

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR A WORLD CHURCH:
The New Curriculum at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago

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Introduction

In yesterday's presentation I offered some reflections on how systematic theology might profit from and be challenged by listening to the wisdom offered by what often is in academia a *marginal* theological discipline: the discipline of mission studies or missiology. Should mission studies be taken more seriously in systematic theology, I suggested, it would become more open to the method of practical theology; it would listen to *all* the voices articulating faith—both in the past and in the present—; it would be more intentionally contextual in terms of being more interdisciplinary, more “occasional,” more open to neglected questions, and more conscious of the various ways or models by which faith and context can interact with one another. In addition, I spoke of some concrete ways that the *content* of systematic theology in the areas of the doctrine of God, Christology and ecclesiology would be affected.

This morning I would like to make these reflections much more concrete and particular by sharing with you how my colleagues and I at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago (where I teach systematic theology and hold the position of Professor of Mission and Culture) have integrated some of these ideas across our entire theological curriculum, and we believe that we have developed a curriculum to form leaders for our contemporary world church. My hope in being so personal and so concrete is to contribute to the very concrete theme of this conference: “Theological Scholarship in Aotearoa-New Zealand.” I believe that our experience of curriculum revision in Chicago can be helpful for similar rethinking in this particular context, and can also offer new insights and challenges to Aotearoa-New Zealand theological education and scholarship.

At one level, I must admit, this is a very bold and even very rash claim. I have been in this country only a few days and know almost nothing about the ANZ context on the one hand and the theological scene on the other. What can this outsider—white, male, Catholic, etc.—have to say to you besides some general theological ideas like I offered yesterday? On the other hand, I am a great believer in the dictum of the U.S. American psychologist Carl Rogers: the most personal is the most general,¹ a dictum that is one of the key insights behind what I have called the “transcendental model” of contextual theology.² My sharing with you my own experience of a rich faculty discussion and a creative curriculum design might very well offer insights that will set off your own ANZ minds in similar discussion and creativity. Or, even if this doesn't work and you are completely turned off by the moves we have taken in Chicago, some creative thinking might also take place if you ask yourselves *why* you are turned off by what I say. In each case, if we are open to real *conversation*—described by David Tracy as speaking honestly

¹Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), 25.

²Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*. Revised and Expanded Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 103-116.

and accurately, listening and respecting the other, courage to defend and courage to change, willingness to argue and enter into conflict³—our conversation might well precipitate a genuine thinking through of the issues in this particular context.

So allow me to be personal and particular this morning, and perhaps bold and rash, for the sake of the conversation.

A Long Discussion

The Keystone Project

The curriculum that our school will inaugurate this September has its roots in a long process that might be traced back to a series of discussions we had as part of what was called “The Keystone Project.” This was a project funded by the U.S.-based Lilly Endowment (from the fortune of the drug manufacturer Eli Lilly of Indianapolis, Indiana) that encouraged a number of Catholic theological schools (there was also a Protestant counterpart) to think creatively about an issue of particular import in their respective schools. There were three groups of six schools, and representatives from each one of the three met in successive summers in the resort town of Keystone, Colorado—whence the name—and all the representatives met there the summer of the fourth year, 2000. I was chosen by our dean to be a member of the team, along with three other colleagues, although I was not able to attend the final meeting in 2000.

Some of our own sister schools chose to work on issues like the implementation of a new curriculum around the theme of Eucharistic communion, the development of a distance learning program, or the relationship between professors as formators and teachers. The issue on which we decided to focus at CTU was the issue of *diversity*, and as we reflected together—both as the Keystone team and with the entire faculty—it became clear that *diversity* was a very complex reality at our school. The issue of diversity had surfaced because of the immense cultural diversity of the school. Besides white Americans, African Americans and Americans of Latino/a descent, we have Asian students from Vietnam, the Philippines, China and Korea; African students from Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia; Latin American students from Mexico, Brazil and Colombia; students from Australia and New Zealand; and a smattering of students from Europe, particularly from Italy, the UK, and Ireland. There was certainly cultural diversity, but there were other ways to think about diversity that were just as rich and just as challenging: there was diversity in age, with students in their early 20s in class with students in their 60s and even 70s; there was diversity in terms of laity, vowed religious and ordained; there was male/female diversity, with some 40% of our student body as female. Finally, there was diversity in theological approach: many of our U.S. born students were very much in the “liberal” camp, but our students from the Third World were much more cautious about much of contemporary western theological scholarship, particularly that which was suspicious of the church’s tradition and magisterial authority; and many of our Third World students *and* younger ordination candidates were much less concerned with feminist issues, particularly the polarizing issue of women’s ordination. Our challenge was to develop a community of teaching and learning that really took this diversity seriously and was able to use it in truly positive ways. We needed to teach theology in a way that enabled the various cultures in

³David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 16.

the class to enter into conversation and learn from one another, where young could learn from old and vice-versa, where women could challenge patriarchy and exclusion from office in the church and at the same time be inspired to continue their faithful dissent, where all could learn from the advances in scholarship while at the same time become respectful of the church's tradition and teaching authority. This was no easy task, and the immensity of it became clearer and clearer to us as the project progressed. It was, we were convinced, however, a necessary one. Our student body with its multiple diversities was a microcosm of the church as it has emerged in these first years of the twenty-first century. Christianity today is a world Christianity; the church today is, perhaps for the first time in history, a truly *catholic* church—a world church.⁴

Many of the benefits of the project were simply in the conversation itself around the issues, and most certainly the consciousness of the issue was heightened among us on the faculty and in the student body and among the staff as well to a certain extent. We were grappling with the reality that we were engaged in theological education in a school and, more generally, a church which had changed radically since 1968 when CTU was founded. In 1968 the student body was composed exclusively of male ordination candidates; in 1998 we were almost 20% Asian, 40% female and 40% lay, and our classes of thirty or thirty-five included women and men from every continent and multiple cultures. Very specifically—and directly germane to our eventual curriculum revision—we reflected together on developing a new set of “graduate profiles”—sketches of what we hoped our graduates would look like upon graduation. Several years before we had developed these criteria; now, conscious of the importance of diversity among our student body, we were shocked at how bland these were. A copy of the original graduate profiles of the M.Div. Program used in our discussion and the graduate profiles developed by our faculty for the Keystone project can be found in this paper's appendix.

Continued Discussions

It was during our faculty discussions in the course of the Keystone Project that we caught the first glimmers of the fact that, in order to actually bring off the goals we stated, we would have to engage fairly soon in a major rethinking and reshaping of our basic curriculum. CTU as a school of theology in a changed world and a changed church would have to attend at every level of its life to the immense diversity that was represented in our student body, and this diversity was calling us to think differently about many other aspects of theological education.

One issue that our faculty reflected about on one occasion was the level—or lack thereof—of integration on the part of many of our students. Students could take wonderful courses in Scripture, systematic theology, ethics and cross cultural ministry and do well in the individual courses, but when it came time to preach in preaching classes they would fall back on what one might call “catechism theology.” Or, despite excellent courses in pastoral and cross cultural sensitivity, they would preach about the academic questions they discussed in class with no skill in relating these issues to everyday questions and issues of ordinary Christian folk. Could our

⁴See Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003); Karl Rahner, “Towards a Fundamental Interpretation of Vatican II,” *Theological Studies*, 40, 4 (December, 1979): 716-727; Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Robert J. Schreier, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

courses be taught in some way as to call for a biblical-theological-pastoral integration right from the beginning?

From this kind of discussion other discussions were held about the importance of interdisciplinary teaching and team teaching. Any future curriculum, we began to realize, needed to include courses which were themselves models of the integration that needed to go on within the minds and hearts of our students, and we began to realize as well that these kinds of courses could only be taught effectively if they would be taught collaboratively, but a team of two or more teachers who would teach from the perspective of their diverse areas of theological expertise.

As conversations continued the year before the formal process of curriculum revision was to begin (2001-2002), what began to emerge was an understanding of a theological curriculum that would have a certain interdisciplinary *core* that would be team taught and focused on integration of academic and pastoral skills, but one that would also be attentive to the integrity of the various theological disciplines as such. The image that was used was that of a tree and its branches. In addition, since CTU had been founded in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, we felt very strongly that any curriculum should have the Council's major foci at heart: its commitment to discerning the "signs of the times," its commitment to openness to other religious ways, its commitment to the participation of the laity in the very mission of the church, and its vision that the church is "missionary by its very nature"—that the church exists not for itself, but for God's work in the world.⁵

In our conversations as well, a number of "pedagogical assumptions" began to surface, and we recognized that these would have to form part of the foundation of any new curriculum we would design. Our colleague Barbara Bowe articulated ten of these assumptions in a paper she prepared for faculty discussion during the new curriculum's design process. First, she said, we presume that learning is a *mutual* process. Both teachers and students have much to teach each other and to learn from each other. Second, models of *adult learning* must be employed in our teaching, respecting especially the experience of everyone in the classroom, students as well as teachers. Third, attention to diversity also includes sensitivity to the variety of *learning styles* by which students appropriate content, method and attitudes in the classroom. Fourth, team teaching will be valued as a model of *collaboration* in teaching and learning. Fifth, students will be called upon to communicate their learning by means of a number of means—written, oral, in groups, through mentoring conversations. Sixth, we will continue to explore the use of the most appropriate technology both inside and outside the classroom. Seventh, we place high value on academic advisement and mentoring outside the classroom. Eighth, we will encourage our students to take courses in the other schools in the Chicago area in order to have a well-rounded ecumenical experience. Ninth, we will encourage students to avail themselves of the opportunities for Jewish-Christian and Muslim-Christian dialogue our school offers, and include these dimensions in our teaching. And, finally, we acknowledge that the entire environment of

⁵For the "signs of the times," see Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), 4. For the Council's attitude toward other religious ways, see its Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*). For the Council's understanding of the Laity, see the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and its Decree on the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*). For the idea of the missionary nature of the church see Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes*), 2

the school educates, and so we are committed to providing a vital theological environment in terms of art, art exhibits, lectures, and the like.

The New Curriculum

In the fall of the 2002-2003 academic year our faculty was faced with two important decisions. The first was the most difficult and wrenching. Since our founding in 1968, we had been on the “Quarter System,” of three ten week quarters throughout the year: late September to Christmas, January to mid-March, and late March to early June. But over the last several years, a number of the other theological schools in the neighborhood—many of which had been close partners with CTU in terms of programs and cross registration—had elected to change over to a modified semester system: early September to Christmas, an intensive January or J Term, and then early February to mid-May. Although enthusiasm wasn’t very high, our faculty voted unanimously to adopt this system as well.

The second decision we made that fall was to formally begin the process of revising our curriculum to fit the new semester system that we had adopted, and at the same time to see if we could put into practice some of the thinking that we had done over the previous four or five years about a curriculum that was interdisciplinary, focused on integration, sensitive to diversity and dialogue, and focused on training ministers for a church that was “missionary by its very nature.”

And so to this end Dean Gary Riebe-Estrella appointed a “Curriculum Design Team” consisting of himself as chair, Edward Foley (liturgy and practical theology), Barbara Bowe (New Testament), Scott Alexander (Islamic studies), and me (systematic theology and mission). Dean Riebe-Estrella suggested that we focus our energies on the revision of the M.Div. Curriculum, as it was the most complex of all our programs and was traditionally the “flagship” program of the school. My reflections this morning will focus exclusively on this program, although we have also revised our other programs in harmony with this one.

As our team met for the first time our task seemed incredibly daunting, but we achieved our first breakthrough when we realized that the graduate profiles our faculty had developed for the Keystone Project back in 1999 focused over and over again on four central goals of what we wanted to be about as a community of teaching and learning here at CTU. First, the Keystone profiles repeatedly spoke of ministry as a *reflective practice* or *praxis*. Our graduates should be women and men who not only possess the skills for effective ministry, but who are also able to *reflect on their ministry in order to practice it better*. Ministerial identity and practice, then, was the first central concept. Second, what continually surfaced in the profiles was the conviction that it was not enough to teach our students *content*. Rather, in addition to knowing what theology was about, they needed to know something about theological *method*. It would be in this way that our graduates could keep on correlating their present ministerial experience and practice with the church’s scriptures and ongoing theological tradition. Third, we discerned, the profiles insisted that our graduates understand the *contextual nature* of Christian faith—how experience, culture and social location are at once the only lens through which Christians can see their faith and at the same time blinders which, if unrecognized as such, can severely limit their religious vision. Students need to be aware that, in the words of my colleague Robert Schreiter, tradition is a series of local theologies⁶—this is both theology’s glory and great limitation. But, fourth, our

⁶Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 93-94.

students need to know that tradition, at least in its broad outlines. Students, we said, should be able to draw a rough “time line” on a blackboard and point out the major moments of Christian history and theology.

It was the recognition of these four goals from our Keystone discussion that gave us the idea of organizing our new curriculum around four major themes: Ministry, Method, Context and Tradition. Not only did these themes articulate what we had outlined in our discussions about diversity and theological education in the Keystone Project; they also echoed themes that seemed to surface in many of the Catholic Church’s major documents on ministerial formation during and since the Council: documents such as that on Priestly Formation (*Optatam Totius*), John Paul II’s 1992 Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, and the various editions of the U.S. Bishops’ *Program of Priestly Formation*. In retrospect as well, we can say that these four areas jibe very well with works on ministerial and theological education by scholars like Edward Farley, Rebecca Chopp, Robert Banks and James and Evelyn Whitehead.⁷

The “Foundational Core”

We began to think, then, of four major interlocking courses that students would take upon entrance into the CTU M.Div. Program. Eventually we named them “Foundational Core Courses,” and began to think of them not so much as courses within certain disciplines, but around these four themes of ministerial practice, method, context and tradition. Each course ordinarily would be team taught by two professors from two different disciplines, and other members of the faculty would also be invited into the course to provide “cameo appearances” in their discipline of expertise. But the idea right from the start was to have our students exposed to courses where integration was taking place in the classroom across disciplines, where even the professors would be stretching themselves toward the other discipline and beyond each of their areas of expertise. Although we knew that it would be up for ridicule at some point, we decided to speak of the four courses with the acronym P-A-R-T (not T-R-A-P!).

The first course (although not necessarily *taken* first) was entitled “Pastoral Practice: The Theology of Ministry.” It would offer a history of ministry, develop a theology of ministry, and engage the students in a form of theological reflection that they would employ in other courses, but particularly in their ministry practicum course after they had finished the foundational core (normally in the second year of study).

The “A” course in the foundational core would focus on method, and was entitled “The Art of Theology: Theological Methods.” The professors who would teach this course would introduce students to the various methods of the various disciplines of theology, emphasizing the fact that theology, rather than just the mastery of a content, is a skill, a craft or an art. Like learning to drive a car, raise a child or play a sport, one needs to master certain basic methods in theology, but the actual driving, raising, playing or theologizing is something that mixes honed

⁷Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999); James D. and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry*. Revised Edition (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1995).

skill with quick intuition—not to mention a recognition of serendipity or plain “dumb luck.”

The focus on context in the lineup is covered in a course entitled “Religion in Context: Diversity in Dialogue”—and so it is an “R” course. This course will include an introduction to the theology of religions and on the nature and forms of culture. Right from the beginning of their theological studies, we hope to impress on students the importance of context for all theological thinking. Important as well is to have a sense of other religions and the need to discover who we are as Christians through encounter and dialogue.

“Tradition: Sources through History” is the name of the “T” part of the foundational core courses. This course will be a sweep through church history, using the perspective of what has been called the “new church history”—that is a history of Christianity as a world Christian movement that is non-western in origin and in subsequent development, that is not just a study of rulers and winners of wars, but which includes the work of ordinary people in the development and spread of Christianity and dissemination of church doctrine. Particular emphasis will be placed on the role of women as a neglected yet major part of tradition’s story.

The “Complementary Core”

As I mentioned above, M.Div. students will be required to take all four foundational core courses before taking other courses in the curriculum. The foundational core courses will be offered, if possible, twice a year, at various time slots to make it as convenient as possible for students to take them. In addition to these, however, which by nature are broad, inter- and multi-disciplinary in focus, students will also be required to take a number of more specifically focused “complementary core courses” which will emphasize practice, method, context and tradition from the viewpoint of particular disciplines. M.Div. Students in the ordination track will have to take four of these, other M.Div. students will be required to take three, although all will be required to take the “T” complementary core course entitled “Introduction to Biblical Studies.” These complementary core courses will vary in their scope, but for the time being the “P” courses will consist of a choice between “Liturgical Planning” and “Communication for Ministry;” “A” courses will offer a choice between “Doing Systematic Theology” or “Living the Moral Life,” and students taking “R” courses will choose between “Abraham’s Children: Jews, Christians, and Muslims” and “Crossing Cultural Boundaries: Ministry at the Margins.” “T” courses will offer no choice. Considering the importance and centrality of the Bible, all students must take the introduction to biblical studies, which will be offered every semester.

Students entering the M.Div. Program at CTU, therefore, will have a wide-ranging introduction to theological studies that are intentionally interdisciplinary and integrated on the one hand, and also focused and discipline-specific on the other. The foundational core courses provide the general overview; the complementary core courses provide a very specific, more in-depth perspective of P-A-R-T.

The “Integrating Core Courses”

There is one more set of courses that is innovative in our new curriculum, and this is the set of “Integrating Core Courses.” All ordination students must take all four of these; non-ordination candidates must take three. These courses, however, can be taken at any time during the remaining years of the program. The genius of these courses is that they revolve around another series of themes, but each theme is covered by focusing on practice, method, context and

tradition. The foundational core courses zero in on one of these themes; the complementary core courses zero in on each of these themes from the perspective from a particular discipline. These integrating core courses treat one theme from four different perspectives.

We struggled to find what themes to address in these courses. One natural set of themes, we thought, might come out of the Christian creed: e.g. God, Christ, Spirit, Church. But this was too doctrinally oriented. Another possibility was to focus on four of the main documents of Vatican II: the church, for example, the liturgy, non-Christian religions, and the church in the modern world. Others thought that we might divide the themes according to the Catholic Catechism issued several years ago after Vatican II—and so the themes would be the creed, the sacraments, Christian morality, and Christian spirituality. What we finally came up with, however, was to fuse into *four* themes *six* elements of the church's mission suggested several years ago by my colleague Eleanor Doidge and me: (1) witness and proclamation; (2) liturgy, prayer and contemplation; (3) justice, peace and the integrity of creation; (4) interreligious dialogue; (5) inculturation; and (6) reconciliation. Elements (3) and (6) would be conflated, as would be elements (4) and (5). Each of these courses would address the four perspectives of the foundational core—P.A.R.T.—and, although they would be interpreted more widely, they would be roughly equivalent to courses in recognized disciplines.

The adoption of these four themes based on the elements of the church's mission for these integrating core courses also responded to something that several of us on the faculty had found missing so far in the curriculum: a clear and strong mission orientation. As a faculty we were convinced that a missionary outlook was crucial for theological education, since ministry in the church was not just about building up the *church* as such, but about turning the church toward engagement with the world and equipping baptized Christians for witness *beyond* the church's borders *toward* the already-but-not-yet-inaugurated Reign of God. And particularly at CTU, where so many missionary congregations were sending their students to be prepared for cross cultural missionary work, this outward-looking, evangelical, cross cultural perspective was particularly necessary to highlight. So far the curriculum had paid strong attention to the cross cultural dimension; now it could be said that the evangelical, missionary dimension was given its due as well.

The course on Witness and Proclamation, in the first place, would be subtitled “The God of Jesus Christ,” and would be roughly equivalent to a course on God, either from the discipline of systematic theology or biblical theology. Its title is “The God of Jesus Christ.” The course on Liturgy, Prayer and Contemplation would be named “Ecclesial Spirituality,” and could be taught by either a liturgist or a professor of spirituality. The course on Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation and Reconciliation is named “Living the Values of the Reign of God,” and could focus either on social ethics or on pastoral theology and pastoral care. And the course on Inculturation and Dialogue is subtitled “Ministry across Boundaries,” and could be offered by a missiologist, a person in cross cultural ministry, or one in the history of religions or comparative theology.

If you are interested in seeing a syllabus for one of these courses, there is one attached in the appendix of this paper. It is not quite complete as yet—it is the course I will be teaching this fall around Witness and Proclamation, reflecting on the God of Jesus Christ.

Ministry Practica, Area Requirements, Electives and Capstone Course

The rest of the new curriculum, and really the bulk of it, will look fairly traditional to theological educators and scholars. The core curriculum makes up about one third (34%) of the

M.Div. curriculum, while the remaining 66% is divided into two courses of ministry practica (a year long course with regular theological reflection and a three-week minimum “immersion”), a number of “area requirements” in the ordinary theological disciplines (Bible, systematic theology, ethics, liturgy, preaching and presiding, spirituality, pastoral theology, cross cultural ministry, church history), and six electives. Finally, in his or her final January term a student must take a course which helps assess the degree of integration that he or she has achieved and what areas need particular work as the student graduates and goes into full time ministry.

As I say, this all looks fairly traditional. Our hope, however, is that as teachers teach in the foundational, complementary and integrating core courses, even their teaching in their own disciplines will be affected by the strong interdisciplinary, integrating and context-conscious approaches of the more innovative courses.

Implementation

What I have presented to you here is the result of several presentations by the design team and a lot of discussion by the entire faculty on three occasions of long-term meetings. Faculty input was invaluable. Much of it pointed out inconsistencies in the approach of the design team and the proposed design, especially the foundational core courses which were the focus of the first day and half meeting in February, 2003. But most of the faculty response was amazingly positive. All of this knew that this approach to theological education would be incredibly stretching, and that we would have to leave behind courses that we had developed and tinkered with for years. But there was, in general, a great sense of excitement about what was being proposed by the design team and what was being created together. As one faculty member exclaimed: “Boy, am I going to learn a lot in this new curriculum.” I thought this captured the enthusiasm and the adventuresomeness of our entire faculty as we tried together to think “outside the box,” as the saying goes, and make concrete the dreams we had talked about over the years.

This past year has been a year of endless meetings, refinement of design and solving problems that surfaced unexpectedly. Those of us who will be teaching the foundational core courses have met together fairly regularly, although none of us had a lot of time to prepare adequately for the exchanges. The teams of teachers have met even more regularly, however, and have been busy producing syllabi and more concrete class preparations. I personally wish we have had time to discuss the “big picture” more fully as a faculty, but for a number of reasons this has just not been possible, since besides the usual preparations for class and usual faculty duties, we have hired four new faculty members this year, and so have had to go to what seemed like an interminable number of interview presentations. But this had paid off. We hired two Asians—the school’s first—both men, and two women, one of which is a Latina and the other is white. We are anxious, but we are also excited. September 7, 2004 will inaugurate a new era here at CTU. This coming year will be a lot of work, but most of us on the faculty think it will be worth it.

Because of the move to the semester system, and because of the number of interdisciplinary and integration-oriented courses that we have added, the individual disciplines have had to give up a good bit of “turf.” Systematic theology, for example, only has two “area requirements” in the new curriculum; in the quarter system systematic theology had five required courses, and now only two (equivalent to three in the quarter system, however). But material in former courses like “Introduction to Theology” and “God” are covered in more general courses, and “Creation and Eschatology” courses will be offered as electives. The same is true for courses

that focus exclusively on biblical texts. In the quarter curriculum students were required to take eight scripture courses; now the requirement is only three (equivalent to four quarter courses). But this does not mean that courses on the Bible have been marginalized; on the contrary, the hope is that biblical exegesis and biblical theology can suffuse many of the courses of the new curriculum—e.g. a biblical scholar is team teaching the course on methods, and eventually the course “The God of Jesus Christ” could be taught by a professor of New or Old Testament. And students will certainly be encouraged to take electives in biblical studies as well. But this loss of “turf” is still a point of some contention, and will certainly surface in ongoing evaluations of the curriculum. For me, the important thing is that we as a faculty, indeed, as a community of teaching and learning, keep talking with one another, keep sharing our experiences, and keep thinking of ways to make more concrete the principles on which the new curriculum is based.

Implications for Scholarship

Before concluding this paper, I would like to reflect for a few minutes on the possibilities in our new curriculum for further scholarship opportunities for our faculty. We are a faculty that publishes a fair amount, and all of us are fairly involved in various scholarly societies and conferences throughout our country and the world. So I think that all the stretching that we have done and will do will also stretch us in terms of our scholarship.

Collaboration

The first area of growth in scholarship that I think our new curriculum affords is that of *collaboration*. Our hope is that many, if not most, of our faculty will get involved in teaching one or the other of the foundational core courses; my further hope is that the collaboration between our professors from various disciplines around the themes of ministerial practice, method, context and tradition will produce some fresh perspectives from which to see theology and theological education. I know that Ed Foley—with whom I am intending to teach the ministry course—and I have already talked about doing some writing together after we have gotten familiar with the material.

The principle behind collaboration is, I believe, an essential one and that is the deep *communal* nature of theological reflection as such. All scholarship, and so *a-fortiori* theology, is a dialogical process. Even the lone scholar at her or his desk is conversing with, learning from, and arguing with other scholars in the books she or he reads. The reason why scholarship and publications are so prized in academia is because it gets scholars in conversation with other scholars. *Theological scholarship*, I believe, needs to acknowledge the dialogical, communal nature of the triune God who is at the center of Christian faith, and so the activity of theology needs to imitate and mirror that reality. And so team teaching and collaborative writing is not simply accidental to the theological task; it is essential to it.

Interdisciplinary Thinking

Secondly, our new CTU curriculum is an encouragement and a challenge to genuine *interdisciplinary thinking* in theology. As Edward Farley and a number of other scholars have argued over the last several years, one of the great tragedies of theological education and theological scholarship since the dawn of modernity has been the fragmentation of theology into

what have become highly specialized disciplines which hardly communicate with one another. Scholars like James Dunn and James Mackey, Gerald O'Collins and Daniel Kendall, and Joel Green have all written about the need to reconnect biblical studies and systematic theology, biblical scholars like Bruce Malina and Carolyn Osiek have pioneered studies which have paired critical exegesis and the social sciences, and sociologist Rodney Stark has done the opposite from his own area of expertise in sociology. Fascinating studies on the relationship between theology and art have been done by Jarislav Pelikan, Volker Küster and Thomas F. Matthews; and missiologists David Bosch and Wilbert Shenk have called for a collaboration between missiology and systematic theology. Francis X. Clooney and James Fredericks have called for a comparative theology that goes beyond a "history of religions" approach to other religious ways and engages other faiths at a much deeper level of mutual trust and learning.⁸

My hope is that the stretching that our faculty will have to do across disciplines will engage us in such interdisciplinary thinking. As important as expertise and specialization is, theology calls us beyond them to think creatively and even recklessly about our faith and its implications for life.

Missiology

In my paper yesterday I called for the inclusion of *missiological thinking* within my own discipline of systematic theology. My hope for our entire faculty is that they also begin thinking with a missiological imagination about their own teaching and scholarship. Just as listening to all the voices, particularly of Third World scholars, is important for systematic theology, just as approaching systematic theology with a view toward one's faith really engaging one's context, so I hope that all our faculty members will think about biblical interpretation, ethics, spirituality, liturgy, etc. in terms of wider sources and contextual engagement. And just as systematic theology needs to point beyond itself toward the greater Reign of God, so with other disciplines as well. The missiological imagination is at the center of our new curriculum; as we as a faculty develop and become more comfortable with our new curriculum, my hope is that it will also become a central concern of our scholarship.

Conclusion

I began this paper inviting you as Aotearoa-New Zealand theologians into conversation. I've pinned my hopes for this paper on the dictum that what is the most personal and particular is also the most general, or at least it can serve as a point of departure for thinking why what is so personal is not very relevant. I've shared with you something that being involved in has been one of the most stimulating experiences of my academic life. What I look forward to now is how these very particular ideas from a very particular place might stimulate you to think about your own context and your own needs in your own way.

First draft: July 7, 2004

⁸There should be a footnote here giving all the references to these scholars.