Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and the Pastoral Imagination

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EDUCATING CLERGY

Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination

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CLERGY WORK HAS A DISTINCTIVELY PUBLIC CHARACTER, and clergy fill a particular professional role in American life. Clergy may spend considerable time in the solitude of their studies and work primarily in the contexts of specific religious traditions, but clergy practice consistently occurs at the intersections of personal and collective, religious and secular public experience.

For example, recalling his installation as pastor in that rural congregation, Lischer writes that in this ritual event, “The church had decreed that henceforth I would be spiritual guide, public teacher, and beloved sage to people whose lives and work I couldn’t possibly understand. With a stroke of his wand, God—or the bishop—had just made me an expert in troubled marriages, alcoholism, teen sex, and farm subsidies” (2001, pp. 49-50).

With his installation, the congregation and community expected him to engage a wide range of personal and public issues through traditional clergy roles of preaching, teaching, caregiving, counseling, and organizing. Even in the most apparently private of interactions, as between pastor and hospital patient, he would be drawn into the increasingly public realms of family, medical staff, congregation, and community. This insight was the catalyst to the eventual transformation of Lischer’s pastoral imagination.

*The New Rabbi* (2002), Stephen Fried’s story of Har Zion Temple’s search for a new leader, also illustrates this point. The power of the public presence and influence of Rabbi Gerald Wolpe’s thirty-year tenure as that Philadelphia congregation’s rabbi could not be avoided at any point in the temple’s quest. As a public religious figure, his leadership of that congregation had established a standard for measuring any potential suc-
cessor. He was a “brilliant orator and politician” who had originally been hired to hold a conflict-ridden synagogue together as it moved from its older and changing neighborhood in Philadelphia to a new site and new building on Philadelphia’s suburban “Main Line.” He was remembered for exceptional teaching, liturgical leadership, and congregational administration—each requiring public presence and presentation. He had “helped the synagogue, and American Judaism, reinvent itself in the new ‘postwar era’—the one after Vietnam, the Yom Kippur War in Israel, and the civil rights and sexual revolutions in America”—movements that had challenged the very core of American Conservative Jewish identity and tradition. Fried adds that in his later years Wolpe “became best known” for the way he publicly shared the personal “pain and medical dilemmas” associated with the long recovery of his wife from a debilitating stroke, “expressing and evoking emotion in a place where reason and power had traditionally held sway” (2002, pp. 4–5).

Lischer’s and Fried’s stories illustrate two interrelated facts of clergy work: clergy practice occurs in public, and clergy practice engages its participants in practices of public service. Even when clergy seem primarily involved in efforts to maintain and renew the vitality of the congregations they serve, they fill roles in public assemblies that authorize their service for a wide range of public issues and concerns. They preside over religious rituals that make public significant personal transitions in life, from birth to death, and they intensify the sense of being connected with others in times of public celebration, crisis, and mourning. In the United States especially, clergy have also articulated visions of social good that have been catalysts to the organization of voluntary associations and the promotion of public policies directed to the betterment of society.

Clergy have been major proponents of the different moral perspectives at stake in what J. D. Hunter and others have recently called the “culture wars” over the family, media, education, law, and politics (1990, p. 50–51). Clergy are, at the same time, primary agents of the contemporary movements of religious fundamentalism around the world that on the one hand threaten civil liberties and on the other pose difficult questions about the relationship of religious traditions to the intellectual traditions of the Enlightenment. Many clergy are prominent and popular media personalities attracting significant segments of the population to their radio and television broadcasts and to massive public gatherings. Recent government proposals for faith-based initiatives to handle important public services would not only alter traditional views about the separation of church and state in the nation, they would also draw clergy even more visibly into roles of public leadership.
Since the practice of clergy occurs at the intersection of religious and public life, it requires an education that enhances what Mary Fulkerson, also of Duke University’s Divinity School, has called a “social imagination.” For seminary educators, this means helping students not only to learn “how the world works” so they can do more than theorize about the social and political world, but also to see themselves as religious leaders involved in “the action in the world.” From this perspective, clergy education involves more than teaching students a particular way of thinking; it requires that those ways of thinking be linked constructively with ways of being and doing. In this linking we can see in clergy education the necessary interdependence of the cognitive, practical, and normative apprenticeships of professional education.

A Pastoral, Priestly, or Rabbinic Imagination

It follows, then, that a primary task of seminary education is cultivating the pastoral, priestly, or rabbinic imagination necessary for clergy to embrace this multifaceted and public work. Dykstra, perhaps more than anyone else, has thought about the shape and function of the pastoral imagination. He describes meeting wonderful ministers who exhibited a kind of “internal gyroscope and a distinctive kind of intelligence” that he calls pastoral imagination. By this term he means “a way of seeing into and interpreting the world” that, in turn, “shapes everything a pastor thinks and does” (2001, pp. 2–3, 15). Dykstra clearly does not place the full responsibility for cultivating such a complete pastoral, rabbinic, or priestly persona on the shoulders of seminaries. Just as lawyers develop a way of thinking—a “legal mind”—through years of experience, so too, he notes, does practicing their profession over time develop in clergy a particular way of thinking (2001, pp. 2–3, 15).

Seminaries, however, are the primary settings for the intentional, disciplined, and sustained cultivation of the imaginative capacity for engaging in complex and rich professional practice. Dykstra notes that this capacity involves knowing “how to interpret Scripture and tradition in contemporary life,” developing “an accurate sense of what makes human beings tick,” possessing “a complex understanding of how congregations and other institutions actually work,” and having both “a clear awareness” and an “analytical understanding of the world that the church exists to serve.” “Undergirding” all this, he continues, is “a clarity of mind about what it means to worship God in spirit and in truth” and an awareness of how all these elements of clergy work “together with real integrity” (2001, pp. 2–3, 15).
Dykstra’s description of pastoral imagination offers several clues to the formative and transformative power possible in seminary education. Seminary educators seek to form dispositions and the intuitive knowledge, or *habitus*, of a given religious or intellectual tradition in students. They intend for students to embody and equip the transformation of these traditions, as inherited “rules” are changed into “strategies” of new engagement to address new situations and circumstances (2001, pp. 2, 15). This is what Aristotle calls the transformative nature of *praxis*; John Dewey, the *reconstructive* nature of practical knowledge; and Pierre Bourdieu, the *strategies* of enacting a social practice. Throughout our interviews and observations we noticed that clergy education, however traditional, involves these transformative moments and goals.

Clergy educators innovate or adapt by drawing on the resources of inherited religious and academic traditions to convey or model for students’ pastoral, priestly, or rabbinic imaginations. The result of their efforts is often transformative. In our study, students often spoke of moments in their learning as *awakening to* or *discovering* new meanings in sacred texts, alternative strategies for the conduct of some clergy practice, or new dimensions to their calling and vocation.

Clergy practice is itself a transformative art, reinvesting inherited traditions with new meanings and strategies in response to changing circumstances and shifting contexts. From this perspective, the pastoral, priestly, or rabbinic imagination requires not only capacities for engaging, integrating, and adapting learning, but also what might be called new forms of religious production. Both Protestant evangelical clergy who interpret a Scripture passage to authorize a new outreach program and Catholic priests who present the gospel in the language and cultural forms of a new immigrant population are participating in transformative practices that produce new forms of ministry.

How, then, do seminary educators think about the relationship between what and how they teach and the pastoral, priestly, or rabbinic imaginations that they seek to cultivate through their teaching? Certainly, some seminary educators teach their students as if they all will become scholars with the knowledge and skills needed to participate in the academic world of publishing and teaching. These educators emphasize the cognitive or intellectual apprenticeship of professional education. Similarly, some faculty members are primarily concerned with developing practical competencies in students for their future work as clergy. They emphasize an apprenticeship of practice or skill. However, when we asked seminary deans to identify members of their faculties who are both respected by their colleagues for their teaching and reflective about their teaching, we
discovered more complex teaching practices and emphases. These seminary educators value scholarly competence and professional skill, but their intentions for student learning emphasize developing capacities for integrating various dimensions of the educational experience, what we have been calling pastoral imagination.

In the survey responses of nearly one hundred and thirty seminary teachers from eighteen different schools, we found clues to the pastoral imagination these seminary educators intend to cultivate. We asked them to consider a course that they “taught recently and enjoyed teaching.” Rachel Adler, at Hebrew Union College, for example, teaches a course called “Constructing Theologies of Pain and Suffering.” (Citations such as this one come from alumni or alumnae, student, or faculty responses to questions we posed on survey instruments developed for this study.) In this course, she intends to help her students read “some difficult classical texts richly and complexly; to pay attention to the process and methodology of different theologies; to develop an authentic, rigorous theological language for experiences to which we tend to respond either with silent terror or sloppy clichés; to address pain and suffering as specific to gendered persons embedded in specific families, communities, and cultures rather than universalizing; and to evaluate prayers and ceremonies, traditional and new, which deal with pain, suffering and loss in the light of the theological standards we are developing.”

She concludes her list by writing, “You could say I want my students to be rooted in Jewish tradition, to learn to appreciate and begin to construct theologies that have integrity and don’t marginalize the specific embodied, encultured people who are suffering” by focusing “the discussion exclusively on God.” For Adler, these expectations for the rabbinical imagination also mean that she seeks to help “students face their own fears and learn courage.”

Mary Schertz of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary observed that a course she teaches, “Reading Greek: the Synoptic Gospels,” is “one of the two most important classes at our seminary for developing pastors who have a strong sense of what the biblical text is (and is not) and a properly chastened sense of their own power and authority as an interpreter of the text.” These intentions for cultivating a pastoral imagination involve helping students learn both “a method and an attitude toward biblical studies that will nourish them and their congregations.” In “Alternative Religions in America,” taught by Donald Huber, professor of church history at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, we found similar attention to the interdependence of cognitive, normative, and practical goals in the process of developing a pastoral imagination that transcends denomina-
tional particularity. Huber encourages students “to listen empathetically to the religious viewpoints of others,” to have the sensitivity and skill “to discuss ‘strange’ religious points of views with their parishioners,” and to develop the ability to “teach about these groups on the basis of real knowledge of them.” At St. John’s Seminary in Camarillo, California, Paul Ford brings to “Sacramental Theology” yet another way of looking at the role of course work in cultivating students’ ability to “understand the implications of the part of the ordination rite in which they are told: ‘Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to him: Know what you are doing, and imitate the mystery you celebrate; model your life on the mystery of the Lord’s cross.’”

Common to each of these seminary educators is the expectation that students will, through their courses, integrate various cognitive, relational, spiritual, and professional understandings and skills. These clergy educators know that for students, developing the capacity to integrate skills and concepts in this way involves increasing depth and breadth of understanding, expanding their ability to see connections among things typically hidden from view and to recognize the relevance of the subject to their lives and work, and learning to attend simultaneously to the multiple and often competing tasks integral to the work of clergy—tasks that originate in texts, traditions, ideologies, practices, congregations, and larger publics. Clergy educators thus approach teaching by considering each individual learner’s growth as both a person and a religious leader.

Indeed, the complexity of these educators’ expectations for student learning, as reflected in their goal statements, was chiefly responsible for shifting our attention from the strategic skills that seminary educators employ while teaching to the ways in which they imagine the teaching and learning enterprise. We discovered that we were exploring the movement from the images of clergy that informed the pedagogical imaginations of seminary educators to their practices of fostering, or cultivating, the priestly, pastoral, and rabbinic imaginations of their students for their future work as clergy.

The goals of these seminary educators also reveal attempts to cultivate among their students pastoral, priestly, and rabbinic imaginations that encompass concerns and values traditionally associated with the cognitive, practical, and normative apprenticeships that William Sullivan has identified as common to all forms of professional education. Clergy educators give attention to the cognitive apprenticeship, for example, in their quests to nurture students’ ability to read “difficult classical texts richly and complexly,” to have “a strong sense of what the biblical text is (and is not),” and to understand “the implications of the ordination rite.”
Their attention to the *skill apprenticeship* concerned with the excellence of "knowing-how" is evident in Adler's desire that students have the ability to "evaluate prayers and ceremonies ... which deal with pain, suffering and loss in the light of the theological standards we are developing" and Huber's hope that students will be able to teach the religious viewpoints of others with sensitivity and skill. Their goal—to foster the knowledge integral to clergy identity—is the objective of the *normative apprenticeship*. This is evident in Schertz's desire that her students develop both a "method and an attitude toward biblical studies that will nourish them and their congregations" and in Huber's intention that his students will be able to "listen empathetically" and discuss sensitively and skillfully the religious viewpoints of others to members of their congregations.

**Teaching Practices in Cultivating a Pastoral, Priestly, or Rabbinic Imagination**

In the seminary setting, teachers engage students—clergy novitiates—in the interactions of teaching and learning with the intention of helping them acquire and develop perspectives, dispositions, and habits—ways of thinking and doing integral to roles of professional leadership in religious communities and public life. The category of pedagogy writ large, however, encompasses topics for investigation ranging from institutional ethos to student readiness, teaching styles to learning theories, curriculum design to lesson planning and assessment. Since it would be impossible to explore all of these topics, we chose to focus our attention on teaching practices—those complex and sustained pedagogical interactions involving strategies and methods to facilitate increasingly proficient participation in the community of the practice.

We focused on teaching practices as a way to explore how seminaries prepare clergy for their professional roles and responsibilities for several reasons. In a survey of articles published over the last ten years in *Theological Education*, the journal of the Association of Theological Schools, we saw a shift of emphasis paralleled in the literature on education in general. Discussions have moved from broader analyses of educational aims and purposes to explorations of clergy identity, the relevance of modes of thinking associated with the Enlightenment, the influence of institutional ethos on student learning, and the methods and strategies used in teaching. The attempts of seminary educators to account, in their teaching, for the increasing diversity in student backgrounds and educational experience and the changing expectations for religious leadership in Jewish and Christian congregations have intensified their interest in the dynam-
ics of teaching and learning. So has the challenge to teachers to account for the "explosion of knowledge" in their decisions about what and how they teach.

We also focused on the notion of teaching practice because we wanted to resist the general tendency in the educational literature and other discussions of education to reduce teaching to technique. Technical notions of teaching, although important, do not adequately explain the significance, influence, or variety of approaches to cultivating a rabbinical, priestly, or pastoral imagination that we observed among seminary educators participating in this study.

The notion of practice has recently received considerable attention, especially among seminary educators. Dykstra and Dorothy Bass, for example, have argued that a practice consists of "a sustained, cooperative pattern of human activity that is big enough, rich enough, and complex enough to address some fundamental feature of human existence" (2002, p. 22). From this perspective, teaching is that human activity addressing the need in human communities to transmit and renew the knowledge and skills, perspectives and sensibilities to each new generation to ensure their futures.

This means, as Alasdair MacIntyre argues, that practices such as teaching are more than instrumental activities (1984, p. 175). The patterns in their activities originated in the earliest responses of humans to their environment and circumstances to ensure biological and communal survival through successive generations. As practices are learned by each new generation of participants in these community practices, they move from being celebrations of discovery to being increasingly taken for granted—to becoming the ways that the members of a given community do something. Eventually, practices are so ingrained in habits and dispositions that not only are they extended over time and through generations, but also, as they are tested by new conditions and circumstances, ideas and procedures, they are renewed and even transformed. They become the structures of expertise and the resources for improvisation in meeting new and unexpected challenges. From this perspective, practices are, as Lave and Wenger have argued, the fundamental processes by which we learn and become who we are (1991, pp. 52–54). They are inherently pedagogical.

The activity of a practice, Wenger has also observed, "connotes" something we do—as in teaching (1998, p. 38). In a teaching practice the patterned activity of that "doing" consists of methods as optional and instrumental activities organized into coherent and complex teaching strategies to engage students in the intentions of a teacher (and implicitly
in the intentions of the community of the practice) for their learning. The methods a teacher can use are limited only by the teacher's imagination, skill, and experience. For example, one seminary educator, pushing beyond traditional methods of lecture and discussion, observed that “We do a lot of ‘hands-on’ or creative learning experiences, like visiting a service of another faith, or conducting ‘on the street interviews’... or rethinking how ordinary objects can be used to communicate a specific concept or faith supposition or truth. We also review for tests by playing all kinds of games.”

Another seminary educator's description of a course illustrates how a variety of methods might be linked into a strategy to establish a rhythmic structure for student learning across an academic term:

Lecture made up the first 4–5 sessions of the course and included case studies of the methodology I use in presenting the Talmudic tales as examples for the students. I also provided them with a library tour and resources list for finding Talmudic stories by subject matter. For a period of 2 sessions after this, students did research toward their presentations. This included study of Talmudic stories with study partners or in small groups. Students also met with me for a “trial run” of their class presentations and to discuss effective teaching strategies for them. This gave me the opportunity to discover what engaged the students, how they thought about their material, and what they felt about it. It also gave me a chance to raise questions about both the intellectual and theological/spiritual nature of the story and the presenter.

The pedagogical function of a teaching strategy such as this one is at least twofold: to gather students into the teacher's vision of possibilities for student knowing and doing in the subject and to engage students in disciplines culminating in the appropriation of that knowledge and those skills. The social function of a teaching strategy like this one emphasizes the commitment of the seminary community to the continuing vitality and relevance of the academic discipline of the course for the future of the seminary's religious tradition.

Students enter a teacher's practice through the practice's methods and strategies. Students participate in a teacher's practice as apprentices to a master craftsman. As the teacher invites the students into the rhythmic structure of the practice, the students subordinate themselves to the requirements of the rules, standards of excellence, and roles encountered in its methods and strategies. As they rehearse the knowledge and skills toward which the practice is directed, they are gradually drawn into the deeper structures of its ways of thinking, dispositions, and habits. Over
time, the knowledge and skills required to participate in the practice become increasingly familiar, even comfortable and often unconscious, enhancing (but also sometimes hindering) the continuing openness of students to learning.

Compelling features toward learning in a practice—especially in a teaching practice—are the “internal goods” that MacIntyre (1984, pp. 189-90) describes as giving rise to and filling the practice with meaning and purpose. For MacIntyre, the internal goods of a practice are evident in, first, the “excellence” identified with the performance of a practice—in the instance described above, in the extent and depth of the engagement of students in studying Talmud, compelling the students into ever deeper encounters with the text and its methods of study—and, second, the “excellence” of the goods appropriated in the course of the practice—in other words, the goods are evident through not only expanding knowledge and growing expertise but also an accompanying sense of accomplishment and appreciation of their value.

MacIntyre identifies a second internal good as “a certain kind of life” associated with the increasing claim of the competencies acquired while engaging in the practice on the ways we think, relate to others, and work at tasks. For seminary educators, this kind of life has to do with the increasing ability of students to identify the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and habits integral to the teaching practice in which they are participating with their future roles and responsibilities as priests, rabbis, or pastors—when, as in the above instance, students can envision themselves not only as students but as preachers and teachers of Talmudic texts in rabbinic practice.

In this way, the internal goods of a teaching practice intensify the relationship of students to the communities of the practice—initially, in the above instance, to the immediate community of students studying Talmud, and over time with the communities of Talmudic scholarship and rabbinic practice. Jerome Bruner borrowed the image of “distributed intelligence” to underscore the socializing dynamics in this view of a practice: “The gist of the idea is that it is a grave error to locate intelligence in a single head.” Rather, it has to do with being part of specific communities “in whose extended intelligence” we share: the community that forms in the classroom or other educational activity as well as the communities of the seminar, academic disciplines, religious traditions, and public life that have a stake in what is learned and how. Each of these communities brings normative expectations to what and how students shall learn.

Dykstra and Bass identify implications of this insight for a teaching practice in seminary education when they note that “Christian practices
contain within them normative understandings of what God wills for us and for the whole creation and of what God expects of us in response to God’s call to be faithful. Christian practices are thus congruent with the necessity of human existence, as such, as seen from a Christian perspective on human flourishing” (2002, p. 22). Christians in different denominational traditions will argue about particular ways of articulating what those normative understandings are, but they share a common relationship to the Christ event in the course of human history.

In other words, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, or Muslim communities—or American, Brazilian, or Chinese communities, or professional societies of doctors, lawyers, or chemists, or disciplinary guilds of theologians, practical theologians, or historians—are defined, in part, by their relationship to a trajectory of normative meanings associated with real and mythic events in the past central to their collective identities and activities in the present. These communal norms not only establish boundaries for human knowing and doing in the communities in which teachers engage the learning of students, but they are also repositories of possibility and sources of constructive critique in their interactions with each other.

Pedagogical Imagination in Seminary Educator Teaching Practices

The pedagogical imagination of seminary educators significantly shapes their teaching practices. Through the exercise of their pedagogical imaginations, seminary educators envision pedagogical events to draw students into “existence possibilities” for their future clergy practice in the interplay of disciplinary and professional knowledge, skills, habits, and dispositions. The exercise of the pedagogical imagination involves teachers, at a minimum, in making decisions about (1) what to teach from all that could be taught; (2) how to engage students in what they intend for them to learn; (3) how to assess the extent to which students learn what was intended; and (4) how to negotiate their sense of obligation to the expectations of students, to traditions of knowledge, and to the religious communities that will be receiving them as clergy and leaders in ministry.

Although few seminary educators in the study used the language of apprenticeship to describe their teaching, we increasingly encountered the relational patterns of apprenticeship in their teaching practices. Over and over again, we heard them describe how they envision introducing students to some confluence of the traditions of knowledge and ways of knowing identified with their academic disciplines and religious communities and the traditions of practice associated with religious leadership.
They seemed intent on creating pedagogical environments that blend the values of cognitive, skill, and identity-formation integral to the three apprenticeships of professional education. They want students to develop a relationship with the subject while at the same time becoming agents of that subject through their professional roles in academic and religious communities.

Although seminary educators set goals to facilitate these intentions, their expectations for student learning cannot always be reduced to these goals. In her discussion of teaching and religious imagination, Maria Harris suggests why this may be the case. "With reference to [teacher] intention," she writes, "the role of imagination is critical" (1987, p. 67). We saw clues to the working of this teacher or pedagogical imagination in the intentions of some seminary educators to engage students in their own practice in the end they might "discover" in it "a rigorous demand" or possibility of "excellence." That demand, Harris continues, in Kierkegaard's words, is an "existence possibility" impelling students to join their teachers in choosing how to relate to the subject of their interaction with each other.

The exercise of the pedagogical imagination in the teaching practices of seminary educators becomes more visible in educational theorist Maxine Greene's description of what teachers do. "Teaching is purposeful action," she notes. Yet "it cannot function automatically or according to a set of predetermined rules" because it occurs in always-new situations and constantly changing circumstances. Teachers engage students in the repetition of complex, yet coherent, pedagogical strategies through which they expect, in Greene's terms, "to bring about certain changes in students' outlooks," to "enable them to perform in particular ways, to do particular tasks, to impose increasingly complex orders upon their worlds" (1973, pp. 69-70). From this perspective, the intent of teaching is purposeful and orderly, not random or idiosyncratic. Among seminary educators it originates in expectations for clergy practice deeply rooted in particular religious, cultural, and academic traditions and is influenced by expectations, standards, and norms in those traditions for the excellence of their efforts.

Although seminary educators typically assume their students come to their classes with some facility in the knowledge and skills for professional practice in their religious traditions, what students actually know and can do typically varies widely. Yet the habits and dispositions, knowledge and skills they do bring influence their ability to enter into and engage the various subjects of their learning. In class, they may encounter new ways of thinking and doing that challenge some and reinforce for others their prior knowledge, beliefs, and methods of study.
Students are novitiates or neophytes engaged in developing new perspectives, skills, and habits that may lead them to new understandings and competencies. As students participate in a seminary educator’s teaching practice, no matter the particular intention of the practice, they move through a series of increasingly complex tasks, each typically requiring the recapitulation and repetition of prior tasks in the quest for increasingly confident competence. This learning process toward increasingly complex understandings integral to processes of professional reasoning may include several interdependent steps; for example:

- Becoming familiar with the vocabulary, rhythms, methods, and genres of a given course of study.
- Developing skills to recognize tensions, questions, issues, and interpretive problems in the subject of study. This information typically requires students to rehearse over and over again what they know and can do until it begins to shape their perceptions, influence their dispositions, and take root in habits integral to the subject of their study, thereby linking knowledge, skill, and character.
- Developing the facility to identify and follow the structure, design, or argument of the subject of their learning to the point that they become increasingly aware of and invested in new issues, questions, possibilities, and competencies for their learning.
- Developing interpretive frameworks through which they may approach, make sense of, and use the subject of their learning—a process that typically requires them to review, rehearse, appropriate, and refashion knowledge and skills developed in the repetition of each of the previous steps in this learning process.
- Developing the ability to compare and contrast what they have learned with alternative interpretive frameworks; in other words, to engage what they know through the eyes of others, providing them with the confidence and competence to critique or reconstruct what they know and can do or to construct something new. Again, moving into this stage of understanding typically takes students back through the prior steps.

A Signature Pedagogical Framework

In trying to understand the shape of the pedagogical imagination of seminary educators, and in looking closely at what might be called the “deep structures” of their teaching practice, we wondered if clergy education has
a signature pedagogy that would be as distinctive as the Socratic dialogue in the analysis of legal cases in law schools or the mathematical analysis of structures in engineering schools.

Lee Shulman (forthcoming) has observed that signature pedagogies function as “windows” into “what counts most significantly as the essence of a profession’s work.” He illustrates this point by pointing to the objective conditions of diagnosis and treatment in medical practice “centered on an individual patient in a hospital bed.” In explicating what he means by signature pedagogy, Shulman notes it includes four dimensions. It consists of strategies and methods that create a “surface structure” for the interaction of teachers and students. It also has a “deep structure” connecting the “concreteness of practice with the more conceptual, social or ideological aspects of the profession’s essential character.” It contains a “tacit structure” that includes the attitudes, values, and dispositions “modeled by the instructor and other students regarding professional practice.” A signature pedagogy may also be distinguished by “what is missing”—what is not taught and what methods and strategies are not employed.

When we began the clergy study, we expected that pedagogies emphasizing the interpretation of texts and the critical reflection on clergy practice might be signature pedagogies, revealing what counts most in the education of clergy. However, as we observed the interactions of teaching and learning in seminary classrooms, we encountered too many variations even in these two approaches to be able to conclude that they or any other pedagogy dominated the pedagogical imaginations of seminary educators. At the same time, across the spectrum of the Jewish and Christian seminaries we observed four shared intentions for student learning, originating in clergy practice and embedded in a variety of pedagogies. Together they seemed to reflect what these seminary educators view as counting most in preparing students for clergy practice:

- Developing in students the facility for interpreting texts, situations, and relationships
- Nurturing dispositions and habits integral to the spiritual and vocational formation of clergy
- Heightening student consciousness of the content and agency of historical and contemporary contexts
- Cultivating student performance in clergy roles and ways of thinking

Each pedagogical intention had the potential of being expressed through a signature pedagogy. We discovered, however, that we could not
anticipate how seminary educators with similar intentions for student learning would weave a variety of teaching methods into strategies for teaching. No teaching methods shared the surface structure of a signature pedagogy.

We gradually recognized that differences we observed in the teaching practices of seminary educators could be traced to varying religious and cultural assumptions about clergy practice embedded in the culture and mission of each seminary. Thus, the deep structures of their teaching practices vary. As the educators model values, attitudes, and dispositions embedded in those assumptions about clergy practice, the tacit structures of their pedagogies also differ. Something else was at work.

That something, we gradually realized, had to do with the persistence of these intentions for student learning in the variety of teaching practices we observed. We gradually recognized that together they formed a signature pedagogical framework. The interdependence of these intentions in the pedagogical imaginations of seminary educators influences their decisions about what and how to teach. Over time, and with much repetition, seminary educators develop distinctive approaches to the interplay of these four intentions in their pedagogical interactions with students. Those approaches, which students can often describe with considerable clarity, are the teaching practices that became the subject of this study.

Aligning Teaching Practices with the Mission and Culture of the Seminary

Descriptions of teaching practices, however, do not fully explain how seminary educators help prepare students for their future work as rabbis, priests, and pastors. Two phases of our research reinforced our awareness of this issue. In our review of the history of the education of clergy and the many studies of clergy education conducted over the past century, we were challenged to account for widely varied and deeply rooted historical assumptions about clergy work that continue to influence the intentions of contemporary seminary educators for the learning of their students. Understanding these traditions helped distinguish teaching practices in one seminary from those in another.

We were also fascinated by the diversity in the institutional cultures we experienced from one campus visit to the next: in the lines of authority among administration, faculty, and students; the patterns of relationship among faculty, between faculty and students, and between schools and their religious and public constituencies; the role of worship, student involvement in campus governance, and service to the community beyond
the seminary; connections with sponsoring religious institutions and other academic entities; the design of the curriculum; and the relationship between course and field work.

The issue of the influence of school mission and culture on faculty teaching practices came into focus as we pondered, in each school we visited, the forces and structures that supported or discouraged teacher intentions for student learning. We had discovered in each school some students who had effectively pulled together and integrated the disparate strands of their education—from across the curriculum and in relating their academic work to spiritual growth and to professional skills integral to the daily work of clergy. We heard these reports in schools where lecture pedagogies dominated and in schools where students engaged predominantly in active learning pedagogies. We heard similar reports in schools where students experienced few overt connections between field education and class work and in other schools where the structures of field education and classroom were interwoven throughout their seminary experience. We heard these reports in schools where community worship and governance were tightly coordinated and in schools where they seemed almost incidental activities for many students (and often for faculty).

In a study of communities of practice, Wenger suggests that one may account for the coalescence of forces supporting or resisting faculty intentions for student learning by recognizing the presence of “three modes of belonging” (1998, pp. 173–4). Wenger calls the first mode the belonging that emerges from “active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning.” This is the mutuality of influence in a teaching practice that occurs for students simply by participating in a small discussion group during a class session or by sharing the challenges and rhythms of an academic course and its assignments together. The second form of belonging at work in the teaching practices of clergy educators is rooted in the imaginative capacity to expand “the scope of reality and identity” in one’s social world by producing new “images” and generating new relations that become “constitutive of the self” and one’s participation in the community. In a pastoral, priestly, or rabbinic imagination, this is the capacity to see in a biblical text the form of a sermon, or in the depths of a fractured relationship, clues to reconciliation; to hear in an ancient prayer the voices of those who have prayed it through the centuries; in the act of a child’s, generosity a vision for the stewardship of the earth. A third form of belonging in the teaching practices of clergy educators “bridges time and space” to align one’s engagement in an educational activity with the “energies, actions, and practices” of something larger. In the context of seminary education, the dynamics of teaching and learning take place in
and are influenced by their relationship to the “larger enterprises” of the school’s mission and culture, the religious traditions that look to the school for future religious leadership, and the public realm in which those religious traditions negotiate their futures.

In a study of “good work,” Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and William Damon use the notion of alignment to describe the coalescence of forces that support and sustain the sense that one’s work, or practice, is indeed good (2001, p. 1). Although they do not use the language of belonging, they observe that good work involves more than professional skill or being thoughtful about one’s responsibilities and the implications of one’s work.” Good work involves acting responsibly on one’s personal goals in relation to “family, friends, peers and colleagues; the mission or sense of [one’s] calling; the institutions with which [one] is affiliated; and lastly, the wider world”—the people we know, as well as “those who will come afterwards, and in the grandest sense, to the planet or to God.” From these perspectives, work is more likely to be experienced as good both by the worker and others in the collaborative activity of the work itself, in the recognition of its imaginative possibilities, and when the worker senses alignment among all the possible relationships that impinge upon the work.

During our study, the notions of alignment and its opposite, misalignment, helped us think about how the various forces in the seminary setting contribute to or hinder the individual and collective intentions of a faculty for the integration of student learning experience in professional practice. They shed light on those aspects of a seminary education that augment and reinforce or hamper and diminish the individual and collective intentions of seminary educators for the learning of students.

The quest for alignment may be found in faculty attempts to limit or align those forces that may help in that effort by articulating academic, personal, and doctrinal or spiritual criteria for new faculty appointments, as well as academic and ethical standards for student admission; by requiring psychological tests and statements of motivation and interest in student applications; and by establishing sequences of learning in the curriculum. Some forces are much more difficult to control or manage—the relationship of student and faculty interest in a subject; the complementarity of assumptions across a faculty about the role of the classes they individually teach in the curriculum; the congruence of faculty teaching and student learning styles; the relationship of course work, worship, governance, and field education; and the confluence of academic, denominational, and cultural expectations for religious leaders.
We did not have the time or resources to investigate, as part of the study, the full range of these influences on the interaction of teachers and students in seminary teaching practices. However, throughout this volume we have attempted more generally to account for ways to assess the extent to which the alignment or misalignment of the institutional culture and mission of a school either augments and reinforces or hampers and diminishes the intent in faculty teaching practices for student learning.

In the next chapter we look closely at the diverse practices and many influences on practice that we found in the seminaries we studied. From that point, we move to an in-depth description of the pedagogies, both classroom and communal, that together prepare students for their work as clergy.

ENDNOTES

2. This observation, described in the introduction to this study, is amplified in Sullivan (2005).

An important related contribution to the literature on practices among Jewish scholars is the work of Wendy Rosov (2001).


David T. Hansen probes, through the concept of tradition, the persisting character of practice in teaching in Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching: Toward a Teacher's Creed (2001)—certainly one of the more provocative recent discussions on teaching in the life of the community.

Michel de Certeau (1984) describes a practice as "a way of making"—"insinuated into and concealed within devices whose mode of usage they constitute, and thus lacking their own ideologies or institutions—conform to certain rules." Those "rules" thereby constitute a certain pervasive
“logic.” This view of practice leads de Certeau to argue that popular culture consists of “arts of making” (p. xv).


5. See also Fairfield (2000), pp. 8–9.

6. Hall (1959): “I was led to my conclusion by the realization that there is no break between the present, in which man acts as a culture-producing animal, and the past, when there were no men and no cultures. There is an unbroken continuity between the far past and the present, for culture is bio-basic—rooted in biological activities” (p. 44).

Fairfield has observed that “Practices thus conceived encompass both primarily cognitive and pragmatic forms of activity including language use, hermeneutic dialogue, education, the arts, games, competitive sports, commerce, law, politics, community service, medicine, friendship, romantic love, family life, science, and scholarship” (2000, p. 9). He, for some strange reason, omitted religion.

7. In a chapter entitled “Knowing as Doing” in The Culture of Education, Jerome Bruner begins to explore the deeply historical and social processes of learning to know, which we are describing as our participation in social practices (1996, p. 154).

8. The schema that follows draws on Kieran Egan’s study (1997) of the development of understanding. His attention was directed to the changing capacities in humans for understanding in the movement from young childhood into young adulthood. His description of the process of developing understanding, however, also seems appropriate to the experience of adults moving from ignorance to knowledge in their encounter with new bodies of knowledge or skill sets. It is in this latter sense that we suggest this schema as a way to think about the experience of students as they move through the seminary curriculum.
David Kelsey observed, “The most obvious characteristic of the world of theological schools is the enormous diversity among its citizens” (1992, pp. 17-18). His attention was drawn to differences among the “deepest theological commitments” and the variety of “historical and sociocultural” factors influencing the decisions of Protestant theological school faculty about their educational mission—a conclusion also relevant to a discussion of the different traditions in Jewish and Catholic seminary education.

We, too, were impressed by the diversity across the spectrum of Jewish and Christian seminaries we visited, but the diversity that dominated our attention centered on the teaching practices of the faculty in those seminaries. From a distance, the teaching practices look remarkably alike from discipline to discipline, from seminary to seminary. Indeed, they do not seem all that different from teaching practices in related fields and disciplines. Up close, however—indeed, inside institutions educating clergy—their range and diversity become remarkable. Those differences may be traced in part to the range of theological and sociocultural traditions to be found among Jewish and Christian seminaries. (In Chapters Seven and Eight we describe something of the influence of those traditions.)

The diversity of teaching practices we found in the seminaries may also be traced to variations in the way clergy educators negotiate a range of social, pedagogical, and historical influences and how they view the relationship of the cognitive, practical, and formative apprenticeship. This negotiation is part of what we are calling pedagogical imagination. Clergy educators view and relate to their diverse contexts in quite
different ways, both when thinking about what and how to teach and while in the middle of the activity of teaching. In those moments, we see the exercise of their pedagogical imaginations. As we have already discussed, by pedagogical imagination we mean the capacity of a teacher to envision the construction of a pedagogical event by drawing on the interplay of disciplinary and professional knowledge and skills to fulfill his or her intentions for the learning of a particular group of students in a given place and at a designated time.

Minimally, pedagogical imagination involves making decisions about what to teach from all that could be taught; how to engage students; how to assess the extent to which students learn what was intended; how to negotiate one’s sense of obligation to the students’ expectations, traditions of knowledge, and the religious communities that will be receiving them as clergy and leaders in ministry; and how to respond and adapt to new situations and challenges while teaching. Those decisions require, as art educator Peter Abbs has argued, keeping “open a creative connection with the best of the cultural past” and taking “its collective energy forward” in quests, on the one hand, to reclaim the numinous, wisdom, and spiritual in teaching and on the other, to reduce threats to their continuing vitality posed by the “twin powers of eclectic consumerism and electronic technology” (2003, pp. 2–3). We discovered among clergy educators many who share both his preference for teaching that is “challenging, subverting, transforming, and healing” and his resistance to the reduction of teaching to technique.

A Shared Goal

Differences in the exercise of the pedagogical imaginations of seminary educators may be seen in the intentions of several Bible teachers for the learning of their students. When Adriane Leveen, from Hebrew Union College, for example, described a course she teaches, she told us she wanted students “to be familiar with each of the Five Books of Moses”—the “specific themes and content as well as how the Five in their entirety work together to establish the basis of Jewish thought and belief.” She then added that through this course she intends for students to develop “skills in reading and translating biblical Hebrew and in learning how to interpret biblical texts in a disciplined fashion.”

James Schatzmann, at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, told us that his “hope and prayer” is that through his teaching, students “will become equipped to interpret and apply Scripture wisely and sensitively.”
He described for us an introductory course he enjoys teaching, in which students move systematically from an exploration of the "need for hermeneutics" to a discussion "of the Bible in terms of its major component parts and its canonical status" while "comparing and contrasting various views of biblical inspiration." The course includes as well an examination of the "historical development of the major contemporary approaches to hermeneutics" and an opportunity to apply "the principles of the grammatical-historical-theological-practical approach to hermeneutics by writing an exegetical paper," all with the expectation that students will integrate "balanced hermeneutical principles into the contexts of life and ministry."

After teaching an introductory course on Old Testament Exegesis for several semesters, Patricia Tull, from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, realized she needed to focus on skills. "I was attempting to teach them to be text critics," she observed, reflecting on changes she had made in the course, "but they are not ever going to do that. They do need to be aware of text criticism and able to evaluate textual notes. So I came up with the analogy that we were doing 'cake mix' textual criticism. We aren't cooking from scratch. We are cooking from the ingredients that textual critics have given us. We are making choices, however, among them. I want students to enter the world of the text, dwell there for a while and wrestle with it." Because "each student is different," she added, she hopes they will "revel" in the "skills that are easy for them," even as they are "introduced to skills that won't be so easy for them."

Dianne Bergant, from Catholic Theological Union, teaches from yet another perspective: "I try to get students to see that what we are doing in class—that is, handing down and re-interpreting our religious tradition from our own social locations—is just what our religious ancestors have always done." "My goal in this [introductory Old Testament] course is to give my students the intellectual tools they need to read and interpret scripture. I try to get them to understand that everybody interprets what they read or hear from their own social location." The starting point of her teaching is to help students become aware of the "diversity of situations that condition" their own readings and interpretations.

Jim Butler described a shift in the way he teaches his Old Testament introductory course, a shift that many other seminary educators had also made. "When I started teaching [at Fuller Theological Seminary], I was very focused on making sure that students had an opportunity to look at issues [of authorship and the like]—the kind of things you study in graduate school. . . . I have become more comfortable over time letting them
read about those things and attending [in class] mostly to those things that create problems for them as evangelical students." This means focusing attention on "the multiple perspectives and mutually contradictory passages in the biblical text we are studying and letting the text itself challenge their assumptions." He now spends more time on what he calls his "bottom line issues—that is, talking about how would you use this in the life of the church. Who gravitates towards this literature and who would reject it?"

These seminary educators would seem to have much in common. They, like most of their colleagues, graduated from prominent doctoral programs. They write books, publish articles in scholarly journals, and participate in academic professional societies. They are deeply committed to critical methodologies for studying the texts and contexts for ministry that, in turn, inform their expectations for student learning. In this regard, most carry into their teaching the *wissenschaft* values of rationality and objectivity generally associated with the academic study of religion.

Their comments also make clear that they all have in common the task of preparing students for leadership of religious communities in the traditions of Judaism and Christianity. They participate in practices of teaching that originated in and give form to the future of the educational and religious traditions in and through which they teach. As Robert McAfee Brown notes, Christian communities—and, we would argue, Jewish communities as well—have a special relationship to certain historic and symbolic events in the past (1974, pp. 28ff). Each lives into the future with a profound memory or deep historical consciousness of that event. Something happened. Stories are told to explain and recall what happened. As time goes on, people begin to link meanings associated with those events to new situations and changing circumstances, to develop, share, negotiate, critique, and reconstruct their interpretations. Rituals are created to rehearse and intensify memories of those events. Certain dispositions, sensibilities, habits, and practices become associated with the rehearsal of those memories and participation in those rituals. People within those communities assume responsibility for handing on the stories and their interpretations—to guarantee they will not be forgotten, for nurturing the sensibilities, dispositions, and habits integral to the identity of the community, and for rehearsing the practices associated with those stories to ensure their continuing relevance. Communities, in turn, assume responsibility for training people to continue the traditions of telling and interpreting the stories and rehearsing the practices to extend their vitality and relevance into the future.
Teaching in seminaries is informed by this common goal of developing leaders responsible for maintaining and renewing—and sometimes transforming—the intent of their religious traditions for new situations and circumstances. The depth of the commitment of seminary educators to this task became evident to us as we compared faculty responses to a survey question about the most important change they hoped might take place for or in their students through their teaching. The overwhelming majority of faculty respondents explicitly described their goals for teaching and student learning, in terms that mingled cognitive and affective, disciplinary and professional, academic and religious expectations.

For example, a Scripture teacher hoped his or her students might displace “interpretive pride” with “interpretive humility” by becoming “open to surprise,” “by being taken aback, to being ‘disarranged’ by texts they thought they controlled”; as well as to becoming “open to comfort from texts they thought were only hostile to them”; not “to fear the Bible,” but to be “lovers . . . with all the possibility that image entails for quarreling, mystery, intimacy, and gift-giving.”

Others anticipated the possibility that students might discover, through their teaching, ways of thinking about and relating to the work of their ministries. “I hope,” wrote one respondent, “my students will come to see themselves as practical theologians engaging critically, constructively, and lovingly the practice of ministry.” Another made a similar point, expressing a desire for “my students” to see “their Judaism as a praxis that is nourished by Torah study and prayer rather than as a body of data or a repertoire of teachings for them to apply to other people. I hope they learn to keep a conversation going between the tradition, its texts and values, and the world they live in, the new problems it presents and the new wonders it reveals to us. Their job is to live out that conversation with integrity and to help others learn to do the same.” These seminary educators teach so their students might become professionally competent in the various roles and responsibilities associated with the professional work of the clergy. They share the desire, as expressed by one survey respondent, for students to have an experience of “ministerial formation that integrates theological vision and wise pastoral practice with a whole sense of Christian identity and vocation,” or, as expressed by another, “[I hope] that students will come to see that loving God with the mind is not an alternative to loving God with the heart, but is essential to the final integrity of the latter.” They also teach to develop in their students the capacity to envision strategic responses from the dialogue of religious tradition and contemporary knowledge and the ability to address challenges to the futures of the religious communities they serve.
Influences on Teaching Practices

We discovered that seminary educators are sensitive to a range of influences on their decisions about what to teach and how. Their response to these influences—as individuals and as members of a faculty—typically leads to quite different approaches to the dynamics of teaching and learning. We found five influences in the context of the seminary to be particularly powerful:

- Campus setting
- Classroom setting
- Competing academic traditions
- Curricular function
- Student expectations and experience

Campus Setting

Perhaps sensitivity to Jewish and Christian messages through the ages about the nature and activity of God in the physical environment has contributed to our heightened consciousness of the influence of the environment on the interactions of teaching and learning among seminary teachers and students. Certainly, the relatively small scale of every seminary campus within the universe of higher education offered us ample opportunities to witness where and how students move through the campus, places they identify as having intensified meaning, and classrooms faculty enjoy or dislike as teaching spaces. One can, with relative ease, obtain a sense of the whole even in a school as large as Fuller Theological Seminary, with its more than 4,300 students.

When Patricia Tull meets her class at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, for example, they gather in the recital hall of Garden Court, a mansion located on the grounds of a large estate in an exclusive neighborhood of the city, a short distance from the campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Massive trees on spacious grounds with landscaped gardens provide a parklike setting for the campus, which includes Garden Court, a comparatively new cluster of stone buildings housing classrooms, offices, and chapel, and, across a ravine, a student apartment complex. A large, relatively new conference center physically extends the school's academic mission beyond its degree programs by drawing the community to the campus. The campus setting seems far removed from the rural and central city neighborhoods from which some
students come—and to which many faculty and students go to fulfill classroom assignments and field placements designed to engage them constructively and prophetically with the city’s legacies of racism and classism.

We encountered a quite different environment for teaching and learning in New York, as we were admitted by security guards—a beefed-up force after the September 11, 2001, attacks and the destruction of the World Trade Center towers—to the imposing complex of buildings that make up the Jewish Theological Seminary in Morningside Heights. The seminary is located down the street from Columbia University and surrounded in part by Union Theological Seminary, Teachers College—Columbia University, and Manhattan School of Music. Seminary education occurs here in the midst of a cacophony of messages about scholarship and learning, observance and tradition, the holy and the secular, safety and danger, leadership and practice—all punctuated by the rumble of the subways emerging from a nearby underground tunnel. Yet a month later, while walking under the massive trees of the Fuller Theological Seminary campus in Pasadena, California, we were reminded of the tranquility of the courtyard at the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Louisville gardens—all places providing for conversation removed from the frantic pace of busy streets and urban life.

As we moved from campus to campus, we found ourselves pondering overt and implicit values and commitments in the teaching of faculty associated with the location of a school. For example, what relationship might exist between the affluence of the school’s neighborhood and the attention many Louisville faculty give to analyzing racist and unjust social systems? What influence does the racial, cultural, and religious diversity of the Los Angeles area have on Fuller faculty and student efforts to mediate the worlds of fundamentalist and mainline Protestant churches and the cultures they represent? In what ways do the values and rigor of the research universities of Columbia, Chicago, and Yale shape the faculty expectations of student knowledge and academic performance at Jewish Theological Seminary, Catholic Theological Union, and Yale Divinity School? Trinity Lutheran Seminary, with its German Lutheran heritage, is very aware of the predominantly Jewish neighborhood in which it is located; the seminary commissioned a large and striking memorial to Holocaust victims, visible to all who pass by. We wondered in what other ways the encounter of German heritage and Jewish community might shape the educational experience of Trinity students.

These questions were heightened for us during our visit to Howard University School of Divinity in Washington, D.C. In words similar to those
articulated in the mission statements of every school we visited, the Howard faculty explicitly seeks to "prepare students to provide competent professional leadership in religious and secular institutions," with a distinctive commitment to "urban Black Communities." Teachers meet their students on the campus of a former Franciscan college in a building displaying large sculptures of Franciscan spirituality on its external walls and housing, inside, an extensive collection of iconic images of Ethiopian Christianity; they meet in the nation's only African American research university, located in the nation's capital and thereby in the crosscurrents of city, national, and global policy debates.

The setting, in other words, provides a catalyst for a curricular commitment to teach to an espoused mission of "prophetic ministry" guided by a "passion for justice and freedom" and a "relentless search for truth." It did not surprise us, then, to hear a student say that a Howard graduate is "supposed to be able to fight the good fight, to take up the social issues, and be the activist, to take on the battles for the poor... I won't say to be militant, but to be the Jesse Jackson, the Martin Luther King, to hold up the banner of justice and faithfulness." He was not only reflecting the public mission of the school, he was articulating a view of expectations for his professional practice embedded in the iconic images and reinforced by the school's involvement in the life of the city and nation.

After a rather extensive discussion of the challenge Yale faculty experience teaching in religiously diverse classes in the divinity school of one of the premier research universities of the nation, one student suggested an image of the Yale graduate congruent with the image of a major Ivy League research institution: "If there's a shared vision... it's that... professors here teach you to ask big questions... good questions. By good questions, I mean creative questions, questions that excite the imagination, questions that challenge the individual and the society, questions that turn traditional readings of say, the Bible or theology on their head... I think that's the one thing that unites both the academics and the religious."

We heard a still different perspective on the relationship of setting and educational experience when another student told us that the liturgy "is the heart of the campus" at Church Divinity School of the Pacific. We had some sense of what this statement might mean when we discovered that although the chapel sits on the edge of the campus, the daily routines of class, faculty, and student community life revolve around fifteen liturgies in that chapel each week. At each campus we visited we were similarly impressed with the extent to which the pedagogical interactions of faculty and students had been influenced by their physical and cultural setting.
Classroom Setting

Classrooms similarly enhance or obstruct faculty intentions for their teaching and student learning. Classrooms in theological schools vary significantly. The superb acoustics of the recital hall where Tull meets her introductory class on the Old Testament reinforce the aesthetic experience of singing songs in Hebrew in three-part harmony. In contrast, Butler, teaching in a school with a large commuting student body, feels constrained by the space in which he teaches. A wide and comparatively shallow classroom with desk chairs arranged on narrow tiers limits his ability to involve students in small group learning. Bergant and her colleagues teach their larger classes in three technologically “smart” classrooms carved out of the ballroom of the former hotel that anchors the Catholic Theological Union campus, but the lack of alternative spaces means they must meet some of their small classes and discussion groups around tables in the cafeteria. For Tull, Butler, Bergant, and many other seminary educators we met, the rooms—and, indeed, the larger physical environment of the school—where they teach also become resources or hindrances to their intentions for student interaction with their teaching.

Competing Academic Traditions: Paideia and Wissenschaft

Differences in the approaches of faculty to their teaching may be traced in part, as well, to how faculty individually and collectively negotiate what Edward Eggleston (1959 [1900]) once called the “controlling traditions” of a culture or community and its assumptions about the role or mission it has in the larger world. In academic settings, these controlling traditions may be traced back to different visions of the academic enterprise. The consequences of the negotiations of a faculty over the influence of these traditions are significant. They are expressed in mission statements and articulated in curriculum policies. They shape academic values and standards. They influence the habits and dispositions of graduates in professional practice.

In Between Athens and Berlin, Kelsey (1993) argues that one of the most influential of these “controlling traditions” in Protestant seminary education may be found in extensively shared commitments to the contrasting values of paideia and wissenschaft, the first originating in Greek philosophy and the second in the individualism and objective rationality associated with the Enlightenment. Kelsey argued, however, that the values located in the authority of the tradition (paideia) and in the capacity
for critical distance in scholarship and teaching \textit{(wissenschaft)} “sit together very uneasily.” Indeed, he concluded, they can only lead to various sorts of negotiated truces” between their “incommensurate sets of criteria of excellence” (p. 92). The result is that among Christian seminaries, some will reflect more clearly the values of one or the other in their programs and policies. Yet as we heard seminary educators describe what they do when they teach across the spectrum of schools participating in this study, we heard most of them embrace (albeit to quite different effects) the necessary interdependence of these two traditions in their teaching.

This observation first became evident to us while visiting the Jewish Theological Seminary. Although the communal and traditional pedagogies of the synagogue and yeshiva (which share many of the communal values of the traditions of 	extit{paideia}) provide the historical backdrop for the establishment of this seminary, its founders embraced fully the rationality of \textit{wissenschaft} scholarship that had revolutionized rabbinical education in Berlin in the early nineteenth century. Frequently we heard members of the faculty say that the ultimate expression of being a rabbi is as one who studies. That was true prior to the Enlightenment and before the Jewish Theological Seminary was founded, and it continues to be true today.

Contemporary methodologies of studying texts in Jewish Theological Seminary courses have been transformed by post-Enlightenment commitments to objectivity and rationality, but the notion of obedience to Torah through disciplined study, deeply rooted in the traditions of the yeshiva preceding the Enlightenment, persists today. Scholarship is at the heart of rabbinical identity; rabbinical identity is grounded in the capacities for solid scholarship. The pedagogy of that scholarship within the tensive relationship of “Berlin” rationality and “yeshiva” communality draws both together in havruta or structured dialogical study. In that relational practice, students engage in ways of learning that join ancient rabbinic dialogue and contemporary scholarly methods.

A biblical scholar in a university theological school affirmed a similar vision of the complementariness of \textit{paideia} and \textit{wissenschaft} when he said that through his teaching he hoped students would discover how to “combine loyalty and criticism, devotion and creativity.” Butler makes a similar claim when he says he does not want students “to have one part of their brain that works critically and then another part that works devotionally.” In pedagogical terms, this means that in his quest to expand and deepen both their understanding of the Bible and their faith, he has increasingly focused student attention on issues in which the critical study of Scripture collides with shared scriptural pieties. The pedagogical task is critical and objective; the learning agenda is communal and even deve-
tional. Tull, who teaches students typically identified as more liberal than those at Fuller, has a similar intention. She wants them to be “interpreters of Scripture in a world of interpretation with others. This means that I want them not merely to be parrots of other people’s views nor merely naïve readers of Scripture.” Rather, she hopes they will become “active contributors to the ongoing conversation about Scripture—that they may come into their own as critically aware, theologically engaged empathic readers.”

In one sense, these teachers of Old Testament or Hebrew Bible have negotiated the relationship of paideia and wissenschaft in their teaching by focusing, often unconsciously, on their students rather than on the organization or function of the seminary curriculum. Butler, for example, is sensitive to those places where the biblical text poses questions for the faith of his students. Bergant directs student attention to questions that emerge from a growing consciousness of the multiple contexts influencing their reading of any given text, with special attention to the tensions students will encounter between the authority of church tradition and local culture. Differences in the attention they give to the values of wissenschaft and paideia in their teaching may be attributed in part to their different perceptions of student perspective and experience and in part to different expectations for what they want students to be able to do when they study biblical texts. In this regard, these seminary educators also model a way to view their leadership of biblical studies in the congregations they will eventually be serving.

Curricular Function

In The Educational Imagination (1985), Elliot Eisner argues that every school has three curricula. The explicit curriculum is articulated in mission statements, courses of study, and syllabi. The implicit curriculum is found in the rituals and organizational structures, values and assumptions, and patterns of relationship and authority that make up the culture of a school. The null curriculum encompasses “the options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about, much less be able to use, the concepts and skills” that do not become a part of their intellectual or professional repertoire (p. 107). The distinctive ways in which these curricula are configured to extend the mission and reflect the values of a seminary culture also contribute to the diversity of seminary teaching practices.

Eisner's insight about the influence of the curriculum was illustrated for us as Bible teachers described the function of their introductory courses
in the explicit curriculum of their respective schools. When Tull, Bergant, and Schatzmann meet students in their introductory courses, they assume that this will be, for most, their first exposure to Bible study in graduate professional education—indeed, for many, the first since Sunday school. Their courses function as a foundation for and catalyst to advanced work in the field. At Fuller, where students are required to take three courses surveying the whole of the Old Testament literature (any one of which can be taken first), Butler must design his course with the expectation that this will be the first experience with the subject for some students and the third for others. He must figure out a way to introduce some students to the field of study while building on prior knowledge of the field for others. Leveen, in contrast, assumes students have a working knowledge of Hebrew language when planning to teach.

These basic curricular decisions point to a range of philosophical assumptions about the nature and function of the explicit curriculum in a school's mission. Daniel Tanner and Laurel Tanner have identified at least seven different views among curriculum theorists alone and then proceed to suggest an eighth (1995, pp. 87-9). The seminary educators we observed, however, seemed to engage these theories not so much as different ways of thinking about curriculum but as different perspectives on the curricular task. Tull, Bergant, and Schatzmann, for example, reflect the emphases of one theory when they seek through their introductory courses to draw students into the "cumulative tradition of organized knowledge" in Scripture studies embedded in the tasks and responsibilities of clergy practice. At the same time they also view the courses they teach as an integral part of an "instructional plan" or "course of study"—another view of curriculum—to advance student learning. Some of the seminary educators we met understood their teaching, either positively or negatively, in Pierre Bourdieu's (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 [1990]) terms, as cultural reproduction, whereas others understood it as the "reconstruction of knowledge and experience"—two additional theoretical perspectives.

In any configuration of these theories, the courses that seminary educators teach contribute to some curricular function. At Fuller, for example, introductory courses are designed to familiarize students with the sweep of the biblical story—often called a "survey"—and an exposure to interpretive problems that story raises, with the expectation that they will, in Butler's words, "expand" (and, presumably, "deepen") their faith and knowledge, whether as academics or ministers. A similar course at Yale has a different curricular function. Yale biblical faculty immediately introduce students to the methods and practices for interpreting biblical texts, with the expectation that through this effort they will not only become
familiar with their content but also become competent enough to continue the practice of interpretation in academic and ministry settings.

Jewish Theological Seminary, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Trinity Lutheran Seminary faculty take yet another approach. Biblical courses require a basic working knowledge of the original languages. This makes it possible from the outset to draw students into translation exercises that facilitate, over time, their increasing ability to closely and critically read biblical texts in Greek or Hebrew.

At Trinity, we saw a different view of the explicit curriculum as a template for the establishment and maintenance of learning community. The summer course in Greek introduces most students to the language and the life of the seminary. The formal teaching of Greek is embedded in a comprehensive strategy for building a learning cohort that includes student involvement in planning for worship and fellowship activities. Collaborative learning is emphasized in learning Greek and also in planning worship and fellowship activities. Decisions of Trinity faculty members about what and how to teach in subsequent courses are similarly informed by widely shared commitments among the faculty about the value of mutuality among the participants in a community of teaching and learning. Faculty members engage in predominantly transmissive pedagogies for introductory courses to Bible, theology, and church history to provide a common vocabulary for subsequent work. But they also meet informally with small groups made up of first, second, and final year students to explore in collaborative fashion their progress through the seminary curriculum. Some faculty members, moreover, self-consciously choose to shift how they teach advanced courses, to facilitate student collaboration in the exploration of biblical and theological themes, questions, and issues arising directly from ministry experience in field education and their intern year in a pastoral setting.

Faculty teaching practices are also influenced by assumptions about the curricular location of responsibility for student learning. Some faculties—both intentionally and unintentionally—locate that responsibility with the individual student. This is the case especially in large schools or schools with a high student-to-faculty ratio or a large commuting student population. If students want to probe an issue from class in greater depth or talk about a difficulty they are having in class, they are typically invited to meet the instructor during office hours. Students talked, for example, about Butler's availability after class, while walking across campus, or during office hours. In reality, however, comparatively few seek him out. The curricular assumption that students are responsible for their own learning does not require a faculty member to be particularly familiar with
the learning goals and struggles of individual students. Nor does it establish expectations for highly interactive and collaborative learning environments. Indeed, in this situation many students indicate that the more traditional lecture with question-and-answer strategies works quite well for them.

The placement of a course in the curriculum also reveals explicit faculty decisions and, often, implicit faculty assumptions about the value and function of any given course in the education of their students. Is the course required, an option that fills a requirement, or an elective? Does it occur in the first semester or the last? Do colleagues in other disciplines explicitly build on the knowledge and skills developed in any given course, or does each tend to stand alone? Is a given course designed to provide the knowledge and skills for students to pass school or ordination exams? Is the course introductory or advanced? Does it assume prerequisite knowledge and skills, or is it open and available to anyone enrolled in one of the school's degree programs? Is it designed primarily for students preparing for clergy work or for an academic career? Is it linked to the research agenda of a faculty member? Whether acknowledged or not, these and other questions influence faculty decisions about what course to teach, and how to teach any given course.

The curriculum embedded in a course of study, however, is not the only explicit curriculum some seminary students encounter. In most Protestant seminaries, students work through parallel and, in some instances, competing programs of learning and preparation for ordination. At Louisville, for example, denominational ordination exams occur during the academic year. Tull and her colleagues support students in their quest for ordination by "pointing out what they should learn for the exams." The school provides staff services to help students prepare for the exams. During our visit, faculty members in a class we were visiting noted that two students were absent because they were preparing for their exams. Although the faculty has been arguing with the denomination to move the exams out of the academic year, in the meantime each of these accommodations infringes on traditional patterns of faculty time and attention and the distribution of school resources.

With students from more than one hundred denominations, Fuller makes provision for supplemental curricular offerings and experiences for students seeking to meet their various denominational academic requirements. Most Protestant seminaries approach the relationship of academic and ordination expectations within this spectrum. A common pattern involves providing specific courses to meet denominational requirements around issues of doctrine, history, and polity. Sometimes these courses
exist only as a service to the denomination; in other schools they function as an integral component in the curriculum. Many students preparing for ordination in these schools also work on a set of parallel assignments to clarify their call to and fitness for ministry, and to make evident to church officials that they are intellectually, spiritually, and professionally ready to assume roles of ministry within that particular denomination. When the aggregate of students preparing for ordination in any one denomination is large enough, the values and standards for ordination in that denomination become a significant component in the school’s implicit curriculum.

Their experience contrasts with the situation for students in Jewish seminaries in which the faculty decides who is fit for ordination and ordains them, or for Roman Catholic, Orthodox Christian, Anglican, and Evangelical Lutheran students in denominational seminaries in which their steps toward ordination are typically interwoven with the course of study established by the faculty.

The implicit curriculum is embedded in other structures as well. Among the most pervasive are processes for what Catholics and others call spiritual formation or what evangelical Protestants often call discipling. In schools as different as St. John’s Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, some of these programs are required but function outside their academic and field education structures. Many of the goals of the implicit curriculum in seminary education are articulated as dispositions, habits, and disciplines. They are espoused in mission statements, focused on in orientation programs for new students, described in student and faculty handbooks, and embedded strategically in programs, rituals, and relationships integral to the culture of the school. They become visible in shared expectations and standards for faculty and student participation and performance in worship life, in school governance, in transitional ritual events, even in patterns of greeting and interaction among members of the seminary community that tend to spill over into the conduct of a school’s academic life.

We have already noted, for example, how Butler participates in the Fuller cultural affirmation of the personal piety of students, faculty, and staff by teaching in a way that will not “disrupt the faith of students” but instead “stretch it.” Bergant, as a member of a seminary community that honors cultural diversity and encourages the mutuality of cultural encounter, not only embraces the academic traditions of biblical textual criticism, but also seeks to heighten student awareness to the interplay of their historical and social locations with that of the texts they are reading so they might affirm their “received tradition as Roman Catholics . . . with a critical stance toward the implication of that tradition for life today.”
Most graduates of Howard, as a quite different example, assume that their education, like the ministries they anticipate, will be couched in the traditions and practices of the black church and African American culture. As Kortright Davis, professor of theology, observed, this means, among other things, that Howard students “must know how to think on their feet”—they must be comfortable with the distinctive oral traditions of black church preaching and other sites of public presentation. In other words, the perspectives that Butler, Bergant, and Davis bring to teaching their students how to read the Bible involve deeply rooted assumptions about the religious life and the interpretation of Scripture in the cultures of their respective schools.

When comparing faculty teaching practices, we also became aware of a null curriculum in each class and each school. Bible educators in schools that do not require the biblical languages are limited in the extent to which they can introduce students to the complexities and subtleties of the original languages in translation. Teachers who do not have the expertise or feel comfortable teaching students to sing or chant the Psalms will not likely introduce students to that aesthetic experience. Teachers who emphasize either critical analyses or devotional study of sacred texts will not introduce students to the power of their interdependence. Teachers, of course, must make decisions about what to include in a course and how to engage students with their intentions for their learning. The time they have, the experience students bring to the class, and the resources available all affect what they can and cannot do. Some of their decisions are conscious and others are unconscious. Whatever decisions they do make inevitably highlight some possibilities for learning and exclude others.

**Student Expectations and Experience**

The increasing diversity of students in programs of clergy education has significantly challenged the ethos and mission of seminary education during the past forty years.7 Seminary educators are fully aware of the trends and their implications; for example:

- Relatively recent decisions by Reform and Conservative Jews and many Protestant denominations to ordain women have been accompanied by dramatic increases in the number of women students and women faculty in clergy education programs. Expansion of lay ministry options has similarly brought many women into some Roman Catholic seminaries. Enrollment of
women in the Association of Theological Schools, for example, increased 234 percent between 1977 and 2002.

- A parallel increase in the numbers of historically marginalized students attending theological schools has been one of the more obvious consequences of the civil rights movement—from 4 percent of the total in 1977 to 21 percent in 2002. Especially in Catholic seminaries, these figures include significant numbers of recent immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Central and South America.

- With expanding college educational opportunities and the volatility of the workplace, increasing numbers of older students have been enrolling in seminaries. Reports from the Association of Theological Schools indicate, for example, that theological students tend to be older than students in law or medicine, are more evenly distributed across the adult age span, and possess a wider range of educational and professional experience.

- In some schools, these differences are compounded by the diversity of religious traditions represented in both student body and faculty. As noted above, Fuller reports a student community drawn from more than one hundred different Christian denominations; Yale students identified with thirty-nine denominations, with several reporting no religious affiliation. Even a denominational school like Candler lists thirty-six denominations represented among its student body, and North Park Theological Seminary publicizes that its student community comes from “many denominations.” Students at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary represent a range of national and ethnic Christian Orthodox traditions. Students at Jewish Theological Seminary identify with various movements in contemporary Judaism.

Jane Shaw, dean of the Chapel of New College at Oxford University and a consultant to both this project and the Lexington Seminar, has suggested that a consciousness of the importance of attending to student diversity may be endemic to American clergy education. She was most intrigued by the contrasts between an English system that finances the full education of students approved for ministry study and an American system that relies heavily on student tuition. This dependency on tuition, she suggests, intensifies competition in recruiting students and increases attention to the retention of admitted students. Her observation may help explain, in part, why many schools in recent years have been willing to
admit growing numbers of "seekers" whose lack of preparatory knowledge and identification with the professional goals of the seminary curriculum clearly compound the complexity of the school's pedagogical task of professional preparation with the necessity of incorporating them into a tradition of faith or observance. Rebecca Chopp's argument (1995) about the influence on seminary culture of increasing numbers of women is pertinent here. When faculties become conscious of and begin to account for the expectations and experience of each new constituency in the student community, inherited and hegemonic patterns of teaching and learning are inevitably disrupted.

All this means that with the range of diversity to be found in most schools, no faculty member can assume any particular constellation of student background or experience from one term to the next as they prepare to teach. Greene's observation that teachers teach in situations "never twice the same" is especially true of seminary educators (1973, p. 69).

When Bergant walks into the first session of a class at Catholic Theological Union, for example, she must ascertain the extent to which the students she is teaching are working toward the priestly or lay master of divinity, the master of arts, or the master of arts in pastoral studies degree programs, or no degree program; the extent to which their academic and professional backgrounds prepared them for graduate professional study of the Old Testament; the charism of the various orders that send their students to Catholic Theological Union; the countries they represent and languages they speak; and, eventually, their individual strengths and problems in learning what she seeks to teach.

The challenge for Butler is even more complex. His classes, like those of Bergant, include students in different degree programs. They bring a diversity of international, ethnic, gender, age, and educational backgrounds to the study of the Old Testament. They represent as well a vast number of Christian denominations and popular religious movements. He is also conscious of the challenges of teaching some students who have recently converted to Christianity and are entertaining possibilities of ministry while still novitiates in the journey of Christian discipleship and other students who are "burned out" from the intensity of their participation in apocalyptic religious communities. For the faculty at Jewish Theological Seminary, differences between yeshiva-educated students and those coming from university Jewish studies programs pose challenges about how to respond to the variation in their readiness to engage in the rigorous reading of texts.

These "new" and often "nontraditional" students, we discovered, were often aware of the resulting tensions these differences posed for their
instructors. A middle-aged woman in her seminary’s honors program makes the point. She entered divinity school after years of teaching children in a public school. Her “call to ministry” was not only unexpected, it was “just overwhelming.” After making the decision to uproot her life in midcareer, she discovered that “seminary was really different from what I expected it to be.” Active participation in her congregation had not prepared her for the kinds of things taught in Bible and theology classes or for the resistance she felt toward the expectations of her clinical pastoral education supervisor about how she should interact with patients in the hospital. It has been a “time of transition,” she said, and the two or three years of a seminary program is “not a lot of time,” she added, “to transition” from one professional and thought world to another.

But now, in her final year, she said, “I’m engaging more in the dialogue, working through some issues, because I know it’s about time to go out there in the real world.” Near the end of our conversation, she made several comments indicating a set of issues she brought to her experience of that school’s teaching that had not been addressed. “I come from an educational background”—with experience that had been generally ignored in her seminary education. She pointed to the research she had done on “learning styles and how people learn best.” She regretted that, as far as she knew, no faculty member of her seminary took into account this body of knowledge in their deliberations about how to facilitate her learning or that of her colleagues.

In an essay probing the dynamics of social class in the classroom, bell hooks poses one of the issues to be found in this woman’s comment for teachers (2003, pp. 147–8). It centers on the “complex recognition of the uniqueness” of each student and the range of experience and knowledge that students together bring to a teacher’s intentions for their learning. The challenge for faculty occurs in the quest “to create spaces in the classroom” where all students can be heard because they sense they are “free to speak” to the questions and issues of the day, because they know “their presence will be recognized and valued.” We discovered that most clergy educators share this value, but it is one much easier to espouse than to honor.

Still another form of difference, originating in student expectations for their educational experience, deepens the challenge for faculty in making decisions about what and how to teach. Most theological schools see their educational mission as advancing theological studies generally and the theological education of clergy specifically. This means they admit some students anticipating a clergy career and other students seeking an academic career. The former anticipate ordination; many of the latter look forward to doctoral studies. These different expectations become clear as
they describe their educational experience. Most clergy respondents to our survey viewed those years in ways summarized by one graduate as “an incredible experience”: “I really loved my time at Yale”; “I was really privileged to have attended Fuller”; “HUC was an incredible experience”; “Southwestern really challenged me to think”; “I was awakened, encouraged, liberated.”

Many, however, also described an experience of the tension between these two goals. A Fuller student anticipating a ministry career, for example, told us that “I think Fuller does a wonderful job of training people going into doctoral work . . . [but] I don’t think it is as helpful for training for pastoral ministry.” A Candler student found the school’s “efforts to accommodate all religious belief” a challenge “to my faith.” A student at Yale observed that some faculty “are here to create great ministers” and others are “here to create great academics.” This means that “both those students who come here to become academics and those who come here to become ministers kind of get caught in the middle . . . It’s something of a blessing and a curse.” A student from Jewish Theological Seminary noted, “The academic learning at JTS is great. But it is rare for the academic learning to point towards the practical rabbinate in any way. Teachers are most effective when they take into consideration the broader context of our learning.” A few students shared the sentiments of a student from an evangelical seminary who expressed “dismay” and “sorrow” over seminaries “losing their identities” in a preference for “brain growth” over “spiritual growth.” Since most schools engaged in the education of clergy have an academic master’s degree or have students who enroll in the master of divinity degree with the expectation that it will prepare them for doctoral work, most faculty share in some way the dilemma faced by Fuller, Candler, Southwestern, and Yale: how to meet the challenge of accommodating the relationship of student academic and professional expectations for their learning.

A faculty member from a school with a very diverse student body told us that her school was the “most homogenous place she had ever been.” Her comment raised a question: to what extent do seminaries accommodate—in the institutional culture, public mission, and teaching practices—the presence of differences among students? Despite shared rhetoric about institutional inclusivity, no school we visited pedagogically embraced the full range of differences faculty encountered among its students. Rather, in each school some unifying perceptions heightened faculty attention to some differences and diminished awareness of others. Certain denominational practices or beliefs, patterns of piety, historic cultural traditions, epistemological values, educational background, or assumptions about
social class, race and gender, cultural, and personal learning styles provided coherence for some students, while for others, they contributed to the experience of marginalization.

Pedagogical Imagination Illustrated: Two Cases

Teaching relies on the exercise of a teacher’s imagination at every stage of designing and conducting the activities of teaching and learning. It is an art form refined over time by repetition and disciplined reflection. It leads—at least in the practice of teachers we observed—to the construction of pedagogical events encompassing all the ambiguity we have been describing but directed, nonetheless, toward specific expectations for student learning. In this section, we offer an extended description of Bergant’s and Tull’s teaching practices to illustrate the range and complexity of the kinds of decisions seminary educators make in the exercise of their pedagogical imaginations and also to illustrate why students experience the teaching of the same literature so differently in different academic settings.

Teaching to Attend to Social Location
Dianne Bergant, Catholic Theological Union

Bergant introduced the class session we observed with an implicit challenge to the assumptions of some students about the role of women in Catholic tradition. She began the class session with a prayer from St. Teresa, noting that it was St. Teresa’s day in the calendar of saints. The prayer provided her with the opportunity to emphasize the role of a woman as “thinker and teacher in the Christian, and Roman Catholic, tradition” several times during the class session. It established a theological framework for the class (“all is passing” and “God is enough”). It also functioned as a pedagogical device “signaling” for students Bergant’s intention that they learn how to combine an affirmation of their religious tradition with a critical stance toward its implications for contemporary life.

She structured the rest of the class session, dealing with the book of Genesis, to help students continue to “learn how to read” because, as she emphasized, “if you learn how to read, then you can read all other texts.” To develop this capacity, she leads students through the steps of a hermeneutical practice with designated texts each week. A set of preassigned questions designed to encourage students to develop the skill of taking responsibility for their own study prepares students to move through these steps, establishing, in the repetition of the process, an increasingly familiar shape for each class session. These questions engage students in the
problems they will encounter as they read assigned texts. They also remind students of the various social locations of relationships involved in their reading of a text.

Bergant begins the practice "in front of the text" with the explanation that there are many "different ways of interpreting." Those ways of interpreting are what readers of texts bring to their reading. Attention to them reminds us of our social locations. When she moves the discussion to historical questions regarding the text, Bergant engages the students in exploring the "worlds behind the text." When she shifts the discussion of a text to focus on, "say how God was depicted," then "that's the world within the text." She emphasizes that this is no linear process, for descriptions of the "world within the text" typically lead one back to questions "behind the text" about the social location of those who are, in this instance, "depicting God." Bergant brings the discussion full circle when she asks students to reflect on their discussion to ascertain "how much we have interpreted the text today" and then notes once again "that's the world in front of the text."

During the class session she mostly stands or walks about in the front of the conventionally organized rectangular room, firing questions and eliciting comments prompted by the flow of the discussion, writing student responses on the board, gesticulating strongly to emphasize a point, or gesturing affirmatively when a student raises questions or makes observations on the topic at hand. She punctuates the flow of the session with highly animated mini-lectures probing the meaning of the text through a closer look at its historical and cultural context. Often she interrupts these mini-lectures either for a question she wants the students to consider or to answer a student's request for additional information.

Teaching to Appreciate Reading the Text
Patricia Tull, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Tull shares Bergant's desire that students become effective readers of biblical texts. But she imagines the experience of student learning in a quite different fashion. She has an advantage: each of her students enters the class with some facility in Hebrew. This means that she has a ready-made structure to pose problems for student engagement: problems emerging from the task of struggling to translate texts from the Hebrew into English. The learning goal for Tull does not center on problems of translation, but on her desire that students develop a love and appreciation for reading the text. In her class, traditional cognitive expectations become explicitly affective; she expands her teaching strategies to include not only
the discursive but also the aesthetic. She uses the exercise of translation, consequently, not only as a primary mode for practicing the reading and interpretation of texts, but also to establish the basic structure for the interaction of teacher and students. She encourages students to pursue their own study through recurring assignments to bring to class translations of designated texts. Before she asks the students to share their translations with each other, however, she gathers the class into what might be called aesthetic encounters with the texts of their study—first by singing in three-part harmony a song learned in Hebrew language class the previous summer, then by listening as she reads a Psalm as opening prayer. Only then do students begin the practice of translation in small groups—another version, it might be noted, of the collaborative process that Bergant uses to encourage student participation.

After the students have worked on the translation of a text in small groups, they move back into a plenary session to explore more complex issues at stake in the work of translation. Using presentation slide software, Tull compares different ancient translations of the same text and engages students in a dialogical process to raise questions and probe issues posed by the differences among them. Every so often she pauses to poll them on whether they find one translation or another more compelling. The lack of agreement in their voting dramatizes the complexity of their task.

These class sessions are highly interactive. Bergant and Tull require student participation to keep the flow going. They work to create environments in which students will publicly risk what they know and do not know. They keep a firm grip on the direction or design of the flow of the class session, but also give mini-lectures on the spot as they respond to and elicit comments from students. Although they use familiar methods—lecture, discussion, reading, questions—they weave them together into complex and creative patterns or strategies for teacher, student, and textual interaction.

Students expressed to us great appreciation for the teaching of these two women. So did students with faculty who “lectured” in more traditional ways. At Fuller, students expressed gratitude for the way Butler illuminates the usefulness of the scholarship of interpretation in the practices of pastoral ministry. We had a sense of what they meant when we heard him explain to his class how one pastor had developed a series of sermons explicating insight from the Leviticus genealogies for contemporary church life. At Yale, students talked in similarly approving fashion about how Adela Collins modeled for them the hermeneutical enterprise in the construction and presentation of her lectures in classes on the New Testament.
The differences among these teachers of Scripture cannot be traced simply to a contrast of their teaching styles as seen in the patterns of interaction they establish between the subject of their teaching and the students they teach. The differences emerge, as well, from some confluence of perspectives and sensibilities, dispositions and habits, knowledge and values that continuously influences the teachers' work—in their preparation, while they are teaching, and when they reflect on their teaching experience to make sense of it. For students, these differences among teachers are evident in

- The transparency of their knowledge of and relationship to the subject of their teaching
- Their ability to discern the edges of what students know and how they learn
- Their struggle to negotiate norms from their religious traditions and academic disciplines with the relativism of language and the contextuality of truth claims
- The range of their expectations of seminary education in forming clergy for professional roles of public service
- Their ability to foster the imaginative capacities of students for the professional responsibilities and roles they would be assuming as clergy

We interviewed and observed highly skilled teachers. They were almost intuitively adept at making technical pedagogical decisions on the spot to shift the focus of the conversation, to introduce new information, to pick up the pace of the session, to alter the plans for the session, to defuse distractions and refocus discussion. These decisions, however, revealed more than technical proficiency and disciplinary competence. They often seemed to exemplify or model the very engagement these seminary educators seek to foster in their students. Their knowledge of the subject becomes transparent as they invite students into the realm of their own questions, to probe with them problems that evoke their own curiosity, and to share with them the excitement of learning at the edges of their own knowledge. Why else would Tull want her students to experience aesthetically with her the challenge of reading biblical texts with others, or Bergant desire that students share her commitment to contextually sensitive readings of biblical texts, or Butler want his students to discover invitations to deeper faith in the process of engaging questions posed by their reading of biblical texts?
In the chapters that follow we argue that the technical proficiency of these teachers can be described more adequately by understanding the imaginative activity of these clergy educators. The building blocks or components of a teaching practice may be obvious. They include, as we have already described, the methods the teacher chooses to use: oral reading of texts, mini-lectures, collaborative translation, presentation slides. Some, like Tull, alter the pace of the class session by the expeditious use of many methods. Butler relies on just a few. The number of methods in the teachers' toolkits or their skill in using of any given method does not seem predict the degree to which students consider them to be excellent teachers.

Each teacher chooses methods to facilitate strategies that he or she designs to direct students toward explicit learning goals. These strategic goals are tangible, concrete, and typically measurable. Strategies can be structurally simple—as when Tull asks students to translate a text (goal) by writing it out (method) to be shared in small groups (method) in class so as to refine and revise their translations together (goal) in dialogue (method) with peers. These strategies are woven together into a design for a class session that, in turn, is part of a design for the course typically articulated in a syllabus. Strategies can alter the effect of any method.12

In one class session, Tull may give a five-minute mini-lecture to explain a term in a biblical text; another to propose an interpretation; another to compare points of view; and still another to evoke debate or argument about its meaning. The structure of each mini-lecture is the same, but its function varies depending on her goal for student learning and its place in her strategy for drawing students into her expectations for their learning. The shape of the practice not only gives meaning and direction to the methods and strategies teachers may choose to enhance student learning; it also situates their efforts in the culture and mission of the schools in which they are teaching.

Diverse Practices

Although seminary educators share the goal of preparing clergy for their professional roles and responsibilities and the academic standards of regional college and university accrediting agencies and the Association of Theological Schools for Christian seminaries, the diversity of faculty teaching practices is one of the most distinctive features of seminary education. Differences in the teaching of Bergant and Tull, in other words, are no accident. Undoubtedly influenced by their own educational experience, primary sources to their differences may also be traced to variations in the
ways they negotiate a range of social, pedagogical, and historical influences in and through their teaching and the ways in which they view the relationship of the cognitive, skill, and identity formation apprenticeships in and through their teaching.

We have described this constructive effort as the work of their pedagogical imaginations. It is grounded in their assumptions about the relationship of disciplinary knowing to the knowing associated with religious leadership. It becomes visible in faculty decisions about the influence of the setting of the class and school, the relationship of historic seminary commitments to both wissenschaft and paideia, the role of an educational event in the explicit and implicit curriculum, and the background and readiness of students to enter into the dynamics of teaching and learning. It is given form in classroom and communal teaching practices through which seminary educators seek to prepare students for their future roles and responsibilities as clergy.

ENDNOTES

1. Peter Abbs (2003, pp. 2-3), a professor of art education, has an “emphatically post-Christian” view of spirituality, reflecting a deep commitment to both the animating values of western and Christian tradition and postmodernity. Abbs’s discussion of the spirituality of teaching actually provides a provocative challenge to any teaching in theological schools that does not take the concerns of postmodernity seriously.

2. Other factors contributing to the diversity in the teaching practices that have been in the background of our attention to those practices include denominational traditions, accommodations to changing accreditation standards, disciplinary styles of teaching (as in Huber and Morreale, 2002), views of student capacities and learning styles (as in Magolda, 1992), and the impact of technology on teaching and learning (as in Schultze, 2002).

3. “The mission of Howard University School of Divinity, as a graduate theological and professional school, is to educate, form, and empower leaders to serve the church and the world, to celebrate the religious and cultural heritage of African Americans, the African Diaspora and Africa and to engage in the pursuit of excellence in ministry, driven by a passion for justice and freedom and a relentless search for truth.”

4. Kelsey (1992) observed that Christian theological schools have held themselves accountable to “two models of excellence.” The more ancient is paideia; the more modern is wissenschaft. The former is most evident in