

For some obvious examples, Christology can no longer intelligibly be done except in the light of other ideas of incarnation and of the relation of other faith judgments to historical founders. The Christian idea of the human person can be interpreted only in dialogue with (and perhaps influence from) the Buddhist notion of *anatta*. The idea of the being of God needs to be informed by Eastern as well as Western ideas of non-being. Christian eschatology must be related to the hope for *nirvana*. And so forth.

If I am at all correct here, then Christian theological work must be throughout informed by the study of non-Christian thought. And the consequence of this is that theological education must in all its parts explicitly incorporate interreligious (and cross-cultural) dimensions. That theological education is not currently of this sort I take to be its most serious theological problem.

CLAUDE WELCH

*Graduate Theological Union
Berkeley*

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM II THE ONE AND THE MANY REVISITED

What is the unifying center of theological education—or, to use Edward Farley's parlance, what and where is "theologia"? For these past few years theological educators have been wrestling with problems of unity and pluralism within theological education. The questions have been formed by Farley's seminal work, *Theologia*, by the issues research being conducted by the Association of Theological Schools, and by the many new dimensions of pluralism which now challenge theological education.

Farley poses the question by recounting the history of theological education and noting the various forms of unity which it has embodied. Each form relates to the purpose of theological education, whether that be to mold character such that each student is imbued with worship of God, or to equip persons for the complex tasks of ministry. Variations of the latter have characterized theological education since Schleiermacher. However, educators of today find increasing difficulty in making this purpose a unifying center of theological education since in fact the tasks of ministry have become increasingly complex. The traditional areas of scripture, dogmatics, historical theology, and practical theology divide and subdivide as new disciplines clamor for their rightful place in the task of preparing persons for ministry. Sociology, psychology, economics and politics are new entries into the theological curriculum, so that one is tempted to say that theological schools must almost become mini-universities to deal adequately with their task.

Pluralism is not only a factor of theological curricula, it is also a factor in theological students. Gone are the days when the seminarian was a young man in his twenties newly holding his undergraduate degree. Such men now take their places

among women and second-career seminarians of all ages, including persons who have retired from other employment.

Finally, pluralism is also a demanding factor in our shrinking world—pluralism of nations and national ideologies, pluralism of world religions, and pluralism within each religion, including of course our own.

In short, theological education is not only diverse in terms of its own curriculum, but also in terms of its students and the recognized world within which education takes place. It is no wonder that in the midst of this diversity the quest for unity takes on deep urgency. In the face of this pluralism, how we define that which holds the pluralism together so that it does not degenerate into fragmentation is itself to be theologically decided. Hence theological education, in this pluralistic age, is itself a theological problem.

There have been various answers posed of late, and it is perhaps quite fitting that there should be a plurality of answers to the problem. It may be the case that no single answer is itself sufficient, and that in fact the unifying center of theological education must itself be a complex unity, mirroring in its own way the central Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

While Farley speaks quite critically of the clerical paradigm, it is nonetheless true that in many schools this acts as central. A particular vision of ministry, covering functional and personal qualities, governs the curriculum. While preparation of persons for ministry is in fact a major function of a theological school, utilization of this function as the basis of ordering a curriculum entails two problems. First, it threatens turning the school into a professional school focusing upon the training of persons for special tasks. A functional orientation must not hide or overshadow the necessity that the theological school devote itself also to the critical scholarship which is essential to the integrity of Christian faith. Second, of course, the paradigm is itself part of the problem defined above. It means that the student must finally bear the burden of integrating the numerous aspects of the curriculum. This would be a mammoth task for one well seasoned in the complexities of ministry; to ask it of those who are in the preparatory stages of pastoral development is to invite failure. The student's personal experience of the curriculum is more apt to be increasing fragmentation, if not an academic form of schizophrenia, and the problem of the unifying center of theological education is not resolved.

Another mode of addressing the problem is to look again for the essence of Christian faith as the unifying answer. In such an approach, each of the many disciplines which is now necessary as a resource for pastoral work is studied in relation to Christian faith. The constant explication of the relationship is the unifying principle of the education. But of course Christian faith has historically been interpreted in a variety of ways, and to assume one mode as a unifying center can in fact distort the rich complexity of Christian faith in its many historical forms. Pluralism inhabits the unifying center. If we attempt to move away from this pluralism by positing an ideal Christian faith which transcends the many modes of historical faith, we achieve a unifying center at the price of reinforcing or reintroducing the dualism and devaluation of history which have plagued us these two thousand years.

A third mode is to organize the curriculum around the communities of faith. David Kelsey has recently written an as yet unpublished paper in which he gives a powerful argument for a theological curriculum "about and against the church." The subject matter of the seminaries is understood in relation to the Church, both as local congregation and as the wider body of Christ. Texts and traditions are studied as narratives which address the question, who are we as the Church? What are the stories which nurture and illumine us? Such a unifying center of theological education calls for closer relations between Church (institutional, congregational, and communal) and seminary. This occurs as the seminary studies the Church and speaks prophetically to the Church. There is much to commend a curriculum centered around the actual life of the Church, yet care must be taken to ensure the mutuality of the encounter, seeing seminary and Church as partners in a common enterprise wherein each learns from the other, and enriches the other in carrying out its tasks. Otherwise, the Church can be stripped of its subjectivity, becoming instead the object of the seminary's studies. The mistrust which has too frequently attended seminary-Church relations will hardly be alleviated in such a situation.

Each of the proposed organizing centers of theological education has much to commend it, and indeed, one might question a theological curriculum which lacked any one of the foci addressed. It may in fact be the case that the difficulties which each of the unifying centers possesses within itself can best be addressed if the center be seen not as one thing, but itself as a complex center incorporating each of the elements in the three suggestions outlined above. This indicates that the search for a way to unify the pluralism which we encounter must not lead us to a denial or denigration of pluralism, but must itself embrace pluralism—fragmentation, not pluralism, is the problem.

We have a model for such an approach in a trinitarian understanding of God, particularly as developed in Western Christianity. The unity of the three persons of the Trinity is not understood as over against the threeness, but as inherent within the threeness. There is a mutual implication such that each is named only through essential relation to the others: the oneness of God is not something other than God named as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but is understood precisely through this naming. Because God is named Father, God is also named Son and Spirit; because God is named Son, God is also named Father and Spirit; because God is named Spirit, God is also named Father and Son. The unity flows from the complexity, and complexity flows from the unity.

If we look to such a theological intuition as a model for finding the unity of a theological curriculum in light of its embraced pluralism, then several things follow. First, the unity is not to be found outside of the pluralism, but within it. This would indicate that we search for the inherent relations which have brought the pluralism into consideration in the first place. Second, the unity, once named, must be itself complex, and capable of embracing and integrating the pluralism.

If we approach the modes of pluralism in light of such a model, inherent relations do in fact occur which in turn give rise to the three suggested ways of approaching pluralism. Pluralism exists in terms of the complexity of disciplines required to prepare persons for ministry, in the student body which now partici-

pates in theological education, and in the great diversity of ways of being in the world. Subject matter, constituency, and the social, political, and religious structures of the world constitute the pluralistic context of theological education. The relation between these pluralisms may well be the simple fact that the third term—the contemporary world situation—demands that ministry be a complex work in fact the worshipping community is to speak prophetically and ministerially within the world. The changing nature of the student body is itself a part of the complexity of the work: there are many needs; God calls many people who in their own embodiment of God's redemptive love can speak and act effectively in the specificity of many situations. They will minister within the Church and with the Church through the resources of the many scholarly and spiritual disciplines to which they are introduced in seminaries.

To so define the relationship of the pluralistic factors in theological education is indeed to read those relationships in light of ministry, but this does not mean that we return to a new formulation of the clerical paradigm out of the new pluralisms. Rather, it indicates a very broad understanding of ministry as inclusive of the whole Church insofar as the whole people of God are called upon to be bearers of God's redemptive love to the world. Thus there is a call for an ecclesial focus in the forms of pluralism. In and through an ecclesial focus, a seminary curriculum might guide seminarians toward becoming pastors who can facilitate the ministry of the laity in the world. If this is the case, however, it is also so that the pastor as well as the community of faith must be a focus of seminary education: one educates the pastors who will serve within and with the Church. Thus the focus on the pastor and the functions of ministry are still evoked by the understanding of pluralism. Yet once again, to define ministry in terms of the whole Church, ministered to by persons gifted and graced in the peculiar functions of servant leadership, is to define a ministry which continues the incarnation of Christian faith in this world through the body of Christ. The faith which speaks of the God who calls us, redeems us, and leads us into lives of service is not tangential to such ministry, but essential to it. Through this faith, from this faith, and in this faith the Christian community is a worshipping community, and therefore a serving community, led in worship and service by servant leaders. Thus examining the situation of pluralism calls for a deep emphasis upon the centrality of the faith of the Church in the seminary curriculum.

Out of pluralism, therefore, one can easily derive the necessity not of one of our three posed answers as a unifying center for theological education, but of the necessity for all three. Rather than forcing the three to vie with one another for dominance, why not look to the trinitarian paradigm as a way of unifying the three answers, and the theological curriculum as well?

The three modes of unity—the faith of the Church, the clerical paradigm, and the community of faith—become in fact echoes of the trinitarian understanding of God. Rather than seeing each as a separate way of unifying a curriculum, one could easily see them as echoes of a trinitarian paradigm of Father, Son, and Spirit, each necessarily implying the others and thus forming a complex unity. The faith of the Church implies that some will be called forth to be pastors within the community of faith. To be a pastor implies leading a community of faith in lives which critically and effectively enact that faith. To be a community of faith involves the faith

which is embodied, and an organization appropriate to the needs of the community and its faith. The unifying center of theological education is appropriately a complex center, emerging from the very pluralism which it embraces.

How does one organize a curriculum around such a center? By no means would I suggest that there is only one way! But I will suggest for purposes of illustration a way which is being utilized at my own institution, Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. The three foci—faith, pastor, Church—are being utilized successively, but not exclusively. That is, while one focus dominates in a single year, its implications for the other two are in fact essential to its own expression. For example, we are utilizing the three years of study to move from a focus on the community in the first year, to a focus on the faith of the Church in the second year, to a focus on the student as pastor in the third. But the ecclesial focus is theologically oriented, and requires as well that the seminarian participate in small Ecclesial Reflection Groups which focus on personal integration of seminary experience. The focus on faith in the second year looks at implications of faith in the life of the Church and the seminarian, and the focus on the seminarian asks for theological reflection on the church and its ministries.

The ecclesial first year has been developed in partnership with churches, and involves a requirement of participating in worship in many churches. The first semester focuses upon the global Church, and the second semester, the local church. The many disciplines of sociology, psychology, education, and ethics as well as theology, Bible, and history are utilized to develop understanding of contemporary Christian communities. This ecclesial focus leads to a second year in which study is organized to probe more deeply into the faith of the Church with its implications for the mission of the Church in the world. Study in the third year requires a focus on the pastor herself or himself, particularly through a Senior Integrative Seminar in which the student must reflect on the seminary experience as it relates to the call of the student into ministry. The ecclesial focus, faith focus, and clergy focus do not clamor against each other, but in fact imply one another. In each year all are operative, though one is dominant.

The diversity of the student body in such a curriculum is recognized in several ways: first, a "Second-Career Seminar" in the first semester works with second-career students as they examine the forms of ministry prevalent in their former careers, and look to integration of past experience into present and future ministry. With regard to the present, these students are asked to design ways in which they share their gifts from their earlier careers with the entire seminary community—a task which is designed not simply to benefit the second-career student, but which is designed to acquaint other seminarians with the broad spectrum of ministry and resources experienced among laity. With regard to future ministry, the seminar seeks to give the student a sense of integration which will uniquely equip the pastor for an integrative ministry of reconciliation in parish and world. In and through diversity there can be unity.

A second mode of working with the diversity of the student body is to recognize that different life situations mean that many students cannot complete seminary in three years. Financial constraints require a combination of work and study. Hence the curriculum described above is adaptable to a five-year program without violating the integrity of the education.

There were a number of dangers cited earlier concerning each focus considered individually; it is important to see how these dangers are addressed if in fact the three foci be conceived as a complex unity. The first danger noted was that of professionalism at the expense of promoting the critical scholarship of the seminary. This critique could hold both in the clerical paradigm and in the community focus, for if a seminary faculty devotes its energies to preparing persons for specific tasks either as defined by the faculty's perception of ministry or the community's own definition, then indeed it is possible that in the press of duties, continuing reflective and critical scholarship will be slighted. Yet the other side of this critique is that if the resources of texts and traditions do *not* speak to the mission and ministry of the Church, then we may well be promoting the dualism between theory and practice that we so readily decry. To reflect critically upon the texts and traditions of the church in light of the contemporary situation is part of the scholarly task of a seminary faculty. A focus upon the mission and ministries of the Church is precisely a context for asking critical questions concerning the past, future, and present nature of Christianity. By modeling this stance in its curriculum, the seminary might better prepare its seminarians to be theologically sensitive in their ministries. The professional/academic dualism gives the illusion of false dichotomies.

The burden of forcing the student to become the integrating center of the complexities of theological education is lifted given the complex unity of the three foci combined. The curriculum itself is integrated successively in the first two years through paired courses and integrated modular units. Thus in the third year, when the focus shifts to the student's own integration, a model has been given and a foundation laid. To conclude a program with student integration is necessary, for if a student participates in an integrated curriculum but has no sense of how integration is developed within the self, then the person is not yet equipped for the complexities of an integrative ministry in this pluralistic world.

As for the pluralism within faith itself, the ecclesial focus of the first year insures that the diverse modes of Christian faith and worship will in fact be recognized. Students are required to participate in a variety of churches from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds, integrating this with paired courses in theology and sociology. Intensive work in Bible, church history, and theology are integrated with the concrete experiences in the churches. The message is not a fragmented faith, but an incarnational faith expressing God's redemptive grace and love within a diversity of forms.

Finally, by working in intentional partnership with many churches in the Washington area and with the United Methodist Church in particular the entire curriculum respects a healthy mutuality between seminary and Church.

The faith of the Church, the pastor as person, and the communities of faith are not mutually exclusive ordering principles for theological education, but rather are essentially interrelated. Combined into a complex unity as the organizing center of theological education, each tends to counteract the problems attendant in the other modes. There is no expectation that other problems will not arise, or even that this way of addressing the recognized problems is totally adequate. Nor is

Wesley's way of unifying the curriculum under a trinitarian paradigm necessarily the best or only way of using such a model. One might equally well orient the three foci around the worshipping life of communities of faith, ordering the seminary curriculum accordingly. The force of my argument is simply to suggest that in searching for the unity of theological education in this age of pluralism, we must not look outside the manyness of our situation for a principle of unification. To do so opposes a one to a many in ways which risk arbitrariness and dualism. Rather, we have a theological paradigm within the very doctrine of the Trinity for seeing relations within pluralism which suggest ways of ordering a curriculum with coherence and theological faithfulness.

MARJORIE SUCHOCKI
Wesley Theological Seminary

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM III
THE RELATION BETWEEN METHOD IN THEOLOGY
AND IN TEACHING THEOLOGY

I have chosen to discuss the theme of theological education as a theological problem from a very narrow and precise point of view. I will view theological education in terms of teaching, so that the phrase theological education is taken here as synonymous with teaching theology. Even more narrowly I wish to speak about the method of teaching theology or the pedagogy that is appropriate for this discipline.

As a way of getting into this subject very quickly and directly, I propose the following hypothesis: The method of teaching theology should correspond with the method of the discipline of theology itself. Another way of putting the same hypothesis would be to say that there should be a correlation between the method of teaching the content of theology and the method of the discipline of theology itself whereby theological content is generated.

The reason why this proposition is put forward as a hypothesis and not a thesis is that in fifteen or twenty minutes it would be impossible to substantiate it. The purpose of these remarks, then, is not to prove anything, but simply to open up a question for discussion; and the point of the hypothesis is to provide a framework for such a discussion. In simple terms the question addressed is this: When theologians do theology, that is, generate theological positions, how do they do it? And when the same theologians teach theology to others, how do they do it? With the hypothesis that there should be a correlation between these two methodologies, I want to open up the question of what such a correlation would mean for both methodologies.

In order to discuss this question somewhat concretely in a short time I want to give examples from two authors who have been helpful for myself both as a theologian and as a teacher. These are Paul Tillich and Paulo Freire. This choice is arbitrary; other thinkers could have been chosen; they are chosen therefore not to prove a point but as illustrative examples. And because the broad lines of the thought of both of these men are rather well known, I can presuppose a general