

# ATS publication honors twenty years of women leaders

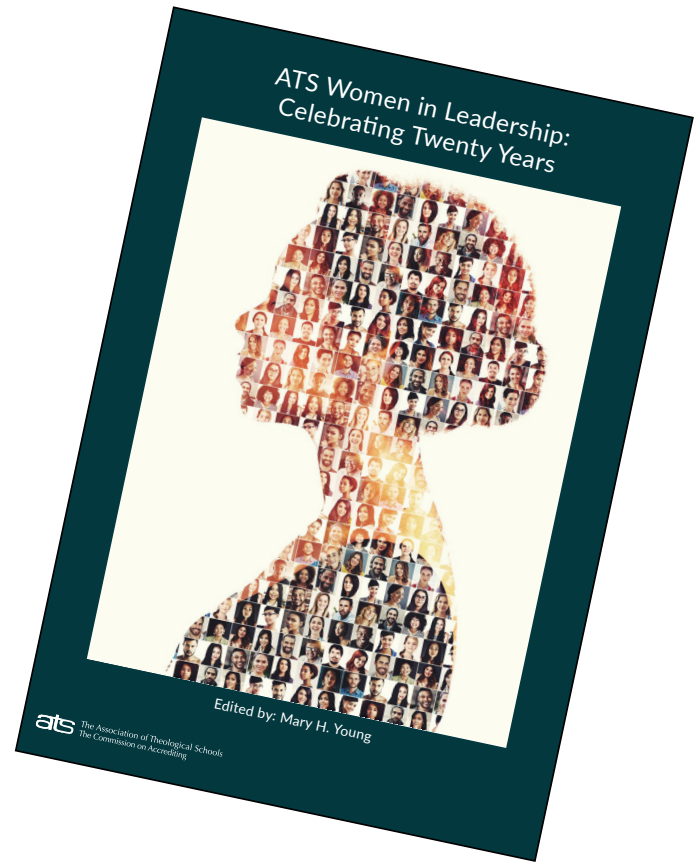
BY *MARISSA DECHANT*

*A series of essays celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the ATS Women in Leadership (WIL) initiative is now available to read online for free. ATS Women in Leadership: Celebrating Twenty Years was published on the Books@Atla Open Press website in November.*

The collection, edited by Mary Young, ATS director of leadership education, focuses on the women's personal narratives of leadership experiences and research interests, shared with the aim of highlighting the impact and the work of women in theological education. In addition to the eight essays are research findings from two ATS staff members and one outside researcher.

"I am particularly pleased that this volume has been brought to fruition and that we have an opportunity to share aspects of the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Association's work with women," said Young. "Each of the writers speaks to significant aspects of leadership shaped by the unique gifts, callings, challenges, and celebrations that women encounter on the leadership journey."

The WIL initiative has been included in the Association's programmatic efforts since 1997, to support the professional development of women in theological education and advise educational programs for women students. The essays included in *ATS Women in Leadership* originated from the 2017 ATS WIL research project and subsequent anniversary event, which brought together women leaders from member schools to share wisdom and discuss professional challenges.



A handful of theological educators wrote essays prior to the event, with the majority of them attending the gathering to discuss their pieces.

*ATS Women in Leadership* brings those essays to the larger ATS membership to share various perspectives from women leaders and to identify key findings that emerged from the 2017 research project examining the Association's 20-year work with women in leadership.

"In perusing the experiences of the writers, I trust that institutional leaders will gain insights on how to both celebrate and advocate for women leaders among their own ranks. It is my hope that individual women who read this publication will gain insights, strategies, and perspectives that strengthen their leadership capacities and inspire hope and optimism for their work in theological institutions," said Young.



The publication includes framing essays by ATS staff members **Jo Ann Deasy**, director of institutional initiatives and student research, and **Deborah H. C. Gin**, director of research and faculty development and staff leader for the WIL research project. Both essays focus on aspects of the 2017 ATS WIL research project, including pathways into leadership, mentoring and advocacy, factors preventing women from advancing in leadership, and harassment based on gender.



Outside researcher **Samantha Plummer**, a postdoctoral research scholar at Columbia University who assisted with the ATS WIL research project, also provides a piece on women leaders' emotional labor, in concert with data gathered from the WIL research interviews.

The contributors to *ATS Women in Leadership* and their essay topics are:



**Chung-Yan Joyce Chan**, academic vice president at Carey Theological College, suggests that minority women are underrepresented in theological education due to the intersectionality of their lives. She advocates for the need to

focus on Asian and other minoritized women and their pathways to leadership.



**Charisse L. Gillett**, president of Lexington Theological Seminary, offers a personal reflection on the matter of invisibility as a female leader. She provides strategies to ensuring that one's voice is heard and contributions to

decision-making processes are impactful.



**J. Dorcas Gordon**, principal emerita of Knox College, reflects on her early years as the first woman to serve as a seminary principal in her denomination. She describes her "way of being" as a female leader using a feminist biblical framework.



**Alison P. Gise Johnson**, associate professor of historical and theological studies at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University, writes a revealing comparison between ordinary leaders and extraordinary

leaders. She challenges women to lead in ways that build a sustainable future characterized by balance and harmony.



**Loida I. Martell**, vice president of academic affairs and dean at Lexington Theological Seminary, suggests that leaders of color are often viewed as foreign bodies in academic spaces. She offers a spirituality of education

that seeks to dismantle the current system of race and privilege.



**Elsie M. Miranda**, ATS director of accreditation, considers how women's experiences of "otherness" can provide a source of wisdom for effective leadership in diverse contexts. She proposes how theological education in the US

might benefit from more inclusive, dialogical methods of leadership.



**Shawn L. Oliver**, associate dean for planning and assessment at Princeton Theological Seminary, writes about the impact that mentors, coaches, and other advocates have made in her theological education career. Speaking about

leading from the center, she illustrates how general leadership skills in higher education can be used in theological education.



**Barbara E. Reid**, vice president and academic dean at Catholic Theological Union (who was recently elected as its first woman president), provides a 20-year look at the landscape of Catholic women in ministry and in theological education, using ATS data points. Along with mentioning disconcerting realities that Catholic women face when considering senior leadership roles in Roman Catholic seminaries, she also offers a way forward with practical

suggestions of how women can support one another into leadership roles.

“This publication is offered with sincere gratitude to the women leaders who have given of their time and scholarship, and willingly shared their experiences as educators and researchers. We are grateful to offer this gift to all of our colleagues at ATS member schools,” Young said.

*ATS Women in Leadership: Celebrating Twenty Years* is available on the [Books@Atla Open Press website](#). The publication is available as open access in both PDF and EPUB formats under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial license.



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