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▪GLENN T. MILLER▪

Historical Influences on Seminary Culture

The narratives prepared by theological schools participating in The Lexington Seminar indicate that, despite the considerable interest in teaching and learning over the last decade, seminary faculty members are struggling with day-by-day professional tasks. Of the many insights to be gained from the Seminar's narratives, two seem most dramatic to me. On the one hand, the narratives reflect a general malaise in American higher education. After a half century of unprecedented expansion and public confidence, Americans are actively questioning their educators and demanding that formal criteria of effectiveness be established and proof offered that these standards are attained. These same questions are asked of theological educators, and people are again asking, even demanding, that churches investigate alternative means to ministry. Also, as in other branches of American education, the advent of increased racial and ethnic diversity has created a demand for cultural and linguistic diversity as well. When one adds the haunting questions raised by postmodernist philosophy about cultural learning, embattled theologians are forced to wrestle with the question: Whose faith should be studied and transmitted? The *Tradition* has become the many *traditions.*

These concerns are magnified by the fact that seminaries, as primarily small institutions, require consensus in order to function effectively. Unlike the mega-university or even the large college where one can teach, do research, and go home, the size of the seminary enterprise demands that everyone be

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"on board" for every major decision. Consensus is demanded even when consensus is not present. And perhaps because of the nature of religion or at least of American Christianity, people are quick to read moral and even apocalyptic significance into seminary business. Seminaries are also comparatively expensive to maintain, and they are facing, as are all American institutions of higher education, continuing rising costs and expectations. Many problems that might be alleviated in larger institutions by hiring new faculty or establishing new departments or appointing new administrators cannot be so solved in the seminary, because few surplus funds are available to invest in innovation or compromise.

Much of this discussion revolves around the word "change." The word is repeated in schools' narratives over and over again almost as if it were a mantra that might open the gates to a higher consciousness. People resist change, they do not want to change, they resent change, they welcome change. In part, this is simply the human condition. Each new generation must remake the world after its own likeness, and each departing generation struggles to leave a legacy that subsequent generations "ought" to respect. But the narratives indicate more than this. Change is like the magic bullet that the medical sciences sought so earnestly in the last century, the one medicine that would cure all diseases. If only we change, then everything will be okay.

The narratives, however, do not indicate that we are on the verge of the millennium. Just as seminaries participate in academia and have their problems, so they participate in the churches and share their problems. And these problems are acute. Since the 1960s, Protestant churches have steadily declined in influence, membership, and funds. Many of the problems with students, teaching and learning, and curriculum are related to a very simple sociological fact: Socially weak institutions attract weak candidates for their leadership. Far fewer volunteers can be found for a position that pays poorly and has declining status and little influence. Further, many of the leadership candidates who enter the institution will have less academic and social ability than those who wish to serve in more prosperous professions. In other simple terms, those professional schools that offer high rewards will tend to get, if not all, then the bulk of the more able and committed candidates. American Catholics, although not yet in the same numerical situation as American Protestants, have likewise faced a vocational crisis that has extended over decades. Seminaries educate the students who come, but those students are increasingly seeking a position that is on the margins, not at the center of society.

There is also the haunting question, often whispered between the lines of the narratives, as to whether the seminaries themselves have not contributed to the current crisis. For almost two centuries, seminaries have claimed that they could produce better and more able ministers, and the current church leader-

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ship has the highest number of seminary graduates of any cohort of American clergy. While we must not be too quick to draw a causal relationship between decline and ministry, we must not ignore any connections that might be there.

At the risk of reading more into the narratives than is there, I would also suggest that part of the malaise that we see is the result of a continuing intellectual crisis. Despite all the glitz of postmodernism and the discovery of various kinds and theories of cultural learning, religious organizations continue to face a crisis of credibility in the present world. Exactly what truth, if any, is involved in religious talk? For example, it is interesting to examine what African Americans believe about God as a matter of historical or cultural information. But that knowledge becomes vital only if the God of African American theology exists as more than a social construct. It does no good to tell the oppressed of the world that God will deliver them if there is no god to do so.

Having outlined the issues that seem most crucial to me, I then must ask, what can an historian contribute to this discussion? As Hegel noted, historians tend to do their work best in the twilight of a movement or discussion. What history provides is a perspective on the present that comes from seeing our current situation in the light of the succession of spiritual worlds that served as its temporal forebears. The ultimate goal is that we gain an understanding of ourselves that has depth as well as height and width.

This essay, therefore, is written from a clear thesis: American theological education did not develop independently. Seminaries and divinity schools are comparatively small, underfinanced institutions that have served limited publics.[1] While small institutions have their own ethos, they are also easily influenced by larger cultural and institutional trends. Although a handful of theological educators formulated a rationale for the seminary, particularly its curriculum, based on criteria internal to theology,[2] American seminaries have lived in the shadows of two important cultural phenomena: the university and religious awakenings.

In any walk through the woods, the larger trees cast shadows that cover the understory trees that grow beneath them. Such shadows are not constant. As the sun moves, the shadows change their shapes and density. Two large trees may shadow the same space. On cloudy and rainy days, both the larger and the small trees experience the larger shadow cast by the clouds. At other times, the understory trees receive the full light of day. Likewise, the effects of university and revival vary. At times, the seminaries are so colored by one or the other of these larger movements as to appear completely dominated by them; at other times, the effects of the larger movements may be almost invisible.

My purpose, therefore, is to describe the evolution of these two influences and their effect on seminaries from colonial times to the present, after which I offer some thoughts about the direction that I think seminaries could and

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should take in response to the current state of these two overshadowing influences.

THE SHADOW OF THE UNIVERSITY

In colonial America, early eighteenth-century colleges, such as Harvard, Yale, and William and Mary, had teachers specifically assigned to theological subjects, but the most common eighteenth-century pattern of theological education was for prospective candidates—usually after receiving some instruction in the liberal arts or at least a modicum of Latin and Greek—to study with a senior minister. While some recent interpreters have seen this as a period of apprenticeship, it was much closer to the tutorial system used in English universities. The supervising minister assigned reading to the candidate and required the candidate to prepare a commentary on it. Successful theological teachers, such as Nathaniel Emmons, pastor in Franklin, Massachusetts, from 1773 until 1827, had more than one student resident at a time and, hence, assigned the same academic work to several students at once. As in the English colleges, the student worked with the tutor until he felt prepared. This period might be as short as three months or as long as three years, and some intellectually precocious scholars, like Jedidiah Morse, studied with more than one instructor. As in England, the tutor determined the curriculum and customized it to fit the needs of the student and, usually, his own theological proclivities.

THE ENGLISH TUTORIAL INFLUENCE

Nevertheless, important differences existed between the English tutorial and the colonial reading of divinity. In England, the tutor was often a young man, fresh from his own studies, waiting for ordination or for a full appointment. Part of the purpose of a "fellowship" was to provide the tutor with time to pursue his own studies, theoretically, in preparation for the master of arts or for his own ordination examination (though such examinations were usually perfunctory). In contrast, his American counterpart was a fully ordained clergyman with his own parish or an officer of the college.[3] Whatever instruction he could impart was given in the time not devoted to other duties. In England and America, the tutorial was made to order for the factionalism that has often characterized the religious life of the mother country and her daughter. After all, students only had to find a tutor who agreed with their own theological perspective, and tutors were more than willing to impart their own theology to students who held no prior opinions. The colonial form may have been even more given to partisanship. Isolated with his teacher in a rural parish, miles

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from the nearest competition, the student rarely had the advantage of other teachers or students whose thought differed from his own.

By 1800, the American tutorial system was ripe for change. Had American society been more homogeneous, the natural road might have been for the colleges gradually to expand their own tutorial programs until theological instruction became a department or faculty in its own right. Something like this, in fact, happened at Yale. Unlike either the religiously pluralistic middle colonies or theologically fragmented Massachusetts, Connecticut Congregationalists were more or less religiously homogeneous, although Baptists and Episcopalians were rapidly growing there. Massachusetts was otherwise. In addition to the challenges provided by other denominations, Congregationalists were deeply divided among themselves: some were Unitarian, some were traditional Calvinists, and some were New Divinity. Profoundly aware that one size would not fit all, the traditional Calvinists and New Divinity men joined forces in 1808 to establish a new institution for theological study in conjunction with Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, that pointedly excluded Unitarians.

While Andover had many distinctive elements, the one most significant for this essay was the new understanding of the theological teacher. From the beginning, Andover's founders envisioned a school that assigned different fields of knowledge to different teachers. Moses Stuart, Andover's Bible teacher, became a highly educated specialist in biblical language and authority on biblical interpretation. Called to Andover from New Haven's Center Church in New Haven, Stuart learned Hebrew and several cognate languages, established a press with the fonts needed to publish research in linguistics, established a postgraduate program of study, and inhaled all the German scholarship that he could find, carefully noting the most important works in the seminary's own journal. Despite suspicion that he had violated the school's already arcane creed, Stuart retained his job. Other seminaries employed his students in their biblical departments.

THE GERMAN UNIVERSITY INFLUENCE

Almost from the beginning, a European shadow fell on the small American seminary that consciously or unconsciously recapitulated German developments in theological education. Like Andover, the contemporary University of Berlin, founded by the Prussian government in the wake of the French seizure of Halle, had four professors in its theological faculty. German theologians had always written, perhaps to excess, but much of their intellectual effort had primarily been directed toward the representation of the timeless truths of the various confessions. In contrast, Berlin embraced the new enlightenment scholarship that stressed the independent examination of a subject and, hopefully, the dis-

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covery of new truth. Although the various German states certified the competence of professionals, including ministers, through a rigorous program of state examinations, university teaching followed another course. While various German *Land* (state) governments continued to make university appointments on political grounds, as time passed, they increasingly relied on published research, especially the doctorate and the habilitation, as the criteria for promotion and retention.[4] The meaning of an advanced education changed. Whereas learning had previously been measured by the mastery of traditional texts, it was now measured by a professor's research and its place in the complex pedigree of the current "state of the question." In turn, the research standard encouraged academic specialization; the field in which anyone might hope to break new ground was, almost by definition, narrow. As in the United States, the Old Testament was the first area of theological specialization, and the New Testament, believed to be the common study of all theologians, was the last.

American theological professors began pouring into German universities in the 1840s and continued to make the trip, almost ritualistically, until after the First World War. Like Mark Twain's "innocents abroad," they were impressed by everything they saw and heard. And those who did not make the trip often learned German a verb at a time as they strained to decipher the latest book from the Continent. Like their German teachers, American professors compiled bibliographies; published dictionaries, handbooks, and encyclopedias; and put their most original work in scholarly journals and monographs. Beginning at Yale in 1860, American universities established their own doctoral programs to train people in the newer methods. William Rainey Harper, who opened the reborn University of Chicago in 1892, was among the first Americans to receive a Ph.D. from an American institution, specializing in Semitic language. He was proud to state in his inaugural that he proposed to "make the work of investigation primary" and "the work of instruction secondary" (Lucas 1992, 173).

Care should be taken not to see the German educational paradigm as implying a Teutonic monopoly on American thought. Despite the widespread American fascination with things German, many theologians looked to the British Isles, particularly Scotland, for inspiration. In part, this was because Great Britain and the United States shared a common language, making the work of scholars readily available to each other. But the affinity went deeper than that. In the early nineteenth century, Common Sense Realism was the dominant academic philosophy in Scotland and the new United States, and intellectual leaders on both sides of the Atlantic distrusted speculative theories. By century's end, many American moderate thinkers saw British biblical scholarship as an important counterweight to what they believed were the unwarranted conclusions of more radical continental scholars.[5]

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The desire of seminary professors to understand themselves as independent professionals and researchers was similar to the passion of collegiate teachers for the same status. Well before the beginning of the twentieth century, seminary faculty members had established their own guild structure, complete with professional organizations, including the Society for Biblical Literature and the American Society of Church History. The guild structure provided many services for the professors, including the publication of important papers in their journals and annual opportunities to discuss the latest developments with other specialists. The annual meetings of the guilds were also places where seasoned teachers might sing the praises of their most able graduate students and help place them in professional positions at other schools. At first in the better schools and progressively in others, the Ph.D., the Th.D., or their equivalents were required for appointment, and even such gifted and well-connected new appointments as Union's William Adams Brown were expected to jump through this hoop. Although he had spent two years of close work with Harnack in Berlin, Brown still had to complete a Ph.D. (from Yale) during his first years as a Union professor. The system was never completely airtight. Many seminaries preferred seasoned practitioners for their appointments in the practical field, and room was found for such uncredentialed geniuses as Reinhold Niebuhr. Nonetheless, the road to academic success in theology was well-marked.

The most significant difference between Stuart's Andover and Berlin was that Andover was a new type of organization: a nonprofit corporation (Hall 1982). Like classical government corporations, such as cities, towns, and counties, these new bodies were organizations tied to the achievement of public goals; however, unlike governmental organizations, a private board of trustees, not accountable to any public agency, governed them. This type of foundation ideally suited the post-Revolutionary American churches. Like other charitable organizations, denominations had public purposes and public visibility, but they were also private organizations, owned by their members and governed by their own sect's rules and procedures. Interestingly, such corporations could, at least in theory, "own" another institution, if that institution's charter gave that group the right to appoint its board. Among the most important duties of the new boards was the hiring (often after recommendation of the faculty) of new faculty members.

THE SCHOLARLY COMMUNITY AND THE INCORPORATED INSTITUTION IN CONFLICT

From the beginning, then, the American theological professor belonged to two worlds. As scholars and intellectuals, professors belonged to the emerging

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scholarly (*wissenschaftlich*) community and were responsible to it for their research and its results. But, as employees of a private corporation, teachers were expected to conform to the aims and purposes of those who controlled the schools where the scholars worked. Combined, these two tall oaks of scholarly community and incorporated institution shadowed the life of the average faculty member and influenced faculty self-understanding in myriad ways.

Ideally, the scholarly pursuit of public truth and the sponsors' desire to have their own perspective taught did not conflict. Nineteenth-century Princeton professors, such as the prolific Charles Hodge, felt no distance between their obligations as researchers and their role as representatives of the Presbyterian Church. Hodge parsed Hebrew verbs with the speed and accuracy of Moses Stuart, and his students continued the tradition of mastering philology as part of the learning of theology. But the harmony between ecclesiastical teaching and research that the Princeton theologians prized was ultimately eroded by the inherent tension between the seminary and its public. In the twentieth century, the descendants of Hodge battled other Presbyterians over whose understanding of their seminary ought to prevail. Interestingly, in this titanic struggle, the usual positions were reversed: The faculty struggled for more accountability, while their denominational opponents pled for greater freedom in research and teaching.

As Machen put it, "In the sphere of religion, as in other spheres, the things about which men are agreed are apt to be the things that are least worth holding; the really important things are the things about which men will fight" (Machen 1923, 1–2). Perhaps this is a partial explanation of why seminary battles have been so intense. In most battles over academic freedom, the issue is usually the right of this or that professor to take a position. Many of these struggles, particularly in state universities, involve political issues. In contrast, what is at stake in seminary battles is the mission of the institution itself, especially as it influences the private or ecclesiastical ends for which the school was founded. Seminary teachers have had a dual identity. On the one hand, they are academic instructors who live and work in the same world as other people employed in the knowledge industry. Yet, on the other, they are also the unique bearers of an institution's identity and mission. No seminary battle, consequently, is only about what is taught or the academic quality of the scholarly work of the faculty. The issue always involves the school's very soul.

The great battles in the history of American theological education—the 1840s battle over Tractarianism at New York's General Seminary, the 1920s Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, the 1970s Missouri Synod battle over Concordia, and the 1980s Southern Baptist civil war—shared common characteristics. In each of these, conservatives believed and believed passionately that the seminaries had deserted their role as ecclesiastical advocates, and they

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were able to point to the exact wording of seminary charters and denominational confessions to support their point. The schools were, in their view, scholarly means to ecclesiastical goals, and they were determined to hold institutions accountable to the covenants the institutions had made with their founders. In contrast, the faculties often stumbled into the fray. Few seminary teachers sought a battle[6] and often expressed surprise when hostilities broke out. More often than not, the teachers had reached their conclusions after long hours of study, criticism, and publication. Because their work had public warrant, the instructors believed that should satisfy the private wishes of the churches as well. In other words, they believed that the public approval of their work had priority over the private and partial goals of an institution's founders or sponsors. The accused had only been doing their jobs.

The irony was that both faculty and their critics were right about the vocation of the seminary professor. Each side understood the vocation of the theological teacher from its own vantage point and assumed that they held the winning cards whenever someone called for a showdown. But neither side could turn the other loose. The faculties depended on the churches for contributors, students, and ecclesiastic legitimacy, in short, for their lifeblood; the churches depended on the faculties to help their leaders establish their place in the American social constellation.

THE DECLINING PRESTIGE OF SEMINARIES IN THE ACADEMIC WORLD

Before 1960, most seminaries were part of an informal network that united denominational colleges with specific theological schools. Collegiate campus ministers directed students who participated in the religious activities that they sponsored to the "right" school, and professors of Bible (sometimes called religion) often served as recruiters for their own alma mater. In addition, popular religion teachers, like Yale's Charles Foster Kent and his companions in the National Association of Bible Teachers, understood themselves as the enlighteners of the churches, raising up an educated class of laymen who would influence public and ecclesiastical opinion. Following the conclusion of the Second World War, many university and collegiate educators renewed their interest in the liberal arts as part of effective training for citizenship. College teachers of religion were ready to respond to this emphasis. Many schools added new religion departments, and many existing departments added new members. America's new leadership role in world affairs also indirectly contributed to the popularity of religion departments whose teachers often had personal knowledge of the far-flung places that TV news was making familiar.

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Strangely enough, at least in retrospect, seminary leaders were not pleased with this arrangement. The American Association of Theological Schools repeatedly reaffirmed its position that religious studies was not a proper major for those preparing for seminary. In part, this was because of the seminary's desire to establish the pattern of four years of college and three years of seminary as a norm. If they gave too much credit to the collegiate departments, some reasoned, then the churches might question the larger paradigm.[7] Others seemed to believe that the seminaries could offer more thorough introductions to such central theological disciplines as Bible or systematic theology. But such issues were not central to the debates. The seminaries wanted a monopoly in the training of ministers and were determined to secure it at any cost. Of all the proposed "preseminary" prerequisites, religion was only assigned three hours and that almost as an afterthought. Charles Taylor, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), added salt to the wound when he said, "courses in religion are not offered according to the best academic standards. Even in some of our universities they are not on a par with studies in other fields" (Beardslee 1966, 100).

In Greek mythology, pride always precedes a fall, and it was so in this case. Almost without anyone noticing, the teaching of religion in colleges and universities received a boost from the Supreme Court. In the highly controversial *School District v. Schempp* (374US203 1963), the court noted explicitly:

> Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistent with the First Amendment.

These simple words provided legitimacy for the study of religion apart from theology. While this was important to the newer state university departments, their collegiate cousins also welcomed it. The teaching of religion could and ought to be separated from the teaching of theology.

Theorists in the new field of religious studies moved quickly to claim the more public academic ground for themselves. The new "religionists" were determined to establish their discipline as quickly as possible. Following a by-now familiar pattern among academics, they commissioned such leaders in the field as Clyde Holbrook to study the new discipline. Moreover, they transformed the National Association of Bible Instructors (NABI) into the far more imposing American Academy of Religion (AAR) (Holbrook 1991). Each word in the title was significant, but the term "Academy" may have said more than the others. The leaders of the new association were determined to be scholars in their own right and to develop their own guild along classic lines. Significantly, perhaps, the NABI traditionally had met on seminary campuses during the Christmas break when space was available; the new AAR met in convention centers and major hotels.

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The separation of the teaching of religious studies from the teaching of theology was never total. As late as 1991, most college teachers of Bible and church history continued to identify with their seminary counterparts, partially because the practitioners in those fields believed that they shared a common historical method that was part and parcel of modern academic life (Hart 1991). But this should not hide the substantial success of the new AAR in establishing itself and its discipline. Scholarship, even in traditional theological fields, had migrated from the theological seminaries and had found its primary home in the university divinity schools and in the larger state universities.

The increasing visibility of the college and university departments of religious studies was not the only reason for the spread of such symbols of university professionalism as tenure and standards of promotion to the seminaries. The handful of university-related divinity schools, which continued to train the majority of theological teachers, had as much, if not more, influence. But such cautions should not obscure the fact that the new understanding of religious studies raised the academic standards of both seminary and college faculties.

The darker shadows cast by the university on seminary life, however, more than offset these gains in academic standards. Seminary faculties and college religion teachers traded places in the academic hierarchy. In the first half of the century, the seminaries were the most prestigious appointments, and all but a handful of college and seminary teachers were ordained; by the end of the century, the most prestigious appointments were in the university departments or divinity schools, and fewer college or university faculty members felt a need to be ordained to legitimate their position. Professorial status was determined by a professor's standing in the guild and not by ecclesiastical recognition. Seminary faculty members enjoyed the improved secular recognition of their scholarship, but they were now clearly in institutions that did not have the prestige of the institutions that employed their former underlings.

THE SHADOW OF THE REVIVAL

Historians have long recognized the centrality of movements of renewal and revival in American Protestant history, and many American religious historians still conventionally count four or five "great awakenings" in our history. Like many other historical heuristics, such conventions are useful if they are not used too woodenly or literally. Seen from a distance, American Protestant life appears to be marked by periods of surge, followed by periods of comparative calmness, which is in turn followed by a new period of growth and expansion. In some respects, the various cycles in American religious life are very similar to the business cycles of rapid economic growth, followed by comparative contraction, that are so common in economic history. The United States is a vast

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free market in religion in which people select faith for a variety of purposes that satisfy their own internal criteria. Periods of revival and renewal represent times when many people invest more of their emotional and financial resources in religious life and institutions than at other times.[8]

Language about business and religious cycles must be qualified by similar cautions about both. In the greatest periods of prosperity, some lose everything due to a poorly chosen investment, and some people prosper in the darkest of depressions. Likewise, religious revivals do not affect all aspects of the religious marketplace equally. During most periods of religious awakening, some churches lose members, while others gain, and sometimes a revival may be more influential in some regions than others.[9]

THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

In addition to the terms "revival" and "awakening," American Protestants have used the term "movement" to describe groups involved in a drive for a particular goal or end. Thus, the antislavery movement directed the energy of its adherents toward the abolition of slavery, the student volunteer movement directed the energy of college students toward the "evangelization of the world in this generation," and the peace movement directed the energy of its adherents toward the outlawing of war. Periods of revival and renewal are times when religious life generates a significant number of movements that direct the religious energies of the newly converted or renewed, although movements can exist apart from such periods of excitement.

Those involved in a revival or a movement often establish schools to continue or promote their revitalized faith. Thus, the early nineteenth-century evangelical surge encouraged believers to establish Newton, Lane, Oberlin, Boston, and Southern Baptist, while the missionary revival of the late nineteenth century inspired the founding of Moody Bible Institute, The Divinity School of the University of Chicago, and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. In turn, the post–World War II revival encouraged the founding of Southeastern Baptist Seminary, Midwestern Baptist Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, the Methodist Seminary in Ohio, and the Saint Paul School of Theology (Kansas City).

Seminaries are deeply influenced by revival and renewal movements, for they provide seminaries with emotional and intellectual energy. In times when religious interest is strong, awakened individuals are willing to invest their spiritual and earthly capital in the future of their particular faith. Religious revivals are often millenarian in their vision, pointing to the coming victory of faith in the life of the nation and of individuals. The seminary or the Bible school is a natural place for enthusiastic believers to invest in this future. The seminary and

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its faculty are, thus, seedbeds of more than academic learning. They are the churches' down payment on the coming consummation of their religious vision.

Seminaries have traditionally been part of the ecology of religious movements, and seminary faculties have served as important public spokespeople for these movements. In the early nineteenth century, such theologically diverse seminary teachers as Leonard Wood of Andover, Bernas Sears of Newton, and Charles Hodge of Princeton were aggressive supporters of the missionary movement. Students listened to speakers, prepared papers on faraway places and their people, and prayed for divine guidance regarding the claim of the foreign field on their lives. Every graduation was marked by a harvest of new missionaries, determined to minister overseas or on the American frontier.

THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

In turn, missionary leaders became avid supporters of the seminaries. After improvements in transportation made "furloughing" missionaries a common practice, the returnees would often stay at a seminary. By 1900, the leading schools had their own missionary residences, often homes on or adjacent to the campus, that provided missionaries with a base for their fundraising activities. In addition, visiting missionaries indoctrinated the current student body with the ideas of the missionary movement and made new recruits to the cause.

Initially, the missionary movement influenced the work of seminary faculties indirectly. The missionary was an anomaly. On the one hand, missionaries were among the most specialized of ministers; on the other, the very nature of their work made them generalists. As late as 1939, Professor John Baillie, a noted philosopher of religion who served both at Union (NY) and Edinburgh, argued that the seminary course was the best preparation for missionaries because "the advantage which the trained theologian has over the saint is not unlike the advantage which the trained anatomist has over the athlete. The anatomist cannot use his body any better than the athlete but he understands it better. The theological student is not a better Christian than the unschooled and unlettered saint but his understanding is better" (539). Although there were periodic calls for the seminaries to provide more specialized education for missionary work,[10] the schools tended to leave that training to the denominations. An important exception to this observation was the establishment of the Kennedy School of Missions as part of the Hartford Seminary Foundation. Hartford's adventuresome president, W. Douglas Mackenzie, established a school of missions as well as a school of education to provide specialized training in comparative religion, languages, and sociology for further missionaries (Mackenzie, Jacobus, and Mitchell 1911). Ironically,

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the liberal Mackenzie's idea of a "theological university" that would teach all the skills needed for Christian leadership later provided Southern Baptists and other religious conservatives with a conceptual model for their own institutions.

The missionary enterprise influenced theological education directly through the ecumenical movement, both at home and abroad. With a few exceptions, such as New York's Union Theological Seminary and the Yale Divinity School, from 1820 to 1920 most theological schools were denominational institutions. In concrete terms that meant that the faculties of the schools were exclusively drawn from the clergy of the sponsoring denomination and often that the school had a denominationally based confession of faith for faculty and occasionally for members of the governing board. But these were the formal marks of denominational control. The actual influence of the denominations was far more extensive. Seminary faculties and boards were deeply involved in ecclesiastical politics, and the seminary often served almost as a talent pool for the churches. While some good scholarship was produced under this system, much of it was primarily directed toward denominational needs. In times of controversy, seminaries could become prizes of war that were conquered and held by one side or the other. Seminary faculties were acutely aware of their exposed place in ecclesiastical controversy, and while many professors primarily wanted to be left alone with their students and books, they knew that their every action was watched by the champions of this side or that. The Fundamentalist-Modernist battles of the 1920s, the Missouri Lutheran battle over Concordia in the 1970s, and the extended Southern Baptist battles of the 1980s saw faculties caught in a maelstrom of seemingly indeterminable debate.

There were two primary ways out of the morass. The university divinity school offered one model. Ultimately reaching back to the very influential German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, this interpretation saw the seminary as primarily a professional school, similar to the schools of medicine, law, and social service.[11] Because the churches were important parts of American culture, the provision of a well-trained, efficient, and professional ministry was an important public task. Particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, the American Association of Theological Schools promoted this understanding. This model had a positive impact on many theological faculties and their thought about their own work.

But the university professional model had two serious problems. First, no Protestant church was large enough or held sufficient influence to claim to be the "American national church." Even the wealthiest and most influential of the churches had comparatively small memberships and had comparatively few representatives in national government. On a purely statistical basis, it would be difficult to argue that providing leadership for these organizations was important. Second, the university and professional model lacked religious

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power. At best, professionalism commanded the allegiance of the mind, never the heart.[12]

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The ecumenical movement was the emotional bridge that provided the needed impetus for change. Like all significant religious and theological movements, ecumenism had many roots that reached deep into the collective psyche. In its modern Protestant form, the ecumenical movement was the convergence of four different movements of renewal and revival. First, the new big-city revivalism associated with Dwight L. Moody and later Billy Sunday was remarkably free of denominational identification. The revivalists believed that they represented all Protestant churches and that their message was a simple distillation of biblical truth, similar to Bill Bright's later Four Spiritual Laws. More liberal American Christians had a similar understanding of theology. What humanity needed, they believed, were not creeds but the message of Jesus that one should love God and neighbor. At the same time, American Protestants were becoming more concerned with various forms of social service and social action. The number of organizations devoted to doing good in the average American city skyrocketed. As liberal theologian Walter Rauschenbusch noted, the social gospel was a fact of Christian life. What the church needed, he argued, was a theology adequate to Christian practice. The formation of the Federal Council of Churches was a natural outgrowth of the success of these interdenominational organizations. Historians of gender (Cairns 1990) have noted that the new emphasis on the social gospel produced a mini-awakening among American males who saw it as a more masculine approach to Christianity than the emotion-laden sentimentality of the average pulpit. Ecclesiastical bureaucracies exploded as the churches struggled to put the new wine of this awakening into the old wineskins of traditional ecclesiastical organizations.

At the heart of this awakening was a revived interest in foreign and home missions. From 1890 to 1914, American Protestants witnessed a major expansion of interest in missionary activity of all sorts. Beginning in 1886 at a meeting at Mt. Hermon called by Dwight L. Moody, the Student Volunteer Movement rapidly expanded on college campuses. Usually identified simply by its initials, the SVM generated deep support on the nation's campuses and inspired both denominational and ecumenical agencies to increase their giving to the cause. The Layman's Missionary Movement, the last of the prewar Protestant financial crusades, illustrated the interest and the financial power that the movement had. Between 1907 and 1924, Protestant giving to missions increased from $8,980,000 to $45,272,000. The new money was needed to enable the churches to use the vast human resources pouring from college cam-

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puses. Because missionary work enlisted large numbers of women as well as men, the question of how these talented women should be educated was an acute one.

Meanwhile, missionaries abroad and missiologists at home began to advocate cooperation in the missionary enterprise. The great missionary conferences, beginning with Edinburgh in 1910, made it clear that the churches could attain their common goals only by common action.

The contemporary tendency to identify mainstream Christianity with the ecumenical movement should not obscure the fact that contemporary evangelicalism has many of its roots in this same missionary revival. After 1890, few, if any, evangelical organizations were denominationally centered, and most were explicitly interdenominational, and the handful that were so organized, such as Baptist Gordon, moved quickly away from their denominational moorings.

The 1963 opening of the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII seemed an answer to many prayers. Many Protestant observers believed that it marked a new openness on the part of Roman leaders to ecumenical cooperation and perhaps even eventual unity. One of the deepest fissures in Christian history seemed about to be spanned.

Many seminary teachers and administrators were involved at every level of the ecumenical movement, and their participation made them familiar with its larger goals. However, what was more interesting was the way in which the ecumenical movements reshaped the understanding of the seminary faculty. John A. Mackay, president of Princeton, the most successful of the denominational schools, enthused that the denominational school with the greatest contribution to make was one "where confessional boundaries are transcended" (Mackay 1956, 7). This was most evident in the reading lists of the various schools which often contained the same texts.

ECUMENISM AND THE DECLINE OF DENOMINATIONALISM

The application of the ecumenical ideal to the task of faculty building was obvious: an ecumenical faculty, blessed by a healthy diversity, might provide a more substantial theological education than a purely denominational school could provide. The process of mixing faculties was under way before 1965, but it changed in character after that date. In addition to representatives from other Protestant churches, Roman Catholics joined Protestant faculties, and Protestants, although in smaller numbers, joined Catholic faculties. The new hope was that the theological faculty might represent in its membership some of the richness and diversity of the Christian tradition.

Although the ecumenical movement peaked in the 1960s, the ecumenical ideal suggested that the seminary needed to be as broad as possible in order

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to accomplish its basic task of training pastors. In effect, ecumenical experience suggested that seminaries needed to reflect, as much as possible, the theological and ecclesiastical diversity of the broader Christian movement. This understanding stood seminary faculties in good stead as they responded to the movements for greater equality in American social and political life. Gradually, seminary faculties came to include more women and more people of color. Some adventuresome schools also began to include gay and lesbian persons on their faculties. Schools were best, it was assumed in this ecumenical spirit, when they represented the full range of Christian diversity.

The decline of denominationalism as an organizing principle for theological faculties had a very important corollary: the identity of seminary teachers was no longer directly connected to their ordination or ecclesiastical standing. In effect, seminary teachers had become "theological educators" who drew their identity from their service to the church. This post-1960 understanding of the seminary faculty member's role came at the same time that the American Academy of Religion was reshaping the understanding of college and university teaching in the United States, and the ecumenical understanding of the role of the seminary teacher was always in danger of becoming theological camouflage for an essentially secular understanding.

The ecumenical origins of the ideal of theological education served, at least partially, to offset this problem. Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and many Protestant evangelicals had seen education for ministry in terms of the spiritual formation of the person.[13] While none of these traditions downplayed the role of a well-trained mind, they believed that the minister was in some real sense a person of God whose spiritual life was indivisible from his or her professional activities.

Advocates of the role of the faculty in the spiritual formation of the clergy had important allies in the Association of Theological Schools. The association had been formed by the older and often more liberal theological seminaries as a way of maintaining the academic standards of the institutions. In the 1950s, due in part to a large grant from the Rockefeller-controlled Sealtantic Fund (Weber 1997, 164), the ATS became the think tank of American theological education in addition to its early role as the government-recognized accreditor of theological schools. After Vatican II, the ATS changed character, as Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, evangelical, and charismatic schools applied for and were granted membership. As the dialogue in the ATS developed, theological educators became aware that a good school must "provide opportunities for formational experiences . . . essential for the practice of ministry, namely, emotional maturity, personal faith, moral integrity, and social concern" (Association of Theological Schools, *General Standards* 4.2.1.1).

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Ecumenical diversity had changed the way that theological faculties understood themselves.

THE MID-CENTURY EXPANSION AND ITS AFTERMATH

From the late 1930s to the 1950s, American religious organizations experienced a period of rapid expansion. This revival was marked by increased church membership, an increase in church contributions, the expansion of state and local church bureaucracies, and increasing financial support for nondenominational Christian organizations.[14] Seminaries, whose enrollments swelled as a result of the GI Bill, shared in this general prosperity. Enrollments grew, new buildings were constructed (including expensive housing for married students), and the ideal of both college and seminary for pastors became more widely accepted. Naturally, faculty size also grew as schools were able to add personnel. Much of this growth was in the newer, practical fields, especially counseling, that had been pioneered in the 1920s and 1930s but whose growth had been stymied economically by the Great Depression.

Part of the religious excitement of this period found its source in the "theological revival." Not only did Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich appear on the cover of *Time* magazine, but there was substantial popular and intellectual interest in religious and theological questions. Among evangelicals, a similar renaissance occurred, although on a small scale, as such noted theologians as E. J. Carnell and Carl F. Henry published significant works.

The Rockefeller Brothers' Fund hoped to utilize this excitement by financing a year in theological school for promising undergraduates. The fund's managers believed that this would expose some of America's brightest and best to the issues that mattered and, hopefully, to lead some into the ministry. While it is difficult to gauge the intellectual level of the teaching and discussion on the average theological campus, the level of theological instruction appears to have been high.

In short, this revival gave theological educators much to crow about. To the less cautious, the future that lay before schools and churches appeared very bright. However, by 1957, some able ecclesiastical and seminary leaders were beginning to warn of dangers ahead. In his last address to the Andover-Newton community in 1965, Herbert Gezork foretold:

> At the beginning of my ministry one of three persons on earth was a Christian, at least nominally. At the end of yours only one in six will be a Christian. . . . Accept then, as ministers of the gospel, the fact that you live in a world which presents to the people of our day numerous options from which to choose a philosophy and a way of life, that the Christian faith is only one of these, and that only a minority choose it. (10)

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Although Gezork's words fell on unperceiving ears, he was right that the period of renewal and new energy was coming to an end. The passionate debate among younger theologians over who would be the successors of Niebuhr came to a disappointing conclusion: no one.

Much of the turmoil and malaise experienced by mainstream theological faculty since the 1960s has arisen from their failure to recognize that the revival that had treated them so well had ended. This was not, of course, an apocalyptic fate, for church membership has continued at about the level that it was in the 1920s. But despite the pressure on church bureaucracies to downsize, their staffs appear to be as large today (and in many cases larger) as they were in the 1920s and 1930s. The same might be said of the mainstream seminaries. Few of them have reduced faculties to the levels of the 1920s, and most still support essentially the same number of faculty as they supported at the high-water mark of the revival.

In response to financial pressures, almost all schools have had to diversify their curricular offerings to appeal to new constituencies, develop new degrees, and demand more from their faculties. At many places, faculty secretaries and other such support staff have been reduced. More institutional energy has had to go into fundraising. This has drawn the attention of seminary presidents away from their institutions and turned it outwards. Deans and faculties naturally have had to take up the slack. Committee work, the bane of the researching class, has increased, and scholarly production has decreased.

In contrast, the evangelical and charismatic seminaries have benefited from a smaller awakening. For reasons not completely clear, conservative churches have undergone a significant rebirth in the 1970s and 1980s. In part this rebirth was related to the renaissance of conservative politics, and the old adage that people pray as they vote may be applicable. But, like most dynamic religious movements, the evangelical mini-revival has roots that are primarily religious and cultural. The promise of rebirth, very much a part of many non-Christian religious movements in the same period,[15] has deep appeal in periods of uncertainty and indirection. In addition, evangelical theological faculties have not only provided courses in church growth and evangelism, they have played a major role in providing evangelicalism with coherence and direction.

For good or ill, seminaries continue to live in the shadow of the revival. When the nation or a part of it is gripped by religious excitement, seminary faculties do well, their numbers increase, and new fields of study open. The converse, unfortunately, is also true. Seminaries and their faculties are affected deeply by the ebbs of the American religious tide.

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RENEWAL ON THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Operating in the shadow of the university and movements of religious renewal, some theological professors are more influenced by their academic guilds than by the churches; others see themselves as the spearheads of religious and political movements of renewal and revival. Certainly the excitement on present-day campuses comes primarily from those teachers who have pledged themselves passionately to a larger cause, whether it is gay rights, feminism, or the recovery of the Bible. Yet I wonder, both as a seminary teacher and a historian, whether either of these alternatives is satisfactory or satisfying. Cautiously, and aware of the various shadows that tincture our path, I would like to suggest another understanding of the theological professor's vocation, one that follows a historical road less traveled.

In 1956, H. Richard Niebuhr, assisted by Daniel Day Williams and James M. Gustafson, published a short volume, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry: Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education*. Despite the generous attribution of authorship to Williams and Gustafson, the essay bears the marks of Niebuhr's wisdom and guidance. The text is somewhat deceptive. On first reading, one is tempted to treat the volume as a period piece, a gold mine of quotations that can be used to illustrate the ideas about theological schools in the 1940s and 1950s. This perspective is not by the point. Like its companion volume, the *Advancement of Theological Education* (Niebuhr, Williams, and Gustafson 1957), *The Purpose of the Church* contains many commonplace observations that reflect the time in which it was written. Yet, even when all of these qualifications are carefully noted, the book still has contemporary applicability.

Niebuhr began with the insistence that the work of theological education must be understood from a theological standpoint.[16] Although Niebuhr recognized the shadows cast by the universities and the revivals, he did not want to define theological schools or their faculties in those terms. Instead, he believed that seminary faculties need to find their purpose in the deeper aim of the church: the increase of the love of God and neighbor (Niebuhr, Williams, and Gustafson 1956, 27). To use the language of Jonathan Edwards, one of Niebuhr's theological exemplars, the seminary and its faculty must align themselves with the intrinsic good that is implicit in their work and not with the various extrinsic goods that lie too ready at hand. By aligning ourselves, thus, with God's ultimate end, we theological educators might set a course into God's future that is greater than any revival or any triumph of university influence. Such a theological focus may allow us, as Niebuhr suggested, to assert ourselves as Christian intellectuals and use our minds to reflect God's glory and thus lead

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our students beyond a narrow comprehension of our scholarly disciplines and into a realm of wisdom from which they can go forth and minister to the saints.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SEMINARY EDUCATION

In light of this understanding of the purposes of theological education, we need to admit that there are limits to how many different programs schools can sustain and still retain a focus on being an intellectual center of the church's life. The question is at what point do institutions resolve to get off the treadmill of program marketing in order to consider what they are actually doing and how well they are doing it. I would even hope that schools might engage in a kind of zero programming of their academic work to see what is essential in light of the purpose of theological education I have argued for. This will mean saying no to some commitments in order to honor the ones they deem most important. For some schools, it might even mean recognizing that they need to reconceive their mission in order to strengthen the quality of what they are able to do.

Seminaries need to keep in mind what is central to their practices of teaching and learning. The objective is not simply to improve certain techniques of teaching or even to better understand student learning; instead, the goal of our efforts to improve theological education is formed by our hope to equip students to join the conversation about faith and to learn how to call others into this conversation. As Christian intellectuals, church pastors and leaders are shaped by the gospel's insistence that we engage the issues of the Christian life and the church's witness in the public community through this continuing conversation.

The challenge for theological faculties is learning how to assist students in making up their academic deficiencies and developing the kinds of skills needed to acquire knowledge and understanding that make it possible for them to participate in theological conversations and teach others how to do this themselves in congregational life and in their vocation as Christians.

The intellectual conversation about faith and public issues that I have been discussing is not synonymous with scholarly discussion. The goal is not to make seminary students like seminary faculties, but to support them in becoming Christian intellectuals in the practice of ministry. The claim for "Christian intellectual" as an image of ministry is the fundamental recognition that pastoral ministry requires us to think about and engage the issues of our life in the church and our practice of the Christian life in the public square. The purpose of theological education is to equip men and women to join this conversation and help others engage the conversation as well. Our efforts to strengthen theological teaching and learning must be grounded in this aim.

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NOTES

1. There were some exceptions, of course. When it was founded in 1808, Andover was among the best-financed American institutions, and Union Theological Seminary (New York) was similarly well endowed at the beginning of the twentieth century. Even in today's world of mega-endowments, Presbyterian Princeton Seminary ranks high, and the Cooperative program of the Southern Baptist Convention has given that denomination's seminaries more financial security than most of their siblings.
2. See Kelsey (1992, 1993), Wood (1985), and Farley (1983).
3. The divinity professors at Harvard and Yale conducted reading programs similar to those maintained by parish clergy.
4. The various German states had the right of appointment to many university positions, and political pressures could affect the process. During the height of the various controversies over the Bible, the governments often required theology faculties to appoint representatives of all factions.
5. The *International Critical Commentary*, published by T & T Clark, was the product of cooperation between American and British scholars. The Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew Lexicon*, various editions since 1907, was another example of American and British biblical scholarship. Although most American Lutherans were very aware of the importance of German neo-confessionalism (often called neo-orthodoxy in German historical writings), other American Christians tended to see German theology in terms of a straight line from the enlightenment and Schleiermacher to Ritschl or Harnack. British thinkers also shared this picture of nineteenth-century German theology.
6. Union (NY) Seminary's Charles A. Briggs was an exception to this generalization. Briggs delighted in goading the conservatives in his denomination and welcomed the battle, at least in its earliest stages. He thought it inconceivable that the Presbyterian Church would reject his scholarship, highly prized on the public stage. He was, of course, wrong. He was convicted of heresy.
7. Ironically, the collegiate departments may have been the best recruiters that the seminaries had.
8. The implications of rational choice sociology for the study of American religion are explored in Stark and Finke (2000) and Finke and Stark (1992).
9. This qualification is particularly important when considering the effects of revivals on theological education. Southern evangelical religion, for example, received a decisive push in the camp revivals in the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Northern evangelicals, however, experienced a decline in the same period. In a similar vein, the surge of religious excitement and energy in the charismatic movement has not had a proportional impact on all American denominations.
10. The 1910 Edinburgh Conference called for all prospective missionaries to receive training in five areas: the science and history of missions, the religions of the world, sociology, pedagogy, and the science of language.
11. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1988) offers the classic expression of this professional model. In the United States, William Adams Brown (1920, 1938) was perhaps the most intellectually acute advocate of this understanding.
12. Shailer Mathews, dean of the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s, was noted for his use of the term "ministerial efficiency." He used the term precisely and sought to show

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that seminary education improved the on-the-job performance of Baptist ministers. While his arguments were convincing, they do not appear to have attracted as much attention as they deserved at the time, partly because they were often presented in an uninspiring manner.

13. The term "formation" has come to be used by a variety of people with little attention to its Catholic origins. I have followed that usage, using "formation" as an inclusive term for the spiritual dimension of the ministry.
14. As in the case of other periods of awakening, some thoughtful people believed that this was not a period of religious health for American churches. These included such leaders as Henry Pitt van Dusen and the young Martin E. Marty. Robert D. Putnam, in *Bowling Alone* (2000), notes the various ways in which Americans were involved in community building activities in this period. The church was part and parcel of this American search for meaningful places for personal interaction.
15. Religious movements that stressed individual spirituality and personal religious creativity have characterized the last thirty years. Evangelicalism may be more like the New Age than many evangelicals would want to admit.
16. A similar point was made during the discussion in the 1980s and early 1990s around the work of David Kelsey and Edward Farley. As Kelsey (1993, 2) noted, "Most striking of all, perhaps, is the fact that it has been a theological debate. Its central focus has been on the question of what is theological about theological education." My turn to Niebuhr is partially a matter of personal preference, but it also reflects my own sense that it is easier to evaluate a book almost fifty years old than a more current volume.