely to pursue a Doctor of Ministry

> *The target market for Doctor of Ministry programs is pastors who are 55 years of age or younger, are seminary graduates, and have been in ministry more than three years. However, those pastors more likely to be eligible to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree are younger (age 28–46) and have been in ministry longer (more than a decade).*

degree are younger (age 28–46) and have been in ministry longer (more than a decade).[4]

This same Barna Group study indicated that the most compelling reasons for eligible pastors to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree were to gain knowledge, grow personally, and improve their ministry-related skills. In the pastors' words, they wanted to

> 66 *The most compelling reasons for eligible pastors to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree were to gain knowledge, grow personally, and improve their ministry-related skills. In the pastors' words, they wanted to stay "fresh" by gaining new perspectives, experiencing spiritual growth, and becoming more effective in their ministries.*

stay "fresh" by gaining new perspectives, experiencing spiritual growth, and becoming more effective in their ministries. This study also noted that the primary obstacles to pursuing and completing a Doctor of Ministry degree were the time and finances required.

Barna's study raises several questions for the future of Doctor of Ministry programs. First, it calls into question the previous target demographic of older, senior pastors interested in leadership training, as it suggests that younger leaders from a variety of ministry occupations may be a more appropriate target demographic for this degree.

Second, it indicates the need for a reevaluation of the curriculum and ancillary components of Doctor of Ministry programs. In addition to providing a practical alternative between an MDiv and a PhD, the Barna report emphasizes the importance of Doctor of Ministry programs including spiritual formation, personal growth, and skill development components.

Third, it clarifies the importance of affordability and flexible delivery modes for Doctor of Ministry degrees to address the financial and time constraints of potential students. Online program components, blended class modalities, and alternative financing models may all be necessary

4.   Barna Group, *Advanced and Continuing Education: A National Study of Protestant Senior Pastors* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2011); *The Rise of the @Pastor* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2013), https://www.barna.org/barna-update/congregations/615-the-rise-of-the-pastor#.VdIBhE2FOUn.

to keep Doctor of Ministry programs sufficiently accessible. In addition, alternative forms of financing may be necessary to continue to attract prospective students.

The current study

The present study evaluated ATS Commission-approved Doctor of Ministry programs in the United States for the purpose of discovering the core components of these programs. This included exploring the delivery models, standards, and curriculum of these programs. The catalyst for this inquiry was the anticipated redesign of the sponsoring seminary's Doctor of Ministry program, following the retirement of its long-time director. The present study initially sought to answer the primary research question of whether Doctor of Ministry programs in the United States were meeting the academic and professional needs of their constituents in order to identify core components of successful Doctor of Ministry programs. Through the process of emergent design, the research question that was ultimately answered was, *What components do Doctor of Ministry constituents identify as being core to successful Doctor of Ministry programs?*

In order to answer this research question, the following interview questions were identified as central to achieving the study's goals:

1. What do other programs say a Doctor of Ministry degree is supposed to be?
2. What does the ATS Commission on Accrediting say a Doctor of Ministry degree is supposed to be?
3. What should be the curricular components of a Doctor of Ministry program, as identified by Doctor of Ministry administrators, potential students, current students, and alumni?
4. What do current students/graduates say they gain from a Doctor of Ministry degree, and are they better off for having it?
5. What do current students/graduates say was lacking in their Doctor of Ministry experience?
6. What are the delivery models for a Doctor of Ministry program?
7. What do prospective Doctor of Ministry students say would motivate them to pursue—or deter them from pursuing—a Doctor of Ministry degree?
8. How will the 2012 Commission Standards for Doctor of Ministry programs affect the structure and curriculum of future programs?

Delimitations and limitations of the study

Delimitations include the researchers' intentionally limiting the search criteria to evangelical, Commission-approved, Doctor of Ministry programs in order to have a sample comparable to the broad demographic of the sponsoring institution's constituency. Additionally, the researchers did not explore the specific curriculum of any Doctor of Ministry programs, as the research question for this study focused more on the purpose of Doctor of Ministry programs rather than on the execution of those programs.

Limitations of this study include the self-reporting nature of the interviews and surveys used, which contributed to the use of a phenomenological approach that sought to understand participants' perceptions rather than an objective reality. In addition, budgetary limitations allowed for only three institutions to be included in this study, although data saturation still appeared to be reached. A final limitation is a potential lack of generalizability, as although some generalizability can be assumed due to the data saturation that was obtained, this may be limited to evangelical Doctor of Ministry programs with similar constituencies, missions, and purposes as those schools involved in this study.

Method

A phenomenological approach[5] was taken to answer this study's ultimate research question: What components do Doctor of Ministry constituents identify as being core to successful Doctor of Ministry programs? In this case, the phenomenon under investigation was that of being a part of a Doctor of Ministry program, whether in the capacity of national leader/ stakeholder, director, or student.

Individual interviews were used with experts and Doctor of Ministry directors in order to gather their perceptions of the phenomenon under study. Focus group interviews were the selected method of data collection with Doctor of Ministry students because of the way that focus groups allow for a co-constructed understanding of the phenomenon under study.[6]

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5.   John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches,* 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013), 76.

6.   Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009).

Participants

Participants in this study were divided into three categories: experts, directors, and students. Purposeful sampling was used to identify the two initial expert contacts: the executive director of The Association of Theological Schools and the chancellor of the seminary sponsoring the study, given his high involvement in multiple Doctor of Ministry programs throughout his career. From those two interviews, snowball sampling[7] was implemented to recruit the final two experts: the ATS director of accreditation and institutional evaluation who serves as the ATS Commission liaison to the Association of Doctor of Ministry Education, and the vice president of a national Christian leadership magazine. All four participants were identified as being experts in the field of Doctor of Ministry education and pastoral leadership.[8]

Various sampling methods were used to identify the Commission-approved Doctor of Ministry programs of interest for this study, from which director and student participants were gleaned. In addition to the seminary that sponsored the study, other programs of interest were identified based on recommendations provided during expert interviews. Of the initial three programs identified by experts, two declined to participate in the study. The school that did agree to participate became internally labeled as the "expert-identified school." At that time, a survey was sent out to the sponsoring institution's Doctor of Ministry students to conduct an alternative form of purposeful sampling. A total of 47 Doctor of Ministry students from the current sponsoring institution voluntarily participated in the survey and answered questions regarding other Doctor of Ministry programs they had considered prior to attending the sponsoring seminary, and what Doctor of Ministry program they would now recommend that a friend attend (see Appendix A).

In asking these questions, the researchers intended to identify the programs perceived as the most comparable, or "sister schools," to the

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7. Snowball sampling is a qualitative method of gathering data in which known participants are asked to identify other possible participants, based on study-specific criteria.

8. An email request was also sent to the president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) who provided a brief written response to three questions but was unavailable for an interview or additional follow-up. Given the brevity of the NAE president's responses and the inability for further follow-up or clarification, the responses from that email were not included in the final analysis.

sponsoring institution's Doctor of Ministry program, and thus relevant to the current study's target audience. The single most cited school (n = 34 combined score between both questions) declined the invitation to participate in the current study. The second most cited school was the same as that identified by the experts (n = 17 combined score). The two additional schools ultimately chosen were therefore the third and fourth most cited based on the above survey questions (n = 14 and n = 9, respectively, combined scores). Both cohort-based and elective-based instruction models were represented in the schools selected, and all schools utilize a hybrid approach to instruction, including on-campus residency along with online resources, assignments, and discussion boards.

Collection procedures

Following approval from the sponsoring institution's Human Participants Review Committee, an email invitation was sent out to all identified experts requesting their participation in the study. The invitation included key information about the study, including the four semistructured interview questions that would be asked during the interview (see Appendix B). Upon their acceptance, an interview was scheduled either by phone or in person, depending on each participant's location. Each expert interview lasted approximately one hour, was audio recorded, and was then transcribed verbatim. The researchers took field notes during the interviews as an additional data source and method of triangulation.

The Doctor of Ministry directors at each seminary selected through expert input and the sponsoring seminary's survey results were sent invitation emails, asking for their participation as well as the ability to recruit their Doctor of Ministry students for participation. The invitation included key information about the study. Upon their acceptance, additional information was sent, including key questions that would be asked of the director and of students. On-location interviews were then scheduled through the director's office. An email invitation was then sent, through the director's office, to potential Doctor of Ministry students, requesting that they RSVP for the student focus group on their campus directly to the researchers so as to provide anonymity to participants. The student invitation included key questions that would be asked during the focus group interview.

A semistructured interview format was used for the director interviews (see Appendix C). Each interview lasted approximately one hour,

> 66 *Both directors and experts spoke of Doctor of Ministry programs needing to be focused on recruiting and training "the best of the best" and, with that, providing the best teachers and training opportunities that a school has to offer to those students.*

was audio recorded, and was then transcribed verbatim. A semistructured interview format was also used for the student focus group interviews (see Appendix D). Each focus group interview contained six to eight participants, lasted approximately 90 minutes, was audio recorded, and was then transcribed verbatim. The researchers took field notes during each individual and focus group interview as an additional data source and method of triangulation. At each seminary, spontaneous and unstructured interviews also took place with key support staff in the Doctor of Ministry office. Researcher notes of these interviews served as additional data for the study.

Finally, an online qualitative survey was created to gather data from Doctor of Ministry students and alumni of the sponsoring seminary, along with anyone at the sponsoring seminary in process for a Master's degree that would qualify them for application to a Doctor of Ministry program. At the sponsoring seminary, the Doctor of Ministry program emailed the survey's hyperlink to all currently enrolled students and alumni, the registrar's office emailed the hyperlink to all current Master of Divinity students, and a snowball technique was used to recruit all other participants for the survey, beginning with sponsoring seminary faculty, locally and nationally known pastors, and acquaintances of the researchers with the request to forward the link to any potential participants. A total of 58 participants started the online survey (n = 58). Thirty-eight were sponsoring seminary Doctor of Ministry students or alumni (n = 38), 13 were current sponsoring seminary Master of Divinity or Master of Arts students (n = 13), one was a nonsponsoring seminary Master of Divinity or Master of Arts alumnus (n = 1), and three were nonsponsoring seminary Doctor of Ministry alumni (n = 3). Three participants started but did not complete the survey (n = 3). Data saturation was met for this study.

Coding, data analysis, and verification

Two outside researchers were used to code and analyze the transcriptions and survey results. *A priori* coding was used, based on the interview questions, to identify broad themes.[9] From there, *in vivo* codes were used,[10] drawing from the specific language of participants and then compared with the researchers' notes and themes as a form of triangulation and data verification. Summary reports were sent out to directors and student participants as a form of member checking. Directors were asked to send feedback regarding the summarized data from all three director interviews, while student participants were asked to send feedback regarding the summarized data from all three student focus group interviews. Feedback from participants was then used as an additional form of triangulation and data verification.

Results

While each category of participants provided nuanced perspectives to the questions asked, a high degree of commonality was found across all participants. For the purposes of this study, and given the prevalence of common themes across participant categories, results were pooled and themes reported in the order of prevalence and importance, as identified across all participant categories. In the instances where participant categories garnered noticeably different themes, they are noted below. Due to the high degree of commonality among schools, results are presented based on theme and not based on institution. No major differences were seen between the results from the sponsoring seminary's participants and those from the participants from the three other institutions.

Doctor of Ministry students

Overall, it was found that prior to commencing a Doctor of Ministry program, students had been primarily involved in positions related to pastoral ministry, parachurch ministry, chaplaincy, missions, or academia. Both directors and experts spoke of Doctor of Ministry programs needing to be focused on recruiting and training "the best of the best" and, with that,

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9. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry,* 185 (see n. 5).

10. Ibid., 185–186.

providing the best teachers and training opportunities that a school has to offer to those students. In this, institutions talked of seeking applicants who were already successful in ministry but who were looking for a Doctor of Ministry program that would amplify their skills, influence, scope of practice, or effectiveness. Student motivation for pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree included a desire for "personal and professional growth," for "practical training for effective ministry," for specific/focused education, and to increase one's reputation and credentials. Most directors expressed concern regarding a lack of diversity within their student populations, identifying their typical student as a white male in his 40s. Most directors saw finances and visa concerns as the greatest hindrance to recruiting minority and international students. The desire for a program with diversity of thought, experience, and perspective was shared by students as well.

> **66** *Student participants talked often of the value and honor they felt in getting to learn directly from the scholars they so deeply admired.*

Student rationale in Doctor of Ministry program selection

Students had various, corroborating reasons for their selection of one particular Doctor of Ministry program over another. For many students, "the quality of education," including the ability to specialize with desired concentrations, was a primary consideration in program selection. At a doctoral level, students are not seeking to expand their general knowledge but are instead desiring to develop expertise and true specialization in a desired area of practice. "The reputation of the faculty" and the institution, including specific professors/mentors, were other key considerations for students. This was noted as a distinct selection criteria from "quality of education." Many shared stories about choosing their particular Doctor of Ministry program because the publications of specific professors at that institution had significantly influenced their ministry or spiritual development to date. Student participants talked often of the value and honor they felt in getting to learn directly from the scholars they so deeply admired. Participants used terms such as *mentorship* and *personal investment* to describe their intense desire to develop personal relationships with core faculty members. This rationale served of particular interest and

emphasis in student interviews. Finally, logistics such as location and cost also greatly influenced student selection of a Doctor of Ministry program.

Doctor of Ministry program directors

Of particular emphasis in director interviews was the theme of Doctor of Ministry programs staffing their teaching positions with core seminary faculty, rather than relying primarily on outside experts. Directors and experts spoke to this value in emphasizing the need to have core seminary faculty as part of the Doctor of Ministry teaching team so that the "soul" of the institution was thus reflected in the areas of specialty found in a particular Doctor of Ministry program. When asked why students may not pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree, or which things may hinder student pursuit of the degree, directors cited cost (and other logistics such as location), a lack of desired concentrations or specialized classes, the school's denominational affiliation (or lack thereof), and family and community responsibilities. Directors repeatedly identified a great desire to see additional funding and resources for international students and other students of diverse backgrounds in order to mediate barriers in the pursuit of Doctor of Ministry education. One

> 66 *In this context, a reflective practitioner is described as one who is able to effectively and pragmatically conduct ministry in a way that is well-informed by research, study, and ongoing evaluation.*

solution regularly referenced by directors was the possibility of creating financial partnerships with the students' sending churches. One director elaborated on this idea by describing a situation in which a student's sending church sponsored the student, paying for a large portion of the associated tuition and fees, with commitments from the student to maintain employment with the church for a set period of time following the student's degree completion and to sculpt the required final project in a way that would directly benefit the needs of the sending church.

Doctor of Ministry purpose and structure

The perceived purposes of a Doctor of Ministry program, as indicated by students, directors, and experts, included providing personal and

professional growth opportunities to enrich students' practical skills for effective ministry, including opportunities to pursue a desired concentration, to receive mentorship under specific experts, and to further student credentialing. The concept of training "reflective practitioners" was used

> 66 *Learning appears to occur at the highest levels for Doctor of Ministry students when it takes place among a community of learners before, during, and after the on-campus portion of the program.*

by experts and Doctor of Ministry directors to capture the unique nature of the desired purpose and final product of a Doctor of Ministry program. In this context, a reflective practitioner is described as one who is able to effectively and pragmatically conduct ministry in a way that is well-informed by research, study, and ongoing evaluation. Students and directors alike saw a purpose of a Doctor of Ministry program to be a place that strove to develop and facilitate the self-awareness and self-analysis needed to be reflective practitioners. It is desired by all categories of participants to see that Doctor of Ministry programs remain high in academic integrity, while also providing advanced skills in practical ministry that are specialized to student interest and yet still broadly applicable.

Instruction modality

Modality of instruction was highlighted by experts and directors as a topic of importance. Specifically, experts placed a high preference on cohort-based models that utilized a "high-touch" approach. *High touch* was described by participants as meaning one-on-one or face-to-face interactions that are personalized to the student whenever possible. In contrast, directors and students placed preference on the models used at their respective institutions (elective-based versus cohort-based). While all categories of participants recognized the need for some online facilitation between residencies, they also all emphasized the need, preference, and value that was found in face-to-face interaction. Regardless of instruction model, students and directors affirmed the need for students to feel connected to and in close relational community with their classmates and faculty. Regardless of a cohort- or noncohort-based structure, all three schools saw themselves as actively working to create opportunities of "connection"

inside and outside of residency, thus allowing students to feel like they belonged with one another and were valued by the institution.

Discussion

Across the breadth of data, spanning experts in the field, program directors, current students, and prospective students, there is agreement on several core components that are necessary for successful Doctor of Ministry programs. Specifically, the results identify several core elements that Doctor of Ministry programs will need to embrace if they wish to flourish amidst the challenges facing institutions of higher theological education. These six "big ideas" include

- developing reflective practitioners;
- creating learning cohorts;
- offering specialized tracks that are consistent with institutional ethos;
- integrating core professors into the soul of the program;
- increasing affordability through sending church partnerships; and
- expanding curriculum to address the broad spectrum of ministry fields.

Developing reflective practitioners

The development of ministry leaders who learn skill sets that can be practically applied in professional ministry settings is clearly a key component of strong Doctor of Ministry programs. This development includes providing significant mentorship from individuals currently possessing these skill sets who can help students understand how to develop these skills for themselves.

> *Pairing a core faculty member content-area expert as the professor of record with nationally known speakers, who can serve as guest lecturers on specific topics, is an excellent model.*

One suggestion for promoting the reflective practitioner is to leverage the inherent hybrid characteristics of Doctor of Ministry programs. Utilizing preresident reading and content assignments; longer, two-week, in-class residencies focusing on real-life case studies and practical experiences; and a final postresident comprehensive final project maximize learning by applying it to practical ministry challenges.

Creating learning cohorts

Learning appears to occur at the highest levels for Doctor of Ministry students when it takes place among a community of learners before, during, and after the on-campus portion of the program. The cohort community should extend beyond a single course and be the learning community in which the student finds the relational connection and development that students cite as a primary motivation for pursuing their Doctor of Ministry degrees.

> 66 *By developing greater partnership with sending churches, students and their ministry communities reap the educational and developmental benefits of the student's degree program throughout the training process.*

For this to occur, cohorts must also have mentors who can follow the learning community, allowing students to derive great academic and personal benefit from professors with content-area knowledge and real-life wisdom. It should be noted that some tracks, such as chaplaincy, may need to adapt cohort schedules to accommodate required travel and service commitments.

Offering specialized tracks consistent with institutional ethos

This study clearly demonstrates that successful Doctor of Ministry programs will not try to be all things to all people. Instead, they need to identify their distinctive qualities and offer only those tracks that they are best equipped to offer at the highest level. This is perhaps best thought of as identifying the "soul" of the program—those aspects of the program that define it, that it does best, and that it has the staff to provide.

This does, of course, require that each track offered be led by a faculty member for whom the content of the track is his or her primary area of knowledge and expertise. In turn, this requires that each institution only offer tracks that match the areas of expertise of its current faculty, rather than choosing tracks and trying to find faculty to teach the curriculum.

Integrating core professors into the soul of the program

Doctor of Ministry programs that rely primarily on bringing in nationally known speakers to teach the curriculum, as well as those that rely heavily on the utilization of adjunct professors as content-area experts, both fall short in attaining outstanding core components. It does not appear necessary for Doctor of Ministry programs to have faculty who solely teach Doctor of Ministry courses, but it is important for core faculty to have at least a portion of their faculty load dedicated specifically to the Doctor of Ministry program. Pairing a core faculty member content-area expert as the professor of record with nationally known speakers, who can serve as guest lecturers on specific topics, is an excellent model. This model allows for what content expert participants referred to as a high touch program model.

It is important to note that a consistent theme across current and prospective students was their desire to study under core faculty—a condition that is not possible with outside speakers who come in for a week and leave or adjunct faculty with minimal institutional commitment. By having core faculty teach within the Doctor of Ministry program as part of their regular teaching load, the soul of the institution is able to be interwoven throughout the curriculum, and students are able to develop a sense of connectedness to the institution and the faculty. This connection can facilitate the mentoring relationship and the sense of satisfaction students have with the program.

Increasing affordability through sending-church partnerships

Creating a partnership between students and their home churches may help address the financial barriers to seeking a Doctor of Ministry degree. The concept of a sending church provides an excellent model, as the leadership and membership of a local church have access to additional funds that can be used to finance the ministry leader's educational goals.

Churches can benefit from ongoing interaction with students throughout their educations. In addition, as participants reported that a primary goal of their training was to improve their ability to serve the communities from which they came, they can use their newly acquired skill sets when they return to their sending churches. As was demonstrated in the example provided by one participant, having a church or ministry partner send a Doctor of Ministry student fosters mutual benefit, commitment, and purpose for the student and the sending ministry. Thus, by developing greater partnership with sending churches, students and their ministry

communities reap the educational and developmental benefits of the student's degree program throughout the training process.

Broadening curriculum to address the broad spectrum of ministry fields

The consensus of participants in this research makes it clear that Doctor of Ministry programs need to develop curriculum equipped to meet the needs of students in a variety of ministry fields beyond pastoral leadership, including missions, parachurch ministry, and teaching. Doctor of Ministry programs must address this widening desire for doctoral-level training in these additional practical ministry applications.

The content experts who participated in the study highly recommended that Doctor of Ministry programs focus on training the best of the best, while adapting programs and concentrations to meet the evolving needs of today's church and ministry climate. Broadening Doctor of Ministry training to include specific training in specialty areas will prove highly effective in meeting the training needs of expanding ministry fields such as chaplaincy, parachurch ministry, Christian education, and missions.

Elisabeth A. Nesbit Sbanotto is Assistant Professor of Counseling and Ronald D. Welch is Professor of Counseling, both of Denver Seminary, Littleton, Colorado.

Appendix A
Sponsoring Seminary Student Survey Questions

1. If you had not chosen [sponsoring seminary] for your Doctor of Ministry degree, where else would you (or did you) consider attending?
2. Consider the following: A friend comes to you for advice about Doctor of Ministry programs. If [sponsoring seminary] was not an option, but time, location, and resources were of no concern, where would you recommend your friend apply? Why?

Appendix B
Expert Interview Questions

1. What do you perceive to be the purpose(s) of a Doctor of Ministry program or degree?
2. What direction do you see Doctor of Ministry programs needing to go in the future, in regard to academic and professional foci?
    *   What have Doctor of Ministry programs been doing that they need to continue doing, and what do they need to start doing?
3. What implications do you see the ATS Commission Standards having on the nature and delivery of Doctor of Ministry programs?
4. Which ATS member schools would you suggest we look to as models of successful Doctor of Ministry programs?

Appendix C
Doctor of Ministry Director Interview Questions

1. Who do you see as your pool of prospective students (target population)?
2. What do you perceive to be the purpose(s) of a Doctor of Ministry program or degree?
3. What purposes do you see students having for pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree at your school?
4. What specific training and curriculum do students need in order to accomplish these purposes?
5. What reasons do you see prospective students having for *not* pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree at your school?
6. What is your current delivery method for your Doctor of Ministry program?
7. What do Doctor of Ministry programs need to be?

Appendix D
Doctor of Ministry Student Questions

1. What were you doing prior to pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree?
2. What prompted/motivated you to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree?
3. Why did you choose this program over others?
4. What do you perceive to be the purpose(s) of a Doctor of Ministry program or degree?
5. What were you hoping to find in a Doctor of Ministry program that you had to compromise on in coming here?
6. Is (Did) your current program meeting (meet) your needs, and if so, how?
7. What needs did (does) your previous (current) program not meet?

Learning from Canada: Canadian Religious History and the Future of Theological Education in North America

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ABSTRACT: *Using data from the ATS Annual Data Tables, the author first interprets what the data reveal about Canadian and US theological schools. He then highlights the rapid and dramatic changes in Canadian religious life over the last 60 years and offers explanations for why the course of Canadian religious history developed as it has. The author concludes with what this history may mean for the future of theological education in North America.*

Snapshots from the ATS Annual Data Tables

The 2012–2013 Annual Data Tables record information for 273 theological schools: 40 in Canada and 233 in the United States.[1] Some of the information in those tables might point to the conclusion that we are dealing here with one common North American entity, rather than two separate nations. Thus, about the same proportion of schools in both countries are independent (65% United States, 62.5% Canada) and university- or college-affiliated (34% United States, 37.5% Canada). About the same percentage of the schools are Catholic (20% United States, 17.5% Canada). In both countries, Baptist or nondenominational evangelical seminaries enroll the largest number of FTE (i.e., full-time equivalent) students, but university-connected schools—usually interdenominational, mainline, or Catholic—have larger libraries and much larger endowments.

Yet a closer look at this information yields clear national differences. Canada's population of not quite 35 million is about one-ninth of the United States's 317 million, but the number of FTE students in Canadian

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1. This paper was presented as a plenary address at the 2014 ATS Presidential Leadership Intensive conference and has been edited slightly for print.

theological schools (2,661) in 2012–2013 was only one-seventeenth the number in US schools (44,296). In other words, enrollment is proportionately almost double in the United States. Even more noticeable is the relative size of student bodies. In 2012–2013, seven US schools enrolled more than 1,000 FTE students each, while the largest individual school in Canada enrolled only 338 FTE students. But even that comparison, snatched from a quick dash through the tables, is deceptive. If student enrollments at the seven affiliated members of the Toronto School of Theology were added together, they would total 728, or larger than all but about a dozen US schools. Those 728 FTE students, moreover, make up more than one-fourth of all FTE students in Canada as a whole. Nowhere in the United States does a similar cooperative arrangement exist for such

> 66 *[T]heological education is today a bigger business in the United States than in Canada; . . . in both countries, evangelical or Baptist seminaries enroll the most students . . . [but] Toronto-based mainline and Catholic institutions occupy a much more prominent place in Canadian theological education than any single school or cluster of schools does for theological education in the United States.*

schools. Yet it is also noteworthy to consider two evangelical seminaries, both founded relatively recently, Tyndale University College and Regent College (Vancouver), where each enrolls more FTE students than any of the seven members of the Toronto School of Theology. One more comparison is instructive: in the United States, several Southern Baptist seminaries are among the very largest, with at least four enrolling more than 1,000 FTE students. In Canada, by contrast, I believe Acadia in Nova Scotia and McMaster in Ontario are the largest Baptist schools, with an aggregate FTE student count of around 200.

Again, this skimming of the Annual Data Tables only scratches the surface, but it does indicate that theological education is today a bigger business in the United States than in Canada; that in both countries, evangelical or Baptist seminaries enroll the most students; but also that

the Baptist numbers are much, much higher in the United States than in Canada. Additionally, with their federated faculties, Toronto-based mainline and Catholic institutions occupy a much more prominent place in Canadian theological education than any single school or cluster of schools does for theological education in the United States.

Sixty years of religious change

Canadian religion has witnessed changes over the last 60 or so years on a scale far greater than what has occurred in the United States. As especially pertinent, I would like to consider three venues in which those changes are most obvious: general religious adherence, the institutional shape of theological education, and the presence of religious voices in public life.

Religious adherence and church attendance

First, around 1950 Canadian religious adherence and church participation were considerably higher than in the United States, but now both are considerably lower. As late as 1961, only one-half of one percent of Canadian citizens told census takers that they were not attached to any religious body. In 2001, the last Canadian census to ask religious questions registered 16.2 percent "no religion," and that proportion is now well over 20 percent (which is higher than the comparable figure in the United States, though that number too has been rising rapidly). Over the same four decades, the proportion of Canadians telling census personnel that they were part of the Catholic church declined slightly from 46 percent to 43 percent of the Canadian population, while the proportion claiming a connection to the Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, and United churches—the four largest Protestant denominations that long dominated religious life in English-speaking Canada—fell precipitously from 41 percent to 20 percent.[2]

2.   F. H. Leacy, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983), Series A164–184; and www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/Religion (Dec. 15, 2005).

Reports of church attendance offer an equally dramatic picture.[3] After World War II, when the Gallup Poll first asked Canadians whether they had been in church or synagogue sometime during the previous seven days, a full 67 percent of Canadians responded positively. Among all Canadian Catholics, the number was a robust 83 percent and in Quebec a stratospheric 90 percent. In the early 1960s, weekly mass attendance in the rapidly growing cities of Montreal and Quebec remained quite high, but some leaders worried openly that in working-class neighborhoods it was down to "only" 50 percent.[4] By 1990, positive responses to the Gallup question had fallen to 23 percent throughout

> *In most of the national comparisons, US responses tended to be about 20 percentage points higher than Canadian responses for almost all of the questions . . . [regarding] confidence in organized religion, church membership, volunteer service in church, practice of daily prayer, and many more.*

Canada. Although the foremost Canadian religious demographer, Reginald Bibby, has recently noted some increase in attendance, his non-Gallup calculations chart a weekly attendance now hovering at slightly more than 20 percent.[5] Survey researchers differ in their count of US churchgoers, but for the country as a whole, the figure is probably at least half-again as high as in Canada.

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3.   Reginald W. Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1987), 16; Reginald W. Bibby, *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1993), 10; Peter Beyer, "Religious Vitality in Canada: The Complementarity of Religious Market and Secularization Perspectives," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36 (1997): 283; and Andrew S. Grenville, "The Awakened and the Spirit-Moved: The Religious Experiences of Canadian Evangelicals in the 1990s," in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. G. A. Rawlyk (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 431.

4.   Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec's Quiet Revolution, 1931–1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 369n15.

5.   Reginald W. Bibby, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 2002), 75–77.

An extensive cross-border survey that the Angus Reid Group conducted in 1996 fleshes out this picture. It included 3,000 Canadians and 3,000 US citizens. This particular poll was constructed with the guidance of George Rawlyk of Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario) who hoped to discover how North Americans would respond to questions trying to measure David Bebbington's four markers of evangelical identity: reliance on Scripture, experience of conversion, emphasis on the cross of Christ, and commitment to religious action. In most of the national comparisons, US responses tended to be about 20 percentage points higher than Canadian responses for almost all of the questions Rawlyk devised. For example, 61 percent of the US population responded positively to the question, "I have committed my life to Christ and consider myself a converted Christian," against only 38 percent of Canadians. The differences were similar for questions about confidence in organized religion, church membership, volunteer service in church, practice of daily prayer, and many more. On the Bible, 80 percent of the US population agreed to some degree that the Bible was God's inspired Word, versus 63 percent of Canadians. In response to a question about reading the Bible or other religious literature, 42 percent of the US population responded that they did so at least once a week against 22 percent of Canadians.[6]

This survey was extensive enough to chart regional variations, with results that could have been predicted. The Canadian regions that registered the highest were the Atlantic Provinces and the Prairie Provinces; sometimes responses in those two regions were at roughly the same level as New England, which ranked consistently lowest in the United States. Quebec, and sometimes British Columbia, registered the lowest responses in Canada, with the Quebec response on regular Bible reading far and away the lowest for all of North America.

Given the comparative information supplied by the Angus Reid Poll, it can be no surprise that today the United States, rather than Canada, is home to the Institute for Creation Research's Museum of Creation, with its all-out attack on evolution. Nor is it a surprise that, although conservative

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6. For sophisticated use of this poll, see Sam Reimer, *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); and for an amateur's deployment, Mark A. Noll, "Religion in Canada and the United States," *Crux* 34, no. 4 (Dec. 1998): 13–25.

religious opinions can be correlated with conservative political views in Canada to some degree, the alliance of conservative political opinions with conservative biblical views is much more salient in the United States than in Canada.

The institutional shape of theological education

In a second snapshot focusing on the period around 1950, Canadian theological education was overwhelmingly dominated by denominationally connected schools; in addition, these schools were almost all associated with major research universities supported by public funds.

The story of Canadian theological education in the 1950s and 1960s reflected distinct characteristics of Canadian culture. Those were the years when planning advanced to establish three ecumenical centers to provide theological education for the Maritimes, Central Canada, and Western Canada. The cultural characteristics in view reflected a high value placed on ecumenicity, federation, alignment with publicly funded research universities, and cooperation among Canada's historically central denominations.

Thus, the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, founded in 1971, represented the cooperation of Anglican, Catholic, and United Church institutions. The Vancouver School of Theology, also arising in 1971, brought together Anglican and United Church representatives, with a later association including also Presbyterians. Growing out of the Toronto Graduate School of Theological Studies, the Toronto School of Theology took shape in 1969–1970 with the association of three Catholic institutions (Jesuit, Basilian, diocesan), two Anglican (a high and a low), one Presbyterian, and one United Church.

Significantly, when the Toronto School of Theology later expanded by adding associate members, these associated institutions represented historical denominations: Christian Reformed, Mennonite, Lutheran, and one more Anglican. In 1950, apart from relatively small, self-standing Baptist institutions, the more sectarian end of the theological spectrum was represented by advanced courses at Bible schools like Prairie in Three Hills, Alberta; Briercrest in Caronport, Saskatchewan; and several nascent Pentecostal institutions. Advanced theological education at independent evangelical seminaries began very late. Only in 1968 did Regent College (Vancouver) begin its lay-oriented, nondegree programs, with a shift to regular degrees not taking place until a decade later; only in 1976 did

the institution now sponsoring theological study at Tyndale University College come into existence.

In other words, the institutional shape of Canadian theological education—with independent evangelical seminaries now occupying a much larger place alongside traditional divinity schools and consortia—has changed almost as rapidly and almost as dramatically as the shape of Canadian religious life in general.

For theological education in the United States, change has also been dramatic, if not as far-reaching. Mainline and interdenominational schools connected with private research universities retain much of the influence they exerted in 1950, especially as training centers for PhDs in religious and theological studies. But whereas advanced theological education in 1950 was dominated by schools like Yale, Union-New York (associated with Columbia), Chicago, Vanderbilt, Harvard, Duke, and Emory—with a wide array of denominational schools spread throughout the country—such advanced training is now spread more widely, with many more significant institutions. Thus, the rapid growth of schools sponsored by Southern Baptists, other Baptists, Pentecostals, and generic evangelicals parallels the Canadian situation in some particulars. On both sides of the border, broadly evangelical institutions have grown most rapidly. In addition, Catholic schools have gained increasing recognition with the public at large. The main structural difference between the United States and Canada remains the location of almost all US theological education in privately funded colleges, universities, and self-standing seminaries. In a related development, religious studies has undergone rapid expansion over the last decades, but religious studies departments rarely concentrate on the preparation of graduates for service in churches.

> " *The main structural difference between the United States and Canada remains the location of almost all US theological education in privately funded colleges, universities, and self-standing seminaries.*

Religious voices in public life

A third mark of rapid change in both the United States and Canada since the 1950s concerns the presence of explicitly Christian voices in the public

sphere. On this matter, my sense is that change has moved more rapidly for the United States than for Canada.

Public life in the United States during World War II and immediately thereafter was certainly religious, but only vaguely so. Public officials—including Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower—affirmed religious values but keyed more to the struggle against first pagan Nazism and then "godless communism" than anything specifically Christian. The insertion of the phrase "under God" in the US Pledge of Allegiance and the inscription of the slogan "in God we trust" on the currency, both of which occurred in the 1950s, bespoke anxiety directed at promoting an idealized "American way of life" rather than dedication to a specific religious creed.

Specifically Christian contributions to public life did come from respected theologians, especially Reinhold Niebuhr (but also Paul Tillich and a few others). In addition, publicity surrounding the young Billy Graham hinted that fundamentalists and self-described neoevangelicals might have a less combative, more widely accepted future than observers inside or outside of the movement anticipated. Yet compared to Canada, public Christian voices in the United States were less visible and less well defined.

US political life, for example, had no parallel to the contrasting, but still definite, Christian visions that inspired the most influential political leaders of the period in Western Canada. Those leaders were Ernest Manning, a dispensationalist radio Bible teacher but also the much-respected premier of Alberta from 1943 to 1968; and Tommy Douglas, a Baptist minister driven by his commitment to the Social Gospel, who was an early leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, then the New Democratic Party, and the first socialist elected as a provincial premier, serving in that post for Saskatchewan from 1944 to 1961. In public life more generally, Charles Templeton seemed poised in the 1950s to offer Canadians the same kind of fresh conservative evangelicalism that Billy Graham promoted in the United States.

In the realm of elite intellectual life, a phalanx of learned academics and public intellectuals kept a variety of Christian viewpoints before the Canadian public. Marshall McLuhan, who had become a Catholic through the work of G. K. Chesterton, published his widely noticed works on the modern media from a position at the University of St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto. Bernard Lonergan, SJ, was a fixture at Regis

College in Toronto for much of the time between the late-1940s and the mid-1970s. Northrup Frye, after theological education at Emmanuel College, became a United Church minister and carried out his influential career as a literary scholar at Victoria College, University of Toronto.

A specific instance underscores the national differences at that time. On the evening of October 26, 1954, George Parkin Grant delivered a 30-minute talk on the CBC dedicated to the subject of Charles Norris Cochrane's book, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine*. Grant, after being educated at Upper Canada College in Toronto, Queen's University in Kingston, and in law and theology as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, was at the time a professor of philosophy at Dalhousie College in Halifax, Nova Scotia. His family tree was full of Canadian first-families—Masseys, Grants, Ignatieffs. George Parkin Grant, in other words, was an establishmentarian Canadian blue blood of the first order.

> " *By no means was Canadian public life in the 1950s thoroughly, consistently, or pervasively Christian. But compared to the United States, it offered comparatively more space for forthright religious assertions with more sharply defined religious content.*

Cochrane, after study at the University of Toronto and under R. G. Collinwood at Oxford, had published *Christianity and Classical Culture* in 1940 from his position as professor of Greek and Roman history in University College, Toronto. Shortly after this book appeared, it was hailed by Harold Innis of the University of Toronto, who was himself widely regarded as among Canada's most influential intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century, as "the first major Canadian contribution to the intellectual history of the West."[7]

The nub of Grant's talk was his commendation of Cochrane's "penetrating insight" for how this book described "the faith centered around a crucified Palestinian peasant" and how that faith "penetrated to the very centre of the powerful and sophisticated civilization [of classical Greece

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7.   Harold A. Innis, *Political Economy in the Modern State* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1946), 148.

and Rome], and by doing so, moved on to dominate the early years of our [Western] civilization." Several important qualifications are necessary to hedge around what I want to say next, but putting the comparison bluntly:

> 66 *[T]he dramatic recession of Catholic influence in Quebec can be seen as playing at least some role in the difficulties for Christian influence throughout all of Canada.*

what a person of Grant's standing said from that kind of national platform at that time about such a book from such an author was inconceivable in the United States. Grant's talk was not merely religious, but directly Christian. It spoke not of a vague theism but pointed unequivocally to Christ. No American academic made— or even could have made—such a forthright recommendation of such a distinctly Christian position in a highly visible national forum as George Parkin Grant did in his 1954 address on Charles Norris Cochrane.

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Since the 1950s, the change in the public visibility of religion has been more dramatic in the United States than in Canada. South of the border, the civil rights movement of the 1950s brought explicit religion back into the public square. That reinsertion prompted, or at least prepared the way for, the public influence obtained from the late 1970s by the New Christian Right. In the realm of elite discourse, self-identified Christian philosophers have led academics from other disciplines in speaking up for and as religious believers.

In Canada, the quantity of elite-level Christian assertion has declined, but not perhaps as much as the decline of Canadian church adherence might predict. From the University of McGill Law School, as an example, Margaret Somerville, a Catholic, has gained considerable public attention for her views on medicine, public ethics, and legal questions. Even more notable has been the extraordinary academic attention accorded to the books of Charles Taylor, particularly *Sources of the Self*, published by Harvard University Press in 1989, and *A Secular Age*, from the same publisher in 2007. In my view, Taylor's scholarship is best described not

as straightforwardly Christian, but as work wrestling seriously with the tangled relationship between the Western Christian heritage and what he presents as the oversold, but nonetheless positive, accomplishments of the modern Enlightenment. Viewed from a distance, and setting aside his specific arguments, the most remarkable aspects of Charles Taylor's work seem to me to be its deep engagement with questions shaped by Christian concerns, its emergence out of McGill in Quebec, and the very wide response it has engendered in the academic community at large. Although diminished, specifically religious assertions have by no means vanished from Canadian public life.

Explanations for the course of Canadian religious history

From describing these large-scale changes—religious adherence, theological education, and public Christianity—we move now to the more difficult task of historical explanation. In order to put these recent developments in perspective, I would like to sketch four specific historical circumstances that lie behind the different trajectories of Canadian and US religious history over the last 60-plus years: (1) Quebec and the rest of Canada, (2) Canadian lack of concern for the separation of church and state, (3) the prominence of proprietary denominations in Canadian religious life, and (4) the enduring importance in Canada of liberal evangelical theology.

Quebec and the rest of Canada

I begin at the beginning, with Quebec. It is only partially facetious to suggest that the cross-border differences I have been examining here were all consequences of what happened on the Plains of Abraham 255 years ago. The enduringly important fact was that Gen. Wolfe and the British defeated Gen. Montcalm and the French. Thereafter, French Catholic Quebec was absorbed into the Protestant British empire with very little alteration to the Catholic Christendom that Quebec represented. This absorption meant that so long as Quebec remained a confessional Catholic part of Canada, its education would also be confessionally Catholic. But so long as Quebec higher education remained confessionally Catholic, an impetus remained for English Canada to retain a confessional component in its higher education. Of course, the dependence of Canadian higher education on British models also had something to do with the survival of confessional Christian elements in the universities.

Yet given what has occurred over the last 50 years, it can be argued that Catholic Quebec exerted as much general influence on Canadian religious life as did Protestant-heritage Britain. The momentous occurrence was the precipitate secularization of Quebec that occurred with lightning speed from the early 1960s forward. Almost overnight, it seemed, the Catholic church lost its ages-long control of education, medicine, labor, and general social organization. Almost overnight, vocations plummeted, churches emptied, loyalty to French language nationalism supplanted ecclesiastical loyalty, and the most religiously observant region of North America became the least religiously observant. There simply is no comparable parallel in the recent history of the United States for such a rapid and such a comprehensive de-Christianization.

Many factors must be considered when accounting for the rapid secularization of Canadian life in the recent past, but one important factor for all of Canada, including its Protestants, must be the secularizing effects of Quebec's Quiet Revolution. The rapid de-confessionalization of Quebec's educational system took place after the ouster of the Union Nationale party in the 1960 provincial election. As one historian has written, "The Parent Commission [that followed soon thereafter] overturned two centuries of collusion between church and state and established a whole new school system that significantly lessened the hold of the Quebec Roman Catholic establishment."[8] It is at least a plausible hypothesis that the maintenance of that Catholic establishment deep into the twentieth century assisted the maintenance of a confessional element throughout all of Canada, including Canadian higher education. But with the confessional center of Quebec's higher education removed, Canadian universities in general faced a new era in which secular pressures have become harder to resist. What happens in Quebec has always been important for all of Canada; in this instance, the dramatic recession of Catholic influence in Quebec can be seen as playing at least some role in the difficulties for Christian influence throughout all of Canada.

Canadian lack of concern for separation of church and state

A second, related historical circumstance also illuminates differences between the United States and Canada. That the decline of Quebec's

8.   A. Donald MacLeod, *W. Stanford Reid: An Evangelical Calvinist in the Academy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 173.

Catholicism did not lead to the elimination of theological education in Canada's public universities must certainly be related to the relaxed Canadian posture respecting church and state. Since the 1750s and the terror that gripped nervous citizens in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia at the prospect of the colonies receiving an Anglican bishop, US citizens have invested great energy in an ideology of church-state separation. During the nineteenth century, visitors to the United States, alongside residents who were not part of the Protestant

> 66 *That the decline of Quebec's Catholicism did not lead to the elimination of theological education in Canada's public universities must certainly be related to the relaxed Canadian posture respecting church and state.*

mainstream, reproached the United States for the hypocritical character of that ideal. Did not the ubiquitous use of the King James Version in primary and secondary schools set up a de facto Protestant establishment every bit as much as the organization of US higher education—with almost all colleges under the auspices of Protestant denominations and led by Protestant clergymen? US English-language Protestants responded by saying that the use of the King James Version did not create an establishment of religion. Rather, public adherence to this "nonsectarian" Bible supplied the virtue without which republican governments would self-destruct. As for the colleges and seminaries, they were operated through voluntary means that required only incidental official governmental support.

In time, Catholics, Jews, Protestants not of British background, and a variety of secularists worked hard to drive out the covert Protestant underpinnings of America's ostensibly "public" education. When that push succeeded, however, public education in the United States became more secular than public education in Canada. The American ideological investment in the ideal of church-state separation was so strong that religion of any sort seemed out of bounds in publicly funded education. If I'm remembering correctly, the University of Iowa was the only state university to have a religion department of any consequence before about 1950. In fact, it took most of the twentieth century for religion to creep back into

publicly funded American education; and with only a few exceptions, that place has not been particularly friendly to traditional Christian concerns.

To be sure, while publicly funded education in the United States turned against anything overtly religious, US private education from the lowest grades through the collegiate level established a strong countervailing presence. If public education has not offered much space for religious concerns, then Christians of many kinds as well as adherents of other religions succeeded in creating their own parallel systems. Catholics, Lutherans, and the Dutch Reformed were especially effective at lower levels, while evangelical Protestants excelled at supporting Bible schools and liberal arts colleges. Significantly, however, with the exception of a few Catholic research universities, the parallel development of US religious private education

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stopped short of the highest educational level, the research universities—even if the denizens of the research universities have exerted the greatest influence in setting intellectual and social agendas for the nation.

Canada, again until very recently, presented a different story. Historically, perhaps because the small-r republican fear of intrusive Big Government could not survive their long and icy winters, Canadians have been much less concerned about the supposed horrors arising from intermingling church and state. A few epic battles involving religion and education, like the Manitoba School Question in the late nineteenth century, have roiled Canadian waters, but the ideal of an unbreachable wall of separation has never taken hold. Instead, the principle has prevailed that tax revenues could be directed to religiously defined institutions, even at the university level, if taxpayers in sufficient numbers or of sufficient influence supported those institutions. This principle, though leading to different results in different provinces, continues to allow public funding for capital improvements at Christian institutions and in some provinces for direct subsidies of students on a per capita basis.

For scholarship at the highest levels, the federated universities that emerged from the nineteenth century allowed denominational institutions to preserve at least some of their distinctives as their personnel took part at every level of university intellectual life. Canadians with experience in such universities have frequently told me that the intellectual payoff from this arrangement has never fulfilled the full potential imaginable from combining confessional particularity and participation in public universities. They are doubtlessly correct. Yet again, observed in comparative terms, it remains significant that such a combination remains all but impossible to imagine for the United States.

In the recent past, increasingly stiff opposition in Canada has challenged public funding going to Christian institutions that do not fall into line with the mores of a rapidly secularizing society. In my view, these developments represent a sharp break with long-established traditions. That break results, however, from the clash of substantive value systems rather than fastidiousness about separating the church from the state.

To sum up at this point, when considering the effect of Quebec's long-standing confessional Catholicism for Canadian public life as a whole and when thinking about the possibilities under Canadian church-state policies that are not possible in the United States, we can see some of the historical reasons for the different trajectories of theological learning in Canada and the United States.

Proprietary denominations and liberal evangelical theology

Two other reasons for the divergent histories are related. One is the fact that the large proprietary Christian churches—Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist, and United—have been more influential in Canadian life generally than have their mainline counterparts in the United States. The other is that, within the large proprietary or mainline Protestant denominations, liberal evangelicalism enjoyed a longer and deeper influence in Canada than in the United States. By contrast, sectarian outliers have always been more influential in the United States than in Canada; and, in the states, conservative evangelical convictions have always been more widely shared.

My sense of these differences has come from reading the compelling works of Canadian historical scholarship. These works have demonstrated how important, at least until very recently, the proprietary churches were as the overwhelmingly most important Christian actors in Canadian

society. Baptists in the Maritimes, along with Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans, and then members of the United Church throughout all of Canada, have defined the image for religion to the public, exerted a strong religious influence on national life, and—significantly—coordinated denominational religion with university life.

In the United States, by contrast, while the mainline Protestant denominations have always been influential, that public influence has been shared from at least the start of the twentieth century by a great host of more sectarian bodies—Baptists and Pentecostals of infinite variety, Disciples, "Christians," Brethren, nondenominational local assemblies, generic evangelicals, and many more. Such groups have always existed in Canada as well, but in proportionately fewer numbers and, until recently, with proportionately less influence. Significantly, the large place of the proprietary denominations in Canadian university life came about because of the liberal evangelical stance that prevailed for so long in those denominations.

That liberal evangelical stance was best exemplified in the late nineteenth century by leaders like the Methodist Nathanael Burwash and the Presbyterian George Munro Grant who succeeded in keeping Christian emphases together that in the United States were dividing Christian believers into competing camps—and also dividing US higher education into separate university and sectarian worlds. Burwash, Grant, and other leading figures in church and academy maintained the vibrant supernaturalism of evangelical tradition, albeit with the different shades found among Presbyterians and Methodists, even as they also proved to be skillful ecumenists at first uniting their own denominations and then moving toward the creation of a national Protestant church. Unlike many US religious leaders, Canadian liberal evangelicals found it possible to accept evolution and the new higher criticism while maintaining traditional Christian confidence in the divinely inspired character of Scripture. Again, in a contrast to the US story, these same leaders promoted *both* active evangelism and an active social gospel. They also continued to regard participation in central institutions of Canadian public life as a distinctly Christian opportunity as well as a valuable civic duty. The Presbyterian George Monro Grant at Queen's, along with the Methodist Nathanael Burwash at Victoria College and then in negotiating Victoria's confederation with the University of Toronto, supplied the content and the tone for the ideals that eventually led to the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925 and that guided the United Church through its first generation.

The effect from uniting these two—strong proprietary denominations with strong liberal evangelicalism—was immense. The combination preserved social and political goals in tandem, it pushed belief and practice toward moderation, and it kept relatively traditional Christian perspectives alive at all levels of Canadian university life.

While comparable efforts and individuals were not entirely absent in the United States, US liberal evangelicals had a much lower profile and much more restricted influence. In the United States, a series of separations occurred that were long definitive in a singularly US way. Thus, sectarian Christian liberal arts colleges divided from research universities. In addition, almost all theological seminaries with traditional convictions divided from the research universities. Publicly funded research universities avoided religion; private research universities moved to interdenominational or generically religious programs. The result in the United States was a divided educational landscape and a fragmented Christian influence in society and the university world.

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In the recent past—perhaps no more than the last 30 or 40 years—the ground has shifted rapidly in both countries. In Canada, as new books by Kevin Flatt and Phyllis Airhart have documented, the leadership of the United Church abandoned its founding stance as a promoter of liberal evangelicalism in favor of more liberal approaches to the Bible and to their

denomination's mission.[9] US citizens with traditional Christian views have crept back into the world of advanced university scholarship. Canadians of traditional Christian convictions have faced increasing opposition from their nation's increasingly secular public life. The number and quality of Canada's independent Christian educational institutions have increased significantly. Some of the US's private, sectarian colleges and seminaries now self-consciously seek the renewal of Christian thinking in the broadest realms of scholarship. At the same time, some of the US's private, sectarian colleges have flourished by emphasizing their separatism from the broader university world in ever-sharper terms.

In a word, patterns of Canadian and US history that were well established before the middle of the twentieth century have been shaken; some of the customary openings for Christian intellectual life are shutting down; others are opening in new and perhaps unexpected places. From the perspective of, say, 1973, the Canadian way that joined a strong liberal evangelical tradition with proprietary denominations playing a large role in the universities looked more propitious for promoting Christian values in Canadian society. From the perspective of today, the US way of separating over theological controversies and preserving sectarian educational enclaves now seems to be providing a more favorable climate for theological education—if not necessarily for Christian public life generally. In another 40 years, it is difficult to predict where these parallel national trajectories will lead, especially since intellectual and religious pathways are so strongly shaped by developments in broad cultural history.

What this history may mean for the future of theological education in North America

Now I will try to address the future, and will do so by posing a few questions. First, how will theological schools respond to the Age of Diversity that has now unmistakably arrived? Canadian theological educators, it seems to me, are better prepared for this challenge ideologically and institutionally, US theological educators better prepared practically. The official embrace

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9. Kevin N. Flatt, *After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and the United Church of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013); Phyllis D. Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

of multiculturalism, which was initiated during the tenure of Prime Minister Pierre Eliot Trudeau, has become accepted Canadian practice as well as the law of the land. My sense, however, is that diversity can still mean different things for Canadians: For university-connected divinity schools, it is equal opportunity with respect to age, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. For independent evangelical seminaries, more obvious has been the striking presence of Chinese-Canadians, along with other Asian-Canadians and Caribbean-Canadians, in these schools. Even in Quebec, the age-old Catholic-Protestant isolations seem to be giving way to ecumenical efforts.

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Theological instruction in the United States seems to me less diverse, institution by institution, but more diverse in the landscape viewed as a whole. The church population is so large and so relatively wealthy that, even as virtually all schools try to diversify, specifically defined constituencies (ethnic, regional, theological, denominational) can still provide enough support, faculty, and students to sustain programs with less diversity than is found in Canada.

What about denominations? It is obvious that more and more theological education is taking place in nondenominational or interdenominational settings, yet denominational seminaries obviously remain important on both sides of the border. The issue for traditional denominations may be different in the two countries as well as within each country. Denominations retain a larger presence in the US South, where church going is at the highest levels for the continent, because concentrated clusters of churches keep at least some aspects of denominational tradition alive and fairly vigorous. Elsewhere in the United States and in Canada, the basic Catholic-Protestant distinction remains significant, though much less so than before the Second Vatican Council. Because the United States has always been characterized by more democratic, demotic, and voluntary

organization, denominations have always been somewhat less important than in Canada, where the main denominations remained so central for so long. In Canada, nondenominational theological education has become a very important part of the total picture. Yet the historical Canadian instinct to assume that Christianity simply means well-defined denominational Christianity creates a situation where broader cultural impact is harder to exert for nondenominational institutions than for the denominational.

A final question: What about the adaptation of Christian institutions to particular cultures? In a gross simplification of complex realities, it can still be posited that the United States and Canada, though both advanced liberal societies, have been led in different cultural directions by the force of contingent circumstances. Thus, by comparison with Canadians, US citizens have favored democracy over against aristocracy, populism over deference to formal learning, and a market orientation instead of mercantilism or other systems of top-down economic control. They have also leaned toward or passionately embraced republicanism as opposed to trust in concentrated power, individualism favored over self-definition by communal identity, antitraditionalism instead of the acceptance of tradition, and a predilection for reform rather than passive acceptance of perceived injustice. Structurally, many of these principles have underlain the US separation of church and state that was first advocated by dissenting Protestants but eventually came to be accepted by representatives of European Christendom, both Protestant and Catholic. If this summary accurately describes US history, then Canadian history may be characterized as somewhat less republican in basic principle, slightly less aggressively democratic, significantly more traditional, and less committed to the separation of church and state.

If there is anything at all to these generalizations, it would be wise for the leaders of theological institutions to take full cognizance of where they are geographically, denominationally, and financially but also nationally. In turn, that cognizance will enable work and planning undertaken with the awareness that the best theology will always speak from God but also to the specific cultural environment of the theologian.

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A Comprehensive, Holistic, and Integrated Approach to Professional Sexual Ethics in Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: With the rise in awareness of ministerial sexual abuse, seminaries and schools of theology must be more intentional in teaching professional sexual ethics across the curriculum. Professors in every theological discipline are increasingly expected to take responsibility for teaching issues of embodiment, healthy boundaries, basic sexuality education, and ministerial ethics. This article promotes a comprehensive, holistic, and integrated approach to professional sexual ethics training in order to achieve specific student learning outcomes in theological education.

Introduction

For decades, seminaries and judicatories have taken a narrow approach to sexual ethics for ministry, focusing almost exclusively on sexual misconduct prevention through boundaries training workshops. Yet, most pastoral misconduct begins long before there is inappropriate sexual involvement. The slide toward misconduct begins when ministerial leaders fail to distinguish their pastoral role from their personal life, fail to take care of themselves, and/or turn to inappropriate ways of fulfilling their sexual needs, fantasies, and desires. Ministers—lay and ordained, paid and volunteer, part-time and full-time—are in leadership roles, with varying degrees of power and authority. Placed on a moral pedestal and living in a "fishbowl" within a faith community, ministers must learn early on how to live and model healthy, responsible, perhaps even ideal, moral lives. Now, there is increasing pressure to go beyond earlier emphases on church-sponsored continuing education events that were motivated primarily by concerns about liability.

It is fair to say that the teaching of professional sexual ethics is not yet a widespread, intentional area of focus in theological education. ATS Executive Director Daniel O. Aleshire, in an assessment of theological education in North America, observes the positive influence of a professional model on theological education, focusing on accreditation standards and the education of skilled practitioners.[1] Yet, neither his nor any of the

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other contributions to the *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity* addresses in any detail the teaching of professional sexual ethics.[2] Furthermore, Charles R. Foster and his colleagues, in a study of clergy education sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching ("[t]he most important study of North American theological education in this century," according to Aleshire[3]), make no mention at all of sexuality and barely touch on any other aspect of professional sexual ethics instruction.[4] The researchers of this first volume of the Preparation for the Professions series evidence no notice of the near-absence of professional sexual ethics

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1. Daniel O. Aleshire, "Theological Education in North America," in *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Regional Surveys, Ecumenical Trends,* ed. Dietrich Werner et al., Regnum Studies in Global Christianity, ed. Ruth Padilla DeBorst et al. (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 507.

2. The absence of sustained attention to professional sexual ethics in this hefty volume addressing the global theological context indicates that this neglect is not limited to North America. Though they did not explicitly identify professional sexual ethics as a subject that should be constitutive of theological education in itself across the globe, the editors may have been noting this limitation of their otherwise fine handbook when they note that sexuality is a contested area *impacting* education everywhere. "We particularly regret that the *Handbook* does not contain articles on . . . the whole range of issues related to the debate on human sexuality and different sexual orientations in Christianity and their impact on theological education." Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, and Joshva Raja, "Introduction" in *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, xxvi–xxvii.

3. Aleshire, "Theological Education in North America," 512.

4. Charles R. Foster et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, Preparation for the Professions series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

as an explicit curriculum in their quest to discover the "signature pedagogical framework" for the education of clergy. Interpretative skills, spiritual and vocational formation, contextual awareness, and performance skills are indeed integral to the education of clergy,[5] but focusing on these four pedagogical intentions to the neglect of essential professional competencies assumes too much. Theological educators should not assume that students are learning professional sexual ethics simply as a result of attending seminary.

This article promotes a comprehensive, holistic, and integrated approach to professional sexual ethics training in order to achieve specific student learning outcomes. Professional sexual ethics training should be comprehensive—that is, attend to what the Carnegie Foundation series on the professions calls the three fundamental "apprenticeships" of professional training: normative, cognitive, and practical,[6] or, more colloquially, the *being, knowing,* and *doing* of professional formation. Professional sexual ethics training should also be holistic (i.e., encompass a range of conceptual frameworks) and integrated (i.e., span the entire curriculum) rather than be isolated to one or two academic classes. These efforts are needed to meet rising expectations for professional sexual ethics instruction in theological education.

Rising expectations

Several denominations are beginning to push for more rigorous training in professional sexual ethics as an integral part of academic formation for ministerial leaders. Combined with changes in the 2012 ATS Commission Standards of Accreditation specifying attention to professional ethics and personal and professional standards of conduct, there are rising expectations across faith communities that ministers-in-training be much better prepared than they have been in the past.[7]

In June 2012 at its Biennial Meeting, the ATS Commission added the following to its *Degree Program Standards*: "The [MDiv] program shall

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5. Ibid., 33–34.

6. William Sullivan, "Introduction," in *Educating Clergy*, 5.

7. Kate M. Ott also makes this argument in "The Case for Sexuality Education in Professional Ethics Training," *Colloquy*, (Fall 2012): 12–13, http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/publications-presentations/colloquy/colloquy-2012-fall.pdf.

specifically provide for training in professional and ministerial ethics."[8] As before, the Standards require schools to offer programs that "provide opportunities through which students may grow in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness," but now "moral integrity" is specified to include attention to professional ethics and personal and professional standards of conduct.[9] The content of these terms is undefined in the Commission Standards, yet the amplification of these topics in the Standards is significant. Theological schools and their faculties are expected to make professional ethics a more visible part of the explicit curriculum in theological education.

Denominational bodies, which have always had some degree of expectation that their ministers-in-training would learn ethics and standards of conduct consistent with leadership roles in ministry, are voicing specific expectations for professional sexual ethics instruction more clearly than they have in the past. The *Standards of Ethical Conduct* for members, for employees and volunteers, and for ordained officers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), commends the following for inclusion in seminary curricula: (1) being faithful, keeping covenants and honoring marriage vows; (2) maintaining a healthy balance among the responsibilities of the office of ministry and commitments to family and other primary relationships; (3) recognizing the need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal; and (4) refraining from abusive, addictive, or exploitative

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8.   ATS Commission on Accrediting, *Degree Program Standards* (approved 6/2012, posted 01/21/15), sec. [A].2.5.2., http://www.ats.edu/uploads/accrediting/documents/degree-program-standards.pdf.

9.   This emphasis on professional and ministerial ethics in the 2012 ATS Commission Standards is echoed in nearly every degree program: "personal, professional, and ethical standards" (specialized masters in ministry; B.2.4.); "personal and professional standards of conduct" (music degrees; C.2.1.3); "and development and appropriation of a personal and professional ethic with focused study on ethical standards and mature conduct in the profession" (DMin; E.1.2.1); "development and appropriation of a personal and professional ethic with focused study on ethical standards and mature conduct in the profession" (Doctor of [area of specialization] including the DEdMin and DMiss; G.1.2.1(4)); "the fostering of spiritual, professional, ethical, and vocational competencies that witness to personal and spiritual maturity" (Doctor of [area of specialization] including the DEdMin and DMiss; G.2.1.4).

behavior as well as seeking help to overcome such behavior if it occurs.[10] The document offers this definition:

> Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the pastor's, counselor's, officer's, or supervisor's responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.[11]

Adopted in 1998, the PC(USA) *Standards* precede more recent and more detailed expectations of denominational bodies regarding seminary education.

In 2010, the Unitarian Universalist Association, according to its own press release, became "the first major religious denomination in the country to require that its candidates for ordination demonstrate the capability to address sexuality issues in ministry" by requiring that they be able to "demonstrate competency in critical areas relating to human sexuality."[12] In 2012, The United Methodist Church (UMC) adopted curricular guidelines for professional ethics, sexual ethics, healthy boundaries, and self-care, applicable to ministerial candidates in seminary and alternative routes of theological education, recommending that professional sexual ethics education span across all disciplines of theological education rather than reside in a single, stand-alone course. The UMC resolution is presented as a covenant of expectation, allowing seminaries flexibility in the way they teach and implement these guidelines, which are nonetheless quite specific in terms of goals, competencies, and content areas to be covered during formal theological education.[13]

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10. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), "Professional Code of Ethics," *Standards of Ethical Conduct* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2004), 1. Approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998), https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/publications/ethical-conduct.pdf.

11. Ibid., 16.

12. Unitarian Universalist Association, "Unitarian Universalist Seminarians to be Trained in Sexuality Issues and Ethics" (February 9, 2010), http://www.uua.org/news/pressroom/pressreleases/158197.shtml.

13. United Methodist Church, "Sexual Ethics as Integral Part of Formation for Ministerial Leadership," in *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2012* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 146–152.

It is clear that judicatories, students, and parishes are demanding better preparation and training in professional sexual ethics from seminaries and schools of theology. The format of a one-day healthy boundaries workshop commonly offered by seminaries or judicatories is insufficient professional formation. A three- to four-year professional degree program affords the opportunity to do more, much more, if teaching faculties are thoughtful and intentional about achieving comprehensive student learning outcomes.

Comprehensive learning outcomes

A comprehensive professional formation must address the normative, cognitive, and practical dimensions of ministry. These three apprenticeships—being, knowing, and doing—require a wide range of desired student learning outcomes. Professional sexual ethics education should foster certain virtuous characteristics, provide basic knowledge in human sexuality, and afford opportunities to develop skills for addressing sexual issues as they arise in the practice of ministry.[14]

Ministers—whether single, vowed celibates, or married—are sexual persons, with sexual needs, shames, desires, and passions of their own. To become a sexually healthy, religious professional, one must become sexually self-aware and be able to live with personal sexual integrity. Such clarity must be accompanied by at least the acceptance of, if not comfort with, oneself as a sexual person. Such honesty with oneself about one's own sexual and gender orientation and gender identity is requisite, even if it is not always prudent or safe to share this honesty with all others. Self-awareness includes the integration of one's sexual history into one's narrative self-understanding along with any ways biography and culture might bias one's current attitudes (e.g., inclination toward sexism or homophobia). To become a sexually healthy, religious professional, one must also grow

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14. What follows is a very brief summary and synthesis of desirable pastoral attributes based on a range of sources, including Marie M. Fortune, *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook* (Seattle: FaithTrust Institute, 2009); Nils C. Friberg and Mark R. Laaser, *Before the Fall: Preventing Pastoral Sexual Abuse* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 125–128; Richard M. Gula, *Just Ministry: Professional Ethics for Pastoral Ministers* (New York: Paulist Press, 2010), 156–188; Debra W. Haffner, *A Time to Build: Creating Sexually Healthy Faith Communities,* 2nd ed. (Norwalk, CT: Religious Institute, 2012), 15–16; UMC, "Sexual Ethics," (see n. 13).

increasingly attuned to the sexual dynamics of various ministerial relationships and pastoral situations. Such alertness to the risks that accompany the often emotionally charged, private exchanges that compose ministry, and especially to any warning signs that a pastoral relationship is becoming sexualized, is a crucial virtue for pastoral leaders.[15]

Ministerial leaders must also know the basics about and be comfortable discussing human sexuality, including specific sexual behaviors and relationships, sexual and gender orientations, and diverse gender identities, as well as one's faith community's sacred

> " *Professional sexual ethics education should foster certain virtuous characteristics, provide basic knowledge in human sexuality, and afford opportunities to develop skills for addressing sexual issues as they arise in the practice of ministry.*

texts, traditions, and contemporary teachings about sexual morality. Religious professionals must understand key concepts, such as sexual boundaries and "safe church" policies, and truly grasp the profound and pluriform consequences of ministerial sexual misconduct.

Effective professional sexual ethics training requires not only normative and cognitive formation but also the development of extracurricular skills, such as fostering in pastors the ability to meet their emotional needs for intimacy and love in ways congruent with their station in life (e.g., if married, practice fidelity; if a vowed religious, practice celibacy, etc.). Given the fiduciary duty to give priority to the pastoral relationship, pastors need to learn how to avoid unnecessary dual relationships with parishioners and instead establish personal intimacies that are not also pastoral, insofar as this is possible. The ability to read and resist the cultural wars that foster disrespect of sexuality is also a vital ministerial skill. A sexually healthy minister encourages sexual justice for all and is skilled at preaching and teaching about sexuality in ways that foster respectful

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15. Cristina L. H. Traina names this virtue "erotic attunement." *Erotic Attunement: Parenthood and the Ethics of Sensuality between Unequals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

interactions among sexually diverse persons and diverse points of view. A single conceptual framework will not be enough to achieve such a range of learning outcomes in the being, knowing, and doing of ministerial formation. A holistic approach is needed.

A holistic approach

A holistic approach to professional sexual ethics for ministry demands the combination of several conceptual frameworks in order to reach the learning outcomes described above. Though each is insufficient in itself, the frameworks of professional ethics, healthy boundaries, sexual ethics, and sexuality education offer the opportunity to address current debates.[16] These conceptual frameworks have often been isolated and unevenly pursued, if addressed at all, in theological education.

A professional ethics perspective focuses on the office of ministry and the role of the ministerial leader vis-à-vis the role of those persons served in ministry. In this view, ethical expectations for the pastor are distinct from those of parishioners precisely because of the difference in roles, responsibilities, and power—differences that create vulnerability on the part of the parishioner and for which the pastor must exercise great care. Many features of ministry suggest that it is like other professions. Ministry requires advanced training, credentialing, a public role as an officer of the church, a fiduciary duty to serve faithfully God's mission and the trust of God's people, and a voluntary covenantal commitment to serve the other's best interest. All this points toward positive comparisons with other helping professions.[17] Yet, the contrasts of ministry with other professions are also pronounced. Pastors function most often like generalists, and their congregational or community context for ministry often blurs boundaries. Ministers are never really "off duty," even if they have removed their collars. Dual relationships cannot be avoided entirely, conflicts of interest occur regularly, and there are often ambiguous perceptions of power

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16. Patricia Beattie Jung and Darryl W. Stephens, eds., *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 2.

17. Richard M. Gula names four "marks of being professional: (1) specialized knowledge and skills; (2) service of fundamental human needs; (3) commitment to the other's best interest; and (4) structures of accountability." *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 51. Gula presents an excellent synthesis of ministry as both a vocation and a profession in *Just Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 2010), 1–43.

among those in ministry.[18] Whether ministry overall is best understood as a profession continues to be a matter of fruitful debate.[19]

Nevertheless, there is considerable consensus about the import of professional boundaries in ministry. So, this is at the core of the typical professional ethics framework. For this reason, judicatories in mainline churches tend to focus on the healthy boundaries aspect of professional ethics. The healthy boundaries framework, as developed and taught by the FaithTrust Institute, which has set the standard for this kind of training, is premised on the ideas of fiduciary duty and the responsible use of power. The pastor must act in the best interests of the congre-

> ❝ *Pastors function most often like generalists, and their congregational or community context for ministry often blurs boundaries. Ministers are never really "off duty," even if they have removed their collars. Dual relationships cannot be avoided entirely, conflicts of interest occur regularly, and there are often ambiguous perceptions of power among those in ministry.*

gant, upholding the sacred trust that he or she will not abuse the power of the ministerial office for his or her own gratification or desire. Sexual misconduct occurs "when any person in a ministerial role of leadership or pastoral counseling (clergy, religious, or lay) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, or staff member (adult, teenager, or child) in a professional [ministerial] relationship."[20] Because of the inherent asymmetry of power in a pastoral relationship, sexual relations are ruled out of bounds between pastor and

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18. For reasons such as these, Mark Miller-McLemore argues against a professional ethics approach to ministry, finding fault with the conceptual language of healthy boundaries and self-care. Mark Miller-McLemore, "Revaluing 'Self-Care' as a Practice of Ministry," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 109–134.

19. For discussion, see Karen Lebacqz and Joseph D. Driskill, *Ethics and Spiritual Care: A Guide for Pastors, Chaplains, and Spiritual Directors* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 37–55.

20. Fortune, *Responding to Clergy Misconduct,* 30 (see n. 14).

parishioner. Not only is sexual activity not a legitimate service of ministry, but also the ability of the parishioner to offer authentic consent to such activity is compromised due to his or her vulnerability vis-à-vis the pastor. The excellent training materials developed by the FaithTrust Institute have done much to mainstream this important perspective, no doubt protecting many vulnerable persons from unintended harm, even as the policy implications of this approach remain contested.

There is considerable disagreement within the profession of ministry about naming the boundaries: what is and is not allowed, tolerated, or condoned. Just as institutions of higher education are not consistent across the board in their policies as to whether faculty may have sexual or romantic relationships with students,[21] judicatories and clergy are not of one mind about the admissibility of pastors having such relationships with parishioners.[22] In a survey of United Methodist clergy, fully one-third asserted the belief that "it is morally OK for a single pastor to date one of his or her parishioners."[23] Nor is there consensus about what safeguards should be put in place to protect the vulnerable party, if indeed there is sufficient recognition of the power differential within and potential for abuse inherent to a ministerial relationship. Absent a sense of professional boundaries, the appropriateness of a clergyperson dating a parishioner is rendered a personal, private matter. Within a professional ethics paradigm, these "private" sexual relationships of clergy generally fall into the null curriculum. Indeed, reflection on personal sexual ethics in general is not often found in seminary curricula.

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21. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) describes three types of "Consensual Relationship Policy" in effect among its members' institutional settings: "absolute prohibitions, limited bans on faculty-student supervisory relationships, and strong discouragement." While acknowledging that "[s]exual relations between students and faculty members with whom they also have an academic or evaluative relationship are fraught with the potential for exploitation," the AAUP stops short of advising an absolute prohibition, suggesting instead, "When a sexual relationship exists, effective steps should be taken to ensure unbiased evaluation or supervision of the student." http://www.aaup.org/issues/sexual-harassment/policies-2002.

22. For example, in the United Methodist Church, there exist a range of policies on clergy dating parishioners. Darryl W. Stephens, "Moral Exemplar or Ethical Professional? Clergy and Sexual Sin in Methodist Church Law," *Methodist Review* 3 (2011): 80–81, www.methodistreview.org.

23. Darryl W. Stephens, "Dating in the Parish—Attitudes, Ethics, and Church Law," *The Flyer*, General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in The United Methodist Church (December 2012): 7.

Alongside this stress on healthy boundaries and professional sexual ethics is an emphasis on the pastor as set apart to embody the community's sexual ideals. Rigid disciplinary enforcement of prohibitions against adultery and other extramarital sexual relations among clergy is presumed to be a way of modeling for the church as a whole the ideals of sexual morality expected of all members. Writing for Protestant clergy, Nolan B. Harmon argues that a more stringent adherence to accepted moral standards is required of clergy. Different expectations apply to ministers, he concedes, but not because the standards are different for pastors. "Whether we like it or not, the people demand a higher [moral] standard from the minister than from the ordinary person."[24] The pastor's behavior must be beyond reproach, above even the appearance of impropriety, due to the public nature of the role and the deleterious effect of moral lapses by the pastor on the edification of the laity. For this reason, church discipline is often more strictly enforced for clergy than for laity.

> *The pastor's behavior must be beyond reproach, above even the appearance of impropriety, due to the public nature of the role and the deleterious effect of moral lapses by the pastor on the edification of the laity.*

Writing for ministers in the Roman Catholic Church—many of whom are vowed celibates but an increasing number of whom are married or simply single—Richard M. Gula notes that the church teaches that chastity takes different forms depending upon the minister's commitments: celibacy for those who have vowed it, sexual exclusivity and steadfastness for those who are married, and continence for all others. He notes as well that the virtues of justice and fidelity should both play a role in assessing ministerial sexual ethics. It is justice that calls for the subordination of sexual self-interest to professional responsibilities and the common good. Pastoral trustworthiness translates into the maintenance of firm boundaries and says a clear NO to invitations to blur those lines.[25]

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24. Nolan B. Harmon, *Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 22.

25. Gula, *Just Ministry*, 85–88 (see n. 14).

Sexual ethics for ministry as a model of sexual morality for all persons offers a consistent, clear, and unambiguous message about sexual morality, reinforced by the pastor's embodiment of this message in his or her personal life. The pastor is expected to display the moral ideals preached. An expectation of personal moral maturity, that pastors "be persons of integrity, persons whose professional lives uphold the highest ethical ideals,"[26] works well when sexual mores within a religious community remain stable. But when rules, if not basic norms,

> *[R]eligious leaders need continued sexuality education to understand themselves and their parishioners within rapidly changing culture contexts.*

are contested, the modeling approach to ministerial sexual formation provides few resources for navigating the currents of profound social change, such as ministry with LGBTQI persons.[27]

One way to provide tools for navigating such dramatic social change is to emphasize a sexuality education framework, centered on an information-based, contextualized approach to human sexuality. Sexuality education provides data and information in order to demystify sexuality and to equip pastors with practical tools for addressing emerging sexual concerns within their faith community and culture. This framework emphasizes being "knowledgeable about human sexuality" and being able "to integrate sexuality and spirituality."[28] From a sexual health perspective, religious leaders need continued sexuality education to understand themselves and their parishioners within rapidly changing culture contexts.

Sexuality education is a much-needed corrective to both the negative and the romanticized church rhetoric about sexuality. Aside from discussions of sexual orientation, churches have been reluctant to recognize ministers as sexual persons. Even then, faith communities rarely do more than delineate what is prohibited, leaving the question of how to

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26. Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders,* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 17.

27. See discussion in Stephens, "Moral Exemplar or Ethical Professional?" 72–74 (see n. 22).

28. Haffner, *A Time to Build*, 13 (see n. 14).

nurture a healthy sexuality unanswered. If discussed at all, the sexuality of a ministerial leader is often identified only as a risk or danger against which the church must take preventive measures.[29] While providing a very much-needed, positive approach to the discussion of sexuality, and clergy sexuality in particular, the sexuality education format, which tends to "bracket" value questions, runs the risk of confining its ethical discourse to issues of personal integrity, consent, and the avoidance of harm, if not balanced with other perspectives.

Professional sexual ethics formation in theological education should be multifaceted. A holistic approach that fosters respect for sexual boundaries along with healthy habits of sexual self-awareness, integrity, and concerns for meeting personal needs for intimacy is important. Continuing sexuality education should recognize that clergy are often expected to embody the highest moral ideals of their communities and, at the same time, foster within them respectful interactions about hotly contested sexual norms. Combining frameworks that foster healthy sexual habits, respect for professional fiduciary duties, and deeper understanding of a faith community's traditional ideals for sexual morality is an effective approach to pedagogy. But additionally, it must be recognized that the initiatives of accrediting and ecclesial bodies (noted earlier) will most effectively be accomplished only by decompartmentalizing professional sexual ethics. This instruction must be integrated throughout the curriculum.

Integral, integrated, and integrative

Ministerial sexual ethics should be an integral part of student formation for ministry. It should be integrated across the curriculum. Professional sexual ethics must become part of the overall educational formation of church leaders, rather than be relegated to a stand-alone workshop or targeted ethics course, elective or not. Do not misunderstand: workshops and courses devoted to the professional sexual formation of clergy are very

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29.   For example, Marilyn Naidoo, writing about the importance of spiritual formation to thwart the deleterious influence of culture, mentions sexuality, along with drugs and alcohol, as an area in which students may have experimented, evidence of "the marks of current culture" that a new generation of students brings with them to seminary. "Spiritual Formation in Protestant Theological Institutions," in *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, eds. Dietrich Werner et al., Regnum Studies in Global Christianity, ed. Ruth Padilla DeBorst et al. (Oxford, Regnum, 2010), 190.

valuable. But what is introduced therein requires steady reinforcement. Professors in every discipline must take responsibility for addressing issues of embodiment, healthy boundaries, basic sexuality education, and clergy ethics as they arise, even when these topics fall outside of their research or teaching expertise. Professional sexual ethics is now an expected part of the explicit curriculum in theological education. It is part of the core of, not just an add-on to, ministerial formation. What is needed now is an integrated approach to curricular development.[30]

An integrated approach is cross-curricular, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary, encompassing both classroom and extracurricular aspects of seminary formation. In 2008, the FaithTrust Institute conducted an assessment of its 10-year effort to impact theological education with the goal of "prepar[ing] people for ministry who have ownership and understanding of the importance of healthy boundaries that goes beyond the perfunctory and becomes integral to their ministry."[31] Having trained more than 100 theological school faculty and administrators, the FaithTrust Institute found that an integrated approach is necessary:

> The strong consensus of participants was that the most effective teaching of ministerial ethics involves multiple opportunities for students to engage with the material, which has the potential to (a) reinforce learning and (b) create an institutional ethos of healthy boundaries and accountability.[32]

The UMC's 2012 resolution, "Sexual Ethics as Integral Part of Formation for Ministerial Leadership," echoes this consensus by encouraging faculty in every discipline of theological education to incorporate professional sexual ethics into their core courses.[33] An integrated approach includes not only addressing these issues as they arise in multiple courses in the cur-

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30. Limatula Longkumer advocates along similar lines for developing gender justice in theological education: "Women in Theological Education from an Asian Perspective," in *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, 72–74.

31. Marie M. Fortune and Aleese Moore-Orbih, *Assessment of the Impact of Specialized Theological Education on Pastoral Ministry* (2008), 3, http://www.umsexualethics.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Zs%2FX2hSP398%3D&tabid=7537.

32. Ibid.

33. United Methodist Church, "Sexual Ethics," 151 (see n. 13).

riculum but also fostering an institutional ethos in which extracurricular aspects of formation are consistent with what is explicitly taught in the classroom. Sexual harassment policies, policies prohibiting romantic or dating relationships between faculty and students, community worship, and other aspects of seminary life should reinforce professional sexual ethics education.[34]

> ❝ *Professors in every discipline must take responsibility for addressing issues of embodiment, healthy boundaries, basic sexuality education, and clergy ethics as they arise, even when these topics fall outside of their research or teaching expertise.*

Schools and administrators will need to provide support for this effort. Currently, there are significant institutional pressures on faculty *not* to teach about sexuality in the seminary classroom, and doing so is rightly perceived as a professional risk. It appears that only contingent or already tenured faculty dare teach courses in sexuality. According to a comprehensive survey of 36 diverse US seminaries, junior-level faculty seeking tenure teach only 6 percent of the full-semester sexuality-related courses offered.[35] For professional sexual ethics education to become integrated into theological education, this must change. Faculty must be actively supported and encouraged to teach professional sexual ethics and promote its consideration among colleagues.

Only when the concepts and ideas central to ministerial sexual ethics are reinforced throughout one's theological studies can they become truly formative, rising to the "integrative challenge" of professional education: "the integration of knowledge, skills, moral integrity, and religious

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34. For a discussion of the implicit curriculum and professional sexual ethics, see Darryl W. Stephens, "Teaching Professional Sexual Ethics Across the Seminary Curriculum," *Religious Education* 108, no. 2 (2013): 206–207.

35. Kate M. Ott, *Sex and the Seminary: Preparing Ministers for Sexual Health and Justice* (New York: Religious Institute and Union Theological Seminary, 2009), 5, http://www.religiousinstitute.org/sites/default/files/research_reports/sexandtheseminary religiousinstitute207.pdf.

commitment in the cultivation of student pastoral . . . imaginations."[36] An integrative pedagogy requires leaders in theological education who have the moral will and the pedagogical imagination to adopt a comprehensive, holistic, and integrated approach to professional sexual ethics instruction.

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36. See discussion of the "integrative challenge" in Foster et al., *Educating Clergy*, 330.

Online Theological Education: Three Undertheorized Issues

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ABSTRACT: *Many conversations about online theological education concern the feasibility of delivering particular courses or disciplines online. Much less attention has been devoted to the relationship between online delivery and theological education as a holistic formative enterprise. In this essay, I invite further reflection on three such formative aspects of theological education that are undertheorized: education as a form of apprenticeship, the essential place of worship, and ecclesial formation.*

In the last 15 years, a multitude of essays and books has been published that reflect on and advocate for the value of online delivery for theological education. These publications were written in the context of a much wider debate about the effect of online learning on higher education as a whole. Recently, my own institution looked at the possibility of online delivery of some of its courses. As a group of faculty members read through the literature, I realized in our conversations that little of this material addresses the deepest concerns of those who are hesitant about this form of theological education. The issue is not, I believe, that proponents do not want to engage what gives their colleagues pause; rather, it is that concerns about online delivery are often grounded in deeper convictions about the nature of theological studies in general, and that many of these convictions themselves have remained at the level of intuitions and have not been theorized explicitly in the literature. The conversation about online learning, however, cannot move forward without taking a look at these deeper-lying convictions. One value of the current conversation about online learning is that it forces us to make these convictions explicit.

My aim in this article is to articulate three such undertheorized issues that give some theological educators pause. To be clear: my claim is *not* that online theological education will not be able to successfully negotiate these three issues. My claim, for now, is simply that the conversation has not taken these three issues sufficiently into account.

Implied models of education

Online delivery privileges a particular model of education in which the instructor must take on a different role than in the traditional face-to-face format. Rather than being the pivot of a residential classroom, the instructor's job is to facilitate the learning of the student by creating environments in which the student can actively engage and thereby master the material.[1] The question is therefore whether this model of teaching and learning is optimal for theological education.

Teacher-centered and subject-centered models

Mary Hess, a prominent proponent of online theological education, argues that it does. In several publications, she draws on a distinction made by Parker Palmer between two models for teaching and learning.[2] On the one hand, there is the teacher-centered model, which "depicts a process in which the responsibility for learning is clear—the expert shares information that the amateurs take in."[3] Palmer illustrates this model with an abstract drawing in which the teacher, the expert, sits between "the object of learning" and the students, the amateurs. Arrows, symbolizing streams of information, move from the object to the amateurs, but all have to pass through the mediator, the expert.[4] On the other hand, there is the subject-centered model. Here Palmer's drawing shows a network of "knowers," all surrounding a "subject," with arrows going both between the central subject and the knowers and to and from the knowers themselves. No

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1. Hanover Research Council, *Best Practices for Distance Delivery of Theological Education* (2009), 12–13, www.hanoverresearch.com.

2. Mary Hess, "What Difference Does it Make? Digital Technology in the Theological Classroom," *Theological Education* 41, no. 1 (2005): 77–91; *Engaging Technology in Theological Education: All that We Can't Leave Behind* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 5–11; see also Hess's unpublished paper "Attending to Embodiedness in Online, Theologically Focused Learning" (October 2000), http://www.academia.edu/666289/Attending-to-embodiedness-in-online-theologically-focused-learning. The distinction comes from Palmer's *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998); see especially 99–106. Lester Ruth appeals to the same distinction in "Converting My Course Converted Me: How Reinventing an On-campus Course for an Online Environment Reinvigorated My Teaching," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 9, no. 4 (October 2006): 240.

3. Hess, "What Difference Does it Make?," 77.

4. See Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 100; Hess, "What Difference Does It Make?," 78; Hess, *Engaging Technology*, 6.

separate "teacher" is identified.[5] This, says Hess, illustrates the fact that in this model

> all are teachers in some way, just as all are learners. . . . Indeed, the fundamental task of a teacher in this model is to get out of the way sufficiently to allow learners to engage the central topic; to create an environment in which direct relationship and direct engagement with the subject is possible.[6]

Having laid out these two different models of education, Hess argues that the second model, which is clearly more in line with the best practices of online education, is also "more adequately descriptive of teaching and learning within theological education" than is the first, thus allowing her to make a case for the natural compatibility of theological education and online learning.[7]

If these are the two options, Hess is no doubt right that the second model fits a theological school better than the first one. After all, *theological education* is, in the end, about getting to know *God* better, so the object of theological schooling is never at the teacher's disposal in the way the teacher-centered model assumes it to be. But is it helpful to narrow our choices to these two options?

Apprenticeship model

A third option is to think about education as a form of apprenticeship, learning a craft from a master craftsperson.[8] A craftswoman teaches her apprentices by inviting them to join in, by enticing them to engage with her in the craft. In such a model, the teacher is not the expert who mediates between the "knowers" and the "subject" of learning, because learning a craft does not consist of hearing *about* the craft; it involves engaging *in* it. The apprentice is handed the tools and put to work. At the same time, the

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5. See Palmer, *The Courage to Teach,* 102; Hess, "What Difference Does It Make?" 79; Hess, *Engaging Technology,* 7.

6. Hess, "What Difference Does It Make?," 81.

7. Ibid.

8. See Stanley Hauerwas, "Carving Stone or Learning to Speak Christian," chap. 7 in *The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 108–121.

teacher is not simply the facilitator of direct interactions between students and subject. Rather, she is the role model, and the apprentices learn by imitating what the teacher does.

If education is understood as a form of apprenticeship in which the students learn by imitating the master craftsman, one has to ask to what degree this form of education is compatible with online delivery. Apprenticeship presupposes a "thick" relationship. The apprentice follows the craftswoman around. He does not just receive formal instruction, but he observes the craftswoman at work and joins in. The question is whether in an online environment the relationship between teachers and learners can be thick enough for apprenticeship to flourish.

> " *If education is understood as a form of apprenticeship in which the students learn by imitating the master craftsman, one has to ask to what degree this form of education is compatible with online delivery.*

Consider the following examples of the results of these kinds of relationships. A seminary professor goes to a church where one of her former students is the pastor. As the church service unfolds, led by the graduate, the professor has the strange feeling of looking at a reflection of herself. It is not that the pastor leads the service in exactly the same way the professor would have done. The words, the gestures, are the graduate's words and gestures, not the professor's. Still it is observable that the student has been formed by her teacher. From taking the professor's classes, but also from observing the professor lead worship herself in the seminary chapel, from discussing worship forms over lunch and reflections during office visits, the student has adopted an ethos that is now shaping her own liturgical practice. The professor was the master practitioner; the student the apprentice. Although the student brings her own personality to the task and leads worship in a way appropriate to the context in which she serves, the *ways* in which she engages ministry were profoundly shaped by her professor.

Or imagine this one: on the occasion of his ordination, a student sends a note to one of his former teachers and his wife saying, "You both have been such a wonderful support to me during my journey towards ordination. From giving me words of wisdom and encouragement to extending

hospitality to me, what a blessing you have been. I am so very grateful for the wonderful example for a life in ministry that you have set for me and my seminary peers." The student identifies the teacher as more than an instructor; he was a role model. But the student could only say so because he had a chance to observe the teacher and his family as they shaped their profession into a way of life. If this is at the heart of teaching—and according to the apprentice model it is—how can this way of being be transmitted if the education is delivered online?

Seminary worship

The second issue concerns the essential place of worship in a theological school. Given that virtually every seminary and divinity school has a worship program, there is a striking lack of reflection on the place of worship in theological education.[9] Nonetheless, there are at least three arguments for the importance of seminary worship.

Building interpersonal relationships

First, regular common worship has a radical influence on the interpersonal relationships among a community's members, which in turn can have a profound effect on the classroom atmosphere. Theological studies are not only a matter of the mind but also of the heart. As teachers, we challenge some of our students' deeply held opinions, worldviews, and beliefs. To do so effectively can only happen in a climate of trust. Worshipping together in chapel, kneeling to pray, and receiving bread and wine together are ways in which such mutual trust is built.

Cultivating an environment of pastoral care

Second, common worship cultivates an environment of pastoral care for students and other members of the community. Theological education can lay huge burdens on students. Besides the classroom challenges, there are

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9.   Since the 1960s, only three journal articles and one collection of essays have been published on this topic: Robert W. Duke, "Seminary Worship," *Theological Education* 2, no. 1 (1965): 42–46; J. Robert Nelson, "The Seminary—Academy and Chapel," *Theological Education* 1, no. 1 (1964): 53–62; E. Byron Anderson, "Worship and Theological Education," *Theological Education* 39, no. 1 (2003): 117–130; and Siobhán Garrigan and Todd E. Johnson, eds., *Common Worship in Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010).

often financial pressures at the home front and difficulties in combining study with family life. Ecclesial judicatories add their own expectations and desires, and all the while students are in a continuous mode of evaluation and discernment. Although many of our students have home congregations, not every local faith community is attuned to the specific needs of seminarians. Moreover, many students are expected—not least by their schools—to take leadership positions during Sunday worship in the form of internships, thereby, often for the first time, making the transition from participating from their pews to leading congregations "up front," which may challenge their ability to worship. The seminary chapel is therefore a place uniquely set apart and equipped to address the stresses of seminary study and to name these in the presence of God.

> **66** *If worship is also essentially embodied, . . . the question is how schools will shape their common worship life as they move to an online format.*

Worshipping in community

Third, as I argue elsewhere, worship is intrinsic to theological education given the unique object of theological studies: God.[10] As David Kelsey has argued, the goal of a theological school is "to know God truly."[11] God, however, cannot be known and not be worshipped. There may be gods whose being does not implore and demand worship, but not the God of Israel; not the God of Jesus Christ. "The God of Abraham praise" is for Hebrew and Christian Scriptures an intrinsic part of our response as we come to know God truly. Because theological study is essentially a communal project, the worship intrinsic to the theological enterprise is to be communal as well. Because of the particular object of a theological school, God, the rhythm of the school's life thus ought to be shaped by worship, just as the rhythm of theological studies in medieval cathedral schools and friaries—different from, for instance, the academic studies of law or

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10.   See my "A Theology of Seminary Worship," forthcoming.

11.   See David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About A Theological School* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992).

medicine—were shaped by the Liturgy of the Hours and celebration of mass.

In an article arguing that embodied presence is not necessary for theological education, John Gresham introduces a distinction "between those areas such as worship where embodiment is essential to an incarnational faith and other areas such as education where the incarnationality can be expressed in other ways."[12] If my arguments regarding the relationship between a theological school and worship cohere, this distinction will not hold. Worship is an intrinsic part of theological education and cannot be separated from it. If worship is also essentially embodied, as Gresham argues, the question is how schools will shape their common worship life as they move to an online format.

Ecclesial formation

The first issue I raised about the relationship between online learning and education as a form of apprenticeship concerns all academic disciplines that work with this model of education. The second issue, about the essential place of worship, pertains singularly to theological education. The last issue, ecclesial formation, concerns only those who are training for ordained ministry.

One of the most frequently raised issues about online theological education involves the question of the relationship between online learning and the spiritual formation of students.[13] But the literature is silent when it comes to the question of the relationship between online theological education and what I propose we call "ecclesial formation." By this kind of formation I mean the preparation of the student for ordination

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12. John Gresham, "The Divine Pedagogy as a Model for Online Education," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 9, no. 1 (2006): 27.

13. See for instance Stephen D. Lowe and Mary E. Lowe, "Spiritual Formation in Theological Distance Education: An Ecosystems Model," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010): 85–102; Mark A. Maddix and James R. Estep, "Spiritual Formation in Online Higher Education Communities: Nurturing Spirituality in Christian Higher Education Online Degree Programs," *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (2010), 423–434; Mary E. Lowe, "Spiritual Formation as a Whole-Person Development in Online Education," and James Riley Estep Jr. and Steven Yates, "Challenges and Opportunities for Online Theological Education," both in *Best Practices of Online Education: A Guide for Christian Higher Education*, eds. Mark A. Maddix, James R. Estep, and Mary E. Lowe (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2012): 55–63 and 65–77 respectively.

as a fundamentally catholic event. Both in Roman Catholic theology and in important strands of the Protestant tradition (Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian), ordained ministry is seen as entrusted by Jesus Christ to the wider church, not to the individual minister. Ordination is to the whole church's ministry of Word and Sacrament. Pastors minister in a particular place but represent the wider church, and, in the end, Christ himself, in that local community. Different ecclesial traditions express this understanding of ordination in a variety of ways. In episcopal traditions it is illustrated by the special relationship between the bishop and the clergy. In my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), it is the reason why an ordination to Word and Sacrament is not performed by a local congregation, but by the council that represents the wider church, the presbytery.[14] In her ordination service, a candidate makes promises concerning her relationship to the wider church, not a local congregation.[15] PC(USA) pastors are not even considered members of local congregations; rather, they are members of the regional presbytery.[16]

> **❝** *Students are not just ecclesially formed by what happens in the classroom but also, and maybe equally importantly, in the relationships that are being formed in the communal life on campus.*

Traditionally, residential seminaries function as the community where candidates for ministry are ecclesially formed in an awareness of their place in the wider church. Students who may know only one, or a few, local congregations are brought together with fellow ordination candidates rooted in very different locations—geographically, socioeconomically, racially,

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14. *The Book of Order 2011-2013: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),* Part II (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, 2011), G-2.0701, 36.

15. For example, she promises to be instructed by the confessions of the church; to be governed by the church's polity; to abide by its discipline; to be a friend to her colleagues; to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church (not *a congregation*, but *the church*); to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love (not *a particular* people, but *the* people that are part of the church); to be active in government and discipline; and to serve on the governing bodies of the church. See *The Book of Order,* W-4.4003, 122–123.

16. *The Book of Order*, G.2.0704, 36.

culturally, and theologically. By going to chapel together, eating in the common room, living communally in the dorms, joining in family play dates, and sharing personal joys and woes, these students learn what it will mean to serve together in one church. In that sense, the formative nature of the residential campus is a holistic experience. Students are not just ecclesially formed by what happens in the classroom but also, and maybe equally importantly, in the relationships that are being formed in the communal life on campus.

When it comes to spiritual formation, proponents of online delivery often argue that students could just as well be spiritually formed through online connections as on a seminary campus; and, in fact, that leaving students in the context of their own families and faith communities may lead to deeper and more lasting religious formation than by gathering them in a school.[17] While this may be true for *spiritual* formation, the same does not hold for *ecclesial* formation. The latter rather entails venturing out of one's local context and being placed in the context of the wider church. If seminary campuses have traditionally been the conduit of such kind of sustained ecclesial formation, the question is how students will receive it if delivery is online.

Concluding observations

If one reflects on the three issues raised above, one will notice that all three of them are concerned with theological education as a formational experience of which classroom interaction is only a part. There is the master-apprentice relationship between teacher and student that reaches beyond the classroom into the dining room, the chapel, or even the teacher's home and family. There is the common worship that is an intrinsic part of a theological school. And there is the common life of a campus community as a vehicle for ecclesial formation. The question is how these aspects of theological education will be shaped if the delivery of our education is online. In the literature, much thought is given to how particular subjects, disciplines, and courses can be taught effectively online, but much less attention has been paid to the relationship between online delivery and theological education as a holistic formative experience.

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17. See Hess, "Attending to Embodiedness," 4 (see n. 2).

In this respect, it is unfortunate that some proponents of online learning speak about residential campus teaching in a rather dismissive tone, as the "lofty ivory tower" from which teachers "demand that students leave home and hearth to climb that tower and join them there."[18] In an oft repeated claim, Mary Hess describes the residential campus as a place that is actually artificial and abstract compared to the incarnational and embodied learning that could have taken place in the student's home environment: "Why should we automatically assume that leaving home or work and entering a physical space labeled 'classroom' should in some way automatically enhance learning"?[19] If the three issues I have raised are critical to theological learning, then there is actually a pedagogical warrant for asking students to leave their home environments and join residential campuses. By dismissing the residential life of a theological school, proponents of online delivery ignore the question of how the formative experience of a residential campus can be effective for their own students.

It should be granted that in general the importance of residential life for theological education is undertheorized, not just in the literature on online learning but also in the literature on theological education in general.[20] It should also be said that the issues raised above challenge—in not dissimilar ways—commuting students or students enrolled in evening or part-time programs, even if these are offered on residential campuses. For both reasons it is fortunate that the conversations about online learning force us to reflect more intently on the pedagogical effects of seminary campus life.

As I emphasized at the beginning of my essay, my arguments should not be construed as a wholesale rejection of online theological education. In fact, I can imagine that in particular contexts the solution to the issues I

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18. Gresham, "The Divine Pedagogy," 26 (see n. 12).

19. Hess, *Engaging Technology in Theological Education*, 65 (see n. 2). Repeated by Gresham, "The Divine Pedagogy," 27 (see n. 12); Lowe and Lowe, "Spiritual Formation in Theological Distance Education," 97 (see n. 13); Maddix and Estep, "Spiritual Formation in Online Higher Education Communities," 427 (see n. 13); Mark A. Maddix, "Developing Online Learning Communities," in *Best Practices of Online Education: A Guide for Christian Higher Education*, eds. Mark A. Maddix, James R. Estep, and Mary E. Lowe (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2012), 34.

20. A notable exception is Jackson W. Carroll, Barbara G. Wheeler, Daniel O. Aleshire, and Penny Long Marler, *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997).

have raised is *more* online theological education. For example, many part-time and evening programs now consist mainly of classroom encounters with very little space for worship, community building, and mentoring and apprenticing. If my arguments hold, for those kind of programs, a better form of theological education may be to offer most individual courses online and to devote the face time one has with the students to worship, fellowship, advising, and events like interdisciplinary reflection on theological education as a whole. But for a program to make such a choice is contingent on a wider conversation about theological education as a holistic formative experience.

Finally, introducing the option of online theological education is sometimes presented as a form of justice. Online learning offers the opportunity of a theological education to a previously underserved and often less privileged category of students. The issues raised above amount to the question of whether online learning can offer students the full formative experience that theological education ought to be. If it turns out it cannot, then online theological education, while without doubt still valuable, would nonetheless be second class to theological education offered at a residential campus. And that too is matter of justice and injustice.

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Antecedents to a Hopeful Future: Challenges for the Theological Faculty

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ABSTRACT: *The contemporary lack of integration of ministerial practice within many confessional seminaries has roots in Schliermacher's bargain with (modern) Berlin University in 1810. Given this historic backdrop, graduates of (modern) divinity schools and the (premodern) confessional seminaries that hire them have work to do regarding their common vocations. While asserting a common vocation in a postmodern era has its own risks, educating for ministry via silo-like applications of disciplinary knowledge is no longer sustainable, according to the author, who considers Jurgen Moltmann's post-Christendom remarks regarding (reasonable) teaching for (confessional) ministry.*

> "[R]eligious worlds and theological systems are constructions. They are human responses to rich, complex experiences of the sacred and/or God. At the same time that these religious worlds and theological systems are powerful and persuasive, they are also 'problematic.'"[1]

As a new, full-time associate pastor for youth ministry, I soon found myself drawn back into my years as a student in the seminary, seduced by the academic wisdom offered me, yet terrorized after graduation by my sudden realization that I had precious few tools adequate for the task of working with adolescents in the late 1960s.

The problem of curricular integration

I am not convinced that it was academic wisdom alone that sustained me during those initial years in ministry. I am not comfortable with the idea that wisdom is disconnected from practice. Over my years in ministry,

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1. Susan M. Simonaitis, "Teaching as Conversation," in *The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*, eds. L. Gregory Jones and Stephanie Paulsell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 101.

an academic deanship, and a period as director of leadership education for The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), I have come to believe that the seminary's peculiar curricular challenge is to constructively integrate both disciplinary knowledge *and* ministerial practice within a school's mission-based curriculum—a mix, I believe, that would have more helpfully equipped me for ministry. Therefore, in my initial year as a youth minister, I wrote a letter to my seminary president suggesting that a merger of disciplinary knowledge and ministerial practice be taken seriously by "my" seminary, but no response was forthcoming.

Overstuffed

The impulse to overstuff a curriculum with additional disciplinary offerings now seems to me an often heartfelt belief that disciplines are only at their theoretical best when students can see, understand, and step *inside* the unified whole that makes up the discipline. That is, presented as an integrated and coherent entity, a discipline can be understood as offering a particular language, logic, and purpose. While this is true, being *outside* the boundaries that frame the discipline (for example, in ministry), a person often does not have the luxury of drawing the many other perspectives making up ministry back inside these preset boundaries. The multiplicity of perspectives present within any faith community (with its compelling set of concerns) looks to a discipline as only one of many perspectives clamoring to be heard. The minister, in order to engage in ministry, must of necessity negotiate the many rather than mandating that one alone is sufficient.

This suggests that a practicing minister is guided by purposes beyond the logic provided by the insider status offered by particular disciplines and, further, whatever insights that are to be gained from multiple disciplines necessarily must be midwifed within specific ministerial contexts. This also suggests that the faculty of a confessing seminary should be concerned about their common vocation as theological educators rather than to act solely as individual promotors of a particular discipline's academic wisdom.

By this we can say that the wisdom to be gained from disciplinary knowledge and the know-how to be gained from the people and personal skills of the practical fields are both necessary if the craft and art of ministry is to break out of the silos containing them in most discipline-centered

curricular course work. But none of this was what I experienced in seminary. And while the seminary in which I later served as professor and dean had drawn closer to my hoped-for merger of knowledge and practice, a hidden polarity between the so-called academic disciplines and the practice fields still held more sway than did integration. I now wonder if we could have sustained the kinds of conversations that were needed in order to make such a move.

Disciplines and the common vocation of a faculty

In the 1990s, my portfolio with ATS included work with the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology grants program, arguably the premier fellowship program for scholars working in theological education.[2] As part of that program, ATS hosted two consultations of Luce scholars, both focused on the exploration of theological scholarship and the academy, theological scholarship and communities of faith, and theological scholarship and theological education.

> 66 *[T]he faculty of a confessing seminary should be concerned about their common vocation as theological educators rather than to act solely as individual promotors of a particular discipline's academic wisdom.*

What became apparent to me through my participation in both consultations was the way most faculty members (including the Luce Fellows) did not embrace or understand what they did as a common vocation in service to the mission of their schools. They felt this lack of understanding had to do with the way discretely arranged disciplines approached the aims of theological education. Curricular integration threatened disciplinary allegiance. While they agreed that disciplinary turf should give way to integration, no one had a clear proposal as to how this problem could and should be addressed. My thought at the end of the two consultations was, How did the disciplinary embrace of theological education provoke and maintain such a negative result? My pursuit of an

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2.   The Association of Theological Schools, "ATS Luce Consultation on Theological Scholarship, May 2003," *Theological Education* 40, no. 2 (2005): 93–114.

answer to this question led me to uncover three historic antecedents. The three flow together, and their confluence is neither largely explored nor discussed by most divinity school and confessing seminary faculties. The first has to do with modernity and the redefining of the fourfold approach to the theological curriculum.

The first modern university

There are some known facts. The Age of Enlightenment, arguably initiated by the method of doubt of René Descartes (1596–1650), was perhaps best summarized by his phrase *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). Enlightenment thinking swept through seventeenth-century Europe and eventually influenced eighteenth-century thinkers such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. The Enlightenment's reliance upon reason and critical thinking managed, over several centuries, to remove theology, dogma, and tradition from once privileged positions. While I knew of these demotions, I was also aware that the church at that time still held to truth as found through God-inspired *Scripture*—the first academic discipline in seminary education. Theologians of that day also understood that the second academic discipline, *systematics* or *dogmatics*, was about the defining and systematizing of God's truth. A third discipline, *church history*, had to do with scholars contemplating the church triumphant. A final fourth discipline, *practical theology*, named how God's truth had unfolded within the church. My understanding was that this educational summation remained in place (into our era) and was the basis for hiring both seminary and divinity school professors. To my surprise, Berlin University, founded in 1810 as the first avowedly modern university, was willing to reject both the theologians and the disciplines they espoused.

How one comes to know truth

Professors who wanted to be hired at Berlin University had to accept the scientific method as the basis for disciplinary work. *Wissenschaft* is a German word meaning a disciplined, scientific research process within which critical inquiry is understood to be a primary virtue. Knowledge comes about in Wissenschaft through critical inquiry and scientific method. These tools are prized above all else. Traditions tied to ancient "godly" texts are neither the repository of authority nor the way one might discover truth. How one comes "to know" (the epistemological question) is understood

to occur through science. Confessional theology about God and the Bible were of no value in the academic world of 1810 Berlin.

Berlin's understanding of Wissenschaft upended theology as queen of the sciences and radically questioned theology's established fourfold pattern. What had become clear was that any discipline with a confessional, God-oriented grounding was unacceptable. Perhaps in the past, Berlin professors might argue, superstitious knowing had been encouraged to emerge from the contemplation of "God's" word (the Bible), but in the new, modern understanding, knowing emerged only through human, scientific research.

Nineteenth-century theologians, caught by the resulting instability (as the university's techtonic plates shifted), must have wondered at what their future (not to say the future of God) might hold. This 1810 dilemma—should the fourfold disciplines follow scientific or confessional method—would set a trajectory impacting seminary education today, some 200 years removed from the founding of Berlin University.

Enter Schleiermacher

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) was the key member of a committee charged with the writing of a founding document for Berlin University. We can read some of his argument in his *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*.[3]

Schleiermacher was crafty. He was also highly adaptive. Suggesting that theology was a necessary societal profession much like law and medicine, Schleiermacher argued that ministers and theologians were civil servants. Supported by the state, they in turn were to support civil society. As such, academic theologians had a right to *scientifically study* ministry, the church's history, and everything else involved in that societal profession.

Schleiermacher made this major turn—from the *confessional* work of the disciplinarily based theologian (where God and the Bible were central) to the *rational, scientific* work performed by the "modern" academic theologian. And his argument—that theologians scientifically studying the state's (culturally necessary) clerical profession should be housed in the modern university—was accepted by the university.

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3. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*, trans. Terrance Tice (1811; repr., Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966).

Thus theologians (and the fourfold schema) were folded into the university privy to the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities held by all University of Berlin professors. Schleiermacher would have a job because his scientific work was based on the same rational inquiry expected of all university scholars. And this understanding necessarily translated into the fourfold curricular categories; that is, things confessional were to be the objects of scientific study and not of formation.

> 66 *[T]he discipline-based system implicitly and politically remains in force as the major way theological study and education continues to be classified and carried forward.*

Looking back at these developments we might wonder, with benefit of hindsight, of a perhaps too casual identification of the minister and academic theologian *within* modernity, science, and the needs of the state, recognizing now how such identification played out later in Nazi Germany. But this was not anticipated in 1810. Accordingly, within this new alignment, ministry as a profession in service of societal need emerged as the accepted "clerical paradigm." As a result, the university professor of divinity became a Wissenschaft scholar understood to stand at some remove from the premodern superstitions of God and the Bible, a scientist now pledged to critical and reflective inquiry regarding the clerical profession.

Is seminary curriculum only a replication of disciplines?

The nineteenth, twentieth, and now the twenty-first centuries, if not fully understanding Germany's Wissenschaft posture, nonetheless accepted as normative Schleiermacher's grand bargain. The end result, Edward Farley observes, is that "the typical theological faculty [was] comprised of specialists in particular disciplines, and the course of study was a path through the designated theological sciences."[4] Farley alerts us to the fact that, whether we are considering the freestanding seminary or the university-embedded divinity school, "two very powerful social forces" still remain at work: first, the continuing and persistent nature of university-

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4. Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 112.

based PhD education, and second, the emergence of powerful guilds with annual conferences and peer groups reinforcing rank, tenure, and promotion standards.[5] Because of these continuing influences, Farley argues that the discipline-based system implicitly and politically remains in force as the major way theological study and education continues to be classified and carried forward. For Farley, clergy education represents the "dominance of the fourfold pattern, the absence of a material unity of studies, a functionalist version of the clerical paradigm as that unity, and a theory-practice mind set."[6]

Current issues rooted in Schleiermacher's bargain

Unexamined history impacts institutions over time. We casually speak of premodernity, modernity, and postmodernity, but embedded divinity schools and confessional seminaries rarely contemplate the unintended consequences of modernity and the founding of the modern University of Berlin.

Embedded divinity schools still wrestle with where they stand in the eyes of university administrators without realizing how the centering truth of premodern thought (i.e., God) once gave way to their university's centering truth of modernity (i.e., science). In a candid article on curriculum and the faculty, Willie James Jennings, then academic dean at Duke University Divinity School, noted,

> An ecology of theological and spiritual assessment does not fit easily into the ecology of the modern university . . . The academic imagination as we experience it at Duke can easily grasp the idea of cultivating a love of learning. More difficult to grasp is the idea of cultivating a desire for God. Far more difficult to accept is the idea that this is an inseparable twofold cultivation that has been torn asunder in our time."[7]

Confessional seminaries also rarely consider the impact of the 1810 University of Berlin on their curricular decisions, yet two-thirds of all

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5.   Ibid., 113.

6.   Ibid., 127.

7.   Willie James Jennings, "Leclerq among the Blue Devils: Assessing Theological Learning in the Modern University," *Theological Education* 41, no. 2 (2006): 25.

seminary professors working in ATS Commission-accredited schools are graduates of only 23 institutions offering doctoral programs.[8] Most of these schools are fairly described as Wissenschaft institutions. And it is a source of pride that the kind of scholarship required in these schools "began in the nineteenth century when America's best theological minds abandoned confessional theology."[9] It is important to note this often hidden link, because if one ascribes to the "premodern through postmodern" historic argument, then most confessional seminaries, (with God and not science as their centering truth) are fairly described as premodern institutions. Nevertheless, most of a seminary's faculty often teach the Wissenschaft way they were taught by their disciplinarily-based (modern) divinity school professors.

Can premodern classroom practices partner with Wissenschaft?

When we unpack that which we come to know about premodern practices, we come face to face with confessional seminary classroom practice: Can a classroom be structured to begin in prayer and seek testimony as to the texts, both written and human, that are on our minds this day? And can we experience a class as supportive and informative of personal discernment? Moments of communal discernment in such a classroom might go a long way in the development of pastoral imagination.

Unfortunately, I suspect our endorsement and active embrace of such premodern terms and practices would alienate our academic friends, but the few mentioned here are among the richest and most pragmatic practices that are found wherever ministry occurs. Yet it is also important to note that university-based disciplines can be very helpful in the thoughtful consideration of such practices. Why not be intentional about integrating the practices of intentional ministry inside a school's course of study? And why not be clear as to how they viably relate to the modern work of particular disciplines? Something as simple as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, with its presumed ministerial integration of Scripture, reason, experience,

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8. Barbara G. Wheeler, Sharon L. Miller, and Katarina Schuth, *Signs of the Times: Present and Future Theological Faculty*, Auburn Studies, no. 10 (New York: Auburn Theological Seminary, February 2005), 12.

9. Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Ante-Bellum Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 149.

and tradition, could be a useful integrative strategy for classroom professors of both divinity and confessional schools.[10]

Clearly, for contemporary theologians, reason and confessional faith are not antagonists. And if such a conversation between reason and faith were to occur, why not say—not with arrogance or disdain but as wise ritual elders engaged in the intentional formation of a new generation of leaders—"this is what is at stake when we sing this song, say these words, or offer this prayer."

> 66 *[T]wo-thirds of all seminary professors working in ATS Commission-accredited schools are graduates of only 25 institutions offering doctoral programs.*

And instead of just talking about a practice, why not *do* it? Such classrooms could become formational, sacred spaces.

A question to be unpacked by a divinity school or a seminary faculty might be put this way: How does your (modern) school experience help or hinder you in the teaching of (premodern) practices like prayer, discernment, and formation?

Post-Christendom and the viability of theological education

A second historic understanding impacting curriculum integration has to do with post-Christendom. *Christendom* refers to the Christian ecology that emerged over the centuries in Europe following Constantine's conversion in AD 313. While the United States formally kept the church separate from the state, believers succeeded in adapting gospel values within the structure of the common culture. Without using the term *Christendom*, theologian John Westerhoff suggested in 1976 that the "ecology" of institutions making up this cultural pattern had broken and could no longer be counted upon to support the Christian education of "our children." He titled his book *Will Our Children Have Faith?*[11] Today those familiar with

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10. W. Stephen Gunter, Scott J. Jones, Ted A. Campbell, Rebekah L. Miles, and Randy L. Maddox, *Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997).

11. John H. Westerhoff III, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

Westerhoff's book are calling for a post-Christendom reprise, this time titled *Will Our Faith Have Children?*

In certain ways, post-Christendom accompanied the collapse of modernity. A centering truth of modernity had to do with the positive progress promised by science. This argument was disproved by Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Holocaust. After World War II, postmodernity saw the unleashing of multiple centering truths, and near the end of the twentieth century, post-Christendom emerged as a recognition of the reality such contestation had brought to the American church, the divinity schools, and seminaries. These institutions noticed the impact made by post-Christendom; Diana Butler Bass describes its arrival at many so-called mainline congregations:

> I've been in hundreds of mainline churches, and although they are not always open to change, that's not the primary feeling in the congregations. Their primary emotion is grief. They are grieving the fact that their churches are declining, that their children are going away, and that the traditions they love might disappear. They are in mourning.[12]

In the fall of 2014, I had occasion to speak with an academic dean at one of my tradition's biggest seminaries. He related how the school's entering class was roughly two-thirds of a typical class size, and that faculty, emerging from an initial student's orientation meeting had just one question: "Where are the rest of the students?" He could only state the obvious: "That's the whole class."

Post-Christendom poses questions of viability for both the divinity school and the confessional seminary: Who today wants to be a minister? What is ministry today? How does one get equipped for ministry? Does a particular seminary offer what such ministry needs? Are those who teach in a particular seminary equipped to do what needs to be done? Is the divinity school providing faculty who embrace such questions as their own?

While such post-Christendom thoughts are the often-discussed concerns of many divinity school and seminary administrators—those concerned about the future of postbaccalaureate theological education, including

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12. Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 172.

faculty and those serving in various forms of ministry—they often ignore such questions or expect that post-Christendom can be answered by more money, better recruitment, and bigger buildings. But the historic concerns noted in this essay will not go away. Perhaps we need to risk opening a discussion informed by such concerns without knowing either the future or the answer. Communal discernment as to the common vocation defining a faculty, a working definition of ministry (with its multiple contextual locations), and the sort of curriculum that hopefully could provide the "right" kind of connective tissue—these possibilities might spark the kind of conversation such concerns call for. Such conversations

> 66 *While such post-Christendom thoughts are the often-discussed concerns of many divinity school and seminary administrators . . . they often ignore such questions or expect that post-Christendom can be answered by more money, better recruitment, and bigger buildings. . . . Perhaps we need to risk opening a discussion informed by such concerns without knowing either the future or the answer.*

might begin in prayer and find hope in the words offered by a theologian like Jürgen Moltmann.

Theologian Jürgen Moltmann's "historic" suggestion

Jürgen Moltmann isn't negative about the collapse of Christendom; he suggests that "it also means positively that religion, God, faith, and the church have finally been liberated from their role as helpers in need and may now be themselves again."[13] This enigmatic statement is grounded by Moltmann's understanding that the resurrection of Jesus is a subversive remembrance shocking us out of our accommodation and adaptation to

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13. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Play*, trans. Reinhard Ulrich (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 63.

the historic logic of our world.[14] Accordingly, Moltmann's challenge to our post era has to do with a different take on history. He suggests we need to look past postmodernity and post-Christendom. By grounding history in the event of the resurrection, Moltmann's language of promise contradicts the present, which present for him is not the true and final result of history. For him, the resurrection and the language of promise *create* an experience of history, thereby revealing God. For Moltmann, when one considers the reality of any historic framework, it matters where one stands.

Of interest to this essay is that Moltmann draws a difference between his teaching the practical, ministry-oriented popular theology at a seminary of the Confessing Church with the academic theology expected of him when appointed to a chair in theology at Bonn University. In the university, he became increasingly aware of demands "made by the other faculties to be "scholarly" or "scientific."[15] He noted that this emphasis on academic theology is

> historically understandable, but substantially it is of only limited value. It was possible only in the European *Corpus Christianum*, that strange and unique unity of church and state, faith and culture in the *Sacrum Imperium,* the Holy Empire. In the non-Christian and post-Christian worlds, the external conditions for any such union are lacking.[16]

He therefore believes a rapprochement should occur between popular and academic theologies. He suggests from his own experience that academic theology needs to more readily accept and understand popular theology, or it will lose its foundation. And the reverse for him is also true—if popular theology doesn't work with and come to understand academic theology, it will run the risk of losing its reasonable character.[17]

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14. Christopher Morse, *Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

15. Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Thinking*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 8.

16. Ibid., 10.

17. Ibid., 11.

Summary

Theological education today continues, for the most part, to follow a modern, Berlin-endorsed disciplinary pattern of education that has been comfortable, like a well-worn chair. We argue about formation, integration, and the absence of practice-oriented or more confessional teaching, yet we seem unable to take the kind of risky steps—in either our divinity or our seminary schools—to change all that. Maybe the old chair, despite its shortcomings, is the best that we can do, but I find that hard to swallow.

On the other hand, our fourfold model and our embrace of certain historic antecedents seemingly define the "turf" of disciplinary decisions, including the schools we look to in hiring as well as contract, rank, and tenure decisions. Today's postbaccalaureate theological education, like it or not, is convincingly tied to the academy. Accordingly, it could be argued that the current pattern is secure because it has economic consequences; that is, the system we have works for those of us who are in the system. But is this the kind of security that drew us into theology in the first place? Can it be that even though we recognize our existence in a post-Christendom context, we remain willing to continue our investment in what was, not willing to step out on the water and risk what might be in our future?

In all this, I find Moltmann's historic argument—to live into the resurrection-based promise of the future—highly persuasive; but only time will tell.

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What Progressive Protestants Can Learn from Jewish Engagement with Scripture

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ABSTRACT: *Forty years ago, Rosemary Ruether laid out a visionary plan for changes in Christian theological education as it relates to Jews and Judaism. This essay builds on her unfinished agenda and illuminates what progressive Protestants can learn from Jewish engagement with Scripture, reflecting on the experience of a rabbi/scholar who serves as a tenured faculty member in a primarily Christian seminary. While emphasizing the study of Judaism for its own sake, Christian students also discover transformative keys to their own spiritual formation.*

It was just over 40 years ago that Rosemary Ruether laid out a visionary plan for changes in Christian theological education as it relates to Jews and Judaism (*Faith and Fratricide*, 1974). A decade prior, Vatican II's statement, *Nostra Aetate*, had launched a similarly radical reassessment (1965). In Ruether's plan to educate for a new relationship, she focused on three primary areas: biblical scholarship, church history, and theology. She also insisted that students, faculty, clergy, and the laity seek out face-to-face encounters with real Jews and the living Jewish tradition.

In the field of biblical scholarship, Ruether argued that Christian theological education should include Jewish interpretations from midrash and commentary, teach about the rabbinic context of Jesus and Paul, and overcome the anti-Jewish implications of Christian Scriptures in preaching and teaching. In church history, she asserted the importance of teaching about Christian legal and social persecution of Jews and the catastrophic "translation of theological anti-Judaism into social anti-Semitism."[1] In theology, she pressed the need to reckon with anti-Judaic implications of foundational beliefs and language.

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1. Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 259.

While these goals are not yet fully realized, many Christian seminaries, colleges, and churches made major strides. In the process, it became evident that much of the work was too Christian-centric, that examination of Jesus's Jewishness was primarily interested in Christian origins. Theological reconsideration of Jews in the New Testament still focused on literary Jews rather than real ones, and occasional encounters with living Jewish tradition were not sufficient. Judaism, even in Christian seminaries, needs to be studied as an independent religious tradition—one of vital and thick relationship with Christianity but ontologically significant in its own right.

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Christian seminaries and colleges, therefore, began bringing scholars of Judaism (frequently Jewish scholars) on to their faculties. I came to Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) six years ago as the inaugural chair in Jewish Studies at the first independent Protestant seminary to endow such a position.[2] Before my arrival, a local congregational rabbi had been teaching for decades as an adjunct professor, an intermediate step that represents what most schools can afford. Students over the years had learned about Jewish prayer and practice, history, contemporary Jewish thinkers, and so forth—Judaism *qua* Judaism.

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2.   A description of my context may be helpful. Chicago Theological Seminary is a politically and religiously progressive Protestant seminary with a focus on "transformative leadership." It is affiliated with the United Church of Christ but draws students from dozens of Christian denominations. The student body also includes Quaker, Universalist Unitarian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, humanist, and transreligious individuals. Among a series of central commitments to combat poverty, injustice, racism, sexism, homophobia, and hopelessness, the "Vision, Mission, and Commitment" statement sets this paragraph:

> We are committed, in conscious response to the Holocaust and in recognition of the toll taken by religious divisions in our world, to fostering better understanding and collaboration among religious traditions, paying particular attention to cooperation among Christianity, Judaism, and Islam toward the end of realizing the aims of the prophetic traditions.

A full-time faculty member, however, changes the equation. I am a member of the community—a committed Jew, a rabbi—and an integral part of this primarily Christian seminary. It is no longer simply a matter of teaching *about* Judaism; rather, the ongoing engagement of students and faculty with Jews and Jewish tradition transforms the way the community thinks about theological education. We still emphasize the need to study Judaism *lishmah* (for its own sake). Strangely, however, the more intricately embedded, the more integral my presence and teaching become in crafting a collective vision, the more they seem to impact Christian students and faculty *as Christians*.

Using Ruether's unfinished agenda related to biblical studies, I offer some reflections about my experience at CTS, illuminating what this community of progressive Protestants appears to learn from Jewish engagement with Scripture.

Teaching rabbinic interpretation

Why did Ruether promote inclusion of Jewish biblical interpretation? Presumably, she wanted to demonstrate that there is another religious community who claims the Hebrew Bible as sacred scripture, with its own equally valid exegetical tradition. This is a worthy goal. It not only brings the continuous Jewish engagement with Scripture to life, however; it also shapes how students perceive their own interpretive lenses.

I teach a course called History of Jewish Thought. Because the vast majority of Jews today are shaped by rabbinic Judaism, we spend half the semester studying rabbinic texts. As students observe how the rabbis read the biblical text through the lens of their own experience, they see more readily how the authors of the New Testament do the same. *Maaseh avot siman labanim*, the rabbis assert: That which happens to the [biblical] ancestors is a sign for their descendants.[3] The Book of Lamentations speaks to the rabbis' own suffering in exile, centuries later. Esau's animosity toward Jacob reflects Roman oppression of Israel. Biblical affirmation that the covenant abides and promises of restoration continue to sustain the hope of the nation.

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3.   The Hebrew articulation changes (see, for example, *b. Sotah 34a*, Nachmanides on Gen 12:6), but the hermeneutical principle remains consistent.

Suddenly the students grasp the import of Walter Breuggemann's insight in *Theology of the Old Testament*: Seeing "fulfillment in Jesus Christ" of passages from the Hebrew Bible is a subsequent Christian interpretation, not a prophetic mystery. ". . . [T]he Old Testament (even the Old Testament as a confessional Christian document) does not narrowly or resolutely point to Jesus of Nazareth."[4] He maintains that such readings are among the hermeneutic possibilities

> **❝** *Studying Jewish engagement with Scripture helps [students] re-embrace exegetical dynamism and even contradiction.*

of a text overflowing with promise, but they can no longer foreclose the contextual sense of the passage or trump other interpretations. Abandoning hermeneutical supersessionism, students can still imagine Jesus as a suffering servant, for example, without seeing it as *intended* in the Book of Isaiah. This move does not diminish the inspirational capacity of Scripture; instead, equipped with a rich collection of rabbinic interpretations that identify with the servant as the people of Israel, students relate a revitalized sense of this figure's abiding relevance in the religious imagination.

Something else happens as well. Since my Jewish background trains me to embrace the multivocal and provisional exegeses of Scripture, it can still surprise me that the broad array of Protestants in my classroom frequently find it to be a new and liberating idea. Even as they study all the critical lenses that deconstruct and reconstruct meaning in the text, and even as they recognize the multiplicity that results from *sola Scriptura*, they are initially liable to expect *one* interpretation to be true (and often universal). Part of this instinct is likely a result of the misapplication of scientific theory to hermeneutics, but it also reflects the residue of doctrinal exegesis. Studying Jewish engagement with Scripture helps them re-embrace exegetical dynamism and even contradiction.

The most surprising part of this process for students is that the interpretive tradition *expands* exegetical possibilities. Many carry with them subconscious baggage of the Reformation, viewing the history of Catholic exegesis as a burden they must shed in order to free the revelatory text

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4. Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 109.

from its institutional confines. After coming to appreciate the multivocality of Jewish interpretation, however, they can see how the Catholic *Glossa Ordinaria* in some ways offered the same type of "conversation" as *Mikraot Gedolot*, the classic collection of medieval rabbinic commentators. Best sellers in the Middle Ages, both works collected commentary from across boundaries of time and space in ongoing engagement with the living Word. My students frequently determine that the history of exegesis does not provide satisfactory answers to their concerns, but they are astounded that almost all of their questions are raised within, alongside other compelling queries that did not even occur to them.

Jewish engagement with Scripture also reintroduces them to the art of close reading—not for a technical gloss or grammatical parsing—but to unpack possibilities of meaning. This exercise was common to all interpreters of antiquity and late antiquity, who saw their Bible as thick with hidden significance, but it is not as common among Protestant readers today.

Cain said to his brother Abel . . . and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him (Gen 3:8 JPS). In *Genesis Rabba 22:7*, the rabbis excavate the ellipsis: What words could possibly have been uttered that would prompt a man to murder his brother? The students are delighted to discover the gap in the Hebrew text that was bridged by the Septuagint, and they plunge into the archetypal sources of human conflict raised by the midrash. In a different course, students read closely a collection of Hebrew Bible passages and realize that all the primary discourses about justice today are found within: not only the retributive justice of reward and punishment

> **"** *[A close reading of Hebrew Bible passages] challenges and inspires them to imagine a more enlightened criminal justice system, to reconsider what combination of forces make for justice, and to think more deeply about the moral order of heaven and earth.*

but also restorative, procedural, and distributive notions of justice. It challenges and inspires them to imagine a more enlightened criminal justice system, to reconsider what combination of forces make for justice, and to think more deeply about the moral order of heaven and earth.

Another liberative discovery is the development of faith as protest within rabbinic literature. Students understand the prophetic tradition of sacred discontent, of protesting "against the world that is, in the name of the world that is not yet but ought to be."[5] Speaking truth to power appeals a great deal to these progressive Protestants, but most draw the line when it comes to speaking over against God. Jewish tradition, however, recognizes the bold precedent of Abraham, Moses, and Job and the powerful plaints made in Psalms and Lamentations; it embraces protest against God as an authentic religious posture. *Chutzpa klapei shamaya—chutzpah* over against Heaven, challenging Divine justice, questioning Divine power— paradoxically affirms faith in God by the expectations it reveals. Freed from supposed customs of proper piety to express *all* their hopes and rage and frustration and love, some students report drawing closer to God.

One of the most valuable doorways that I believe is opened by studying Jewish engagement with Scripture is a hermeneutic that develops from the requirement that we read even the ugly texts. The lectionary cycle in Judaism reads the Torah straight through, including first family dysfunction and instructions for genocide. Although it is more selective with prophetic and other texts, the readings do not shy away from problematic passages. The searing doubt of Ecclesiastes is read during Sukkot, the festival of our joy. We recite the entire Book of Esther at Purim—even the bloody retribution of the Jews upon their would-be attackers. Never mind that it is an invented tale; the text records a mighty celebration of this literary slaughter.

There are many ways in which humans circumscribe the text: Marcion's heresy, Jefferson's naturalism, lectionary frameworks, and selective memory all excise some of the difficulties. I frequently share with my students a poem by Yehudah Amichai with a brilliant insight about the resulting "Reader's Digest" Bible. He claims he *tried* to edit Scripture:

> I've filtered out of the Book of Esther
> the residue of vulgar joy, and out of the Book of Jeremiah
> the howl of pain in the guts. And out of the
> Song of Songs the endless search
> of love, and out of the Book of Genesis
> the dreams and Cain, and out of Ecclesiastes

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5. Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility* (New York: Schocken, 2005), 27.

the despair and out of the Book of Job—Job.
And from what was left over I pasted for myself a new Bible.
Now I live censored and pasted and limited and in peace . . .[6]

What is he saying? Basically, he took out everything that was ethically objectionable, emotionally unbearable, or intellectually suspect—and there was not much left. He is saying a text that does not reckon with unmerited suffering and choking despair cannot speak to the human condition. A text that cannot imagine fratricide and genocide alongside liberation and holiness is surely easier to read, but it cannot tell the whole story. It would leave us censored, pasted, and limited.

"Scripture is not a Boy Scout manual," my teacher Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf used to bellow. It does not lay out in easy steps God's path of goodness. It is not to be read as a guidebook with all the answers. It contains the *questions*. It is a syllabus for a lifelong course in advanced ethics. Contradictions within the text, a multiplicity of interpretations, the clash with contemporary values—all these irritations are designed to create dialectical tension. We read closely, consider carefully, consult history, rub the sore spots—and we produce from the irritating grains of sand precious pearls of Scriptural instruction. We cannot simply spiritualize or ignore all the tough parts, because that is where the ethical work really happens: texts as tools of moral development.

As Jewish exegesis explores possibilities of meaning within parts of Hebrew Bible that most of our students had rarely considered, they also begin to notice what R. Kendall Soulen calls "structural supersession" in the way that early Christian commentators read the dual canon. It rendered Septuagint indecisive for Christian theology in imagining God's redemptive plan. The essential religious narratives became creation, the Fall, the incarnation of Jesus, and the final consummation—bypassing entirely God's involvement with the people of Israel.[7] Eager to reclaim theologies of the Divine that are deeply invested in the incarnation of creation and the unfolding of earthly history in ways large and small, students rediscover a vast and fertile ground.

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6.   Yehuda Amichai, *Time: Poems*, trans. with Ted Hughes (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 29.

7.   R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 28–33.

The proto-rabbinic context of Jesus and Paul

At CTS, our professors of New Testament have been teaching the texts through a Jewish prism for many years. They present Jesus as an observant Jew and the literary assaults on the Pharisees as an internal Jewish polemic with the closest "competition." They recognize the Jesus movement as an emerging particularity, alongside other expressions of Judaism—all struggling to maintain their identity over against the universalist imperial engine of the Greco-Roman world, even as they are also significantly impacted by it. These insights help to defuse some of the anti-Judaism that stained Christian teaching in history.

Engagement with rabbinic literature adds two critical dimensions. The more established endeavor relates to New Testament study, for which careful analysis of historical context and Jewish tradition allows us to better understand what the text may be trying to teach. For example, the Mishnah (*Yoma 8:1*) testifies that Jewish law had transformed "eye for an eye" into a system of restorative justice: One is liable to compensate the injured party for pain, for time lost from work, for medical expenses, for any permanent loss in earning potential, and for emotional suffering. No reciprocal eye gouging is involved. Redacted at the end of the second century CE, this rabbinic text is evidently recounting law already in force in the Jewish community and is important if one is to understand Jesus' perspective in Matthew 5.

Another example is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). Long treated in Christian exegesis as a critique of Jewish purity praxis—as if the priest and the Levite pass by the wounded traveler because of concerns about contact with a corpse—the passage actually says nothing of the kind, and rabbinic law makes the interpretation highly unlikely. *Mishnah Nazir 7:1* insists that even the high priest must attend to a neglected corpse without concern about contracting uncleanness. Jewish tradition also gave precedence to the possibility of saving a life (*pikuach nefesh*) over any ritual instruction.[8] Stripping the exegesis of erroneous assumptions allows the narrative to drive home its message more effectively with the still-pressing question, "Who is

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8.   The Talmud most directly roots the principle in Leviticus 18:5: *You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which a person shall <u>live</u>; I am YHWH.* Jewish tradition generally cites the Hasmoneans' decision to defend themselves on Shabbat in 167 BCE as the earliest recorded example.

our neighbor?" The priest and the Levite have significant responsibilities on behalf of the community—they, of all people, *should* have stopped to help—and yet they turn away. The third passerby, whom narrative logic suggests will behave differently, surprises the listener because he is not "Israel" but a Samaritan, an identity with some historical hostility toward the Judean community. Like the lesson of Jonah, we learn that human interdependency and compassion do not stop at national boundaries; they extend even to our enemies.

> 66 *Engagement with rabbinic literature adds . . . to New Testament study, for which careful analysis of historical context and Jewish tradition allows us to better understand what the text may be trying to teach.*

It is the of study rabbinic literature for its own sake, however, that catalyzes Christian spiritual formation in new ways. We study the rabbinic *mashal* and appreciate how parables were essential pedagogical tools of the age. We look at sage stories about miracle workers and charismatics in the late Second Temple period. Honi the Circle Drawer is among the most famous. Like all the great miracle workers of his time, including Honi's grandsons Hilkiah and Hanan, he could command the rain. Students begin to see such gifts, less as signs of special status than as Divine graces to provide what the people most desperately need. The portrait of Rabbi Hanina b. Dosa seems most illuminating to them; just a few years younger than Jesus, he cured the sick even from afar (*y. Berachot 9d*), just as Jesus healed the servant of the Roman centurion (Matt 8:5–13, Luke 7:1–10, John 4:46–54), and he also cast out demons (*b. Pesachim 112b*). Rabbi Hanina had issues with established leadership, too, driven by their concerns that his power could disrupt the status quo.

We look at rabbinic stories of preternatural infants, voices that critique imperial oppression, and efforts to distill the highest values of Jewish text and tradition that reshaped praxis and community.[9] We examine evolving

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9. Examples of preternatural infants include Moses in Josephus *Antiquities II, b. Sotah 12b, Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer 48, Midrash vaYosha*. There are a variety of reform movements at work among Second Temple Judaisms: the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls inveighed against the corrupt leadership of the Temple, disciple circles of pharisees worked to interpret the text in new ways, and zealots sought to challenge the oppressive power of Rome.

Jewish ideas of messianism. For our students, especially those who prefer a Christology that emphasizes the earthly ministry of Jesus, studying these Jewish texts helps them make sense of Jesus's work. They are drawn to consider the tremendous theological implications, as Daniel Boyarin does in his most recent book[10] of Jesus appearing in history in an extraordinarily normal way.

Overcoming anti-Jewish texts and traditions

Amy-Jill Levine from Vanderbilt University came to speak at CTS a few years ago, presenting her top 10 pitfalls of Christian interpretation.[11] Our students were surprised by how many of these errors they themselves had committed: denigrating "the law" or seeing it as an impossible burden, presuming that Jewish emphasis on praxis was how Jews imagined earning Divine love and salvation, maintaining that God stood distant in Jewish imagination until Jesus called him Abba, believing that Jews were parochial and exclusive so Paul invented universalism (like Al Gore invented the Internet), thinking that Jesus stood over against a "Temple domination system." In many ways they knew better, but when she mentioned specific New Testament texts and the history of interpretation, they recognized their own understanding.

It was true even for those who had come to appreciate how the praxis of Shabbat fashions sacred time, how *halachah* could be a dynamic embodiment of values, not a sterile diminution of Divine teaching. Even those who knew to translate Torah as Divine instruction, not law, realized they still spoke about the letter and the spirit in ways that presumed most Jews

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10. Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels* (New York: New Press, 2012). For Boyarin, it is not simply Jesus's manner of teaching, his mission of reform, and his special gifts but also many of the theological tropes we consider most Christian that flow from the deep reservoir of Jewish religious imagination. Other academics and clergy have investigated related questions of Jewish precedent for what most people now identify as Christian concepts; see, for example, Israel Knohl, *The Messiah Before Jesus*, trans. David Maisel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Prayer of Joseph," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha II,* ed. James H. Charlesworth (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 699–714; John Shelby Spong, *Liberating the Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1997).

11. A brief rendering of this list is available in Levine, "Bearing False Witness: Common Errors Made about Early Judaism," *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 501–504.

of the time to have missed the point. Even those who believed that God's love is not conditional in Judaism, and that observance is about covenant and relationship rather than salvation, still recalled having set works and faith as universally oppositional paths to being saved.

Even those who had read texts in which God goes into exile with the nation and who saw how Hebrew Bible relates a deep intimacy between God and Israel, had also preached how Jesus was the first to draw God near. Even those who knew about Philo and Hellenistic influence in universal philosophy, and those who knew that rabbinic Jews also proselytized until it was ruled illegal by Christian emperors, had at times mistaken particularism for parochialism. Even those who knew of the people's deep love for the Temple and the national trauma of

> **❝** *How could they have learned so much and still make the classic mistakes of interpretation? Until they connected what they studied about Jews and Judaism back with their identity as Christians, back to the preaching they had heard growing up, they could never relearn it.*

its destruction, had equated it with Roman oppression; they imagined that Jesus sought to topple it rather than reform it.

How could this be? How could they have learned so much and still make the classic mistakes of interpretation? Until they connected what they studied about Jews and Judaism back with their identity as Christians, back to the preaching they had heard growing up, they could never relearn it. It was as if they no longer believed these denunciations were true but still accepted that they were surely what the New Testament taught. When I decided to come to CTS, it did not really occur to me that teaching Jewish studies here would be an important part of Christian spiritual formation; I naively thought I was simply coming to teach *about* Judaism. It is only through opening new ways of knowing themselves as Christians, however, that the Jewish teachings securely take root.

Closing reflection

These observations echo some of the emerging methodology of comparative theology, in which one's own faith is enriched and complicated by deep understanding of the discourses, perspectives, practices, and priorities of another tradition. To the extent that these concepts are assimilated into one's own theology and practice, there is the potential problem of erasure. No respectful encounter with someone else can be "all about me," even if it is motivated by a desire not to misrepresent the other and a readiness to be changed by the meeting.

This issue is especially fraught in a context of Christian privilege. Thus, in addition to teaching Judaism (and other traditions) as ontologically significant in its own right, we are working to shape an approach to theological education that is about "us." We have started small, examining curriculum and community; reinvigorating our Center for Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Studies; and recruiting a self-consciously multifaith cohort that can model the transformative engagement we expect in spiritual formation. Recognizing that the Master of Divinity degree is inherently Christian in organizational structure and the societal superstructure, we are working through our range of graduate degree programs. We have also implemented a requirement in the MDiv program to pursue advanced course work in a non-Christian tradition because we believe that one cannot be a religious leader or teacher in our multifaith context without knowing something about other religions. We do not know yet where this encounter will lead us, but it draws its strength, as many things do, from our collective engagement with sacred text.

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