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The Seminary Dispersed

THEOLOGICAL TEACHING IN A CHANGING WORLD

Once upon a time, in seminaries all over the United States and Britain, students were extremely well-prepared. In fact, some of them even knew Hebrew and Greek before they arrived. They always went to class. They turned their assignments in on time. They never grumbled, and they completed their seminary studies in three years with no problems. The faculty members were never overworked, and after a good day of teaching, community worship, leisurely office hours, and supper with students in the refectory, they would go home to an evening of research while someone else put the children to bed.

I do not know whether this golden age of seminary education ever existed. I rather doubt it, but I do detect that we tend to operate as if it did, as we worry and ponder about how to make things better in the face of overworked faculty and administrators; commuting, part-time, and older students with various levels of education; and a diverse student body. Even if that golden age did exist in some places and at some times, we should always ask: For whom was it golden? Not, I think, for those of the “wrong” gender or ethnicity or class or age whose vocations went unanswered, ignored by the churches, and whose gifts of intellect and teaching were discounted by the academy.

We find ourselves today in the midst of some confusion, some messiness, and much diversity of expectation and experience. We also find ourselves with a great opportunity to educate ministers who might truly represent all God’s people in a new and invigorating way. This exciting development presents us

with a number of challenges to which many of the narratives for The Lexington Seminar give witness.

In this essay, I look at two issues. First, I draw an analogy between the student bodies in today's seminaries and the reality of today's congregations and their churchgoing patterns. Second, I examine the diverse nature of seminaries' student bodies. Following these discussions, I then make some suggestions—grounded in a thoroughly incarnational theology—for new possibilities in teaching, learning, and community formation to break through the stalemate situations in which we often seem to find ourselves.

Before beginning, though, I wish to sound a note of caution. We are often hard on ourselves as teachers and learners, imagining that if we can find just the right magic formula, then we will get everything absolutely right in theological education. At the same time, we might think we can build the kingdom of heaven on earth overnight. As Christians, we operate with a vision of something better, which sustains and motivates us. It is part of our theology. It is part of our practice. We operate with a vision of God's kingdom, and that vision is vital, but just as vital is the recognition that the vision will not be fully achieved in this lifetime. In that space of tension between the "not yet" and the "could be," we operate as Christians, and that includes what we do in theological schools.

THE SEMINARY DISPERSED, THE CHURCH DISPERSED

Seminary student bodies are changing, and this affects the nature of seminary community life, as illustrated by many of the narratives developed for the Lexington Seminar. The Church Divinity School of the Pacific's narrative (2001)¹ illustrates the pressures on both students and faculty. For Priscilla, the part-time commuting student, life in her placement church is rather more exciting than seminary commitments, and family and church commitments mean that she can only come to seminary one day a week, for one course a semester. Consequently, she feels that she will need more than the six years allotted for a part-time student to complete her training and theological education in the M.Div. program. Furthermore, she is not showing up for her duties on the chapel rota and does not seem to understand the importance of her involvement in a central part of community life: worship. It is, at first glance, easy to blame Priscilla for not grasping the commitments required of those engaged in a seminary education. At second glance, it is easy to blame the seminary for opening its doors to part-time students, for offering such students the opportunity to train for ordained ministry, for thinking (in all likelihood) of its own financial benefit, without necessarily anticipating the repercussions of its new

strategy. The reality is that the institution, the students, and the professors each have different expectations that are not necessarily being met, which lead to clashes, built-up resentment, and considerable pressures on all parties.

A similar pattern is echoed in the narrative of Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School (2002). The dean expresses the faculty's frustration when she wonders to herself how the seminary can even consider goals such as formation when its students "seem barely able to keep up with basic class work, while the faculty is envisioning moving to a curriculum beyond basics: values and outcomes, aptitudes and attitudes, sequencing, evaluation . . . Dare we continue this cloistered, visionary discussion? Or should we problem-solve around students living in a 'reality' world?" All along the corridor, faculty members listen to the explanations (and rationalizations) students give for not attending classes or completing assignments—"I had to facilitate Bible discussion groups," "I had to teach a confirmation class," "I had to attend a revival"—all of which are put before time in the classroom. Again, the clash is between students who want to do ministry in the real world and have many commitments outside the seminary, and faculty who are, as the narratives indicate, overwhelmed by obligations that leave them little time for scholarly pursuits or spiritual contemplation and frustrated by the burdens of trying to teach a seemingly resistant or ungrateful student body.

In Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary's narrative (1999), a part-time student and single mother named Jean expresses her frustration both with the content of her courses—why, for example, does she have to take two classes in systematic theology when her own denomination emphasizes practical theology?—and with the feeling that "everything is structured for a certain type of person, and I'm not that person." In Lexington Theological Seminary's narrative (2002), Wayne, a twenty-eight-year-old student, expresses his frustration at being made to write papers on theology. "No one really cares about theology," he explains to, of all people, his theology professor, "or any of the other 'ologies' we spend so much time on at seminary. What relevance for today is there in wading through Tillich, Barth and Schleiermacher?" As another student in the same narrative says, "I came here to prepare for ministry and for me that's more about spiritual formation than it is about abstract intellectual stuff. If I wanted that, I would have gone to a graduate program in religious studies."

General Theological Seminary's narrative (2002) shifts the focus from the clash between the expectations of the students and those of the faculty to the clash between resident and nonresident students in the seminary. The narrative describes a seminary coming to grips for the first time with a serious volume of commuter students that threatens to change its well-established, indeed famed, ethos as a residential community. A new commuting student

complains to the academic dean that he can't find anything, that he doesn't know anyone, and that he can't make sense of the seemingly arcane chapel worship (even though it is basic Anglican evensong in an Episcopal chapel). In contrast, a residential student complains that the commuting students show no respect for the ethos of the seminary, an ethos that involves growing commitment and a dedication to community life. "Communities are built, not bought," says the residential student. "The problem with . . . some of the part-time students is that they think theological education is something you purchase. They've got a consumer mentality."

Two major themes emerge from these four narratives. First, as a result of the demographic shifts in the student body, formation—so long a staple of residential seminary life, occurring by osmosis over meals together in the refectory, corporate worship, and late-night chats in the dorms—does not now occur in the same way. Perhaps it does not occur at all for some seminary students. Second, many students perceive little or no connection between the "real" ministry they are doing and what they are required to learn in seminary. A clash between student and faculty expectations for ministerial training and theological education therefore ensues. As the theology professor in Lexington Theological Seminary's narrative says, "How do we help students integrate questions of theology and practice in ministry?" With a gracious hermeneutics of generosity—given that her subject has been declared irrelevant by student Wayne—and a keen desire to learn how to be a more effective teacher, the theology professor puts the responsibility back onto the faculty and asks, "What do we in the faculty have to learn to do if we are to teach in a way that helps students become thoughtful and theologically reflective pastors?"

In addressing these two themes, it is helpful, I think, to make an analogy with models of the church. A church is traditionally thought of as the church gathered, especially by the ordained minister who is around the church for much of the week, whose mental, spiritual, and emotional focus is necessarily church life as it revolves around a particular place. But as Vincent Strudwick has pointed out, for most members of a church, the church is only gathered once or twice a week. The rest of the time those members form the church dispersed. Strudwick (2001) writes, "The church exists in two modes: gathered and dispersed. The clergy often spend most of their time in the 'gathered' mode and this means that they can easily forget that the laity spend 98% of their time in the 'dispersed mode'. Yet how much time when we are 'gathered' do we spend preparing people spiritually, theologically and psychologically for being Christians in the secular world?" What we have to recognize is that the seminary today is, in many cases, much more the seminary dispersed than the seminary gathered. Even for the residential students and the full-time faculty, the reality of a significant proportion of the student body being almost constant-

ly dispersed affects their own formation because it affects the nature of community life.

In the church dispersed, the sensible minister recognizes that the church's mission is not simply to get people into church but to guide the spiritual proclivities of people outside of church. Similarly, seminary professors should be considering ways to harness those student activities that are apparently not about seminary classes and worship—work, church placements, relationships, families, shopping for groceries, getting the car fixed—and incorporating them into the process of formation and learning theology. Shouldn't seminaries and professors be trying to develop a truly incarnational model of theological education?

William Temple, the mid-twentieth-century archbishop of Canterbury, articulated a thoroughly incarnational model of theology. Through his work in education, especially through his role as president of the Workers Educational Association (WEA), Temple came to see that all human experience was “religious” or could be interpreted religiously. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, as John's Gospel tells us, which means that Christ does not need to be brought into the world; Christ was, is, and will be already in the world. For Temple, then, one cannot go straight to scripture or doctrine to find answers to any social or ethical situation; one must rather acquire and assess the evidence, listen to people's stories and experiences, and use the work of experts in their own fields outside the discipline of theology as an essential part of theological work. Temple reminded us, too, that the ongoing activity of most people in their families, jobs, and civil life is where their Christian discipleship and principles need to be applied. He wrote, in his best-selling book *Christianity and Social Order* (1976, 39), “Nine-tenths of the work of the Church in the world is done by Christian people fulfilling responsibilities and performing tasks which in themselves are not part of the official system of the Church at all.”

This serves as an important reminder to all clergy, to all seminary professors, and to all those training for ordination that “church”—and, by analogy, “seminary”—is not just a building or set of buildings where people gather but is also the people dispersed in the world.² So, if seminary teachers develop a truly incarnational model of theological education, and if they do that well, then they will be modeling something extremely important for seminarians when those students go on to become ministers of the church dispersed. They will be giving them the tools to help the members of their congregations *be* church wherever they are: in the workplace, in family and friendship circles, and in community activities.

Some seminaries that have strong formational patterns in place—such as General Theological Seminary—struggle to maintain them, while others who

cannot approximate anything like a residential model—as illustrated in the narrative of Bethel Theological Seminary (2001)—struggle to integrate issues of personal and community formation into the classroom. However, all seminaries, whatever their denomination and demographic composition, face the fact that mixed modes of learning are here to stay, and each school must find a way to address its own distinctive issues.

In the United States, the current model is usually one of a seminary, formerly composed entirely of residential, full-time students, gradually acquiring a number of commuting and part-time students, often to the point that such commuting and part-time students become the statistical norm (as at Church Divinity School of the Pacific), while the norm of seminary training, education, and formation remains that which was designed for a fully residential, full-time community. In Britain, this pattern sometimes occurs, but in the last two or three decades, the Church of England in particular has developed a number of part-time ordination training courses. These usually entail attendance at several lectures and a worship service one evening a week during term time and a number of study weekends throughout the year, plus a week of summer school. These courses are increasingly popular. They cost less than residential training, and they enable older students and students with families to train for ordination without uprooting themselves or their families, often without leaving their full-time employment.

While the attractions of such courses are considerable, they also create the troubling likelihood of a two-tier level of theological training. The type of student attracted to such courses, and often placed in them by bishops and ministry committees (who, in the Church of England, have the power to determine where and how someone will be trained for ordained ministry because the Church of England funds all such training), tends to be older and female. By contrast, the type of student more regularly accepted for full-time, residential training in the several theological colleges that still exist around the country tend to be younger, free of family responsibilities, and male. There are, then, issues of power at play in who gets educated and how, and these issues must be carefully monitored so as not to disadvantage the so-called unconventional students. We need to be careful not to welcome them with one hand (smugly proud of ourselves for opening our doors to them) while relegating them to an education that is often perceived and even experienced as second-class, one that is seen as less rigorous than that received by full-time residential students.

Such perceptions and experiences occur when part-time courses are modeled on full-time courses, usually by simply stretching the full-time course over a greater period of time. The challenge is to build courses of study and notions of formation out of a new understanding of the seminary, an understanding

in which the seminary is perceived as the seminary dispersed as well as the seminary gathered. What students experience when they are not in the seminary buildings can then be newly understood as part of their seminary education when they are given the right tools of analysis and the appropriate support systems. Such tools and support systems are explored in the final section of the essay.

IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Another reality of the changing demography of our seminary populations is that issues of diversity and pluralism—having to do with gender, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation—are prominent in many of our seminary communities. The articulation of that diversity and how people experience it is often highly charged, simmering with all sorts of resentments and half-understandings and then emerging in explosive moments of crisis.

Austin Presbyterian's narrative (1999) ends with a letter to the dean from an African American student saying that he has been a victim of racism on the seminary campus: "I know you pride yourself on openness, but things only seem to be 'open' when we manage to fit in. Once again, I was left out of a study group because I am black and don't 'act' white enough." United Theological Seminary's narrative (2000) explores—in the form of a letter from Julie, a white, lesbian evangelical student—the repercussions of both living and learning together as a diverse community and the pedagogical minefields this can open up. Julie's letter to her advisor demonstrates that she has not succeeded in integrating her experiences with her academic study (nor her sometimes conflicting experiences of being both evangelical and lesbian), nor has she opened herself to learning from others. Through this letter, the narrative suggests the range of perspectives and backgrounds amongst the other students: from Sara, the white, heterosexual, divorced woman who is learning how to use her experiences as a starting point and not as the primary criterion for her ministry and study; to Clarice, the only African American woman in the class who does not know how to be herself in the seminary as she can be in her own community; to Mark, the middle-aged, married, liberal white man who has learned *about* others' experiences but not *from* them. He has not challenged himself in that process of learning and has therefore not stretched himself through his experience in seminary.

The question at play here is how students might relate theology to their own context while also attempting to understand the other, such that their own presuppositions are challenged and their ministry becomes more effective. In my experience as a teacher, the two are related; the inner and the outer, so to

speak, are utterly connected. Too often, contextual theology is thought of as something that people who “have a context” do. Thus, contextual theology is Latin American liberation theology, feminist theology, black theology, and urban theology, rather than, for example, Tillich’s systematic theology, which, as I discuss later, is equally contextual. I am always amused when the students at the theological colleges in and around the leafy green suburbs of Oxford—who will mostly go on to pastor in leafy green suburbs around Britain—tell me that they have been reading urban theology as contextual theology, as if their own situation at present (and in the future) were not a context!

We all have a context, and encouraging students and, indeed, teachers to reflect on that is the first step toward any real possibility of engagement with the other. Once we see our own situatedness, our own context, our own pre-suppositions, then—the hope is—we can begin to shed our own parochial and universalizing tendencies and our paternalistic tendencies as pastors and pastors-in-training. We can understand by means of both compassion—or perhaps a better expression is “sympathetic understanding”—and analogy, as I suggested earlier, but also by standing alongside others and grasping that difference *is* difference. This is only possible when “whiteness” or heterosexuality or being male or, for that matter, being a full-time residential student is no longer perceived as the norm and is seen as one contextual position amongst many, albeit often carrying with it particular privileges and considerable power.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Once we begin to perceive diversity and the seminary dispersed as the normal condition in which we operate rather than the exception, we can begin to establish strategies that make our work not only more effective but more fulfilling, both for ourselves and our students. We can begin to link the “real world” to the study of theology in all its facets. Applied to questions of teaching and learning in theological education, the insights of an incarnational theology, as expressed by someone like Temple, and the model of the seminary as dispersed, would suggest a breaking down of the barrier between theology and the real world (between seminary and not-seminary, between church and not-church) as perceived by faculty and students, so that all activity is seen as theological and students are given the proper tools to analyze that activity in theological terms. As The Lexington Seminar narratives suggest, increasingly diverse student bodies call teachers to question their assumptions about the process of teaching and learning, for those diverse student bodies bring a wide range of gifts and experiences but do not necessarily come with traditional educational preparation for seminary learning.

FINDING QUESTIONS FOR THE TEXT

How do teachers present seemingly alien material so that students might understand it? As is well-known—though, in my own experience, often forgotten by teachers and students alike—for a text to have any meaning, the reader has to have some questions to put to it, so the text can come alive. Simply put, I don't understand a physics textbook because I have no questions to put to the text. I stopped doing physics when I was sixteen. I hated every minute of studying physics. Consequently, two and a half decades later, I have no questions to put to a physics textbook and I don't understand it. Sometimes I have to remind myself, as a teacher, that for many seminary students, especially in their first term and their first year, their experience of theological education is like my experience of reading a physics textbook. They have no questions to put to the texts they are reading. And we teachers do not necessarily offer them any questions to put to those texts. Or, rather, we fail to discover what questions they do have which would help them make sense of the material with which they are faced. When learning about the scriptures, church history, systematic theology, and all those seemingly abstract things they learn about in a classroom, what questions do both students and faculty have which would enable the students to understand that what seems so abstract and disconnected from the real world has always, in fact, emerged out of real, live, dynamic, bubbling contexts?

Some excellent suggestions have arisen in the meetings of The Lexington Seminar, and I offer some of those now. As a historian, I am attracted by the idea of presenting apparently abstract systematic theologies in their historical context so they can be shown to be vital theological responses to the questions and cutting-edge issues of their day. By demonstrating this link between theory and the day-to-day world, we might avoid the situation in which a student named Wayne dismisses Tillich, Barth, and Schleiermacher.

I was fortunate to be taught twentieth-century systematic theology by Sharon Welch at Harvard in the mid-1980s, and she brought those thinkers to life by teaching their ideas in the context of their lives and times. In her lectures, Tillich was no longer an abstract thinker but the beatnik of the theological world who, just like those beatnik poets and writers of the 1950s, had an existential crisis—but he formulated a theological response to that crisis. Presented that way, we were all longing to know what Tillich's response to that crisis was, and what God had to do with it. This sort of approach may involve reorganizing the curriculum to combine the teaching of systematic theology and church history; Church Divinity School of the Pacific has done this in recent years, and to excellent effect.

How do we bring alive the debates of the past and the contexts in which theology was discussed? Fourth-century discussions of the Trinity may seem

dry to many a seminary student, but Gregory of Nyssa sketches a picture in his *On the Divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit* in which every part of his city was filled with talk of the Trinity—alleys, squares, crossroads, and avenues. Everyone was talking about the nature of God. If you asked a baker about the quality and price of bread, he would give you an answer about the nature of the Father and the Son. Ask a money changer for the going rate on the drachma, and he would tell you about the begotten and unbegotten. And the manager of the baths, instead of telling you whether the water was ready, would give you a discourse upon the Holy Spirit. Surely we can bring to life the theological debates of the past in two ways: first, by putting them in context rather than teaching them as a set of abstract ideas, and second, by making analogies with the debates of our own day.

How, too, might we link the classroom with students' experiences with field education placements, church work, and family life? One suggestion is to have students retell biblical stories in their own words. Through this they learn the tradition of *midrash* and a good deal about the storytelling methods and oral traditions of the ancient world that forged the written scriptures we have today, while also connecting the insights of scripture to their own experiences and the experiences of those whom they encounter in daily life. This is also good preparation for preaching and can be combined with the scholarly study of the meaning of words in their context—putting the oft-hated Greek and Hebrew to immediate, practical use in group work—so that parallels can be made between different cultures and a range of meanings and theological responses to any given situation explored. In church traditions that follow a lectionary, seminaries might have a weekly informal lunch for students and faculty to discuss the lectionary texts for the coming Sunday, combining personal storytelling in response to the scripture with the scholarly study of the text, as outlined above. In this way, students can begin to prepare for sermons in dialogue with other students and their teachers, bringing seminary learning together with the real world and generating a practical outcome for their church life and field education placement.

These sorts of methods also address the lament, often heard from older students who arrive at seminary with much experience in their fields, that they are being de-skilled or infantilized in their theological education. Such complaints reflect the fact that the old model of preparing students for the ministry by stripping them of all they know still lingers, implicitly if not by design. The challenge for seminary teachers is to use the students' existing skills and experience—upon which we place so much emphasis in assessing their fitness for ordination and then too often forget the minute they walk into the classroom—as the starting point for their academic and practical study of theology and the ordering of community worship. Such skills and experience should

be a starting point but not the primary criterion for theological work, for leaving a student's skills and experiences unchallenged can lead to uncritical and self-centered study, which is the opposite of what I am advocating. By forming the starting points for study, life experiences are the key—via compassion and analogy—to understanding other cultural and social circumstances and, thereby, to grasping in a fresh way what appears to be alien academic material. Life experiences provide us with the questions we need to put to the text.

AVOIDING A TWO-TIERED SYSTEM

To prevent a two-tiered system of theological education from developing, we need to think carefully about how the seminary dispersed can be a starting point for the education of all students, part-time commuting and full-time residential, rather than a default position for the commuters who struggle and end up in the dean's office three times a month with problems. All students come with skills and life experiences which can be used as jumping-off points for professors' teaching and students' learning—or, from time to time, students' teaching and professors' learning—thus contributing to a new model of formation that models for students ways in which they can enable the members of their future churches to build on their skills and life experiences in *being* church out in the world. This is not to undermine what goes on in the seminary or church buildings. The seminary gathered and the church gathered will always remain vital moments of community life, corporate worship, sustained teaching and learning, and shared reflection. However, such a new balance encourages people to understand that they can be in church or are engaged in theological education even when they are dispersed.

DISCOVERING COMMON GROUND THROUGH OUR OWN ETHNICITY

For many of us who teach or have taught in primarily white seminaries and theological colleges, our experience is that there are usually five or six black people in the community—students, administrative staff, domestic staff, and teachers. In those circumstances, we tend to see race or ethnicity as being about those five or six black people in the community. But we all have ethnic identities with histories and consequences, and we who are white reflect on these far too little. (Similarly, the point needs to be reinforced that gender is not just about women, and sexuality is not just about gay and lesbian people, though they are often the ones who highlight the issues precisely because they have been defined as “not the norm”). Getting students and teachers to examine their own “whiteness” is vital for tackling the unexamined issues of power and privilege that are inherent in all our communities—at faculty, staff, and student

levels. This is something that Robert Beckford, the most prominent black theologian in Britain, consistently points out to those of us in the profession who are white (though we do not always take much notice).³

Patricia Williams, in the first of her 1997 Reith lectures, broadcast on BBC radio in Britain, put it like this: “This is a dilemma—being coloured, so to speak, in a world of normative whiteness—whiteness being defined as the absence of colour.” She continues:

Perhaps one reason that conversations about race are so often doomed to frustration is that the notion of whiteness as “race” is almost never implicated. One of the more difficult legacies of slavery and colonialism is the degree to which racism’s tenacious hold is manifested not merely in the divided demographics of neighbourhood or education or class but also in the process of what media expert John Fiske calls the “exnomination” of whiteness as racial identity. Whiteness is unnamed, suppressed, beyond the realm of race. Exnomination permits whites to entertain the notion that “race” lives over there on the other side of the tracks, in black bodies and inner-city neighbourhoods, in a dark netherworld where whites are not involved. (1997, 4–5)

The work of the historian Matthew Frye Jacobson is also instructive here. First, race, as a concept, is a product of the nineteenth century; it is not something natural but was constructed within the politics of immigration patterns and empire building. As Jacobson puts it, “race resides not in nature but in politics and culture.” Jacobson shows the ways in which, during the great waves of immigration to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who counted as white was not at all straightforward. In short, whiteness also has its own particularities, though often perceived and presented as universal or the norm. Racial categories are often shifting and contested. Second, Jacobson also points to the fact that power was (and is) an important part of those shifting racial categories and of the ways in which they are constructed. He demonstrates the “historic legacies of white privilege,” suggesting that “recognising how that privilege is constituted depends upon our first understanding how whiteness itself has been built and maintained” (1998, 9, 12).

Mary Foulke has suggested that the process of coming to terms with our own whiteness is a spiritual journey and, in a helpful article, has mapped out the three stages of “unlearning racism” which are to be followed by the three stages of building a positive, antiracist, white identity. She suggests that this work goes on both at a personal, individual level and in dialogue with others. Community is the result of struggle and hard work, and so, Foulke suggests, is identity—as it is forged in communities. Both identity and community are, for Foulke, journeys—journeys to come into our own, journeys toward God, with God, and with one another. As she points out, “in the scriptures, journeying implies movement and change, peril, discovery, loss, gains, repeated departures, uprooting and adventure” (1996, 35–36).

How do these journeys of transformation occur in seminary life? Talking about all of this, embarking on this journey of exploration and change with one another, is difficult and requires sensitivity. “Creating community, in other words, involves this most difficult work of negotiating real divisions, of considering boundaries before we go crashing through, and of pondering our differences before we can ever agree on the terms of our sameness” (P. Williams 1997, 4). Real conversations are required for the creation of true community, but they only occur when each one of us is willing to be vulnerable in examining our own situatedness in careful and boundaried ways. The danger otherwise is that there will always be an explicit feeling that those “others” in the community have somehow ruined its golden age. Such conversations are not easy. They require patience; they take a long time. People make mistakes and they don’t always have the right language, but all of the conversation and all of the mistakes can be seen and experienced, in the right environment, as a part of growth and formation by students and teachers.

If we believe in the Incarnation, then those conversations are and must be a vital part of community building, formation, and theological teaching and learning. Seminary professors are explicitly engaged in teaching the whole person. Other teachers may feel they are engaged in this too (others may not), but seminary professors take on as a part of their role a commitment to teach the whole person. And the whole person is always situated in particular communities and has identity markers of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, and so forth. Not only do students experience their own situatedness, but so do faculty, as has been noted in a number of the conversations at The Lexington Seminar.

Professors face many of the same pressures of overwork and family commitments as the students, and as faculties become more diverse, they also reflect more of the tensions felt by students who feel they are not perceived as the norm. As we face these exciting challenges in seminary education, it is important that the teachers take care of themselves. This is not always easy in understaffed and financially struggling communities, a hallmark of many seminaries in the United States and theological colleges in the Britain. When I was teaching in another college in Oxford, one that trains ministers and educates undergraduate and graduate students in various disciplines, I was once asked to preach a sermon on work. To comply, I preached on the importance of observing the Sabbath, of taking at least one day a week off from work. During my time at that college, I preached many sermons that I thought might upset people, but this sermon caused the greatest stir, especially amongst some of my colleagues who felt chastised. But in that sermon I felt that I was saying something important about pedagogy.

As seminary teachers, we should not model for students the Protestant work ethic gone mad. Offering such an example does not help them survive as healthy ministers. It is vital that we model good practice for them, both in work and in rest. By showing them the importance of taking essential time with family and friends, we model for them a means by which they can recharge themselves for ministry. But such modeling is not simply for the students' benefit. As faculties of seminaries and theological colleges become more diverse and engage a wider range of external commitments—both of which are healthy developments—former patterns of working cannot be sustained if professors are to give of their best in their teaching.

CONCLUSION

These remarks on diversity within seminary communities bring me, in concluding, to the question of vulnerability and thus back to some of my opening comments. We operate, in our expectations and in our vision, in the tension between the “not yet” and the “could be.” In doing so, we—both students and teachers—will not get it right all the time, and we should not expect to do so. Our faith, rooted in a loving and forgiving God, does not expect it of us. Theological education at its best has the possibility of *exploration* in it. All of us who have taught in seminaries and theological colleges have encountered the students who go through seminary with no doubts about their faith, their current endeavors, or their future vocations, learning little or nothing because they have no questions. We all know that they are disasters waiting to happen in the parish. Healthy seminaries give students the space to ask questions, make mistakes, and be forgiven in the context of a loving and compassionate community. Teachers have a particular responsibility to stand alongside these ministers-in-training as they ask their questions and make their mistakes, just as those students when they become ministers will stand alongside the people of their congregations in the future, helping them to grow in their relationship with God through the rubble and the joys of their lives.

NOTES

1. All narratives cited in this book can be found in the Archives section of the Seminar's Web site: <http://www.lexingtonseminar.org/>.
2. On William Temple, see Spencer (2001); of Temple's works, see especially, *Christianity and Social Order* (1976).
3. For an example of such an analysis of “whiteness,” see Ware (1992) and Ware and Back (2002).