
Theological Education

Theological Education
as Teaching and Learning

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Continuing the Conversation

Theological Education invites short responses to articles published in this issue to encourage and promote conversation among its readers. Reader responses should be fewer than 1500 words and may be edited for length. Please send responses to Managing Editor, ATS, 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103 <merrill@ats.edu>.

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Theological Education, the journal of The Association of Theological Schools, is devoted solely to issues and ideas in graduate theological education in North America. The journal supports the mission of the Association by: (1) providing a forum for scholarly discourse on current issues and trends in graduate theological education in the United States and Canada; (2) addressing the contemporary issues facing the community of theological schools; (3) sharing models of critical analysis and effective practice in theological education; and (4) recording the changes and advances in theological education.

Introduction

Michael A. Fahey

Marquette University

The early Christians shared with their pagan predecessors a fascination for the dialectic nature of teaching and learning. As early as the mid-200s, Cyprian of Carthage wrote in a letter to his counterpart in Rome the wise reflection that even Socrates would have applauded: “Bishops must not only teach but also learn; persons become better teachers when they daily make progress and advancement in learning what is better” (ep. 74:10). In a modest way, this issue of *Theological Education* attempts to continue that ongoing fascination Christians have for the dynamics of learning and teaching. From a rich cross-section of the ATS membership—professors, researchers, and administrators—we offer a variety of insights on how we learn and how we teach the Word of God in the context of theological schools.

The first contribution is a thought-provoking article by Kenneth O. Gangel, formerly of Dallas Theological Seminary, now retired and directing graduate studies at Toccoa Falls College, Georgia. His theme is “Delivering Theological Education That Works.” He reminds us of the often neglected historical fact that in the United States from colonial days, well before the Revolutionary War, the highest priority within Christian higher education was extended to ministerial education. There has been a long tradition of combining academic quality, spiritual vitality, and ministerial integrity. In short, theological education must be one that “works.” Drawing upon insights he has garnered during his many years of involvement in the educational ministry, Dr. Gangel argues that teaching needs to be attractive, beneficial, congruent, distinctive, effective, functional, and finally growth-producing. He then offers several practical check-lists to assist faculty. His article closes with an exploration of several problematic issues in schools devoted to ministerial training: why is there sometimes a lack of quality work by students, what are the significant trends in seminary education, and finally, how can we best adapt classroom procedures to our special needs? He offers four easy-to-use suggestions.

The next study is presented by Christine E. Blair of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, where she is director of the D.Min. program and associate professor of practical theology. She discusses: “Understanding Adult Learners: Challenges for Theological Education.” Many of her ideas are very congruent with the preceding article, but her focus is specifically on adult *learners*. Her emphasis is not on teaching but on the learning process as it is experienced by persons who already possess notable resources of experience in both church and world. She draws upon a growing corpus of educational

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research devoted to adult learning. To this she adds her teaching experience and data she has culled from recent graduates in Doctor of Ministry and continuing education programs. Her conviction is that faculty members need to be helped to understand adult learners and to develop more effective teaching models and strategies. Crucial in this undertaking is creating a learning environment that is supportive, with multiple opportunities for reflection and engaging the mind. She also favors a dialogical problem-solving education model in which teachers and learners become co-investigators.

Kraig Klaudt has long been associated with the World Health Organization's Global Tuberculosis Programme in Geneva, Switzerland, and has also worked for various international Christian development organizations that promote social change. Over the years he has undertaken a variety of visits to India, staying at ashrams and trying to appreciate the universal value of the religious thought associated with Gandhi, Tagore, and Sri Aurobindo. In his present reflection, the author proposes "The Ashram as a Model for Theological Education." He reasons that the modern Indian ashrams, themselves the fruit of a thousand years of Hindu wisdom, provide us with an alternative model for learning notably distinctive from pedagogical practices of North American and European theological schools or Bible schools, but one that could enrich theological education. The Indian ashrams promote person-centered pedagogical strategies that not only foster spiritual and theological development but also sensitize students to issues of social justice. These ashrams are open to all prospective students; they offer an experience in shared community living; they draw upon the teacher's or guru's maturity and wisdom. Furthermore, their curriculum is holistic, and their environment unabashedly religious. In terms of methodology, ashrams promote flexibility and develop students' skills in self-evaluation. Western theological educators may find it interesting to familiarize themselves with the model of ashrams.

The next contribution summarizes a conference, supported by the Presbyterian Church (USA), that in June 1997 brought together in Santa Fe, New Mexico, an ecumenical cross-section of urban theological educators from fifteen seminaries to explore the curricula and resources of urban training programs in the U.S. Several of the participants (Warren Dennis of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Katie Day of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and Ron Peters of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary) collaborated to provide an account and an evaluative analysis of what emerged from that gathering under the title: "Urban Theological Education: A Conversation about Curriculum." One special concern was bridging the gap between theological education in the academy and the praxis of urban ministry. The conference understood urban ministry as the life and work of the church not only in urban communities but also in neighborhoods and suburbs economically tied to the cities and experiencing similar patterns of population density and diversity. The essay concludes with specific suggestions in

response to these challenges.

Along the same lines, Robert V. Kemper of Southern Methodist University, in his article "Theological Education for Urban Ministry: A Survey of U.S. Seminaries," provides a wealth of statistical information describing what is being done and identifying ATS institutions that specialize in urban ministry. The material is analyzed according to denominational traditions and along U.S. geographical regions, specifically the Northeast, Midwest, South, and the West. He documents the fact that only one-third of ATS schools offer specific courses in urban ministry. He lists these regionally and denominationally. Of the 169 U.S. seminaries and divinity schools studied, only 56 offer courses in urban studies. The article includes a thematic analysis of courses offered in these settings.

Timothy D. Lincoln of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary provides a fascinating study of an issue much discussed across our continent, namely: "The Shapes of Goodness: Theological Libraries Journeying to the Millennium." He is convinced that in the next decade students in our theological schools will learn in an information environment in which they will make use of both print and electronic resources (whether stored and managed locally or elsewhere). The theological library will continue to be an indispensable resource, but its configuration will be much different. Rather than just waiting for the future to happen, librarians and administrators need to be proactive and help to shape that future. This will require, for instance, more innovative cooperation among libraries. Special attention will be needed to help users in the complex task of finding and managing information. Ultimately each individual library will need to discern its precise local mission, its technological capacity, and the ways in which faculty and students are teaching and learning.

The final essay in this rich collection of articles focuses on the all-important role of the academic dean in ATS schools. The author is Wilson Yates, president of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, who describes what he calls "The Art and Politics of Deaning." Originally given as an address at an ATS conference for chief academic officers in Pittsburgh this past October, the reflections draw upon the author's eight years of experience as dean. He explores the interaction between the dean and the president of theological schools, stressing the need for them to focus on the larger tasks of theological education. The dean needs to reflect commitment to the institution's mission. The successful dean draws upon the talents of the president and the teaching staff to assist in the dean's work. The author describes the dean as "gatekeeper" in the institution, responsible for a flow and interpretation of information to those who seek understanding about human and educational resources. He concludes by highlighting the importance of the dean to nurture a spiritual life that will enable him or her to converse with God on the challenges and tasks to be accomplished.

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As our theological community now approaches ever closer to the new millennium, with all the technological and social changes and challenges that will surely face us in the coming decade, we take heart in knowing that The Association of Theological Schools, by affording us personal exchanges and published insights of its members, remains a creative and sustaining influence in our collective mission of learning and teaching.

Michael A. Fahey is chair of the ATS Publications Advisory Committee and served as dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of St. Michael's College in Toronto for ten years. He joined the faculty of Marquette University in the fall of 1997 as the first holder of the Emmett Doerr Chair in Systematic Theology.

Delivering Theological Education That Works

Kenneth O. Gangel
Toccoa Falls College

ABSTRACT: Although seminaries and theological schools must pay continual attention to both the process and product of education, delivery systems represent a significant area of discussion and concern in this decade. This article offers practical guidelines for enhancing the way in which graduates use their theological education years after their formal schooling has been completed. It is written from an intended and transparent position of evangelical theism.

Etched above the gates to Harvard University one can read the following words:

After God had carried us safe to New England and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship and settled the civil government, one of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches when our present ministers shall lie in dust.

So begins Mel Shoemaker's provocative article entitled "Ministerial Education: Basis for Renewal."¹ Shoemaker goes on to note, "Ministerial education has been and must always be the number one priority of the church and Christian higher education." He observes that "Prior to the Revolutionary War every Ivy League institution in the Colonies, except the University of Pennsylvania, was established by a branch of the church primarily for the training of ministers."

But as we approach the twenty-first century, ministerial education, particularly at the seminary level, shows signs of significant growth and health while at the same time defending itself against withering attacks from the very churches it is designed to serve. If we were to distill all we have read in the research of this decade about theological education, we could probably boil the central issue down to one challenge: *delivering theological education that works*. Some have called this avoiding the "spray and pray" approach to seminary.

The key question is simple: how can we enhance and increase student use of what we teach them? A business research organization called Training Plus

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estimates that ninety percent of what students learn in business schools is left in the classroom and only ten percent taken to the job. If those statistics even remotely pertain to theological education, our critics have a frightening case. Surely it is the intent of every seminary that seeks excellence to combine academic quality, spiritual vitality, and ministerial integrity. This study strives to ask and answer four questions in an attempt to improve our ability to deliver theological education that works. It is admittedly written from a popular rather than scholarly perspective, which seems justified by the very issue it addresses.

What Are the Criteria for Quality Academic Programs?

In his brilliant book *Twilight of a Great Civilization*, Carl Henry emphasizes the task of evangelism but adds, “If while evangelizing we abandon education to alien philosophies, we shall abet a climate that condemns Christianity as a religion for anti-intellectuals only. We shall veil the fact that the reasons given for modern unbelief are invalid rationalizations. We shall obscure the truth that evangelical theism involves a compelling intellectual commitment.”²

A seminary must design academic programs of quality across its curriculum and there must be some way to identify that quality; consequently the measures may be more qualitative than quantitative, more subjective than objective. The following is adapted from research by Bergquist and Armstrong that appeared as chapter one in their useful book *Planning Effectively for Educational Quality*.³

A. *Quality academic programs are attractive—they respond to genuine needs because they do something that brings people into them.* Too commonly we look at input factors such as library holdings, faculty books, doctorates, and GRE scores. But measurement ten years beyond graduation has to do with output factors, and attractive academic programs give promise of producing something students can use in the real world.

B. *Quality academic programs are beneficial—they do something helpful to students involved in them and therefore to the communities and churches they serve.* Let us recognize that an attractive academic program may not be beneficial once a student actually becomes enmeshed in its requirements and emphases. A department could satisfy criterion A but fail miserably at B.

C. *Quality academic programs are congruent—they do what they say they will do.* To put this simply, they fulfill catalog and brochure promises. In the words of Bergquist and Armstrong, “The quality of an educational program can be adequately assessed only if one can determine the extent to which the program has directly contributed to the desired outcome. This is called the ‘value-added’ definition of quality.”⁴

D. *Quality academic programs are distinctive because they respond to the unique characteristics of the institution they serve, and its constituencies, and are therefore not necessarily like other programs.* “Distinctive” is not a

haughty word; it simply means that a program reflects a seminary's own uniqueness and has not necessarily been adopted or even adapted from some other institution.

E. *Quality academic programs are effective—they do what they do very well and can demonstrate their effectiveness to others.* Again, Bergquist and Armstrong: "The program will be of highest quality, however, only when intended learning outcomes have been defined clearly and when achievement of these outcomes has been documented and communicated persuasively."⁵

F. *Quality academic programs are functional—they provide learners with knowledge and skills needed to perform ministry successfully in today's society.* This is extremely difficult to measure within several years after graduation. Part four of this article will deal with achieving long-range results. One seminary leader calls for seminaries to "evaluate our results by outcomes" and to "listen to the church, lay people, alumni and students to make sure we are effectively user-friendly and fulfilling."

G. *Quality academic programs are growth-producing—they enhance development in the number of important directions of learning.* Howard Hendricks once told the Dallas Seminary faculty that today's students enter the seminary with several glaring deficiencies: they are educationally deprived, biblically illiterate, theologically deficient, spiritually naïve, and possess a low tolerance for ambiguity. A quality academic program induces positive growth in each of these deficient areas as well as in the content of the discipline it handles.

So in all our academic programs we strive for excellence, accountability, and collegiality as well as information. Thomas McDaniel warns us that, "Grades, diplomas, and awards are not enough. If we are to help students reach their full potentials, college [and seminary] teachers must have courses and requirements that satisfy the deepest personal motives that people bring to the classroom."⁶

What Causes a Lack of Quality Work by Students?

It is difficult to find faculty in higher education today who do not bemoan the inferior quality of work done by contemporary students. Pouring in from dysfunctional families and deficient school systems, they bring all the negative "baggage" to our classes and expect transformation. In many cases, through diligent effort and God's grace, that transformation occurs, but along the way those of us who have been called to the teaching profession must continually ask ourselves what causes lack of quality work, avoiding the easy and often lazy excuses of blaming earlier domestic and academic environments.

In *The Quality Professor* by Robert Cornesky,⁷ the author attempts to narrow the problems to four, all of which fall under the influence of classroom teachers and academic administrators, thereby making them susceptible to at least some influence toward improvement.

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A. **Materials.** Those of us who have taught internationally, especially in Third World countries, have experienced this deficiency firsthand. In the post-modern Western world, however, students rightfully expect a certain reasonable level of books and course materials that are sufficient, appropriate, and current. When we do not provide these, or at least demonstrate to the student where they can be obtained, we contribute to the lack of quality work.

B. **Equipment.** Having served as a visiting or adjunct professor at more than thirty different institutions around the world, I know from experience that this creates a genuine problem at some seminaries. In many institutions, rather than computer-generated images that flutter across the screen, chalk-dust-covered professors still erase lists from boards that maintenance workers have not touched in a week. Obviously a seminary that wants excellence will procure the appropriate equipment, employ the people to prepare and maintain it for instruction, and provide the dollars to replace broken or outdated equipment essential to the educational process.

C. **People.** Even when materials and equipment are in place, the educational process can break down because of interpersonal problems between professors and students. Students who are inattentive, who act out immature behaviors, who fail to attend class, or always come late can destroy the best efforts of professors who have dedicated themselves to the learning task. On the other hand, the unenthusiastic, disorganized, and inconsistent professor can kill student incentive in all but the most self-directed learners.

D. **Procedure.** What we use, who we are, and whom we teach ultimately come into play in the actual process that goes on in the dynamic classroom. Is the class boring or too routine? Are the assignments irrelevant busywork? Do the methods enhance or erode communication? Does evaluation fit the objectives?

At any given point any one of these four can either enhance or deter educational quality. And let us not assume any overload of responsibility on the part of faculty here; at the graduate level, students play a major role in the learning outcomes generated by these components.

What Are the Trends in Seminary Teaching?

Teaching, of course, begins at the level of curriculum, and quality academic programs that deliver theological education that works must take into consideration everything we have learned about teaching adults, and especially about preparing them for ministry. As we design or redesign instructional programs, we must do so with one eye on mission and the other on vision.

A. **Andragogical research.** For full and detailed information on how adults learn, readers are referred to *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Adult Education*.⁸ But suffice it to say here that adults bring at least six different dynamics into the learning process: different needs, experiences, attitudes,

groupings, programs, and methods. Perhaps the biggest factor here is *need* because in adult learning an educational need is not really a need until the learner realizes it. This is never more obvious than the comparison between teaching a first-year master's student and a D.Min. student who has been in active ministry for ten or fifteen years.

B. *Self-directed learning*. This immediate spin-off from andragogy reminds us that the student, especially when he or she becomes a graduate, may no longer have experienced mentors to whom to turn with every question or problem. Apart from the objectives we design, students should be encouraged to develop their own objectives for each course and certainly, in the broad picture, for their entire degree programs. The student who spends hours at the Registrar's Office just checking to see whether requirements are being met, or selects classes because of the time of day they happen to meet, may be showing a lack of ministry readiness.

C. *Cooperative learning*. Often called "synergogy," this trend appears often in the current literature. Education, including seminary education, tends to be competitive and at times, even combative. But research indicates that North American education is turning away from that structure to the developing of collaborative and cooperative learning (synergogy) in which students work together to achieve mutually desirable goals. As long as we work with grades we will be hindered in the purity of collaborative learning, but we can make some great headway with group work in any approach that vectors away from each student standing against each other student to achieve a grade point average or an award.

D. *Increasing use of technology*. This is so obvious it hardly bears space here. Surely by the end of this decade every cutting-edge seminary will have determined the best electronic delivery system to serve its extension sites, continuing education, and lay training for ministry.

E. *Greater access to learning*. Distance learning enters almost every discussion about seminaries today; in ministry training it rushes to the forefront. Without weakening the central home base, seminaries continue to acknowledge that many people worthy of ministry development cannot uproot themselves domestically, geographically, and emotionally to devote several years for a residential program. Many seminaries are reaching scores of new students largely through massive use of extension programs. One can hardly imagine a world-class seminary seriously committed to impacting modern society in which no attention is paid to some form of extension or distance learning. Many potential learners who desperately need what we offer have family or work responsibilities and cannot easily relocate to attend seminary. Surely a frightening percentage are already serving in vocational ministry but require retooling, encouragement and, in some cases, even basic skills.

All of this reminds us again that content piled on content neither integrates truth nor develops ministry skills. I was surprised to learn somewhat recently

that many medical malpractice suits deal more with relational issues than surgical procedures. People seem to understand that medical science is not exact (a characteristic that certainly pertains to theological education as well), but they cannot forgive arrogance, coldness, and disregard for their needs. Though it has become something of a trite expression, at a seminary every faculty member is continually “doing theology.”

How Can I Adapt Classroom Procedures to Achieve Long-Range Results?

There is a bottom line here and it is simply stated: We must be more applicational in all phases of ministerial education. The North American model from kindergarten through graduate school has been “take it—test it—lose it.” And in ministry that simply will not work. To repeat, the real test comes ten years after graduation. Suppose we were to bring in the graduates of the class of 1988 and administer the exams for the 1997-98 academic year. Obviously we would make allowance for upgrading information and new generations of content as our faculties grow professionally. But the haunting question remains: are our students using what we teach them? If any doubt remains, how can we address this issue of functional ministry preparation?

A. *Design each class or course by asking key questions about the syllabus.* The course does not begin when we read the roll on the first day of class but when we first begin to construct the syllabus. Perhaps I should say, when we first begin to review and renew the syllabus. The following questions are hardly new but represent the interrogative backdrop for instructional design:

1. What do I want the student to learn?
2. Why do I want the student to learn this?
3. When he has learned it, what do I want him to do with it?
4. When he has learned it, how long do I expect him to retain it?
5. Can this objective be tested?
6. What provision will I make for varying learning abilities, such as rate, mode, motivation, and interpersonal variations?

B. *Focus on concepts applicable for a lifetime.* If we deal with absolute truth and life-long learning, we want to put into students’ hands tools they can use to work the mine for the next three or four decades. To be sure, we cannot predict what ministry skills might be necessary in 2010 or 2020, but we can at least take into consideration what we do know about the diversity and multiculturalism of the world as we know it today. Martin Marty talks about the “practical mode” and says, “This will turn out to have the most bearing on religious commitment in religious studies, along with theological interpretation and contributions by the academy to the practice and profession of ministry in and through religious institutions. . . . Let it be noted that in this

mode one would indeed locate religious belief, practice, professions, and preparation for them, action in the world, and even most theology."⁹

Ed Dobson emphasizes the importance of internships in preparation for a lifetime of ministry:

Training for the ministry involves much more than knowledge gained in a classroom. Successful ministry depends on relating that knowledge to the problems of real people in a real church. In a highly academic environment there is always the danger of becoming isolated from practical ministry. The application of classroom instruction to a real setting is vital.¹⁰

C. *Acknowledge and utilize the principle of successive rehearsals.* At first glance this looks to be the reverse of the practicality emphasized in earlier paragraphs, but research shows us that successive rehearsals tend to project knowledge and skills a great distance into the future, which is really a major portion of our goal. When students complain about crossover information between or among departments, they may very well be expressing a short-sighted view ("been there—done that") rather than understanding that three or four different approaches to the same concept could very well lodge that concept in mind and heart, making it much more usable in future years.

D. *Take aim at four levels as we envision a student using what we teach.* The relationship between cognition and application superimposes Bloom's taxonomy to higher levels of learning, thereby exposing its fundamental weakness, namely, dependence on the cognitive domain.

Seminaries can target *knowledge within a discipline*, which is much broader than knowledge for its own sake. Consider the class that offers exegetical studies deliberately designed to lay a foundation for teaching and preaching rather than focused just on mastering exegesis.

The next level is *knowledge between disciplines* in which, for example, the Pastoral Ministries and Intercultural Studies departments could blend their contributions toward a focus on urban ministries. To borrow from Marty again, "Despite opportunities that scholars in our fields do have to put their academic disinterestedness to work, many fail to close ranks within the relatively tiny part of the academic enterprise that incorporates religious and theological studies. Thereupon they 'divide the camp' to the bewilderment of bystanders, while contributing to the continuing opaque misunderstandings of the uninterested public, and the diminishing of our academic potential to create interest in that public."¹¹

The third level is *knowledge aimed at real world predictable situations*. We know that American students do well on Bloom's taxonomy but fail to cross the line into cognitive skills. Field education is a crucial component of what we do for it moves ministry preparation beyond the cognitive to the affective and cognitive domains.

Delivering Theological Education That Works

A fascinating publication entitled *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach* focuses on globalization in theological education and asks, “How can a seminary change the way it teaches in light of the ultimate goal of enabling the Church to be more faithful in an increasingly interdependent world?”¹² The report emphasizes that both the formal and informal aspects of seminary education must be focused when globalization as a world reality emphasizes the interdependence of unique peoples and cultures of the world, the constant all-pervasive presence of poverty and injustice, the need to inform ministry and service with appropriate social implications of the gospel, and an emphasis on the universal significance of the reign of God with its concomitant call to discipleship, servanthood, and hope.¹³

The fourth level focuses on the student *utilizing knowledge in real world unpredictable situations*. Obviously transcultural ministries are a major factor here, and the closer to actual life issues and problems we can take the student, the more he or she can interpolate to the unpredictable situations. I remember when Leith Anderson addressed our Dallas faculty and we asked him how he would change seminaries if he could. He responded by suggesting that seminaries should decrease subject matter for tradition’s sake and increase opportunities for non-traditional learning, ministry involvement of faculty, modeling experience opportunities, internships, and the recognition that there is no single model of theological education for the 1990s and the twenty-first century.

The Bible, of course, offers a transcultural message, and historic theism must be passed on as our essential heritage. *The problem is neither what we believe nor what we know but how we can get students to use it effectively with people in a world full of changing paradigms.*

We began with Carl Henry and perhaps that is a good way to close; again from *Twilight of a Great Civilization*:

We’re well aware that biblical theism supplied the cognitive supports of Western culture. It produced a linear view of history; it affirmed the sacredness of human life; it focused man’s responsible role as steward of the cosmos; it nurtured the development of modern science; it engendered the compassionate humanitarian movements that differentiated Western society; it shaped the vision of a climactic end-time triumph of the good and of mankind’s decisive deliverance from injustice; it offered the practical impetus and a means as well of transforming human existence into a New Society that exudes moral and spiritual power.¹⁴

A wonderful heritage, but one that can only be passed on if seminary leaders are able to deliver theological education that works.

Kenneth O. Gangel is retired from the position of vice president for academic affairs and academic dean at Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas. He currently holds the rank of Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Christian Education at Dallas Seminary and serves as executive director of graduate studies at Toccoa Falls College in Georgia.

ENDNOTES

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Understanding Adult Learners: Challenges for Theological Education

Christine E. Blair

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT: The students in the majority of ATS member schools are mature adults. This article summarizes research in the field of adult education that could be useful to our institutions as we plan educational processes and programs. Yet this research, and the social-religious context in North America, also make it clear that theological education is a difficult endeavor. This article employs adult learning studies and the author's experience in theological education to explore some challenges faced by graduate theological institutions.

*"...it has become evident that learners' reasons for participating in adult education are many, are complex, and are subject to change."*¹

The quest to understand adults, how they learn, grow and change, what their needs and desires are, has resulted in a large, complex body of literature. My first goal in this paper is to summarize and clarify the research for the theological educator without, I hope, oversimplifying a complex subject. I will focus on learning, rather than teaching, although theories of adult learning implicitly or explicitly point to certain requirements for the teaching of adults.

My second goal is to raise some difficult questions about teaching in graduate theological education in light of the adult learning literature that I have reviewed. These questions grow out of my years as a professor and an administrator of theological education programs. In brief, I wonder whether learning is possible for many of the adults involved in studying in graduate theological institutions. I do not have any easy answers to my questions, but perhaps in giving voice to a serious problem I will have helped us move toward some solutions.

Adult Learning

In order to help the practitioner understand adult learning, I have chosen to organize this material by asking the question, how do adults learn best? In other words, what enhances adult learning? To answer this question, I have drawn on three sources. The first is the growing body of research, especially in

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secular education. The second is my experience as an adult educator in churches and theological institutions. A third source of data comes from the many pastors and church educators who have participated in the Doctor of Ministry and continuing education programs I have directed. From these sources a picture develops of what enhances adult learning.

First, however, let us consider what we mean by the term “learning.” One definition I like is that learning is “the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action.”² Another, classic definition is that learning is that which results in a change in behavior.

Learning takes on many forms. Learning can be simple acquisition of new information, or it can involve reinterpretation and reintegration of new understandings. It can teach us new skills, or it can convert our minds and hearts to an entirely new way of making sense of reality. It may be helpful to think of learning as a spiral, in which layers of new data and information enhance perception, deepen understanding, and ultimately can lead to major shifts in fundamental ways of understanding the world.³ Educators distinguish, for example, among levels of learning by speaking of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, each more complex and profound than the former.

In this paper I will not be distinguishing among different types of learning. The picture painted of “how adults learn best” applies in general throughout the learning spiral.

Adults learn best when the learning environment feels safe and supportive.

Researchers have noted the “emotionally laden nature of learning.”⁴ Learning something new can frequently be painful or threatening. True learning often requires cognitive dissonance, that is the conflict of one’s current understanding with another understanding. For the individual to be able to deal with, rather than avoid, the discomfort that may come in the learning process, some environmental factors that lower the feeling of threat are needed.

Several factors can help create a supportive learning environment: respect for the learner’s knowledge, community, collaboration, mentors, good organization.

Respect for the learner’s knowledge helps to create a supportive learning environment. This fact is stressed by adult educators. Learners themselves will often voice preference for instructors “who respect me.” This includes, of course, courtesy and warmth. Paulo Freire speaks of the importance of teaching with love and humility.⁵ Each adult learner brings a diversity of life experience and a wealth of knowledge to the class. Often adults are instructors themselves in other areas.⁶

Adults need affirmation of the knowledge they already have for two reasons. First, this affirmation provides psychological and emotional support

and counters the fears of dependence that may surface. It keeps self-esteem high enough to motivate the learner to continue learning.⁷ Second, this affirmation helps adults cognitively to integrate their previous knowledge with the new knowledge. They can thus explicitly as well as implicitly use information they have previously acquired.

Community helps to create a supportive learning environment. A community of people learning together furnishes emotional and intellectual support. The community provides a diversity of views, questions, and ideas. It offers each individual a mirror on himself or herself. A learning community also reflects on itself and its own processes and learns from this reflection.⁸

Community is crucial for theological education. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them,” said Jesus (Mt. 18:20). The Christian tradition affirms that in the community of faith the Holy Spirit is at work and Jesus is revealed. Interpretation of the Bible, of faith stories and traditions, and decisions about moral and ethical principles and actions are to take place within the community of faith. Thus an important reason for forming community is theological.

Community is also crucial from an educational point of view. As many writers have demonstrated, community shapes the values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of individuals. It teaches persons “who we are” through its stories, rituals, assumptions, and attitudes. It passes on an entire world view. This learning on the part of the individuals in the community is often unconscious and unrecognized. It forms part of what is often called “tacit” learning or the “hidden curriculum.”⁹

Faithful Christian community is not necessarily a collection of people who think alike, look alike, or agree on all issues. Jesus provides the model: he gathered around himself a highly diverse community, women and men of different occupations, education, and class, who did not always agree, cooperate, or understand. But their loyalty to the Christ made of them a community. Likewise today, diversity and even disagreement can enrich and strengthen learning as we search together to follow Jesus Christ.

Collaboration helps to create a supportive learning environment. North American society encourages competition in education, business, arts, and many other major areas of life. A climate of competition often inhabits our theological schools. Yet when it comes to learning, studies show that students learn more when they work together.

Collaboration in education can happen at two levels. The first is collaboration among students. Educators have come to understand the wealth of knowledge that is available when learners share experience, insights, and vision with one another.¹⁰ Sometimes such learning is impeded when students themselves do not value what is learned from other students and count only as valid what is brought to the class by the teacher.

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The second level of collaboration is between teacher and student. Students are encouraged to set their own goals and to choose their own methods of learning. Knowles speaks of proactive, as opposed to reactive, learning, in which the teacher is a facilitator who helps release the students into inquiry and discovery.¹¹ Freire speaks of the teacher as a co-learner and co-investigator with the student.¹² In good education, the teacher is also learning.¹³

Mentors and models help to create a supportive learning environment. Learning can be strengthened when a person has a mentor who works closely with him or her. Several studies show the value of the mentor in the life of the adult learner.¹⁴ Certainly the Christian tradition is rich with images of the mentor and/or model: the older pilgrim who helps the younger over the rough road; the spiritual guide who counsels the person of faith; the confessor who helps the process of self-examination, repentance, restitution, and forgiveness; the parent who models responsibility and wisdom; the Christ who is not only our Saviour but our brother and friend on the way. Professors and administrators have long served as mentors and models to their students. Most of our institutions continue to encourage this relationship.

Good organization helps to create a supportive learning environment. Adult educators emphasize the importance of the organizational structure for learning.¹⁵ If the atmosphere is warm and friendly, learners feel more welcomed. If the physical facilities are comfortable and attractive, learning seems more interesting and exciting.

Schedules also need to be clear and consistent. One of the major reasons adults do not participate in educational activities has proven to be lack of clear information about those activities.¹⁶ Advance preparation and care of details are important bases of good organization. A critique of the availability of clear information about the Doctor of Ministry programs of the 1980s is an example of how theological institutions underestimate the importance of this aspect of adult education.¹⁷ In my experience as an administrator of adult education programs, I have found that comfort, structure, and clear information matter a great deal to the adult. When these are attended to, the learner is appreciative and is better able to learn.

In order for the environment to be supportive, the educational organization must truly value human beings and their development.¹⁸ This value must be at the heart of religious education for adults; it is not always the case, however. Do we not often value our subject (the Bible, the tradition) or our institution (the church) more than we value our learners?

To call for a supportive learning environment is not to call for learning that is devoid of challenge, interest, diversity, and even tension. On the contrary, all these factors are crucial to adult learning.

Adults learn best when their minds are engaged.

The myth lingers in our society that once one is an adult, one stops learning. This belief has been unintentionally reinforced by cognitive development theories. Formal operations thinking, for example, described by Piaget as the ability by young adults to think abstractly and symbolically, seemed for a recent generation of scholars to represent the last step in mature cognitive development.¹⁹ Studies in adult intelligence also supported the view that adults stopped growing after a certain age. Intelligence tests seemed to show a decline in intelligence as people entered middle and late adulthood.

More recently, however, researchers engaged in studies of the adult throughout the life span suggest that there are many ways of thinking and knowing in adulthood. For example, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule have studied different ways of knowing in adult women.²⁰ There are also several different ways researchers have looked at adult cognition.²¹ Some have added a fifth stage to Piaget's four stages: after formal operations is the stage of "postformal thinking,"²² which includes moving to relativistic thinking and then to dialectical thinking.²³ Brown's study of the deep structures of consciousness suggests six stages found in those who practice meditation. Wilber delineates nine stages of adult knowing. The last three of these adult stages deal with inner insight and personal development through an integration of thought and experience. These studies of adults indicate the need to "cultivate" a variety of ways of knowing—cognitive, contemplative, and dialectical, among others.²⁴

Studies in adult intelligence have likewise become more sophisticated. Researchers describe two kinds of adult intelligence: fluid intelligence and crystallized intelligence.²⁵ Fluid intelligence can be characterized as the ability to process information, form concepts, and think abstractly. Fluid intelligence is often seen in short-term memory, word analogies, and verbal reasoning and is often termed "quick intelligence."

Crystallized intelligence, on the other hand, increases with age. It is based in what adults learn through experience, through formal schooling, work, and acculturation. This kind of intelligence mixes fluid intelligence with cultural and personal knowledge. Crystallized intelligence is described by Alan Knox as "the ability to perceive relations and to engage in formal reasoning and abstraction based on a familiarity with knowledge of the intellectual and cultural heritage of the society."²⁶ This intelligence gives the adult the ability to test well in areas of information storage, verbal comprehension, and numerical reasoning.²⁷

The results of empirical research in this area show that adult cognitive learning does not necessarily decline with age and can even increase when the need to learn is great. Older adults rely more on crystallized intelligence than fluid intelligence. They "substitute wisdom for brilliance."²⁸

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Several catalysts serve to engage the mind of the adult: interest, multiple opportunities for reflection, cognitive dissonance, and openness to the unexpected.

Interest helps to engage the mind of the adult learner. One of the primary reasons for participation in educational activities is interest. Interest can take a variety of forms. As a result we can identify three kinds of learners: learning-oriented, goal-oriented, and activity-oriented.²⁹ The first are learning “simply to learn” because of personal interest. Goal-oriented learners seek more education in order to meet a personal need. Researchers believe this is the primary category of interest found in adults. Activity-oriented learners engage in education in order to “do something” or because of a social concern. Studies in adult interest do not always distinguish between these three types, perhaps because the distinction among them is not always clear.

The challenge of cognitive dissonance helps to engage the mind of the adult learner. Adults find educational activities most meaningful when they need to meet an obstacle or challenge.³⁰ Challenge often occurs in the form of cognitive dissonance, that is, in the clash of what a person knows or believes with new, conflicting knowledge or beliefs. Cognitive dissonance creates the demand that pushes adults onward to more learning. Developmental psychologists such as Erikson, Piaget, Gilligan, and Kohlberg point to cognitive dissonance as the source of discomfort that propels individuals to new developmental tasks and ways of thinking. Many educators agree that dissonance is sometimes necessary to learning.³¹ People enjoy a puzzle, and do not like to leave it unsolved. Cognitive dissonance may lead to new discoveries and coherence of understanding.³²

At the same time, too great a challenge or experience of cognitive dissonance can prove counterproductive and even harmful. In this situation adults often either withdraw from the educational activity or deny that conflict exists.³³ Cognitive dissonance can be potentially a great barrier to learning for religious adults. Some religious groups work to help their members avoid learning by lowering cognitive dissonance among their believers and helping them avoid dealing with reality or resolving conflict. Religious education then is not true education, but simply a reinforcer of ideology and unexamined beliefs.³⁴

Multiple opportunities for reflection help to engage the mind of the adult learner. Reflection can simply be thinking over some idea or action. It begins with remembering and includes emotional evaluation and intellectual assessment. A deeper level of reflection is called “critical reflection.” Critical reflection involves unmasking the myths by which we have lived in order to see reality as it really is, and to name it truly.³⁵ In other words, we are thinking about

the very assumptions that lead us to think the way that we think. Critical reflection on the bases of our beliefs turns the world upside-down and seems to be the key to genuine transformation. Transformation of this kind is not, of course, the sole goal of education, and it needs to be linked with deepening and expanding knowledge and skills.

Another way of comprehending different kinds of reflection distinguishes among knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Knowledge consists of information and data.³⁶ Understanding helps the learner appreciate general principles and universals. Wisdom yields a knowledge of the ultimate why, the “ultimate causes and explanations of a given reality.”³⁷

Ongoing reflection helps learning to begin, deepen, and take on meaning. Such reflection aids in bringing together new and old learning, and to integrate experience, feeling, and thought. Reflection is strengthened when adults can return to the subject matter several times in different ways. For example, D.Min. students who used a process that included journaling, followed by written analysis focused on a few ministry events and discussion with peers, claim to have experienced deeper insights and understandings. In addition, when adults have been asked to share their reflection with others, greater learning seems to have occurred. The elements of *repetition*, *critical analysis*, *articulation*, and *sharing* are important to fostering repeated reflection that can lead to critical reflection.

Openness to the unexpected helps to engage the mind of the adult learner. Many educators point out that often the most valuable learning is that which is unexpected. The unexpected can mean the conscious surprises, the “ah-ha!” moments, the detours in the conversation that help everything make sense. This unexpected learning can happen as a gestalt, a sudden vision of the whole.

The unexpected can help in the creation of “memorable encounters” that are considered so important in adult education.³⁸ Yet certain kinds of teaching can keep the unexpected from happening, such as a rigid adherence to behavioral goals and inflexible lesson plans. Adult attitudes, too, if they are rigid and inflexible, can inhibit these wonderful moments that are the Spirit’s gifts.

Adults learn best when their learning is grounded in their experience.

A major difference between children and adults is the wealth of knowledge based in experience that adults have. Adults shape their self-identity and define themselves by their experience: “I studied at . . . , worked at . . . , lived in . . . , moved to” We have also seen above that adults increase their use of crystallized intelligence in order to learn. This intelligence grows out of years of education and experience.

Some educators also claim that “the texture of experience is different for an adult and a child.”³⁹ An adult not only has more experience than a child, the

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experience is organized differently. Developmental psychologists tell us that adult experience is organized around such themes as intimacy and generativity, love and work. As we have seen in the discussion of crystallized intelligence, such experience is an important resource to adults as they continue to learn.

Adult experience can become a barrier to learning by creating biases and knowledge that need to be unlearned.⁴⁰ Researchers have studied the problem of interference in learning from previous inaccurate learning.⁴¹

Good adult education must therefore take this adult experience into account. Researchers who have identified this phenomenon note that adults prefer: learning that applies to life situations here and now; being listened to as knowers; and having their needs met.

Adults prefer learning that applies to life situations here and now. Malcolm Knowles makes the important claim that adult motivation and energy for learning comes from focusing on life issues. The issues may be developmental ones that grow out of aging, work advancement, marriage and family, or may come from societal or personal crises.⁴² Likewise adults engage in new learning more effectively when it is set in the context of real-life situations.⁴³

Learners prefer being treated as knowers. We have seen above that one element of a safe learning climate was for the adult to be treated with respect. This respect includes the recognition of the wealth of knowledge that each adult has accumulated. Having knowledgeable adults as learners means classes that are very heterogeneous, often filled with educated adults, and with adults experienced in informal learning. These adults may know how to think in complex terms in their own fields, but do not yet know how to do so in the theological disciplines.

Adults prefer having their needs met. Adult education literature is filled with discussion, and some disagreement, about the pressure to meet adult needs. Studies show that adults seek to learn most when they have immediate problems to solve such as how to get a promotion, how to take care of a newborn baby, how to deal with cancer. These needs can come from outside pressures such as work. Inner pressures, however, such as self-esteem or quality of life can be the greater motivators.⁴⁴ Needs, therefore, can include the search for a deepening of complex thinking, of self-esteem, and of meaning-making.

An important critique of needs-based learning is that this educational theory is overly consumerist with its stress on giving learners what they say they want.⁴⁵ The teacher becomes someone who wants to please adults. Educational effectiveness is then judged by how happy it makes the learners. Yet popularity and contentment may not be good measures of true education. In addition, learners may not be the best judges of their own needs. This is especially true in theological education where the learner does not have the

knowledge and experience to make this judgment, and where faculty are trained to do so.

Adults learn best when they are self-directed⁴⁶

Studies suggest that most adult learning happens for self-directed adults. A need arises and adults set about to learn in order to meet that need. Self-direction has several important dimensions: learning how to learn; having some control over the learning process; unlearning inaccurate knowledge and dysfunctional habits. All three areas are important for theological educators to keep in mind. Most crucial, however, and possibly the source of the resistance which we often encounter in our students, is the need to be in control. A typical adult student in our institutions has moved from being competent and in charge in a job or profession, to being at the mercy of institutional and professorial demands and goals.

Adults learn best when education speaks to mind, heart, and soul.

Knowing that is creative, intuitive, contemplative, and imaginative has been explored by thinkers such as Jerome Bruner, Arthur Koestler, Amos Wilder, Paul Ricoeur, and others. In religious education, scholars such as Maria Harris, Nelle Morton, and Thomas Groome have explored the importance of imagination, story, and symbol for religious learning.

To complete the picture of how adults learn best, we note the following observations: adults need to encounter symbol and story; adults need to be encouraged to use their imagination; adults need to live their knowledge in ritual and action. For the highly creative and intuitive learner, the world of theological studies with its emphasis on analysis is a difficult and shocking one to enter. A community tied together by storytelling, drama, and worship can be especially helpful to these learners.

Implications and Questions for Theological Education

After a review of adult learning literature, joined with my own experiences in teaching, I am led to pose this question: is graduate theological education possible today with adult (especially mature adult) learners? My reasons for questioning such a basic premise are several. Perhaps central is my being a mother, watching my two-year-old child learn and being struck anew by the differences between the way children and adults learn.

At the same time, my seminary has been instituting some curricular changes at both the master's and Doctor of Ministry levels, brought about by a faculty deeply committed to good education and sound teaching. The changes have resulted, on the part of some students, in anger, frustration, and resistance. The level of rage has seemed surprising and out of proportion to the

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stated cause of frustration. What, we are wondering, is going on? A third source for my thinking has been the inner dialogue created when I read Jill Kerr Conway's autobiography, *True North*. From these pages shine this scholar's deep love of ideas and her joy of pursuing learning translated into a passionate desire to help learners catch the vision of the power of ideas in shaping human understanding. What has happened, I find myself wondering, to the joy of learning that was the foundation of my graduate education? Have we lost that enthusiastic pursuit of ideas in our theological institutions today?

From this broad review of what enhances adult learning, we can identify several aspects of adult learning that may cause resistance and difficulties for our adult students: the desire to have their needs met and to have their learning apply to immediate life situations, and their need for comfort and for control of their learning.

We have seen that many adult learning studies stress that adults learn in order to meet their perceived needs. In our institution, adults have the need to answer their call to become leaders in the church. My theological institution exists to serve the church and to provide such leadership, and it sees itself meeting this need of the learners. The problem arises, however, in the details of how to accomplish such education: the goals, the structure, and the content of theological education. Quite a few books have recently described the variety of visions that exist for theological education.⁴⁷ Theological faculties wrestle with conflicting visions held by their members; are we, for example, training ministers to be scholar-preachers, trained professionals, or spiritual guides? We also debate a variety of teaching models: is education to be based in the classic texts of the tradition, in the experience of the student, or in the call to transform society?

Our review of adult learning demonstrates that we also deal with a variety of visions from our students. They demand from their institutions that their needs be met as they, not the institutions, define needs. And therein lies the rub, for the learners' vision of their needs and the faculty's vision are not the same. Learners today, especially American students, are pragmatic, utilitarian, and consumerist in orientation: they want skills that can be immediately applied, answers that can quickly solve problems; they are goal-oriented learners. Professors, on the other hand, stress tradition and intellectual inquiry; they expect learning-oriented learners.

In addition, our adult learners will resist the discomfort that comes with letting other adults have more control over their education. John Hull contends that one of the biggest obstacles to learning for Christian adults is the fear of becoming like children again, giving up control, having to turn to another for knowledge.⁴⁸ By becoming students again, adults give up much of their lives to the control of others: to institutional demands and the requirements of professors. They are being asked to be as children: willing to learn and engage in new ideas, and, perhaps most difficult, accepting of the authority of another adult, the professor.

Adult students are asked to recapture the wonder and joy of learning that children have, whether useful or not. But, unlike children, adults find that new knowledge and ideas present them with radically different conceptions of the world and of the faith. Such a challenge causes cognitive dissonance that can result in learning or resistance to learning. Because learning means changing, adult resistance can be strong, especially when dealing with questions of religious faith.

Secondly, adults are asked to be as children because they must accept the authority of the faculty. They are asked to trust our judgment and knowledge in guiding their studies, and to give up control of their learning process. In this antiauthoritarian age, many adults find this trust to be difficult.

Furthermore, our students' concept of educational needs, and our professors' concept of educational needs clash. Students today often look for immediate benefits and usefulness in their learning. They demand instant skills or applications. They want tools. The faculty, on the other hand, desires education to be intellectually and emotionally stimulating, a catalyst for personal growth and change. Professors want students to become acquainted with the larger community of discourse in a subject area, to understand the deep theoretical issues within this discourse and the implications of the differences for faith and ministry. To return to the tool metaphor, they wish to help the students understand the physics of tools: why the tools work and which ones to choose. They expect their experience and education to give them the authority to teach these matters.

Can these conflicting views and needs come together? I believe it is more difficult than I originally envisioned. As an educator, I must admit, I thought certain pedagogical strategies would solve the problem. I favor a dialogical, problem-solving educational model, in which teachers and learners are coinvestigators into the practice of ministry. Teachers bring the expertise of their discipline, their religious faith, and their experience of the church into this dialogue to guide students, while in turn honoring their students' knowledge, faith, and experience; teachers know that in teaching they also learn. This model, inspired by John Dewey and Paulo Freire, seemed to be the answer to the problems we professors were encountering. Now, at the beginning of my ninth year in theological education, I am not so sure. I do believe faculty members can be helped to understand adult learners better, and to develop more effective teaching models and strategies. But I wonder, is the ethos of this time against learning? Are adults so insecure in the uncertainties of contemporary life that they cannot deal with the uncertainties that new learning creates? Are Americans so consumerist that all that can be valued is what seems immediately useful, rather than what is true? Are our churches in such decline and/or conflict that questions of faith can no longer be asked?

I challenge those of us who shape theological education to take this question seriously. I believe that theological education is possible, but the

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difficulties are many. The challenge of the adult learner will only be met if we work together, faculty and students, to understand one another, explore pedagogical issues, and develop common vision and goals grounded in faith and trust.

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ENDNOTES

1. Sharan B. Merriam and Rosemary S. Caffarella, *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 86.
2. Jack Mezirow and Associates, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: a Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 1.
3. For a discussion of layers of learning, see Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 66ff.
4. Mark Tennant, "The Psychology of Adult Teaching and Learning," in John M. Peters, Peter Jarvis and Associates, *Adult Education: Evolution and Achievements in a Developing Field of Study* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 198. See also John M. Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), Ch. 3.
5. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1973), 77-79.
6. Leon McKenzie, *The Religious Education of Adults* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1982), 95 and 101.
7. Studies of motivation in learning often focus on self-esteem, ideal self, and expectations. See Mark Tennant, "The Psychology of Adult Teaching and Learning," 204-206.
8. Ibid.
9. "The hidden curriculum of the school is what it teaches because of the kind of place it is." Eliot Eisner, *The Educational Imagination* (New York: MacMillan, 1985), 97 (see 88-97); also Maria Harris, 68-69.
10. Cyril O. Houle, *The Literature of Adult Education: a Bibliographic Essay* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 291. This phenomenon is especially apparent in Doctor of Ministry programs in theological institutions. When persons with experience in an area join together to engage in new learning and are open to learning from one another, exciting education occurs.
11. Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1984), 189-191, 219, for example; see also his *Informal Adult Education* (New York: Association Press, 1959), 32-36.
12. Paulo Freire, especially 75-85.
13. Knowles states, "None but the humble become good teachers of adults. In an adult class the student's experience counts for as much as the teacher's knowledge." *The Adult Learner*, 98. Some disagree with this extreme an equation, as we shall see.

14. Cyril O. Houle, *The Literature of Adult Education*, 302-303; see also Laurent A. Daloz, *Effective Teaching and Mentoring* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986), 16-42; Sondra Higgins Matthaëi, *Faith Matters: Faith-Mentoring in the Faith Community* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996).
15. See Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Learner*; Sharan B. Merriam and Rosemary S. Caffarella, 28-32.
16. Merriam and Caffarella cite studies by Houle and others, 87.
17. See Jackson W. Carroll and Barbara G. Wheeler, "Doctor of Ministry Program: History Summary of Findings and Recommendation," *Theological Education* 23:2 (Spring 1987): 30.
18. Knowles, 121.
19. Piaget's work is extremely elegant and useful and has been central to educational practice. The problem lies in the implications that came from the lack of investigation of the adult life span.
20. Mary Field Belenky, Blaythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing* (New York: Basic Books, 1986). They have identified five epistemological frameworks that shape the way women think and feel about knowledge, truth, and authority. Their study has implications for teaching both women and men, while holding gender differences in mind, and has proven useful to me and many of my colleagues in our teaching.
21. Marcie Boucouvalas with Judy-Arin Krupp, "Adult Development and Learning," in Sharan B. Merriam and Phyllis M. Cunningham, eds. *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 187-192.
22. Klaus F. Riegel, *Psychology Mon Amour: A Counterpoint* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), suggests this stage, as do others. See Merriam and Caffarella, 311.
23. Boucouvalas with Krupp, 187.
24. *Ibid.*, 188.
25. This discussion is drawn from Alan B. Knox, *Adult Development and Learning*, 409ff., and Mark Tennant, "The Psychology of Adult Teaching and Learning," 199-202.
26. Knox, 420.
27. Tennant, 199.
28. Knox, 421. This categorization of different kinds of intelligences is different from that used by Howard Gardner in his theory of multiple intelligences, although this work is also useful for our understanding of adult ways of knowing and learning. See Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
29. Cited by Merriam and Caffarella, 83-84.
30. Stephen D. Brookfield, "Facilitating Adult Learning," in Merriam and Cunningham, *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education*, 206.
31. Tennant, 207.
32. Hull, 98-99.
33. Knox, 433.
34. Hull, 96-111.
35. Freire, 71.

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36. James Michael Lee, *The Content of Religious Instruction* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1985), 159.
37. Ibid.
38. Knox, 442-443.
39. McKenzie, 123.
40. Knowles, 58.
41. Knox, 439.
42. Knowles, 59.
43. Literacy programs are good examples. When illiterate adults are taught to read using arbitrary vocabulary lists, the results are disappointing. When the vocabulary is that of everyday work and life situations, the results improve dramatically; Ibid., 59-60.
44. Ibid., 61.
45. Stephen Brookfield, "Facilitating Adult Learning," 204-205.
46. The next two sections are abbreviated for the purpose of this discussion. A longer discussion will be found in a forthcoming publication.
47. For example, Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Westminster/John Knox, 1995); Joseph C. Hough Jr. and John B. Cobb Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985); David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); and Lynn Nell Rhodes and Nancy D. Richardson, *Mending Severed Connections: Theological Education for Communal Transformation* (San Francisco: San Francisco Network Ministries, 1991).
48. See John Hull, especially Chapter Three, on the need of adults to be right, and on cognitive dissonance, 89ff.

The Ashram as a Model for Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: Modern Indian ashrams provide a viable alternative to the pedagogical practices of North American and European seminaries. The ashrams of Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi, and Griffiths have used person-centered educational strategies to help nurture spiritual and theological development and encourage social justice. These ashrams feature eight distinctive practices: being physically located “in the world,” being open to all who are interested in attending, offering comprehensive community living, emphasizing the spiritual maturity of the teacher, providing a holistic curriculum, creating a spiritual environment, valuing flexibility, and encouraging self-evaluation.

Seminary education in North America is sufficiently homogeneous that it is difficult to imagine alternatives to classrooms and lectures, books and papers, dissertations and field work. For students and professors alike, the familiar accoutrements of seminary instruction have become virtually synonymous with the practice of education. Certainly, not everyone is satisfied with the current state of affairs in theological education, and many inspired proposals have been put forward to transform the process. Yet few of the suggested reforms release their grasp of the culturally bound educational tools North American and European seminaries have inherited.

The Indian ashram provides adult theological education in the West with an intriguing alternative model: one that could prove more conducive to fostering spirituality, community, independent and disciplined thinking, and social justice. The ashram has evolved over thousands of years as Hinduism’s principle institution for spiritual education and—if only on the grounds of its resilience throughout history—should not be quickly dismissed. Indeed, a careful examination of ashram education can help us envision new possibilities for revitalizing religious education in the West.

In Sanskrit, the term *ashrama* is derived from the root *sram*, which refers to a stage of intense exertion in the duties of life.¹ A typical ashram contains a small community of people who have gathered to sustain each other during an intense spiritual quest. This quest is characterized by the relationship between the community and its guru, or spiritual leader. Meditation, asceticism, simplicity, dialogue, sharing of goods, devotion, and charity have also come to characterize the ashram.

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The sanskrit term *asrama* . . . refers to the forest hermitages of the seers [who are believed to have received the Veda from the gods] and of holy people, who spent their lives in meditation and austerities and who communicated their teaching and experience of Brahman [the Absolute] to disciples.²

Unlike the other-worldly image often associated with a guru and his followers, ashrams have been traditionally grounded in the concerns of society as well as the life of the spirit:

Ashrams have flourished in India since prehistoric times. The Rishis of the Vedic and Upanishadic ages had their own Ashrams where princes and commoners alike received training in the arts and sciences as well as spiritual instruction. Krishna and Balarama and Kuchela were fellow-publics at Rishi Sandipani's Ashram on the banks of the Jumna. It was only in later ages that Ashrams became excessively austere, a refuge for people who were fed up with the weary weight of this oppressive world . . . But once again, there has been witnessed in our own time a return to the older type of Ashram that trained people for the here and now, not only for the hereafter.³

Ashrams that prepare people for the "here and now" present the greatest challenge to Western seminaries. These "modern" ashrams have been founded within the last hundred years as they emerged during the Indian renaissance movement, a movement that was significantly influenced by Western thought and Christian beliefs. Modern ashrams are exemplified by those founded by spiritual and political leaders such as Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), and Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), as well as a number of Christian ashrams such as the one founded by Father Bede Griffiths (1907-1993). Presently, there are hundreds of reputable ashrams in India, although their influence has declined from the earlier part of the century when they were a leading institution for social and religious change.

Shantiniketan, or "Abode of Peace," was originally established by the father of the poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore in 1863. The ashram, located near Bolpur, ninety miles west of Calcutta, was intended to be a place of solitude to which the elder Tagore could retreat for contemplation. In 1901, Rabindranath Tagore revived the ashram by beginning a small school for boys. As education in India was rapidly being westernized, Tagore hoped to preserve many of the ideals he valued in ancient Indian education and provide a "home for the spirit of India." W.W. Pearson describes his first visit to Shantiniketan in 1912:

Education (at Shantiniketan) consists, not in giving information which the boys will forget as soon as they conveniently can

without danger of failing in their examinations, but in allowing the boys to develop their own characters in the way which is natural to them.⁴

In the years to follow, Tagore established Visva-Bharati University and a school for rural development called Sriniketan in an attempt not only to preserve the Indian spirit, but to also provide a meeting point between the ideas of the East and West.

Tagore approached education as a peacemaker, and advocated humanistic education, which will foster the quest of universal brotherhood, social welfare, political justice, economic well-being and spiritual evolution of humans.⁵

After an active career teaching and promoting India's political independence, Sri Aurobindo found his ashram in the south India coastal town of Pondicherry in 1926. According to Sri Aurobindo, "This ashram has been created . . . not for the renunciation of the world but as a centre and a field of practice for the evolution of another kind and form of life which would in the final end be moved by a higher spiritual consciousness and embody a greater life of the spirit."⁶ Sri Aurobindo's experiment has grown to be one of India's most thriving and comprehensive ashrams, as it presently includes nearly two thousand community members who live and work in more than 400 buildings.

Not only spiritual matters but literature, art, politics, education, psychology, religion and war were discussed. The *asram* grew in these years, adding men and women and in time, children. It was not a typical Indian *asram*, for it was modern, scientific, and brought together a multiplicity of types at various levels of spiritual progress.⁷

Gandhi established two ashrams in South Africa; the Phoenix Settlement in 1904 and the Tolstoy Farm in 1910. On returning to India, Gandhi founded an ashram near Ahmedabad, Gujarat, in 1915, which was later called Sabarmati. The motto of the Sabarmati ashram was "Education is that which liberates." In 1932, Gandhi established his final ashram, the Satyagraha ashram, at Sevagram in central India. Each of Gandhi's ashrams were training centers for social change, placing a high premium on the practice of non-violence and the development of practical vocational skills. While the two ashrams in India are no longer in operation, museums to Gandhi's life and ideas have been established on the grounds.

Only a few years after Gandhi founded his first ashram in India, the first Christian ashrams were being established in Kerala and in Tirupattur. Until his recent death, Father Bede Griffiths ran one of the fifty or so Catholic and Protestant ashrams in India. Bede Griffiths was English, Benedictine, Oxford-

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educated, and was a close friend of C.S. Lewis. In 1968, he took over the Saccidanand Ashram, which was founded by Jules Monchanin and Henri Le Soux two decades earlier. The ashram, now known as Shantivanam, the “forest of peace,” is located on the Cauvery River near Triruchirapalli in southern India. As with the gurus of most Catholic ashrams, Griffiths adopted Indian dress and many Hindu forms of worship. In addition to the dozen or so permanent members of Shantivanam, the ashram attracts a variety of spiritual seekers:

Shantivanam brings together in a wonderful communion of love around a venerable Father-Guru an eclectic group indeed: a retired Flemish abbot who has a sort of city ashram in Amsterdam; a young Colombian missionary from Pakistan who comes for retreat...a laywoman from Kent who works among the poorest and returns here periodically for spiritual sustenance...a young sociologist from Malta whom the sisters in the village have asked to help in surveying the situation they are facing; a retired priest of the Divine Word Society . . . a Benedictine from Korea who looks for ways to help his brothers identify more with the poor of his country . . . and the Indian sannyasin who have found in the wise man, the monk from the West, their Guru.⁸

While many similarities can be found between most modern ashrams, they are by no means identical. For example, Sri Aurobindo’s ashram is predominately in the city while the others are in the countryside. The role of the guru is more prominent at Sri Aurobindo and Shantivanam than the other ashrams. Tagore’s Shantiniketan was founded in an attempt to encourage internationalism, while Gandhi’s ashrams promoted Indian nationalism.

Differences also exist between various Christian ashrams. Generally speaking, Catholic ashrams in India tend to be more contemplative while Protestant ashrams are more involved in direct service to the community. The Catholic ashrams in particular have actively pursued interreligious dialogue with Hinduism and Buddhism. While most Christian ashrams present Christ as the *Sadguru*, or supreme teacher, Catholic ashrams frequently place a greater emphasis on the role of the guru—or human teacher—than their Protestant counterparts.

There are, of course, many difficulties in using the ashram as a model for transforming seminary education in the West. For one, the ashram originates in a different religious and cultural tradition. Certainly, we can do without many of the trappings of the forest-schools of the Vedic age. Customs such as sleeping on the floor, eating with one’s hands, and going barefoot may be found to be more romantic than pragmatic when adapting the ashram to our own social context. Even so, it is significant that each of the fore-mentioned founders of

modern ashrams received extensive education in England, and each was well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of Western education. In many ways, modern ashrams represent a hybrid of the best educational ideas of both East and West, as well as a reaction to the worst elements found in both worlds. Tagore describes his own impressions of Western education:

In India our Goddess of learning is *Saraswati*. My audience in the West, I am sure, will be glad to know that her complexion is white. But the signal fact is that she is living and she is a woman, and her seat is on a lotus-flower. The symbolic meaning of this is, that she dwells in the centre of life and the heart of all existence, which opens itself in beauty to the light of heaven.

The Western education which we have chanced to know is impersonal. Its complexion is also white, but it is the whiteness of the whitewashed class-room walls. It dwells in the cold storage compartments of lessons and the ice-packed minds of the school-masters. The effect which it had on my mind when, as a boy, I was compelled to go to school, I have described elsewhere. My feeling was very much the same as a tree might have, which was not allowed to live its full life, but was cut down to be made into packing-cases.⁹

The preeminent role of the guru presents another difficulty in using the ashram as a model for person-centered education. Historically, the ashram has revolved around the guru, who has often been considered to be either a god or a representative of a god in various Indian writings. The guru, similar to one's parents, is considered worthy of worship and respect. The guru/student relationship, while containing many exemplary interpersonal elements, is nevertheless characterized by the servant-like commitment of the student to this god-person. In many instances, the educational style of the guru is more oppressive and restrictive than that of Western educators, although many modern ashrams have substantially reformed the role of the guru. Gandhi, for example, refused to accept the title of guru. At Tagore's Shantiniketan:

One of the most remarkable effects of the religious spirit in which the school is carried on is that no great distinction exists between the teachers and pupils of Shanti Niketan; all are learners together, all are endeavoring to follow the one rising path.¹⁰

In spite of these and other difficulties, I have been impressed by other core educational values and practices found in modern Indian ashrams. Their strength is in discouraging the communication of "a dead load of dumb

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wisdom"¹¹ to students, and encouraging the development of insight and intelligence that originates from creative investigation. What follows are eight qualities that can inspire us to attempt radically different strategies in our own efforts to improve Western theological education.

Physically Located in the World

Almost paradoxically, modern ashrams have managed to flourish in locations that are both in the heart of the natural world as well as in the heart of society. Frequently located under lush trees or on the banks of a river, the ashram's tranquil setting is usually chosen out of a desire to facilitate contemplation rather than to encourage isolation from society. Yet most ashrams are never too far from the world's troubles. Poor people and lower castes who work the land are the nearest neighbors, not an upper-middle class university community, as would typically be found in the West.

It is common for ashrams to be actively involved in medical and agricultural work among the villages, or to be working with their neighbors on issues of sanitation and preventive medicine. The Gandhian-inspired Anond Niketan ashram in Fenai Pradesh, for example, has been highly active in anti-alcohol campaigns during a time when excessive drinking has become one of the most urgent social concerns in India. Even more "other worldly" ashrams, which emphasize contemplation and devotion, accomplish their mission through encouraging interaction with the natural world, rather than researching accounts of the world presented by others in texts and lectures.

For the ashram, "being in the world" is inseparable from "the world being with us." Not only does the ashram reach out to the world, it is designed to be a place that the world will feel at home to visit. Only on close inspection can one usually distinguish the ashram's grounds and facilities from its neighbors. This "world-in-us" environment contrasts our familiar images of higher education, such as the "ivory tower," which has built psychic and even real walls to keep the world out. According to Father Bede Griffiths, "One of the differences between an ashram and a monastery is that the monastery always has an enclosure to keep people out. But the ashram is completely open; people come here from all parts."¹²

Open to All Who Are Interested

To encourage a diversity of ideas, many ashrams open their gates to all persons, regardless of their physical, emotional, intellectual, or financial situation. Historically, this has not always been the case for Indian ashrams, with many being formed exclusively along caste lines. Modern ashrams, however, have been at the forefront of breaking down discrimination among castes and sexes in India. According to Gandhi:

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible because I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them. Mine is not a religion of the prison house. It has room for the least among God's creations; it is proof against insolent pride of race, religion and colour.¹³

While Gandhi is best known for breaking down caste barriers, one of his earliest followers, Vinoba Bhave, was instrumental in shaping the Stree Shakti Jagaran women's liberation movement in India. A French woman named Mirra Alfassa is generally credited for much of Sri Aurobindo ashram's success. Most modern ashrams, such as Tagore's Shantiniketan, are open to the outside public and to all castes:

Some of us belong to the Brahmo Samaj sect and some to other sects of Hinduism; and some of us are Christians. Because we do not deal with creeds and dogmas of sectarianism, therefore this heterogeneity of our religious beliefs does not present us with any difficulty whatever.¹⁴

Like our seminaries, each ashram has its own unique interests and traditions, but ashrams are also exemplary in their ability to transcend sectarian interests and build community out of diversity. This has been seen in the way many ashrams have been able to promote Hindu-Christian dialogue. In the West, such dialogue is often a function of sharing papers at conferences and by interacting with guest lecturers. In the East, Christian ashrams have brought people of all faiths together to learn from one another in a much deeper way. "As co-operative efforts between West and East, between educated and uneducated, between townsman and villager, the ashrams have proved a greater success than any other type of life."¹⁵

This openness can have a sharp political edge. Any educational institution whose purpose includes being open to diverse ideas must adapt its activities to accommodate different races, genders, sexual orientations, and savings account balances. The latter, one's financial worth, is arguably one of the most difficult prejudices potential students encounter in attempting to gain admission for a graduate education. Certainly, seminaries have been much more generous than their university graduate-school counterparts in offering various forms of financial aid for low-income students. Still, by and large, graduate religious education is primarily the luxury of those who have the resources. Ivan Illich once observed that, "Whatever his or her claims of solidarity with the Third World, each American college graduate has had an education costing an amount five times greater than the median life income of half of humanity."¹⁶ Gandhi as well noted:

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When it is difficult for millions even to make the two ends meet, when millions are dying of starvation, it is monstrous to think of giving our relatives a costly education. Expansion of the mind will come from the hard experience, not necessarily in the college or the schoolroom. When some of us deny ourselves and ours the so-called Higher Education, we shall find the true means of giving and receiving a really Higher Education. Is there not, may there not be, a way of each boy paying for his own education? There may be no such way. Whether there is or there is not such a way is irrelevant. But there is no doubt that when we deny ourselves the way of expensive education, seeing that aspiration after Higher Education is a laudable end, we shall find out a way of fulfilling it more in accord with our surroundings. The golden rule to apply in all such cases is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot. This ability to refuse will not descend upon us all of a sudden. The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to re-arrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality.¹⁷

The ashrams of India have shown that it is possible to gain a quality education without great expense. Whereas attractive facilities, comprehensive library collections, and well-published faculty may be held at a premium in the West, simple living is considered to be one of the most important educational assets within the ashram. With such affordable core values, it becomes financially possible to welcome students from all economic levels.

Comprehensive Community Living

Ashram education does not *prepare* people for life and ministry; it *is* life and ministry in its fullest. The ashram is a fully functioning community that does not need to create worship projects, field experiences, and case studies in pastoral care to prepare students for “the real world.” These opportunities are all readily available in and around the educational community, from milking the cows to taking care of elderly community members who are sick or dying.

The holism that comes from providing for one’s own needs is not only relational, but also educational. While many of us have milked cows, raised crops, collected firewood, and prepared food, we may not have fully appreciated the learning and growth that takes place in doing such activities with others and making these activities sources for theological reflection.

When community members are not alienated from the labor needed to meet their own basic needs, the experiential fabric that weaves the ashram community together is more seamless and authentic. Rather than placing students in the charitable projects of others, many ashrams have fully inte-

grated the operation of hospitals, health clinics, and counseling centers into their own community. As such service is built into the very life of the community, there is greater identification and struggle with human needs and oppression.

Our seminaries in the West would benefit from more intentionally becoming places for intensive living, in addition to being places for intensive study. Seminaries could more authentically incorporate the sharing of work, recreation, and entertainment into the educational process. In this model, interpersonal conflicts and difficult personalities become important sources for community reflection and intervention. Peeling potatoes need not be a work-study chore reserved for students with modest incomes, but can be a community-wide activity that contains the potential for Brother Lawrence-like spiritual discoveries.

Spiritual Maturity of the Teacher

In learning a new sport or game, we do not need people to read us the instructions as much as we need them to demonstrate to us how to play. In a short time, we forget the specifics of classroom lectures, while the image of the educator's personhood can remain with us for life. While the various traditions of Hinduism portray the role of the guru in many different ways, in all cases the guru is understood to be one who has taken the highest possible road toward completeness and self-realization.

... the guru is *fully human*; because of this, he is wise. He has the ability to rightly interact with persons and situations based on a broad range of knowledge, experience and understanding. For the guru has already walked the path chosen by the seeker. The guru, therefore, is in a position to *show the way* and to transmit the value of his experience to the disciple. The guru's wisdom is born of meditateness, that is, reflection on and absorption in his experiences. Thus, the guru *speaks little*. When he does speak, however, it is with personal *equanimity*.¹⁸

It is the example of the guru's life, more than his lessons, that are most instructive to the student.

Living with the guru, the disciple learns by observing the actions of the guru; the guru's very life is a living sermon. Being in the guru's company is inspiring. The book knowledge that he gives becomes significant because the guru also gives himself. True religion (spiritual wisdom) is not taught but caught from someone who has it.¹⁹

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It can be tempting for seminaries to place a higher premium on published and credentialed educators, rather than the most complete and spiritually actualized human beings. The educator's spirituality can often be overlooked when greater emphasis is placed on professional development and academic achievement. Ideally, the professional teacher would be, at the same time, a professional student who is tending to his or her own spiritual maturation. As Tagore once wrote, "A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame."²⁰ To enable nonoppressive education, faculty members must continue on their own pilgrimage, entering into mutual vulnerability with the learning community around them. Henri Nouwen put this challenge to the professional educator:

... we continue to hide ourselves behind our many emotional, mental, and spiritual blackboards. This is not really very surprising. Who really wants to make his own often painful struggles with faith available to others as a source of growth and understanding? Who wants to be reminded by his own students of his own doubts and uncertainties? Who wants to confess that God cannot be understood, that life is not explainable, and that the great questions do not lead to answers but only to deeper questions? Who wants to be vulnerable and say with confidence, "I don't know!" To be a religion teacher calls for the courage to enter with the student into the common search. This is hard and often painful because it requires a confrontation with our own brokenness.²¹

In addition to taking their own journey seriously, educators also need to possess relational skills and aspire to help others tend to their own journeys. Ashram education emphasizes the fullness of the educational relationship over the mere communication of knowledge and skills.

The most distinctive mark of this teaching tradition, that which distinguishes it sharply from those learned traditions developing from the Socratic Greeks or the Chinese Confucianists, is the special relationship between teacher and student. The teacher-student relationship may be India's finest contribution to the learned traditions of the world.²²

Holistic Curriculum

Liberal arts education can seem very limited when compared with the modern ashram's ability to bring students in touch with the whole of life. In an ashram, all aspects of the person are engaged; the intellectual, political, aesthetic, relational, and spiritual as well. For example, many Indian ashrams are

well-known for their art, as seen in the contributions Tagore's Shantiniketan made to the Bengal renaissance of painting and verse.

The Western universities have not yet truly recognized that fullness of expression is fullness of life. And a large part of man can never find its expression in the mere language of words. It must therefore seek for its other languages—lines and colours, sounds and movements.²³

Most ashrams give consideration to all three *margas*: *jnana* (knowledge), as well as *bhakti* (devotion), and *karma* (action), and political activism is also an important part of this wholeness. Contrary to the Western stereotype of the guru as an isolated, other-worldly mystic, the most popular guru figures in contemporary India, such as Gandhi, Tagore, and Sri Aurobindo, were political leaders as well. According to Tagore, traditional educational systems fail to prepare people for action:

It is my conviction that our schools and colleges, instead of making us manly, make us obsequious, timid, indecisive and ballastless. Manliness consists not in bluff, bravado or lordliness. It consists in daring to do the right, and facing consequences, whether it is in matters social, political or other. It consists in deeds not in words.²⁴

A Spiritual Environment

"Ashrams are 'spiritual' power-houses or laboratories for the experiments of life."²⁵ While each ashram may have a different emphasis—Sri Aurobindo is primarily concerned with the life of the mind, Shantiniketan with art and devotion, Sabarmati with political activity, and Shantivanam with interreligious dialogue—each is deeply anchored in a commitment to spiritual growth. The following statement is typical of the mission of many ashrams:

The guiding principle and orientation of Aurobindo's educational thought is the awakening of man as a spiritual being . . . a total spiritual orientation had now to be given to the whole of education and the life of the nation.²⁶

Ashram life challenges community members to integrate spirituality completely into all aspects of their education and development. Prayer, worship, and meditation are not merely studied or experienced at specifically-designated hours, but are infused into the entire educational experience.

One way this is accomplished is through the very physical design and location of the ashram. While some ashrams have chapels or shrines, there is a

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sense in which every corner of the ashram grounds is a spiritual temple for communing with God. The simple choice of physical location of the ashram has much to do with the spiritual rebirth that is so much a part of the educational experience.

... some reference should be made to the religious atmosphere of the place. I say religious *atmosphere* because there is no definite dogmatic teaching, and for the development of the spiritual side of the boy's nature the ideal has always been to leave that to the natural instinct of each individual boy. In this considerable help is expected from the personal influence of the teachers, and in the silence but constant influence of close touch with Nature herself, which in India is the most wonderful teacher of spiritual truth.²⁷

Spirituality is also ever-present due to the continual practice of various spiritual disciplines. The concept of *sannyasa* has been central to most ashrams. Similar to Western forms of asceticism, *sannyasa* is a way of life that can include vegetarianism, fasting, celibacy, and rejection of worldly possessions. While such practices can prove to be restrictive obstacles for some students, their intent is to continually evoke sensitivity to the presence of the Spirit.

Flexibility

Modern ashrams vary in the degree of flexibility and structure they offer community members. Typically, the daily routine of the ashram is structured, beginning early each morning with worship or devotions. In most ashrams, however, participation in this routine is left to the individual. In particular, areas of study, reflection, and activity are based on the needs of the student.

We Christians can learn a lot from Indian flexibility in the way we go about forming our own ashrams. This applies to the daily pattern of life as well as to such things as the taking of vows. For whilst hindu ashrams have regular hours of meditation and scripture reading, and a general pattern of manual and intellectual work, the rest is not minutely pre-planned And the routine is not the same for everyone at an ashram—different people have different needs and different paces. Since what people are being “formed” for at an ashram is meeting God, it is essential that their exact pattern of life there should be individually based and paced. One of the most important things that Christian ashrams can provide, for the young in particular, is simply time and space in which people can discover who and what they are.²⁸

This flexibility can be seen in the community guidelines created by the Rule of Christa Prema Seva Christian ashram in Pune, one of India's first Christian ashrams:

[We will not] attempt to determine before hand the precise lines or methods of its life and work, but will expect these to emerge gradually with experience, as it waits upon God in prayer. Likewise it will not seek to cramp the individuality of its members by forcing all into one mold, it will rather welcome and offer scope for a diversity of gifts as enriching the life of the family and increasing its usefulness. This elasticity of development is also in keeping with the spirit of India, which has small faith in rigid organization, trusting rather to the spontaneous movement of the Spirit of God.²⁹

In the ashram, perhaps more so than in Western education, the student is responsible for the success or failure of his or her educational experience. This can be seen in the Free Progress System that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother developed for their ashram and schools. Under the Free Progress System, students choose their areas of study, proceed at their own pace, and develop their own interests. Only one or two subjects are studied at one time.

Aurobindo's contribution to education was not only to make the soul the specific object of education but also to hand over the responsibility of education to the student as a means to evoke the soul. The psychic being is evoked by the individual himself, and he must freely find and determine the means to the discovery.³⁰

Self-Evaluation

A distinguishing feature of most Eastern religions is the belief that truth is ultimately found within each person. With the Spirit of God so immediate, it is easy to understand why the notion of using external means of evaluation to measure the progress of ashram students would seem inappropriate. Rather than preparing tests and grading papers, ashram educators devote their attention to assisting the student in developing her or his own capacity for discerning truth and error.

In ashram education, there is little need to motivate students with the carrot-and-stick approach of grades and evaluations. It is assumed that most people naturally desire a more complete and abundant life. Under Sri Aurobindo's system of education, tests are available only by request as a means for the student to monitor his or her own educational progress. Likewise, W.W. Pearson observed the following during his visit to Tagore's Shantiniketan:

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One of the things that strikes visitors to the school is the look of happiness on the boys' faces, and there is no doubt that there is none of the usual feeling of dislike for school life which one finds in institutions where the only object held before the boys is the passing of examinations. Examinations have been abolished in the lower classes, except once a year when tests of each boy's progress are made by the teacher who has been teaching the boy himself.³¹

Indeed, frequent external validation or invalidation of a student's growth and learning would seem to be the very antithesis of an authentic spiritual education. According to Tagore, it is one route to spiritual death:

Mind, when long deprived of its natural food of truth and freedom of growth, develops an unnatural craving for success; and our students have fallen victims to the mania for success in examinations. Success consists in obtaining the largest number of marks with the strictest economy of knowledge. It is a deliberate cultivation of disloyalty to truth, of intellectual dishonesty, of a foolish imposition by which the mind is encouraged to rob itself. But as we are by means of it made to forget the existence of mind, we are supremely happy at the results. We pass examinations and shrivel up into clerks, lawyers and police inspectors, and we die young.³²

Conclusion

As in any craft, the tools we have at our disposal—whether libraries and personal computers, or community and spiritual direction—will largely determine the quality and shape of the end product. The ashram provides us with some new tools to help place each person's unique developmental journey at the center of educational and theological activity. The person-centered style of theological education practiced in ashrams holds great promise for helping us develop more authentic, courageous, and holistic religious leaders and should be explored by North American and European seminaries aspiring to provide a more diverse range of educational opportunities.

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The Ashram as a Model for Theological Education

27. Pearson, *Shantiniketan*, 70-1.
28. Vandana, *Gurus, Ashrams and Christians* (Madras: CLS, 1980), 61.
29. Sara Grant, "Reflections on Hindu-Christian Dialogue in an Ashram Context," *Religion and Society* 26 (1979): 44.
30. Cenkner, *The Hindu Personality in Education*, 174.
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Urban Theological Education: A Conversation about Curriculum

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ABSTRACT: This article reports on a gathering of urban theological educators, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, who met to discuss the current curricula paradigm for the preparation of effective urban ministers in the urban context. These urban educators extend an invitation for a wider dialogue among theoreticians of theological education and providers of non-traditional theological education programs to bring an urban focus into the core of the larger realm of theological education. At the center of the conversation is the question: Should urban ministry constitute a theological discipline in its own right or should it be more intentionally woven throughout the entire curriculum?

A conversation among urban theological educators from fifteen seminaries took place in Santa Fe, New Mexico, June 26-29, 1997, to share curricula and concerns related to theologically based urban training programs. They represent a growing number of theological schools that are developing innovative programs to prepare more effectively church leaders for ministry within an urban context.¹ The focus of the conversation was to examine the status of institutional efforts to bridge the gulf between theological education in the academy and the praxis of urban ministry in the city. For conference participants, the conversation was critical because, at present, any serious consideration of curricular reform in North American theological education with a combined reference to ministry in an urban context has been perceived to be politically problematic for seminaries.

The participants, with the support of a grant from the Presbyterian Church (USA), came together to discuss the current paradigm of theological education and the challenges of city ministry in the years ahead. Interest in the conversation of urban theological education is becoming widespread, not only within the academic community of North American seminaries. Although they were not represented at the meeting, it is clear that providers of non-traditional programs reach different constituencies but have the same goal. Therefore, their inclusion would be important in future conversations. It is also clear that those in Santa Fe came to the conversation from a variety of disciplines and descriptions within the academy.

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In less than five years, more than half the world's population will reside in cities, as compared to nine percent at the turn of the century. The issues of ministry in urban centers of the United States reflect challenges facing the church in non-western, large cities around the globe: employment, housing opportunities, access to quality health care and good education, environmental and safety concerns. The issue is far more complex than simply assuming old philosophical postures of theory versus practice or academy versus community polarities. The reality is that some of the most devastating human and environmental challenges of the new global market reality and postmodern society are to be found in North American urban centers where traditional approaches to theological education have not proven effective in preparing clergy to address these urban realities. Theological education needs to move beyond its traditional bifurcation of theory and practice, which is often at the expense of practice. Urban complexities will require a more comprehensive and creative approach to theological education.

Inclusive of the traditional approaches to urban theological education discussed in Santa Fe, examples were presented of faith-based communities engaging the strength and capacity of inner-city persons to address issues of transformation. These communities of faith place a premium on *building the community from the inside out*. They lift up signs of hope while identifying the assets of the community and acquiring systematic knowledge of how to harness existing resources. Urban theological education from this vantage point prescribes to building upon (exploiting in the positive sense) the social capital that exists within the built environment.

Since World War II, mainline denominational theological curricula have patterned or followed, for the most part, the dictates of suburban ministries, focusing primarily on the professional clergy model. Such a model emphasized a managerial approach to organization and maintenance of congregational ministry from inside the institutional structure. An individualistic approach to pastoral care has not taken seriously the social structures that contribute to spiritual crises—they too must be understood and transformed. Similarly, the realities of multiculturalism have been reduced to addressing racism as a flaw in many seminary curricula rather than the social challenges presented by increasing mobility of racial, ethnic, and national groups. As urban church leaders find themselves confronting enormous community need, there is little in their seminary background to prepare them for ministries incorporating community development. Therefore, the ecumenical group of seminary representatives in Santa Fe felt strongly that the preparation of effective urban ministers for the twenty-first century required the coordinated efforts of the broader spectrum of theological schools. The issues are too complex and pervasive to leave to individual seminaries or even denominations.

In this long overdue gathering of those who had created special M.Div. and D.Min. programs for ministry in metropolitan centers, attention soon centered

on the relationship of these programs within theological education. Believing their programs have been kept at the periphery of the curriculum, these educators began planning a process to bring an urban focus into the core of the larger arena of seminary education. Course and program descriptions that were presented during the meeting demonstrated that most urban programs in the fifteen institutions represented utilized interdisciplinary pedagogical methods. At the core of the conversation was the question: *Should urban ministry constitute a theological discipline in its own right or should it be more intentionally woven throughout the whole curriculum?* This, of course, relates to the current discussion of *excellence* in theological education. The emerging vision of a discrete urban field raises all sort of possibilities in terms of curriculum development, advanced degrees (beyond the D.Min.), publications, colloquiums, teaching posts, and other issues.

It was also clear in the programs represented that not only was instruction interdisciplinary, it was also distinctly contextualized. This means different things at different schools, but generally speaking, those developing training programs for urban ministries were involving non-traditional teachers (such as pastors), non-traditional sites (the neighborhood as classroom), and forging non-traditional partnerships (with, for example, community organizations or non-accredited training programs). If seminaries are to influence the shape of urban ministry in the twenty-first century, we must begin by addressing what has been a rigid boundary between the academy and the community. Greater pedagogical sophistication is needed as we train church leaders for the complex challenges of ministry in the metropolis. Old biases about the nature of education must be transformed into a deeper understanding of all the partnerships that might be necessary for effective teaching.

As communities of faith and learning, seminaries are challenged to lead the church to respond creatively to the urgent needs of our urban communities and to reach new horizons in theological education, by keeping theory and practice together in creative tension, and by breaking down the walls that separate the various fields of theological education, thus building up a theology and a ministry of integrity and wholeness.

The History of Urban Curricula

What movements or undertakings are significant to the next phase of urban theological education? The last fifty years have been critical in the shaping and reshaping of the relationship of training for urban ministry and theological education in North America. The beginnings of postwar urban theological education date from the creation of the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relation (PIIR) in 1944 under the visionary leadership of Marshall Scott. Although the evolution of the industrial age concerned him more, emphasizing management and labor relations more than the impending urbanization, his contribution to urban theological education is, nevertheless, significant.

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Clifford Green provides an insightful critique of the guiding paradigms that have shaped urban ministry since World War II in his work *Churches, Cities, and Human Communities: Urban Ministry in the United States 1945-1985*. This work makes a significant contribution to developing a knowledge-base that furthers systemic analysis and reflection as a form of instruction. He raises three significant questions for framing a historical investigation: (1) What has the central concept of “urban ministry” meant? (2) What are the main forms it has taken? and (3) What image, model, or paradigm of the city, inner city, or metropolitan area has informed the churches’ policy and strategy in cities?² These questions raised by Green are fundamental to ongoing curricular conversations.

Green and his collaborators provide a sampling of the curricular history of urban theological education of which the East Harlem Protestant Parish, a widely acclaimed, innovative cooperative ministry in New York City, is the best-known example. His work is timely for an ecumenical conversation on urban theological education that incorporates both the academy and the community. He pushes the dominant paradigm of theological education by advocating a larger role for seminaries as partners in the social agenda and the needs of the urban context.

George Younger provides significant research on the early efforts of urban ministry training between 1961 and 1975.³

Theological seminaries manifested a general inability and inertia in responding to the more complex society encountered in the city. As a result of this deficit, the decade of the 1960s saw the proliferation of a variety of training efforts. These efforts called action and urban training were developed by national Protestant mission boards and they were directed at enabling the churches to respond to the urban challenge The first attempts at meeting what was defined as a need for clergy and staff training were: 1) in-service training programs set up by national staff members using inner-city clergy, national staff, and seminary and urban studies professors; 2) training in community organization, using the resources of Saul Alinsky and Industrial Area Foundation (IAF) or other community organization specialists; and management training for mission executives either at university business schools or centers of urban studies, or developed by the faculty of those institutions.⁴

Younger documents the evolution of the Action Training Movement in response to the urban challenge of the 1960s. This paradigm shift of the action training movement (or church-based urban training) placed emphasis on *contextual analysis* and the inclusion of *racial ethnic concerns* as central to the task of theological reflection on issues of mission and ministry in the city. It provided opportunity for community persons and those victimized by the oppressive

structures to have a voice in the educational process. Such a curriculum fostered contextual relevance of teaching and learning that equipped persons to exegete their own cultural setting through social and historical analysis that interfaced with biblical and theological reflection, and that allowed them to take responsibility of their lives. While urban realities in the 1990s differ from those of thirty years ago, the legacy of the action training movement deserves revisiting. The direct and indirect impact of those earlier urban educators was evident throughout the Santa Fe discussions of pedagogical approaches in the preparation of ministers who will provide creative, faithful, and effective leadership in the city.

The early 1980s brought forth the most recent model of urban theological education outside the formal structures of the academy. SCUPE (the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education), under the leadership of David Frenchak, emerged out of the clear recognition of the need for programs of urban pastoral education. SCUPE is significant to this discussion because of its ecumenical approach. In addition to providing semester- and year-long educational experiences for students, it brought thousands of clergy, lay, and community persons together biannually to network and share approaches to address urban issues. The SCUPE Congress on Urban Ministry has set the agenda for city ministry for the last fifteen years.

Curricular Reform

The aim of the Santa Fe gathering was to give collective critique to the preparation for ministry in an urban context. It called into question the clerical paradigm of theological education, which is oriented to monastic education; i.e., education in matters of faith best happens in retreat from the distraction of the everyday world. This concept, says Efrain Agosto, “reflects the age-old battle in seminaries with regard to the dichotomy of the so-called ‘theoretical disciplines’ and the so-called ‘practical disciplines’ . . . that has been exacerbated over the years by the influence of academic guilds upon our theologies faculties.”⁵ This is especially true in urban ministry, where it has been documented by experts and others that seminary programs (with few notable exceptions) are simply out of touch with the needs of today’s metropolis.

Theological education must become self-critical at this point of location—looking at the historic and sociological reasons for the preservation of the withdrawn academy. What purpose is served by such decontextualization; or more to the point, whose purpose? Are we not withholding educational resources from our students, and from the community as well?

Those gathered in Santa Fe testified that their experience in training leaders for urban ministry had shown that such education challenges the traditional boundaries between the classic disciplines, between theory and practice, between the academy and the community, between the credentialed and the non-credentialed. Theological education, in order to be effective in urban

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education, must connect faculty, students, congregants, and members of the community in more organic ways in order to understand better the systemically oriented challenges that confront those living in the inner city. Who better to teach with an ethicist on distributive justice than those who have been “downsized” out of the workplace? Who better to teach with a professor of missiology on cross-cultural communication than those from a variety of ethnic groups? Who better to teach with a theologian about the systemic nature of sin than the poor? In other words, the question is not only *if* we should include urban ministry in the theological curriculum, but *how* we should teach it. In answering the questions posed, those in Santa Fe (while representing various theological traditions) agreed that current and future urban realities require that, *yes*, city ministry must find a central place in theological education and *yes*, it means a different pedagogical approach that is ecumenical, contextual, and experiential.

Out of this basic affirmation, a plethora of curricular options emerged. Course content is limited only by imagination and experience. Already in our seminaries courses are being offered. Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia’s “The Church in the City” course brings together a variety of disciplines, faculty members, and resource persons to engage in dialogue with students about the meaning of, and ministry in, the city. New Brunswick Theological Seminary offers “The City as Text,” a course that engages students in a contextual dialogue and systemic analysis with church leaders and community residents to discern the surviving pedagogy and theology of the community as an attempt to document and bridge the gulf between the academy, the church, and the community. Claremont School of Theology’s “Multiculturalism and Ministry in the City” explores the dimensions of intercultural relations with attention to transcultural ministry issues confronting churches in transitional neighborhoods. Lancaster Theological Seminary’s research seminar, “Urban Ministry: Strategies for Post-Manufacturing Cities,” provides students with an opportunity to conduct research related to religion in urban, industrial population centers.

Out of several seminaries, Clinical Pastoral Education programs have been “recontextualized,” moving from clinical to neighborhood settings. Field education and internship assignments range from congregational sites to assignments with homeless shelters, church-based community organizations, and even City Hall. D.Min. programs encourage participants to develop deeper expertise in community development, cross-cultural ministry, or indigenized evangelism.

Too often churches have aided and abetted the crises faced in cities by maintaining segregated, disengaged congregations or even by leaving the city altogether. As those charged with the preparation of church leadership, seminaries cannot claim to be innocent bystanders in the process. We must reclaim our responsibility as partners in the struggle for survival and transformation of our cities.

Urban theological education further challenges the presumption of location for theological education. In addition to the dichotomous discourse of theory and practice, there is the question of the appropriate place for teaching urban theological education. Is the isolated environment of campus-based theological education the best place to train leaders for the urban church? Traditional seminaries should recognize the opportunity to expand their current curricula paradigm beyond the monastic ideal of the traditional classroom to the wider community.

Moreover, seminaries are further challenged to think critically about twenty-first century issues of urban theological education in relation to the churches in cities. The cities today are too complex for mid-nineteenth century “industrial age” solutions, particularly in relation to poor and African American and Latino communities plagued with various sorts of socioeconomic crises. The same “industrial age” conviction falls short for theological education institutions and the Christian church who see it as their purpose to address such crises as ministry and mission.

A Matter of Definition

Those gathered in Santa Fe recognized the importance of definitions. For example, “urban” can connote population, or race, or culture, or social dynamics. When it becomes a code word for “drugs and crime,” then any town, village, or intersection that experiences these social problems is regarded as “urban.” Further, a paradigm of ministry is drawn from this pathological understanding of urban realities, a construction that casts the *church as problem-solver* and the *community as client*. In other words, “urban” signifies Black and/or inner-city which, of course, is only descriptive of a proportion, often a small one, of some, and certainly not all, cities. Earlier attempts to romanticize the city, such as Harvey Cox’s *The Secular City* in 1967, led to celebratory models of ministry. As naïve as that was, both theologically and sociologically, a little celebration of the city would be a welcome antidote to the predominant pathological definition. Clearly, much is at stake in the definitions: our understandings of ministry and, therefore, theological education for preparing pastors and leaders for that context.

Defining Urban Theological Education

By standard definition “metro urban” refers to a metropolitan area (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area) that has a core city population of 50,000 or more with surrounding suburban areas that relate economically to it. “Urban” suggests a densely populated environment that is usually multicultural, multilinguistic, multiracial, and economically diverse. Cities are arenas for a complicated interaction between a physical structure, a system of social organizations, and collective human communities. “Urbanization” refers to the growing phenomenon around the globe in which people are migrating to urban

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centers, thereby increasing their geographic areas (i.e., “sprawl”), political importance, cultural impact, and economic vulnerability. In 1960 the United States had 136 cities with populations greater than 100,000 and 194 cities in 1990.

Contextually, “urban ministry” refers to a theological understanding of the life and work of the church in urban communities, but it also includes neighborhoods and suburbs as they are economically related to cities and experiencing similar patterns of population density and diversity. Urban ministry, therefore, has to be both intensely local in its focus *and* metropolitan in orientation for understanding and addressing larger issues. It is at once encompassing of the vitality of congregational life and the intentional engagement within its context. It is difficult to extricate the pastoral care of members who live in substandard housing, for example, from mission strategies that include community economic development. At the base is a theology of mission in which the Gospel is proclaimed in community and made manifest with it. What is needed is a strong set of skills in which to implement that theology.

This then becomes the task of urban theological education: to ground leaders in solid biblical and theological study that will clarify their missional theology and commitment. Rather than removing them from the context for the purpose of theological education, only to reinsert them at the conclusion of their training and leave the responsibility on the students to integrate their theology with the urban reality, the very process of theological education needs to take place more intentionally in dialogue with the urban context. The second project, that of competence building, should not be segregated from the theoretical instruction, but rather woven into it. The questions that emerge in the process of counseling a pregnant teen, or negotiating a delicate agreement between Latino newcomers and African American old-timers in the community, or organizing a citywide protest against banking practices of disinvestment in inner-city neighborhoods get to the very heart of exploring the means of sin, atonement, ecclesiology, and incarnation. Effective ministry in the city results from training that is at once intensely theological and practical. The praxis of education becomes the great pedagogical challenge before the institutions of theological education.

We are aided in the reformation of curriculum by the agenda of the city itself. Disciplines usually foreign to the academies of theological education need to be incorporated into our courses: sociology, economics, education, land-use urban policy and planning, public health and administration, and community organization, as examples. Our concept of teaching faculty has to likewise expand: Howard University School of Divinity has engaged a police officer in its instruction; Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia have drawn on the expertise of a former mayor of the city; community economic development and a seminar on accounting and auditing procedures taught by a C.P.A. provide the necessary theoretical foundation needed for a student enrolled in a Master of Religious

Education degree program at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary's Metro-Urban Institute; Claremont School of Theology offers an alternative internship called "A Year Abroad in L.A." in which teaching staff includes the director of a non-profit agency, a program officer of a foundation, and former gang members in the city of Los Angeles. These are the elements that make the paradigm of *urban theological education* distinct within the larger endeavor of theological education.

The goal of urban theological education is the cultivation of passionate and effective leadership for ministry in our cities—from the smaller and mid-sized cities to the mega-metropolises. The pedagogical process required is one of learning and doing, research and reflection in the context of ministry. Its methodology must be dialectical and dialogical, interdependent and interdisciplinary. As an educational value, it affirms multicultural diversity and employs the principle of collaboration. Its approach to theology, from any Christian tradition, is necessarily one of empowerment and transformation. Those who come through it must be able both to provide pastoral care and do social analysis, while recognizing the relationship between the two. Urban theological education is not exclusive to pastors, however. This recognition of the potential of the priesthood of all believers should not dilute the process of theological training but, in fact, enrich it.

Challenges Ahead

Finally, the ministry outcome must be marked by hope for the city. As vital communities of faith are developed, they must run counter to so much of the culture that values structures over people and finally holds out little hope for urban centers or their people. Urban ministry, then, is not a commentary or pronouncement of the urban predicament. Done well, it celebrates the possibilities that cities hold, while critically analyzing those systems that oppress, and works strategically with increased sophistication to bring transformation. Rather than writing off our cities with pessimistic determinism, urban ministry makes two important affirmations: *first*, that cities can become healthier, more just and sustainable communities; and *secondly*, that they are worth the effort. Therefore, no singular approach or method of urban ministry can be asserted—in fact, that is not even a desirable goal. Thus, as we enter the twenty-first century, authentic urban ministry in urban context(s) presents some of the most complex and challenging opportunities for seminaries, pastors, and congregations. This means that for urban theological education to be authentic in its engagement and reflection it must be theoretical, global, missional, spiritual, polycultural, prophetic, collaborative, empowering, and transformative. Any one or a combination of these can become a paradigmatic lens for examining a particular urban phenomenon.

Representatives at the gathering in Santa Fe agreed that seminaries must assume a major responsibility in helping urban congregations and other city institutions to shape the character of effective urban ministry into the next

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century. The role taken by seminaries will need to be as partners with “all who love and serve the city.” To that end, the group committed itself to cultivating and expanding the network, and to meeting again next June. The collegial connections have already been fruitful in sharing of resources and experiences as each institution continues to develop its programs. But beyond that there is concern that some consensus around definitions be created—the product of that conversation has been reflected here. There is also a commitment to developing some standardization to program development and more central recognition of the legitimacy of training for urban ministry within theological education. Therefore, the changing dynamics of the urban context raise two challenges: (1) that ministry in cities become more effective and comprehensive and (2) that theological education adapt its considerable resources in order to become more relevant to the task of training leadership for that ministry, and that the role undertaken by seminaries be as partners of a leadership team working toward systemic transformation for an enhanced quality of urban life.

Warren Dennis, associate professor of metro-urban ministry at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, served as convener of the Santa Fe conversation. His research interest is in the sustaining pedagogy and theology of the African American grassroots community as the framework for urban theological education. Katie Day is associate professor of church and society at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, where she is also director of the school's urban program. Her most recent research has been on the African American church's involvement in community economic development and community organizing. Ron Peters is associate professor of urban ministry at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and director of the Metro-Urban Institute, a consortium of churches and community agencies related to the seminary's urban curricula.

ENDNOTES

1. The schools that participated in the conversation were New Brunswick Theological Seminary (New Brunswick, NJ), Drew University Theological School (Madison, NJ), Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (PA), Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (PA), Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (Wynnewood, PA), Claremont School of Theology (CA), Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (South Hamilton, MA), Howard University School of Divinity (Washington, DC), Iliff School of Theology (Denver, CO), Interdenominational Theological Center, (Atlanta, GA), Lancaster Theological Seminary (Lancaster, PA), McCormick Theological Seminary (Chicago, IL), United Theological Seminary (Dayton, OH), and Wesley Theological Seminary (Washington, DC).
2. Clifford J. Green, ed. *Churches, Cities, and Human Community: Urban Ministry in the United States 1945-1985*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 2.
3. George D. Younger, *From New Creation to Urban Crisis: A History of Action Training Ministries 1962-1975*. (Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1987).
4. *Ibid.*, 3-5
5. Efrain Agosto “The Gift of Urban Theological Education: A Personal and Professional Reflection,” *Theological Education* 33:1 (Autumn 1996): 98.

Theological Education for Urban Ministry: A Survey of U.S. Seminaries

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ABSTRACT: Few will deny that the United States is an “urban” nation whose most profound problems are on display daily in its metropolitan areas. Nonetheless, only one-third of ATS accredited seminaries in this country offer (much less require) courses concerned with “urban ministry.” The good news is that strong, vibrant, and growing programs in urban ministry are available—although more frequently in seminaries located in the older cities of the Northeast and Midwest than in those found in the newer cities of the South and West. This article examines some 227 courses, 19 M.Div. programs, 8 M.A. programs, 7 D.Min. programs, and 14 institutes, research centers, and consortial arrangements focused on urban ministry in the context of regional and denominational diversity in the United States.

As we prepare to enter the twenty-first century, everywhere we witness the stark contrasts of urban life—especially, homeless people sleeping on the sidewalks below newly remodeled and gentrified loft apartment buildings. Problems associated with ethnicity, class, housing, and immigration are particularly striking in metropolitan areas, not only in the United States but throughout the world. In this context, the importance of “urban ministry” in theological education must be continually reexamined.

In a recent issue of this journal, Efrain Agosto reflected on the “gifts” of urban theological education as “giving voices to the urban constituency,” “challenges to how we conduct theological education,” and “the wedding of theory and practice.” Agosto concluded his reflections by urging that the gifts of urban ministry programs “need to be lifted up, written about, and disseminated so that the impact can be felt across the whole spectrum of theological education and the church community.”¹ The sense of celebration in Agosto’s reflections on urban ministry must be balanced by a realistic assessment of the current state of urban theological education.

The present article grew out of my personal interest to discover what is happening in urban ministry in U.S. seminaries. Although I easily located numerous books and articles on how urban theological education *should* be conducted,² I was surprised that “simple” questions related to the actual role of urban ministry in seminary education were difficult to answer. Even appeals

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to The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) itself, though graciously answered and redirected to outside experts, brought little satisfaction. Consequently, several months of tedious research and persistent inquiries (and encouragement from many persons in seminaries throughout the nation) have resulted in this report on the practice of urban theological education.

Here are some answers to such "simple" questions as: Which seminaries offer courses and programs related to urban ministry? What are the main features of urban-oriented training programs? Where are courses and programs being offered? What special resources (e.g., training institutes, research centers, publications, and consortia) have been developed to facilitate classroom and field training in urban ministry? And, finally, do denominations differ in their emphasis in training seminary students for urban ministry?

Procedures

This report is based on a survey of 169 graduate-level educational institutions in the United States accredited (i.e., excluding "associate" and "candidate" members) by ATS. The ATS membership directory (<http://www.ats.edu/members/>) also provides active links to the Internet home pages of many of these institutions. The information in these institutional home pages permitted me to contact (by telephone) the relatively small number of institutions absent from the microfiche catalogue collection used for the initial survey. Eventually, I was able to examine a recent catalogue or brochure for each of the 169 institutions to obtain data on their courses, programs, institutes, and other activities related to urban ministry.

General Characteristics of Urban Ministry Education

For purposes of this survey, I have defined "urban ministry" as an explicit focus on "urban," "metropolitan," or "city" phenomena or problems, whether in the U.S. or abroad. Thus, courses on "Church and Society," "Church and Community," or "Church and Ethnicity" are not considered "urban" unless they clearly emphasize the urban context and dimensions of society, community, and ethnicity. Based on this narrow definition, only 34.9% (59 of 169) of U.S. seminaries offer courses that fall within this rubric. The number of courses offered at individual institutions ranges from zero (the approach taken by the other 65.1% [110 of the 169] institutions surveyed) to more than twenty. Typically offered as elective courses within an M.Div. curriculum, and less often as courses for M.A.-level and D.Min. curricula, urban ministry courses usually are classified into a division of "practical theology" or "ministry" where they stand in contrast to biblical studies, church history, theology, or homiletics, for example. In addition, urban ministry may be offered within an internship, field education, or contextualized education domain of the curriculum.

Geographical Distribution of Urban Ministry Education in U.S. Seminaries

The 169 seminaries included in this survey are located in 33 states and the District of Columbia. Following the framework used by the U.S. Census Bureau, I have divided their locations into four regions: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. Table 1 shows that, when compared to the seminaries that do *not* have urban ministry course offerings, those with urban ministry course offerings are distributed fairly evenly across the four regions of the nation. However, when considered as a *separate* group, the 59 seminaries with urban ministry course offerings are more often found in the Midwest (30.5%) than in the South (28.8%), the Northeast (25.4%), or the West (15.3%).

Table 1. Urban Ministry Course Offerings at U.S. Seminaries: Regional Distribution

Region	No Urban Courses Offered		Urban Courses Offered		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Northeast	26	63.4%	15	36.6%	41	100.0%
Midwest	38	67.9%	18	32.1%	56	100.0%
South	31	64.6%	17	35.4%	48	100.0%
West	15	62.5%	9	37.5%	24	100.0%
Total	110	65.1%	59	34.9%	169	100.0%

Note: the Northeast includes CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, and VT; the Midwest includes IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, and WI; the South includes AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, and WV; and the West includes AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, and WY.

To what extent does this distribution of seminaries with urban ministry course offerings reflect the patterns of urban population distribution in the nation? Or, to put the issue in terms of praxis, are the seminaries that provide urban ministry education located in urban areas in need of professional clergy with these special skills? Drawing on data from the 1990 census, we can examine this question. Among the four regions, the percent of urban population varies from a high of 86.3% in the West to a low of 68.6% in the South (with the Northeast and the Midwest falling in between, at 78.9% and 71.7%, respectively). In other words, the U.S. is an "urban" nation, especially because

the Census Bureau defines “urban” for the 1990 census as “compromising all territory, population, and housing units in urbanized areas and in places of 2,500 or more persons outside urbanized areas. . . . Territory, population, and housing units not classified as urban constitute ‘rural.’ ”³

If we look beyond overall urban population patterns to cities as the sites of human community in contemporary America, we see a different picture. With regard to the distribution of the 100 largest cities, the South (40) leads the way, followed by the West (30) and the Midwest (21), while the Northeast (9) is far back. On the other hand, the Northeast has a perfect match between those states (i.e., MA, NJ, NY, and PA) with large cities and those having one or more seminaries with urban ministry courses. In the Midwest, only Kansas, Nebraska, and Wisconsin are deficient in this regard. For the South, the match between cities and seminaries is not as appropriate: the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, and Oklahoma have large cities but lack seminaries with urban ministry courses, while in the West (with its notable paucity of seminaries beyond California), the states of Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Washington have large cities but no home-based seminaries with urban ministry courses.

As Table 2 shows, the 30 large (and relatively “old”) cities of the Northeast and the Midwest are served by 33 seminaries with urban ministry course offerings, whereas the 70 large (and relatively “new”) cities spread across the southern and western regions of the nation from Miami to San Diego to Seattle are served by only 26 seminaries with urban ministry course offerings. The Northeast and Midwest together have 21.5 million city dwellers and 33 “urban” seminaries (a ratio of 651,000 to 1), whereas the South and West together have 30.2 million city dwellers and 26 “urban” seminaries (a ratio of 1,162,000 to 1).

Table 2. Distribution of Large Cities and Seminaries with Urban Ministry Courses

NORTHEAST

CITIES (total = 9, with total population = 11,102,654)

(1) New York City, (5) Philadelphia, (20) Boston, (40) Pittsburgh, (50) Buffalo, (56) Newark, (66) Rochester, (67) Jersey City, (84) Yonkers

SEMINARIES (total = 15)

Alliance Theological Seminary, Andover Newton Theological School, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Episcopal Divinity School, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Harvard University Divinity School, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Moravian Theological Seminary, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New York Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary (NY), Westminster Theological Seminary

MIDWEST

CITIES (total = 21, with total population = 10,472,274)

(3) Chicago, (7) Detroit, (12) Indianapolis, (16) Columbus, (17) Milwaukee, (24) Cleveland, (31) Kansas City, (34) St. Louis, (42) Minneapolis, (45) Cincinnati, (48) Omaha, (49) Toledo, (51) Wichita, (57) St. Paul, (71) Akron, (80) Des Moines, (81) Lincoln, (82) Madison, (83) Grand Rapids, (89) Dayton, (99) Fort Wayne

SEMINARIES (total = 18)

Anderson University School of Theology, Calvin Theological Seminary, Christian Theological Seminary, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Lincoln Christian Seminary, Luther Seminary, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, McCormick Theological Seminary, Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Saint Paul School of Theology, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, United Theological Seminary (OH), United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Western Theological Seminary

SOUTH

CITIES (total = 40, with total population = 15,727,992)

(4) Houston, (8) Dallas, (10) San Antonio, (13) Baltimore, (15) Jacksonville, (18) Memphis, (19) Washington, DC, (22) El Paso, (23) Nashville-Davidson, (25) New Orleans, (27) Austin, (28) Fort Worth, (29) Oklahoma City, (35) Charlotte, (36) Atlanta, (37) Virginia Beach, (43) Tulsa, (46) Miami, (55) Tampa, (58) Louisville, (60) Birmingham, (61) Arlington, (62) Norfolk, (64) Corpus Christi, (65) St. Petersburg, (70) Lexington-Fayette, (73) Baton Rouge, (74) Raleigh, (76) Richmond, (77) Shreveport, (78) Jackson, (79) Mobile, (85) Hialeah, (86) Montgomery, (87) Lubbock, (88) Greensboro, (91) Garland, (93) Columbus, (96) Little Rock, (100) Newport News

SEMINARIES (total = 17)

Asbury Theological Seminary, Candler School of Theology of Emory University, Church of God School of Theology, Columbia Biblical Seminary of Columbia International University, Columbia Theological Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary, Duke University Divinity School, Eastern Mennonite Seminary of Eastern Mennonite University, Emmanuel School of Religion, Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, Howard University School of Divinity, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, Virginia Union University School of Theology, Wesley Theological Seminary

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WEST

CITIES (total = 30, with total population = 14,525,274)

(2) Los Angeles, (6) San Diego, (9) Phoenix, (11) San Jose, (14) San Francisco, (21) Seattle, (26) Denver, (30) Portland, (32) Long Beach, (33) Tucson, (38) Albuquerque, (39) Oakland, (41) Sacramento, (44) Honolulu, (47) Fresno, (52) Santa Ana, (53) Mesa, (54) Colorado Springs, (59) Anaheim, (63) Las Vegas, (68) Riverside, (69) Anchorage, (72) Aurora, (75) Stockton, (90) Huntington Beach, (92) Glendale, (94) Spokane, (95) Tacoma, (97) Bakersfield, (98) Fremont

SEMINARIES (total = 9)

Claremont School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Haggard Graduate School of Theology of Azusa Pacific University, Iliff School of Theology, Pacific School of Religion, San Francisco Theological Seminary, Talbot School of Theology of Biola University, Western Evangelical Seminary

Note: the number preceding a city indicates its rank among the 100 largest cities in 1990. The city and state of each seminary is given in Appendix 1. Branch campuses and extension programs have not been included here.

In recent years, some institutions have recognized this mismatch between urban needs and seminary resources and, consequently, have established programs to serve areas at a distance. For instance, Fuller Theological Seminary's Extended Education Program offers off-campus courses in southern and northern California, Washington, Arizona, and Colorado; Reformed Theological Seminary of Jackson, MS, has branch campuses in Orlando, FL, Charlotte, NC, and Washington, DC; Bethel Theological Seminary of St. Paul, MN, and Westminster Theological Seminary of Philadelphia, PA, both have new branch campuses in the San Diego, CA, area. Still, despite recent improvements in distance learning programs and the new trend toward branch campuses, some states (especially Texas and Florida in the South and Nevada, Arizona, and Washington in the West) with rapidly growing cities have considerable unmet needs for urban ministry education. Entrepreneurial seminary administrators will see here numerous opportunities for advancing urban theological education.

Courses in Urban Ministry

The 59 seminaries offer at least 227 courses in urban ministry *narrowly defined*, an average of almost four courses per seminary. The number of courses offered ranges widely, from one to 22, with the most common patterns being one (28.8%), two (13.6%), or three (18.6%). Some urban ministry courses, like all seminary courses, are taught every term, while others (especially field courses) may be reserved to summer sessions or winter inter-term periods. Urban ministry courses are taught by full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty. Depending on typical faculty course loads, at many seminaries urban-related electives are not offered every term. Where part-time and adjunct instructors are employed in the urban ministry area, the reduced institutional costs may be associated with sporadic course offerings.

To understand the kinds of urban ministry courses offered at these 59 seminaries, I placed each of the 227 courses into one of twenty-two thematic categories. The distribution of courses by category is given in Table 3. Because the most common pattern is for a seminary to have only one urban ministry course, it is not surprising that 20.3% of all courses fall into the “General Urban Ministry/Church Issues” category. In a similar fashion, the connection between urban ministry and field placements is revealed in the importance of courses falling into the category of “Urban Field Experiences” (13.2%). The emphasis on mission and church planting work, especially among evangelical denominations, is seen in the popularity of courses related to “Mission, Evangelism, Church Planting” (9.7%). Tied in the next position are courses involving “General Urban Issues” (5.3%), “Urban Church and Community” (5.3%), and “Urban Ministry Leadership Issues” (5.3%). These six categories together account for 59.1% of available courses; the remaining 40.9% of the courses fall into the other 16 categories. Clearly, urban ministry education is a highly diversified enterprise, both in terms of the number and emphases of courses offered at individual seminaries. Here is a cautionary lesson to seminary educators: urban theological education is *not* limited to courses about ethnicity, poverty, community development, and social justice. On the contrary, a comprehensive urban ministry program can include urban-oriented training in theology, pastoral counseling, preaching and worship, and church history. In fact, one institution—Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, located on the edge of Philadelphia—requires at least one urban ministry course for all M.Div. students. This is a distinctive approach to making urban ministry a “comprehensive” component of theological education.

Table 3. Urban Ministry Courses Arranged by Thematic Categories

Category	No.	%
General Urban Ministry/Church Issues	46	20.3%
Urban Field Experiences	30	13.2%
Mission, Evangelism, Church Planting	22	9.7%
General Urban Issues	12	5.3%
Urban Church and Community	12	5.3%
Urban Ministry Leadership Issues	12	5.3%
Methods of Community Analysis/Organization	10	4.4%
Theology of the City	10	4.4%
Community Development & Social Action	9	4.0%
Urban Culture, Anthropology, & Sociology	8	3.5%
Family/Social Issues & Pastoral Counseling	7	3.1%
Seminars in Urban Ministry	7	3.1%
Urban Poverty	7	3.1%
Multicultural Issues	6	2.6%
African Americans	5	2.2%
Urban Christian Education	5	2.2%
Urban Preaching and Worship	5	2.2%
Independent Studies in Urban Ministry	4	1.8%
Hispanic Americans	3	1.3%
History of Urban Churches	3	1.3%
Asian Americans	2	0.9%
North American Urban Ministry	2	0.9%
Total	227	100.1%

Note: the total does not sum to 100% because of rounding error.

Appendix 2 lists all 227 of the courses encountered in my survey of seminary catalogues. The courses are arranged there according to the categories of Table 3. Following each course name a number in parenthesis indicates which of the 59 seminaries offers that course. Even casual perusal of the course titles shows the wide-ranging creativity found in urban ministry programs, while a careful analysis of the courses will be helpful to those interested in designing (or improving) a comprehensive urban ministry education program.

Concentrations in Urban Ministry within the M.Div. Degree

Among the 59 institutions with urban ministry course offerings, nineteen (32.2%) also have developed “concentrations” for urban ministry within the M.Div. degree program. The requirements for these diverse programs typically

involve from five to eight courses, often with a foundational/integrative course at the beginning of the specialization followed by topical courses on urban themes and completed through a field practicum and/or internship experience. Some of these concentrations emphasize urban mission/evangelism both at home and abroad, but most focus on the needs of M.Div. students to learn about the features of contemporary urban communities in the immediate metropolitan context of the seminary. These programs are far more than mere collections of urban-related elective courses. In varying ways, they provide institutional recognition and receive significant faculty leadership and administrative support.

Although the local meaning of the labels used for urban ministry programs may be unique and thus not comparable across institutions, it is still worthwhile to identify how these programs are labeled: Concentration (2, 37, 47, 49), Emphasis (1, 19, 36), Experience (14), Focus (59), Program (9, 16, 22, 26, 30), Section (57), Specialization (34), Track (31, 56), Vocational Orientation (10). [Note: the numbers in parentheses correspond to the seminaries listed in Appendix 1.]

Seminaries with urban ministry programs are found throughout the nation and are usually located in major metropolitan settings where contextualized education can be integrated into student training. Several programs involve short-term “immersion” or weekend “plunge” experiences in cities like Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. In addition, a few seminaries have made contextualized education an integral rather than optional part of the curriculum. For instance, the “Mission Statement” of Howard University School of Divinity includes a recognition that theological education should be “designed to prepare persons to provide competent professional leadership in religious and educational institutions, as well as in other institutions which affect the quality of life in society, especially in urban, underserved, black communities.” Perhaps the most storied example of an institutional commitment to urban ministry is that of New York Theological Seminary,⁴ whose catalogue describes its Master of Divinity degree in these words:

The program is oriented to the pastoral ministry in an inner-city or metropolitan context, with a strong emphasis upon the local congregation as an agency of personal spiritual formation and societal transformation. A high premium is placed, therefore, upon the centrality of the Bible in all subject areas, skill in preaching and worship, field experience in the actual parish situations where students are already in ministry, social analysis and engagement with political, economic, and social forces that victimize the poor, women, and ethnic minorities. . . . Under the guidance of an interracial faculty of men and women, students seek to synthesize life experience with the academic study of religion and gain and enhance skills relevant to the urban constituencies they expect to serve.

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Iliff School of Theology in Denver is currently in the second year of a pilot program in urban ministry which provides a useful model for other seminaries. Recognizing that financial awards play an important role in the choices made by M.Div. students, Iliff is testing a program that offers four students full tuition plus a stipend as an incentive to focus their careers on urban ministry. These students are assigned to an urban parish and to a related urban service agency where they work. These fellowships are granted in the second year and normally renewed for the third year of the M.Div. program. The fellowships are funded through the generosity of one of the members of the Board of Trustees. This substantial grant also enables Iliff to fund several adjunct courses with an urban focus and to send the urban fellows to a conference on urban ministry. According to my conversation with Jeff Mahan, director of ministry studies at Iliff, this innovative urban ministry program “will affect not only the fellows themselves, but will impact the consciousness of the entire school.”

M.A.-Level Urban Ministry Programs

Beyond the concentrations available within the M.Div. degree, specialized master’s level degree programs in urban ministry have been developed at several seminaries. Alliance Theological Seminary offers a 48-hour Master of Professional Studies in Urban Ministry which includes 18 hours of electives in urban ministry; Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary has an urban ministry concentration in its M.T.S. degree program; Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary has a two-year Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies which has a significant urban component; the Haggard Graduate School of Theology has a 60-hour Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies with a 20-hour concentration in Urban and Intercultural Ministries; Lincoln Christian Seminary offers a new Master of Arts in Urban Mission degree program through its Chicago Center for Urban Mission; New Brunswick Theological Seminary has a 25-hour Urban Ministry Concentration within the 61-hour M.A. in Theology; and Westminster Theological Seminary offers a two-year Master of Arts in Religion with a 22-hour Urban Missions Emphasis and also a Master of Arts in Missiology with an urban specialization.

Doctoral-Level Urban Ministry Programs

Although most seminaries offer a fairly standard Doctor of Ministry degree, it is possible to specialize in urban ministry at the doctoral level. Fuller Theological Seminary, through its School of World Mission, offers several degrees (D.Min. in Global Ministries, the Doctor of Missiology, the Doctor of Philosophy in Intercultural Studies, and the Doctor of Philosophy in Missiology) which allow significant urban mission course work. In fact, the Urban Mission (MN) designation covers 29 different courses from “Foundations of Urban

Mission” through dissertation preparation and writing. Also in southern California, the Claremont School of Theology offers an urban concentration in its Doctor of Ministry program and the Talbot School of Theology is beginning a new Doctor of Ministry degree program with a concentration on Urban Ministry. Three courses (“Introduction to Urban Ministry,” “Theological Foundations of Urban Ministry,” and “Urban Models of Ministry”) will be critical components of this new D.Min. program.

In metropolitan Philadelphia, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary has a new D.Min. program with a decidedly urban focus. Called the “Doctor of Ministry in the Renewal of the Church for Mission,” this program aims to train ministers and mission leaders for transformation and renewal. Specializations are provided in four areas: personal, congregational, community, and global. Also in Philadelphia, Westminster Theological Seminary has a D.Min. degree program in urban mission. Started in 1982, this program involves eight competency areas (including urban anthropology, demographics, and theology of urban mission). All of these are available as distance learning packets for non-residential students.

In New Jersey, a Doctor of Ministry degree in urban ministry is available through New Brunswick Theological Seminary. A distinguishing feature of this program is its relation with the School of Urban Policy and Planning at Rutgers University.

In Washington, DC, Wesley Theological Seminary offers an Urban Ministry track in the D.Min. degree program that aims to develop effective models (through sustained theological reflection and peer learning) for the special challenge of urban ministry. The Wesley urban ministry track includes five especially designed courses: “Urban Theology,” “Sociology of the Urban Context,” “Urban Issues and Politics,” “Urban Ministry Models,” and “The Bible and the City.”

Institutes, Centers, and Consortia for Urban Ministry

Independent institutes, research centers, and consortia focused on urban ministry operate in several metropolitan areas. The earliest were established in the Northeast but more recently these centers for innovation in urban theological education have sprung up in other parts of the nation. Institutes, centers, and consortia frequently offer combined courses of study or field placement opportunities beyond those of the member schools.

Atlanta

The Urban Training Organization of Atlanta (UTOA) includes Candler School of Theology of Emory University, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and other seminaries that send students to the Atlanta metropolitan area for intensive urban experiences. In addition, the Interdenominational

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Theological Center, located on the campus of Atlanta University, involves six institutions—Morehouse School of Religion, Gammon Theological Seminary, Turner Theological Seminary, Phillips School of Theology, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, and Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary—that work closely with the UTOA in action/training programs in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

Boston

The Center for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME) is affiliated with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and serves as the site of the Contextualized Urban Theological Education Enablement Program.

The Boston Theological Institute (which includes Andover Newton Theological School, Boston College, Boston University, Episcopal Divinity School, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Harvard University Divinity School, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Saint John's Seminary, and Weston Jesuit School of Theology) offers a cross-institutional "Urban Ministerial Education Program" which includes nine courses drawn from three of the member schools.

Chicago

Perhaps the best known of the consortia, the Chicago-based Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE) involves numerous seminaries within and beyond the Chicago metropolitan area. These include Anderson University School of Theology, Calvin Theological Seminary, Emmanuel School of Religion, Luther Seminary, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, and Western Theological Seminary. These member schools have access to a complete curriculum of urban pastoral studies, including field placements for their students, who must have a full year of seminary education before participating in this study experience. The SCUPE program involves 11 months (from September to August of the following year) during which students do 20 hours per week of supervised urban parish ministry and also take courses related to urban topics. In addition to the 11-month program, SCUPE offers a short-term program in the winter (e.g., 28 Nov. - 16 Dec.) so that students might explore a "systems" understanding of the city and ethnic communities.

Six of the eleven members of the Association of Chicago Theological Schools (ACTS) cooperate in the ACTS Urban Clinical Pastoral Education Program. These schools include McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago Theological Seminary, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Meadville/Lombard Theological School, and the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. One hospital system (Advocate Health Care, related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Church of Christ) sponsors the ACTS Urban CPE Program in the summer and in an extended, year-long format.

Los Angeles

The Bresee Institute for Urban Training (affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene) is located in the heart of Los Angeles, an ideal setting for studying the issues and challenges of urban ministry. Graduate (and undergraduate programs) are offered year-round, as are “urban plunges.” The Institute offers 36 quarter units of graduate urban course work each year, with credit available through Nazarene Theological Seminary and four other institutions (Anderson University School of Theology, Haggard School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Pacific Christian College).

Also part of the Bresee Institute is the Southern California Urban Theological Education Partnership, which offers urban ministry training opportunities for Claremont School of Theology and other institutions in the greater Los Angeles area.

Claremont School of Theology also provides a Program in Leadership Development for Urban Ministry that targets active pastors as well as students seeking formal training in urban ministry. This training is carried out in conjunction with Claremont’s Urban Leadership Institute.

In addition to being involved in the work of the Bresee Institute, the Haggard Graduate School of Theology of Azusa Pacific University also offers urban ministerial studies at the Los Angeles/Urban Ministries Studies Center. Students may enroll for up to 20 credit hours toward the M.Div. degree or the Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies.

Philadelphia

The Urban Theological Institute (UTI) is affiliated with Lutheran Theological Seminary. The Center for Urban Theological Studies (CUTS) involves Westminster Theological Seminary, Geneva College, and Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, while the Philadelphia Urban Ministry Consultation (PUMC) includes Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Westminster Theological Seminary, and other seminaries.

Pittsburgh

In 1991, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary initiated the Metro-Urban Institute in order to prepare Christian leaders for ministry in the urban community. The Institute aims to provide diverse educational opportunities grounded in urban and related suburban ministries through: (1) networking, (2) identification of continuing education needs, (3) clarification of issues, (4) provision of urban education and field placement opportunities, (5) utilization of community leadership, and (6) offering resources to students, faculty, and collaborative members. A distinctive feature of the Metro-Urban Institute is the urban Ministry Field Education program known as “The Collaborative,” through which students can receive supervised experiential learning in urban field education and internship placements during all three years of their degree

work. The Institute offers a comprehensive set of courses, both for M.Div. and M.A. programs, related to urban ministry.

Washington, DC

The Wesley Institute of Urban Ministry is affiliated with Wesley Theological Seminary. In 1991, the Wesley Institute began a focus on urban religious research (to complement its prior emphasis on aiding inner-city churches and enabling students for ministry in such settings). Current goals are to understand congregations and urban religious phenomena, to provide information for religious and community revitalization, and to develop new curricular models for theological education.

Denominational Features of Urban Ministry Education

This survey demonstrates that urban-related programs cross denominational lines, not only by their presence at seminaries affiliated with many mainline and multi/interdenominational churches but also because urban ministry brings denominations into dialogue about the problems of the city. Table 4 shows the pattern of urban ministry education for the 42 denominations whose seminaries are accredited by ATS.

Table 4. Denominational Patterns of Urban Ministry Education

Denomination	No Urban Ministry	Urban Ministry	Total
Roman Catholic, United States	43	0	43
Inter/Multidenominational	8	12	20
United Methodist Church	3	9	12
Episcopal Church, The	8	3	11
Presbyterian Church (USA)	4	6	10
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	2	6	8
United Church of Christ	3	4	7
American Baptist Churches in the USA	4	2	6
Nondenominational	4	2	6
Southern Baptist Convention	4	2	6
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	3	1	4
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod	2	0	2
Mennonite Church	1	1	2
Reformed Church in America	0	2	2
Unitarian Universalist	2	0	2
Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	0	2	2

African Methodist Episcopal	1	0	1
Assemblies of God	1	0	1
Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church	1	0	1
Baptist General Conference	1	0	1
Brethren Church (Ashland, OH)	1	0	1
Christian Reformed Church	0	1	1
Christian and Missionary Alliance	0	1	1
Church of God (Anderson, IN)	0	1	1
Church of God (Cleveland, TN)	0	1	1
Church of the Brethren	1	0	1
Church of the Nazarene	0	1	1
Churches of God, Gen. Conf.	1	0	1
Conservative Baptist Assoc. of America	1	0	1
Cumberland Presbyterian Church	1	0	1
Evangelical Congregational Church	1	0	1
Evangelical Covenant Church	1	0	1
Evangelical Free Church of America	1	0	1
Friends, Religious Society of	1	0	1
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in N./S. America	1	0	1
Mennonite Brethren Church in NA	1	0	1
Moravian Church in America	0	1	1
North American Baptist Conference	1	0	1
Orthodox Church in America	1	0	1
Presbyterian Church in America	1	0	1
Reformed Presbyterian	1	0	1
Seventh-Day Adventist	0	1	1
Total	110	59	169

Analysis of the data in Table 4 shows that, aside from the commitment of Roman Catholic seminaries to a traditional parish-oriented pedagogy, denominations with multiple seminaries are over-represented in urban ministry whereas single-seminary denominations are under-represented. Table 5 shows this pattern clearly. The challenges of urban ministry depend less on denominational dogma than on diversity. When denominations have more than one seminary, especially where these are located in metropolitan settings, the tendency to respond to the urban problems beyond the seminary walls is heightened. On the other hand, if a denomination has only a single seminary to train its leaders and if this seminary is located in a rural setting, it is unlikely to emphasize urban issues in its curriculum.

Table 5. Denominational Groupings and Urban Ministry Education

Denominational Grouping	No		Total
	Urban Ministry	Urban Ministry	
Denominations with 2+ seminaries	36	38	84
Inter/multi/nondenominational	12	14	26
Denominations with only 1 seminary	19	7	26
Roman Catholic, United States	43	0	43
Total	110	59	169

It remains to account for the situation of the Roman Catholic seminaries, especially in the light of their important work in urban parochial school education and in social services to immigrant and impoverished peoples in cities across the nation. In his astute analysis of Roman Catholic approaches to urban ministry for the period 1945 to 1985, Frederick J. Perella Jr. provides a provocative answer:

Prior to 1945, then, the experience of American Roman Catholicism was a story of urban ministry. But there was no distinctive concept of “urban ministry,” a term that seems rooted in Protestant experience and suggested a dichotomy between ordinary Roman Catholic life and some specialized activity.⁵

Although this sense of “dichotomy” is apparent in many Protestant seminaries that offer separate courses and programs in urban ministry and/or rural ministry, Roman Catholic seminaries can treat urban and rural parishes as similar mission contexts. The traditional Roman Catholic emphasis on parish ministry and pastoral care makes it possible for local priests to know their communicants and their communities on a first-hand basis. So, Roman Catholic seminaries do not sense a need for special training courses or programs to respond to urban problems with which they have been involved for decades. Nor do diocesan-based Roman Catholic seminaries need special courses or programs to set themselves apart from other seminaries, either within or beyond the denomination.

Conclusion

The development and maintenance of urban theological education programs is part of the churches’ witness to “seek the peace of the city.”⁶ Innovative programs in urban ministry and mission continue to be created as we struggle with the material and spiritual well-being of our sisters and brothers in cities in the United States and abroad. The pioneering programs in Boston, Chicago,

New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC, are being complemented by new efforts in Atlanta, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, and elsewhere. Still, much work remains. A tiny fraction of all seminary faculty are dedicated to the complex task of training a new generation to minister with the people of our cities. Despite the progress of the past two decades, it is sobering to be reminded that two-thirds of all seminaries in the U.S. still fail to offer (much less require) even one course directly concerned with urban ministry. As we celebrate the gifts of urban theological education, we should not ignore this continuing challenge.⁷

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ENDNOTES

1. Efrain Agosto, "The Gifts of Urban Theological Education: A Personal and Professional Reflection," *Theological Education* 33:1 (1996): 103.
2. For examples of the literature on urban ministry, see Edgar J. Elliston and J. Timothy Kauffman, *Developing Leaders for Urban Ministries* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); Roger Greenway, ed., *Discipling the City: A Comprehensive Approach to Urban Mission*, 2nd. edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); Loyde Hartley, *Cities and Churches: An International Bibliography: Volumes I-III, 1800-1991* (Metuchen: ATLA and the Scarecrow Press, 1992); Eleanor Scott Meyers, ed., *Envisioning the New City: A Reader on Urban Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); Harold J. Recinos, *Jesus Weeps: Global Encounters on Our Doorstep* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992); and Cecil Williams, *No Hiding Place: Empowerment and Recovery for Our Troubled Communities* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992). Two important continuing resources of information about urban ministry are available from Westminster Theological Seminary: the journal *Urban Mission*, now in volume 15 (September 1997), and *Urban Missions Newsletter* (no. 55, September 1997). In addition, an entire issue of *Church & Society* (November/December 1995) was devoted to the topic "Seeking the Peace of the City: The Next Decade in Urban Ministry."
3. U.S. Census Bureau, "Urban and Rural Definitions," <http://www.census.gov/population/censusdata/urdef.txt> (Oct. 1995).
4. See Robert W. Pazmiño, *Seminary in the City: A Study of New York Theological Seminary* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988) and George W. Webber, *Led by the Spirit: The Story of New York Theological Seminary* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990).
5. Frederick J. Perella, Jr., "Roman Catholic Approaches to Urban Ministry, 1945-1985," *Churches, Cities, and Human Community: Urban Ministry in the United States 1945-1985*, ed. Clifford J. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 179-180.

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6. Eldin Villafañe, *Seek the Peace of the City: Reflections on Urban Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995).

7. This challenge is taken up in the companion article in this volume on “Urban Theological Education: A Conversation about Curriculum” by Warren Dennis, Katie Day, and Ron Peters. They report on a conference (held in Santa Fe, NM, in June 1997) that brought together urban theological educators from fifteen seminaries concerned with “theologically-based urban training programs.”

Appendix 1. Seminaries with Urban Ministry Course Offerings

No.	Name of Institution	City, State
1.	Alliance Theological Seminary	Nyack, NY
2.	Anderson University School of Theology	Anderson, IN
3.	Andover Newton Theological School	Newton Centre, MA
4.	Asbury Theological Seminary	Wilmore, KY
5.	Calvin Theological Seminary	Grand Rapids, MI
6.	Candler School of Theology of Emory University	Atlanta, GA
7.	Christian Theological Seminary	Indianapolis, IN
8.	Church of God School of Theology	Cleveland, TN
9.	Claremont School of Theology	Claremont, CA
10.	Columbia Biblical Seminary of Columbia International University	Columbia, SC
11.	Columbia Theological Seminary	Decatur, GA
12.	Dallas Theological Seminary	Dallas, TX
13.	Duke University Divinity School	Durham, NC
14.	Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary	Wynnewood, PA
15.	Eastern Mennonite Seminary of Eastern Mennonite University	Harrisburg, VA
16.	Emmanuel School of Religion	Johnson City, TN
17.	Episcopal Divinity School	Cambridge, MA
18.	Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest	Austin, TX
19.	Fuller Theological Seminary	Pasadena, CA
20.	Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary	Evanston, IL
21.	Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary	Mill Valley, CA
22.	Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary	South Hamilton, MA
23.	Haggard Graduate School of Theology of Azusa Pacific University	Azusa, CA
24.	Harvard University Divinity School	Cambridge, MA
25.	Howard University School of Divinity	Washington, DC
26.	Iliff School of Theology	Denver, CO
27.	Lancaster Theological Seminary	Lancaster, PA
28.	Lincoln Christian Seminary	Lincoln, IL
29.	Luther Seminary	St. Paul, MN
30.	Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago	Chicago, IL

31. Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia	Philadelphia, PA
32. Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary	Columbus, SC
22. McCormick Theological Seminary	Chicago, IL
34. Methodist Theological School in Ohio	Delaware, OH
35. Moravian Theological Seminary	Bethlehem, PA
36. Nazarene Theological Seminary	Kansas City, MO
37. New Brunswick Theological Seminary	New Brunswick, NJ
38. New York Theological Seminary	New York, NY
39. Pacific School of Religion	Berkeley, CA
40. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary	Pittsburgh, PA
41. Princeton Theological Seminary	Princeton, NJ
42. Reformed Theological Seminary	Jackson, MS
43. Saint Paul School of Theology	Kansas City, MO
44. San Francisco Theological Seminary	San Anselmo, CA
45. Seabury-Western Theological Seminary	Evanston, IL
46. Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University	Berrien Springs, MI
47. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary	Fort Worth, TX
48. Talbot School of Theology of Biola University	La Mirada, CA
49. Trinity Lutheran Seminary	Columbus, OH
50. Union Theological Seminary	New York, NY
51. Union Theological Seminary in Virginia	Richmond, VA
52. United Theological Seminary	Dayton, OH
53. United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities	New Brighton, MN
54. Virginia Union University School of Theology	Richmond, VA
55. Wartburg Theological Seminary	Dubuque, IA
56. Wesley Theological Seminary	Washington, DC
57. Western Evangelical Seminary of George Fox University	Portland, OR
58. Western Theological Seminary	Holland, MI
59. Westminster Theological Seminary	Philadelphia, PA

Appendix 2

General Urban Ministry/Church Issues: Christianity in the City (3), Church in the City (15), Church in the Urban Context (47), Foundations of Urban Ministry (37), Inner City Ministry II (22), Introduction to Urban Ministry (30), Introduction to Urban Ministry (48), Introduction to Urban Ministry (49), Introduction to Urban Ministry: Biblical, Theological, Sociological & Ministerial Dimensions (14), Issues in Urban Ministry (31), Ministry in the City (18), Ministry in the City (52), Ministry in the City (55), Ministry in the Urban Church (52), Models of Urban Ministry (31), Models of Urban Ministry (59), Module Course: Ethical Issues in Ministry (24), Public Ministry: The Church in the City (7), Reformed Urban Ethics (40), Religion and the City (24), The Church and the Urban Setting (34), The Church and the Urban World (5), The Church in the City (31), The Church in the Urban World (1), The Churches and the City: Ethical Issues in Urban

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Ministry (30), *The Churches and the City: Ethical Issues in Urban Ministry* (33), *The Gospel, The World, and the City...* (22), *The Inner City: A Context for Ministry* (22), *The Urban Church* (13), *The Urban Environment and Ministries of the Church* (56), *Theories of Urban Ministry* (44), *Urban Church Ministry* (20), *Urban Church Models* (1), *Urban Churches in Transition* (1), *Urban Ministries* (6), *Urban Ministries Program* (4), *Urban Ministry* (27), *Urban Ministry* (44), *Urban Ministry* (51), *Urban Ministry* (53), *Urban Ministry* (10), *Urban Models in Ministry* (48), *Urban Policy and Urban Ministry* (14), *Urban Reality as a Context for Ministry* (14), *Urban Religious Movements* (19), *Urban Religious Movements* (36)

Urban Field Experiences: *Atlanta: An Experience in Diversity* (49), *Contextual Education for Ministry Program* (52), *Detroit Urban Seminar* (49), *Field Education in Urban Ministry Evangelism* (10), *Field Education Seminar: Urban Ministries Track* (56), *Field Placements: "Urban Ministry"* (17), *Focus City Ministry, Detroit* (29), *Integration Project* (28), *Intern Year: Urban Ministry* (11), *Internship in Urban Ministry (Basic)* (11), *January Term in Chicago* (30), *Learning Ministry in the City: Reflecting on our Practice* (50), *Local Immersion* (30), *Mentored Field Experience* (28), *Milwaukee Outreach Training Network* (29), *Ministry in the City: An Immersion Experience* (55), *Orientation to the Urban Mission Program* (28), *SCUPE: Chicago* (29), *The Atlanta Term* (32), *The Urban Term* (54), *Travel Course on Ministry in the Urban Setting* (5), *Twin Cities Immersion Experience* (29), *Urban Immersion* (23), *Urban Ministry Intensive* (39), *Urban Ministry Practicum in Organizational and Ministry Development* (19), *Urban Ministry Practicum in Urban Issues* (36), *Urban Ministry Practicum in Urban Systems* (36), *Urban Ministry Unit I* (41), *Urban Practicum* (1), *Urban Training Event* (21)

Mission, Evangelism, Church Planting: *Church Planting among Resistant Peoples* (10), *Church Planting in Urban Settings* (42), *Church Planting Study Tour* (10), *Faculty Directed Study in Urban Church Planting* (10), *Foundations of Church Planting* (10), *Foundations of Urban Mission* (19), *History of Urban Mission* (59), *Language, Communication, and Change in Urban Mission* (28), *Missiological Issues: Church in the City* (19), *Mission and the Urban Church* (2), *Mission to the City* (59), *Models of Mission with the City* (46), *Principles of Urban Church Planting* (21), *Spiritual Life of the Urban Missionary* (28), *Strategies for Missions to Multi-Housing Communities* (47), *Strategies for Reaching World-Class Cities* (12), *Strategies, Methods, and Models for Urban Mission* (28), *The Mission of the Urban Church* (21), *The Mission of the Urban Church at Home and Abroad* (14), *The Urban Church: A Study of Its Mission* (58), *Urban Church Planting and Growth* (1), *Urban Church Planting Strategy* (10), *Urban Evangelism* (1), *Urban Evangelism and Church Growth* (28), *Urban Mission* (46), *Urban Mission* (8), *Urban Mission and Ministry* (10), *Urban Perspectives on Today's Christian Mission* (35)

General Urban Issues: *Conceptions of a City* (30), *Creative Solutions to Urban Problems* (19), *Exegeting the City: The Urban Landscape as Text* (19), *How the City Works* (57), *Introduction to Urban Studies* (19), *The City: Habitat of Humanity* (21), *Transforming Urban Systems* (30), *Understanding the City* (31), *Urban Area Studies* (1), *Urban Community* (36), *Urban Issues* (4), *Urban Social Change: Transformational Replication* (21)

Urban Ministry Leadership Issues: Administration of the Urban Church, with Special Emphasis Upon the Black Church (34), Church Administration in Urban Context (37), Developing Leaders for Urban Churches (28), Leadership and Mentoring in the Local Church (59), Leadership Development and the Black Church (14), Leadership Development for the Urban Church (1), Ministry Development and Management (9), Pastoring the Urban Church (1), Spirituality and Leadership Development for the City I (36), Spirituality and Leadership Development for the City II (36), The Layperson and Urban Ministry Seminar (1), Urban Ministerial Experience (16)

Urban Church and Community: Church and Community (30), Church and Urban Community (46), Church Revitalization (37), Congregation and Community Relations (4), Ministry in the Urban Church and Community (25), New York City: Its Living Religious Symbols (50), The Church in the Urban Community (25), The Urban Church and Community Alliance (14), The Urban Parish and Its Community (34), Urban Ministry: Church & Community Settings (56), Urban Ministry: Community Based Setting (56), Urban Ministry: Local Church Setting (56)

Methods of Community Analysis and Organization: Analyzing and Organizing the Community for Ministry (9), Community Analysis for Ministry (28), Community Organization as Ministry (25), Demographics and Urban Studies (46), Ministry in Urban Settings: Structure, Praxis and Visions (50), Resource Networking for Urban Ministry (1), Urban Analysis and Demographics (59), Urban Community Analysis (1), Urban Community Analysis and Organizing (19), Urban Demographics and Ministry (12)

Theology for the City: Biblical Foundations for Urban Ministry (28), Biblical Interpretation for Urban Workers (28), Biblical Theology of the City (30), The City in Theological Perspective (19), The City in Theological Perspective (23), The City in Theological Perspective (36), Theological Foundations of Urban Ministry (48), Theology for Urban Ministry (1), Theology for Urban Mission (19), Theology of Urban Mission (59)

Community Development and Social Action: Christian Social Action (22), Church and Community Development (43), Community Development and Urban Ministry (1), Economic Development and the Urban Church (14), Facilitating Holistic Community Development (19), How to Facilitate Community Transformation (57), The Urban Church and Community Development (24), Urban Committed Communities: Principles of Growth (21), Urban Community Transformation (59)

Urban Culture, Anthropology, and Sociology: Urban Anthropology (19), Urban Anthropology (28), Urban Anthropology (4), Urban Anthropology (59), Urban Anthropology (10), Urban Anthropology and Christian Ministry (23), Urban Ministry and the Study of Culture (56), Urban Sociology and Ethnic Groups (28)

Family/Social Issues and Pastoral Counseling: Christian Ministry and Urban Social Problems (19), Christian Ministry and Urban Social Problems (23), Pastoral Counseling for Urban Ministry (22), Pastoral Counseling in the Urban Context (59), Urban Families Ministries (1), Urban Family Counseling (14), Urban Family Ministries (1)

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Urban Poverty: Housing the Marginal and the Homeless (57), Housing the Poor: An Urban Mission of the Church (25), Ministry on the Margins (30), Reconciliation, Recovery, and Renewal: A Prison Agenda for Urban Ministry (14), The Church and the Urban Poor (1), The Church and the Urban Poor (7), Understanding Poverty (19)

Multicultural Issues: Multi-Cultural Ministry (37), Multi-Culturalism and Ministry in the City (9), The White Church and Racism: Church Development Issues (43), Urban Cross-Cultural Ministry (23), Urban Intercultural Ministries (36), Urban Intercultural Ministry (19)

African Americans: Black Community & Black Church (43), Black Theology and Urban America (40), The African-American Church in the Urban Setting (30), The Black Church and the Urban Challenge: Seminar (24), The Impact of Urbanization on the Black Religious Experience (54)

Urban Christian Education: Christian Education for the Urban Church (1), Christian Education in Urban Settings (22), Congregational Education in Urban Context (37), The Church and Urban Education (40), The Gospel and Urban Youth (22), Urban Youth Ministry (1)

Urban Preaching and Worship: Good News to the Poor (11), Preaching in an Urban Context (41), Preaching in the Urban Church (54), Preaching to the Needs of the Inner-City (37), Ritual and Worship in the Urban Community (50)

Independent Studies in Urban Ministry: Independent Study in Urban Ministry (57), Independent Study/Tutorial Readings in Urban Ministry (14), Research/Thesis in Urban Ministry (57), Urban Ministries Directed Study (1)

Hispanic Americans: Immersion in the Hispanic Barrio (18), Ministry in the Hispanic Community (18), Reshaping the 'Kin-dom' within Us: Urban Ministry to U.S. Hispanics and Other Minorities (50)

History of Urban Churches: History of Urban Christianity (2), The City and the Church: Now and Then (14), The Corinthian Church: A Biblical Approach to Urban Culture (30)

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The Shapes of Goodness: Theological Libraries Journeying to the Millennium

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ABSTRACT: In the next decade, books and journals will continue to be important for users of ATS libraries, but scholars and students will also use more and more electronic information. Finding and managing information will continue to be a complex task. In this context, each library needs to discern the precise local mission, technological capacity, and way in which faculty and students teach and learn. Good leaders will deploy technology prudently, increase collaboration among libraries, and build trust.

William Blake wrote that the person who “would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars; General Good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite & flatterer....”¹ Blake’s insight confirms what Christians have learned by the experience of being disciples of Jesus Christ in different times and places. Generic good does nothing to put shoes on the feet of one child or proclaim good news to inmates in Sing Sing (cp. James ch. 2). The reminder of the need for “Minute Particulars” is also, I think, pertinent to the current situation of North American theological libraries. The libraries of the schools that are members of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) are a diverse lot. There is diversity in their missions, in their levels of funding, and in the tools that they use to accomplish their missions. But all of them want to be good. As the editors of *Theological Education* asked recently, “As theological schools increasingly attach their identity to their heterogeneous character, can some common assumptions about institutional quality—goodness—inform such an identity?”²

This essay provides some reflections on what it might mean for North American theological libraries to eschew “General Good” in favor of “Minute Particulars.” In short, I am concerned with the various shapes of goodness. In my professional experience as a librarian, goodness has been a very slippery thing. The project of acquiring a rich collection of materials related to Christian missionary activities throughout the world is celebrated as a “good” in one library and judged as “out of scope” (one way librarians denote badness) in another.

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Each of us probably imagines that she or he is living in a time of transition and uncertainty. Certainly North American librarians are aware of the uncertainties of these times regarding the future of books, the seemingly relentless onslaught (or is it a blessing?) of electronic information, and the slippage of libraries as foci of weight in North American culture. The distance transited in the last fifteen years by libraries of ATS schools is shown by the concerns identified in 1984 in Stephen L. Peterson's Project 2000 report on present and anticipated needs of ATS libraries. The report highlighted the need for ATS libraries to convert information about their holdings to machine readable form to enable better inter-library loan.³ In 1984, the Internet had not entered the consciousness of theological library users. By 1990, Peterson expressed concern that provision of scholarly computing services in libraries would debilitate library collections.⁴ As we approach the turn of the millennium, some North American librarians make predictions of "virtual" future libraries in which "librarians, Internet resources and the digital library will be interwoven into a NETWORK of human and electronic resources. . . ." As Michael Gorman notes with characteristic bite, such visions are "based on science-fiction, wishful thinking, and unthinking trendiness."⁵ The landscape of North American theological librarianship in 1997 seems to have at least some recognizable contours that will endure for the next decade. As we move through this space, I think that we can reasonably articulate at least some of the challenges that the libraries of ATS schools will face in their journeys.

After describing four of these contours, I want to think about shapes of goodness for ATS libraries as that goodness pertains to institutional mission, technology, and the teaching and learning of theology.⁶ I will conclude with some challenges that leaders, both librarians and seminary deans, can reasonably expect to face as they lead the way to good theological libraries in the approaching millennium. I offer these reflections in the hope that they can aid those in leadership in theological schools as they wrestle with the slippery shape of goodness in their respective contexts.

Some Contours of the Information Environment in the Next Decade

The next decade will see the continuation of several trends in publishing and librarianship that will affect theological libraries. The first is the continued importance of printed journals and books. The faculty at my seminary publish articles and write books. While various scholarly guilds are also recognizing other forums for scholarly achievement, for the next decade I expect faculty to continue to submit articles to journals because refereed, print journals will continue to be vehicles for scholarly conversation and for rewarding high quality contributions to theological research. While it is true that in some of the hard sciences, electronic journals are important for the dissemination of the results of research,⁷ the forces affecting journals in theology, church history,

and other specialties are not the same as those at work in some scientific disciplines. The publishers of solid journals in religious studies with modest circulations do not have the financial incentive to move from print to electronic format. ATS libraries will continue to subscribe to journals.⁸ Moreover, theological faculty members who write for the broader community of church leaders will continue to communicate with pastors and Christian educators in books published by presses like Westminster/John Knox, Augsburg, Abingdon, and Liturgical Press. These presses are important for Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, and Catholic leaders who think, preach, teach, and provide pastoral care.

A second contour in the coming decade is the continued proliferation and use of electronic information by students and scholars. The number of electronic texts in the humanities available to theologians is growing and “can be estimated at many thousands.”⁹ To venerable databases like the American Theological Library Association’s *Religion Database*, electronic publishers will add reference encyclopedias and full-text libraries, or textbases. An example of the former is *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (12 projected vols., 1994–), which Abingdon Press is producing simultaneously in both print and CD-ROM versions. An example of the latter is *The Works of John Wesley on Compact Disk* (Providence House Publishers). There is a twofold attraction in an electronic format. For publishers, production costs for CD-ROMs, currently a popular storage device for such information, are much lower than the costs to produce the same product as a printed book. *The Oxford English Dictionary* on CD-ROM, for instance, costs about one-third of the price of the printed edition. For researchers, electronic products offer the advantage of efficient, quick searches for textual information. Theological students and faculty members, by and large, like to use electronic tools because of their speed.¹⁰ I would expect that the percentage of acquisitions money spent by theological librarians on electronic tools will continue to rise.

A third contour of the next decade will be increased production of networked theological information resources. A feature of many library journals is a column announcing or evaluating World Wide Web (WWW) resources or Internet discussion groups for various fields. Perhaps most of these sources provide information that has not been through a rigorous review process. Nevertheless, scholarly organizations, church bodies, and other institutions will continue to create web sites (and whatever the granddaughter of web sites will be in 2007) containing information of genuine value to senior faculty and first-year seminarians.¹¹ As centers for theological information, theological libraries must pay attention to these developments. Library staff will logically face the task of identifying good Internet sources and training students to access them.¹²

A fourth contour of the information landscape is the continued complexity of the task of information discovery and information management. Research on library use documents the fact that many library users fail to find information

that they judge pertinent to their information need.¹³ When using electronic tools, especially Internet search engines, users frequently search to the best of their abilities for information and receive back screens of search results that seem to have been prepared by electronic monkeys typing on cyberspace typewriters. The fact is, it is not easy to discover pertinent information, even theological information. Managing information is a complex task as well. Today theological libraries are places that contain traditional onsite collections (print, microform, audio and videotape, slides, etc.) accessed through online catalogs and other bibliographic tools that stubbornly work differently. In the years ahead, theological libraries will also be places where users will be connected to greater numbers of networked resources following a logic not controlled by the local institution. Finding, filtering, and evaluating theological information will remain a complex task. Seminary libraries will need librarians because they are the persons whose calling is to move information from chaos to disorder and, at times, to a kind of order (information management) and who train faculty and students in techniques for ferreting out pertinent information (information discovery).

If I am reading the landscape right, in the next decade seminary administrators will be active in an information environment in which patrons use both print and electronic sources (whether stored and managed locally or elsewhere), and which continues to need theological libraries and librarians.

Goodness and Institutional Mission

How can theological libraries work in the information environment of the coming years and be good? If a theological library is to be good, the shape of its goodness must be defined by the mission of its parent institution. The redeveloped ATS standards for library and information resources certainly affirm this. "To accomplish its task" of providing information resources, "the library requires appropriate collections, effective information technology, and sufficient human and physical resources."¹⁴ (General Institutional Standard 5) The standards speak in general language about aptness: appropriate collections, effective technology, and sufficient human and physical resources. This language, however, might cause some librarians to move directly to the details of task without adequate reflection on the ramifications of institutional mission. In the language of West Texas, the central mission of most ATS schools is "to make preachers." What is at issue are the particular ways that each library can help its school make ministers who are faithful to the Christian faith and skilled, compassionate, reflective pastors.¹⁵

A library director needs to know in minute detail how his or her faculty go about the task of shaping students into ministers, that is, into something other than students. To pose the question about mission and goodness another way: for whom does the library exist? To be sure, it exists to aid faculty in their

scholarly research. But if the primary mission of a school is to make preachers, then the shape of the goodness of a given library will be governed by the way in which a particular faculty and curriculum work at the task of ministerial formation. In one theological library, this means that robust purchases in sixteenth-century Reformation theology should be the order of the day, because some seminaries place special value on producing ministers grounded in a classic confessional position. In other settings, building such a collection would simply not fit. To give another example, what sort of mundane procedures should a library develop for length of loan periods, recalling and renewing books, or the use of copying machines? What may be good for the student body may be quite different from what is good for the faculty or what is the easiest for the library staff.¹⁶

Goodness and Technology

A second aspect of particular goodness relates to information technology. Librarians believe that computers are their friends and promote good service to patrons. The technology now available to theological libraries of means is truly remarkable. Students and faculty, although frustrated by the need to learn which buttons to press, enthusiastically use library computing equipment to search the library catalogs and discover journal literature. Many librarians use presentation software to offer instruction about library skills, and librarians create useful bibliographies and guides that are mounted on Local Area Networks or the Internet. Technological innovation continues to evolve at a mind-numbing rate. In some ATS settings, three-year-old computers seem as antiquated as bridles and buggy whips would be in a Mazda showroom. In a consumer society like ours, we seem to lap up the current serving of technology and immediately ask for a menu to choose the next course. Many theological students, for instance, now expect that an institution will provide them with access to the Internet and an e-mail account as a routine part of graduate student life, because they had access to this level of technology as undergraduates.

In this environment of rising expectations and continued innovation, what should inform our thinking about the goodness of technology in theological libraries? I think that the shape of goodness in this area requires thinking about at least two factors. The first is the overall state of technology for the institution. If the institution provides enough computers so that every student can use one to write papers, then having the capacity to download a bibliography from the library's online catalog to a disk would clearly be desirable, because this function saves student time and lessens the possibility for error. Paying for this function in the online catalog would not make sense if few students use computers to write papers. At the high end of the technological scale, there may be some ATS libraries that would settle for nothing less than delivery of a

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requested document in print or electronic form to an M.Div. student within twenty-four hours. Secondly, goodness in regard to technology is ineluctably linked to the provision of technical competence, user training, and support that the institution makes available. More than one theological institution, for instance, has created a home page on the WWW that has been orphaned when the creator graduated or took a different job. The result is frustration for users expecting current information. A library director can purchase a state of the art Bible concordance program that will make little impact on student exegesis if the reference staff are not able to assist patrons in using the program. Once books are accurately cataloged and properly shelved they are ready for patron use. Installing new databases on a computer in the library, however, is only a first step. Users need initial training and ongoing support. In short, good technology means something much more precise than all the technology that one's parent institution can afford.

Goodness and Teaching and Learning

Goodness in the provision of information technology is purely instrumental. Theological libraries, we affirm, should impact the teaching and learning of theology. The ATS standards assert:

The library is a central resource for theological scholarship and the theological curriculum. It is integral to the mission of the school through its contribution to teaching, learning, and research, and it functions as a partner in curriculum development and implementation. (General Institutional Standard 5, Library and Information Resources)

The question of goodness in minute particulars necessarily leads us to seek some precision about how this central resource makes a robust contribution to teaching and learning. Traditionally, librarians have often intuited this connection or argued that the library indirectly informs student learning. If a student uses the library and writes a high quality term paper, then the library has made a positive contribution to that student's learning. Unfortunately, the research that exists about the precise relationship between library use and the quality of student papers is rather murky.¹⁷ The ATS standards (in section 5.2) describe the contribution that libraries make to teaching and learning in general terms. Libraries accomplish teaching by offering reference service, teaching research methods and the like.

I wish to suggest that theological librarians should not limit their analysis of success or failure in teaching and learning solely to the determination of whether or not they offered library tours, bibliographic instruction, or formal courses in the literature of theological bibliography. These activities are, to be sure, appropriate and meet important student and institutional needs. But if

goodness has to do with the library's service to its primary group of users—*students*—then theological librarians should consider implementing procedures that routinely ask students how well the library supports their academic work. In this context, the key question is not “Does the library staff offer workshops on using the library?” but “Does the library staff and the library provide you with the skills and information that you need to learn theology?” One of my colleagues once remarked that he was responsible for teaching courses in biblical studies, but it was the responsibility of students to learn. While this is a valuable distinction, it should not keep librarians from asking students and faculty qualitative questions about the help that the library provides. These questions are not simply about inputs, but about outputs and outcomes.¹⁸ First of all, librarians can query students and faculty about subject areas in which library collections are deficient, skimpy, or excellent. In the context of particular goodness, deficiency means inadequate for the way in which a given faculty conducts the enterprise of teaching instead of meeting external standards. Two seminaries of the same denominational affiliation may teach feminist theology quite differently, for instance. There is no arbitrary good number of books on this subject that specify for librarians what is required. Librarians need to ask faculty and students. Secondly, library staff can ask students what they think about the helpfulness of library collections and services. It is in the interest of the library staff to create procedures for gaining a representative sampling of this sort of feedback rather than relying on random comments. While it is fairly easy to document the growth of a collection, how many books were circulated in a given year, or the number of reference questions asked, librarians need to use qualitative data collection methods, such as focus groups, to get at why patrons use materials and how well the library met the information needs of its users.

Leading the Way to Goodness

The attainment of particular goodness in ATS libraries requires leadership. Seminary presidents, deans, and library directors leading the way to good theological libraries in the next decade face several challenges. The first is the prudent deployment of technology. The second is the challenge of greater collaboration between seminaries and their libraries. The third is the challenge of trust-building between librarians, faculty, students, and administration.¹⁹

First, goodness in a theological library will require prudent deployment of technology. Technology on seminary campuses is no longer the exclusive province of the library. Local Area Networks connect administrative offices. Development offices maintain detailed records on donors and potential donors.²⁰ Information technology that is used to deliver theological information to students and faculty, however, is not simply an administrative tool. It affects the reciprocal enterprises of teaching and learning. Theological libraries that do

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not use technology will run the risk of violating two of the cardinal rules of librarianship: save readers time and provide every reader her book.²¹ Information technology dramatically saves time in discovering the existence of sources of information. Linked information about the holdings of other libraries makes it possible for readers to learn about books not held in their local seminary's collections. Directors of theological libraries need to know the advantage that electronic tools provide students and faculty in the research process, and be articulate in advocating to the administration for technology that fits the local context and therefore is good.

The second challenge for good theological libraries in the next decade is greater collaboration. The forces of quick package delivery, inexpensive electronic communication, document delivery systems,²² and large networks of shared bibliographic information like the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) and the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC)²³ whisper to librarians that it is no longer necessary for each North American theological library to purchase, store, and preserve copies of erudite theological books that will see limited use in a given context.²⁴ Collaboration seems possible and cost-effective in an era when prices for some theological books and journals are rising at a much faster rate than the acquisitions budgets of some libraries.²⁵ Theological librarians continue to imagine scenarios in which various libraries would take primary responsibility for collecting materials produced in certain countries, thus making available in a systematic way more information to potential users, an idea Stephen Peterson promoted in the 1980s.

At the same time, the forces of institutional pride, patron skepticism about a library's ability to deliver on promises, and habit work against such robust collaboration. I regularly assure incoming students to Austin Seminary, for instance, that inter-library loan opens to them a very large universe of books. In practice, however, I know that some libraries respond slowly to inter-library loan requests, and many libraries will not loan materials that are old (a 1900 publication date is a common cut-off date) or are especially valuable to an institution (e.g., a single copy of a dissertation produced at that school). Theological libraries that discover ways to enhance collaboration in sharing books and professional expertise will, I believe, provide better service than those that continue business as usual.²⁶

The third challenge for leaders is to build trust among librarians, faculty, administration, and students so that theological library directors can experiment with services, technologies, and techniques that break out of accustomed patterns to achieve particular good. Without such experiments, theological libraries will eventually reach a limit on their ability to provide all the expected traditional services (reference services, basic library instruction, the building of robust onsite collections of materials) plus desired new services (such as providing assistance in using various onsite databases and how to use the Internet effectively to discover scholarly information). To give one example of what is technologically possible but very demanding in human and institu-

tional terms, I will use the case of the two seminary libraries in Austin, Texas. Tomorrow the Stitt Library at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary could purchase and install an interface to our online catalog that would allow Austin Seminary students to search both our catalog and the online catalog of the library of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, six blocks away. Students or faculty with computers connected to the WWW could perform the same search from the homes. One search for books on the subject of stewardship or the doctrine of the Trinity would actually be two searches conducted in two different library catalogs running different software.²⁷ It would, to push the logic further, be possible to coordinate collection development between the two libraries in ways that could reduce the overlap in new acquisitions between the two collections. The result: more diverse collections for both seminary communities while spending the same amount of money for new materials. The limiting factors in such cooperation lie more in the realm of leadership and organizational behavior than in the realm of machinery. Such inter-library coordination could only be achieved if there were tremendous trust between the two schools at every level, from the academic deans to whom the library directors report down to the clerks who staff the circulation desk at both libraries. Without the achievement of this sort of trust, I doubt that many theological libraries in 2007 will seem very much different than they are today. I do not wish to denigrate the significant cooperation among North American theological libraries that already exists. My point is that there may be contexts in which greater, innovative cooperation could be explored *if* the level of trust is high enough.

In Conclusion: Journeying with Aristotle

The philosopher Charlie Brown, in a moment of Platonic reflection in one of the "Peanuts" comic strips, opines, "I love humanity. It's people that I can't stand." William Blake, by contrast, throws his lot in with Aristotle. The person who "would do good to others must do it in Minute Particulars." At its best, the profession of librarianship is known for its attention to the details. If theological libraries achieve actual goodness in the coming years, they will do so because seminary library leaders and staff pay attention to profoundly particular details about institutional mission, their users, their school's specific manner of teaching and learning, the apt use of technology, and the changing environment of information. Otherwise, we won't get there from here.

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ENDNOTES

1. William Blake, *Jerusalem* plate 55 line 60 in *The Complete Writings of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London and New York, 1957).
2. "Introduction: The Good Theological School," *Theological Education* 30:2 (Spring 1994): 1.
3. Stephen L. Peterson, "Theological Libraries for the Twenty-First Century: Project 2000 Final Report," *Theological Education* 20 (Supplement, 1984): 46-47. Many other concerns of the report, including preservation, building enhancement, and competent staff sound perennial themes.
4. Stephen L. Peterson, "The More Things Change—the More Things Change: Theological Libraries in the 1990s," *Theological Education* 26:2 (Spring 1990): 137-151.
5. Michael Gorman, "Dreams, Madness, & Reality: The Complicated World of Human Recorded Communication and the 'Challenge of Change,'" in *Summary of Proceedings, Fiftieth Annual Conference of the American Theological Library Association*, (Denver, Colorado, June 21-24, 1996), ed. Melody Chartier, 159; 157.
6. My thinking in this essay builds on the framework that I develop more fully in Timothy D. Lincoln, "A Contextual Approach to Collection Management in Religious Studies for North American Libraries," *The Acquisitions Librarian* (forthcoming).
7. For instance, there are some two dozen American Chemical Society journals available on STN International, the science and technology network. New research can be "published" very quickly electronically, which is important in experimental sciences. There is a real question about whether or not such electronic journals cost less to produce than printed ones. See Robert H. Marks, "The Economic Challenges of Publishing Electronic Journals," *Serials Review* 21:1 (Spring 1995): 85-88.
8. To be sure, there are some electronic journals in religious studies. In the next decade, I see such journals as complementing rather than replacing print journals. For a sophisticated argument that Internet-like journals will burgeon, see Michael Koenig and Toni Harrell, "Lotka's Law, Price's Urn, and Electronic Publishing," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 46:5 (June 1995): 286-88.
9. Susan Hockey, "Evaluating Electronic Texts in the Humanities," *Library Trends* 42:4 (Spring 1994): 677.
10. One danger lurking here is information overload, the state of being buried under the weight of apparently relevant literature on a given topic. A related and equally pernicious danger is the confusion between retrieving information and actually reading and thinking about the information that one retrieves.
11. An example of a scholarly organization with a web site that delivers scholarly content is the site maintained by the Society of Biblical Literature (<http://shemesh.scholar.emory.edu/scripts/SBL/biblie-pubs.html>). Both the Vatican (<http://www.vatican.va>) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (<http://www.elca.org>) have official home pages on the Web.
12. It should be noted that librarians and publishers alike are wrestling with the implications of electronic information for copyright and fair use.
13. See, for instance, Karen M. Drabenstott and Marjorie S. Weller, "Failure Analysis of Subject Searches in a Test of a New Design for Subject Access to Online Catalogs," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 47:7 (July 1996): 519-537.

14. The Association of Theological Schools adopted these standards at its 1996 Biennial Meeting. They are published in the *ATS Bulletin* 42, Part 3, 1996.
15. Edward Farley argues in *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988) that current patterns of organizing the delivery of graduate theological education in North America may not serve this goal well. The goal itself, however, is the central mission of most ATS institutions.
16. In some cases, users suspect that procedures are driven only by the idiosyncracies of library automation systems.
17. The difficulties in teasing out such linkages are legion, including the fact that writing a good paper requires many skills that are, strictly speaking, not part of library use. See Jennifer Wells, "The Influence of Library Usage on Undergraduate Success," *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 26 (June 1995): 121-128 and Jamshid Behesti, "Beyond Circulation Statistics: Measuring Patterns of Book Use," *Canadian Library Journal* 46 (December 1989): 397-398.
18. See Peter Hernan, "Service Quality and Outcome Measures," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 23:1 (January 1997): 1-2.
19. Few good things can happen in theological libraries without adequate funding. The fourth challenge for library directors is to develop their skills in fund raising.
20. Jack L. Stotts, former president of McCormick Theological Seminary and Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, has often said that technology does not save money for an organization, but it does change the way that an organization allocates its financial resources.
21. S.R. Ranganathan, *Library Book Selection* (New Delhi: India Library Association, 1952). Ranganathan was a key theorist about library and information science whose ideas remain pertinent despite many changes in the tools that librarians use.
22. The American Theological Library Association's Document Delivery Service, for instance, allows librarians to request journal articles from 100 journals (1985 to the present). ATLA processes requests within two working days and will deliver documents via fax or first-class mail.
23. The Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) and the database of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) contain bibliographic and holdings information about materials owned by member libraries. Thus, the databases indicate not only that a given book exists, but also which libraries possess it.
24. The most obvious example of works that will be seldom used are books written in the 'scholarly' languages of German or French and purchased routinely by American seminary libraries. Library directors often purchase these books because of the research interests of one or two members of the faculty. The vast majority of M.Div. students do not read these languages and will never use these materials.
25. This is especially neuralgic for works from foreign countries, because libraries do not have much to say about the fluctuations of currency exchange rates. Costs for 140 journals in philosophy and religion tracked by EBSCO Publishing's Academic Search showed that prices rose 4.08% from 1996 to 1997. The average cost of a title in 1997 was \$112.70. The average annual price increase during the period 1993-1997 was 7.65%. Ketcham and Born suggest that some publishers are increasing the prices of print journals to offset cancellations and to cover the costs of developing document delivery systems. Lee Ketcham and Kathleen Born, "Unsettled Times, Unsettled Prices: Periodical Price Survey 1997," *Library Journal* 122:7 (April 15, 1997): 42-47.

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26. I recognize that I am simply singing a new verse to an old song. There has been a productive history of cooperation among the member libraries of ATLA, as is evidenced by such important achievements as the preservation filming of thousands of monographs.

27. This kind of bibliographic search is possible when the libraries in question are accessible from the Internet and both have online catalogs that meet the ANSI/NISO Z39.50 protocol standard for interoperability.

The Art and Politics of Deaning

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ABSTRACT: The role of the academic dean in theological education involves both art and politics. Five specific recommendations about the art and politics of deaning are offered to those who hold this office. They address the role of the dean in fulfilling the mission of the institution, interpreting information to the school's various constituencies, understanding the dean's role in governance and one's own administrative style, and developing strong relationships between president, dean, and faculty. Nurturing one's spiritual life, or being "in conversation with God," the author suggests, may be the most crucial component of effective academic leadership.

I begin this article on a personal note: my work in theological education has taken place at one institution, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. I came from Harvard doctoral work thirty years ago, a brash young faculty member in the field of ethics and society. This was the era of civil rights, anti-war demonstrations, the women's movement, and gay/lesbian issues, and United Seminary had launched its own ship on a course that invited the treatment of social justice issues. I was very much at home, though at times my dean, Louis Gunneman, would have preferred my being a bit more restrained member of the family.

Twenty years later and twenty years older, I was less brash, more reflective and, while deeply committed to these and other ethical issues, I had become much broader in my theological interests, including a growing interest in theological education as a subject of study and practice.

In the fall of 1988, I became dean of the seminary and served in that role for the next eight years under an excellent president, Benjamin Griffin, now president of Andover Newton Theological School. When I became dean, I received a congratulatory note from Donald Shriver, then President of Union Seminary in New York, who observed that a disproportionate number of ethicists became deans and presidents. I find that makes a great deal of sense, for ethicists are trained to deal with institutions and governance issues. These remarks of mine may well carry some of an ethicist's bias in my reflections on the office of the dean. I enjoyed the work enormously, though my satisfaction during that period came in part from my work in the field of theology and the arts—a field I had moved into some years back. I mention this because one should not forget the importance of remaining a scholar and teacher while

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serving as dean and administrator. It not only keeps you linked to students, faculty, the curriculum, and your field, but it serves as a welcomed break from the administrative demands of deaning. When I became dean, a number of things changed and life was, indeed, filled with a different set of experiences. Let me offer a small montage of images and experiences, rather randomly selected, as a means of suggesting what one person can encounter in the dean's office as both welcomed and unwelcomed, humorous and sober.

First, I related to a new set of ecclesial and professional institutions outside the school including, foremost, the ATS. My relationship to ATS began early and proved to be a very important one. Indeed, it had begun in quite idyllic fashion while I was a young faculty member, for I had applied for a grant and been told that because I was a seemingly bright young, albeit unproved, faculty sort with a good project, I could have a few thousand dollars to do research, write, and even travel a bit. This is called encountering ATS in its grandfatherly garb. I remember my first contact with ATS as a dean as one that was somewhat more sobering albeit very positive. I received a phone call from then ATS executive director, Leon Pacala, who congratulated me on becoming dean but told me I had undertaken one of the most difficult though rewarding jobs in theological education. That was the ATS as professional uncle. Pacala proved to be right. Unfortunately, when I became president, my friend and ATS executive director, Jim Waits, called to congratulate me but noted, with tongue in cheek, that I now had the hardest job in theological education and that during my tenure, which for presidents, he said, tends to be short, I would have moments of satisfaction depending on whether or not the dean and faculty were happy and the budget was balanced. He then closed with the comment that it is strange to him why people leave the best job in theological education to take up the impossible job of being president. That was the ATS as probation officer. I am finding that Jim Waits's musings are proving to be on target. In fact, given the slippery-slope nature of this law of diminishing returns, I assume that on retirement someone will call me from the ATS to congratulate me on my retirement and tell me to enjoy what little time and few morsels of satisfactions I might still have the presence of mind to enjoy. That is ATS as the friendly caretaker. But that is also digressing.

On becoming dean, a second and more sobering change began to occur. My friendships with the faculty changed. I was told that this would happen, but I did not believe it. Some of these colleagues had been my friends for twenty years. But, in fact, there was a subtle shift in my relationships and with the exception of a few close friends, there did emerge an otherness in my relationships that was not there before. I was no longer a regular faculty colleague, nor was I expected to act like one even in this amazingly egalitarian non-status-conscious seminary.

A further change was quite personal. I tended to wake up more nights than I liked around 3:00 a.m. (Becoming president has not changed that.) It is the hour I call the hour when the furies play, when all that I ought not to have done

but did, and all that I did not do but should have done, are metamorphosed in the taunting voices of a Minnesota Greek chorus. I recommend as antidote reading the statistical abstracts from the *ATS Fact Book*.

And there were other peculiar habits I picked up. I fell in love with “dean” humor. For example, if you hear the thudding sound of faculty committee footsteps coming to your office with the determination and punctuation of Mussolini’s brigade, then you should take arms against a sea of trouble and hide in the closet. Or another dictum. If you have to respond to someone but have nothing to say on the subject, then mumble, quietly but with good eye contact, mumble and then look at your watch and say you will continue this later but you must now go to another meeting. Then smile and thank them for the opportunity to discuss these important matters with them. And there are, of course, the blunders you make that at least others find amusing. I remember a fall academic convocation at which I was making a number of announcements one of which was related to a liturgical dance troupe that would be on campus and the other related to the New Testament scholar, Krister Stendahl, who was coming to deliver our Gustafson Lectures. Somehow the words that came out of my mouth were, “We look forward to having Professor Krister Stendahl dance on the roof of the seminary this coming Monday night with lectures greatly anticipated from the dance troupe.”

There was also the Monday onslaught. I developed a theory as dean that the faculty, students, and president spent much of the weekend thinking up things to tell the dean on Monday morning about what was wrong with the institution, or the curriculum, or the student body or, heaven forbid, the current dean. This reached a moment of final crescendo when in one day I was visited by a driving young faculty member whom I recognized, I fear, all too well from twenty years ago, who brought in a complete revision he had made of a major portion of our curriculum with the admonition that the very integrity of what we were about depended on changes that he had spent much time thinking through. He was followed by a fellow administrator who was concerned about what the gay and lesbian students would do next, who in turn was followed by several gay and lesbian students who wanted to talk about what the administrator was going to do next, who were followed by a faculty member who said that the admissions staff was only interested in warm bodies and she could no longer tolerate empty-headed students no matter how spiritually well-intentioned they were, who was followed at the end of the day by a young woman who came to claim ageism against a mid-career student who she claimed was treating her in class like her mother treated her at home. I was never to have a day that quite equaled that number of complaints, but Monday, nevertheless, remained the day when crimes of passion were confessed, revolutionary new utopias were set forth and unexpected insights into the will of God were duly reported.

But, of course, this montage finally has at its center other events that are bolder in color and more powerful in image. One is the resolution of a difficult matter related to a faculty member in which the proud faculty member

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and the proud student inched slowly away from charges against each other to expressions of sorrow that the issue had gotten out of hand. Another is the morning that I picked up out of my letter tray a book, new and fresh and handsome, written by a faculty member whose struggle to write the volume had given testimony to how lonely and at times threatening scholarly writing can be but how marvelous was the victory of publication. And still another image is at Commencement when the one student walks up who made it against insuperable odds, and in the pew sits her smiling husband who almost left her; her parents, who beam midst their tears; and her children who sparkle with pride in the moment of her hooding—a moment when you know that her toughness and God's grace did dance in concert even though you feared the dance would end too soon.

Reflections on the Deanship

I want to offer in this discussion certain recommendations I have regarding the art of deaning. But as a president I want to begin these remarks with a comment on the relationship of the dean to the president. I do this not as a way of bypassing the relationship of the dean to the faculty, for, finally, the dean is engaged in a dialectical dance between two power centers: the faculty and the president. But we do examine in continuing fashion the dean/faculty relationship and this tendency is complemented by the fact that most of us come to the deanship out of the faculty. On the other hand, the dean's relationship to the president remains somewhat less explored and somewhat more obfuscated.

For me, the most important two-person relationship in theological education is that of the dean and the president. If it is a politically and morally good relationship, it can become a pivotal model and source of creativity, collegiality, and trust for the whole school; if it is a bad relationship that is politically uneven, if not acrimonious and questionable in its moral trustworthiness and relationality, it can become a devastating model and source of power plays, stalemates, and alienating behavior for the institution. The dean and president within the institution are invested with the highest authority accorded officers of the school, and they wield the greatest degree of power of any two persons in the seminary. If they do not trust each other, if they are not good colleagues, if they engage in end runs and power plays, then they undercut their capacity to provide each other critical evaluation, mutual support, and their responsibility to provide the institution a sound sense of its own vision and destiny. Our English musical friends, Gilbert and Sullivan, did not like each other, bad-mouthed each other, and periodically took each other to court in the midst of composing via the post—not face to face—wonderful comic operas. If a president and dean attempt to play Gilbert and Sullivan on a theological school's stage, the results will be tragic opera for everyone involved. Therefore, I would recommend: work together closely, avoid surprising each other in

meetings, and support each other in public. Enough said. Let me turn to the recommendations I wish to make as I look back on my experience of deaning.

Some Recommendations about Deaning

My first recommendation is that *a dean ought to define carefully and articulate to the seminary community forcefully what he or she considers to be the larger tasks of theological education and his or her relationship to those tasks*. We all come into the dean's office with our own definition of the overarching tasks with which the theological school should be engaged, and there is a body of literature to stimulate our own thinking about these matters such as the ATS journal *Theological Education* and Jeanne McLean's monographs resulting from the *Study of Chief Academic Officers in Theological Schools*, which are excellent sources of good ideas, and, of course, such studies on theological education as those written by Edward Farley, Charles Wood, Joseph Hough and John Cobb, Barbara Wheeler, and David Kelsey—all of whom become, through their work, wonderful partners in honing our own understandings. Out of my own engagement with these types of material, I chose to define, at least in short-hand fashion, the fundamental tasks of theological education as those of *theological formation, spiritual formation, leadership formation, and institutional formation*.

Let me comment on what I mean by these terms. *Theological formation* is concerned with helping students shape their theology out of conversations with biblical, ecclesial, theological, and cultural sources in light of their own times. *Spiritual formation* is focused on the nurture of students in their own faith by challenging, nurturing, and enabling them to define the religious and moral character of their religious journey. *Leadership formation* is concerned with students developing the skills of leadership for institutional, pastoral, community, and ecclesiastical ministries. The fourth task, *institutional formation*, is one which I define as work related to the development and support of the faculty and the institutional policies and relationships necessary to that task, the articulation of the school's mission both to itself and its larger world, and the general financial and political advancement of the school. Now many would have different tasks or definitions of these tasks, but my point remains the same: that the dean has a very important responsibility to identify, think through, and articulate to the community his or her own understanding of the fundamental tasks of theological education and the dean's relationship to them. I think this is important for two reasons, particularly. First, most deans come out of faculties where they have been identified as persons viewing theological education through faculty lenses. The lenses we use as deans, however, have a different set of interests—certainly broader interests. Everyone needs to know, therefore, how you are now seeing the theological education enterprise. Secondly, it is important that a community know what you see the overarching tasks to be and how you plan to shape your work with them—for you are now

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the academic leader of the faculty; indeed, the school as a whole. I would like to note that a turning point came for me when I gave a paper to the faculty and community on how I saw theological education. I think it was with that address that I ceased being in the faculty's mind simply one of them engaged in certain administrative chores and became the dean.

A second recommendation I offer is this: *we need to see the dean's position as foremost a part of a larger institutional commitment to fulfill the mission of the school rather than interesting work that represents basically another chapter in one's own career or an opportunity to represent more boldly one group within the seminary.* The implications of what I am saying are several. The focus of the office should be on implementing the mission of the school rather than the mission of any single group within the school; the dean's first loyalty is to the institution's needs rather than the guilds, academic or ecclesial, to which the dean may belong; the advancement of the callings and careers of the faculty commands our primary energy rather than the advancement of our own careers. In effect the dean should have a sense of calling, a sense of vocation, in which the commonwealth of the seminary and its well-being is the focus of his or her work. In making this judgment, I am not suggesting that the dean should fail to be an advocate for curricular change, or an advocate for the faculty or student body, or advocate for particular groups within the school as he or she works with a president or board of trustees or ecclesial body. To the contrary, the dean is *par excellence* the advocate in court for the faculty and student body and various groups, often marginalized groups within the school's make-up, that need representation. But the case of advocacy the dean sets forth must be one that shows how the support or changes advocated are for the greater good of the school and, through the school, the church.

I am also not suggesting that the dean should ignore where deaning fits into his or her own career. But I strongly believe that the faculties' careers should be the focus of attention and, even more so, the careers of young faculty who need both support and affirmation as well as encouragement to move from an understanding of themselves in a disciplinary career to an understanding of themselves as undertaking a vocation in theological education.

A third recommendation is that *the dean, president, and faculty should have a common understanding and acceptance of the dean's governance-related and politically focused duties, responsibilities, and tasks in the life of the school.* This matter has to do with the political life of the dean and his or her role in governance. It is sometimes easy to say that a dean should foremost be a pastor and administrator to faculty and students and act only secondarily as a political figure engaged in governance. I caution you to beware of that division of power for a number of reasons. First the dean is identified by an institution and particularly its faculty as one who has the authority and power to make things happen regarding policy making, budget, curriculum revision, faculty development, and interpretation of the academic program. The pastoral role is a major one

but to have significant effectiveness it must, paradoxically, be complemented by this type of political and institutional authority. A model is Mother Theresa. She taught us a great deal about compassion and pastoral care, but it was intrinsically linked with the exercise of political power. My second reason to caution you to take seriously the political role can be bluntly stated: if you abdicate, then the president, on the one hand, and the faculty, on the other hand, will assume your decision-making authority, and you will find yourself with more time to do pastoral care and administrative paper work than you ever planned to do. The third reason has to do with the third use of the law; namely, that these duties are defined in the seminary's constitution and bylaws, in your job description, and in the governance handbooks of faculty and personnel as duties and responsibilities accorded you for the purpose of helping govern the institution and enabling it to realize its mission and goals. My last reason for your claiming the political expectations made of you is that the president and the faculty need a dean who is politically involved in the governing of the school. You are a person of authority who talks with the president and faculty daily, who counsels them both, and who is in a position to urge them to exercise their own political authority or, indeed, remind them of the checks and balances to power that they are called to respect. You are a major officer with authority who should engage in decision-making debates in the school's formal settings and in the conversations where informal power is exercised. You are a political creature who is called to engage in the art of politics. Let me say, parenthetically, politics is an art, not a science. You are called to use gesture and story, image and presence; you are called to be an actor and the playwright, all in one, in the midst of being the subject of the play and a member of the audience. You are called to do the unexpected when people expect business as usual, and you are called to do everything conventional wisdom suggests when people brace for the unexpected. You are called to be a good and responsible academic politician as dean of the seminary. It is your duty.

A fourth recommendation: *It is important for a dean to know in a self-reflective way his or her own style of administration and decision-making and ask what that means for working with the president and the faculty.* There are a range of instruments that can help in defining one's style as no doubt you are fully aware. Some are more psychologically oriented and others are more sociologically focused. I have found Amatai Etzioni's model, spelled out in his book *The Active Society*, to be a helpful one in talking about institutional assessment, planning, and decision making. He sees three approaches most often operative: *rational planning*, *incremental response*, and *mixed scanning*. The first—rational planning—is an approach identified with those who like to create plans, often long-range ones, that are carefully designed in light of long-term goals in a highly rational fashion. In this approach, data analysis, program projections, and goal-setting are woven together in such a way that a blueprint is laid out. The task becomes one of garnering support and creating the changes that will enable the

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plan to be implemented. Such planning is, above all, an effort to move decision making beyond that of crisis response which the rational planner sees as a foil to the building of a strong school. I call this planning model an architectural one for it involves us in creating a blueprint for what we want to build and then setting about the task of building it.

Etzioni's second approach is incremental in character. This is the reverse of rational planning. Here the task is one of responding to issues as they arise. It is generally assumed that change is so indigenously to an institution's life, including the inevitability of crises and problems, that one should not focus on the creation of long-term rational plans which quickly become irrelevant as changes deem them out of sync, but should focus on responding incrementally to issues as they present themselves, most of a predictable type, and most manageable enough to allow time to formulate effective responses. Various community organizers have worked out of this model seeing the best approach to the city, which is dynamic and changing, to be one of creating changes and responding to crises as situations dictate.

The third model—mixed scanning—blends these two approaches by engaging in rational planning, on the one hand, but, on the other, continually surveying changes in the system in the interest of modifying the plan to meet those changes. Etzioni has compared this to a chess game in which we have a grand plan for winning but must adjust the plan in an ongoing fashion in light of the opponent's moves and our own rethinking of strategy. I like the analogy of sailing in which you have mapped your course but must continually adjust for storms, winds, and other weather changes confronting the passage the ship undertakes.

My observation of deans, presidents, and faculty members is that they each fit one style more than another and they often don't work out of the same style. The rational planner president and the crisis management incrementalist dean approach their work quite differently. While such styles are, in theory, effective, I am attracted to the mixed scanning model simply because it combines the need for planning and the need for tending to the incremental situations and crises that occur. But my point here is to call us to recognize each other's style in order that we can better determine how to work well together and how we can help with each other's weaknesses.

The fifth recommendation is that *the dean should see himself or herself as a gatekeeper in the institution responsible for a flow and interpretation of information to the various parties that seek understanding about faculty and students, the academic program, the president, and the mission of the seminary.* I like the term gatekeeper because my last name, Yates, is a Saxon name that means gate, and my Saxon ancestors were minor military officials who led the garrison that protected the castle gate and determined who would be allowed in and who would be denied entrance. The dean is continually playing the role of one involved in determining the flow of information. The dean provides information and interprets

information as well as remaining silent, at times, regarding information that people seek. Often working in situations that are confidential in nature, the dean must decide what can be told and what cannot be told. A dean works with groups whose members may be provocative and somewhat reckless in their judgments. The dean interprets that meeting not blow-by-blow but with concern for communicating the heart of the matter.

In this process the dean becomes a vital gatekeeper for the flow of information about the faculty to the president and the flow of information about the president and board to the faculty. It needs to be judicious interpretation given with fairness and deliberation. And amidst all the information allowed and ignored, the most difficult is sensitive data. A sexual harassment case, an alcohol addiction problem, a divorce, a budget decision, a suicidal act, an angry president's frustration can come over the bridge into your castle once you have opened the gate. What you do with that information, how you respond to that situation in light of what you know can affect careers, marriages, institutional goals, life itself. In a seminary, a part of responding to those situations revolves around the interpretation of them to the parties affected and to the larger public. Speak cautiously, therefore, for words both cut as well as heal, and once said can haunt you for all of your deanship.

A Final Recommendation

There are other matters about which recommendations could be made that space does not allow. I have not directly dealt with the pastoral role though I would argue that a successful deanship will elude you if you fail to be pastorally responsive. Nor have I commented on the importance of your maintaining your scholarship and your teaching beyond a single reference at the beginning of these remarks. But your own scholarship and teaching is crucial to your well-being as well as the well-being of the school. I also have not dealt with what I like to call the dean as keeper of the ethos, though the dean is expected to play the role of one who embodies the ethos, on the one hand, and is expected to critique it on the other.

I do want to offer a final recommendation, however, in concluding these remarks and that is *nurture your spiritual life such that you maintain your conversation with God*. A dean is surrounded by people vital and alive, desperate and defeated, people who can be arrogant and self-righteous, people who are compassionate and just, but who are usually people wanting something from you. This is not bad; indeed it is good, for you are supposed to be a source of information and problem-solving, political insights, and pastoral concern; a source of theological interpretation. You are supposed to be calm, reassuring, and capable of performing in a measured and effective way on a moment's notice. You are supposed to be pastor, priest, and politician. But over time the people, the pace, the demands can take their toll on your spirit and your

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religious and moral sensibilities. Over time they can dry you up and leave you wondering what does this work have to do with your own call, your own vocation, your own understanding of what you are supposed to be about.

I want to relate to you a personal incident that happened not so long ago—an incident that touches on something of what it was like, at least for me, to encounter that rather dark moment. It came at a time when I was very tired and there seemed to be no let up in sight—a time when I had held in too much, pleased too many, and wondered what did this all have to do with whatever it was that I was called to do. It is not a piety-filled moment of sunrises and rainbows but a realistic moment of religious need that a dean or president can have, and it offers an honest if rather undramatic effort to respond to that need.

It began with a dream that occurred at three in the morning—the time of the furies. It is a somewhat amusing dream, yet a very serious one.

The dream is set in a carnival on the midway. The midway is muddy, the side shows filled with the usual promises that for a pittance one can see a world-renowned freak show of a 400-pound man, a bearded lady, and a two-headed goat. On the midway, I run a booth where you throw a ball at the bear and if you hit it, you get a small replica of the big teddy you hit. Now, in the midst of the evening, at the time the dream opens, the lights go out and I am quite angry for it has happened before. I march down to the trailer where the owner oversees the midway, ready to let him have it. Now the owner, who I know, happens to be God and I fear, alas, at least in this dream, and I promise not to have this dream again. God is a white pot-bellied, middle-aged, cigar-smoking male who sweats. I bang on the door and he meets me saying, “Oh, it’s you again.” I say, in quite animated fashion, something to the effect that the lights have gone out. “Did you forget again to pay the electricity bill?” I shout, and then I vent rather strong feelings about his bloody midway and the freaks he has gathered, including me, and I yell that it is a damn shame that the police don’t shut him down, let loose that slob of a bear he has in a cage, and run this whole carnival out of town. God says nothing and then responds in an understated sort of way, belying his dirty plaid shirt and cigar cough, “You are a bit upset, aren’t you?” And then the dream shifts sharply. We are standing somewhere by the sea and I sit down in utter despair and say, “What do you want from me?” and God says, “You will have to sort that out yourself.” I say, “That is not fair,” and he responds with a touch of kindness, “You’ve not made yourself a fair world.” And the dream ends.

Conversations with God

I got up from the dream and went into the sitting room. There I searched for a prayer that is important to me which I found on a postcard I purchased some years back. A prayer of Henry VI. But I could not find it, so I picked up a text from Giovanni Gabrieli, the early seventeenth-century organist of St. Marcos—

a text taken from several Psalms entitled *Timor et Tremor*. It was a text that spoke of the darkness of the night and the promise beyond it. It spoke well of my response to how I was appropriating the dream.

Fear and trembling have come upon me,
and darkness has fallen over me.
Have mercy upon me, O Lord,
for my soul has trusted in thee.
Hear my prayer, O God,
who art my refuge and strong defender.
Lord, I have called upon thee;
henceforth will I never be confounded.

Psalms 54:6; 56:2; 30:3-4, 18.

And then, fortuitously, I picked up the *Book of Common Prayer* and randomly leafed through it. I fell upon this passage from the Evening Prayer service that spoke its own freeing words—a passage from Psalm 139:10-11.

If I say “Surely the darkness will cover me and the light
around me turn to night,” darkness is not dark to you, O
Lord; the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light
to you are both alike.

And then I read further from the 139th Psalm:

Lord, you have searched me out and known me;
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You trace my journeys and my resting-places
and are acquainted with all my ways.

And finally I read the Latin prayer of Henry VI that I had found among the stack.

*Domine Ihesu Christe, qui me creasti, redemisti,
et preordinasti ad hoc quod sum,
tu scis quid de me facere vis:
fac de me secundum voluntatem tuam
cum misericordia. Amen.*

O Lord Jesus Christ, who has created and redeemed me,
and has brought me unto that which now I am;
thou knowest what thou wouldest do with me: do with
me according to thy will, for thy tender mercy's sake. Amen

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Slowly the morning yielded in its own birth, something beyond the bloody midway. I returned to bed as light began its inward leakage into my world.

Conversations with God or moments that we all have when we are pushed to wonder what is it all about and why we are doing this. Perhaps it is all an undertaking of inestimable disquietude interrupted often with questions but still an occasion for grace unanticipated. It is what must happen when you are dean if you are to stay alive deep in your own spirit.

So I say, do not let the fires turn to embers else your spirit lose its way.

I wish you well as you practice the decanal arts. It is an extraordinary journey. It was the finest time of my life. On occasion I wish I were still there in what Jim Waits called the finest job in theological education.

Wilson Yates was named president of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in 1996. This article was adapted from his address to chief academic officers in theological education at the October 1997 ATS conference entitled "Leading and Serving."