

Theological Education

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ISSUE FOCUS

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Editor's Introduction

Jeremiah J. McCarthy

The enduring task of theological education is, perhaps, best captured in the succinct and wise aphorism of St. Anselm, as *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding. For theologians, the normative mandate of this discipline is to interrogate the received texts of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, to plumb the depths of the written and living tradition of the communities of faith in order to see and to construe the world as it has been divinely intended. No sphere of human endeavor or activity is exempt from the searching scholarship of the theologian, who seeks to interpret reality in the light of the revealed word. It is not by accident that its skilled practitioners—ranging from the Cappadocian giants of the fourth century, to the mystical genius of Juliana of Norwich, to Karl Barth, “God’s enthusiast” (as he has been described by no less a genius than Hans Urs Von Balthasar, his dialogue partner)—have also been immersed in the living, concrete realities facing communities of faith. The *ars theologica* has always been the most practical of disciplines. It is always rooted in particular communities of faith with distinctive historical and practical concerns that provide the ground for its reflective wisdom that guides action in service of the Gospel.

The late Catherine Mary LaCugna, for example, strenuously and brilliantly argued that the doctrine of the Trinity was the most practical of all theological understandings because it is fundamental to grasping the interrelatedness of all of reality and the capacity for relationships that is foundational to understanding human experience. Recovering the interdependence of theological scholarship and the community of faith from which it springs, as exemplified in the work of David Kelsey and Edward Farley, has challenged an Enlightenment paradigm that relegated theology to the academy and divorced it from its pastoral roots. The redeveloped standards of accreditation adopted by the ATS have embraced this more integral and holistic understanding of theological education.

Theological “field education” can be seen as an extension of the text of Scripture by inviting theological reflection upon the concrete *praxis* of pastoral ministry. It, too, is a rich field of learning that not only enhances, but is crucial to, a proper grasp of the meaning of theological scholarship. Our feature article, by Robert T. O’Gorman, Kathleen Talvacchia, and W. Michael Smith, contributes to the conversation about holistic, integral formation for ministry and its implications for the theological curriculum. Charlotte McDaniel contributes a thoughtful, comprehensive survey of the publications and character of theological scholarship by those who serve seminaries and schools of theology as directors and administrators of theological field education. These essays move

past sterile and empty debates that polarize “theory” and “praxis” or that privilege “classroom” learning at the expense of “field experience.” Rather, our contributors advance a conversation about how best to ensure integration and excellence in the skill of theological reflection across the spectrum of professional ministerial training.

The Open Forum section of this issue offers a rich spectrum of views about the nature of leadership education that builds upon the diverse and multiple contexts of theological education. Edward Wheeler, Jack Seymour, and William Myers identify five core understandings of leadership education for theological educators and describe the Association’s developing curriculum of leadership education. The essay by Emilie Townes is a thoughtful meditation on spirituality in leadership that incorporates the distinctive context, or location, of womanist theology, a topic that coheres nicely with the focus of this issue of *Theological Education*. In addition, reflections from three distinguished leaders in theological education further heighten our awareness of the inescapability of attending to the multiple contexts and settings in which preparation for a learned ministry occurs. Finally, the spirited rejoinder by Jon Pahl, challenging the assumptions and theological presuppositions of the contributors to the Autumn 2000 issue on the “Public Character of Theological Education,” is an example of an energized response to “Continuing the Conversation.” I hope that you find the current issue evocative, if not provocative, and if so, let us know by sending your reflections so that we can share them with our colleagues in theological education.

Continuing the Conversation

Theological Education invites responses, of up to 1500 words, to articles published in the journal in order to foster conversation among its readers. Reader responses may be e-mailed to the Managing Editor at <merrill@ats.edu>. Responses are published at the discretion of the editors and may be edited for length.

The Scandal of the Theological Mind: On the Disciplinary Captivity of Theological Schools

Mark Noll's jeremiad, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, focused too narrowly. Riddling the earlier ATS issue on "The Public Character of Theological Education" (Autumn 2000) is a scandalously nostalgic view of history. Such nostalgia undermines the intentions of the various writers to overcome a supposed "loss of public visibility" on the part of theological schools (xiii). To put it as a question: when have theological faculties ever truly engaged the American publics with the message of Christ (or of Moses or Muhammad or Buddha, for that matter)? The days of Protestant hegemony when a few superstars of theological education were called upon to comment upon public affairs were also the days of Native American removals, an African American holocaust, and Asian exclusion laws. The "good ol' days" for theological education were also the days of the "good ol' boys." And the years of "influence" by theological scholars were also the years of U.S. military build-up, environmental degradation, and increasing economic stratification. No, the problem for theological education is not that public influence has been lost, but that public influence has been found difficult and not tried, to paraphrase G.K. Chesterton. Christian scholars have evaded public accountability with retreats into one disciplinary captivity or another, where their "findings" largely confirmed prevailing paradigms and practices that masked (or overtly supported) Christian

complicity with powers and principalities.

Four captivities in particular have produced the enduring exile of Christian scholars from American public and popular cultures. Evangelical biblicism, Catholic ecclesiasticism, and Protestant historicism coalesce in the odd captivity of nondenominational divinity schools, where (too often) professors mimic disciplinary and subdisciplinary hyper-specialization and mystifying jargons to produce scholars (and schools) more concerned with preserving fiefdoms and themselves than with truth. These four captivities render theological discourses suspect to various publics, and especially to the popular media, who care little whether research conforms to prevailing French theories, but who do care about a strange notion called truth. As Martin Marty has insistently (and correctly) argued, the "public" is best conceived of as a *mode* of presence, more than as a realm or place. To engage the public, then, demands a different mode of presence and address than has historically been characteristic of parochially driven theological education. Historically, such schools interpreted truth in either particularistic or (imagined) universalistic terms. The new mode asks theological schools to articulate truth as integrity—*integrating* traditions with contexts. Until this mode of articulation, which I believe is the mode characteristic of "public theology," becomes embedded in the various theological subdisciplines, theological schools will continue to be "left behind."

Evangelicals are, in this regard, both the most and the least scandalous

case. On the one hand, scholars from evangelical theological schools still talk about truth—and thus have managed to find a hearing among many publics. On the other hand, evangelicals tend to represent “truth” through a series of fictions that purport to be based upon a “high view of the Bible” (2). Nothing could be further from the truth. The biblicist captivity of evangelical theological schools may, once upon a time, have been based upon a carefully reasoned Baconian worldview. Now it is based upon so thorough a reaction to modernity that the ways modernity has shaped the worldview remain unconscious to adherents. In many evangelical circles, contemporary language patterns (e.g., English) and cultural or contextual assumptions (usually moralistic) are imposed upon and do violence to the biblical texts in the name of a “literal” reading of them. The ATS authors on evangelicalism recognize their epistemological problem, both in name and in principle, and they acknowledge that evangelicals in public life tend to oscillate between withdrawal or attempted domination of “the prevailing culture” (12). They retreat, however, from the step most urgent to take, when they claim to face a “temptation to be uncivil” when they participate in public (13). This is ironic, because faculties at evangelical theological schools need most to address the “public” of their own communities, and in relation to that public the mode of address must be *critical* (in all senses), if not uncivil. Evangelical theological schools and scholars will provide invaluable public service when more of them imitate the model of Noll and have the integrity at least to seek to slow down spurious uses of the Bible among their peers. Until biblicism is broken from within evangelicalism, the “prevailing culture” will continue to be rightly suspicious of evangelical claims.

Catholics have made great strides in recent decades to overcome, as the ATS authors acknowledge too kindly a

“struggle to fit into U.S. culture” (19). Anti-Catholicism runs deeply in American history, and endures as a matter of worldview, if not politics. Despite impressive social and economic advances by Catholic individuals and institutions over the past century, however, Catholic theological schools even after Vatican II remain wedded (pun intended) to a medieval vision of the church that rests authority on an anti-body, hierarchical “chain-of-being” (which is, of course, actually a “chain-of-males”). The ATS authors claim that “ministerial leadership in the Catholic community is no longer the exclusive prerogative of ordained, celibate men” (18). This is true. But it is also true that “ordained, celibate men” form a highly visible “brick and mortar ceiling” that renders Catholic theological schools suspicious to many publics in America, and that renders the voices and visions of women, feminist men, and others suspicious to the hierarchy. Catholic theological schools need to address—and invite among them as full participants—the public of women. Until they do so, ecclesiasticism (theologically, liturgically, and otherwise) will unfortunately mute whatever public voice such schools find. The brilliance of the many social statements of the Catholic bishops has been dimmed in public life by the crisis of integrity resulting from continuing institutional misogyny in the Church.

Mainline Protestants are the most chagrined, it would seem, by their supposed “diminished influence” in American public life (34). I recently joined the faculty of a mainline school and was pleased to find my colleagues and students engaged continually with discussions concerning public life. Oddly, however, the theological tradition of the school (Lutheranism) often appears, despite the best efforts of a few very articulate apologists, to function more as a historical relic (like the statue of Muhlenberg that stands at the entrance) than as a living font of

truth to be lived out in cultural contexts. Other truths—psychological, political, and economic—dominate discourse and practice. The reasons for this historicizing of the tradition are undoubtedly complex, but reduce to at least two. First—we find it embarrassing. Most notably, barely a day goes by that we don't manage to discuss in some form Luther's "two kingdoms doctrine." I suppose we have good reason to be anxious about that one, given how it has been used and abused in the recent public past, but dread associated with the most egregious examples of historic evil committed by Lutherans renders any attempt to mediate contemporary cultural conflict from theological grounds suspicious. We feel (and act) unforgiven, demonstrating a strange (by Lutheran theological standards) guilt while claiming powerlessness to do anything about it. Second—we know we are still complicit. The impulse underlying historicism—which seeks to reduce everything to an "event" or "experience" or "practice" which must (or at least can) be reasonably controlled in continuity with a heritage—has been the source of Protestant "strength" in the past. It justifies (word used intentionally) the commodification of everything, and translates grace (as Weber understood) into visible signs of this-worldly enchantment. Theological studies become the constructions of verbal museums, with pastors and lay ministers as curators, and theologians as technical specialists. And thus we have our ATS authors, in an article about public theology—demanding that public presence must be supported through "rewards attached to salary, promotion, and tenure" (46). Why not just reinstitute a Protestant form of indulgences? Maybe trips to Walt Disney World (witness the recent AAR Annual Meeting) would work? Unless scholars can speak from a heritage with graceful and confident connections to people who can't imagine the luxury of tenure, no traditionalist attempt to bolster the

heritage will hoodwink the publics who recognize with suspicion just how good we have it while we complain about "lost influence." The media will leave us alone, since we seem only worried about ourselves anyway. Mainline historicism is a mirage to mask continued (if diffuse) cultural influence. Until we acknowledge that privilege, we will not speak with public integrity. Even as numbers decline, endowments endure.

We come finally, then, to University-Related Divinity Schools, where the subdisciplinary captivities are all present, if in changed form. Americans trust universities, for some reason, and continue (as was until recently the case with physicians) to see them as a last vestige of purity removed from the taint of market or entrepreneurial ambition. Anyone connected on a professional basis with a university knows this is a patent fiction, but it is a durable one, and our ATS authors would have us exploit it a little more. "University-related divinity schools must relate to the university as a primary public as one means to reach the larger public," they argue in the last sentence of their abstract (49). This turn *incurvatus se* does not bode well, because universities—like some manifestations of the church—are hierarchical beasts that eat their young in the interest of preserving good parking spaces. The "prestige" of the universities with which many divinity schools are related does indeed create an opening for theological faculties to speak with a public voice. But that "prestige" is also a trap. The public voice of theological faculties at university divinity schools will be muted unless those faculties are willing to ground the integrity of their productions not in the impressions of their peers, but by the influence of such productions on the social order at large. Fiefdoms and intellectual status—not public truth—have dominated university life over the past few decades, and divinity schools will either continue to succumb to this mimetic desire, doing violence to

themselves and others in the process, or rediscover again the roots of their initial mandate in a more inclusive, if inherently pluralistic, public vision.

What could be the contours of such a vision? Ironically, Luther would hardly seem to be a model for public theology, given what has been done in his name in the twentieth century. But in a pluralistic, voluntaristic, and postmodern context Luther's paradoxical formulation of freedom may offer a ground for theological education that will slowly bring down the walls of disciplinary captivities and enable public voices with integrity to emerge out of theological schools. The same kind of grounding could also be located, I am sure, in Jonathan Edwards, in Theresa of Avila, in the Bhagavad Gita, in Torah, in Muslim submission to God, and in Buddhist compassion. Luther's insight—that a believer is perfectly free, and a servant of none; and perfectly obedient, and a servant of all—calls theological faculties to speak out of their *traditions* (not primarily out of their academic specializations) with confidence (sinning boldly, if you will) in ways that integrate such traditions with contemporary contexts. On the one hand, when theology faculties embrace the conviction that they are truly intellectually free, bound by no one and nothing—they will be free to construct truths that heal and empower people rather than that defer to powers and principalities. True intellectual freedom means that the fears that fuel subdisciplinary specializations and jargon-laden mystifications will cease, and the word “popular” will no longer be a pejorative. For a public theology must be, finally, a popular one—not determined by numbers, but determined by its working as truth to assist people in living lives of integrity and meaning. On the other hand, when theology faculties understand that they are accountable not only to their department chairs, or deans, or students, or denominations, or disciplines, or

gender, or race, or class, or traditions, or universities, or nations, or peoples—but are accountable to them all and more, then institutions of theological education will change dramatically. I recognize that my ability to suggest such a global vision is reinforced if not made possible by my privilege as a tenured, white male, but the question remains for all faculty: what would scriptural studies, practical theology, and historical studies look like if filtered through a mode of public presence less concerned with tribal loyalties than with truth as integrity? At the least—a little more modesty about claiming that theological faculties have ever had a “public voice” or “public influence” in American history might be warranted. Such modesty, far from silencing traditions, will resonate with the realities of the limits of human power in a way that rings true to “the public” experience of such power. Such a voice will not be apologetic, or attached to privilege or position, but will truly be public—given up for the sake of the Other. Starting with the ways we address the students in our own classrooms, then, theological faculties can (and must) engage and develop a mode of presence that seeks integration alongside technical mastery. Such a voice may not be heard over the roar of the powers and principalities whose clamor is ceaseless, but for those with ears to hear, that still small voice will ring true.

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Teaching from a Community Context: The Role of the Field Educator in Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: In January 2000, seventeen theological field educators participated in a consultation on teaching and learning. The consultation explored how field educators could sharpen the focus of their identity, clarify the paradigms and methods of their teaching, and influence teaching in the broader theological curriculum. The following six sections emerged from the conversations and shared learning experiences of the group: (1) process, insights, and reflections on key issues; (2) the identity of the field educator as teacher/director; (3) teaching method and methods in field education; (4) the field educator as teaching colleague; (5) research and the credibility of field educators; and (6) field education as a career in theological education.

Introduction

Troubled by a sense that all has not been well with our seminaries, theological educators, scholars, and church leaders have been actively assessing the state of our enterprise for at least two decades. A part of what was unsettling was the aftershock of distress that denominations and churches experienced as they coped with an era of rapid and continuous cultural changes in North America, which began in the early 1960s. Since the 1950s, which may prove to have been the final gala of the Christendom era in North America, mainline denominations have sustained stunning losses of membership, congregations, clergy, and clout. During that same era, in stark contrast, “new paradigm” or postdenominational churches,¹ and megachurches have surged onto the scene. The landscape of faith communities has been a jumble of losses and gains. We have witnessed the coming of church growth and our ambivalent responses, the “worship wars,” changing roles of women and openly gay persons, fluctuations in numbers and backgrounds of candidates for ministry, church

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marketing accompanied by (or in response to) a consumerist bent toward church shopping, nationwide attention to clergy sexual abuse, waning denominational and doctrinal loyalties, the emergence of congregational programs of theological education, burgeoning new-age spiritualities, diverse perspectives and experiences of racism and economic disparity, the waxing and waning of ecumenism, the removal of prayer from school and the Ten Commandments from courthouses, followed by government advocacy for faith-based initiatives. Churches have experienced this storm and passed along its implications to the seminaries.

In addition to this aftershock, the same forces that have unsettled the churches have directly affected the seminaries. In the midst of the turmoil, theological educators have continued to examine the philosophical and theological underpinnings of current curricula and pedagogies and to revisit the models of church and church leadership that inform prevalent approaches to theological education. Current educational practices were shaped, by design and by evolution, to fit a cluster of perceived “realities”—the profiles of students enrolling in seminary, convictions about the *missio Dei* that churches and clergy believe they are called to serve at a particular time and place, and perspectives on what constituted appropriate congregational and denominational life and church leadership. Awareness that many of these formative assumptions no longer fit contemporary situations prompted a stimulating array of theologians, church leaders, and educators to engage the debate on theological education.² Their analyses and proposals are guiding the efforts of theological educators to adapt to the new and continuously changing world of the twenty-first century.

Theological *field* education has come of age during these decades. Theological field education began as something of a reform movement within theological education. A major weakness in ministerial education was on the minds of a group of seminary educators who began meeting in 1946 to discuss their programs of “field work.” In five meetings of this group, held between 1946 and 1957, the identity and agenda for theological field education became clear.³ In the book, *The Advancement of Theological Education*, an AATS-sponsored study, H. Richard Niebuhr, Daniel Day Williams, and James Gustafson in 1957 identified a problem to which the emerging discipline of field education was a response, namely the need for a more holistic, integrated approach to theological education. “Theological education,” they said, “tended to be too much an affair of piecemeal transmission of knowledge and skills.”⁴ Nine years later, Charles Feilding, in his book, *Education for Ministry*, also an AATS project, stated the problem more starkly: “the gap between the working ministry as seen in the seminary and practiced in the parish is alarmingly wide. . . . Theological education does not prepare for ministry.”⁵

Tension between the interests of the academies, as defined by eighteenth-century categories of theological scholarship, and the concern to prepare persons for the practice of ministry pointed to the need for reform at the

intersection of knowing and practice in ministry. These early field educators believed that by making student ministries an explicit and well-developed part of the educational process, it was believed, seminaries could help students bridge the gap between theory and practice. Biennial meetings of concerned theological educators evolved into the present Association for Theological Field Education (ATFE). Not only have programs of field education become a required part of theological education in ATS accredited seminaries, the integrative, contextual concerns that are at the heart of field education have now become explicit expectations of those seminaries.⁶

There is significant overlap between the cluster of theological, philosophical, and pedagogical issues that are central to the practice of theological field education and the questions that have become prominent in the conversations about the state and future of theological education. The sometimes awkward fit of field education in traditional seminaries over the past half-century has highlighted some of the very tensions articulated in the current “debate.” Field education inherently and intentionally blurs the lines between church and academy, between serving and learning, between personal and spiritual formation and intellectual development, and between personal faith and professional competence. The debate turns on whether either the lines or the blurs are appropriate. Field education also emphasizes the contextual nature of *all ministry*, including the ministries of exegeting and interpreting, theologizing, and teaching. This emphasis is evident in the fact that many schools name their programs “contextual education” rather than “field education.” These concerns are prominent in the ATS Standards (as noted in endnote 6).

This perspective constitutes the backdrop for the following reflections stimulated by the ATFE/Wabash consultation held in Nashville in January 2000. The participants in that consultation and the authors of this report believe that the time has come for more intentional partnerships between field educators and the deans and faculty of our seminaries in pursuit of common goals. We believe that such partnerships will enrich our seminaries by enabling us to more effectively prepare women and men to serve God’s transforming purposes in and through the churches in these continuously changing times.

In January 2000, seventeen field educators⁷ from accredited seminaries across North America participated in a consultation on teaching and learning in theological field education. The consultation, held in Nashville, was jointly sponsored by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion and the Association for Theological Field Education. Robert O’Gorman of the Institute of Pastoral Studies of Loyola University Chicago and Kathleen Talvacchia of Union Theological Seminary in New York planned and facilitated the four-day process. Lucinda Huffaker of the Wabash Center was a participant observer.

The consultation explored how field educators can sharpen the focus of their identity, clarify the paradigms and methods of their teaching, and influence teaching in the broader theological curriculum. The consultation

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inspired rich scholarly discussion of teaching and learning in theological field education. There was a palpable sense among the consultants that, as a group, they were on to something very important and potentially groundbreaking for theological education as a whole: when field educators begin to see themselves primarily as teachers, they see their role and the values of field education as central to the purpose, flow, and rhythm of theological education.

The following six sections emerged from the conversations and shared learning experiences of this group, whose combined experience represents many decades of attention to ministerial formation. These sections are intended to broaden this significant conversation about teaching and learning to theological education as a whole—to deans and faculty, and specifically to theological field educators. These reflections (a) move the understanding of contextual education among seminary faculty and administrators to new levels, (b) serve as an example of holistic learning and credible scholarship, (c) identify exciting areas for research, and (d) bring to field educators clarity with respect to issues of identity, method, and collaboration.

The following sections, with the authors noted below,⁸ focus on:

1. Process and insights of the consultants during the four-day event, followed by in-depth reflections on the key issues raised, *What They Said*, by Robert O’Gorman and Michael Smith
2. Identity of the field educator: teacher/director, *Who They Are*, by Robert O’Gorman
3. Teaching method and methods in field education, *What They Do*, by Robert O’Gorman
4. The field educator as a teaching colleague on the theological faculty and field education’s role in the curriculum: “contextualization,” *Where They Work*, by Robert O’Gorman
5. Research and the credibility and contribution of field education, *How They Think*, by Kathleen Talvacchia
6. Field education as a career in theological education, *To What They Are Called*, by Kathleen Talvacchia

Section One

Field Education in Conversation

Several key questions focused the conversations in and learning activities of the Nashville consultation. What is the identity of a field educator: administrator or teacher? What method(s) are characteristic of or central to the practice of field education? Where does field education fit within the broad arena of theological education? Is it, or should it be, a discrete discipline? Does its generalist character limit its ability to be governed by the culture of the academies? How should field educators best participate in the ongoing reformation of theological education? Is the fruit of their daily engagement in the contexts and contextualizing of message and ministry something they should offer more boldly to their communities of theological education?

The purpose of this first section is to allow a glimpse into the deeply personal dimensions of theological field education. Through a review of the agenda, learning processes, and conversations of this consultation, we take the reader into the embodied practices, purposes, struggles, questions, and convictions of a group of theological educators whose daily work keeps them hovering around the “bottom line” of the institutional purposes of their schools.⁹

Identity: Are field educators administrators or teachers?

The question, “Who are you?” elicits different answers depending on whether the asker wants to learn how I understand myself or to know my perception of how others define me. An exercise early in the Nashville consultation launched the group past the theoretical into an exploration of the day-to-day activities and roles that form and express the identity of field educators. Each participant was asked to list on newsprint, and then share with the group their *ideal* job description, their *real*, (i.e., functional job description), and their *official* job description. The process brought into clear relief the complex identity of the theological field educator.

The titles, status, and identity of the field educators vary significantly among the schools. Some are teachers. Their titles may be Professor of the Practice of Ministry or Professor of Christian Ministries, and their tenure-track status highlights the educational nature of their roles and identities: members of the faculty. Others have titles such as Director of Ministry Studies or Director of Contextual Education and are primarily administrators. Some serve under administrative appointment, are not tenure-track, and are not considered faculty. Their identity, function, and status are in focus. In a few cases, both roles are acknowledged in title and status. One is a Director of Field Education and Associate Professor of Christian Ministries on tenure-track with full faculty status and many administrative duties.

Ambivalence. As the consultation progressed, participants came to accept, and even embrace, their own ambivalence about their titles, status, and identity. The following comments from participants, edited for conciseness and clarity, reveal the paradoxes inherent in their work. The practice of contextual education requires both teaching (they are faculty) and administering (they are directors).

- “Faculty tend to reinforce one another in identity and in what is significant. For that reason, the more I identify as faculty, the more respect, status, and credibility I gain. Being a full part of faculty affects my ability to be central to the decision-making and makes field education more central to the teaching endeavor of the whole faculty.”
- “It depends on how you define teaching. I see almost everything I do as having a major teaching component, even when what I am doing looks, through the lens of most teaching faculty, like administration. Standard faculty research criteria expect a different kind of research than what is most helpful to my work as director, program designer, and field visitor. So, in a sense, the title ‘director’ gives me some valued freedom.”
- “Maybe it is not either/or. If a teacher is one who facilitates learning, then everything I do is teaching—visioning, planning, organizing reflection groups, recruiting and training supervisors, evaluating and approving sites, evaluating student progress, budgeting, problem-solving, developing and revising procedures and materials, as well as the work that I do for and in the classroom. All of my ‘directing’ is done in service of student learning. So, putting all under the identity of teacher is preferable.”
- “This discussion has revealed our ego struggles as being guild members, with the need to assert ourselves aggressively—qualities that pay off in academia. But in drawing attention to ourselves we draw it away from the context, which is the teacher. As we pursue an identity as teachers rather than administrators, it is well to see the temptations therein.”
- “Maybe we have problematized the title of ‘director’ in an effort to elevate the title of ‘professor.’ But I’ve begun to see a new richness in the title of director. As professor, I have fairly narrow teaching responsibilities, but as Director of Ministry Studies, I now understand myself to be invited to be widely concerned for all the ways that we teach about the identity, skills, and theoretical foundations for ministry.”

The mixed identity of field educators is further complicated by their sense that in some ways they feel like aliens in the culture of theological schools. Comments during our consultation hinted at their personal experience of living with uncertainty about where they belong. One of the participants, Lynn Rhodes of Pacific School of Religion, had said in 1987,

We are “bridge people,” which as the poet Marge Piercy reminds us is a fine place to walk over, but very difficult to live

on. We are connectors between the academies and the churches; between those who think theory and practice can be separate entities and those who demand relevance out of anything and everything we do. . . . We sometimes found ourselves on the boundaries of every group and institution, seminary, [and] church. . . . As chaotic, unfocused and diffused as that can be, I do believe it is also our strength: never having a place of stability; never quite legitimate.¹⁰

It is not surprising that field educators have tended to feel insecure about their place at the table of theological education. Field education exists within the larger world of theological education—a context traditionally governed by the values of theological scholarship. Even though those values and educational practices have changed in many ways since Schleiermacher’s fourfold division held full sway,¹¹ there remain in most schools traces of a bifurcation between theory and practice. The intellectual rigor of field education is not apparent because its objectives, pedagogies, structures, and means of evaluation do not fit standard academic models. Some at the Nashville consultation seemed highly sensitive to their lack of full affirmation and support from their schools and colleagues.

Credibility and call. Field educators as a community are aware that they bear some responsibility for a number of factors that contribute to the persistent uncertainty they feel about their place. One is the relatively high turnover among field educators. Field educators come from a wide variety of disciplines and experience. There is no clearly defined career path to field education, nor are there PhD programs in theological field education. Some serve in field education temporarily while they wait for positions in the classical disciplines. Perhaps due in part to the transient tendencies of field educators, as a guild they have failed to develop a journal or a coherent body of literature exclusively focused on theological field education. Furthermore, there is no single academic department that constitutes field education. This cluster of interdependent factors is evidence of the failure of field educators *and* the larger system of theological education to nurture this movement toward full maturity. When measured by the standards of the classical disciplines, which tend to prevail in theological education, field education remains underdeveloped.

Yet, in a way that symbolizes the paradoxical situation of field education, conforming to the standards of the classical disciplines may not be desirable. Must field education continue to develop its resources and structures? Without a doubt! But its maturation may be guided by values that transcend the standards of the academy. Participants in the consultation were aware of the need to continue to seek credibility as competent, thinking, disciplined participants in the community of theological education. They need to reach levels of education comparable to their faculty colleagues and need to persist in serious research and publishing. The goal, however, may not be to establish field

education as another credible academic discipline. To do so could tacitly endorse the fragmented approach to theological education that their calling inherently resists. For the sake of credibility, field educators need to demonstrate in their integrative, contextualizing work a level of discipline and long-term commitment comparable to that of scholars and teachers in the classical theological disciplines. The more fundamental aim, however, is to nurture a collaboration that includes colleagues in faculty and administration, as well as clergy and denominational leaders, in adapting or designing theological education practices that defragment theological education and ministerial formation and make their disparate parts cohere.

Theological field educators are called to model for their students as well as their faculty colleagues a high level of competence in a broadly defined, generalist practice of ministry. Many of the students whom they help to educate are called to serve as practitioners in congregational ministry, i.e., as generalists. To become a generalist (e.g., a pastor) need not imply that a student does not have what it takes to become a “specialist” (e.g., a professor in one of the classical disciplines). Shockingly, theological faculty have been known to intimate or overtly counsel select students that they are too bright to become pastors, advising them to pursue scholarship, writing, or teaching instead. Field educators still strive to model for those students who are called to be generalists a rigor of the whole person (intellect, heart, spirit, relational ability, character) in exercising competent, committed, and disciplined ministry that draws deeply from many wells in order to minister good news through presence, words, and practices that are faithful as well as appropriate to their contexts.

Conversations about the *identity* of the field educator were at the heart of the entire consultation. Perspectives on identity provided a crucial foundation for the discussion of teaching methodologies. These perspectives were also integral to helping field educators imagine how best to rethink, with their faculty colleagues, the aims and practices of theological education.

Method: What is distinctive about teaching in field education

Teaching, under the umbrella of theological field education, occurs in several venues beyond the classroom. Our participants had no trouble naming them. When they evaluate and select placement sites, when they engage students in reflection on their vocation and together discern the site and supervisor that are the best match, when they coach students through placement interview processes, when they recruit and train supervisors, when they conduct site visits and student evaluations, and when they facilitate reflection seminars—in all of those activities—they are teaching and facilitating learning. Participants in the consultation sought to determine whether there is an identifiable methodology that is central to their practices in these various settings.

They concluded that Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR), a mode of teaching by action/reflection, is central both as a means for enhancing ministerial formation in students during their field education experience and as a set of perspectives and skills needed for life-long learning. It is a method that suits well the generalist nature of their teaching. A reflection process based on a specific issue or experience from ministerial practice allows the teacher to invite students to consider how their Christology, ecclesiology, hermeneutics, sense of church history, personal and social ethics, philosophy of religious education, and other theological perspectives inform their ministry decisions. That same reflection guides the students’ discovery of ways in which their ministry experiences energize their course work.

The field site: teaching in the synapse. On-site supervisors provide some of the teaching that occurs in field education. The consultation offered an excellent opportunity to explore ways that teaching in the field education site differs from teaching in other field education contexts, such as classroom and reflection group.

The consultants visited Bob Coleman, pastor of the Edge Hill United Methodist Church in Nashville, who supervises ministry students for Vanderbilt University Divinity School. They asked him to describe the pedagogies he uses to facilitate student learning from the community context. Coleman has supervised ministry students for ten years. He understands education to be a process of growing and developing mentally, morally, and ethically. In his words:

When *the what* [Scripture and tradition] and *the how* [preaching, teaching, counseling] crash into *the who* [the parishioners], that is where education happens. On the site in field education we are between the mind and the hands, in the synapse. We are aligned among and between estranged vocabularies, folkways, nuances, and practices. We create opportunities for students to experience the estrangement, to translate classroom knowledge and experience and to critically reflect. Focusing on *the how* is not enough (to baptize, to preach, to teach, etc.). The site supervisor has to usher the student into a place of tension where academic knowledge meets the community. This grants the student and the academy an opportunity for affirmation.

The Edge Hill congregation with its distinctive character and context is itself a teaching partner. Begun in 1966 during the civil rights movement to bring African Americans and European Americans together, which it has done successfully, Edge Hill’s primary concern today is the increasing need for gender and sexual inclusivity. The congregation believes that the unity of God’s love can come only through the diversity of God’s creation. This is a justice church with outstanding ministries: prison, homeless, hunger, tutoring,

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mentoring, etc. It is more concerned with building sustainable relations with its neighbors than growing in size and buying up surrounding properties. There is a minimal level of pretense at Edge Hill. There are no taboo subjects.

Coleman gave a narrative response to the question about how he teaches. He recounted his experience with two different seminary students. The first was a third-year female seminarian seeking ordination. Ministry at Edge Hill introduced her to tutoring and mentoring low-income children. Early in her time there, she developed a drama ministry and, in a weekend retreat, guided the kids to design skits that would express life through their eyes. Working with the children transformed her sense of call. She concluded, "I don't want to be a pastor. I want to be an elementary school teacher in a low-income neighborhood." Coleman tailored the remainder of her internship to that end. He guided her reading of books on poverty and children in poverty. Coleman believes that the supervisor is not trying to get the student from point A to point B, but rather, is allowing the context to reveal something of value to the student.

The second student was a third-year male seminarian in his second field education placement. His first placement had been a justice ministry setting, addressing needs of the homeless. When he arrived at Edge Hill he wore jewelry and had "wild" hair. He was soft-spoken, poetic. He wanted to work with liturgy and worship. His experience with the Edge Hill congregation facilitated an important shift. Before the year was over, he cut his hair and began to dress and relate in more conventional ways. He also decided to return to his Southern Baptist roots to seek ordination. Working in that context taught each student something of value that they did not expect to find.

Coleman views field education as much more than offering a "how-to" course for student ministers. It involves the risk of placing students in a spot of tension and helping them to understand themselves. Coleman is motivated to be a supervisor (and thus to help Edge Hill become a teaching congregation) by his love of the intellectual challenge, by his hope that some interns may be inspired by the experience to do ministry similar to Edge Hill's in other places, by his enjoyment of the teaching and learning process, by his desire for the personal growth that comes from supervising, and by the challenge and satisfaction of crafting each internship around the student's interests. Coleman spends one and a half hours a week in supervisory conference with each intern. Through an intentional relationship with students, he aims to nurture in them "the art of living creatively and effectively in ambiguity."

After visiting Edge Hill, the consultants reflected on the distinctive contribution the supervisor, the ministry site, and the field educator each make to the student's learning. Here are some of their observations:

The supervisor

- “The pastor/mentor/supervisor is often the crucial person. A supervisor who can ask the right questions and provide support and critique based on observation offers something central to theological education that I can’t do in the classroom.”
- “Traits to look for in a supervisor: not too big an ego; doesn’t need to have the student copy her/his style; can affirm a student who chooses a different kind of ministry as her/his vocational direction; cares about theological reflection, not just skill training.”

The ministry site

- “The relative ‘messiness’ of life in the ministry site ushers students into an important new dimension of theological learning. It is distressing for some because they are just getting used to the relative orderliness of learning in the classroom and library spaces of the theological institution. With good supervision this transition can help students prepare for life-long learning.”
- “Developing the mindset and skills to recognize, respect, and learn from the context is a great asset for a lifetime of ministry.”
- “Congregations that are committed to being teaching parishes are exciting places to learn.”
- “A site can engage the student in pioneering, missional ministry, not just learning the skills to be chaplain to the status quo.”

The field education director

- “It is a challenge for the director to take full advantage of the unique gifts that each supervisor and site bring while pursuing some outcomes that meet basic requirements of the field education program.”
- “By training supervisors and those who facilitate reflection groups, I am able to invite students to reflect on how their understanding of theology, Bible, and history informs their practice of ministry, but I am limited in my ability to pursue the learning back in the other direction. Is there a place within the field education program to ask the students how ministry experiences in their site are influencing their study of theology, history, Bible, etc? Should we field educators encourage and offer resources/training for faculty who teach in other disciplines so that they regularly invite field education students to explore those rich learning opportunities?”

Pastoral Theological Reflection: Problems, possibilities, and requirements. The consultants focused on the following questions: If Pastoral Theological Reflection (PTR) is the central method of field education, how is it taught? How does the teacher, supervisor, or group facilitator determine when the student has gained genuine insight? How is PTR related to the rest of the

theological curriculum? They began to answer them by viewing experience and tradition as two sources of learning ministry on a continuum:

Ministry
Experience-----Tradition

The student on the site is much closer to the direct experience of ministry. The field educator's role is to stand with the students at each end and help them bring experience and tradition together. The field educator as teacher helps students theologically integrate learning from both sources.

In theological reflection it becomes apparent that tradition and experience are complementary, engage in dialogue, and neither is superior to the other. Methodologically, learning to reflect theologically requires that the student pay attention to experience and tradition, and hold them in silence and contemplation, resisting the temptation to rush to apply theory/tradition to experience or vice versa. The goal is integration, a synthetic approach that is the wellspring of *praxis*—practice consciously informed with theory. Within conventional theological education, students tend to begin with tradition and then encounter experience. In contextual education, students begin with their experience in the ministry site and then create space there and in themselves for a life-giving dialogue with tradition (itself built from experience of past generations).

These specific skills are required for pastoral theological reflection: clarifying direction, illuminating pastoral concerns, focusing the theological issues, and balancing a student's ministerial skills and personal feelings. This means having both a pastoral concern for the student and a theological concern for those to whom the student ministers. It is important to be clear about the distinction between pastoral theological reflection groups and pastoral counseling and care. The focus in pastoral theological reflection is on vocation and work; the leadership responsibility is to address their various relevant issues. Pastoral counseling uses a variety of therapeutic methods to help persons handle their personal problems, life destiny, and their relationship with God. The major functions of pastoral care and counseling are healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling.

Field educators are not the only ones in theological education who use reflection as a teaching method, but they are unique in using it in the immediate relationship of theological content to the context of ministerial practice. The student's engagement in ministerial experience is the base from which field educators work. Because the student engages in the ministry experience as a whole person, theological reflection done well also attends to the student's emotions, personal history, spirituality, contextual observations, and relational competencies as well as her or his intellect. Learning to weave together the worlds of the academy, the ministry context, and the person of the student/

minister may be the most demanding intellectual work a theological student ever does.

After a role-playing seminar reflecting on a pastoral event, the consultants agreed on these summary observations. As generalists, field educators need to be prepared in Scripture, theology, ethics, history, liturgy, and so on. They must also be able to draw on personal experience. They need skill to identify the impact of various factors on the reflection process, such as the background of the group leader, their own agenda, and discernment of the social location of the pastoral event. They must resist the temptation to act as a therapist.

Naming the method. How important is the terminology used to designate this central method of field education? The consultants’ efforts to answer this question raised differing assumptions and perspectives, and revealed their lack of consensus about the details of action/reflection learning in field education. Clearly, further exploration is needed. Participants began to explore whether there is, beneath the unresolved terminology question, a common dimension of practice around which cohere the distinctive ways of articulating these methodologies.¹²

The term Pastoral Theological Reflection helps to convey that the intern (i.e., the minister) is responsible for his or her own reflective learning, and that learning is done best in the context of pastoral relationships and community. The teaching process stresses the communal nature of good theological reflection lest students gravitate toward overly individualistic practices that are isolating and inherently unsatisfactory. PTR brings together the three components required for *praxis*. One participant wondered whether “pastoral” modifies “theological” or “reflection.” How does Pastoral Theological Reflection differ from theological reflection in and for other contexts?

While there was no resolution on the questions of methodology and terminology, participants recognized the need to continue to analyze their practice and efforts to articulate what they are doing. There is much to be learned from educators in other fields (such as medicine) who, like field educators, are concerned with the formation and education of the whole person. Holism, whether in an approach to education or in the practice of ministry, is embodied: it must reside in the persons of those who teach, administer, and serve in other ways. Those who possess or are possessed by a holistic perspective on ministerial formation will devise, name, and use methodologies and structures that serve it well. In turn, they and their students will be continually formed by those structures and practices. Vision, methodologies, structures, and terminology are interdependent in field education’s efforts to prepare persons for ministry.

**Context: Field education's role
in the community of theological education**

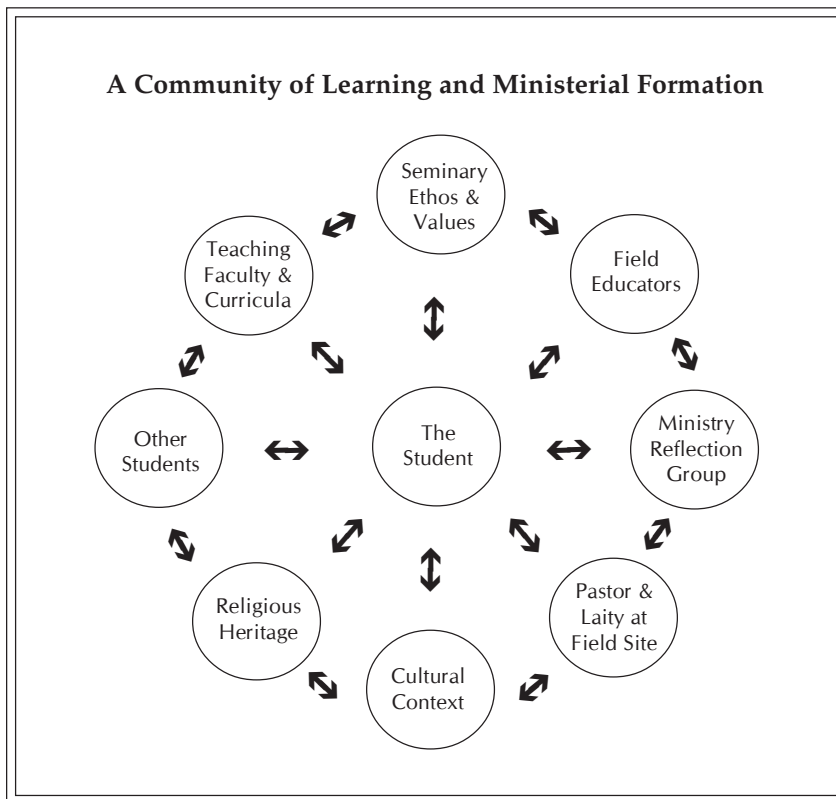
An important aim of the January 2000 consultation was to enable participants to seek a better understanding of their vocation in the context of the broader enterprise of theological education. They were to ask, to what extent do the aims of field education match those of the whole? Are the contextual concerns of field education widely owned by the school? What, if anything, is the "hub" of the theological education process? What do field educators and their faculty colleagues need to learn from one another regarding their goals, students, contexts, and pedagogies? What modes of collaboration should field educators and their colleagues devise in order to advance contextualization in the schools' approach to theological education? How fundamental is contextual education to theological education? Several learning activities enriched conversations around those questions.

Teaching as connectedness. A videotaped presentation by Parker Palmer to the faculty at Vanderbilt University entitled "Teaching as Connectedness: Knowing, Teaching, and Learning as Communal Activities"¹³ offered a starting point for the consultants to revisit the basic paradigms that govern theological education today. Palmer recounts the story of a curriculum revision undertaken in the medical school of McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.¹⁴ The dean and a group of faculty became concerned that they might be guilty of "educational malpractice." Many students were graduating with less compassion than when they entered, their ethical behavior was in steady decline, and they were failing to learn how to learn in order to keep abreast of a rapidly changing field. Rethinking curricular and pedagogical assumptions was overdue.

A prominent difference in the new approach they devised was that learning began with a living patient at the center of a small group of a professor and students. From that first day on through the end of their medical school, the patient was the subject of the curriculum, the hub around which and from which the students branched out to learn the various facts, theories, systems, and contexts that influence health and illness. This involved a pedagogical shift from having an expert teach disembodied data (an approach that too easily views patients as objects) to teaching via collaborative inquiry in small groups focused on a person who is a patient in their midst. Students still went to lecture halls, labs, skill-training seminars, and independent studies, yet always returned to the hub of that wheel, the patient-centered small group.

This model views teaching as informed connectedness. The teacher connects, or engages, self with students and subject in a personal and meaningful way. Palmer describes community as the capacity for connectedness to self, others, the cosmos, history, and scholarly discourse, and understands the concerns of community to be inseparable from the educational process.

A central feature of the ferment within theological education over the late twentieth century has been distress over the inherited tendency toward fragmented (and perhaps fragmenting) learning. From a systemic perspective, it could be said that during this time of distress, theological education has generated internally, in the emerging practices that have become field education, its own corrective to fragmentation—the embryo of a more communal approach to the whole process of theological education. Field education is inherently a connecting educational practice. Relationships are the primary medium within which formation for ministry occurs. The holism of this kind of learning extends beyond the whole person (body, mind, spirit, emotions) to the person in community. The structures of many field education programs reflect and require the relational nature of experiential theological learning. The model below reflects a field educator’s perspective on the network of relationships within which theological learning and formation occur. Whether structured and intentionally focused on learning (e.g., in the field education program), or functioning coincidentally, all of these are formative *relational* contributors to the educational process.



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Several field educators in the consultation reported that they continue to face ambivalence or even resistance within their schools to the notion that experiential, contextual, and relational learning are as substantive or as crucial to theological education as formal classroom learning. Some consider it too “soft.” This ambivalence may well be the natural response of a system to disruption of its homeostasis, or a challenge to its most basic assumptions and settled convictions. If field education is a significant contributor to the embryonic development of new forms of theological education, some resistance is to be expected. The ability of field educators to help construct a web of collaborative learning relationships within their own schools (and more broadly among theological schools) will both test the applicability of relational learning to educational institutions and will embody the communal, contextual, and reflective learning that field educators believe to be the heart of theological learning. The movement of modern theological education has never passed this way before. We are making it up as we go along. To the extent that field educators and other theological educators are able to nurture this embryonic collaboratively, the cause of theological education will mature.

Palmer’s video presentation sparked energetic discussion and raised several important questions. Field educators may attempt an answer to some of the questions, but other answers can only emerge from conversation with the larger community of theological education.

- What is the subject in our divinity studies? What is the hub from which we start and to which we return? Is the hub a method, content, or ultimate outcome? Is pastoral/practical theological reflection a methodological hub? Is “the capacity for connectedness” itself the hub? Is the person of the student the hub, i.e., embodying an inherent unity of intellect, emotions, history, personality, will, faith, relationships, skills, vocation? Or is it the community of theological education? These questions seem pregnant with opportunity and require conversation across the larger theological education community.
- How does the primary methodology of field education (Pastoral Theological Reflection) help to counter pernicious disconnectedness?
- What are the reflective methods already in use within the respective theological disciplines (ethics, Scripture, theology, religious education, preaching, etc.)? What others are appropriate to them?
- How do we collaborate with our colleagues across these disciplines in discovering and developing more connective, collaborative approaches to theological education?

The field educator and the curriculum revision process. To help focus the consultants’ attention on the collaborative dimensions of this topic, Lynn Rhodes of Pacific School of Religion (PSR) presented the case “Collaborative

Curriculum Revision.” The case featured the multiyear effort of the PSR faculty to collaborate across disciplines in reshaping their curriculum. The field education faculty member was chair of the MDiv revision committee for much of the time. The last major curriculum revision at PSR had been twenty years earlier. In previous years the field education faculty member had been coordinator of a nine-year experimental program that involved many faculty members teaching in a ministry setting where students were in field education placements. Every week the class was held at a different field education site. A study of the results of that experiment showed that changing the teaching from the seminary classroom to ministry sites shifted both student and faculty perceptions and orientation to the material whether it was Bible study, ethics, worship, or church history. Those faculty who participated in the experiment acknowledged that it was an important experience of faculty development. The faculty as a whole never adopted the experiment, but elements of it have been critical in guiding the leadership given by the field education faculty member as the faculty has developed the MDiv revision. The experiment showed that faculty development is key to curriculum revision and that changing the site of the classroom to the field can be a critical element in changing faculty teaching and inculcating a sense of accountability.

Before and during their curricular revision, the PSR faculty have also been experimenting with different forms of teaching. They learned from the past experiment how important it was to have a praxis base for the curricular revision process itself. The Hebrew Bible professor, for example, developed a course in which every student taught a six-week Bible class in their local church field education sites. He visited those classes wanting to learn first-hand what was happening in local Bible study groups and whether that reflected what he was teaching. He asked himself and the students: What is our community of accountability? What issues emerge in local congregations that can inform the content, context, and critical thinking of these groups? Why does there seem to be such a divide between what is taught in seminary and what happens in Bible study in local congregations and communities? This professor’s attention to the students’ ministry and the students’ ethical formation illustrates an integrative approach to theological education. It also demonstrates a healthy flow of interaction between classroom and field education site where both are changed by their encounter.

Members of the PSR faculty also have begun to collaborate in research projects. An ethics professor has co-authored a book with a professor of spirituality. Individual faculty ask faculty in other disciplines to read their work-in-progress to receive other perspectives. Many of the faculty co-teach across disciplines and seek out faculty in disciplines other than their own as they do their own research. One of the most satisfying research projects for several of the faculty was done collectively over four years by a group including the field education faculty member, an ethics professor, a theology

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professor, and several church leaders. One result of their work together is that they have developed authentic relationships with one another that include enjoyable work, appreciation of other disciplines, and laughter. It also served to help them keep a healthy balance in their loyalties to their guilds, students, community, and ministry.

The MDiv revision process was begun more than five years ago. As a result, the faculty devoted a full semester to weekly faculty seminars. They had come to the conclusion that revision is an ongoing process and is not complete once a set of curricular changes is made. It takes energy, time, and administrative and financial commitment to make any significant progress in faculty development. Reward systems must reflect those commitments. Rhodes's case reinforced the consultants' awareness that only a concerted effort can overcome several barriers to integrative approaches to theological education.

Most theological educators agree that the traditional disciplines make little sense as isolated subjects, and they express a desire for healthier ways to make them interact, and find that established values and structures get in the way. Ironically, the values that guide faculty selection in some schools contain built-in resistance against high levels of collaborative research, teaching, and attention to the comprehensive curriculum. Research is highly valued and an essential ingredient in the tenure process. Many who are excellent researchers prefer working alone. They find that they pay a high price in emotional energy and time when they engage in the kinds of relationships required for collaborative research and teaching. In addition, most schools have reward systems that encourage individual rather than collaborative work in scholarship, teaching, and professional service. It is unrealistic for faculty to add much-needed collaborative work on top of their other commitments. Lasting change will come when the values and structures of our schools support it.

Just *how* field educators can and should foster increased collaboration in their schools' broader program of theological education is another matter. Consultants shared several suggestions and perspectives. They reiterated the need (noted above) for field educators to be credible and appropriately confident conversation partners with their faculty colleagues. Additionally, they suggested the following:

- Field educators could offer to guide faculty learning experiences that embody contextualized theological learning. One participant found that some who teach in the classical disciplines at her school were very apprehensive about leading reflective seminars because they had little experience in the area. They needed training and coaching. This can only happen if the school creates space for it.
- Participate in and initiate, if necessary, collaborative teaching, research, and other ministries. This includes the vulnerability of subjecting personal perspectives, objectives, and processes to collegial influence.

- Highlight and publicly celebrate the ways that faculty are already teaching in context-sensitive and integrative ways.¹⁵
- Consciously avoid dichotomous language that reflects a polarizing view of intellectual and practical work and learning.
- The dean in one theological school asked the field educator to serve as a consultant to other faculty helping “audit” their syllabi and teaching practices to improve contextual and integrative dimensions of their teaching.
- Continue to define and develop, i.e., further “discipline,” the integrative work of field education. Because field education is constitutionally cross- or multidisciplinary, it will benefit all disciplines if field educators work to further define what they do.
- On the other hand, one consultant suggested that field educators bring to the formation process a healthy “un-discipline.” Their primary focus on contexts of ministry means that they bring an abiding affection for the chaos and conflict often found among the people of God and in the contexts they inhabit, and a firm conviction that revelation takes place there.
- Field educators should continually invite faculty to focus on the students’ learning rather than on fields of teaching.
- Attempt to gain the administration and faculty’s support for a vision of a more clearly contextualized and integrative practice of theological education. Help identify needed adjustments in the school’s system of rewards.
- Engage other faculty (as many as possible) in theological reflection/practicum groups within the field education process. Provide the orientation, guidance, and support they need to do this kind of work confidently and well.
- With faculty colleagues, keep reflecting theologically on theological education. Patiently ask the theological questions that pertain to intended outcomes and the congruence of our decisions and practices with those outcomes.
- Invite into our midst those who can critique our assumptions and practices, e.g., non-Western scholars and ministers.
- Ask questions of candidates for faculty positions (to the extent that local hiring processes allow) to learn their perspectives on and experience of contextual and integrative approaches to theological education.
- Participate with other faculty in research on teaching and learning to identify the methodologies that actually achieve the core learning objectives of the school and its teachers, then critique and modify ways of teaching in light of those findings.

There was consensus among those who gathered in Nashville in January 2000 that field education is not just a program in the seminary. It is a way of understanding theological education and ministerial formation. Field

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education's efforts cannot be fruitful without effective collaboration and wise engagement with the broader school community in learning, discerning, and transforming its shared work. Success in this also requires a cultivated, active trust in God and in the process of collaborative learning and leading. One consultant raised an important cautionary note:

The contextualization of curriculum is a heady concept. We need to proceed carefully. I know of no colleague who does not understand her/his discipline as being at the "hub" of the theological education wheel. They wouldn't be good teachers if they didn't consider their discipline this way. We need to be in dialogue not simply to press our agenda but also to listen, to learn how and where scripture and tradition form context and community.

Curricular reform should not be the starting point in an effort to influence a school toward increased contextualization in its work. One person commented that a new curriculum is of little value if you have the same old mindsets in the faculty. A revised curriculum will be the fruit of change in the perspectives, beliefs, and practices of the faculty. Field educators are wise to recognize and ally themselves with those among their faculty colleagues who share that vision, and work patiently and openly toward productive change. The content, tone, and pedagogies of the curriculum, as well as the structures that support them need regular, perhaps continuous, review to ensure that they reflect the commitments and heart of the community of learning.

Conclusion

The significance of this Wabash/ATFE Consultation was not in creating new knowledge or insights. The consultation did bring into clearer focus, however, that field education has reached an important crossroads. It seems significant that the values and concerns of this coming-of-age discipline of field education correspond so directly to several values and needs that are prominent in theological education at this time. Whether the two choose to nurture a more intentional partnership that leads to the creation of something new, more faithful, and fruitful may depend on several factors beyond the individual efforts of either party.

Field education will be unprepared for that partnership unless we continue to clarify and then confidently honor and live out of our unique identity and its inseparable vocation. We must continue to refine our distinctive methodologies and bring new discipline to our craft without surrendering that identity, which refuses to be bound by the sometimes limited scope of "the academies" as we have traditionally understood them. If, in God's grace, field educators are able to appropriately lead and/or follow, and walk with their seminary

colleagues, they may together participate in a rebirth of the enterprise of theological education, and thereby contribute to the preparation of those persons called to church and community leadership that serves God’s healing transformation of the world.

The possibility of such a rebirth is also dependent on the larger system of theological education. Field education at best has some helpful perspectives and practices. Unless they are refined through interaction with the perspectives and practices of other partners in theological education, they will, like the seed that fell along the roadside, fail to germinate and bear fruit. Neither soil nor seed alone bears fruit, nor feeds the hungry of the world.

In the remaining sections, we will move to more thorough investigation of the issues of identity, method, and context that emerged during the consultation.

Section Two

The Identity of the Field Educator: Teacher/Director

The conversations about vocational identity during the Nashville consultation hinged on the field educators' self-perceptions and the perceptions of their colleagues. This is indeed the way identity is ascribed. We establish our identity by engaging the questions: How do we see ourselves, and how do the stakeholders in theological education see us? Stakeholders include colleagues, students, administrators and boards, the church in general, including denominational executives, pastors, and parishioners. As noted by the consultants, this essentially is the question of vocation—the conjunction of our gifts and the needs of those with whom we associate.

The consultation had posed the concern of identity as a choice between *teacher or director, faculty or staff*. As the consultants faced this formulation, key values emerged. On the side of teacher or faculty a key value is the field educator's *core place in the decision-making about the curriculum* of the school. The concern here is not personal power. Some of the consultants had been at their schools long enough as field educators that they had gained much respect and personal power in curriculum decision-making. The concern was more the status of the enterprise of field education as a "theological discipline" with a strong voice in theological education. To what extent and in what ways is field education central to the curriculum?

In this section, we will point to the underlying issues that influence the identity of field education and its centrality in the curriculum.

The imperialism of theory over practice

Traditional models of the theological curriculum inherited from the eighteenth century grew out of a world view built on the mind/body split, with the mind the work of the school and the body best trained on the field. "One learns *what* to preach in school; one learns *how* to preach in church." This model of educating ministers suggests that the purpose of the school is to produce knowledge of why and what ministry is; that is, to focus on theory. The *field*, i.e., church, is seen as the locus for the application (practice) of that knowledge. Such a perspective envisions the minister as a problem-solver, an applier of the right theory. The operating assumption is that the job of academics is to derive theory out of experience, whereas the job of practitioners is to learn those theories in school and then go into ministry and apply them.

The legacy of this educational approach is twofold. It produces a minister who does not claim the authority for the meaning of what he or she is doing and/or a minister who feels that theory is simply irrelevant, hardly a "pastor-scholar."

This mind/body split has one conceive of the universe in terms of “ups and downs.”¹⁶ More value is given to things near the top and less to what is near the base. There is a “chain of being”: God over humanity, humanity over animals, animals over plants, plants over rocks, rocks over atoms, and atoms over particles. Religious language and religious habits in our culture assume, and then reify, a similar hierarchy that dominates theological ministerial education. Faculties, courses, programs, and scholarly work in the academic fields—the biblical and theological disciplines—are held to be of greater value than those in the arts or practice of ministry.

One of the chief theological problems with teaching ministers in schools is that academic sources are not the primary sources to which ministers must attend. The primary sources are the experiences and practices of those in the community in which the minister serves. This is the model of the Bible, which, for the most part, is taken in churches as being a record of primary experience and practice. Theology or religious theory, in such communities, is typically considered to be second-stage reflection on these primary sources. Mistaking one for the other creates confused expectations and priorities. Working against such confusion in theological education are certain current “contextual” theologies such as liberation theologies, black theology, and feminist and womanist theologies. Section Four devotes much attention to them. Field education’s task in the curriculum is to articulate people’s primary experiences as they tell them, before introducing any reflective theology or theory.

To consider learning from human experience to be inferior to the work of the research disciplines is very likely to betray both. Human experience is, at its heart, religious: that is, it is disclosed to and disclosive of the limits of existence and the horizons of human living.¹⁷ Field education moves the student to engage theological research not just as a product, but also as a process, so that theological learning can happen in encounters with the present lived experiences of communities of faith.

Field education stands Janus-faced at the portal between communities of faith and the academy. In one direction, the students join the larger community engaging the religious experiences of life. In the other, at the seminary, they join teachers and colleagues reflecting on several communities’ practices in light of the religious traditions that have shaped them. During this exchange students learn to generatively practice reflection and to reflectively practice. They learn to become “ministers,” ambassadors to the community.

About fifty percent of ATS accredited schools regard field education as a teaching or faculty position—as an integral theological activity of the curriculum—not as administration. This forward-looking position rejects images of field education as limited to giving students “work experience” while they are studying, or only providing the context in which they practice skills learned elsewhere. Regarding field education as a teaching activity recognizes that it is critical for exercising and gaining the theological knowledge essential for

ministry. Field education becomes a theological exercise whose benefit is greater than fieldwork.

The identification of field educators as guild members in theological education

The attractiveness of the “director” identity may involve a wary view of the relationship of field education to the theological guilds. Those who attended the January 2000 Wabash/ATFE Consultation were not all convinced that field educators should abandon the identity of “director.” As a director, the field educator is able to bring a *counter-cultural voice to the academy-oriented community of theological education.*

An underlying issue directing the identity of field education and its role in the curriculum is the relationship of field educators to the theological guilds. Do the guilds control the theological curriculum? Should they? Should field education be identified as being part of or as one of the guilds? Field educators are not so sure. Inherent in the term “guild” is the image of production. Clearly in the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature, the guilds control the standards for research and production. They have set the requirements captured in the phrase “publish or perish.”

A recent survey of theological field educators revealed that fewer than fifty percent have produced any publications.¹⁸ Among the reasons for this lack of publication are the nature and time demands of the field education role. Indeed, the field education site supervisors, whom the field educator recruits, trains, and supervises, constitute a faculty of mentors larger than the typical school’s residential faculty. Thus, staff oversight and other administrative responsibilities tend to limit the publication output of field educators as they do for deans and other administrators. Rarely do they reach the production level of more typical faculty members.

However, a school’s decision to make field education a faculty position carries the expectation that the field educator will contribute to theological research. This low volume of publications suggests that field education has not yet developed either modes of research appropriate to the enterprise or structures to support research as a priority. Section Five addresses this concern in depth.

Research was only one of the problematic identity-related concerns raised by the field educators at the consultation. They also questioned the idea that in order to satisfy guild expectations, all field educators should hold a PhD. They fear that this requirement might block the creativity of the field educator. “One of the gifts of field educators,” a consultant said, “might be to bring intellectual excitement formed by places other than graduate schools. Graduate schools have limitations in developing good teachers.” This is indeed a radical suggestion.¹⁹

During the consultation, there was much conversation about the inadequacy of having to choose between the terms “teacher” and “director,” which led to the thought that “teaching” is not a univocal term. If the context is the teacher, the field educator has the task of working with that context—a much more unwieldy task than working with a text. One consultant said, as we have noted: “. . . my administrative functions are in service of learning objectives . . . in all that I do I am teaching—visioning, recruiting, evaluating, etc. . . .” Juxtaposing “teaching” and “directing” overlooks the common ground in field education. Teaching in classical areas and in field education is very different. The first is focused on subject matter outside the student; the second attends to the student and the student’s experience as “text” and is highly process-centered. This means the classroom component of field education is designed differently and is on a different timeline than a book-text course. To process the direct student experience demands different teaching skills. This happens in a considerable amount of one-on-one work with students, site cultivation and visitations, as well as classroom and small-group facilitation whose prime mode is practical theological reflection. Again, comparison of field education teachers with deans, who, while faculty members, take on teaching functions that are beyond the traditional classroom ones, is most appropriate.

The Belgian/Brazilian biblical scholar Carlos Mesters offers helpful concepts of teaching through his reflections on the three words: *text*, *context*, and *pretext*.²⁰ In the Bible, for example, he asks, just where is the word of God? Is it the “text”—the written words contained in the canonical writings of the Bible? Does it already exist in the “pretext”—the motivations, the assumptions, the lived experiences that one brings to a reading of the text? Or is it in the “context”—the world in which we live where we experience love and hate, joy and sorrow, poverty and plenty? He claims the word of God is not in any one of these places, but that it happens when all three are in a dynamic communion. When the “pretext,” our *present* experiences correlate with the experiences and practices of the *past* (the “text”), and we are moved to act out new experiences and practices in the *future* (our context), Mesters says, the word of God happens.

Perhaps one of the most poignant comments of the consultation was, “This discussion has revealed our ego struggles with being guild members, with the need to assert ourselves aggressively—qualities that pay off in academia. But in drawing attention to ourselves we draw it away from the context that is the teacher.” In field education, the context is a primary teacher. Perhaps the same can be said about the more traditional academic setting—it is the text that is the teacher. As at the “great books schools,” the teacher is actually a “tutor” of the text—a guide to the text, and the text does the teaching. What is key is the student’s ability to deal with reality—the “text,” versus an ability to deal with a particular person—the “teacher.”

Consensus? With all these issues, there was no consensus regarding the identity of the field educator. Ambivalence prevailed, but not by default. It was

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a thoughtful, chosen ambivalence. Ambivalence and some ambiguity are vital to field education's contribution to the community of theological education. One of the consultants observed: "If my identity is faculty, I may lose my sense of being on the border of the institution . . . it is healthy to have some 'unease' with the institution." "Border and margin" comprise a major theme in religious ministry. Much biblical work places Jesus at the margin of society—with a concern for the marginalized and a disdain for those who seek to control and live at the center.

The consultants in Nashville did not rush to embrace the identity of "teacher" versus "director," though in a forced choice, "teacher" more accurately characterizes how field educators tend to see themselves. There was, however a greater desire to redefine or reinterpret these terms. There was a call to theological field educators to "let the imagination roam freely."

The issue of identity was the overriding issue of this consultation and it comes back to shape and direct the following sections of this article: method, research, and career.

Section Three

Teaching Method and Methods in Field Education

Method and identity are intertwined in theological field education. Both are shaped by their service of the overarching aim of field education: the holistic formation of men and women for ministerial praxis that is faithful to tradition and appropriate to its context. To the extent that the concerns of field education influence the ongoing transformation of theological education, these issues of teaching method in field education become vitally important in the future of theological education. In this section, we draw on the insights of several known scholars as we explore further the methodological dimensions of context and theological reflection in theological education.

The context is the teacher on the site.

The site visit to Nashville’s Edge Hill United Methodist Church during the Wabash/ATFE consultation illustrated vividly for the participating field educators the fact that, on the site, it is the context that teaches. The actual encounter of the student with the needs of the people and the exigencies of the situation produce the events and experiences that provoke the student’s responses. In the classroom the student responds to the text—a second- or third-level reflection of events. The mode of teaching on site is more like that of coaching. Direct supervision, i.e., facilitation of learning, can happen during a “time out,” that is, either during the student’s scheduled supervisory conferences with the on-site supervisor or informally as the two interact in ministry. The coach and the player are guided by a game plan (a theologically informed strategy), which both responds to new data from “the floor” and is changed by those data. As coach, the supervisor is able to test the student, “placing students in a spot of tension and helping them understand themselves,” as Pastor Bob Coleman of Edge Hill Church says. This approach requires supervisors “who can ask the right questions, and provide support and critique based on observation,” as one of the consultants put it.

Reflection on how and what learning takes place on the site indeed helps field educators to see that their role in the classroom is that of mediator of practices revealed in the recorded tradition (the students’ texts from their academic and practical courses) and practices students bring from the section of church in which they are placed (captured in their ministry event reports). With the image of teacher as mediator, the field educator needs a methodology that holds both sets of practices, the contemporary and the historical, in a balance of respect. The field educator as mediator has several key teaching tasks:

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1. The *descriptive* task: helping the student to read a “text,” present-day or ancient,
2. The *historical* task: cultivating the student’s ability to analyze the influence (and judge the value of that influence) of biblical/historical/theological/ethical/or psychological material for ministerial practice in an immediate, specific context,
3. The *systematic* or constructive task: helping the student reframe present-day practices in light of the resources (scriptural, historical, theological, etc.) and,
4. The *strategic* task: guiding the student in the choice of a new or a reformed practice (ministry) to address the needs he or she encounters in the events of the site.

Reflections on “theological reflection”

One consultant’s comment, “We need to do a lot more work on what we mean and what words really describe our method . . . this is the area that surfaces our educational differences,” prompted some historical and theological reflection on “theological reflection” itself. We identified above some teaching tasks that effective in-context learning (field education) requires, we look at those tasks from the point of foundational “method” or theory.

To enter the world of “theological reflection” is to walk onto a vast plain upon which are individuals who practice daily spiritual meditation, lay groups of Christians who gather to reflect upon a social justice action or need, liberation theologians who speak of a *praxis* paradigm for theology (over against a classical paradigm), and theological educators who, as Pastor Bob Coleman said, facilitate the learning that occurs “when *the what* and *the how* crash into *the who*.”

Theological education today is at a crossroads of “faithfulness to the ancient and honorable paths of the *fathers*” and mothers, and the knowledge required for daily religious living.²¹ The church and the world demand accountability from the theology school for knowledge that is both authentic and “usable”; a knowledge to help people draw on, explain, and respond to their religious experiences.

One force pulls theological education toward a deeper and more critical study of the “traditions” and their disciplines. In merely a generation the various “guilds” of theological education have significantly developed and come of age. More has been learned about Scripture, for example, in the last generation than in all the preceding years of its existence. Today, more than ever, professors are challenging students in theological education to encounter and master the guilds’ disciplines and methods.

There is a counter force that pulls theological education toward the “context.” Here the point of departure for theological education is not the

reflections of scholars and their mastery of methods of inquiry but the daily living of persons negotiating relationships with birth, death, hunger, plenty, restlessness. These relationships are lived out in the city, the suburbs, and in rural areas, in situations of poverty and wealth, disease and health, with the young and the old.

Theological reflection as used in theological education by field educators and in other fields is a product of what Catholics call “pastoral theology” and Protestants call “practical theology.” Efforts in pastoral or practical theology are a late twentieth-century phenomenon in theological education that are attempting to overcome the limitations of “objectivistic” approaches. It begins by focusing on people and their actions on their terms: who they are, where they are, and how they are (i.e., *the subjects*). Meaningful action is the “text” with which such focusing begins.

Practical or pastoral theology represents an epistemological breakthrough in doing theology. It adds *experience* to classical theology’s norms of Scripture and tradition. Experience becomes not only the point of departure but also the point of return for practical/pastoral theology. Practical/pastoral theology, then, points to a new touchstone, indeed an initial canon for doing its work—experience in the present context. Like a font of water coming from the ground ever new, the practices of the community are the source of theology, its very nature. The processes of understanding and interpretation that it teaches move one toward action. Individuals, social groups, and communities change and are changed through the agency of God’s creative and redemptive spirit.

Practical or pastoral theology cultivates capacities to be present to the situation and its environment, and develops learning skills to hear and describe what is happening and to interpret the situation. It opens the student to new, previously disenfranchised voices (especially those of people of color and women) that may not be represented in the reflections of the scholars. Practical/pastoral theology is essential for exercising and gaining the knowledge for ministerial studies.

Barbara J. Fleischer writes: “The concern for ‘method’ . . . has, in many respects, taken center stage in our post-modern religious world. . . . (T)he major methodological shift that has occurred in this century is toward theological inquiry that grounds itself in the human experience of the persons and communities doing theology, a development rooted in the ‘turn to the subject’ initiated by theologians like Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan.”²²

Bernard Lee helps us with the word “practical”: “Unlike the older meaning attached to ‘practical theology’ as the ‘applied discipline’ flowing from the theory found in the classical theological specialties, practical theology as a new approach to doing theology calls upon communities to reflect upon interpretations of their cultural realities in conversation with interpretations of the Christian tradition (texts, symbols, story and vision), with a focal attention on the question of what kind of world we should be creating together as agents in history.”²³

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Fleischer, in her paper cited above, roots practical theological method in the works of the theologians David Tracy and Bernard Lonergan. Her paper focuses on the method Lonergan elaborates. Practical/pastoral theology, Fleischer writes, calls upon communities to reflect on their experiences in light of the Christian tradition, with the question: “what kind of world should we be creating together as agents in history?” Underlying this approach is David Tracy’s premise that the Christian tradition and human experience are equal conversation partners in the theological enterprise; one does not dominate the other.

Bernard Lonergan in *Method in Theology*, Fleischer points out, proposes that theology must proceed through the same phases that all human learning follows: experience, initial understanding, judging (or critical reflection), and decision. This is a break with Aristotle’s deductive system of beginning with unquestioned “truths” and then proceeding logically to a final conclusion. Lonergan begins by outlining four operations or levels of consciousness through which we move to decisions about the meaning of events and about how we respond. These four movements are: experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding.²⁴ Lonergan elaborates on how we attend to our experiences, articulating our initial understandings and testing them by reflecting upon them in the critical light of other information to come to decisions.

The shift from a deductive to an experiential method in theology highlights the centrality of conversion. Focusing in the abstract, the universal, the unchanging, and the static qualities of God takes attention away from conversion. A change in one’s observations opens one to new values and brings a change in oneself, how one relates to others and how one relates to God. As Lonergan puts it, conversion is “at once personal, communal, and historical.”²⁵ Continual conversation and reflection on experience and on the ultimate questions that arise from our experience lead to an ever-expanding horizon and self-transcendence.

As field educators we can indeed claim a “method” in theology that represents our particular place and role in theological education. It maintains the primacy of context. It begins and ends in present experience. It draws on the tradition and reshapes its interpretation, and it is holistic. It is about conversion to the revelation coming from present experience.

In the next section we extend this conversation to look at just how theological field educators see themselves in relation to the entire curriculum of theological education and just how they relate as theological colleagues with other faculty in the school.

Section Four

Contextualization, Colleagues, and Curriculum: The Field Educator’s Role in Advancing Contextualization in Theological Education

Context, Curriculum and Connection

In its June 2000 Biennial Meeting in Toronto, ATS approved a mission statement “. . . to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public.” In a workshop session at that meeting, entitled “Mission: Leading Schools to Fulfill the Educational Mission,” Brian McDermott, SJ, then president of Weston Jesuit School of Theology, and David Tiede, president of Luther Seminary, presented case studies that cited changes in the missions of their schools and the effect these had on constructing a new curriculum and pedagogy. Tiede set the tone by referring to the ATS mission statement that was approved in a plenary session earlier in the day. What is key in this new statement, he pointed out, is the focus on “communities of faith” rather than on theological disciplines or on ministerial leadership. The quality of the theological school’s work is measured by its contribution to the lives of congregations and their neighborhoods—the school’s context. Those contexts are not only recipients of the school’s services; their voices must be heard as the seminary defines its purposes, curricula, structures, and pedagogies. In the ATS mission statement, clearly, it seems to us, “context” is the emphasis.²⁶

The question posed at this ATS workshop was “what is the unit of analysis” by which we determine what our curriculum and pedagogy should be? McDermott began by looking at the shifting student body at Weston. He pointed out that forty-two percent of the student body was comprised of laypersons, and he went on to describe the school’s new three-year curriculum.

Tiede of Luther Seminary did not focus on the changing student body as the “unit of analysis” but on the communities of faith the school serves. He demonstrated what a radical shift this was for a denomination that is so pastor-centered. The watchwords for the reform McDermott and Tiede advocated were: “Stop preparing graduates for a church that hardly exists.”

Both presenters acknowledged that while they lacked answers, they believed deeply in the necessity of struggling with this type of question. Workshop participants identified several possible “units of analysis”:

- the kinds of students we have,
- the view of leader (pastor) we have,
- the faculty perspectives,

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- the disciplines (traditions),
- the communities we serve, and
- the public communities of our society.

Rethinking theological curricula and pedagogies through the lens of heightened attention to and concern for these and other relevant units of analysis will ground the schools in today's realities and enhance their missional faithfulness.

ATS has clearly pointed to the communities we serve as appropriate starting points in discussions about curriculum and teaching. As schools consider the ways that movement toward more contextualized approaches to theological education will affect pedagogy and curriculum, the work of field educators should be helpful. Attention to context has always been at the heart of their work. How to help students learn contextually is the question they live with daily.

Unfortunately, little is known in the academy about the work of field educators beyond the practical "nuts and bolts" of providing field placements. Field educators have not created an adequate body of scholarship that would help their colleagues in the wider academy understand field education more clearly. We need to raise the question of how the field educator can be a more helpful and valued resource in the endeavor of faculty from the various "traditions" and disciplines to teach more contextually.

Contextual Theology—A Brief History

The unfathomable destruction of human life and spirit in the two great wars of this century had the sobering effect of focusing theologians on the problems of present-day societies, rather than on speculation detached from present lived experience. After the midpoint in that century, theologians, particularly in Europe, began to talk of a theology of "present realities" or contextual theology.²⁷ In our discussion of methodology in field education, we noted the epistemological shift that reincorporated experience with Scripture and tradition as a norm in doing theology. Field education embodies a focus on experience as the point of departure and the point of return for contextual theology. Contextual theology affirms experience in the present context as an initial canon for doing its work.

Jon Sobrino, in *The True Church and the Poor*, suggests these elements of contextual theology:²⁸

1. The *starting point* of contextual theology is the present, not the past. It begins from the everyday experience of people. Contextual theologians have their highest concern in doing theology in the social situation in which it takes place, looking ultimately to social consequences. Contextual theology thus has an ethical and practical character.

2. Contextual theology is *particular*. It does not see itself as emanating from an idealized geopolitical world center (northwestern Europe) abstracted from the real worlds of particular living like the streets and neighborhoods in our cities. It is thus more closely related to the social sciences for the purpose of analysis and action, whereas classical theology is more related to philosophy and the world of ideas.
3. Contextual theology is directed to a *transformation* of the social context. To transform does not mean to construct an intellectual model to understand experience; it means, rather, bringing about structures for new experiences in society.
4. Contextual theology is the *common reflection* of and for a community—not the theology of an individual working alone in a library.
5. Contextual theology restores *method* to its original meaning—as a way of traveling—not in thought, but in reality. The move from abstract concepts to concrete practice is not via the history of thoughts, but by means of action. It is action by faith that makes the abstract understandable, not thought. Classical theology’s emphasis on theory rather than action comes from the accumulation of theological tradition over centuries—a “deposit” of truths to transmit, explain, interpret, and make meaningful. This “burden” of knowledge, as a given, is classical theology’s starting place.

Contextual theology influenced one of the major documents emerging from Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, which altered the Catholic Church’s theological method.²⁹ Traditionally, the church had theologized deductively—that is, beginning with rational principles or articles of faith and then applying these to present situations. In contrast, *Gaudium et Spes* carried out theology inductively, starting with “the signs of the times” or the “here and now” of experience and then engaging theological principles in a synthesis of tradition and present fact before acting. From this base of present experience, the council exercised a new mode of theology.

When the teaching church engages in contextual theology it is no longer distant from the people but becomes intimate with their experience. People view their experience in religious terms. The dualisms between religion and church, and between faith and life, cease to exist.

The Reconstruction of Academic Theology: Practical/Pastoral Theology Comes of Age

David Tracy, concerned because theology tends not to address the religious in the contemporary human struggle, recasts the categories of theology to activate a “critical correlation between an interpretation of the Christian fact and the contemporary situation,” i.e., between theological abstraction and life.³⁰

Tracy’s first work phenomenologically establishes that fundamental theology’s task is to show that human experience is, at its heart, religious.³¹ His

second work describes constructive or systematic theology as an attempt to express this human religious experience in terms of the classic Christian texts or traditions.³² Systematic theology's mode, then, is that of literary analysis. Thus, Tracy calls for an "analogical imagination." He proposed a third book to develop the position that the work of contextual theology is to construct a model or vision of human transformation—what people "live" when they operate from the Christian tradition.³³ This *vision* is a synthesis of fundamental theology's *assertion* of human experience's religious nature (thesis) and systematic theology's *expression* of this experience in Christian terms [religious analogy] (antithesis). A synthesis, according to Hegel, whom Tracy cites, "preserves, uplifts, and transforms" thesis and antithesis simultaneously into a new third thing. Thus, Tracy's construction of the relationship of ways of thinking theologically about religious experience is threefold: *intuitive*—common to human experience, *narrative*—as analogy in religious texts, and *expressive*—as vision in action. For Tracy there can be no one-way or handmaid relationship among the categories of theology or the categories of theologians. The pastoral agent—the "contextual theologian"—for Tracy is the one who calls forth the living vision of human transformation that comes by *living* ethically in the world. Her or his activity participates in the theological task by its struggle to formulate the *telos* or vision of the human religious experience, what Tracy calls the ethical ideal.

A problem with the technical-rational epistemology, as mentioned in Section Two, is that the intellectuals' sources are not primary sources, experiences are. This is the epistemological model of the Bible, a record of primary sources. Theology or religious theory is secondary reflection on these primary sources. We have confused secondary sources with primary sources and have forgotten that knowing is in action. Dominated by the technical-rational model, the world of knowledge is built upon a vision of control and a desire for efficiency in action. Now, however, scholars are more aware of the importance and value of complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and conflicts of value. These conditions that exist in the pastoral field are not to be abstracted and dealt with in the theological "ivory tower," but are the loci of knowing in their own contexts. Central to the pastoral agent are not theory and its principles of how to solve a problem, but reflective action.

The old epistemology of action was shaped by a concern with problem solving. The new epistemology of reflective action is not. It is concerned with problem *setting*. Where technical rationality cannot tolerate uncertainty, reflective action is secure in dealing with uncertainty; where technical rationality operates only scientifically, reflective action operates artistically; and where technical rationality is restricted to a single discipline, reflective action chooses from among competing professional paradigms.

The pastoral agent, then, is the theological actor who has the power to decide on her or his feet. It is only on the hard high ground that one can follow

research-based theory and technique; in the swamps it is too messy. Yet it is in the swamps where the problems of greatest human need exist. It is precisely this concern about religion’s relevance to human problems that has caused Tracy to revise theology.

Theological education needs to see theological research and learning not just as a product, but also as a process, something in which to engage. The operative epistemology here is that *knowing is in action*. Action needs to be seen as embodied thinking. Knowing happens in action, sometimes in a split-second, intuitive-feeling interface of the actor’s awareness of self, tradition, context, and mission.³⁴ At other times, knowing happens in a far more conscious and sometimes collaboratively reflective process of deliberate action.

In *A Fundamental Practical Theology*,³⁵ Don Browning elaborated a reframing of theological education that lives out the theological *habitus* as a *rhythm of theologizing*. This rhythm flows from action to theory and back to action through four movements: *describing* the community’s action, *analyzing* the action historically, *systematically relating* life themes in the action to the religious tradition, and *establishing the norms and strategies* of pastoral response to the action. Thus Browning sees “practical theology” (or contextual theology) not as a discipline but as an overview of theology itself, the indication that theology arises out of the lived experience of the community. Theological field education is contextual theological education’s primary teaching *methodology*. Field education is a *theological* teaching exercise whose content is a rhythm that tracks through Browning’s four movements noted above: describing, analyzing, systematically relating, and establishing norms and strategies of pastoral response to the action.

Field education plays a major role in orchestrating students’ theological education, an activity through which they generate data for theological construction and reconstruction. Field educators not only exercise their teaching directly in the classroom with students but also are called to be leaders in contextualizing the theological school. What field educators seek to add is not simply intuition, but adaptability, in integrating embodied thinking into practical action.

Conclusion

In the first four sections of this work, we have addressed two related concerns. First, we have reflected on three central issues in theological field education that emerged from the January 2000 Wabash/ATFE consultation: identity, method, and context. We have also called attention to the timely correspondence between theological education’s pressing for more holistic, integrative, and contextual approaches to theological education, and the nature and strengths of field education. Field education is a “member of the body” of theological education and exists in service of the vocation of theologi-

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cal education. This is true functionally within each theological school as it is in the ongoing historical evolution of theological education. Field education is both dependent upon and a contributor to theological education. Every weakness, strength, uncertainty, or triumph of field education sends ripples of its burden or blessing out into the larger system. Our concern for the well-being of both realms calls us to continue to nurture their unity.

In the coming section, we challenge field educators to expand the knowledge base of theological education through more disciplined and extensive research in the practices of field education. We believe that such research will enrich the efforts of all theological educators to help prepare women and men for faithful and appropriate practice of ministry.

Section Five

Building a Knowledge Base from Practice: Research in Theological Field Education

Theological field educators often find themselves in a dilemma. They are members of a faculty at an institution that is involved with theological education, and they direct a significant component of its curriculum. Their work is noted in the ATS accreditation standards as essential to the curriculum of theological education.³⁶ However, the work that they do, located as it is outside the school, in the “field,” is often not viewed as significant and essential by their colleagues. As we noted earlier, some field educators are not in faculty positions, and some who are in faculty positions are not on tenure track. We also described in earlier sections our sense that some faculty colleagues are unaware, or perhaps unconvinced, that field education contributes to the intellectual life of students and our schools. Field educators, some think, simply help the students prepare for the practical dimensions of ministry.

As theological field educators, we are often in complicity with this understanding of our work and ourselves. For the most part, there is more attention to the issues of practice than research among field educators, even at our professional meetings. Some of this stems from an institutional structure that often places field education as one responsibility among many in a job description, while some of the problem is a practical issue of time that the field education endeavor requires. Its roots, however, lie in a deeper problem of identity of self as teacher and scholar, as well as our own lack of confidence in the particular epistemological understanding we bring to the academy.

Furthermore, because field education is an integrative discipline of theology, education, sociology, ethics, and Bible, field educators have to keep abreast of the research and literature in all these areas as participants in the student’s ministerial formation.

This section seeks to show that research is a fundamental and essential component of the work of field education for at least the following two reasons:

- It builds a knowledge base of practical action and theoretical reflection about the field of ministry.
- It allows us to bring field-based perspectives into the research base of traditional disciplines in the theological academy.

Thus, research in field education contributes to theological education both a content knowledge about ministry and a research method capable of bringing insight to the work of other disciplines.

Research Obstacles: Why Don't We Do More Research?

Understanding the role of research in field education must take into account at least three structural problems that have to do with “nesting” field education in effective ways within the administrative and academic structures of the theological school. First, the epistemological inclination of the academy weighs heavily toward theory and its application in practical settings. Its epistemology is primarily theoretical. Second, as a practice-oriented process, the work of field education poses specific challenges of articulation. It seeks to effect a balance between thinking and feeling, hard facts and intuitive sense. It requires an integration of the whole person. This is not always a comfortable fit in an intellectual environment that prefers abstract conceptualization, logic, and theoretical critical thinking. And third, the work of field education necessarily demands administrative components that must be attended to for effective learning to occur. This often creates a perception of field educators as being administrators. Practical reality compounds this situation in that administrative tasks can become so time-consuming that there is little energy or space left in the schedule for reflective thinking. While administration has its educative components, it requires a very different energy from the broad theoretical and practical reflection involved in asking deeper questions of the discipline.

Each of these points about research in field education could constitute individual sections of this article. For the purposes of this section, however, I will discuss each briefly as a way of contextualizing some of the issues facing field educators and their attempts to engage in research.

Traditionally, the academy has been dominated by a particular way of knowing that is highly theoretical and involves rigorous critical thinking. In this model, engaging texts and colleagues in critical dialogue alone creates new knowledge. Students are expected to take these ideas and apply them in practical situations. This theory-application model has dominated higher education and learning.

The last twenty years have brought some change in this view with some thinkers resisting theorizing divorced from practical application in a context of community. Scholars such as Freire, Schön, and Groome advocate an action-reflection process as a way of integrating community needs and theoretical rigor.³⁷ Scholars who are influenced by gender and culture-based critiques seek to understand how practical knowledge can have an impact on theoretical knowledge in ways that make that theoretical knowledge more accurate to the lived reality of communities.³⁸ Many, if not most, academic models, however, still rely heavily on theoretical thinking and find it difficult to engage in a genuinely integrative action-reflection process.

In contrast, field education (as well as many areas in the arts of ministry) relies on a more praxis-oriented method. This method begins in experience and, through an action-reflection process, seeks a theory that makes practical

sense, as well as a practice that is theoretically consistent. Many scholars who work in the area of theologies of liberation and ethics are kindred spirits with field educators in this work of praxis thinking. But the explicitly community-based location of field education forces an attention to practical detail that does not always fit into traditional research methods. The knowledge created in field education is an integrative, often intuitive product that poses its own difficulties of articulation. This creates difficulties in research because we often have to work with research material (that is, the complexities of ministerial practice) that can be difficult to subject to theoretical categorization.

It might be instructive to consider as an example some of the issues that field educators face in teaching that are directly related to the problems they face in doing research. Field educators often attempt to articulate the process of ministerial formation in spiritual realities or character development that have an ephemeral quality that is not easily expressed in words. While it is possible to articulate some aspects of the learning that a student has achieved during a field site experience, such as skill development or growth in pastoral confidence, it is more difficult to articulate accurately, for example, the maturation in ministerial identity that occurs.

Often, the knowledge that the student gains through a field education experience is difficult to standardize and to evaluate. How does one measure the development of leadership skills, for example? How does one create a standard for personal and professional maturity? The instructor could develop a standard in terms of traditional ways of stating course objectives, i.e., observable evidences of personal and professional maturity, but would it reflect adequately the student’s growth in these areas?

More to the point of the issues of this section, how does one begin to articulate research questions that approximate some of the concerns that are part of studying these subject contents?³⁹ As field educators we help students think about vocation, but we spend less time thinking about the methods we actually use to help students discern their call. This topic would be an interesting one for research, in spite of some aspects of it that are difficult to articulate.

The nature of the work in field education is another factor that can impede research. For every field educator, administration is a necessary function, but for most, this also becomes an all-encompassing reality. The infrastructures of many schools place field education in the unusual position of having to attend to both learning and administrative concerns.

Schools have many administrative services that support learning and are often invisible to most of the faculty. An admissions director, for example, recruits students for the incoming class. A director of financial aid makes certain that students’ funds are in place. A dean of students cares for the students’ personal concerns and any trauma that might be triggered by or developed from the school experience. When learning moves outside of the

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seminary context, however, someone has to recreate those administrative services for students. When the learning site is off-campus, someone needs to recruit placements, deal with financial concerns, and help students through any emotional issues that arise. The needs of students do not fundamentally change, but they move to a different venue. Thus the field education program, in many ways, has to reproduce the administrative support of learning for the off-campus context.

The field education professional has to attend to these administrative concerns because they are immediate and pressing. Students cannot learn easily or effectively if they are in the wrong placement or have financial pressures or have emotional issues getting in the way at the field site. On a purely infrastructure level, the school must provide someone to attend to these administrative details. The fact that many do not observe the educational component of field education is part of the epistemological reason, spoken about earlier in this section, why field educators are viewed primarily as administrators and not as teachers. When administrators, as well as field educators, understand education as a praxis of action/reflection, they are able to see the pedagogical component that completes field education as educational process. The administration of the program serves the learning and is secondary to the teaching function.

Although there are many obstacles to doing research as a field educator, in reality, we are constructing new knowledge all the time in the work that we do. For example, helping students to discern their calling links them in an immediate and personal way to a larger academic discussion about the theological understanding of vocation and call. Helping a student sort out a pastoral call that entails difficult boundary negotiations can help to create new knowledge in professional ethics. If we are able to ask questions of critical analysis and the connection of the issue to broader theories, we can use these practical details as research material.

So, what obstructs the vision of field education as a legitimate area of research? As stated above, one factor is an inability to view action-reflection work epistemologically as the creation of knowledge. A deeper and more present issue, however, involves our own sense of identity as field educators. On some days, we bring only our identities as pastors and administrators to the work and hold less consciously our roles as teachers and “scholar-pastors.” We often see the work we do as an extension of our pastoral skills or our administrative skills, rather than as teachers trying to understand a method of reasoning that helps people to learn to do ministry better and creating a knowledge base in the discipline.

Some field education programs are conducted as extensions of church bureaucracies. Schools support this way of operating because many of them see their mission primarily as forming persons for work in their denomination’s churches. In this way, church, bureaucracy, and seminary all become partners

in leadership development. There is logic to this arrangement, but it either ignores the academy or lives in strong tension with its requirements. A legitimate and necessary struggle occurs between the educational interests of the church and the demands of the academy. For the most part, these are two different worlds with very different missions. Seminaries are unique in higher education for the way in which they must negotiate the demands of the two worlds of the academy and the church. Field education programs are “ground zero” in this sometimes tense domain between church and academy. We have to engage responsibly both the pastoral and academic aspects of our identity. We can help students to see themselves as “scholar-pastors” who serve communities of faith with both intellectual rigor and pastoral effectiveness. Modeling research that is responsive to communities and is academically rigorous assists this work of developing leaders who can exist comfortably in both worlds.

Research Possibilities: Examining Field Education Practices

A structural reality of field education as a guild involves the fact that a majority of its practitioners are trained in an area different from field education itself. As noted earlier, some come into the field by chance, some do the work for several years as a stepping stone to a faculty position, and some do the work as a transition from the pastorate and may lack academic or research interests. It is rare that a person is trained specifically for this work. Most enter field education through work in another area. Therefore, people bring to this work the interests of the disciplines in which they were trained, often doing research in those fields, rather than in field education itself.

This diversity of paths leading to work in field education makes it difficult to locate exactly what constitutes research in this area. Initial efforts to chronicle the range of research undertaken in field education⁴⁰ show such areas as ethics, theology, pastoral care, and ministerial supervision. No specific area dominates the research efforts of field educators.

As a way of thinking more deeply about the issue of research, I want to use my experience as a field educator and faculty member to explicate two essential questions at the heart of understanding field education and its research possibilities. I offer my practice as a way of understanding how we might think about research.⁴¹

How do I understand what I am doing in the work of field education? I begin with this question as I reflect upon my practice. A basic answer for me is the following: *I am teaching people how to function ministerially in a community.* Let me break this down into component parts for analysis.

First of all, I am *teaching*. I do not assume that students necessarily know how to function as ministers. I also do not assume—and this is a fundamental assumption—that they will learn how to be ministers entirely at the site. I have

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seen that students need a combination of content from academic disciplines, as well as content from the site itself to learn the art and craft of ministry. Students need both the knowledge of theological traditions and the knowledge of its lived reality in community to be well formed as ministers. Therefore, I understand that I need to provide content in such areas as vocation, social analysis, ministerial professional ethics, and theologies of ministry to give a framework to the experience as well as supplement it. Colleagues in the ministerial areas of church and society, religious education, pastoral care, preaching, and worship provide courses that cover other important ministerial components. I also need to provide reflection processes in the seminars to help students integrate the work of the curriculum of theological education with the work of their field site. These two content areas cannot remain as parallel lines; rather they must intertwine into a more integrative experience.

Secondly, it is the expectation of field education that a student *function* in the congregation. That is to say, students are not there to observe as much as they are there to do a job. In doing that job and reflecting upon it, they will learn. Therefore, I have to teach and help students gain initial experience in that action-reflection process in order for them to get the most learning from the field experience. Some teachers have a misguided notion that if you place students into a field experience and then bring them together to talk about it, they will be able to do the integration necessary for deeper understanding. Students are empowered, in part, by pedagogical strategies that help them learn how to integrate the knowledge that they bring *to* a site with the knowledge that they gain *at* a site. They are able to function better when they are learning how to think in an action-reflection way, which allows them to think on their feet and use all the resources of self and knowledge that they bring to the context.

Thirdly, I am teaching people how to function *ministerially*. I have to be aware of the different backgrounds (personal and professional) and understanding about ministry that students bring into their seminary experience and help them form their understanding of ministry appropriately. This involves initially forming people in a specific professional role that is not only social worker, teacher, counselor, preacher, or liturgist, but some unique combination of categories consistent with both the community's model of a pastoral or worship leader and the student's awareness of her or his own gifts and call. For students who see themselves functioning in ministry from a less confessional point of view, the basic stance is one of a leader who is grounded in a set of religious and spiritual values. Many students are comfortable acting in the capacity of helping professional, but they need to learn how that work of helping is done specifically as a ministry. This means that I have to help them understand the ways in which the work of service becomes ministerial when undertaken in the name of God and of a community of faith.

Culture constitutes a significant awareness in my attempts to teach students how to function ministerially in a community. Each student comes from a different religious tradition that understands ministry in a particular way. This factor must become part of the learning process. Even within a particular theological tradition, various groups have their own specific expression or emphasis. For example, students in the Episcopal tradition need to understand the nuances of theologies of ministry in African, African American, or Afro-Caribbean contexts that are different from the dominant white traditions. Students must learn that in order to function effectively in a leadership capacity, they must see the particularity of ministry as it is defined and lived from specific theological and practical traditions.

Some students come with no theological tradition in their history, and they have to be formed in the tradition and learn ways to function as a professional within it. The denominational shifting and movement that is part of contemporary society creates a situation where many students bring a variety of religious experiences to seminary. What does it mean to educate for ministerial leadership in a specific community in this context?

Finally, I am teaching people how to function ministerially *in a community*. Students often make the mistake of assuming that they know the community and the context of their site, when in fact they have not done the rigorous work of social analysis to understand well the community and its needs. The variety of communities that theological education comes into contact with demands that students understand the distinctiveness of each community and the particular ministries that are appropriate to the context. Korean American Presbyterians have a very different set of needs than Hispanic or Anglo Presbyterians. Students need to learn the skills of social analysis and multicultural awareness in order to function with any ministerial effectiveness. I seek to teach students mental and pastoral agility in working with the complexities of diverse communities and contexts.

This first question of understanding what I do in my field education work focuses my research agenda in the areas of scholarship that support it. Given my understanding of my work in field education, a second research question is the following: *What do I make certain that I learn so that I can prepare people to minister effectively in communities?* First, I study teaching strategies to help students learn in praxis-oriented ways. This includes reading in areas of educational theory from the perspective of critical social theory and feminist and liberationist viewpoints. Second, I study theologies of ministry and specific issues about ministries, including denominational statements about ministry as well as a variety of works on the topic of ministry. I also read about ministerial issues such as leadership training and domestic violence prevention. And third, I study communities and how one learns from them. This includes constructive theologies from various cultural expressions, as well as sociological works describing a community and its concerns.

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Thus, because I see field education as teaching students how to function ministerially in a community, I prepare by doing research in these areas: education, theology, ethics, Bible, and sociology. Acknowledging that it is impossible to know all of the research in all of these areas, they remain key areas for my own research as a teacher of field education.

When I do research I often feel that I am a generalist in an academic climate of specialists. In order to do my work effectively, I must know something about many areas of theological education. For more in-depth thinking on particular topics, I rely on my colleagues who are specialists in those areas.

Our research contributions as field educators are significant and necessary to the work of the theological academy. An important aspect of our research is our unique perspective on the nature of theological education itself. As field educators, we are in the position to see the enterprise of theological education in its entirety vis-à-vis text and communities. We are able to understand how theology is lived out in communities and how communities affect theology.

As a final point in this discussion of field education and research, I want to highlight two ideas connected to my own research and to suggest ways of thinking about research possibilities.

One research project, now completed, involved drawing connections between the work of theological reflection and spiritual formation for ministry. In "Finding God Experientially in the Tradition: Theological Reflection as Spiritual Formation,"⁴² I reflected on the use of the process of theological reflection and its importance as a tool for spiritual formation in ministry. This work came directly out of a combination of my own teaching and a pastoral experience that served as a case study in the article. Reflecting on both the experience of teaching field education seminars and pastoral practice, I was able to articulate a larger ministerial issue that was important for thinking about ministerial formation in general and theological education in particular.

A second area of research possibility for me emerges out of my attempts to understand how students are best prepared for leadership in communities. There are many skills, experiences, and values involved in leadership formation for ministry, but one important ability to gain from seminary experience is how to approach a ministerial problem with both analysis and compassion. Students need to develop a way of thinking that is both critically reflective and empathetically grounded. In order to function effectively in a community, students must have the capacity to put themselves in the place of community members and understand their issues and concerns. At the same time, students must be able to step back with some emotional distance to critique the issues of the community from a more dispassionate stance.

I find it useful to employ the language of "separate and connected knowing" to articulate this dynamic of analytic critique and empathetic understanding. I refer here to the work on feminist epistemology published in *Women's Ways of Knowing* and *Knowledge, Difference and Power*.⁴³ Briefly, these two types of thinking can be described in the following ways:

In separate knowing one takes an adversarial stance toward new ideas, even when the ideas seem intuitively appealing; the typical mode of discourse is argument. In contrast, in connected knowing one tries to embrace new ideas, looking for what is “right” even in positions that seem initially wrong-headed or even abhorrent.⁴⁴

These categories hold potential for articulating the various types of thinking skills that students must have for effective ministry and are important for further research. For example, students must employ separate knowing procedures in order to do a social analysis of the field site or analyze a professional ethics conflict. At the same time, they need to employ connected knowing skills in order to understand better the interpersonal relationships among community members at the field site. Research in this area may provide a useful articulation of an essential teaching function for ministerial development.

Research in field education can arise from our practical concerns,⁴⁵ from our pedagogical concerns,⁴⁶ or from the larger issues of ministry that we engage daily.⁴⁷ Most importantly, as we emphasized in the Introduction and in Section One, we need to own the fact that as field educators we offer important issues that theological education needs to engage. There are also crucial areas of research and reflection that require collaboration among field educators, faculty in the classical disciplines, and administrators in theological education.

Exercises: A way into thinking about one’s research

The exercises and questions in this last section are designed to help field educators examine their work and identify ways in which they are engaged in the creation of new knowledge. The relevance of this work for all of theological education requires that this work not be done in isolation. We offer issues and questions that suggest new cross-disciplinary research in theological learning.

- Regarding the organizational structure of your institution, draw a diagram of where you are as a field educator in that system. In what ways are you empowered in that system? In what ways are you marginalized?
- In what ways do you define what you are doing in the work of field education? What assumptions do you bring to the work?
- If you were to cite three disciplines that you integrate regularly in your field education program, what would they be?
- What connection do these areas have to the other parts of the curriculum of theological education?
- What are the most consistent administrative concerns you face in a week? As you think about those concerns, what larger ministerial issues are they related to? (e.g., confidentiality, role boundaries, power relationships, budget management?)

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- If you were to share these ideas with colleagues, both those who are in field education and those who are not, how would you describe your thoughts in writing? What would an outline of these thoughts look like?

We have stated our conviction that field education has much to offer as a conversation partner within the community of theological education. In the sense intended by Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline*,⁴⁸ theological education is a responsive, "learning" system. Field education can be seen as an adaptive movement within theological education, that is, a conceptual and programmatic response of theological education to its growing awareness that good theological education must be integrative and must attend to the education and formation of the whole person, in community, and for ministry that fits the contexts of the faith community. Field education, on the one hand, exists for the benefit of theological education. In a symbiotic way, it is dependent on the good will and resources of the larger enterprise. Only when nurtured, respected, included, and resourced can it make the contribution needed by the whole.

As field educators approach the research-related exercises and questions above, it is important to remain alert to field education's location within and in-between the community of theological education and the churches. In what ways does each research question we consider interface with concerns of the broader community of theological education and with the concerns of the churches and the neighborhoods in which students serve? Which colleagues in our school (and from our churches) should we call upon to help refine our *questions* and join us as research partners and/or consultants? How can we nurture the willingness of our teaching colleagues to join us as research partners? Through which media can we most effectively share with our partners in church and education communities our questions, processes, and findings?

It is likely obvious that we tend to see ourselves as people on a mission, people with a calling. In our final section, we turn to the matter of the vocation of the field educator. Why do we do this work?

Section Six

Finding Our Way: Field Education as a Vocation in Theological Education

Several years ago, at dinner during an interdisciplinary gathering of scholars, I was asked by several people what I liked about doing field education. I thought seriously about the question and found myself saying some things I was not expecting to say. One was that I find field education satisfying because it is holistic and action-reflection work that is not always typical in an academic setting. It allows me to think about my students as full human beings with intellect, feelings, personal and social histories, as well as anxieties and skills. Academic work does not always allow that kind of holistic approach to teaching. A second reason I gave was that I enjoy having one foot in the academy and one foot in the community. It satisfies my needs for both intellectual rigor and community-based relevance. Finally, I was surprised to hear myself say that I enjoy most the mentoring aspect of the work, and that I literally get to see people “grow up” in ministry. It is enormously satisfying to have an academic career that is so deeply rooted in an intellectual and spiritual formation experience for students.

As I think about these ways in which I describe my own work, I am struck by how my descriptions are somewhat out of step with traditional academic thinking. My passion does not fit customary academic categories. It is a discipline that has interesting and intellectually challenging ideas, and yet it is deeply practical. It is work that attempts to understand a body of academic knowledge and yet is deeply involved with ministerial training and character formation. Because of these particularities of the work, I find myself more comfortable talking about field education in vocational language. In my field education vocation, I am able to help educate and form people for important community-based service that is connected to a faith tradition.

Viewing field education as a vocation involves some conflicting realities. On the one hand, many field educators do not explicitly feel a call to enter into this work. While many enter this work through any number of practical and circumstantial reasons, after they are engaged in the work, they begin to use the pastoral language of call and commitment. It is almost as if one experiences field education as a calling only in the process of doing it. This makes a great deal of sense given the field-based nature of the work. The calling to be a field educator may be something that emerges in reflecting upon the work itself.

The skill of discernment must be a significant aspect of the vocation of the field educator. It is somehow appropriate to an action-reflection learning process that field educators deal with their own discernment of vocation while teaching students to discern their vocational direction. This means that to be an effective field educator one must develop a discerning lifestyle, specifically: (1)

one that can perceive the movement of the Spirit in daily life, (2) in order to understand a situation and its demands, and (3) to take appropriate action.⁴⁹ In other words, a field educator must possess an ability to see beyond what is evident on the surface and to see the deeper meaning emerging from practical experience. One must be able to make sense of the work beyond the apparent practical realities of making field site experiences operate smoothly. Field education, as an integrative scholarly enterprise, demands discernment skills that help field educators integrate the intellectual and practical movements of their work into a larger sense of ministerial understanding.

Much of the work of field education entails assisting students in their attempts to make sense of the problems and successes of their field site experiences. Students bring a variety of problems and possibilities to the field education consultations, which include supervisory conferences, reflection groups, and classroom work. Teaching and mentoring in this educational context demands seeing beyond the concrete issue that the student is presenting to the larger ministerial issue at hand. For example, when a student youth minister brings a case to class asking for help in disciplining students, there are several practical problems to be addressed. One problem involves developing basic skills necessary for effective group management. Another issue is that of role boundaries. What is the authority appropriate to the role the student has in that ministry setting? But there is often a deeper issue of the student's reluctance to embrace the authority of that role and act out of that inner authority. Just as field educators must discern the larger ministerial issues present in practical issues, so we must help our students to perceive the deeper issues present in the concerns they bring for reflection. We do this through assisting the students in developing skills of ministerial theological reflection.

Thus, part of the vocation of field education involves the ability to discern the deeper issues present for the student beyond what appears on the surface to be a practical problem in need of immediate attention. Similarly, field educators need to discern the deeper ministerial and theoretical issues at play in the practical problems that they see every day in their own work. The many administrative details involved in terminating a problematic site, for example, can completely preoccupy a field educator's time. The larger issue in many field site terminations, however, has to do with underlying communication problems between the supervisor and the student, or with personal and/or structural limitations in either the student or the site personnel or the site itself, that cannot be overcome to create a stable working environment. Developing a lifestyle of discernment involves attentiveness to interpersonal dynamics. It involves an openness to see and hear God's Spirit in the ups and downs of daily life in ministry. It involves attentiveness to the spiritual movements in oneself and a commitment to living a reflective life. Given the need for this type of discerning lifestyle as a basis for vocation in field education, what might be some motivations, character inclinations, knowledge base, and experiences

that would incline someone toward field education and allow them to succeed at it? An initial question to ask is why someone would want to become involved in this work. One reason is that the work of field education allows one to engage in the action-reflection educational process in an academic setting. The boundaries of traditional, theoretical academic work can restrict academics inclined toward a more practice-oriented way of thinking. Those who work in field education need to be able to work in an action-reflection process that brings together, in the same space, both practical community need and theoretical thinking

Care about the formation of leaders in religious communities is another motivation for doing the work of field education. For a person with a strong commitment to the health and vitality of the local church and the quality of ministers who work in it, field education is very satisfying. It is a way to serve religious communities in very practical ways.

Another motivation to do field education involves a commitment to see spiritual and religious values influence the work of community-based social service groups. Secular-based service work, such as law, medicine, or social work can be used in the work of building a just society from a spiritual value orientation. This is becoming more apparent as an increasing number of second- or third-career people come to seminary either to enter into a church-based ministry or to find ways to do their existing work in a more spiritually aligned way. A lawyer, for example, may choose a seminary education to clarify values that influence her or his practice of law. A therapist or a social worker may study theology in order to better understand religiously oriented clients and their needs. Appropriate sites need to be created for these students who will do creative things in a secular setting. Field educators are a primary agent in helping these students to choose the correct placement for their learning and to develop their vocational vision.

Another motivation to work in field education is a desire to work with students holistically, nurturing them in their personal growth, ministerial formation, and vocational and professional goals. Some students come to seminary with a vague sense of God’s calling. Field educators often help students discern their vocation so that they can serve communities effectively.

Some are also drawn to the vocation of field education by their awareness of the “bridging” role of field education. No other position in the school connects as intentionally and consistently with the congregations, denominations, and neighborhoods that our students are being educated to serve. Field educators are in a position to nurture a continuous two-way flow of understanding between the school and its contexts. This offers to the school a unique opportunity to hear directly from congregations, judicatories, and neighborhoods, and to allow their voices to influence mission, curricula, pedagogies, program, and staff. When the seminary’s values, structures, and ethos permit, the role of field education can be rewarding to the school, to the field educator,

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and to the congregations, neighborhoods, and institutions that will be blessed by them.

Motivation is an important factor in the vocation of field educator, but it also helps to consider specific skills needed to do this work. What type of knowledge, background, or training is helpful? Facilitating relationships between students, field sites, and seminary requires strong people skills and emotional intelligence. The ability to handle conflict and negotiate it is especially important. Very often, field education officers must negotiate conflicts between supervisor and student, and between seminary and service institution, and must be able to do so well.

Another useful competence to bring to the work of field education is the ability to see the big picture of the entire curriculum. Field educators are in the unique position of helping students integrate their learning from the entire curriculum with their understanding of themselves, their religious heritage, and their understanding of the contexts of ministry. This vantage point allows field educators to provide an important critique of the effectiveness of the curriculum. They are uniquely positioned to help analyze how effective seminary education is for specific communities. In reflection seminars, for example, a field educator might hear reports from students about the way in which their study of Isaiah was or was not relevant in a church Bible study. This information may be discussed with the Bible department as a way of assessing the effectiveness of the Bible instruction at the seminary and also with the students in considering how the church Bible study might be encouraged to understand what the classroom teaches and why.

Useful background experiences for field education work can be found in many areas. Ministerial work, whether in a church, educational, or service context, gives some knowledge of the context in which some field education students will learn. Another area is pedagogical work. As has been previously discussed, field educators need to know how to teach via an action-reflection process, which requires some practice and skill to do effectively. Finally, academic training in theology, Bible, and the arts of ministry helps to prepare the field educator for her or his primary integrative work.

In addition to personal motivations, character, training, and knowledge, it is important to note that nurturing a vocation in field education depends upon certain institutional structures. Issues such as the lack of full faculty status, lack of tenure, and the multiple roles of teaching and administration increase the likelihood of high turnover in personnel. Often, such institutional issues mitigate against lengthy careers in this work.

By way of conclusion, we return to a question that is at the heart of the vocation of field education: What is its role in the broader enterprise of theological education? Seminaries need field educators to help keep their curricula accountable to communities of faith. Because of its direct interface with these communities, field education is positioned to assist in evaluation of

the curriculum as a whole. This is both a practical task and an intellectual one. It is a practical task insofar as it ascertains whether students are learning the skills they need to function effectively as leaders in church or secular communities. It is an intellectual task insofar as it challenges the academy to research and teach from a standpoint of social relevance and transformation.

Thus, the vocation of field educator involves a call to two-way accountability: to communities where ministry will be practiced and to intellectual centers where the logic of curriculum is designed, implemented, and evaluated. It is a call to live faithfully and rigorously “in the middle” of two worlds that have distinctive needs and requirements, but are intrinsically dependent upon one another. It is a call to honor the work of action-reflection, both as a method of individual inquiry and as an institutional process and commitment. The work of the field educator helps to keep seminaries in balance, and in doing so to serve God and communities faithfully.

Conclusion

In these sections, it has been our aim to address both field educators and their administrative and faculty colleagues in theological education. The participants in the Wabash/ATFE consultation in January 2000 believe that the issues of identity, method, and context that are central to the work of field education have become critically important for the entire community of theological education. Field educators must pursue new levels of discipline and competence, and must do so in adaptive and collegial collaboration with administrators and faculty. Field educators’ location within theological schools means that they cannot succeed without the support of the school. It is our hope that through local efforts and experiments, and regional and national consultations, we can continue to explore the promising potential that our partnerships can offer.

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W. Michael Smith was, at the time of this writing, the Director of Field Education and Associate Professor of Christian Ministry at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis. His research interests lie in the area of congregational mission and ministry in diverse and changing contexts. He is presently completing a police chaplaincy-based CPE residency through the McFarland Institute in New Orleans.

Appendix

Participants in the January 2000 Consultation
on Teaching in Theological Field Education
Sponsored by the Association for Theological Field Education and
The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion

Facilitators: Robert O’Gorman, Institute of Pastoral Studies,
Loyola University Chicago
Kathleen Talvacchia, Union Theological Seminary, New York
Observer: Lucinda Huffaker, Wabash Center

Consultants:

Catherine Barnsley, St. Andrew’s College, Saskatoon, SK
Jody Clarke, Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, NS
Mickey Corso, Boston College Institute of Religious Education and
Pastoral Ministry and Department of Theology, Chestnut Hill, MA
Michael Dash, Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, GA
Kent Eaton, Bethel Theological Seminary, San Diego, CA Site
Michael Green, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School of Trinity International
University, Deerfield, IL
Joanne Lindstrom, McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL
Jeffrey Mahan, Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO
Nicholas Mays, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC
Charlotte McDaniel, Candler School of Theology of Emory University,
Atlanta, GA
Marilyn Nelson, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Richmond, VA
Randy Nelson, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN
Lynn Rhodes, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, CA
Michael Smith, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, IN
Sue Zabel, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, DC

ENDNOTES

1. See Donald E. Miller’s *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
2. See especially Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999); Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992); Don Browning, ed., *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church and World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983) and *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991); Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995); The Cornwall Collective, *Your Daughters Shall Prophesy: Feminist Alternatives in Theological Education* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980); Orlando Costas, “Theological Education and Mission,” in C. Rene Padilla, ed., *New Alternatives in Theological Education* (Oxford: Regnum,

1986); Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) and *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and University* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Thinking Theologically about Theological Education,” *Theological Education* 24: Supplement 2 (1988); Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and John B. Cobb, Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); Joseph C. Hough, Jr. and Barbara Wheeler, *Beyond Clericalism: The Congregation as a Focus for Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Philip S. Keane and Melanie A. May, “What Is the Character of Teaching, Learning, and the Scholarly Task in the Good Theological School?” *Theological Education* 30:2, 1994; David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1993); Loren Mead, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier* (Washington: The Alban Institute, 1991); The Mud Flower Collective, *God’s Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1985); Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, eds., *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989); Max L. Stackhouse, *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization, and Mission in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988); Lynn N. Rhodes and Nancy D. Richardson, *Mending Severed Connections: Theological Education for Communal Transformation* (San Francisco: San Francisco Network Ministries, 1991); Eldin Villafaña, “Elements for Effective Seminary-Based Urban Theological Education,” in Rodney L. Petersen, ed., *Christianity and Civil Society: Theological Education for Public Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis/Cambridge, 1995); Barbara G. Wheeler and Edward Farley, eds., *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991); Charles M. Wood, *Vision and Discernment: An Orientation in Theological Study* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); and many other issues and supplements of *Theological Education*.

3. “The History of ATFE—a Living Document,” (revised 1995), in *Report of Proceedings, 23rd Biennial Consultation of ATFE, 1995*, 200-208. For a fuller exploration see Maureen Egan, “The History of the Association for Theological Field Education and its Contribution to Theological Education in the United States, 1946-1979” (PhD dissertation, St. Louis University, 1987).

4. H. Richard Niebuhr, Daniel Day Williams, and James M. Gustafson, *The Advancement of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 209.

5. Charles R. Feilding, *Education for Ministry* (Dayton: American Association of Theological Schools, 1966), 29, 31.

6. In the ATS Standards, in addition to the requirement for “opportunities for education through supervised experiences in ministry” (A.3.1.4.3), there is clear acknowledgment of the contextual nature of the broader work of theological education in section 4.2.1 “Basic programs oriented toward ministerial leadership,” as follows, in *Bulletin 44, Part 1, 2000: Procedures, Standards, and Criteria for Membership* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada), 62.

4.2.1.1 Curricula for programs oriented toward ministerial leadership have certain closely integrated, common features. *First*, they provide a structured opportunity to develop a thorough, discriminating understanding and personal appropriation of the heritage of the community of faith (e.g., its Scripture, tradition, doctrines, and practices) in its historical and contemporary expressions. *Second*, they assist students in understanding the cultural realities and social settings within which religious communities live and carry out their missions, as well as the institutional life of those communities them-

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selves. The insights of cognate disciplines such as the social sciences, the natural sciences, philosophy, and the arts enable a knowledge and appreciation of the broader context of the religious tradition, including cross-cultural and global aspects. *Third*, they provide opportunities for formational experiences through which students may grow in those personal qualities essential for the practice of ministry, namely, emotional maturity, personal faith, moral integrity, and social concern. *Fourth*, they assist students to gain the capacities for entry into and growth in the practice of the particular form of ministry to which the program is oriented. Instruction in these various areas of theological study should be so conducted as to demonstrate their interdependence, their theological character, and their common orientation toward the goals of the degree program. The educational program in all its dimensions should be designed and carried out in such a way as to enable students to function constructively as ministerial leaders in the particular communities in which they intend to work, and to foster an awareness of the need for continuing education.

Similar expectations regarding the practice of theological education are stated elsewhere within the ATS Standards. See sections 3.1.1.2, 3.1.1.3, 4.1, 4.1.2, 4.2.3.1, 4.2.4.1, A.2.0, A.3.1.2, A.3.1.3, A.3.1.4.

7. See Appendix for the list of participants.

8. The authors are indebted to notes taken at the consultation and supplied by Michael Smith (then at Christian Theological Seminary), Mickey Corso (Boston College), and Marilyn Nelson (Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond). Michael Smith also served as an editor of these sections and in so doing made substantial contributions to the manuscript. The authors especially want to express gratitude to the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion that provided the initial grant for the consultation as well as a follow-up grant for the writing of this manuscript.

9. Most theological schools identify preparing persons for the practice of ministry as a core or ultimate objective. Students often find that in their supervised ministerial experience every facet of their theological education begins to converge: understanding of self and vocation; comprehension of Scripture, history, tradition, and their relevance in the current contexts; and competencies in ministerial practice. In a way that is unique within their theological education, students begin to face, in field education, the multidimensional, multilayered realities of "readiness for ministry." Thus, field education is, within the scope of the institutional purpose of most schools, a bottom-line experience. The holistic, integrative concerns of readiness for ministry constitute the focus of the daily work of field educators.

10. Lynn Rhodes, "Opening Address," in the *Report of the Proceedings of the Nineteenth Biennial Consultation of the Association for Theological Field Education*, January 14-17, 1987, Louisville, KY, 4.

11. Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), chaps. 3 and 4.

12. Further study on method and terminology will include attention to Bernard Lonergan, SJ, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972).

13. Chancellor's Lecture Series, Vanderbilt University, 1998.

14. A story told in his *Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 125.

15. Lynn Rhodes of Pacific School of Religion noted four principles that are guiding PSR's work on curriculum design: "Education must be understood contextually. The

term ‘contextual’ indicates that all knowledge, and thus all learning, is contextual: that is, historically, socially and culturally conditioned and situated. Also contextual means a sustained conversation about and an engagement with the pressing social-ethical issues of our time. Theological education that is contextual requires a vital, scholarly and critical engagement with the wider social context with all its attendant complexities.”

16. Suzanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, third ed., 1957).

17. David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 104-6.

18. See Charlotte McDaniel, “Publications by Members of the Association for Theological Field Education: Survey Results” in this issue (*Theological Education* 37:2, 2001).

19. In this regard it is interesting to observe our contemporary culture’s treatment of “production” versus “reproduction.” This culture seems, unfortunately, to value production but not reproduction. *Producing* jobs, such as in business, technology, research, etc., are highly paid. *Reproducing* work, such as childcare, teaching, farming, and nursing, are not. However, rampant production without reproduction erodes the resources for further production. Much of our ecological crisis is seen as related to this imbalance in reproduction and production.

In education, when “publish or perish” rules, we experience the value of production (research) over reproduction (teaching) and the formation/transformation it nourishes. This puts the academic world, and indeed all our world in jeopardy in not attending to future producers and reproducers (failing to emphasize teaching). See Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

20. “The Use of the Bible in the Christian Communities of the Common People” in Norman K. Gottwald (ed.), *The Bible and Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983).

21. James Gustafson quoted in Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 81.

22. Barbara J. Fleischer, “A Theological Method for Adult Education Rooted in the Works of Tracy and Lonergan.” Paper Given at the Association for Researchers and Professors in Religious Education, New Orleans, November 1996, 1.

23. Bernard J. Lee, SM, “Praxis Theology: A Talking Paper” delivered at the AAR/SBL session on Practical Theology, November 1996, New Orleans, 1.

24. Bernard Lonergan, SJ, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 14.

25. Bernard Lonergan, SJ, “Theology in Its New Context” in *Theology of Renewal* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968). Reprinted in W. E. Conn, ed., *Conversion*, 1978, 3-21, (New York: Alba House), 14.

26. ATS leaders seem to concur with the attention several prominent contributors to educational literature over the past decade gave to context. The title of bell hooks’s work *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994) links education to context. The author recognizes that understanding current context is the beginning point of teaching. Of her early school experiences, she writes, “My teachers were on a mission. To fulfill that mission, [they] made sure they ‘knew’ us. They knew our parents, our economic status, where we worshiped, what our homes were like, how we were treated in the family.” Ira Shor emphasized the impact of context when he titled his book, *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992). His thesis is that empowering education is a “critical democratic pedagogy for self and social change. It is a student-centered program for multicultural democracy in school and society.” (p. 15) Stephen Brookfield

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boldly opens the first chapter of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995) with, “We teach to change the world.” Theological education that fails to learn from and contribute to the well-being of its contexts is irresponsible.

27. F. Houtart, (1985) “La Contribution de l’Université Catholique de Louvain au Developpement de la Sociologie de la Religion en Amerique Latine.” April 4, 1985. A mimeograph of Centre de Recherches Socio-Religieuses, Section: Religion et Developpement, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1348 - Ottignies - Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.

28. Jon Sobrino, *The True Church and the Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984).

29. In the English-speaking world, this document was called *The Church in the Modern World*; in the Spanish-speaking world, *The Church in the World Today*, or more literally, *The Church in the Here and Now*; cf. McGrath, 1985. At the council, Latin American bishops chose identification with the poor, rather than accommodation with modernity chosen by the English speakers.

30. See David Tracy, “The Foundations of Practical Theology” in Don S. Browning, *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and World* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 61.

31. David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975).

32. David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad Books, 1981).

33. David Tracy’s *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987) is the closest he has come to date toward the third dimension of theology.

34. The purposes of these reflections do not allow extensive elaboration, but it is important to note that action also often embodies non-thinking influences. Psychiatrist and leadership writer, Ronald Heifetz, states, “I believe that many adaptive and communicative processes are unconscious, and I learn about them by inference. People do not always say what they ‘really think’ or understand why they do what they do. Moreover, many difficulties with making headway on problems arise from poorly orchestrated and unresolved conflicts—internal contradictions in values, beliefs, and habit.” *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 5. The task of theological education and ministerial formation nevertheless requires explicit efforts to help students recognize, interpret, and address the full spectrum of factors that influence their actions. Field education routinely engages the whole person in this sense.

35. Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996).

36. See endnote 6.

37. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970, 1993); Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Donald A. Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987); Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: The Way of Shared Praxis* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991).

38. I am referring here to the vast literature in the areas of feminist and womanist theologies, as well as culturally contextual theologies that have emerged since the 1970s. See for example, Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Devaney, eds., *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Tradition, and Norms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Catherine M. LaCugna, ed., *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist*

Perspective (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993); Kwok Pui-lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2000); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical, Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993); Katie Geneva Cannon, *Katie’s Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York: Continuum, 1995); Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesus: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995); Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996); Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Emilie M. Townes, *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation and Transformation* (New York: Continuum, 1997); Dwight Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999); Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

39. The very nature of field education as a learning process situated in various communities and cultures resists standardization of evaluation, and perhaps of research. Different contexts and cultures require different skill development. Success in ministry in an African American Baptist church might look different than success in a Euro-American Baptist church. The skills needed in a secular, community-based setting are different from those required in a church community. Standardization implies a universal norm, whereas situation and context are the reality for field education assessment.

40. See Charlotte McDaniel, “Publications by Members of the Association for Theological Field Education: Survey Results” in this issue (*Theological Education* 37:2, 2001).

41. It is important to note that I use my experience only as example, and I am not suggesting that all field educators need to think about research in this way. The best thing for the guild is the development of many voices on the topic of research and the ways in which we do it. I add my voice as one in the conversation.

42. Kathleen T. Talvacchia, “Finding God Experientially in the Tradition: Theological Reflection as Spiritual Formation,” *New Theology Review*, Volume 11, Number 4, November 1998.

43. Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women’s Ways of Knowing* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Nancy Goldberger, Jill Tarule, Blythe Clinchy, and Mary Belenky, *Knowledge, Difference and Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

44. Blythe McVicker Clinchy, “Connected and Separate Knowing: Toward a Marriage of Two Minds,” in *Knowledge, Difference and Power*, 207.

45. See, for example, Susan E. Fox and Judith Trott Guy, *A Handbook on Legal Issues in Theological Field Education* (Richmond: Presbyterian Theological Field Educators, 2000).

46. See, for example, Jeffrey H. Mahan, Barbara B. Troxell, and Carol J. Allen, *Shared Wisdom: A Guide to Case Study Reflection in Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991).

47. See, for example, Lynn N. Rhodes, *Co-Creating: A Feminist Vision of Ministry* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987).

48. Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1990).

49. This understanding of a discerning life comes from an Ignatian understanding. For further discussion, see Joan Mueller, *Faithful Listening: Discernment in Everyday Life* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1996) and Frank Rogers Jr., “Discernment” in *Practicing Our Faith*, Dorothy C. Bass, ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

Publications by Members of the Association for Theological Field Education: Survey Results

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ABSTRACT: This paper reports survey results regarding publications among members of the Association for Theological Field Education (ATFE), representing the administrators of practice of ministry programs. One goal of ATFE is the encouragement of publications and research regarding members' work. To assess progress toward that goal, numbers and types of publications by members were surveyed. Of the 163 surveys mailed, 73% were returned (reliability 0.70). Findings reveal limited publications, as well as high personnel turnover, and this article explores both of these issues.

Of several goals developed by the Association for Theological Field Education (ATFE) is the encouragement of publications and relevant research among its members. One way of assessing the progress toward the goal, as well as the directions for future research and publications, is to determine the current number and type of publications among the membership. This paper reports the results of a survey among the current members of ATFE, who represent the administrators of practice of ministry programs in theological education.¹

Dissemination of work through publications is one avenue for providing information about an organization or its work, as well as establishing its scholarly interest. Likewise, research allows one to contribute new knowledge in an area and to articulate a research agenda or research questions. It is a way of directing work in an area. Research also contributes to the development and expansion of an area of interest, such as the practice of ministry.

Procedures

Mail Survey and Data Collection. In order to determine the current status of publications among ATFE members, a mail survey was conducted of current members, mailed to the attention of the senior administrators of the practice programs. One hundred sixty-three (163) survey packets were mailed, with 119 returned; this resulted in an acceptable return rate of 73%. Several replies were not usable or noted that members had retired, and those surveys were deleted. Among those returned, 108 were used for the data analysis.

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The survey had three categories. The first addressed members' demographic information including age, gender, religious affiliation, ordination status, years of work in field education, their initial theological education, highest professional and highest academic degree earned, tenure status, and length of time (in years) in the current position. The second category asked for school information including the field education position title, program enrollment, and type of school. The last category requested respondents to give information about their publication histories. Publications were divided into eight types: abstracts, articles, books, book chapters, manuals, reviews, videos, and others. For each type, respondents listed the number of publications that they (1) authored, (2) authored in the immediate past five years, and (3) edited.

Analysis of Data. Briefly reported here, the data were entered into SPSS (a data analysis software package), cross-checked for errors, and analyzed. The majority of the demographic data were categories resulting in ordinal data supporting descriptive analysis. The length of time in the current position and publication data were ratio data allowing analyses with correlations and cross-tabs. Analysis for reliability of the data was undertaken with Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficient was 0.70, an acceptable level of reliability supporting the continued analysis of the results.

Findings and Discussion

The research project revealed several results with implications for theological education. In order to delimit the focus of the statistical analysis, the primary findings will be stated with a discussion of each. Indeed, a substantive central issue that these data raise is here posed as a question: If professional education regarding ministerial practice is the central mission of theological education, why, then, are directors of programming that is inherently central to this endeavor not publishing their work, not engaging in substantial amounts of research, and demonstrating high positional turnover? To put the question another way: Given the centrality of this work in professional education for ministry, as originally raised by Niebuhr et al, and more recently by Rebecca Chopp,² why does it appear so ambiguous and tentative in nature? What is the level of professional and institutional commitment by and to these personnel and/or to their positions?

The data suggest a high degree of turnover among field education personnel and, perhaps, lack of professional personnel or institutional commitment as well. Without attributing causality to this equation, when lack of commitment is evident on the part of an institution, or its relevant parties, it is difficult to obtain personnel with high commitment. This also works the other way, of course. Regardless of how one desires to construe the dynamics of this issue, the apparent lack of longevity interrelates with few publications, including research-based scholarly work. In terms of theological education and its professional preparation for ministry, it is curious that the area addressing

professional preparation lacks substantive attention. The survey results raise at least three key issues: lack of publications, high turnover of personnel, and questions about preparation and identity. Each of these issues will be explored in more detail with findings from the survey interwoven with the discussion.

Publication Status. The primary aim of this research project was to assess the numbers and types of publications among the current ATFE members. The survey results of more than seventy percent (73%) of the membership reveal that respondents have written few published works and edited even fewer works. There is, however, an increase in the number of publications over time, measured as the immediate past five years.

**Table 1. Number of Authored Publications
by Respondent Frequency (RF) and Percentage**

Number	Abstract		Article		Book		Book Chapter		Manual		Review		Video	
	RF	%	RF	%	RF	%	RF	%	RF	%	RF	%	RF	%
None	101	94.4	49	45.4	74	68.8	70	65.4	74	69.8	71	65.7	95	88.0
1	3	02.8	10	09.3	16	19.4	21	19.4	8	07.4	5	04.6	5	04.6
2	2	01.9	9	08.3	6	06.5	7	06.5	11	10.2	4	03.7	3	02.8
3	2	01.9	9	08.3	4	04.6	5	04.6	7	06.5	5	04.6	1	00.9
4			3	02.8	1	02.8	3	02.8	3	02.4	5	04.6	1	00.9
5			2	01.9	4	00.9	1	00.9	3	02.8	2	01.9		
6			4	03.7	1	00.9					1	00.9	1	00.9
7			2	00.9	1	00.9	1	00.9	2	01.9				
8			1	00.9							1	00.9		
9			1	00.9										
10-15			10	09.3	1	00.9					8	07.4		
16-20			3	02.8							1	01.8		
21-30			3	02.7										
31-40														
41-50			2	01.8							1	00.9		
51-60											1	00.9		
Total	108	100	108	100	108	100	108	100	108	100	106*	98.1	106*	98.1

*Missing Data

Publication data displayed on Table 1 reveal details about publications and their status among this population of educators. The percentages of positive responses are noted here with the corresponding negative responses in paren-

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theses. The majority of ATFE members have produced few publications. Among publications written, 5.6% (94.4%) of the respondents have published abstracts. More than 54% (45.4%) have published articles; 22.6% have written between one and five articles. The number of published articles by members ranged from zero to a high of 49 by one individual. This high was followed by one individual each who had published 47, 30, 23, and 20 articles. What these results reveal is that although, overall, the respondents have published few articles, several respondents have published significant numbers of articles; these are predominantly single-authored works. Additionally, as might be anticipated, there was a statistically significant relationship ($p < .01$) between the length of time in the current position and the number of published books. No other correlations were significant. The last statistical analysis that was conducted was with cross-tabs, which examined for demographic categories that were potentially related to the publication data. No significant results were revealed by the cross-tabs analysis.

Slightly less than one-third, or 31.2% (86.8%), of the members had published books, and slightly more than one-third, or 34.6% (65.4%), had contributed chapters to books. Of the books or book chapters published, 14.8% of the respondents had published one book and 19.4% one book chapter. Similarly, 30.2% of the members had published manuals, and 34.3% had published reviews (69.85% and 65.7%, respectively, have none). Even fewer developed videos. No respondent listed "other" publications, written or edited.

The proportions of publications published within the immediate past five years reveal that in every category the respondents have a higher proportion of their work published within this time period. For example, while 54.6% of the members had published articles, 45% of these articles were published in the past five years. The amount published within this recent time frame is 82% of the total, a trend that transcends the type of work published. Thus one finds that in all categories of publications, most were completed within the past five years.

The third question regarding publications asked respondents to enumerate works they had edited. The vast majority of the member respondents had no edited abstracts (92%), articles (92.5%), books (90.6%), book chapters (98.1%), manuals (98.1%), reviews (99.1%), or videos (98.1%). As noted in these proportions, the largest group is among edited books. Ten members have edited one published book; several respondents reported two or three edited books published.

Members also were asked to list a concept or to provide a brief statement that conveyed their primary publication focus or research interest. Of the total usable replies, 28 did not provide this information. Among the remaining replies, or 80 surveys, the concepts and areas listed varied so widely that it was impossible to categorize them. Several respondents added a comment to the section on publication-research interests, noting they also worked in pastoral

care or taught systematic theology, for example. These replies, too, ranged widely, and they represented most of the disciplines in theological education today. Few, however, listed field education as a focus. What these replies convey is the wide range of interests and backgrounds of the ATFE membership regarding research and publications.

While these data suggest that the amount of publication among these ATFE members is low, comparing these results with publication by ATS faculty members is fruitful. A survey of faculty in ATS schools, conducted in 1993 by the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education, revealed that their rate of publishing was about the same as that of an undergraduate faculty and that about one-third of theological faculty did little or no scholarly publishing.³ Examining the results of the ATFE survey, one finds that about 45% of ATFE administrators have not published articles, about 69% have not published books, and about 91% have not edited published books.

One of the questions that these data raise is why so few administrators of practice programs are engaging in publication and/or research. Attention to

scholarly activities and dissemination of work were underlying concerns on the part of ATFE in highlighting this activity in recent years. To address the issue, other dimensions of this study were explored, which leads to the second key issue for consideration.

Turnover Rate. Respondents were asked to indicate the time in years in their current position (Table 2) and their years of work in field education (Table 3). The length of time in the position among the respondents was revealed to be relatively short. Put another way, the retention rate among the administrators of practice of ministry programs was extremely low. The question is why this occurs.

The members' demographic data may offer some explanation of these findings regarding turnover. The data confirm that this respondent sample is relatively recent in appointment. As displayed on Table 2, half of the program administra-

Table 2. Length of Time in Position

Years	Number	Percent
0	05	04.6
1	15	13.9
2	17	15.7
3	09	08.3
4	09	08.3
5	10	09.3
6	05	04.6
7	05	04.6
8	05	04.6
9	02	01.9
10	03	02.8
11	02	01.9
12	02	01.9
13	03	02.8
14	03	02.8
15	03	02.8
16	02	01.9
17	01	00.9
18	02	01.9
20	01	00.9
21	01	00.9
24	01	00.9
25	01	00.9
27	01	00.9
Total	108	100.0

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tors (50.9%) have been in their positions for four years or less. However, a significant proportion has been in the position less than one year, for one year, or for two years (4.6%, 13.9%, 15.7% respectively), for a total of 34.2% of the members. In contrast to data from the Auburn Center's faculty survey, in which non-retirement faculty attrition was noted as being between 2-4%, the turnover among field educators is extremely high.⁴

These data reveal a very high turnover among ATFE personnel. In order to explore in more detail the publication status of members and possible relationships between years in the position and publications, a simple correlation was conducted between them. These were the only data appropriate for correlation analysis. Indeed, this analysis revealed a statistically significant correlation ($p < .01$) between the number of books published and the years in current position. This is an anticipated finding and is consistent with characteristics in other academic areas. Table 3 displays information on length of time in field education and indicates that while the largest respondent group (38.9%) reported working in field education for ten years or more, the majority of field educators has worked in this area for nine years or less (61.1%).

When one compares data on the length of time in the position to the predominately higher range of age, 51 years and over, it also suggests that field education is a second career. Demographically, 49.1% of the ATFE members are 51 years of age or older. They also are male (65.7%), Protestant (70.4%), and ordained (79.6%). Although these findings are relatively consistent with characteristics of faculties in other areas of theological education, an inconsistency emerges when one examines age and the length of time in years in field education. The lack of parallel time implies that these respondents had other employment prior to working in field education (hence, a second career) and to their current position. The delimited length of time in the position may be an underlying factor that contributes to the low proportion of published works by these respondents. It is also an issue that should be examined further.

High turnover in positions is very costly. Indeed, organizations would typically want to avoid such high turnover in employment. While there may be a rationale for retaining flexibility in positions, the turnover in these positions reflects atypical duration. Not only is high turnover expensive in terms of preparation and training, it also leads to organizational instability and lack of continuity. High turnover throughout one area of these academic institutions also raises questions about a lack of interest in or commitment to that area of an institution's work. These findings also may be a clue to the sense of fragmentation that has been noted in theological education.⁵ Surely, at a minimum, these data suggest instability within the field among the ATFE administrators.

The second report from the Auburn Center's study of theological school faculty sheds light on this phenomenon. It identifies two key determinants with respect to the granting of faculty tenure: the *value* faculty hold for the

**Table 3. Respondents' Demographic Categories
by Number and Percent**

<i>Category</i> Sub-Item	Number	Percent
<i>Age</i>		
31-40	08	07.4
41-50	47	43.5
51-Over	53	49.1
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	37	34.3
Male	71	65.7
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>		
Roman Catholic	24	22.2
Protestant	76	70.4
Other	08	07.4
<i>Ordination Status</i>		
Lay	13	12.0
Ordained	86	79.6
Religious Community	09	08.4
<i>Years in Field Education</i>		
1-3	27	25.0
4-6	25	23.1
7-9	14	13.0
10-More	42	38.9
<i>School Type Attended</i>		
Denominational	66	61.1
Non-Denom.	14	13.0
Univ-related Div. Sch.	17	15.7
Univ. Dept. of Religion	9	08.3
Other	2	01.9
<i>Highest Professional Degree</i>		
None	12	11.0
BD, MDiv	34	31.5
MTh, STM, STL	14	13.0
DMin, MRE	41	38.0
Other	7	06.5
<i>Highest Academic Degree</i>		
None	16	14.9
BA, BS	23	21.3
MA, MTS, MS	25	23.1
PhD, ThD, STD	31	28.7
Other	13	12.0
<i>Tenure</i>		
Yes	25	23.1
No:	(83)	(76.9)
Faculty only	38	35.2
Administrator only	22	20.4
Joint appointment	23	21.3

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position and the *care* exercised in the initial selection of a new faculty member.⁶ The high turnover among ATFE administrators raises the question of value and selection. To return to the question regarding the centrality of preparation for ministerial practice in theological education, the high turnover among these personnel highlights even more the question of value. Obviously, an inverse relationship is implied: high turnover among these personnel suggests low value. It may also suggest the second key element—lack of attention to the selection of personnel who occupy these positions. These two determinants are undoubtedly related. Administrators and faculty would give more care and attention to positions that held high(er) value than those that do not. Thus, one can logically assume that high value leads to more care—time, energy, and attention—to the selection of personnel in theological education.

In addition to these interpretations, the data reveal that a small proportion of this sample is tenured. In the academy tenure is a form of institutional stability; it is an avenue to both professional and institutional commitment. Thus, the survey asked these respondents about their tenure status in their current position, with the following results. Tenure is held by slightly less than one-fourth (23.1%) of the ATFE membership. Those without tenure report that they have a faculty appointment (35.2%), an administrative appointment (20.4%), or a joint appointment (21.3%) among the three choices for mutually exclusive appointment types. It is not known how many with tenure have a faculty appointment, but it is assumed that most, if not all, do because administrative appointments are rarely tenured.

Without attributing causality to this result, one would expect tenured members to have published works. However, that assumption does not hold true for this respondent sample. Analysis of those respondents with significantly larger numbers of authored works reveals that several of them are not tenured. Indeed, untenured members authored several of the high numbers of publications reflected in Table 1. Also, several respondents added comments that tenure is unavailable at their institutions. Therefore, one avenue of institutional stability is inaccessible to some members of ATFE as personnel in practice of ministry programming. The issue of tenure could be explored in further research, given the small number of tenured respondents. This leads directly into the issue of identity of program administrators.

Preparation and Identity. The last issue that these data raise is preparation and identity of personnel who administer practice of ministry programs. These two concepts are inherently interrelated, and the issue warrants further exploration. The results indicate that the initial preparation is not that expected for persons engaging in significant amounts of time devoted either to publishing or to research. It raises the question of whether publications, either for dissemination of work or for research, are realistic expectations. For example, for most administrators the highest professional degree is a D.Min. or M.R.E. (38%); fewer report their highest academic degree as Ph.D., Th.D., or S.T.D. (28.7%).

Members also typically receive their initial theological education in a denominational seminary (61.1%). However, examination of the types of non-tenured appointments reveals that the largest percentage (35%) has a faculty appointment. This type of appointment contradicts earlier findings, because an appointment as faculty (only) implies that larger amounts of publications would be forthcoming.

Although this study did not elicit information regarding prior employment, these data complemented by anecdotal information suggest that the majority of persons who are administrators for practice of ministry programs gain entry into the academy as a competent pastor. While a faculty position may build upon church experience, the background of ATFE administrators contrasts with additional preparation for a faculty position, a position that typically requires publications. These data regarding the initial preparation and the highest degree earned among ATFE members in the survey serve to confirm these anecdotes. Thus, clarity of expectations about the position would aid in supporting research and relevant publications. This issue, however, needs to be addressed upon initial appointment.

If the primary identity of ATFE members is that of administrator, then other issues obtain. One argument is that as administrators these personnel serve "at will" and in a fashion similar to other seminary administrators, i.e., without tenure. Another argument is that flexibility in the appointment allows closer tailoring to the school's current needs, student enrollment, or church experience. Tenure in these positions would offer less flexibility in appointment. In contrast, the quite high turnover suggests that the issue is less one of suppleness and more one of instability: remaining in a position for two to three years implies lack of stability rather than flexibility. Other school administrators, such as a dean, typically serve for a specified term with the option for re-appointment. Deans often have a complementary faculty appointment, some with tenure. Thus, the foundational issue is the identity of the program director. If the director is perceived as an administrator, then, while turnover is high, the reasons may be explainable. However, if the administrator is understood as an educator, then these data provide background for a substantive conversation about the personnel, nature, and direction of practice of ministry programming in theological education.

These results may also be viewed in light of the school information provided by survey respondents (Table 4). Respondents typically hold the position title of director (85.2%), the remainder holding other titles (14.8%). Enrollment in programs of the largest proportion of respondents (25.9%) ranges between 25-49 students per year. The majority of respondents is employed in church/denominationally related seminaries (53.7%).

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Table 4. Respondents' School Information

<i>Category</i>	Number	Percent
Sub-Item		
<i>Position Title</i>		
Director	91	85.2
Asst./Assoc. Dir.	01	00.9
Field Supervisor	0	0
Other	16	13.9
<i>Program Enrollment</i>		
Less than 25	22	20.3
25-49	28	25.9
50-74	22	20.4
75-99	16	14.8
100 or more	20	18.5
<i>School Type</i>		
Univ. Related	36	33.3
Church/denom related	58	53.7
Other	14	13.0

The program titles also aid in interpreting these data regarding preparation and identity of this sample. Each respondent was asked to note the title of the program in which he or she was employed. These results ranged widely. It was possible, however, to categorize the titles in the following way. Titles referencing *field education* were noted first, then the term *field* (but not education), followed by the term *supervised* (but not *field*) ministry. These two terms—*field* and *supervised* or any variation of them—represented the largest numbers of respondents among the programs represented by the current ATFE membership, or 79% of the programs. The term *field education*, however, has ambiguous etiology and limited theological foundation and identity.⁷ The third most frequently used concept was *contextual education*: 7 programs (8%) used that term. The remaining program titles (11%) varied widely and appeared to represent the particular emphasis of the school; 3 respondents (2%) did not provide a title.

The question about identity also raises the question of the field educators' disciplines and field education itself as a discipline. Based on the wide range of publications, research foci, and terms used for programs, it would appear that the disciplines of these respondents also range widely. Field education itself was not frequently listed as an area of publication or research, nor was it combined with another discipline. These are issues for another and longer conversation.

Indeed, the identity of persons in field education is undergoing scrutiny. Two respondents added a written comment regarding the identity of field educators. These respondents saw identity as a critical issue about which they "feel strongly." They indicated that they identify themselves as educators

rather than as administrators. This question of identity is an issue for future consideration in ATFE, as well as in theological education.

Recent attention has been given to discussions about identity, the ramifications of a more focused intentional identity, and the shift from administrator to educator. These conversations have occurred at the biennial professional meetings of the ATFE. The term "administrator" was used in this survey to avoid an assumption about terminology (e.g., director). While some respondents may wish to avoid the term "administrator," the designation is typical to denote the program leadership, functions, and accountability. It is interesting that 35% of the respondents report a faculty (only) appointment, even though they have an administrative title and responsibility for the program.

While the central purpose of this project was to assess publications among ATFE administrators, the results highlight others areas of interest and concern. The high turnover, the apparent lack of consistency, and perhaps ambiguity, about the positions and appointments, and the general lack of attention to this group indicate that more attention needs to be given to this area of theological education. Practice of ministry clearly needs further examination. When the goal, as reflected in the ATS Standards of Accreditation, is to develop collaborative learning communities⁸ or to provide avenues to sustain, support, and enhance the work of faculties in theological education, these administrators also need to be considered. Consistency within a school and among schools of theological education is important to provide for an overall quality of education. Likewise, supporting and enriching all personnel leading to more productive and effective faculties also attends to the important relationship between the church and the academy. The programs represented by this respondent sample relate to both sides of the church-academy equation. The student graduates of theological education often seek employment in the local church. Thus models of education that enhance appreciation for both dimensions are important contributors to the enterprise of theological education.

The data from this survey were reported at the biennial AFTE conference in January 2001. Limitations to this research are noted briefly here. No attempt was made to evaluate the publications. The survey did not ask respondents to differentiate between peer-reviewed publications and ones not reviewed, for example. Second, using pre-determined categories resulted in data with limits on analysis. While categories were appropriate to the aim of this project and assisted in obtaining an acceptable response rate, the form of response constrains the type of analyses. Lastly, this author suggests that ethnic-cultural background of members is important for future research in ATFE.

Conclusion

The current members of the Association for Theological Field Education, representing the administrators of practice of ministry programs, reveal a

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range in the number and type of works they have published. Overall, the majority of the respondents reports limited published works. The largest publication number is authored articles, followed by book chapters. Books represent the largest category among edited publications. There has been an increase in the amount of publishing in the past five years. With the exception of published books, the length of time in the position and other groupings are not significantly related to publications. Given the respondents' initial preparation and length of time in current position, these results are not surprising. While the purpose of the survey was to elicit information regarding publications and research, the results highlight a significant turnover among these personnel and apparent ambiguity regarding their identity, preparation, and appointments. Implied are significant instability in these positions, less value regarding the position, and perhaps lack of professional commitment. Given the centrality of practice of ministry to professional theological education, these are issues requiring further exploration.

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ENDNOTES

1. The Research Committee of the Association for Theological Field Education (ATFE) awarded a research grant to the author. Appreciation is expressed to the committee and to ATFE for its underwriting, in part, of this research project, as well as to the many respondents who took time to participate in the survey.
2. See H. Richard Niebuhr, in collaboration with Daniel Day Williams and James M. Gustafson, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry: Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education* (New York: Harper, 1956) and Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1995).
3. Barbara G. Wheeler, "True and False: The First in a Series of Reports from a Study of Theological School Faculty," *Auburn Studies*, No. 4, January 1996 (New York: Auburn Theological Seminary).
4. *Ibid.*
5. See Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).
6. Barbara G. Wheeler and Mark N. Wilhelm, "Tending Talents: The Second in a Series of Reports from a Study of Theological School Faculty," *Auburn Studies*, No. 5, March 1997 (New York: Auburn Theological Seminary).
7. Charlotte McDaniel, "Vision for the Future: Terminology in Theological Field Education," *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry*, Vol. 20, 2000: 208-218.
8. See particularly Standard 3, Learning, Teaching, and Research: Theological Scholarship and Standard 6, Faculty, *ATS Bulletin 44*, Part 1.

From “Talking Shop” to “Setting an Agenda”: Leadership Education Toward 2005

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“Talking shop” is something presidents and deans often fall into whenever they gather and no other agenda demands their attention. The authors of this article admit that they, too, engage in this practice. In the past year, the three of us have had occasion to “talk shop” in an increasingly secular culture where the question of theological vocation has become increasingly suspect, particularly when connected to established religious institutions, such as seminaries. We have complained, but at the same time, have enjoyed “talking shop” because we get to argue about things that we are never really certain we fully understand. One such conversation centered on how seminary teaching seems to have become increasingly focused and narrowed because of an over-reliance on academic guilds in the education of seminary faculty. We have no facts to support this theory, but that didn’t keep us from waxing eloquently on the subject. After all, that is why we enjoy “talking shop”; we never have to provide evidence for our positions! But, sad to say, we have usually come away from such conversations less than satisfied; we have confessed that we would like to see such issues dealt with in a more intentional way than that provided by our occasional conversations.

Mapping the Terrain

All three of us attended one or more of the fourteen regional meetings that ATS conducted in fall 1999, in the context of the long-range planning process of the ATS Executive Committee. These gatherings attempted to “take the pulse” of what ATS means to its member schools. We understood a central message in those meetings to be: “We like what ATS does, but we want and need it to do more, particularly regarding the emerging issues of the day and a more structured approach to leadership education.” This made sense to us,

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especially as we recognized the broad umbrella ATS provided and the resources it could direct toward such an agenda. Not surprisingly, the concerns raised in these regional meetings made their way into a work plan for 2000-2006 that was endorsed by Association members at the 2000 Biennial Meeting. In abbreviated form, that agenda included: (1) working on the ways in which theological schools relate to the church, (2) the public character of theological schools, (3) the nature of learning for religious vocation (and how such learning is assessed), (4) race and ethnicity in theological education, (5) attention to the support of women in leadership positions in theological education, (6) maximizing effective use of educational technology, and (7) education for administrative leaders and the development of faculty.

In particular, the three of us felt that the approved work plan for ATS including leadership education as a key element went a long way toward addressing the concerns raised not only by us in our "shop talk," but also raised in the fourteen regional meetings. The Association's history of convening theological school leaders in a variety of settings suggested to us that ATS could provide the hospitable space necessary for in-depth conversations about leadership education and other significant issues among theological schools of varying theological perspectives. It can do this, we believed, not as the place where theological differences are resolved, but as a place where institutions that represent broad theological distinctions can talk about how such distinctives inform issues of consequence, such as leadership, for theological education.

Considering Leadership

The three of us believe, for example, that institutions of theological education exist, in large part, to *educate leaders of the church*. We also believe that ATS can and should be the place where discussions can occur about what it means to be in the work of developing theological leadership for the church. We agree that such conversations could help seminaries and the church name how leadership is identified, educated, nurtured, and assessed within its various traditions. This conversation could lead to more generally accepted understandings and criteria for leadership running across denominational boundaries. Certainly we can glean insights from the ATS Standards of Accreditation in this regard, as well as through major projects in this area sponsored by ATS. But such comments only accent the complexity of the way leadership comes to be shaped, educated, and formed in various theological institutions. One way to advance such a conversation is by suggesting that leadership education within the seminary community is multilayered, involving not only those formally called into leadership positions, but also involving faculty, staff, and students. Seen this way, leadership in theological schools is a function and responsibility of the entire community. Such suggestions recast the question of leadership and move theological concerns about how one defines and is educated for "leadership" in a theological institution front and center.

Pragmatic Steps

We have come to believe that if ATS can convene hospitable space wherein substantive conversations about leadership can occur, the Association can also be the organization that helps those leaders already identified understand and prepare for new and emerging realities that must be faced by those who are charged with formal leadership roles in theological education. While those who are in such roles are accorded certain status, it has been our own experience that they are serving under tremendous stresses, and leadership education must come to terms with how one survives (and, if possible, thrives) given this reality. Perhaps such stress is a constant because those in formal leadership roles are standing inside enormous issues, any one of which challenges the best of leaders. For example, in addition to the authors' concerns about the possible dominance of an academy model in theological education, our concerns include, yet are not limited to, unresolved issues of diversity, new student demographics, financial resources for theological education, women in leadership roles, and how students being formed by theological education know how to engage critically in ministry in the local church and the broader public. These issues seem congruent with many of the targeted work areas adopted by ATS and mentioned above, and as a "good faith broker" in the past, ATS today can help current administrators and faculty understand and appreciate the impact that such issues will have on institutions across the range of theological perspectives evident within the Association's membership. Educational events must include not only formal role training, but also issue exploration. In all this, the education ATS is most qualified to promote should focus on the uniqueness of theological school leadership, the missional vocation of theological schools, and the best practices that effectively constitute such work.

Toward such ends, ATS sought and was granted \$3.54 million from Lilly Endowment to develop and administer a comprehensive program of leadership education for faculty and administrators in ATS schools through June 2005. While ATS had historically sponsored individual leadership education events, this new effort develops a system of educational events that together embodies both an educational strategy and a predictable pattern. Five categories help to order this process:

- *workshops*—education focused on specific information for specific individuals,
- *seminars*—sustained conversation around certain concerns of particular importance to persons who fit certain categories and elect to participate in the seminars,
- *peer groups*—small groups of invited participants who would be called together for a specific number of meetings spread over a pre-determined period of time,

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- *conferences*—gatherings of a large number of persons within similar roles in ATS schools, and
- *consultations*—concentrated efforts to diagnose what might be done around or about particular issues.

These five categories help ATS define the particular expectations to be found in the numerous events envisioned as leadership education. In addition, ATS has or will be seeking funding to advance the targeted areas of work mentioned above, but those proposals will be developed on the assumption that an organized system of educational leadership events can provide venues for much of the dissemination of findings from these other projects.

Educational Leadership: Five Core Understandings

Leadership education in theological settings must, at the core, be something more than the careful bromides that fill most of the hard-cover volumes on leadership. We can agree that there are key areas of concern where common expertise must be sought and acquired so that competence can be assessed, but leadership in a theological setting is derived from the community more than earned via technical tools in skill-set workshops. This leads to an initial core understanding: ATS must remain attuned to the deeply religious vocational understandings that undergird forming educational leadership even as numerous ATS events provide focus toward specialized competencies and skill sets. This is more than a balancing act, i.e., an ATS program of leadership education should not only deal with competencies, but also ground itself in deeply held theological understandings informing leadership for ATS institutions.

That said, we also must recognize a second core understanding: Leadership in a theological setting is becoming more and more complex. Certainly the complexity of spreadsheets, personnel legalities, and the identification of sufficient resources to keep the school open are common issues shared by those in educational leadership positions, whether in a public university of great size or a theological institution housing fewer than 100 students. But despite size and differing contexts, all the issues that emerge in the big school also emerge in the small school; that is, the complexity of being an educational institution of higher learning remains. Thus, with certain positions, ATS leadership education must pay attention to and cover those common elements that define given positions.

The chief executive officer, president, university dean, principal, or rector’s position, for example, demands competence in a set of definable categories, and ATS introduces these in a three-day annual seminar. Because this event is for new presidents (in the first three years in office) and is for only three days suggests that follow-up is needed, particularly because presidents grow in the

position and quickly become aware of deficit areas in their leadership. Toward meeting these concerns, a week-long intensive seminar for presidents will commence in 2002, with cases and presenters geared to deeper exploration of definable categories that mark the “good” presidency. Once the week-long presidential event is implemented, targeted single areas of competence for the chief executive will be explored in annual twenty-four-hour workshops. Occasional mid-term presidency events (for those presidents who have completed five but not yet eight years) and small peer support groups will help in personal assessment and potential reconfigurations for the long haul. Through such regular programming, the Association hopes to provide a thorough set of leadership education events for presidents in the member schools.

Developing Professional Advisory Leadership Committees

In this process ATS asserts a third core understanding: ATS will rely upon association leaders to help structure individual events whenever possible so that steering committees will be formed that will engage these larger educational agendas while staying focused upon the primary concerns of a specific set of persons. In order to achieve this, ATS will seek to implement the strategy of forming steering committees for most of the administrator tracks. The process most likely to be followed in this regard was designed and initially used by the Development and Institutional Advancement Program (DIAP). Following DIAP’s lead, each new steering committee will plan and implement meetings that meet the identified needs of the professionals that make up its group. Workshops, seminars, and conferences will be offered to provide ongoing professional development, provide the setting for dissemination of findings from projects related to the ATS function of development of theological education, and, as a system, provide an opportunity to address common themes across multiple leadership roles.

For example, DIAP has a mission statement, a steering committee composed of elected classes, a regular newsletter, and a large, all-member annual conference, plus an annual twenty-four-hour single-issue workshop. In February 2001, 196 participants attended the annual conference, and forty new development officers gathered for the fall workshop. Because the steering committee meets in conjunction with both events, time and money are saved. Key to the success of the annual conference is the hard work of the steering committee, which regularly pulls together leadership for twenty to thirty workshops and also identifies keynote speakers who are chosen to lift up not only the theme of the conference, but issues of stewardship, vocation, and ministry.

ATS staff advises and supports DIAP, but the two events sponsored by DIAP are largely self-supporting because of the voluntary leadership provided by the steering committee. It is hoped that professional gatherings like these

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can occur through similar leadership patterns with academic deans, student services personnel, and financial/business officers. This model has received an enthusiastic endorsement from the academic deans, who put in place in March 2001 an elected steering committee, a mission statement, and an annual conference structure. It is anticipated that a similar structure will be discussed as the second Student Personnel Conference occurs in spring 2002. Currently, financial/business officers participate in ATS Strategic Information Workshops. This still continues, but the possibility of developing a similar steering committee structure will be explored with them. As DIAP, the deans, and the student personnel officers' programs take concrete shape, financial/business officers are the final group that will be asked to consider this model.

Thus far in this article, we have suggested that an ATS leadership education program must: (1) pay attention to *discrete competencies*, both definable and appropriate to professionals who operate in theological education institutions; (2) sense how such competencies *work together for leaders within an increasingly complex context of higher education*; (3) work with those persons who serve as academic deans, development officers, student personnel and financial/business officers to *build peer professional associations* responsible for their own educative work; and (4) always *seek ways to explore the deeper themes*, such as *vocation*, that undergird leadership in theological institutions.

Vocation(s)

While a common term, "vocation" takes differing shape in differing traditions. Nevertheless, participants in ATS leadership events recognize that the seminary communities that form ATS are struggling (in this post-modern, post-Christian, individualistic terrain) pragmatically to access these rich traditions. How can such traditions help us connect *vocation* to an increasingly complex and technical, secular understanding of leadership? The term "vocation" suggests to a religious person that one cannot view leadership education as purely utilitarian; such a limited understanding cuts us off from every religious tradition and makes no sense at all. And when leadership education events for those engaged in theological education take shape, affirmations and questions about *vocation* (and mission, community, service, and stewardship) need to be named powerfully and explored with an eye to confounding free-floating, technical concepts of "leadership."

For example, ATS has concern for newly appointed faculty freshly engaged in theological education. Our suspicion is that the individual vocational trajectories of these faculty are compounded by the startling complexities they often face for the first time in their new positions as they come into close contact with what it actually takes to drive a school's communal and vocational mission. In the past, ATS framed the annual *New Faculty Seminar* (for those who had completed one year as new faculty in theological institutions and who

were nominated by their deans) as an exploration of traditional areas of faculty concern to be found throughout higher education; that is, the seminar would engage exemplars to talk about teaching, research, and service. After two such conferences, ATS realized that these areas, while still of deep concern, were inadequate to the issue of what it means to be a new faculty person in a *theological* institution. As a direct consequence of evaluations from participants and our emerging recognition of how the larger issue of *vocation* (both individual and institutional) plays out with new faculty, the Association moved down a different track, this time in an effort to get under the too-easy generalizations ascribed to teaching, research, and service, and to engage people within a format that re-names and re-thinks the question of vocation. Here we were helped by a set of questions: Is it possible that an individual faculty member's vocation can cohere with the vocation of an institution such as a seminary? Or, is it impossible to speak of institutional vocation, let alone imagine a setting where individual and communal understandings of vocation might come together? And how can an understanding of vocation re-imagine the idea of theological leadership? Is it possible that *every* member of an institution like a seminary is, by definition, a leader regarding that institution's missional emphasis?

Such exploration turns contemporary individualistic theories of leadership on their head, primarily because leadership seen through the lens of vocation can be understood as a function of community through which all new faculty, in that they are called by a seminary community bent on fulfilling a mission, enter a common, communal vocation. And how that communal vocation takes shape and becomes embodied, speaks of an implicit formational curriculum that may, in effect, be as powerful or more so than any explicit curriculum or purely technical, utilitarian or individualistic approach to leadership. It may also define the peculiar possibilities of what a president (or academic dean or development officer) might do to imagine and lead within a theological institution.

In addition, ATS has an explicit curriculum.

A fifth core understanding about explicit curriculum has to do with ongoing, targeted work areas of educational concern for all of ATS, which were favorably supported at the 2000 Biennial Meeting. Those areas have been identified above. There is ongoing staff support and explicit events already scheduled regarding most of these areas. In addition, major workshops are planned in each area and offered in the spring of each year beginning in 2002 and continuing through 2005. The themes of these workshops include: "Diversity in the Faculty and Student Body" (2002); "The Character and Assessment of Learning for Religious Vocation" (2003); "Information Technology and Theological Education" (2004); and "Women in the Theological Faculty"

*From "Talking Shop" to "Setting an Agenda":
Leadership Education Toward 2005*

(2005). As these workshops occur, ATS will also continue to address each theme by integrating into all events conversation about what the themes might imply regarding the practices and work of theological institutions, individual leaders (presidents, deans, development officers, student personnel, financial officers), as well as theological students and theological faculties. The workshops are not only expected to offer insightful content, but to engage participants in ways that could lead to changes back home.

Given the multilayered nature of the issues named, any effort at devising a curricular approach must agree that no one strategy will work for every area. For example, however defined and understood, "diversity" means, at one level, that fewer than fifty percent of ATS schools have one or more persons of color on their faculties. At the same time, several schools have struggled through the rhetoric and into the reality of hiring a more diverse faculty. If ATS were to sponsor a leadership education event in this area, how might it be structured? ATS might hold a conference to which anyone who wishes could attend; or, ATS might intentionally select "examples of excellence" from those few schools that already embody diversity while intentionally inviting a few schools known to be struggling to make diversity a part of their ethos. When two or more participants per school come together in such an event, potential strategies could be reality-tested, and effective processes leading to true change might occur. An educational strategy such as this might also result in a series of cases and articles for this journal as well as uncover key recognitions in ATS institutions as to how the richness of diversity can realistically be incorporated into theological institutions. Such an overarching educational strategy might not make sense for other workshops under consideration, but the understanding here is that no one educational strategy can be expected to be universally helpful.

Oversight and Guidance

These five core concepts of 1—addressing specific competencies and skills needed in positions of leadership; 2—understanding increasingly complex contexts; 3—building professional associations that take responsibility for peer education; 4—addressing all these concerns through theological lenses such as "vocation"; and 5—working toward educational strategies congruent with the concerns being addressed form an initial, working strategy for leadership education in ATS. These concepts admittedly are a "work-in-progress"; as such, they need candid conversation, oversight, and evaluation. Toward that end, two committees were elected by the ATS membership to provide oversight and guidance for these events, and they reside under the Leadership Education Subcommittee of the Executive Committee of the Association: the Advisory Committee for Leadership Education (ACLE) and the Faculty Development Advisory Committee (FDAC). At the time of the printing of this article,

Jack L. Seymour, Edward L. Wheeler, William R. Myers

the leadership education program of ATS had completed one full cycle, each committee had met at least twice, and the Executive Committee was pleased with reported progress toward an effective ATS leadership education program.

Conclusion

The authors of this article are enthusiastic about the way(s) this program has been developed and are encouraged with the first cycle of events. What has been envisioned and what has actually occurred in the first cycle of the ATS leadership education program holds promise for the institutional members of the Association as they deal faithfully with the missions with which they have been entrusted.

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A Womanist Perspective on Spirituality in Leadership

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Editor's Note: This article appeared in Volume 37, Number 1, and is reprinted here because the last page of the article was not bound into the prior issue. The article is the text of an address that was delivered in October 2000 at a consultation that convened all the women who had participated in the ATS Women in Leadership in Theological Education program over the prior three years.

Let us pray:

There's going to be all kinds of roads to take in life. . . . Let's not be afraid to take them. We deserve them, because we're all good women. Do you. . . do you understand who we are, and what we have become? We're the daughters of those old dusty things Nana carries in her tin can. . . . We carry too many scars from the past. Our past owns us. We wear our scars like armor, . . . for protection. Our mother's scars, our sister's scars, our daughter's scars. . . . Thick, hard, ugly scars that no one can pass through to ever hurt us again. Let's live our lives without living in the fold of old wounds.

Eula

Daughters of the Dust

We do not love ourselves. We do not love a whole holy God.

The film *Daughters of the Dust* by the African American film maker, Julie Dash, is stunning in its power and scope. It tells the story of a Black sea-island or Gullah family preparing to come to the mainland at the turn of the century. Tradition, change, migration, and bondedness to the land are woven together in the Peasant family. The memories of slavery and working in the indigo plantation of the island are the stuff of history books, they are written in the hands of the older members of the island and in the stories they tell to the younger ones, the games the young and old still play, and in the African and Arabic words they continue to teach the children.

The history and mythobiography of the film capture my imagination again and again. The words I began my time with you this morning come from that movie. They are from the character, Eula, who had been raped by a white man. The narrator of the movie, the Unborn Child, is Eula's child. Only the audience knows that the child she carries is truly the one she conceived, in love, with her husband Eli. As Eula speaks, near the end of the movie, she calls

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the women to task for ostracizing Yellow Mary, a prostitute, who turned to this life after her own experience of rape. Yellow Mary had come home to the island to be with her family again and to heal. Eula reminds them all that the fate and hope of Yellow Mary is their own—no one escapes the ravages of evil, no one stands outside of the promise. Then she turns to the younger women and her words are for us as well.

There's going to be all kinds of roads in life to take, let's not be afraid to take them. We deserve them because we're all good women . . . Let's live our lives without living in the fold of old wounds.

It is within this constellation of possibilities that I want to spend some time with you. The notion of all kinds of roads. Our willingness, or not, to take them. The fact that we are, most of us, good women. But we are the daughters of those dusty things that Nana carries in her tin can—there are scars: class ceilings; discriminations based on gender, sexual orientation, weight, beauty, race, age, religiosity, culture. And yes, we do wear some of those scars. For some of us they are like armor because we have discovered that we do need protection. But what does this do to us, ultimately, when we live our lives in the folds of old wounds? When we cannot see another way to be except the one we experienced as being so harmful to us—until we mastered it? And learned to write *its* script in *our* actions?

These, dear colleagues, are the kinds of questions that a womanist spirituality of leadership asks. They are not questions that are designed to be lullabies that rock us into a sweet sleep. They are questions that ask each of us—you and me—to think through what it means to be responsible, and to be willing to take responsibility that can help shape an institution, guide a career, light a pathway to knowledge and wisdom, or not.

womanist spirituality is a

lived experience of faith

it is embodied in people

and found in the concrete contexts in which people live out their faith

it is grounded in the context of struggling for faith and justice

it takes on antagonistic dualisms as unhealthy in many places in our faith journeys

it is an ongoing faithfilled process—a ripening and ripening into wholeness

living out womanist spirituality—integrating faith and life

means that we recognize that we are made in God's image

indeed, God's presence is the very fabric of our existence

immanent & transcendent
close as our breathing
no, God is not an option or on the supplemental reading list
for God's love for us is unconditional
yes, God makes demands, has commands
and perhaps the simplest and hardest of these
is that we are called to live our lives out of the possibilities
not our shortcomings
answering yes to God's what if
this love moves us to grow in compassion, understanding, and acceptance
of each other
it is the formation of a divine/human community based on love and
hope
and pointed toward justice
we are to listen for and hear the word of God
a call for responsibility, contemplation
in the lives of others *and in our lives*
for in the personal search for spiritual understanding we are also engaged
in the human struggle
and in the midst of human struggle we are, some of us, called to
step out and step in and lead
but i think we must stay mindful that spirituality involves
living our lives with integrity and faithfulness in God
it means coming to a sense of self, finding our identity
for me, spirituality encompasses all of life
and as a spirituality of life
we must take care that we do not spin our lives, our careers, our
ministries around a success ethic
that is grounded in measurable gains
and regrettable losses
rather, we seek to proclaim the dignity of life
and this can be a challenge as we go about our lives
for it is easy to lose sight of this, sometimes, in the midst of
budget woes

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challenging students

i mean the ones that appear on the agenda
of the student affairs committee every
month the good lord sends

dueling faculty

unyielding/unreasonable co-workers

phones that ring without ceasing

calls that are never returned

but i suggest that if we think about the call to proclaim the dignity of all
people as a strength

rather than as a virtue

that we can then draw comfort and sustenance from this
proclamation

because i truly believe that it helps us tap into the ability to
continually call forth hope and righteous agency

in the midst of those times we are called to step out and
guide others on their journey

even as we are uncovering our own

for as womanist this spirituality is embodied, personal, communal

as it brings together the historic force of black women's spiritual
lives with the demand of the spirit to contextualize and live one's
faith

it is reflection on the particularity of one's own faith journey lived
and unfolded in community

and when we turn to issues of leadership and how we do it or not as women
all women

it begins with us

with you and me

it is, then, to begin with pieces of what it means to being women all the time

I.

being women all the time

is like breathing in and out

it is like the moments of smiles and whispers

it is like warmth and passion

it is like naming a voice through the song you sing

it is like the roll of dice weighted to come up doubles
but to reach for your winnings
and find nothing there
being women all the time
is like breathing in and out
it is like finding yourself in the midst of degradation
and having the will to stake a claim for liberation
it is like turning and turning and turning into a shimmering
tomorrow
it is like hearing a still, small voice
that you craft into a roaring wind
as you see and feel wholeness as no longer an abstract,
sterile category
but what we all yearn for
so we can, if we must, begin with the wounds
those scars, in Eula's words, that are our mothers', daughters',
sisters'
thick and hard so no one can ever pass through to hurt us again
the folds of those old wounds, that have in some cases maimed us
with the lies, secrets, and silences we are told about other women
that we are told about ourselves
these wounds mark us, but they do not need to define us
for as wise women
or women seeking wisdom
we must grasp a hermeneutic of suspicion
that is, we must examine our first works over
again and again
and consider how we are with each other
and let the larger institutions care for themselves for awhile
as you and i seek to ponder
what it means for each of us
to be in this work of leadership
yes we are all subject to the ravages of structural racism, sexism,
heterosexism, classism, ageism, ableism

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we have also participated
 in holding these “isms”
 these masters’ *and* mistresses’ tools
 in *our* hands
and, my sisters
 we have used them
 sometimes relentlessly
we have used them
 to avoid our depression and discontent
 by cheering ourselves and finding a woman who is worse
 off than we are
 to avoid the questions we have about our beauty
 by failing to question who sets the standards
 and then dressing
 literally
 to kill
 to protect ourselves against charges that we aren’t feminine
 by pointing to someone who may
 or may not
 be tougher than we are
 to prove that we really *do* know the color pink
 to cloak our fears that we may not be bright enough or talented
 enough
 by ridiculing other women
 and charging that they are sublimating their
 frustrations
 in their work
 in the church
 in the vision for a more whole pedagogical
 vision that can address where people will
 be and already are as we head into the 21st
 century

II.

tears and sighs
screams and shouts
the movement, the passion
 for liberation comes in a variety of sounds and textures
too often we suffer and forfeit our lives
 through the silences that muzzle and stifle
 through a warped sense of tradition as hegemonic
 rather than tradition as reminder of the dreams and hopes for a
 vision of our passages into wholeness
it is a terrible thing to lose one's voice
 to demons of self hatred
 and horizontal violence
 and a vision of one—and we are the only one
it is deadly to never find our voices
 for we model our ministries
 and our witness
 after styles that are not who we are
 or fashions and modes that only challenge
 our gifts and abilities
 into a small and narrow space in our souls
and we lose the vitality and hope
 we learned in sunday school
 and prayer meeting
 and wednesday night bible study
 and all those chicken dinners and fish fries
 and just sitting in the presence of the Spirit
but my sisters
 it is tragic when we fail to recognize it in another tone
 or perhaps in a different octave
silencing and voicing are marrow for tradition
 we must listen closely through our expectations and categories
 to hear *God's* call to us

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to join with creation
and to move away from speculating
who is going where
who is doing what
and how did she manage that, anyway

our categories of reflection

run rough shod over the subtleties of the gospel
and the kind of pithy witness we are called to

in short

our schools and our churches need new visions that may be shaped
from old dreams

but perhaps not

we cannot keep doing it the way it has been done
and believe that we are doing the work of God

or calling this leadership

and that a just and whole kingdom will come

for a womanist spirituality of leadership knows that genuine liberation is
loud work

it is a multiplicity of voices

in which the keys are *not* meant to blend

but the ruckus stands as a sign of movement

of hope

by taking a whole new look at what it means

for us

to call ourselves educators, presidents, deans, librarians,
development officers, teachers, scholars. . . faithful

we are not called to be tourists

who will simply inflict more damage to the environment

we are not to provide feminine cannon fodder for a bureaucracy that likes to
declare its holiness or its scholarliness or its relevance

while colleagues engage in mind-numbing studious lint picking
from their scholastic navels

while white male academics rail on about how white men can't find
jobs and then look at you and me as if we should dignify such inane
chatter

while students call out for practical skills for ministry and some of us immediately assume that they are trying to avoid “the real” courses in the curriculum

while issues of class go unaddressed every day and in every way as we plan course schedules, academic calendars, funding initiatives, and the pedagogy that fuels our curricula

and while the increased enrollment of women students across the socioeconomic and racial ethnic spectrum

is what is keeping many of our institutions afloat financially
or at least gives us enough buckets to keep bailing water
until the capital campaign begins to reap benefits

a womanist spirituality of leadership means

declaring that part of who we are is about seeking liberation

daring transformation

living justice

it means that we must challenge ourselves to live into a new vision of what it means to be ministers

lay and ordained, academicians and church-based, agency oriented and denominational

to a word and a grace that is amazing

and ask tough questions of ourselves and our churches and our academic institutions and our ministries

about just how faithful are we being

when there is a whole laundry list of things we *cannot* talk about in many of our churches

and that list is made up of people’s lives and
people’s questions

their joys, their fears, their heart and soul

and we somehow deem this as nasty or worldly or evil

we should be ashamed of ourselves and the not-so-sacred spaces we create when we do this

a womanist spirituality of leadership

that heads out for liberation

means that we begin with ourselves

it means that the prophetic liberation we say we want

say we need

know we must have

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must be more than so many coins in a bankrupt economy
that traffics in people's lives
as so much loose change
what this spirituality makes clear for us is that
liberation means unpacking the gospel *into* living
there are many leadership models out there for us
but to take them on without asking the basic questions of justice and
liberation
is an exercise in obsequious sycophancy at best
and an ill-conceived drag show at worst
what i argue for, this morning
is for a re-commissioning of the bell tones of how we think about
leadership
and more importantly the styles of leadership we adopt
we need a style of leadership that does not rationalize
climbing on each others' backs
rather than lifting as we climb
for a style of leadership that simply exchanges one gender for another while
it continues to suppress and oppress others
is offering others
and settling for ourselves
a partial gospel
muffled success
flawed strategies
and a ministry that is dying
if not already dead
we have much to learn from each other
i doubt i am the only one in here who had a
miz waddell
miz wynne
miz carter
nana
and jesus
as you were growing up

there is a need to recapture for ourselves

 where we are quickly losing, if not have already lost it
our ability to sit down as women with each other
 and give each other the important details of living
 share with each other how we have survived
 how we have thrived
 and how we understand the power of success
 the fear of failure
 the power of failure
 and the fear of success

being women all the time

 means we must place ourselves not in the role
 of host or hostess
 and open up a few more rooms for the next generation to
 live in
 of a house crafted on sin and debasement
 and our only concern is when to do the next maintenance
 task
 rather than constructing a more just home

being women all the time

 means opening ourselves up to the hard task of defining a new way
 to be ministers—together
 of exploring the possibilities
 of searching through our memories
 of holding on to our dreams
 of listening again and again
 to the voice and voices of our call

being women all the time

 recognizes that we can't run off with someone else's ministry
 because even when we steal
 that doesn't make it ours
 it only makes it stolen

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stretch into *your* ministry—discover anew what leadership can and must mean when it is grounded in grace rather than solely on the latest harvard or wharton business model of success

walk around in it
sit down and play
 with the holy sand
 God has given you
for who you are is gift
and what *your* ministry
 your sense of being and guiding with others
 your sense of lifting as you climb
 your leadership style
is to become awe-some

III.

so what of the larger worlds in which we travel, have our being, help to shape, question and resist

with a history (and a present) that includes such vulgar spectacles as auction blocks and lynchings and pedestals

it is ludicrous for women
 to believe for one second
 that there is any possibility that we can do the work within ourselves and in our institutional households without recognizing the powers that shape the worlds in which we live

some of us in this room do not live in the much acclaimed public and private split

for as when i was growing up

 it was clear that black folks did not have a private life that was not at the beck and call of hegemony
 even my search for paradise was tinged with the blinding white hot evils of white and male and economic supremacies

we did have citadels of hope
 and outposts of resistance

we did have separate but equal
 and Jim Crow

but what we really had to struggle *for* was a private world that was genuinely our own

one that wasn't shaped and formed by dominating others

but one that we could actually call and know to be home

given that this is the place from which i move and try to understand the stump from which i speak, it is clear to me that

the dominant gaze makes that which is named private obscured in the prescribed public realms of the dominating others

this mournful gaze does not recognize the richness of black cultures

it resorts to collapsing black realities into postmodern minstrel shows

it seeks to freeze frame black life

without recognizing that even when we all share a common language

the rhythms and cadences of living are different and rich within themselves

and within the communities of black life as well

the private has never *been* private in u.s. colored lives

it has been controlled and manipulated to fit the news at 5, 6 and 10 (central time)

it has been a place where various forms of the police state could, did, and do enter at will

it has produced casualties in see-through body bags

so that even our pain and our sorrow become the stuff of romanticization and novels

it has vented an endless stream of stereotypes and prototypes of black wickedness and sexualized body parts

and sadly, oh so sadly

many of these brutalized and brutalizing images have been internalized in black communities

and in the individual lives of black women and children and men

for far too many of us

this not so private sphere is a place of paralyzing demons

some, in our communities, have slipped into an endless spiral of horizontal violence

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some have neither martin's dream

malcolm's nightmare

walker's color purple

or mama day's lightening powder

so, quite frankly, womanist thought engages in a renewed search for a moment-by-moment spirituality

that can issue in leadership styles that build on (and with) each other's lives rather than pyramids of evil

a womanist spirituality of leadership

is to search for home, to seek liberation

for liberation, to this womanist's mind, is to find a home

that is a place for health, healing, identity formation, resistance, celebration, transformation

not only for one, but for all

that is the place where the "real lives" the "real worlds" of peoples take place

not the media-driven images of black living that trick all of us into believing and/or living into grotesque stereotypes of black life

not the death-dealing images of success that trick us into thinking our accomplishments are ours alone

not the mind-numbing bromides of leadership that include fear tactics, terrorist acts, bullying, lying, avoiding, fronting, and simply not giving a damn about anything but the bottom line, pr, and piling up legacies

it is the place where the realities of diversity, difference, disagreement, harmony, hope, justice all exist

it is the place that shapes the radical differences within our lives as women such that we are not a monolithic community, but an eclectic and diverse compendium of communities

it is the place of core resistance to devaluing oppressions

oh yes, for a womanist spirituality of leadership, home is a place of rest

a place where we get things done, sometimes alone, but mostly with others

a place that we are still learning to create in a social order that features a suffocating regime of interstructured inequality

it is the place of morrison's dancing mind
walker's world in our eye
sanchez's house of lions
it is a place, that we are building, life by life
in which we yoke our individual lives with communal
accountability
and learn a communal hope that teaches us as we
learn
to love our eyes

backs
hands
mouths
feet
shoulders
arms
necks
inside parts
lungs
life-holding wombs
life-giving private
parts
hearts
spirits
souls

leadership built on liberating justice
is a place to gain strength for the journey
so that we learn to live creatively in the tight circle of choices that
are given to us by this social order we all live in
but also plot, scheme, and realize ways to craft that tight circle into
a spiral of possibilities for this generation
and serve as the standing ground for the next generation
and the next generation and beyond
yes, it is true that we make choices within a culture and socioeconomic and
theo-ethical reality
that is geared for warring
violence
destruction
and the annihilation of the enemy, the other

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and this makes the idea of liberating justice
at times
 an obscene phone call
 a dirty joke
 a utopian pipedream
one, which at times chokes
because anger and rage come so quickly
 and completely
 that we cannot draw our collective or individual breaths
because it implies a choice or a set of choices that have not been part
of the historic reality of the lives of most, if not all, black women,
and many women across the color spectrum
for you see,
 choice, like poetry, is not a luxury
 it is a right
one that has been denied
 subverted
 violated
 pillaged
so womanist wit and wisdom holds fast to dreaming a world
 that is a more powerful
 more real
 more concretely and materially just world
a world that shakes with liberating fury and passion
 as it designs and sets in motion the plot lines of justice and freedom
 because we know that liberating hope is the only defense against
 subjugating despair and ruin
yes, the “isms” of all of our lives come in dolby sound
 they are layered upon layer
 woven with a thin thread
 with tensile strength
 and a tight pattern
we can't get at one without dealing with the other
 if we are careful *not* to use the masters' tools

the yearning and struggle for liberating justice in our work as leaders is the kind of thing

that brings out the biggest, best, and most seductive of the masters' tools

because when the spirit gets wrapped up in how we lead

it means those tools will be banished

forbidden

made obsolete—and even *tools* want to survive

transformatory womanist spirituality recognizes that

this is hard work

necessary work

and may be very lonely work at times

that is why we must find and nurture allies

not only to suit our needs, desires, and plans

but those who will challenge and call forth the best from us

who will tell us the plain truth of our acts

and how they affect those around us like ripples on a pond

or sometimes like tidal waves after the quake

to consult only those who look and act and think and are just like us is not going to change anything

a womanist spirituality of leadership calls us to

listen for the voices

accepting the variety

allowing the voices within our communities

the young and the old

the lesbian and the gay

the propertied and the propertyless

the heterosexual and the celibate

the dark and the light

the bisexual and the transgendered,

the female and the male

the conservative and the radical

the thoughtful and the clueless

all these and more

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to have a full and authentic and *valued* place as we sort
through how to lead and how to follow

realizing that there are many paths to freedom—and slavery—and
death

living our lives outside of the folds of those old, old wounds means that we
learn to love ourselves

for this is to love our bodies

which means tackling the gross iconization of our lives

that comes from the false dichotomy of public and private in white
western self-absorbed penile thought

for when womanists talk about the body

it is both the personal and the communal body

i first learned about this body from the older black women in my life

and it was years before i realized that they were not just talking
about *my* body

they included miss hemphill down the road

miss rosie across the street

miss montez around the corner

and cousin willie mae down by the juke
house

my body was placed in a witness of women

who knew violation

enjoyed sex

moved with dignity

and shook from religious ecstasy

i learned that there was always the possibility that some injustice might be
done to my body

and bodies of other black folk

but also knew i had a home to come to and they would
stand by me

there would be times when it seemed my options were few

but i had a right to scream

to say no

to fight back

to do what i thought best to protect any violation
against the dignity of my body

and i had an obligation to teach this right to other black boys and girls as well

they crafted a community of healing that was a refuge of loving women
(and sometimes men)

to heal a scarred throat
or bruised knuckles
or brutalized body

they taught me that i was a child of God
and in some strange, if not halting way
that meant i was free
but i'd have to fight for it

all those women are gone now

but what they left me with is the deep knowledge that the
community they created and gifted me with
must be re-created

but it takes the strong and the weak *together* who will refuse to accept inept
silence or self-abnegating sacrifice as the only options

who will hold themselves accountable to the spirit
who *will* choose to live rather than die

because silence suffocates when it is prompted from
violence and fear

and this is a truly slow and obscene death

but we've got to understand the system

in order to maneuver into places which celebrate our bodies
and learn how to turn racism and sexism and classism and ageism
and even homophobia and heterosexism
into occasions to not only speak, but also do justice

we can name the violation and abuse

and then act to eradicate it

we understand that choices are often tight

but that some of us come from the tradition of the trickster
and there are *always* ways to create new options

but it will take courage and cunning and faith
to get there

A Womanist Perspective on Spirituality in Leadership

those women did not tell me how you do all this
but they did teach me how to use an oyster knife
womanist oyster knives
are made with craftiness
calculation
joy
care
and faith
and we are polishing them
yes, it may seem that my words to you about leadership and liberation and
justice sound like they come from some place in paradise
and maybe they do
but this is not a paradise of theme parks with gerrymandered thrills
and fears
but a paradise of hope, love, justice, joy, resistance, and liberation
a paradise that puts salve on those scars we all carry
a paradise that does not try to smooth over the fold of our old
wounds
but it refuses to live in their hollows
it is a paradise built on an enduring faith
and an outright colored stubbornness that simply will not stop until
justice comes

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Issues and Challenges in Theological Education: Three Reflections

Editor's Note: The Panel of Advisors of the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education meets annually, and at its August 2000 meeting, several members of the Panel were asked to identify issues and challenges facing theological education. The comments of three ATS presidents, who are members of the Panel, are presented here.

Reading the Signs

Joseph C. Hough Jr.
Union Theological Seminary

I am not much of a prophet, but I occasionally do read the signs I see in my own context. So this prophecy is an exercise in projecting the strong trends I see in my present context out toward the future. It is that sort of enterprise that will characterize what I predict about theological education for the next twenty years.

On the basis of my most recent experience, I believe that the *best* of the current crop of theological students is as outstanding in every way as any I have seen in my thirty-five years as a teacher and administrator in theological education. Moreover, most of them come to theological study with interesting life experiences, and that means that they are older than students were in the past. Some of them, even the younger ones, have been quite successful in the practice of other professions. More of them are women, and more are openly gay or lesbian. They are motivated, teachable, and challenging. *If* they should opt for ministry in the local church, and *if* they are successful in finding a congregational placement, many of them could provide excellent leadership for the churches.

But there are some indications that this situation will not last forever and that many of our current students will not provide leadership for local congregations. What are the concrete signs that lead me to believe that there may be serious leadership problems ahead, both for the theological schools and for the churches?

1. First, I believe that the pool of traditional applicants for MDiv and MA degrees in schools like Union Theological Seminary will remain relatively small. In fact, there are some indications that the current pool will shrink in size. If one looks at the predominantly white "old-line" denominations that have been our main suppliers of candidates for these degrees in the past, three things are worth noting:

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- a. The old-line denominations have experienced three decades of declining membership, and there is no indication that one can anticipate any sudden increase in their membership or any intensification of their efforts to recruit prospects for the ministry.
- b. The huge upsurge of women applicants for the traditional ministerial degrees that has kept many seminaries in business for the last ten years is not likely to continue at the same level over the next two decades. Moreover, the growth in the pool of women applicants seems generally to have been offset by the shrinking pool of male applicants within the old-line denominations.
- c. The continuing controversy surrounding debates over the leadership of women and the ordination of gays and lesbians may well discourage a significant number of very capable prospective students from pursuing theological education, and even more of them could be discouraged from considering the congregational ministry.

In recent years, some university-related schools have seen remarkable increases in the number of Roman Catholic students being admitted to their student bodies. At least two schools I know now report that the largest single group of their students are Roman Catholics—primarily women. This may partly reflect the surge of optimism about the future of women in ministry in the Catholic churches after Vatican II. However, this may be even more related to the shortage of priests available for service. On the basis of the research by Katarina Schuth, it is evident that the American Catholic Church has increasingly turned to women to provide needed pastoral services as the number of male candidates for the priesthood continues its sharp decline. Because women are not admitted to Roman Catholic seminaries in great numbers, it is likely that in future decades Catholic women will continue to apply in even greater numbers to schools like Union.

Turning to the ethnic churches, one sees a slightly different set of signs emerging. For example, there may be some increase in the numbers of racial/ethnic candidates for the ministry. Yet, as opportunities to enter other more financially lucrative professions expand for able racial/ethnic students, their vocational choices may become more similar to the pattern identified below for white students. The allure of the pastoral ministry is beginning to fade for some of the best and brightest college students of all races.

Furthermore, some racial/ethnic students have expressed serious discomfort with the “liberal” outlook that characterizes many of the old-line theological schools. This is particularly true of students from the churches affiliated with the major Black Baptist denominations. It also is true of students affiliated with churches in the old-line denominations where church membership is predominantly ethnic. The Korean Presbyterians and Methodists are good examples of this. Thus, while considerations such as quality and reputation of the seminary will remain the most important factors in the choice of a school for all applicants to seminaries, the theological “flavor” of a particular school

may emerge as a more significant factor in the choice of schools by racial/ethnic students. Unless the traditionally liberal schools are able to embrace greater theological diversity, they may discover that their goals for racial/ethnic diversity will be increasingly difficult to achieve.

2. A second concern for Protestant theological education is the lack of adequate financial aid for students and the general decline of financial incentives for students entering the ministry. Part of my concern arises from the level of debt that is being incurred by students who are aiming to become ministers in local congregations. *Average* indebtedness in the range of \$25,000 and more was not uncommon for all students graduating from a single Protestant theological seminary in recent years. In addition, many of those who graduate with this level of debt will enter churches that can supply only minimal salaries of \$35,000 or less. In other words, financial aid resources for MDiv students are simply not adequate, especially in light of the dim prospects for substantial beginning salaries and the limited range of opportunity for salary advancement. I have been told repeatedly by church leaders that these financial problems pose special difficulties for racial/ethnic students who often come to seminary with significant debt from their college years.

The picture emerging from the student indebtedness study conducted by the Auburn Center several years ago was a grim reminder that one of the reasons that it is difficult to attract top students to theological education is precisely this compounding lack of financial incentives. We can hardly be surprised, then, if studies done at UCLA of Phi Beta Kappa students in approximately 100 major colleges and universities indicate that far fewer students in this elite group are electing initially to pursue careers in religion. Similar studies of Rhodes Scholars have yielded the same result.

3. The third concern for Protestant theological education is the declining number of *current* theological students who are opting for the MDiv degree or for ordination. Even fewer have in mind a vocation for ministry in congregations. From the survey of current theological students by the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education we have learned that even though 80% of theological students surveyed say they will pursue a religious occupation or profession, only 68% of old-line Protestants and 53% of evangelicals indicate that they will be ordained. Only 40% in old-line Protestant schools and 28% in evangelical schools indicate that they plan to work in a congregation. On the basis of my experience, I would venture a guess that the proportion of entering students who plan to be ordained and those who plan to work in a congregation would be even lower in the university-related divinity schools and seminaries than in other old-line theological schools. For example, I have noted that a growing number of the most capable students entering Vanderbilt University Divinity School are enrolling in the Master of Arts degree rather than the MDiv degree. I also have anecdotal evidence that the same is true in other university-related schools. Furthermore, the very small percentage of students in evangelical schools, who indicated plans to work in a congregation in the Auburn

Center survey, may signal a growing problem for some of the more traditional evangelical churches.

If the analysis in sociologist Phillip Hammond's recent book is correct, even the striking growth in membership in the more recently developing independent evangelical churches may not signal much hope for significant additions to the pool for evangelical theological schools. What he finds is that most members in all churches are less committed to the institution itself than in the past. Hammond has argued that the commitment of the current church population is increasingly based on personal and autonomous choices for services, in contrast to loyalty to a tradition or a denomination.¹ Subsequent research by Wade Clark Roof revealed some similar phenomena, but Roof is somewhat more optimistic. He believes that the search for meaning that is characteristic of the "Boomers" may ultimately lead them toward deeper involvement and greater institutional commitments.²

These developments and related research are especially disconcerting when several of the old-line denominations are either projecting or already experiencing a shortage of ministers for congregational ministries. Moreover, a survey conducted by the Disciples of Christ several years ago provides at least some evidence that those who are not yet of normal retirement age are burning out and retiring early, so the problem of staffing local churches may become more severe than it is now.

4. A fourth concern has to do with the financial situation of theological schools. While there are notable exceptions, it is safe to say that a significant number of Protestant theological seminaries are in financial trouble. As Loren Mead, former director of the Alban Institute, notes in his book, *Financial Meltdown in the Mainline*,³ a number of old-line theological schools share many of the problems of the churches plus some of their own. Such matters as extraordinarily high proportions of tenured faculty, careless financial practices, reduced library spending, deteriorating facilities, and unsustainable rates of endowment spending are pushing some institutions near to a crisis point.

Aside from the problem this presents for the sustainability of some theological educational institutions, it also presents a problem for the quality of future church leadership. Because many institutions have become desperately dependent on tuition income for survival, there is a tendency to admit almost anyone who applies, regardless of qualifications. The report on the survey of theological students by Auburn Center clearly documents this practice. Almost anyone can gain admission to some ATS accredited theological schools. If this practice continues over time, we can anticipate a lower quality of leadership for the churches and declining prestige of the MDiv degree and the ministerial profession.

5. A fifth concern for Protestant theological education is the rather desperate situation of many of the churches that have been the traditional

placement sites for our graduates. For one thing, given the level of individual financial contributions, many of the congregations of the old-line churches are hardly able to support a full-time pastor. For example, a recent report, *Review 2000*, prepared by the Mission Review Committee of the New York City Presbytery stated that the median membership of the presbytery's congregations in 1998 was 97. That represented a membership decline of 23% since 1990. In the same period, membership in the Presbytery itself declined by 14.6%.

The *national* median membership of all Presbyterian (USA) congregations was 123. In New York City 71% of all Presbyterian churches had fewer than 150 members, and nationally 57% of all Presbyterian (USA) churches have fewer than 150 members. If we assume that a church requires a minimum of 125 members to support a full-time pastor at minimal salary and to keep the buildings in reasonable repair, it is obvious that the prospects for full-time placements for future graduates of theological schools are not very promising. As the New York Presbytery report says, "Each year more and more Calls are part-time. Some churches which have always had full-time ministers can now only afford a part-time Call."

Even more striking is the conclusion of sociologist Mark Shibley after his recent research on evangelical churches. If his findings prove to be correct, this problem of shrinking membership is already affecting traditional evangelical churches outside the South.⁴

Shrinking membership is not the only problem for local churches. Loren Mead indicates that, like the situation in the seminaries, such problems as deteriorating physical facilities, including sanctuaries and educational buildings, careless financial operations, and the absence of any long-range financial planning have left many of the churches in the old-line denominations near bankruptcy. Moreover, despite constant so-called "restructuring" plans, the denominations are running out of money to support their national mission boards and agencies, and no one in the system is willing to admit that money is the problem. This does not augur well for the prospects of more full-time ministerial placements in the future.

6. There will also be some major theological debates within the mainline denominations that will have unpredictable impacts on the future of the churches and the theological schools. For one thing, the whole issue of ordination and placement for gay and lesbian ministerial candidates will continue to vex the major denominations. If Shibley is correct in his assumption that like national politics, Protestant Christianity has undergone a "southernization," then the resistance to gay and lesbian ordination and placement will continue to be strong. On the other hand, most of the mainline denominations usually reflect middle class values and, according to Shibley, the "Boomers" are much more flexible and relaxed about differences than their forebears.

Within more rigid evangelical groups, the issue of women's equality and ordination will remain a source of contention, perhaps even more so than in the

Roman Catholic Church in America. Garry Wills has recently argued that the Catholic laity are far more flexible on the leadership and ordination of women than the clergy, and he believes that the critical shortage of priests will soon force a modification of the official positions of the church.⁵

Within the seminaries that are associated with the mainline denominations, there will continue to be controversy about Christology, especially the significance of the historical Jesus and soteriology. Related to that discussion will be a vigorous discussion about a theology of religions that takes account of the growing religious pluralism in America. That this will be a major public theological issue during the next few years is hardly in doubt now after the choice of Joseph Lieberman as the Democratic nominee for vice president.

Conclusions

If my concerns prove to be justified, then the next twenty years of theological education within the schools I know best will be ones of continuing change.

There will be fewer schools twenty years from now, and there should be. The financial resources simply are not there to sustain all of the schools affiliated with the old-line denominations, and there are far too many schools being meagerly supported by the denominations.

The changing situation in the local churches, particularly the growing number of churches that are too small to support full-time ministers, will require theological schools to be imaginative in designing educational programs to provide the ministerial leadership for this changed situation. For some it may require quite radical institutional and curricular change so that increasing attention can be given to the education of "tentmakers" to serve churches that cannot afford a full-time Call. Others will need to learn from the excellent initiatives by Fuller Theological Seminary and New York Theological Seminary designed to meet the educational needs of ministers without college degrees serving small independent urban and rural churches.

Many theological schools, like other educational institutions, will probably be forced to rethink their heavy reliance on tenured faculty to carry the main burden of instruction. As in other educational institutions, more junior faculty and part-time faculty may be the trend in the future.

Those theological schools that can generate imaginative innovations in curriculum and pedagogy for first degree theological students are the ones most likely to provide leadership for theological education in the future.

Where they are implemented, these institutional changes will probably reflect the sobering influence of financial stringency. And the changes will likely provoke wide-ranging and potentially destructive controversy in theological schools.

ENDNOTES

1. Phillip E. Hammond, *Religion and Personal Autonomy: The Third Disestablishment in America* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992).
2. Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).
3. Loren B. Mead, *Financial Meltdown in the Mainline?* (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 1998).
4. Mark A Shibley, *Resurgent Evangelicalism in the United States: Mapping Cultural Change Since 1970* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).
5. Garry Wills, *Papel Sin: Structures of Deceit* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

Theological Education and the Larger Culture

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During the years that I taught in the philosophy department at Calvin College, we had weekly two-and-a-half hour faculty times when we discussed one another's works-in-progress. Nicholas Wolterstorff was working on aesthetics at the time, and we devoted many sessions to the work he was doing in that area. At one point he was attempting to clarify the concept of a work of art, and I asked him to help me understand something that I had seen at an exhibit in Chicago. The artist I was puzzling about would take a big sheet of plywood and cover it with Elmer's Glue, and then he would smash a cello—he apparently bought them in bulk—onto the plywood and wait for it to harden; then he would sell the result as a work of art.

My question to Wolterstorff was, "What's going on here? I don't understand this." And his response has stuck with me: "Every time you see some avant garde piece that you don't understand, you should take it as an implicit invitation in which the artist is asking you this question: 'Hey, would you call this a work of art?' It's all about exploring the boundaries."

In the evangelical world right now we are asking questions like that about the life and ministry of the church: "Hey, would you call this a hymn?" "Hey, would you call this a sermon?" "Hey, would you call this a congregation?" One of our graduates, a marvelously talented young guy, had joined the staff of a large fundamentalist church. He recently broke away and rented a warehouse for Sunday services. They now have thousands attending each week. They have a rock band for about a half-hour. Then he gets up and he preaches sermons, wearing jeans and a T-shirt. He preaches long sermons, often for forty-five minutes; recently he did a series on Deuteronomy.

In the evangelical world there's a large-scale exploration of boundaries taking place. That can be quite frightening, but it is important if we are to be

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open to new dimensions of ministry. Sometimes I even wonder whether we need to do things in theological education that explicitly invite people to ask parallel questions: “Hey, would you call this a seminary? Hey, would you call this a theological curriculum?”

There is an emphasis in the evangelical world on trying to read what is going on out there in the larger culture, and then working to reconfigure church life in order to address those patterns. Bill Hybels of the Willow Creek Church has said that when they began their ministry twenty-five years ago, they had done sociological surveys of the “boomers” and they found that the people who were unchurched (although they found out that many of them had been “de-churched”) did not want to go to a worship service that required participation, or that violated anonymity, or that had the trappings of traditional worship. So they did the “seeker service,” which featured a rather passive audience listening to musical presentations and sermons, and of course it was hugely successful. What they are finding now is that the people coming to the seeker services these days are different: they *want* participation. They are looking for community. Many of them are also looking for a more traditional iconography of worship; some are asking, “Why is there no cross in this building?” So Willow Creek is changing the nature of its seeker services. Hybels explains that when they started out they were working on the assumption (which seemed to fit the generation they were attempting to reach) that, first of all, you have to change people’s beliefs and then they would belong. Now they want to belong, and it is in the process of belonging that they come to change their beliefs.

I find that kind of sociologically savvy approach attractive, and there is much to learn here for our efforts in theological education. Craig Dykstra of Lilly Endowment has been making the point in the past few years that we theological educators often wrongly assume that we can do much of our thinking about appropriate programs without focusing first of all on the big picture. We need to begin by asking, he says, “What is going on out there in the larger culture?” Then we must ask what the church would have to be like in order to minister to that culture. And then we have to ask what seminaries need to be like in order to prepare people for the churches that will address that kind of culture.

To me those can be unsettling questions, given many of the things that are going on in the larger culture. But they are also unsettling when I think about what those questions mean for evangelical theological education in particular. I have already pointed to the ways in which so many congregations in our part of the ecclesial world seem to be driven by a need continually to reconfigure their ministries in order to respond to what they see as the larger needs of the culture. On the one hand, many of us in evangelical theological education have worked hard to try to bring evangelical theological schools into the ATS, and to encourage evangelical educators to be more accountable to the larger

community—with its consensus norms—of theological education. On the other hand, though, we feel the need—in order to serve our movement, with its mission-driven tendency to work constantly at reconfiguring church life—to push in a direction that encourages *less* conformity to those norms. This means that as relative newcomers to the larger educational discussion we will have to ask questions that many of our friends from other traditions wish we would not raise.

By way of spelling out some of these concerns, I will look briefly here at seven issues about the church's response to the larger culture that are having an important impact in the evangelical world, commenting also on the implications I see for theological education.

The first is the need for schools to repack and "piece out" the curriculum. Let me provide an example. A while back I met with eight pastors of very large, new "apostolic" charismatic churches—none of whom had attended seminary. They each were asked to identify potential benefits of a new partnership with seminaries. But for the most part they told me that they could not see any real benefits from such an arrangement. They said things like this: "If I want to learn how to grow a church, I won't go to a theologian, I'll go to a sociologist. If I want to know how to structure a congregation, I'll look at marketing literature and not at theological literature. What we really need is a zeal for the Gospel and a grasp of how to sell our product—and seminaries would make our job more difficult!"

Groping for some way to move them in a more theological direction, I decided to appeal to their fondness for charismatic themes. I repeated to them the outline of an account that I had heard from a historian of Pentecostalism, about how one of the Pentecostal denominations had dealt with various departures from their initial theological formulations regarding faith healing. Their earliest views on the subject—drawing on Isaiah 53:5: "by his stripes we are healed"—had emphasized the ways in which physical healing is *included* in the atoning work of Christ; this means, they taught, that we can often expect miraculous displays of God's healing power in our bodies. But soon some folks began to teach that physical healing is *guaranteed* by the atonement—so that if a Christian is not miraculously healed of an ailment, this means that there is some secret sin in his or her life. The leadership rejected this notion as heterodox. Soon, though, an even more radical departure surfaced: the idea that physical healing is *accomplished* by the atoning work of Christ, so that if a person thinks she has a cold, she is being deceived by Satan—by his stripes she *is* healed! This teaching also had been quickly denounced by the mainstream leadership.

This history, I told this group of clergy, demonstrates that there is a collective wisdom that resides in the classic Pentecostal denominations, and that folks like them should be aware of this "development of doctrine." If they ignore this wisdom, I warned, they run the risk of constantly recycling old heresies in their own circles.

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This was an important moment in the conversation. After a brief silence, one of them observed: “I have an associate pastor who does faith healings, and I think he comes close to one of those heresies. Is this account that you described written up anywhere?” And then someone else asked if I could recommend a good book on healing. And then, finally, the wonderful question: “Does Fuller offer a course on this kind of thing? I don’t want a degree or anything like that, but I could use some of that sort of information!”

This last plea is an important one. Shouldn’t we, at least those of us who are trying to influence some of the newer charismatic-type groups, be packaging some courses—not for “a degree or anything like that,” but perhaps a certificate connected to, perhaps, a half-dozen courses—that are designed to speak to the actual theological concerns that do capture the interests of pastors like the ones I was addressing? We have a lot of work to do in thinking about reaching people with as much theological education as they can presently tolerate, in the hopes that it will invite them into a large and more long-range and intensive engagement with seminaries. This is an example of what I mean by a “piecing out” and repackaging of our curricula.

Second, we must think about new sorts of partnerships with congregations and parachurch ministries. “Teaching churches” are a big phenomenon in the evangelical world right now—the best-known example being the large conferences put on by Willow Creek Church. Actually, the congregation-based education for ministry goes back to the time of the Reformation. In my own Dutch Reformed tradition, the earliest form of theological education in the sixteenth century was that a person who wanted to be a minister went to live *with* a minister for a while. He followed the pastor around and studied with him, including the study of Hebrew and Greek. But gradually a division of labor developed. One minister would say, “The pastor in the next town is a little better in biblical languages than I am, so I’ll work with you on doctrinal topics and you can go to him for the Hebrew and Greek.” Within a century or so, things had shifted to the theological faculties at the universities, with a more professional style of education.

Maybe we need to take a new look at this older pattern—but with a “second naivete.” I am certainly not suggesting that we do away with theological schools and shift all theological education back to the teaching church, but perhaps there is something in favor of returning to some kind of closer partnership with churches and para-churches. For example, Willow Creek has announced that they are making available a Master’s in Church Leadership, given by Bethel Theological Seminary, featuring six courses, all offered online, with students communicating by e-mail in a kind of internship relationship with a Willow Creek staff member. I take Bethel to be doing something very creative here, forming a new kind of partnership, and it seems to me that we need to consider more of this sort of thing.

Third, we need to work to reconfigure faculty job descriptions in light of new relationships. I took six Fuller faculty and staff during the summer of 2000

to a Willow Creek conference, and we also had a discussion with some Fuller graduates who are on the staff of that congregation. One of our faculty asked, "What could we do to partner with Willow Creek? What would that look like?" The response was: "You're just going to have to come and spend some time with us. There are some defenses that we have to get over, but just your willingness to come and see how we do things and learn from us would open up opportunities down the line." If we are going to form these types of partnerships, I think they should include theologian-in-residence type arrangements. In the Fuller context I talk a lot about "extending dynamically from a strong center," where distance learning and the like draw strength from a core of scholarly activity. It may be that some faculty need to be given an opportunity to develop the mind for all this by actually experiencing in an intensive way various experiments in congregational life and mission. Maybe, for example, participating in five "practical" conferences should be considered the equivalent of teaching one course. To consider reconfiguring faculty job descriptions in this way would mean that deans would have to spend a lot of time with each faculty person, asking what the coming year is going to look like for him or her, and what the equivalencies might be, or redrawing the lines to calculate a full-time position in the new environment.

Fourth, we need to think about possible new motifs for organizing portions of our curricula. One obvious motif is that of *leadership*. At the large Willow Creek conferences, in connection with which Bethel Seminary is offering the program in church leadership, my rough estimate is that only twenty-five percent of the participants are pastors. The others include praise team leaders, deacons, elders, trustees, and church musicians, and they are there studying what it means to provide leadership in the local congregation. There is much fruitful theological work that can be done to provide the underpinnings for these patterns of leadership. Indeed, there is a good opportunity here to re-package ecclesiological discussions in such a way that they inform a new generation of church leaders—both clergy and laity.

Fifth, this is an important time to think about how to redraw the received disciplinary boundaries in theological education. One of the great gifts of feminist scholarship has been the way it has highlighted the need to draw attention to women who otherwise were hidden from church historians of the past. If you do church history by looking only at the great councils of the church, you are not going to find women. But by going into the convents of the Middle Ages, and reading journals, diaries, spiritual reflections, and prayers, that is how you discover Hildegard of Bingen and the others. The teaching of church history along the lines of the history of spirituality, for example, is fascinating and is, to me at least, as legitimate as the teaching of one particular church history or the history of creeds and confessions or the history of church controversies. In doing so we end up with a much richer understanding of the Christian past.

Sixth, we must think clearly about new governance patterns. I have been working on this topic with one of my faculty colleagues, Jim Bradley, over the past two years, with a grant from the Gordon-Conwell leadership project. There are clearly new patterns of governance emerging in theological education. In the evangelical world, many of the faculty who have thought about governance patterns tend to hold up old Princeton as a model of governance because the perception is that it put the faculty in the primary governing role. I just read Jack Calhoun's two-volume history of Princeton in which he noted that the great nineteenth-century theologian Charles Hodge could teach only the books and topics that the board told him to teach. The board set the curriculum and the content of the courses and examined the students at the end. Basically, what Hodge did was to give lectures on board-prescribed subjects, provide for spiritual formation, and run the financial part of the school. Many of the current-day tension points in faculty governance would be illumined by going back and taking a look at the older models.

The new patterns are very obvious at a school like Fuller. There is an emerging class of middle managers who are responsible for the educational delivery system, including designing the distance learning courses and managing the extension and continuing education programs. This phenomenon is probably going to grow for us rather than diminish; so the question will become whether these staff members have faculty roles and what their role will be in the shared governance of the institution. It is crucial that we monitor these patterns.

Finally, we need to attend to new attitudes and patterns in philanthropy. Many people in the older generation of donors have had a tendency to want to save their money until the end of their lives. Then, when they have been ready to give, they have been willing to support general operational costs. They also give out of loyalty to institutions—including movements, denominations, and schools. The new donor—the Silicon Valley type donor, for example—wants to give the money away now. The pastor of a church ministering to technology industry people told me that during the economic boom of the past several years he would regularly have a person come to him saying, "I made several million dollars this year and I really want to put a million or so somewhere. Can you help me? How do I decide how to give?" These new donors haven't been shaped or influenced by the Depression, and they are eager to give some money away. But they do not want to give it for generic purposes or to an annual fund; they are interested in designated, restricted gifts, such as scholarships for Latino/a students or a named chair. We find ourselves exceeding our goal for student scholarships even as we struggle to meet our annual fund goal, and this has much to do with the profile of the new kind of donor. This means that we may need to think about redesigning our annual fund to offer specific named projects, because we know that the new donors will give to things that they're excited about. They are entrepreneurs who want to give where the action is,

and if they believe that somebody has an exciting program, they want to support it. They also expect accountability and if they don't see their investment paying off, they will find another cause to support. There is a very real change taking place in philanthropy and fund-raising donor relationships that is also part of the larger cultural change around us.

Each of these areas that I have identified could benefit from sustained attention and focused research. Certainly research on emerging developments in philanthropy could be very helpful, as would research that focuses on faculty work loads and faculty governance issues, and new relationships between theological schools and the teaching churches.

Future Directed: Trends in Theological Education

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It is a privilege to have this opportunity to share a few of my thoughts about the future of theological education.

First, I think that we will feel the pressure to deliver theological education in a variety of "user-friendly" ways. The traditional, classroom-based, professor-centered educational delivery model may be eroding more rapidly than we realize. If validated through research, this phenomenon will challenge our assumptions about the necessity, utility, and feasibility of the teacher-student, face-to-face dyad. I would mention, parenthetically, that the best course I had at Harvard Divinity School was Father George MacCrae's "Introduction to the New Testament" with 150 students present. My hunch is that the market will respond to older, paying customers who will demand part-time courses, computer-based courses, and distance programs.

In this regard, it would be useful for ATS and the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education to undertake research on innovations in distance education that preserve or repackage the best of the traditional model. There is an American university that now sponsors an Internet-based "all-star faculty" curriculum. Shouldn't someone in our field be considering an "all-star seminary" curriculum?

Another dimension of the user-friendly, market-sensitive delivery research and development should ask, "Are we missing an opportunity to use mass media to educate the public conscience?" I refer to this as the "Bill Moyers portfolio." Moyers has demonstrated that the public has an interest in the thoughtful and literate exploration of spiritual and religious matters. As a community of theologians, we should discuss how we might present conversations or lectures on topics such as the great ideas in modern theology or faith-guided movements that have changed the modern world. I am sure that C-

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SPAN and other mass media would eventually show some interest in such programming. The best of our ATS Biennial Meetings and AAR/SBL plenary sessions would probably evoke keen curiosity among a larger intelligent public and they could succeed in demythologizing theology and the seminary.

Second, we are likely to feel increased pressure to improve the professionalism of seminary graduates. The refrain, "Three years is not enough time," is, of course, correct but it does not satisfy unhappy parishioners who wonder why the new minister with the foreboding Master of Divinity degree seems clueless about how to lead a congregation. How well are we using the three years that we have with the student? This challenge goes beyond curriculum reform to the issue of how the entire culture of the seminary (its worship, the professionalism modeled by faculty and administrators, the conduct of the board of trustees, the seminary's public witness, etc.) communicates its most deeply embraced values and convictions about the nature of ministry.

I think that we must do a better job of educating students so that they depart with a higher measure of confidence in their ability to convene good meetings, resolve basic conflicts, preach interesting and nurturing sermons, organize and mobilize people, and carry on the ritual life of the inherited tradition with dignity, spirit, and integrity. The great Yale historian, Jaroslav Pelikan, has observed that "tradition is the living voice of the dead, traditionalism is the dead voice of the living." Many seminaries are educating students to speak with dead voices, while the churches look for professionals who can help them to speak with new and living voices, indeed, leaders who can help parishioners join the Christian tradition.

Perhaps ATS could use its "bully pulpit" to better effect by challenging denominations and congregations to invest in continuing theological education by providing incentives and financial support for lifelong learning. My wife is a gynecologist who is required annually to take new courses to keep her skills fresh. As she plans for the next course, I quietly and somewhat uncomfortably wonder, should I be taking a new course on ethics, homiletics, or administration? But, nobody compels me to do this, so, my future formal professional learning (perhaps like yours) will probably be an optional, informal, occasional affair. The church and the wider public deserve some assurance from theological educators that we are at least trying to eradicate clergy incompetence, unethical behavior, and irrelevance. Here, I think that ATS might play an activist role in working with denominational and academic leaders in defining a more comprehensive set of norms for continuing theological education.

Third, with the growing public demand for non-degree certificate education, seminaries that sponsor such programs must take the curriculum and its attendant market more seriously. Some of the faith traditions that are growing most rapidly do not need us or require our product. If we fail to respond to the demand, other institutions will step over us to serve these clergy and laypeople.

Some of today's entrepreneurial spiritual innovators, most notably megachurch pastors, are sponsoring their own homespun quasi-seminaries (often renting faculty from accredited seminaries at much higher pay rates). I look with some envy on the incredible recruiting (marketing) reach of training programs sponsored by leaders such as James Dobson, John Maxwell, Kenneth Hagin, T.D. Jakes, and Fred Price.

Driving part of this demand is the intelligent layperson who wishes to embrace the intellectual demands of the authentic Christian life. Abandoning the anti-intellectualism characteristic of large segments of American Christianity, today's laypeople have been nurtured in an information economy and culture. They want more data, more analysis, and want to have their intellects respected by religious leaders.

I have met many of these curious and searching laypeople at the local Rotary Club. When I have lunch with a half-dozen business leaders, I often ask them, "If you could take only two courses from a seminary, which ones would you choose?" Clueless about the menu of courses we offer, I give my short seminary orientation speech. Three minutes later they're excitedly interrupting each other to declare that they'd love to take a course on ethics in the workplace, spirituality and stress management, comparative religion, marriage and family enrichment, and the history of the Bible. Not bad, I think. If only our seminaries could respond to this interest.

ATS could perform an important service to the field by documenting "best practices" in continuing and lay theological education. As a former faculty member at the Candler School of Theology, I can attest that such programs can be done well and can have a profound impact on the lives of practicing clergy and laypeople.

Fourth, with the passage of the 1996 welfare reform legislation and its "Charitable Choice" clause, we will see many new opportunities to expand the role of congregations in public life. In Atlanta, Interdenominational Theological Center, Candler School of Theology, and Columbia Theological Seminary are working together in a project called "Faith and the City" to amplify the voice of faith in determining the future of that bustling city. Following the lead of a very creative, community organizer and minister, the Reverend Bob Lupton, we hope to prepare "community chaplains" that will serve not simply in established institutions such as hospitals and prisons, but also in lower-income and public housing communities. Community chaplains will be trained in drug-rehabilitation, gang-violence prevention strategies, and so on. We think that we will see the emergence of publicly supported ministers with skills in our most challenging public policy issues. For instance, ministers of urban poverty and homelessness or of race relations would be engaged full-time in helping our communities to resolve challenges in peaceful, respectful ways. They would bring the resources of the Christian tradition to bear upon our common life. I believe that our tradition brings wisdom about reconciliation to

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the public conversation without which that conversation is impoverished. At the same time, Gandhi reminds us of nonviolent practices in Hinduism (*satyagraha*), and the Dalai Lama bears witness to a voice in Buddhism about the nature of competition and acquisition that the public conversation desperately needs to encounter. Consequently, public theologians or public chaplains must understand and respect the boundaries and appreciate the treasures that accompany religious pluralism.

If the society were to ask churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples to supply such leaders, would the seminaries (speaking from the Christian perspective) be prepared to educate students concerning the nature of power, justice, and social evil? I happen to think that most of us could meet the challenge, and where we are lacking, we could learn.

Fifth, with what we have learned from the Auburn Center's research regarding the changing demographic profile of entering seminarians, we may witness the changing nature of authority in the classroom. We may witness more of what I am beginning to hear described as adult students with extensive professional experience colliding with younger seminary professors whose domain is the classroom. How ready are we to redefine the traditional assumptions about authority in the classroom? The future will bring numerous and competing authorities learning to negotiate limited classroom space. This will push us to reexamine the attendant theological implications of authority as well. Newly minted professors who expect students to show appropriate awe and deference may have to work harder to earn it.

Another dimension of the authority issue will be revealed in the challenge of an aging clergy that cannot effectively communicate with younger people. This issue has been articulated by many people before, but I am struck by the recent findings of Carl Dudley and the leaders who collaborated on the Faith Communities Today (FACT) national survey of religion in America. They report that American clergy are rapidly aging and admit to a generational disconnect from young parishioners. We may need to revisit the vocation of the youth minister and confer upon it greater authority while lending it greater support and visibility.

Sixth, the issue of clergy burn-out and dysfunction will challenge our field to provide more confidential, affordable, safe resources for renewal and rehabilitation. The list of high-profile clergy who have hit the wall in recent years is, sadly, too long. Most are guilty of unoriginal sin, but stand in need of a fresh encounter with the boundless grace and rehabilitating justice of God. It is time to go beyond sounding our shame and disappointment over clerical mischief and take measures to assist seminary professors and clergy *before* they hit the wall. We cannot afford to lose a single colleague to his or her own burn-out, frailty, or self-doubt. Seminaries and churches should supply the support for renewal when the early warning signals are noticed.

These are some of the trends and challenges that, I believe, demand our attention, energy, and imagination.

Theological Education Submission Guidelines

The Association of Theological Schools is a membership organization of schools in the United States and Canada that conduct post-baccalaureate professional and academic degree programs to educate persons for the practice of ministry and advanced study of the theological disciplines. The Association's mission is to promote the improvement and enhancement of theological schools to the benefit of communities of faith and the broader public.

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

Unsolicited submissions are reviewed by members of the journal's Editorial Board, who then make recommendations regarding their publication. The Editorial Board will not consider articles that are being submitted simultaneously to other publications.

Article Formatting Requirements

1. Articles should be approximately 6,000-8,000 words in length.
2. Follow *Chicago Manual of Style*, using endnotes.
3. Convert footnotes to endnotes, if necessary, using author's given name and then the surname with no intervening comma.
4. The *American Heritage Dictionary* is the reference for preferred spellings.
5. Provide a paragraph abstract at the beginning of the article in approximately 80 words.
6. Add a short (2-3 sentence) paragraph at the end of the article identifying the author(s), institution or relationship to the project/topic, position held, and/or other information relevant to the experience of the writer(s).
7. Articles should be e-mailed to the managing editor <merrill@ats.edu> followed by a hard copy sent by conventional mail to: Nancy Merrill, Managing Editor, *Theological Education*, The Association of Theological Schools, 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103.

