

## CATHOLIC SEMINARIES AND THEOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP

Patricia Walter of St. Mary's Seminary, Cleveland, Ohio, addressed specific problems facing professional theology in the seminary environment. Walter cited Boyer's definition of scholarship as "a variety of creative work carried on in a variety of places...measured by the ability to think, communicate and learn." While the environment of seminaries differs greatly according to their structure, a problem for seminaries is that often scholarship today is measured exclusively by publication, and significant contributions in other areas may not be recognized. The unique relationship of seminaries with the pastoral authorities of the church does not preclude scholarly activity. Service to the diocese or religious community necessarily flows from this relationship. Often it is unrecognized, as when seminary professors do research for bishops in forming pastoral letters and other statements which appear over the bishop's name. However, research and publication in neuralgic areas such as sexuality and authority can have and have had deleterious effects. Hiring priorities should emphasize research potential as well as leadership and pastoral success. Budget constraints often sacrifice released time and sabbaticals which are essential for the maintenance of theological vitality. Pastoral service is a part of the life of most priest faculty, but when added to advising and formation responsibilities, especially in free-standing seminaries, scholarship often suffers. In some situations, time spent in scholarly activity is regarded as a luxury which increases the work of other faculty in formation. In general, additional discrimination in tasks and realistic support is needed to encourage the development of theological vitality in seminaries.

Robert Schreiter of the Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, Illinois, focused on the theological union or consortium as a locus of theological activity in seminaries. The union model has the advantage of size. The student body is larger, as is the faculty. The larger faculty allows greater specialization, and the union of various religious institutes creates a larger pool from which faculty may be drawn. Unions are usually part of ecumenical consortia with other theological schools. This provides more colleagues within particular disciplines. The Protestant schools have a tradition of acting as theological and intellectual centers for their churches and have a strong focus on academic standards. These relationships often provide the opportunity for faculty involvement in doctoral level programs even when their particular institution does not offer such a program. Unions have been formed by the participation of religious communities, many of which have a long and serious commitment to academic traditions and culture. These communities attract academically talented students who are drawn by this commitment. The structure of the union results in fewer formation responsibilities for academic faculty. Formation has mushroomed in recent decades. It may be said that it has "metastas-

ized." Given the age of today's candidates, these questions must be asked: "Are we really changing people that much?" "Is the amount of change reflective of the time spent in formation activities?" Given the emphasis in some quarters on formation, "Are the academic activities of the faculty rewarded adequately or even properly recognized?"

Jeremiah McCarthy of St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, California, emphasized the uniqueness of the seminary context for the study of theology. Seminary learning is rooted in praxis. This strengthens the need for the concrete grounding of the theological enterprise but must avoid the levelling effect of the students' desire for the immediate applicability of theology. As a professional degree, the M.Div. design influences the way in which the tradition is passed on to the next generation. The tension resides in the need to be comprehensive as well as critical in the transmission of this tradition. The spiritual context allows the seminary to do theology holistically when *lex credendi, lex orandi* is a lived reality. While the seminary is required to live within the mission of the church, it is not theologically entrapped. Rather, the mission of doing theology in the context of credal statements, concrete pastoral demands and the like leads to a special responsibility for the tradition itself. It is a setting where pastoral focus is an asset and not a detriment to theological education. The challenge of seminary education is to help students achieve the process of theological integration so that their horizons may be "fused" according to Gadamer's prescription for the clarification of the pursuit of truth.

A spirited discussion followed the presentations. The participants noted that the diversity of seminary structures necessitated a variety of approaches to achieve theological vitality. There was agreement that there must be a clearer delineation of tasks within seminaries. The increase of time spent in formation and the danger that the seminarians spend too much time addressing therapeutic issues were seen as critical factors which affect scholarly endeavors. Lack of professional training for many in formation roles can lead to a lack of support for academic achievement. While publication is important, it should not be equated with theological vitality. It is the responsibility of the academic faculty to ensure that professional standards are not compromised. In sum, the critical questions for seminary scholarship are the taxing workloads of seminary faculties, realistic support for research and publication, and the competition for precious student time amidst an avalanche of ever increasing expectations and pastoral demands.

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