AUBURN STUDIES

# TRUE AND FALSE

## THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF REPORTS FROM A STUDY OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL FACULTY

BY BARBARA G. WHEELER / JANUARY 1996

# TRUE AND FALSE

## Beginning

Who is teaching the next generation of ministers and priests? What backgrounds do theological school faculty come from? How are they educated? What are their interests? How do they spend their time? What do they think about the schools that employ them, their students and colleagues, and the wider circles of intellectual and church life in which they participate? How soon will the current contingent of seminary and divinity school faculty have to be replaced? *When that time comes, will the schools be able to find the kinds of faculty needed for the future?*

In 1991, when Auburn established its Center for the Study of Theological Education, little information was available about the persons teaching in theological schools. The last comprehensive study of theological faculty had been completed more than two decades ago.[1] Since then, the Association of Theological Schools has kept careful records of its member schools' progress in achieving racial and gender diversity in faculties and has published summary data on faculty compensation. No one, however, has tracked basic information about how faculty are trained, what fields they teach in, how much and what kinds of materials they publish, how they participate in church life, or even how old they are. To fill this gap, Auburn launched a major study of the current state and future prospect of the faculties of theological schools.[2]

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## Assumptions, Questions, and Hunches

The Auburn study, which is organized in ten parts and is by far the largest research project that the Center has conducted, was prompted by more than curiosity. During the 1980s, experts in higher education reported ominous signs that the quality of the American professoriate was headed for decline. The ablest college graduates were much less likely than in the past to choose to pursue the Ph.D. and a career in college or university teaching; most were choosing law, medicine, and business instead. As higher education enters a period in which a high proportion of its aging faculty will be replaced, a number of writers voiced concern that the replacements may not measure up to the standard quality of their predecessors.[3] There were good reasons to worry that this trend would seriously affect the potential pool of faculty for theological schools because ministry, long the major source of theological school teachers, was one of the "altruistic" professions (along with teaching and social work) that talented college graduates were avoiding. Researchers on higher education also reported declining morale among professors and suggested that this development would make efforts to recruit and retain high quality faculty even more difficult. Are

theological faculty as unhappy in their work and as eager to explore alternatives as college and university teachers? Because some of the unhappiness in the professoriate is linked to low salaries, there was reason to think that might be the case in theological schools where salaries are often low.

The special circumstances of theological schools raised some other questions. One has to do with diversity. Theological schools and the churches that sponsor them lagged behind many other institutions in setting goals for racial and gender diversity. With this late start, how are seminaries faring in the recruitment and retention of women

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and minority faculty members? Other questions stem from the dramatic changes that have taken place in patterns of doctoral study in theology and religion. Until the early 1960s, almost all seminary and college professors of theological and religious subjects received their Ph.D.'s from a handful of doctoral programs, most of them linked to university divinity schools of Catholic university, and all of them with curricula organized to "match" the typical seminary curriculum. The last several decades, however, have seen scores of new programs, a few in seminaries but most in non-denominational private and public universities. These programs are often organized not by the theological subjects taught in seminaries but by the many topics and fields of the comparative study of religions. What part do these programs and their curriculum patterns play in training seminary faculty? What impact might they have in the future?

Finally, the Auburn research staff was aware of a range of criticisms of theological school faculty. Some of these are long-standing complaints. Church leaders regularly label theological school professors "ivory tower intellectuals," cut off from and unconcerned about the life of the churches that seminary students will graduate to serve. Is this a real and widespread problem? Other concerns and criticisms along the same lines are more recent. Some seminary administrators, for instance, have reported that a high percentage of young candidates for teaching positions lack seminary training and practical church experience. At the other end of the spectrum of criticisms, some observers in both seminaries and universities question whether the amount and sometimes the quality of scholarship produced by seminary faculty are adequate.

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## What We Did

Such a wide range of questions and issues required several different research approaches and methods. As a first step, in 1992, Auburn compiled data collected by the Association of Theological Schools on all faculty serving full- time in the fall of 1991. (The data on these 3475 faculty members form the Auburn/Association of Theological Schools Data Base, 1991 (AADB91).) The data included the age, gender, race, ordination status, type of masters degree, and source of doctoral degree. Then, in 1993, Auburn sent a survey questionnaire to about half of this group.[4] The survey incorporated some items that had been used in surveys of faculty in other kinds of institutions as well as specific questions about theological schools and teaching. The findings reported in this article are based primarily on these two data sources. (Other parts of Auburn's faculty research project are listed above.)

The findings are a surprising mixture. Some of them confirm common assumptions about theological faculty, but others disprove hypotheses with which we began the research and some widely-held impressions as well. Similarly, we found that higher education researchers' results are sometimes replicated for theological faculty- but not always. Theological faculty resemble faculty in other sectors of higher education in some respects, but they differ markedly in others. Even before all the separate studies of this project are completed, it is clear that the questions that shadow the future of theological faculty are somewhat different than we would have predicted when the project began. This report presents findings on four issues that the research to date has brought clearly into focus: Retirements and Replacements, Morale, Women on Theological Faculties, and Scholarship and Church Service.

In addition to the data base and faculty survey that form the basis for this report, the faculty research project includes eight other studies:

- an interview-based study of junior faculty
- case studies of several theological schools that are reputed to be good places for faculty to work
- a survey of the policies and curricula of doctoral programs in theology and religious studies
- a survey of doctoral candidates in those programs
- an historical study of the roles of faculty in theological schools
- an intensive analysis of changes in faculty compensation over the last decade
- a series of consultations about basic issues in theological doctoral education
- a study of issues pertaining to the recruitment and retention of African American faculty.

The results of these studies will be reported in future issues of *Auburn Studies*.

## The Pace of Retirements and the Preparation of Replacements

Theological education faces a large wave of retirements in the next decade. This finding is not surprising because a retirement surge has been predicted for higher education generally, but theological faculty, whose average and median age is 52, are even older than faculty in some other educational sectors.[5] They

are also much older than theological faculty used to be. In 1970, 3596 were 51 or older; in 1991, 54% of all faculty fell into this category.

The variations among schools of different traditions and types are slight: faculty teaching in Roman Catholic seminaries are a little younger (average age 50.5) and those teaching in university divinity schools a little older (average age 53). No type of school--and very few individual institutions--will be exempt from dealing with an unprecedented number of retirements. If faculty retire at age 67 (as they indicated they will in response to a question on the Auburn survey), half of those who were teaching in 1991 will reach that age in the ten years between now and 2006. In addition, some faculty leave theological teaching well before retirement age. They go to parish assignments, into college and university, teaching and elsewhere. By comparing the 1991 data base with one constructed in 1988, Auburn research staff estimate the rate of non-retirement attrition at between 2 and 4% per year. If this is the case, as much as two-thirds of the membership of theological faculties will have changed in the fifteen years between 1991 and 2006.

For institutions that want to reshape their mission and programs, a high rate of naturally-occurring departures can be good news. Because theological faculty are relatively old, they are very senior in status and highly tenured. (The fact that theological schools confer tenure rather quickly--the average time to tenure from first full-time academic employment is 5.8 years--increases the rate of tenure.) Two-thirds of all faculty in theological institutions that give tenure are tenured. Half of all theological faculty are full professors (compared with 32% of all undergraduate faculty in the 1992 HERI study). Such high levels of seniority and tenure often serve to hold the *status quo*. The high rate of departures in theological education, however, counters this situation. New appointments can be made to support revised educational goals without the added costs of early retirement programs and other forms of faculty buy-outs.

**TABLE I: Teaching Field by Age Category**

| | *51 and Younger* | | *52 and Older* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Field | *Number* | *Percentage* | *Number* | *Percentage* |
| **All fields** | **1542*** | **49.5** | **1574*** | **50.5** |
| Bible | 386 | 52 | 353 | 48 |
| Theology | 226 | 51 | 221 | 49 |
| Ethics | 96 | 50 | 95 | 50 |
| History | 176 | 53 | 157 | 47 |
| Practical theology | 391 | 44 | 505 | 56 |
| Religious education | 84 | 48 | 90 | 56 |

*includes smaller fields not shown on this table

High retirement rates can also speed progress toward diversity. Because--as we note below--female and minority faculty are on average younger than their white male colleagues (except in Roman Catholic schools, where women faculty are older than men), retirements subtract very little from whatever gender and racial diversity an institution has achieved; at the same time, they create opportunities for increased diversity when replacements are chosen.

Rapid turnover can, nevertheless, threaten the quality of a theological faculty. If a school cannot replace key faculty with others with the same teaching strengths, programs may be weakened. Institutions also face the problem of maintaining quality if they use the current retirement surge as an opportunity for painless "down-sizing," "right-sizing" or "re-engineering"--the currently fashionable terms for cutting faculty and staff to save money. The vacated positions may be critical ones that cannot be eliminated without damaging the integrity of a school's program.

**TABLE II: Percentage of Faculty Members in Teaching Fields by Religious Tradition of School**

| | *Tradition of School* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Field* | *Mainline* | *Evangelical* | *Roman Catholic* | *All Schools* |
| *Bible* | 22.9 | 27.0 | 18.3 | 23.3 |
| *Theology* | 12.3 | 11.1 | 24.7 | 14.7 |
| *Ethics* | 7.2 | 2.2 | 11.5 | 6.4 |
| *History* | 13.3 | 8.9 | 8.9 | 10.8 |
| *Practical Theology* | 26.5 | 36.6 | 20.3 | 28.7 |
| *Education* | 4.8 | 8.2 | 1.7 | 5.3 |
| *Human Science* | 2.8 | .6 | .1 | 1.4 |
| *Religion* | 3.0 | .2 | .7 | 1.5 |
| *Formation* | 1.0 | 1.0 | 4.9 | 1.9 |
| *Area Studies* | .8 | .7 | .4 | .7 |
| *Arts* | 3.3 | .5 | 6.8 | 3.1 |
| *Tools* | 1.5 | 1.5 | .9 | 1.4 |
| *Other* | .6 | 1.4 | .7 | .9 |

Our data indicate that searches for appropriate replacement theological faculty will be complicated because retirements will probably not be spread evenly across fields: faculty in the so-called practical areas are older. As Table I shows,

50.5% of all faculty are 52 or older, that is, they fall into the older half of the teaching force. This is true for 56% of faculty in practical and ministry studies. *We predict that demand for persons prepared to teach in the practical subject areas will increase*. It will be especially intense for the small number of persons who have earned doctorates in these areas. And some schools will feel the impact of retirements in these areas more strongly than others. Table II shows the distribution of faculty by teaching field in schools of different religious traditions.[6] A high percentage of the faculties of evangelical seminaries are in the "older" fields of practical studies and education--about 45%, compared with 31% in mainline Protestant and 23% in Roman Catholic schools--so evangelicals will feel the impact of coming retirements with special force.

Will the young faculty members who replace older ones across the spectrum of fields be well trained to conduct programs of theological education for ministry? Are more faculty now than in the past being drawn from doctoral programs in religious studies that sidestep the subject areas of theology and ministry? Is it the case, as some seminary leaders reported to us when we began this study, that many young candidates for seminary teaching posts have not attended seminary themselves?

We studied these matters carefully and reached some surprising conclusions. We tabulated information about where theological faculty members in the 1991 data base had obtained their academic doctoral degrees,[7] and we compared the resulting list to the one published in the 1970 study of theological faculty. In both cases, we found that about 20 programs each produce 1% or more of the total number of theological faculty, and together they train about two-thirds of all faculty. The remaining one-third of faculty received their doctorates from a wide array of other programs, most of which contribute only one or two graduates to the teaching force. The array of such schools was wider in 1991 than in 1970: in 1970, faculty held doctorates from 145 programs other than the top 2 1; in 199 1, from 284 programs other than the top 23.

A few significant changes occurred between the 1970 and 1991 lists of top programs. Universities in Europe and the United Kingdom are less prominent now as suppliers of mainline Protestant and especially Roman Catholic faculty. In 1970, 65% of faculty in Roman Catholic seminaries who held doctorates were trained in Europe or the UK; in 1991, only 30% held such doctorates. (European and UK institutions continue to train significant numbers of evangelical faculty.) A few schools, Hartford and Johns Hopkins, for example, that were among the top 25 in 1970 have dropped off the list; others--Notre Dame, Emory and Union in Virginia--have joined it.

*The most remarkable feature of the list of top suppliers, however, is its similarity to the 1970 list*. Despite massive changes during the last quarter century in the

institutional location of advanced programs in religion and theology--especially the growth of doctoral programs in the religious studies departments of universities that have no ties to churches or theological schools--the major institutional sources of the doctoral degrees of theological school faculty have remained much the same. Most of the major suppliers appear on both lists, and *all the major suppliers are in some way connected either to a ministry-degree granting institution or to a Catholic university*. Religious studies programs that are unconnected to theological and ministry training, in other words, are not training a larger proportion of faculty today than they were 20 years ago. Nor is there any evidence of a trend in that direction. In fact, a higher percentage of younger faculty (68%) in the 1991 data base than older faculty (61%) had received their degrees from one of the "major supplier" programs.[8]

The major programs do not, of course, supply all types of seminaries equally. Table III shows the 23 major suppliers for all schools and the top 5 suppliers for schools of different religious traditions and types. Overall, Roman Catholics are more dependent on a few schools (three-quarters of their faculty members are trained by the major suppliers) and evangelical institutions are less so (only about half of their faculty hold doctorates from the major suppliers). The same generalization, however, can be made about all types of schools: most faculty receive their doctoral degrees from institutions that have a religious affiliation or a divinity school.

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**TABLE III**

Percentages of Academic Doctorates Obtained from the Top 23 Programs

| *All Schools* | *%* |
|---|---|
| Harvard Divinity School/University | 5.1 |
| University of Chicago | 4.9 |
| Roman Theological Schools | 4.6 |
| Yale University | 4.5 |
| Union Theological Seminary/ Columbia University | 4.4 |
| Southern Baptist Theological Seminary | 3.8 |
| Princeton Theological Seminary | 3.7 |
| Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary | 3.6 |
| Catholic University of America | 3.2 |

Top Suppliers of Academic Doctorates by School Tradition and Type

| *School Type/Doctoral Source* | *% of Faculty* |
|---|---|
| MAINLINE DENOMINATIONAL | |
| Chicago | 9.4 |
| Harvard | 8.5 |
| Union/Columbia | 7.9 |
| Yale | 7.2 |
| Princeton Seminary | 6.7 |
| MAINLINE NON-DENOMINATIONAL | |
| Union/Columbia | 13.1 |
| Yale | 13.1 |
| Harvard | 9.5 |
| Chicago | 7.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Boston School of Theology/University | 2.7 |
| Duke University | 2.2 |
| Claremont School of Theology/ Graduate School | 2.1 |
| Toronto School of Theology/ University of St. Michael's | 2.1 |
| Vanderbilt University | 1.9 |
| University of Notre Dame | 1.8 |
| Candler School of Theology/ Emory University | 1.7 |
| Garrett-Evangelical Seminary/ Northwestern University | 1.5 |
| Fuller Theological Seminary | 1.5 |
| Drew University | 1.4 |
| Graduate Theological Union | 1.4 |
| New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary | 1.4 |
| Oxford University | 1.3 |
| Union Theological Seminary in Virginia | 1.3 |
| Others | 36.5 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Boston | 4.2 |
| EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONAL | |
| Southern Baptist | 13.0 |
| Southwestern Baptist | 12.8 |
| Fuller | 3.7 |
| Princeton Seminary | 2.5 |
| Concordia (MO) | 2.4 |
| EVANGELICAL NON-DENOMINATIONAL | |
| Dallas | 7.7 |
| Fuller | 5.7 |
| Michigan State | 4.7 |
| Harvard | 4.3 |
| Aberdeen | 3.3 |
| ROMAN CATHOLIC | |
| Roman Schools | 22.3 |
| Catholic University | 14.4 |
| Notre Dame | 5.0 |
| Toronto/St. Michael's | 4.4 |
| Chicago | 3.9 |

**TABLE IV: First Degrees by Age Category**

| | *Percentage of Faculty Holding the Degree* | |
|---|---|---|
| *Degree* | *Younger than 50* | *50 or Older* |
| M.Div or equivalent | 70 | 81 |
| Masters from theological school | 21 | 12 |
| Masters from secular institution only | 7 | 4 |
| Masters from church-related college/university | 1 | 2 |
| Other or no first level degree | 2 | 2 |

The data we collected on masters' level theological degrees also contain a surprise. It is true, as administrators suspect, that younger faculty are less likely to hold the Master of Divinity degree. About 70% of those under 50 hold the degree, compared with 81% in the 50-and-older group. As Table IV shows, most of the younger faculty who do not hold the M.Div. or its equivalent do not have M.A. degrees in religion from "secular" institutions, as the administrators predicted; rather they hold one of the various two-year masters degrees now offered by theological schools. In other words, almost as many young faculty as

older ones have a *theological* masters degree, but significantly fewer have followed the track for professional ministry preparation and earned an M.Div. degree. The increased presence of women among younger faculty--a number of them from traditions that do not ordain women--helps to make this phenomenon more pronounced.

Though we have not completed our research on doctoral candidates and programs, everything that we have learned to date suggests that the quantity and quality of applicants to doctoral programs in theology and religious studies will remain high. This does not, however, mean that schools will have an easy time finding precisely the faculty they want

We recommend two steps to maintain the strength of faculties in the face of rapid retirements and changes in the preparation of young teachers.

RECOMMENDATION ONE: Every theological school should chart its own likely pattern of retirements and begin discussions about the shape of its faculty in the future. Schools that can foresee specific faculty needs--for coverage of particular subject areas, for instance, or for women and minorities--should ascertain whether there are people "in the pipeline" who meet those and other requirements (such as ordination, denominational affiliation, willingness to sign the school's statement of faith). If not, schools should consider "growing" some of their own faculty--sponsoring the doctoral preparation of likely candidates for faculty posts. *Schools that wait to begin searching for faculty until vacancies actually occur will not always find what they are looking for.*

RECOMMENDATION TWO: Theological schools collectively, in the forum of the Association of Theological Schools, should study the trend toward two-year masters programs as preparation for theological doctoral study. It is unlikely that this development could be reversed entirely by action of theological schools because so many university programs unrelated to theological schools also offer the degree. Still, there may be incentives that theological schools can devise together to encourage more students to combine the Master of Divinity degree (as well as ordination and some ministry experience) with theological doctoral study.

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## Morale

The most surprising finding from our survey is that almost all theological faculty are *very* happy in their work. In contrast to teachers in other sectors of higher education, they rate almost every facet of their circumstances, assignments and institutions highly. Of 63 items that measure faculty attitudes and views--scaled from 1 (lowest satisfaction level) to 4 (highest satisfaction level)--only *four* were

rated below the midpoint of 2.5. Many of the 63 measures were borrowed from other surveys in which faculty from outside of theological education gave much lower rates.[9]

The highest ratings went to items having to do with teaching, students, and working conditions. Faculty enjoy teaching, feel well prepared for it, think they do it well, and believe that their institutions value it. Most do not feel that research pressures undercut their teaching. They rate their relationships with students highly (though the quality of students less so), and they are equally positive about their relationship with faculty colleagues. They report that they have sufficient autonomy and academic freedom to do their work and that their relationships with the chief academic officer are very positive.

On matters of relations among racial groups and fairness to women and minorities, the ratings are mixed. Most faculty paint a picture of theological schools as relatively fair in their treatment of women and minorities. Women and minorities themselves are less positive.[10] They are more likely to say that they have been discriminated against in their role as faculty, though both groups are still well above the mid-point--agreeing with the statement that they have *not* been discriminated against. African Americans are more likely to report campus conflict over racial issues, but again, their rating of campus racial climates is above the midpoint.

On the other hand, the majority of faculty rate their institution's curricular response to minority perspectives and new social movements fairly low (though again, still above the midpoint). Interestingly, women and minorities are more likely to judge that the curriculum has been affected by minority and new social movements, perhaps because many of them incorporate such perspectives in their own teaching.

Faculty are least positive about their workloads, which they view as increasing. They believe that they spend too much time on institutional business and that institutional service, unlike teaching, does detract from research. Perhaps with this in view, they rate the morale of other faculty fairly low (just above the mid-point), while reporting that their own views on most matters are positive. There are also lower ratings on some items that pertain to faculty-administration relationships (though academic officers, as noted above, are rated high) and salary levels (though benefits are rated high). Yet again, very few average responses fall below the mid-point--and those that do, all of which have to do with workload, are just below it. As noted before, the quality of students is also less highly rated than other items.

On almost all these topics, women and younger faculty tend to be less positive and enthusiastic than older male faculty (except for the quality of students,

which women rate higher), but the ratings of all sub-groups are still quite high. On most items (with the exceptions reported above), minority faculty report levels of satisfaction just as high as and sometimes higher than their white colleagues. Later in this report, we focus on the situation of women faculty. In subsequent *Auburn Studies*, we will share findings from the survey and other sources about junior faculty and minority faculty.

Because dissatisfaction is so rare among theological faculty, we tried to pinpoint its location. We focused on one set of items on which there was variation in responses: opinions about and attitudes toward administrators. We discovered that negative views of the quality of administration are not spread evenly across the range of schools but concentrated in a few. Some of these institutions have been centers of highly publicized, recent conflicts between faculty and administrators; others, to our surprise, have presidents and deans who are widely viewed as strong and highly competent. Though firm conclusions about the sources of negative faculty views about administration cannot be drawn, it appears that one source is a recent history of bitter conflict; another may be widespread assumptions among faculty members that they should at least share substantially in institutional governance, or even play a dominant role--assumptions that "strong" administrators may thwart.

In any case, the norm among theological faculty is positive attitudes and opinions about theological education, their place in it, and their institutions. Trustees, administrators, and others responsible for theological schools should recognize that the high level of faculty morale is an important resource for theological education's present and future. Its sources are not easily traceable. One can speculate that the small size of even the largest theological schools, compared with most colleges and universities, contributes to faculty members' sense of well-being: the smaller the institution, the larger the role that faculty play in setting the tone and shaping policy.[11] The religious commitment that most faculty bring to their theological teaching assignments may also make the work more satisfying.

Whatever the reasons for the positive posture of so many theological faculty, it is a hopeful sign for the future. The fact that theological faculty are happy in their work is likely to prevent defections of good faculty to other enterprises and to make recruitment of talented new faculty easier.

Though we have no specific recommendations on this point, we do have two suggestions.

SUGGESTION ONE: It would be wise for seminary leaders regularly to assess the mood and morale of faculty in their institution and to answer any legitimate

complaints about working conditions. Faculty good-will is an asset that should not be squandered.

SUGGESTION TWO: Seminary leaders should also note that signs of trouble and discontent are evident among young faculty and women faculty. junior faculty will be the subject of a subsequent report. Issues raised by and about women are taken up immediately below.

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## Diversity and Equity: Women on Theological Faculties

Observers of theological education told us when we began this study that we would find both that women have made great progress and that women have a long way to go to reach full equity on theological faculties. They were right on both points.

Ministry and the related profession of theological teaching have been among the last in North American society to admit women. In 1970, only 3% of all full-time faculty members in Protestant schools were women, and only 2% of those in Roman Catholic institutions. The next 20 years saw quite rapid change. By 1991, 15.5% of Protestant-school faculty were women, and an even higher percentage of those teaching in Roman Catholic seminary programs--18%--were women.

The late entry of women into theological teaching is evident in comparison with the rest of higher education. In 1993-94, 31% of full-time faculty in U.S. higher education were women.[12] In higher education 47% of all women were tenured; in theological schools in 1991, 37% of women were tenured. The discrepancy is notable because the overall tenure rate in theological schools is high.

**TABLE V: Percentage of Women Faculty by School Tradition and Type**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mainline Protestant, denominational | 21 |
| Mainline Protestant, independent | 23 |
| Evangelical Protestant, denominational | 8 |
| Evangelical Protestant, independent | 6 |
| Roman Catholic | 18 |
| Peace Tradition | 16 |

There are signs that theological schools are catching up with the rest of higher education. The percentage of women faculty is not uniform among types of colleges and universities. The pattern is that the percentage of women faculty decreases as the level of degrees granted by the institution increases. Thus women are almost 40% of the teaching force in two-year colleges, but in private

"comprehensive" universities that have graduate programs at approximately the same level as seminaries (and thus are probably the non-theological institutions to which theological schools are most fairly compared), the percentage is lower, 27.5. In private research universities, it is lower still: 19.5. In theological education, as Table V shows, there is also variation, though the decision to hire seems to be dominated by institutions' views of women in the teaching office rather than the level of degrees the institution grants. Thus evangelical institutions, many of which do not grant academic doctorates and which have been slow to appoint women, both give a higher percentage of "lower-level" degrees (that is, masters-level) and have lower percentages of women faculty than other kinds of schools. Mainline Protestant institutions give more academic doctorates and have more women teaching. In fact, the percentage of women on the faculties of such institutions (21) is higher than the percentage teaching in private research universities (19.5), the type of institution in which mainline divinity schools that give doctorates are usually located.[13]

**In contrast to faculty in other sectors of higher education, almost all theological faculty are *very* happy in their work.**

**TABLE VI: Percentage of Women Faculty by Field**

| | |
|---|---|
| **ALL FIELDS** | **15** |
| Bible | 11 |
| Theology | 10 |
| Ethics | 12 |
| History | 15 |
| Practical studies | 15 |
| Religious education | 36 |
| Human sciences | 24 |
| Theology and arts | 16 |

Other evidence, however, suggests that obstacles to the full incorporation of women on theological faculties remain. For instance, women are not yet evenly distributed across teaching fields. Table VI shows that religious education, a traditional field of women, is still more heavily saturated with women faculty than other fields. The smaller field of the human sciences (sociology, anthropology, psychology) also has a higher percentage of women. History, arts and worship, and practical studies are "on track"--women are present in them in proportion to their presence in the teaching force generally. Bible, theology, and ethics lag behind.

Our data yield some other troubling information about women's progress. Women faculty come from better-educated families than male faculty, which suggests that special economic and educational advantages may be required for women to "make it" through doctoral study and into the teaching profession. They require more years of full-time study to complete the doctoral degree, and they take somewhat longer to get tenure.[14] Young women faculty are markedly less satisfied with their assignments and institutions than their young male colleagues. They feel that their workloads are especially heavy, they worry about job security, and they report some discrimination against them. Objective data suggest that their perceptions, especially about workload, have basis in fact.

Women faculty, for instance, spend about 20% more time than their male colleagues on committee work. This may be one explanation for the fact that non-tenured women publish fewer scholarly books and articles than their male colleagues. Women also feel more pressure to do research and feel that this pressure interferes with their teaching.

Overall, a picture emerges of women faculty as present on theological faculties in much greater numbers but, notably in the period before they are granted tenure, hard pressed by institutional demands. (A number of the attitudinal differences between non-tenured women and men disappear when tenured women and men are compared.) Societal pressures are very likely present as well. Many studies have shown that women who work full-time carry much heavier domestic responsibilities than men who work full-time; some are also bearing and raising children during their junior faculty years.

Our findings compel us to urge theological schools that have made significant efforts to *recruit* women faculty to take steps to be sure that they *retain* them.

RECOMMENDATION: Theological schools should pay special attention to the situation of their women faculty, especially those who are in their early years of service. Policies that govern institutional service, teaching and advisement loads, promotion and tenure review, provisions for research, and family and medical leaves should be carefully crafted to ensure that they equalize the situations of women and men. Such policies should guard against women bearing disproportionate burdens of institutional responsibilities and should make reasonable accommodations for the loss of time related to both childbirth and the continuing expectation in many households that women retain primary responsibilities for child-rearing and household chores.

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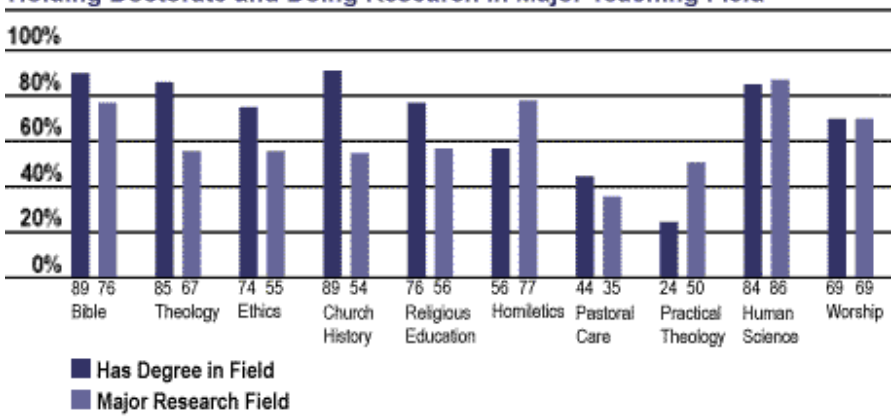
## Scholarship and Church Service: Where Faculty Interests and Loyalties Lie

What do faculty members do with their time when they are not teaching? A widespread stereotype places them in the library, deeply engrossed in studies of obscure topics of interest to other scholars but irrelevant to the life of the religious communities that theological students are being trained to serve. This common view dovetails with another: seminary faculty as alienated from churches--unlikely to participate in worship and other congregational activities, and critical or even disdainful of the denominations that sponsor their schools. A third, somewhat contradictory, impression is that some theological faculty who have tenure do very little in addition to teaching. They take advantage of their guaranteed employment by cutting back or ceasing altogether whatever research and church service they performed before they were tenured.

**FIGURE 1: Percentages of Faculty Members Holding Doctorate and Doing Research in Major Teaching Field**




Auburn's survey of theological faculty provides evidence that these popular beliefs about faculty are inaccurate. The survey found that:

- Theological faculty are not narrowly specialized in their teaching and research areas. Our data show that theological faculty have both training and intellectual interests outside the fields in which they are trained and now teach. As Figure I depicts, at least 10% of those teaching in every field--and in some cases considerably more--did not earn the academic doctorate in that field.[15] Figure I also shows that in every field but one, less than three-quarters of those who teach in that field (and often considerably less) say that they also do most of their research in that field. In every field, substantial numbers do cross-disciplinary research, as Table VII shows.

**TABLE VII: Percentage Who Say Their Major Research Area Is "Multiple Fields" by Teaching Fields**

| *Teaching Area* | *Percentage Whose Major Research is in Multiple Fields* |
|---|---|
| Bible | 14 |
| Theology | 16 |
| Ethics | 21 |
| Church history | 22 |
| Religious education | 21 |
| Pastoral care | 24 |
| Practical theology | 18 |

**TABLE VIII: Percentages of Faculty Attending Worship**

| *Frequency* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| Often | 89 |
| Occasionally | 8 |
| Seldom | 3 |
| Never | -- |

- Theological faculty do not sacrifice teaching to scholarly research. Less than one faculty member in ten reports that institutional pressures to do research impinge on their teaching; at the same time, half of all faculty complain that they do not have enough time to do research. (This is a marked departure from the general pattern of satisfaction of theological faculty with other aspects of their situation.) Though comparisons are tricky, theological faculty do not seem to be more intensively engaged in research leading to publications than faculty in other educational sectors. Their rate of publishing is about the same as the rate for undergraduate faculty.[16]

- Most theological faculty do not focus most of their publications for a small scholarly audience. About one-third of theological faculty do little or no scholarly publishing, but most of these publish materials for church and other general audiences, as do faculty who publish research. In fact, nearly all the most productive research scholars also do some general audience publishing.

Publishing emphases differ to some extent by the religious tradition of institutions. Faculty in mainline Protestant schools do the most scholarly publishing; those in evangelical schools do the most publishing for church audiences; faculty in Roman Catholic schools fall in the middle of these scales. The sub-set of faculty that produces the most scholarly publications, however, is tenured Roman Catholic faculty.

- Tenured theological school faculty publish at a higher rate than non-tenured faculty. Within the category of tenured faculty, those in the younger half of the group are most prolific, perhaps because new publishing opportunities open up for those who are "recognized" by tenure. The rate slows somewhat for older faculty, but they are still more productive than non-tenured faculty. We found no evidence to support the view held by some that most scholars become unproductive after tenure.
- Theological faculty are deeply and regularly involved in the life of the church at all levels. Our data contradict the reputation of seminary faculty as unconcerned about and uninvolved in the activities of organized religion. As Table VIII shows, theological school faculty attend worship services regularly.

Younger faculty (50 and younger) and women faculty are less likely to attend "often" (in both cases about 85% report attendance "often"), and more likely to attend "occasionally" or 11 seldom." But in no category does more than 1% of faculty say that they 11 never" attend. Older women faculty, it should be noted, attend worship as often as older men.

**TABLE IX: Frequency of Worship Leadership by Faculty**

| *Frequency* | *Percentage of All Faculty* | *Percentage of Ordained and Licensed Faculty* |
|---|---|---|
| Weekly | 19 | 24 |
| 1-2 times a month | 20 | 24 |
| Several times a year | 42 | 43 |
| Rarely or never | 20 | 10 |

**TABLE X: Ordination**

| *Ordination Status* | *Percentage of All Faculty* | *Percentage of Faculty Under 50* | *Percentage of Women Faculty* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ordained | 78 | 73 | 35 |
| Not ordained | 22 | 27 | 67 |

Theological faculty also lead worship services with some frequency, as shown in Table IX.

About 75% of all faculty hold a ministerial degree[17] (the Master of Divinity or other degree that normally prepares for ordination) and, as Table X shows, 78% are ordained or licensed. Younger faculty and women faculty are less likely to be ordained. Though younger faculty are less likely to be ordained than older faculty, they are more likely, whether ordained or not, to lead worship frequently. Women--the majority of whom are not ordained--are, of course, less likely than men to lead worship, though ordained women are just as likely as men to lead worship and slightly more likely to lead it frequently.

About one-quarter of all faculty currently serve in a parish or congregational ministry, almost all of them part-time. About 60% have served in full-time, congregational ministry in the past, and 80% report professional ministerial service of some type at some time. A disproportionate number of those who have had no professional ministry experience are women, many of them from denominations that do not ordain or license women.

In addition to their involvements in local congregations, about 85% also serve the church beyond the local parish or congregation ("lecturing, leading conferences, membership on regional or national boards and committees, ecumenical activities"). The mean amount of such service each year is very high: 15 days; the median amount is 10 days.

This information about how theological faculty spend their time outside the classroom undermines much of the conventional pictures of them as "ivory-tower intellectuals" uninvolved with the church. It also raise a different set of questions about faculty values and commitments than is usually discussed. Both church leaders and educational experts with whom we have reviewed our data think that the levels of church service of some faculty are too high and the amounts of publication--especially scholarly publication--of some are fairly low for faculty who reach at the graduate level.

Insofar as these are problems, no single course of action will correct them in all affected institutions. Particular institutions and the faculty members within them vary greatly in their commitments to "church" and "academic" values and activities. Our data suggest that some schools do permit their faculty to slight scholarship and to spend too much time in church-related activity; many others encourage a healthy balance; some may allow it to tilt towards an exclusive focus on scholarship (though we found less evidence that this is the case). Our recommendation is that institutions track these matters more carefully than they usually do.

RECOMMENDATION: Academic officers of theological schools should keep track of faculty publication rates and the kinds and amounts of faculty members' church involvements. They should also keep records of faculty "moonlighting"--teaching that faculty members do in other institutions--which can drain the time needed for *both* scholarship and church service. (Our data show that faculty do substantial amounts of such outside teaching; some subgroups, such as minority faculty, do huge amounts of it.) Administrators and boards of trustees should periodically review the information they have collected to be sure that faculty time and professional effort are being invested in ways that are consonant with their schools' wider mission.

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## Conclusion

Several recent Auburn research reports have warned of serious dangers ahead for theological schools. Many schools face serious financial constraints.[18] Some are permitting students to borrow more than they will be able comfortably to repay when they graduate.[19] This report, by contrast, brings good news. Theological school faculty feel well-prepared for their task and have high opinions of their colleagues' abilities. They are committed to and involved in the life of religious communities. Their morale is excellent. We hope that the positive findings that dominate this report will remind seminary and church leaders that faculty are a valuable asset--perhaps *the* most valuable asset--of theological education today.

Like all valuable resources, this one should be husbanded--cared for in ways that will make it even more useful.

Precisely because faculty morale and productivity are high, efforts at faculty "development" will pay dividends. In future reports of our case studies of institutions that are "good places to work," we shall suggest some models and mechanisms for supporting the work of faculty and developing their potential.

**Trustees, administrators and others responsible for theological schools should recognize that the high level of faculty morale is an important resource for theological education's future.**

Mixed into the good news are causes for concern. Progress on racial diversity in theological faculties has been exceedingly slow, a topic we will address in a future report. As we point out in this current report, women faculty, though more numerous, continue to face serious obstacles. Finally, the data on scholarly research and publication, though difficult to interpret, should cause schools to reflect on whether enough faculty time is protected for serious study and writing

as well as what kinds of intellectual products faculty should be expected to turn out. Repeatedly, seminary leaders tell the Auburn Center that they worry about how isolated their institutions are from church life and from the rest of higher education. Faculty publications are important bridges to both sets of partner institutions--churches and the college/university world--and provisions must be made for the amount and quality of publications to increase.

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## Notes

1. Marvin J. Taylor, "A Theological Faculties Profile: A 1970-71 Survey of AATS Schools," *Theological Education* 8 (Autumn 1971): 57-72.

2. The study is supported by grants from Lilly Endowment Inc. Portions of it are being conducted in cooperation with the Association of Theological Schools and the American Academy of Religion. Co-principal investigators are Barbara G. Wheeler, Director of the Auburn Center; and Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., Chair for the Scientific Study of Religion, University of St. Thomas, MN. The data manager is Darla Fjeld. Researchers and consultants include Barbara DeConcini, Warren Frisina, Joseph C. Hough, Jr., David Kelsey, Kim Leathers, Glenn Miller, Cameron Murchison, Anthony Ruger, Jack Schuster, James L. Waits, Mark Wilhelm, and Charles M. Wood.

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3. Howard R. Bowen and Jack H. Schuster, *American Professors: A National Resource Imperiled* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 7-8; 77-79.

4. Questionnaires were sent to all women and minority faculty, to insure an adequate number of returns for analysis; and to a 50% random sample of the rest of the list. The return rate overall was 50%.

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5. Theological school faculty are older, for instance, than undergraduate faculty nationally who were surveyed by the Higher Education Research Institute of UCLA in 1992. About 53% of all faculty surveyed by HERI are 50 or older; 57% of those reaching in theological schools are 50 or older (AADB91). We speculate that the difference is explained by the fact that many faculty attended seminary for three or more years, and some served for a period in ministry as well. In most other fields, there is no parallel pattern of professional study and service in addition to academic doctoral training as preparation for graduate professional teaching.

6. Two related typologies of theological schools are used in this report. Both were developed by Jackson Carroll and Barbara Wheeler and have been used in previous research. The typology used in Table 11 divides schools by religious tradition. Protestant schools are divided between the categories of "mainline" and "evangelical" institutions. Evangelical institutions include denominational seminaries whose sponsoring denominations do not belong to the National Council of Churches, plus other institutions--some independent and some affiliated with "mainline" denominations (NCC members)--that publicly identify themselves as evangelical. Remaining Protestant institutions are classified as "mainline." A more elaborate version of the typology that appears elsewhere in this report assigns institutions affiliated with anabaptist and pacifist traditions (Brethren, Mennonites, Moravians, Quakers) to a separate category ("Peace Church") and sub-divides the mainline and evangelical categories by institutional type-

independent or denominational. A listing of schools by the resulting categories is available from the Auburn Center.

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7. About 80% of all theological faculty hold academic doctorates. An additional 1096 hold a professional doctorate, usually the D.Min., as the highest degree.

8. These data do not address the question of the *content* of doctoral study. It may be that "religious studies" has affected the character of doctoral programs in the universities and even seminaries in which theological school faculty are trained. Other studies in this project, including the surveys of doctoral students and doctoral programs, will investigate whether this is the case.

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9. Interestingly, though faculty elsewhere in higher education express much more dissatisfaction with various features of their circumstances and assignment than do theological faculty, the rate of *complete* dissatisfaction is about same for both groups: 5% of the Auburn respondents say that they would not choose the same career again; the same percentage gave that response to interviews in the study by Bowen and Schuster, p. 158.

10. All differences reported in this report are statistically significant at $p<.05$.

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11. Faculty do protest the amount of time they spend in institutional governance, but we suspect that they would be unhappier if they did not play a significant role in decision-making.

12. Martha S. West, "Women Faculty: Frozen in Time," *Academe*, July-August, 1995, 26. The 1995 figure is the same as the Higher Education Research Institute found in its 1992 survey of undergraduate faculty. West's point is that the integration of women into faculty ranks has been "exceedingly slow ... : In 1920, when women won the right to vote, 26 percent of full-time faculty in American higher education were women.... {There has been an increase of only} 5 percent in seventy-five years!"

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13. There is, however, no *positive* correlation in theological schools between academic doctorate-granting and presence of women faculty. Across the spectrum of schools, Ph.D.-granting and non-Ph.D. granting theological schools have virtually identical levels of women faculty.

14. On average, male faculty have spent 5.7 years in full-time teaching when they are granted tenure; women have spent 6.2 years--a statistically significant difference. Unfortunately, the most meaningful tenure data--those that would show whether men and women who apply for tenure are actually tenured at the same rates--are not available.

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15. Though there are some variations by field, the general pattern is that about half of those who do not hold the doctorate in their teaching field have an academic doctorate in another field; the other half either do not have an academic doctorate or have a professional doctorate--usually the D. Min.

16. Based on comparisons with data from the Higher Education Research Institute survey of undergraduate faculty.

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17. The forms from which the ATS/Auburn 1991 Data Base was constructed suggest a higher level of ministerial degree holders--85%. Auburn's special study of first degrees held by faculty suggests that those who complete the forms (usually a single administrative official rather than faculty members themselves) often judge all Master's degrees from theological schools to be "ministerial" degrees, resulting in a figure about 10% too high.

18. Anthony Ruger, "Lean Years, Fat Years: Changes in the Financial Support of Protestant Theological Education," *Auburn Studies*, No. 2 (December 1994): 19-22.

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19. Anthony Ruger and Barbara G. Wheeler, "Manna From Heaven?: Theological and Rabbinical Student Debt," *Auburn Studies*, No. 3 (April 1995): 9-17