

we are serious about such educational endeavors, we will be required as faculty to spend time in cultures other than Euro-American and to learn from indigenous forms of thinking and being. Our constructive endeavors will be enhanced by a genuine engagement with cross-cultural teaching and learning.

Third, we must continue to move beyond the debate of theory and praxis. Perhaps those of us in Ph.D. and Th.D. programs should be as concerned about the loss of clinical training programs as we are about the lack of students who want to spend their time and energy in the academy learning to work in a narrow discipline. Similarly, those in D.Min. and clinical training programs ought to be concerned about the number of graduates from Th.D. and Ph.D. programs who lack clinical or pastoral experience. For pastoral theology to continue to deepen and develop, our commitments to one another should be as real as our commitments to the particular program out of which we work. We are a community of scholars, dependent on one another for the future of our discipline.

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**Guess Who's Coming to the Classroom?  
Postmodernity and Doctoral Programs  
in Religion and Personality**

Each year the applicants for our Ph.D. in Religion and Personality grow more diverse, becoming more equally divided between Asians, African Americans, and European Americans. Few applicants resemble the typical candidate of only a decade or more ago—young white mainline Protestant male. Yet evaluative criteria (e.g., GREs) and the field itself, its major texts and traditions, and its typical courses are often defined for and by just such persons. How then do we select, much less teach and grade new students, fewer and fewer of whom arrive with the traditionally presumed background or commonly shared aspirations?

Postmodernism means multiculturalism, pluralism, relativism, and sociopolitical diversity. However, if the university scholarships still go mainly to those with high GREs or if teaching those for whom English is a second language requires more work, how far can doctoral

programs go in fostering diversity? And what do we do when we must respond to needs beyond our own arenas of expertise or when students assume practices and beliefs rejected by Christians or Christian feminists (see Cohen, Howard, and Nussbaum, 1999)?

In a time of uncertainty and transition, I offer a few thoughts to guide us forward in our thinking about doctoral programs. We need to consider the following six interrelated moves:

**(1) Affirm the field of religion and personality vs. lament our identity crisis**

One nice consequence of postmodernity is its leveling effect. We are not the only field in ferment. Other fields are confused about their parameters and norms; other areas have also lost tenure-track positions. In institutions in the Association of Theological Schools over the past twenty years, the "number of full-time faculty increased 5 percent and the number of part-time faculty 129 percent" (Wheeler, 1998, p. 109; Frisina, 1997).

Sadly enough, predictions about our field's demise seem related to the arrival of the "other" on the scene. Just because the field does not look like it used to, with certain kinds of courses, for example, or with certain numbers of well-known white male faculty doesn't necessarily mean it's in decline. Riet Bons-Storm and Denise Ackermann argue convincingly that continuing debate over our field's identity crisis distracts us from more pressing matters "in a world full of want." Anxiety about our status makes it difficult to let the "other" in, especially the "unfamiliar and the unexplored" (1998, p. 2-3). Instead of lament, how might we get on with the business of defining the parameters of study in our field?

**(2) Recognize and affirm the field's unity *and* complexity**

Recently, I was the first of three faculty members in our field to introduce myself in a large group of people from other fields in religion. All three of us gave different job titles and the third to speak said wittily, "But we all teach the *same* thing." We laughed in relief. But do we teach the same stuff? Would it be such a bad thing if we didn't? Might our differences in title, in fact, mark the richness rather than the problematic of the field? Perhaps we need to understand and promote this richness rather than feel compromised by it. The field is by definition complex.

On the one hand, we should agree on and use a generic rubric for the field as a whole. The nomenclature of "religion and personality" has served us well. Why throw it out or hesitate to use it as an all-encompassing way to gather under one umbrella the diverse enterprises of the field? At the same time, as this implies, we should welcome as part of the field the three divergent foci that I have defined elsewhere as psychology of religion, pastoral theology, and religion and culture (1998, p. 178). These are different means, from positions both within and beyond the circle of faith, to address common questions that inspired and still connect the field.

The field is united by questions of both critical hermeneutics and critical praxis. That is, scholars and teachers have raised the question of how to interpret contemporary human problems in light of older classical theological and philosophical views of human nature and competing views in the modern social sciences (Browning, 2000). Postmodernity itself has added a second question which both deepens and challenges this question: how to hear the competing perspectives of diverse, and often marginalized, persons, communities, and traditions in relation to classic religious understandings of human existence with the goal of developing transformative practices (Chopp, 1987).

There are other ways to frame our common questions and methods. But we need to keep asking how divergent programs together create the field, especially in light of the many new voices.

### **(3) Strengthen connections between seminary, college, and university teaching**

The survival of our field rests on the ability to sustain the interconnections between the enterprises of psychology *of* religion, psychology *and* religion, psychology and *theology* (Miller-McLemore, 2000). This strategic interdependence is a particularly important component of sustaining strong doctoral programs. Doctoral programs have a responsibility for both the breadth and the depth of the field. Students need exposure to the field's complexity and then options in terms of their own goals.

By contrast, those who teach in self-standing professional schools and undergraduate programs often focus on one of the field's areas, whether pastoral care and counseling or religion and culture respectively. This does not negate the importance of acknowledging the wider interconnections. Faculty on either side still need to know something of what goes on in different settings and to cross over into

foreign territory occasionally. Do regular members of the Person, Culture, and Religion group of the American Academy of Religion, for example, know what's going on at the Society of Pastoral Theology? Do folks in the Association of Practical Theology keep generally abreast of prominent themes in the Social Scientific Study of Religion?

**(4) Build on previous work on the field's methods and content**

Consider the often abstruse character of systematic theology, the restricted focus of much biblical scholarship, or the noncommittal neutrality of religious studies. Then reconsider what pastoral theologians have accomplished. Over the past several decades, pastoral theologians have attempted to interpret, preserve, and enrich lived theologies and practices of faith. Those in the field have demonstrated the importance of critical encounter between human struggle and the resources of Christian and Jewish traditions. While arguments for the public character of theology now abound, pastoral theologians have never doubted the need to address the wider public, even if we have done so primarily bit by bit in the midst of the personal problems of individuals.

Just listen to Rod Hunter's depiction of what is entailed in teaching the basic course in pastoral care as stated in a review of Margaret Kornfeld's new introductory text (1998):

[The introductory course] must take into account new information and theory in psychology, sociology, social psychology, cultural anthropology, cognitive science and brain research. It must be based on a substantial historical and theological foundation and relate effectively to the practice of parish ministry. It must present up-to-date treatments of lay caregiving, gender perspectives, sexual orientation, family breakdown, violence, clergy sex abuse, legal liabilities in counseling, and much more. And it must teach contemporary forms of family theory and brief counseling, and attempt a rapprochement with the historic pastoral arts of spiritual direction and formation (1999, p. 493).

This is no small agenda pastoral theology has established for itself.

Pastoral theologians tend toward a kind of historical amnesia. We quickly forget and overlook previous attempts to define the field.

We do not look back to them or build on them often enough (see, for example, Hunter, 1980). Earlier texts merit attention and retention as a means to move forward.

**(5) Extend and deepen the heritage of the field**

Teaching must involve a broader historical positioning of the field than we have previously offered. In this move, we might follow the approach of the relatively new but more established field of religious ethics. In many graduate programs, students are required to take a historical exam that focuses on the ethical ideas of classic figures and periods. Why haven't our exams required a comparable return to the pastoral theologies or theological anthropologies of earlier periods?

Doctoral programs, however, must not only identify the classics in pastoral wisdom and theological anthropology. They must distinguish the frequently overlooked and forgotten voices of history. Both tasks are difficult but this one is harder and perhaps more important. It suggests that the fundamental definitions and texts may be a whole lot more uncertain than any of us want to admit.

**(6) Allow for uncertainty in teaching and research**

A few decades ago, some white men thought they could write Great American novels and all-encompassing systematic theologies. Today we teach classes and write books that begin by recognizing the situated, limited character of our voices and that end by inviting more diverse conversationalists to join in.

This requires a different approach in the classroom. Author Carole Maso says she no longer teaches the way "it's often done—I'm the teacher and I'm here to tell you something, and this is what I'm here to tell you." This seems "false and male-oriented" to her. But the students are comfortable with teacher monologues:

They hate when I say I don't know the answer, when I say, I don't know what to tell you . . . . They feel like they're paying their money to get the answers. . . . They want some stable ground under their feet. And there are obviously things that you can say with some authority, but to put them up against their own fear is part of the job as far as I'm concerned. To show them how truly

scary it is and how high the stakes really should be is part of what is done in my classes (1995, p. 32).

Postmodernity in the classroom means leaving open slots on the syllabus for unforeseen texts that students might want to add. It means more dialogical lectures or what Susan Simonaitus calls "generative lectures" and "structured improvisation." A generative lecture provides enough information to allow students to interpret a text, sometimes at the beginning of the class but more often interspersed when a puzzling impasse in conversation is reached. Structured improvisation allows students to direct the conversation but keeps a set of questions developed out of the teacher's expertise in mind without knowing when such questions will arise or even if students will happen upon better, more insightful ones. Generative lectures are still lectures, the classes are still structured, and professors still have expertise, authority, and power that must be recognized. But the lectures, structure, and authority are now of a different sort. They are full of ambiguity and open-endings (see Miller-McLemore, 1998, pp.190-194).

Telling students we professors don't know or even that our vision is clouded by our all-too heterosexist or racist or mid-western or U.S. biases can be quite disturbing, especially if students are looking for more perfect role models to idealize. Teaching in this way also takes courage when one's colleagues down the hall deliver lectures on Monday and Wednesday and let teaching assistants run the apparently less valued, face-to-face discussions on Friday. Students have to be willing to be confused; they have to assume responsibility for grappling with ideas and even for the corporate personality of the classroom; they have to live with the frustration of disorganization and leaving the course without a fat notebook full of scribbling. Asking students to learn in different ways is frightening. But perhaps we can take heart from those who have gone before us who introduced verbatims, role play, or gestalt exercises as a way to live and learn the material.

In this final point and through all six suggestions, I'm basically arguing that doctoral programs will face the challenges of Postmodernity well by *both strengthening and loosening up our disciplinary identity* at the same time. Recognition of the social construction of knowledge has opened space for new voices. This is good. On the other hand, Postmodernity undermines the modernist grounds by which the marginalized claim a right to participate. Moreover, Postmodernity makes it more difficult for teachers to make sound judgments about knowledge and methods that define the field. Those who therefore must

strike for the fluctuating middle ground of a "critical postmodernism" (Lakeland, pp. 8-9; Burbules and Rice, 1991). We must appreciate the ways in which postmodernism has loosened the boundaries of classic approaches. But we must also refuse to celebrate all Postmodernity's negations and instead fabricate new, ever-evolving parameters. For we still live in a hybrid mix of competing premodern, modern, and postmodern ideals and must help our students do so with wisdom and hope.

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**Teaching Doctoral Programs in  
Pastoral Theology in the Twenty-First Century:  
An African American Perspective**

The new millennium gives pastoral theologians an opportunity to reflect on concerns and issues that they will be confronting in the twenty-first century. Pastoral theology is the interdisciplinary and practical arm of theology, and its task is to make informed interventions into the lives of people who are facing life transitions, stresses, and crises. To accomplish its task, pastoral theological reflection must also take into consideration wider cultural issues that impact the lives of people including racial and ethnic traditions, inter-racial conflict, gender equality, discrimination against people because of sexual preference, and issues related to technological and post-industrial economic changes.

Pastoral theology at the doctoral level must address the dominant issues that face society, and one of the issues is the impact of technology on the life of community or modernity. Post modernity is viewed by some as the continuation of selected themes of modernity, particularly themes related to human subjectivity, pluralism of voices clamoring to be heard in the market place, and social political diversity. In addition to these highly publicized themes are related less visible ones that impact particularly the African American community now, but will affect all communities in time. These issues are nihilism and shame.

The concern about nihilism in the African American community has been raised by Harvard University scholar Cornell West and by Andrew Billingsley, a family sociologist from the University of South Carolina. For them, nihilism is the loss of a sense of meaning and

Moreover, many African American graduate students in pastoral counseling find connections and relationships with church nurturing and sustaining. They feel a sense of being home. Consequently, they don't feel the same threat of loss of many as other pastoral counselor might feel.

## **Conclusion**

Shame and nihilism are the psychological and emotional fall-out of post-modernity. In many ways they are also the result of loss of participation in significant cross-generation support systems and in spiritual and religious programs. Pastoral theologians cannot ignore the spiritual and religious dimensions in the training of students. Professional formation will also need to be connected with some aspects of the spiritual formation of the pastoral theologian. How this is done will need to be creative and innovative. Issues related to religious identity and pastoral identity of the pastoral theologian will become more rather than less important.

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