AUBURN STUDIES

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

PRESENT AND FUTURE THEOLOGICAL FACULTY

BARBARA G. WHEELER, SHARON L. MILLER AND KATARINA SCHUTH / FEBRUARY 2005

About this Issue

This issue on theological school faculty and the doctoral students who will be the theological faculty of the future revisits topics first studied ten years ago by the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education. The findings of the present study, compared with those of Auburn's earlier research, suggest that theological education is, on the whole, a stable enterprise. On many items and indicators, theological faculty and doctoral students today look and sound very much like those surveyed ten years ago. In some other areas there are slight but steady changes over the decade that may indicate new trends, and a few dramatic changes that invite analysis and interpretation. This report also addresses a new topic—theological faculty members' teaching practices and attitudes toward teaching.

The previous reports on theological faculty, "True and False," and "Tending Talents," as well as all back issues of *Auburn Studies* may be found on the Center's website: www.auburnsem.org.

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Who are the faculty members who are training future religious leaders in North America, and how have those faculty changed in the last ten years? How do they balance research and teaching? What do they think is most important for their students to learn? Will there be enough qualified candidates to replace an aging professorate? This report on current theological faculty and doctoral students in religion and theology examines these and other questions that are of concern to those involved in theological education and those who care about the future of the religious communities that seminaries and rabbinical schools serve.

Background: Earlier Research

A decade ago, the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education conducted a study of theological faculty in the Christian theological schools of North America. In the late 1980s, a series of alarming studies from the world of higher education had reported that the ablest college graduates were less likely than in the past to enroll in programs of doctoral study in preparation for college and university teaching.[1] Instead, they were choosing careers in business, law and medicine in ever greater

numbers. Leaders in theological schools were noting spot shortages of faculty in particular fields. Furthermore, although candidates were abundant for many positions, too few were knowledgeable about the religious tradition to which the school was related and about the goals and needs of institutions whose primary purpose was the theological preparation of religious leaders. The Auburn study responded to these anxieties by addressing a wide range of questions:

Who is teaching the next generation of ministers and priests? What are the backgrounds of theological school faculty? 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?

Auburn's study, the first of its kind, was comprehensive in scope and was intended to serve as a baseline for future research.[2] The findings, published in 1996 in a series of reports, documented some of the observations and concerns of leaders in the field but called others into question.[3] The data confirmed, for instance, that theological education, like other sectors of higher education, was undergoing a period of rapid turnover. The study estimated that up to two-thirds of the faculty workforce would retire or leave the field in the fifteen years between 1991 and 2006. There were, however, few indications that replacement in most fields would be a problem. Theological schools draw their faculty from a large pool of doctoral students in theology and religion, all of whom were willing and many of whom were eager to teach in a theological institution. (The exception was the field of ministry practice, where there was a dearth of doctoral programs.) Further, the Auburn study found that certain fears of church leaders—that faculty were enmeshed in academic guilds and were personally and professionally estranged from religious faith and institutions—had little basis in reality. Almost all faculty members surveyed in 1993 participated in worshiping communities; many had professional ministry experience. Their record of service to churches, denominations and other religious agencies was extensive. Other data from the studies showed that rates of scholarly activity for theological faculty overall were not high, leading the researchers to ask whether, in fact, church service was cutting into time needed for research and scholarship.

The 1993 Auburn research produced a great deal of additional information. It showed, for instance, that theological faculties were becoming more diverse.

In 1993, theological education was undergoing a period of rapid turnover, but there were few indications that replacements would be a problem.

Women were much better represented than in previous decades, though they were still advancing through graduate study and faculty ranks more slowly than men. Minority progress, on the other hand, was disappointingly slow, and the supply of minority doctoral candidates was not sufficient to meet schools' hiring needs.

Two of the study's findings were especially encouraging. The Auburn researchers found that junior faculty in theological schools fared better than new faculty in other sectors of higher education. They had more confidence in their teaching and, with help and support from their institutions, most of them advanced toward tenure. Further, they and their senior colleagues expressed much more satisfaction in their work than did faculty in other sectors of higher education in the same period.

New Research

This publication reports the results of a new study of theological faculty and doctoral students. Begun in 2001, the present research replicates in whole or in part four of the earlier studies:

- With the cooperation of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), a database was created, comparable to the one constructed in 1991. It contains basic demographic information (age, gender, race, field, rank, tenure and ordination status, type and source of doctoral degree) for all full-time faculty in ATS member institutions.[4]
- A questionnaire was sent to a random sample of the faculty members in the database and in four rabbinical schools that agreed to participate. It contained many of the same items as the questionnaire used in the 1993 faculty survey.[5] The questionnaire also contained a number of new items on teaching, drafted jointly with the staff of the Carnegie Foundation Clergy Education project.[6]
- A questionnaire was sent to doctoral students preparing to teach theology and religion. Though the questionnaire was similar to one used in 1993, the sample was different. The 1993 survey was conducted jointly with the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and included students in almost all religious studies and theological studies doctoral programs in North America. Auburn's 2003 survey focused instead on the sub-set of doctoral students most relevant for theological education: those in the twenty-five programs that supply the largest numbers of faculty to U.S. and Canadian theological schools (we refer to these institutions in this report as the "top supplier" schools; they are listed in Table 2 in the text below). Recently AAR conducted a survey of graduate programs (rather than students) in theology and religion. When possible we have compared results from our study with the demographic information available from the AAR survey.[7]
- Aggregate data on faculty compensation were studied to discover patterns and trends in compensation over the decade.

The Future of Theological Faculty: Findings

The findings of the present study, compared with those of Auburn's earlier research, suggest that theological education is, on the whole, a stable enterprise. On many items and indicators, theological faculty and doctoral students today look and sound very much like those surveyed ten years ago. In the first part of this report, we review the characteristics and views of faculty and doctoral students that have changed little over the decade. We then look at what is different—the slight but steady changes over time that may indicate trends and the rare dramatic changes that invite analysis and interpretation. Finally, we report our findings on a topic that was new in this round of research—theological faculty members' teaching practices and attitudes toward teaching—and we explore what these findings add to an overall understanding of theological education.

A. AREAS OF LITTLE CHANGE—OR NONE

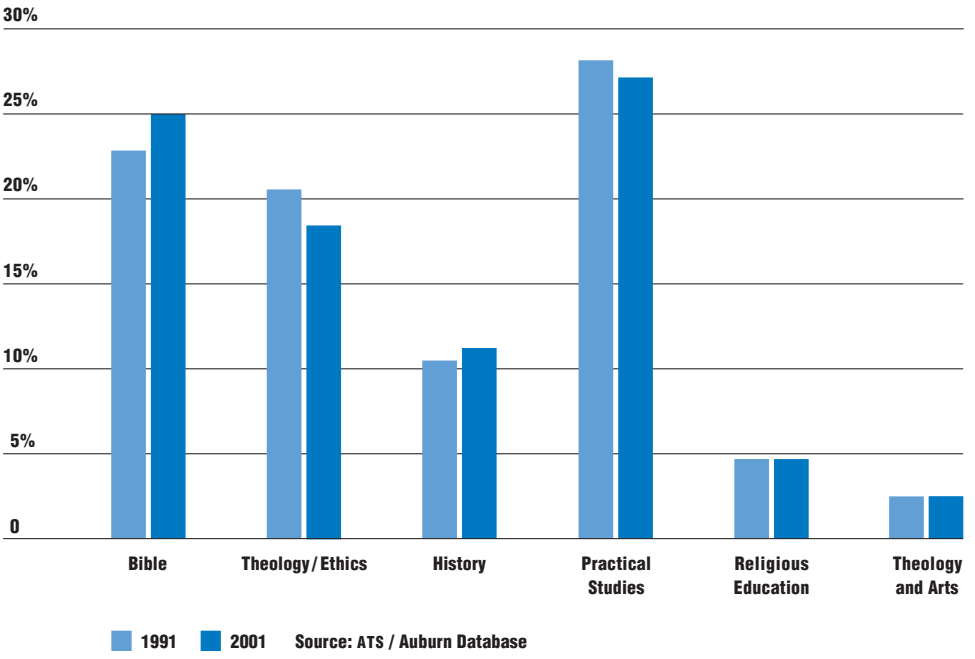
Theological institutions, noted one long-time observer, have split personalities. Often they serve as portals through which daring new ideas or older ideas in a new form enter the religious communities to which the schools are related. This function can earn them a reputation for radicalism. But generally their institutional practices are conservative. The findings of Auburn's research confirm the latter part of this observation. The structures, work patterns, and operating values of theological schools are anchored in tradition and continuity. In most instances, they remain the same for long periods or change very, very slowly.

The allocation of faculty by rank, for instance, has stayed the same over the ten-year interval [A].* Seventy-six percent of faculty in 1991 and seventy-five percent in 2001 were professors or associate professors.[8] Similarly, as Figure 1 shows, relative sizes of teaching fields have changed very little. The largest change is in the fields of theology and ethics, which have a smaller percentage (4 percent less) of the total group of faculty than they did ten years ago. Nor did we detect signs of major changes in faculty workload. The number of committees on which faculty members say they serve is the same—4. The number of hours a month reportedly spent on committee work has increased slightly, from 11 to 12. In 1991 women reported significantly more hours spent on committee work. That difference has disappeared. A majority of faculty still complains that the workload is increasing, but in 2001 the majority is a little

The structures, work patterns, and operating values of theological schools are anchored in tradition and continuity. In most instances, they remain the same for long periods or change very, very slowly.

* *Capital letters in brackets refer to additional charts available at http://www.auburnsem.org/study/publications.asp (see "Signs of the Times")*

Figure 1: Teaching Fields of Theological Faculty: 1991 and 2001



smaller than ten years ago, and the percentage complaining about the amount of time spent in administration has dropped quite a bit more, from 61% to 49%. Whatever changes have occurred seem to have made the structure and amount of faculty work more acceptable over the last ten years.

Our data suggest that theological schools are also slow and measured in their response to changes in the social environment. Over the years, they have made steady progress toward inclusion of women on theological faculties but, as Figure 2 shows, the rate of increase has slowed as the percentage of women on faculties has grown. The percentage point increase between 1991 and 2001 is only half the increase in the previous ten-year period. Representation of women on faculties varies greatly by the religious tradition of the institution. In mainline Protestant institutions, women make up 29% of all full-time faculty members; in Roman Catholic institutions they are 22%; and in evangelical seminaries, 9% [B]. The schools that had the most women faculty a decade ago have seen the largest gains since then (in mainline Protestant schools, an increase of 8% during the period; 4% for Roman Catholic institutions, and 2% for evangelical ones) [C].[9]

Women overall constitute a higher percentage of younger faculty than of older (23% of the faculty under 53, the median age; 17% of those 53 and older), which suggests that as faculty members age and retire, the percentage of women

Figure 2: Gender of Theological Faculty: 1970-2001

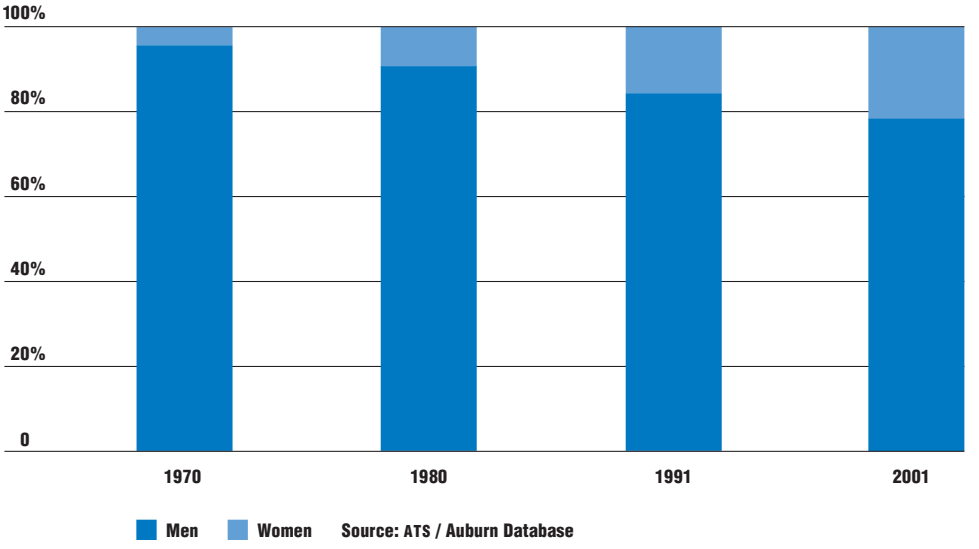


Figure 3: Gender of Doctoral Students

Top 25 Supplier Programs, 1993 and 2003, and All Religion / Theology Programs, 2003

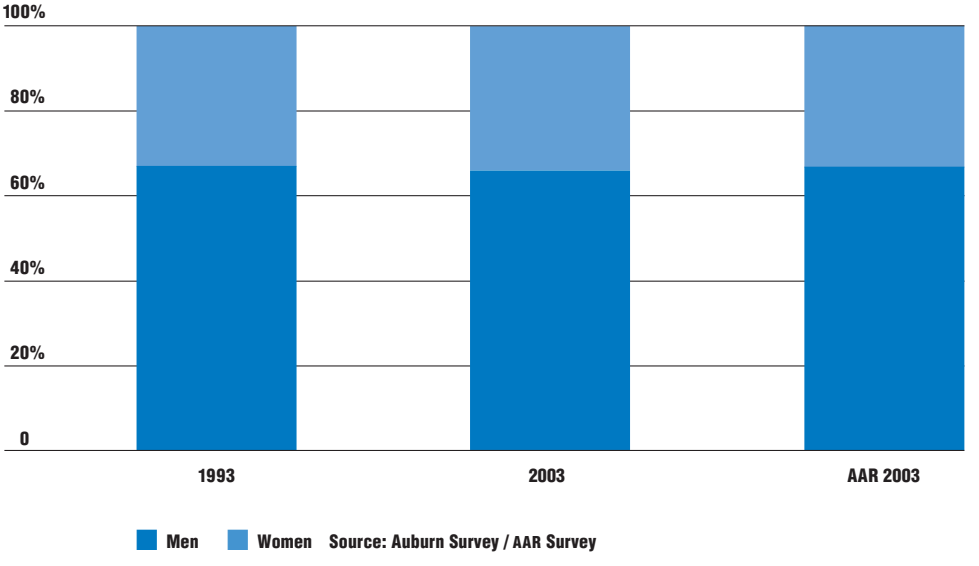
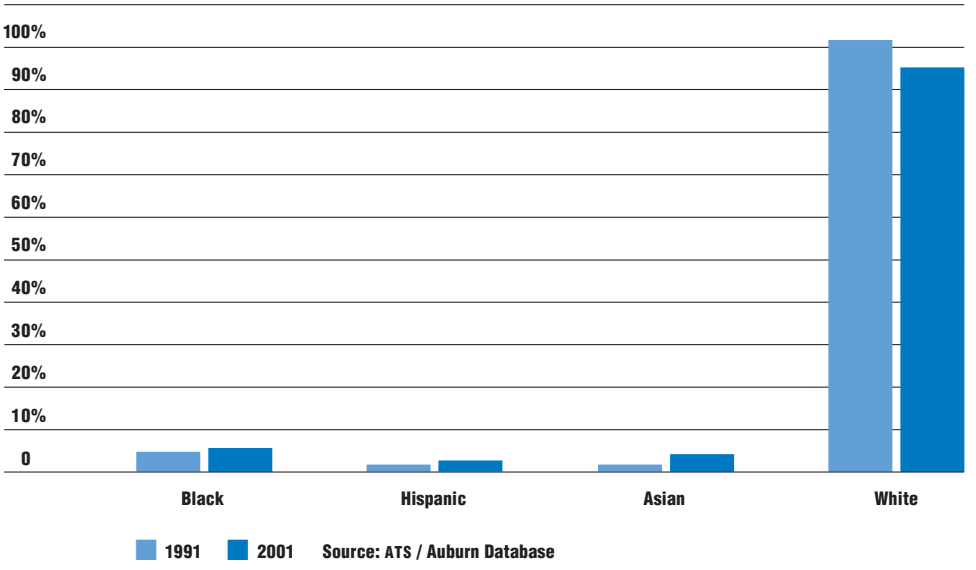


Figure 4: Race of Theological Faculty: 1991 and 2001

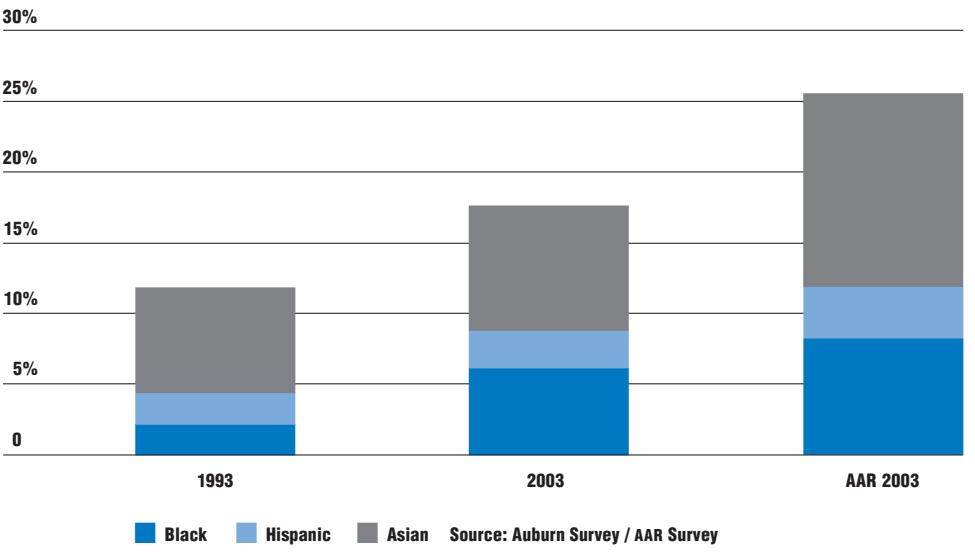


will increase [D]. There are indicators, however, that the number of women will not soon equal the number of men. The percentage of women doctoral students in the twenty-five programs that are top suppliers of faculty for theological institutions is not increasing significantly. As shown in Figure 3, it was 32% ten years ago and is 34% today (these are figures from samples, so the fluctuation may be due to sampling error). AAR, surveying a larger group of programs, found that 32% of students enrolled in doctoral programs are women. There appears to be some kind of ceiling for women at the level of one-third of the entrants into the academic fields of theology and religion. What creates the ceiling is not known. Do fewer women than men apply to doctoral programs? Are they accepted at the same rates? Do they complete doctoral work as often and as quickly as men do? Further research is required to understand why the percentages of women in the field are now growing so slowly.[10]

Numbers and percentages of racial/ethnic minority faculty in ATS-member theological institutions remain small, as shown in Figure 4. African-Americans constituted about 6% of faculty members in 2001, a gain of only about one percentage point in a ten-year period. Gains of other racial/ethnic groups have not been much greater. Schools of different religious traditions have different levels and types of racial diversity: mainline Protestant faculties have the highest percentages of racial/ethnic faculty in total and the best representation of African-American faculty, but Roman Catholic schools have the highest percentage of Hispanics, and evangelical Protestant seminaries

Figure 5: Minority Doctoral Students

Top 25 Supplier Programs, 1993 and 2003, and All Religion / Theology Programs, 2003



the highest percentage of Asians and Asian-Americans [E].

The prospects for progress in the immediate future are not bright: the younger half of faculty is only slightly more diverse than the older half [F]. And although at first glance (see Figure 5) the doctoral student body appears to have made real gains in racial diversity in the last ten years, it must be noted that two groups—African-American and Hispanic—have increased in the top supplier schools only to the current level of representation on theological faculties (a little more than 6%, for instance, for African Americans). Asians and Asian-Americans are present in impressively high numbers at the doctoral level, but many of these students are non-residents who will return to teach in their home countries.

A number of factors contribute to the difficulty of recruiting and retaining minority faculty, most of them beyond the control of theological schools. Minority college graduates are heavily recruited by other professions, for instance, and recent changes in affirmative action policies threaten to keep the numbers of minority students in four-year colleges from growing significantly. Theological education mirrors the slow progress elsewhere in higher education. Comparison with the larger group of theology and religion programs surveyed by AAR indicates that the programs that are top suppliers of theological faculty are somewhat slower to incorporate diversity in their doctoral student bodies than the other programs AAR surveyed. Theological schools do, however, lead departments of religion in representation of minorities on their faculties.[11]

B. NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE TRENDS

Against this static backdrop—little or no change in the profile of theological faculty and the academic structures of theological schools—Auburn's recent research on faculty and doctoral students shows several clusters of developments that, taken together, suggest significant long-term trends and shifts. One set of developments, having to do with retirement and replacement of current faculty, poses challenges to theological schools. A second set of changes, in the career patterns and vocational outlook of present and future faculty, is mostly encouraging. A third set—changes in the professional identity of doctoral students and entering faculty—may have both positive and negative effects, depending on the current state and future needs of particular theological schools.

Age, Retirement and Replacement

The average age both of doctoral students in the top-supplier programs and of theological faculty rose by more than a year between 1991 and 2001. The driver of this trend appears to be later entrance of students into seminary: in 1999 the average age of entering seminary students had reached 35.[12] At least half of doctoral students and three-quarters of current faculty earn a three- or four-year seminary degree, so the average age of doctoral students and faculty tracks the rising age of seminarians.

A major effect of the higher average age of faculty is an accelerated need for replacements. If faculty members' projections of their retirement ages are accurate (68.2 years in 2003, up from just under 67 years in 1993), in the near future later retirements will relieve some of the pressure. But if the total length of careers decreases because of later entrance into teaching (or if retirements occur earlier than projected from a distance), replacement needs will become more intense and will impact some fields sooner than others. Table 1, which shows the percentages by field of faculty 52 years of age and older, helps to identify those fields in which replacements will be required soonest. As the table shows, one area in particular, practical ministry, has more than its share of older faculty. (In 2001, 55% of all faculty members were 52 and older, but 60% of faculty members in the practical fields were in this category.) In interviews for a special Auburn study, many seminary leaders reported that candidates in this field are scarce already.[13] Unless there is an infusion of younger faculty, replacement needs may become acute in practical

Table 1

Field	*Percentage of Faculty 52 and Older in 1991*	*Percentage of Faculty 52 and Older in 2001*
Bible	48	51
Theology	49	53
Ethics	50	56
History	47	53
Practical Theology	56	60
Religious Education	56	50
All	50.5	55

Source: ATS / Auburn Database

theology in the next decade. Another group whose retirement patterns should be monitored is women, who though younger on average than male faculty, say that they plan to retire at age 67.2, more than a year younger than the age that men predict for their retirements. The age gap is becoming narrower, as the first women appointed to faculties reach senior status. As noted earlier, the rate of progress toward equal representation of men and women on faculties has slowed. In the future, representation of women may become more of a challenge if women follow through on their plans for earlier retirement.

Taken together, the data indicate that the top-supplier programs for theological institutions are becoming more selective, admitting fewer students and supporting those they most hope to attract.

Career Patterns and Vocational Outlook

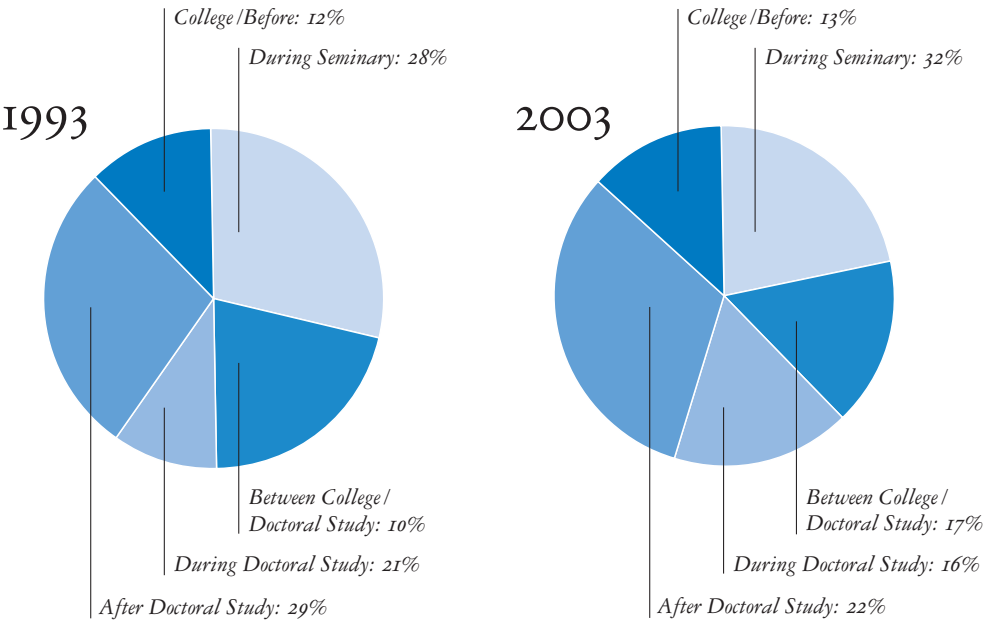
The paths to doctoral studies have not changed in the last decade. In 1993 and 2003, one-quarter of doctoral students said they made the decision for graduate study in religion or theology while in college, and a little more than one-third while in seminary [G]. Nor have their reasons for choosing a program changed: the specialty emphasis of a program is "very important"; the presence of a particular faculty member and financial aid are "important."

Other aspects of the process, however, have changed noticeably. Prospective students apply to more programs than they did ten years ago and are less likely to be attending their first choice (86% in 1993; 81% in 2003). Most of those not in their first choice program were not admitted to that program—fewer than one in five of this group decided on another program for financial reasons. Fewer students surveyed in 2003 had been offered first-year financial aid than those surveyed in 1993, but the grants, tuition remission and assistantships that were offered were worth more in real dollars.[14] Taken together, the data indicate that the top-supplier programs for theological institutions are becoming more selective, admitting fewer students and supporting those they most hope to attract.

Current and recent doctoral students seem to have greater clarity about vocational direction than earlier cohorts. For example, theological faculty surveyed in 2003 are more likely than those surveyed in 1993 to have set their sights on a teaching job in theological education before they finished their doctoral work (Figure 6). They are also much more likely to have taken the initiative to find their current position in a theological school, rather than to have waited to be contacted (or appointed) [H]. More than 95% of all doctoral students in the top-supplier programs are open to teaching in a religiously-affiliated institution (more than 90% in a seminary) [I], and seminaries and divinity schools remain the first-choice sites for a first teaching job (See Table 4, page 17).

Auburn's 2003 data contain more signs of high morale than those gathered

Figure 6: When Theological Faculty Decided to Work in Theological Education



Source: Auburn Surveys

ten years earlier. Doctoral students express greater approval for their mentors' responsiveness to multiculturalism and to women's and minority issues; for the voice given to doctoral students in institutional decision-making; and for the help their programs give in finding a job. Faculty, meanwhile, express high satisfaction with almost all aspects of their jobs, including their compensation, relationships, workload and the leadership of the institution [J]. (They also rate administrators highly, though a little less so than in the past.) The only points of significant stress are time demands, student demands, school finances, and the faculty role in budget decisions [K]. Both doctoral students and current faculty are more likely now than in the past to say that they would enter the same field if they had it to do again. Such widespread satisfaction makes it unlikely that either doctoral students or theological faculty will flee the fields of theological study and teaching in significant numbers.

The foregoing facts in combination form an encouraging picture. Doctoral education in the top-supplier schools is becoming more selective, and schools are bidding higher for the students they want. Theological teaching still tops the list of most attractive types of employment. Because morale is also high, both doctoral programs and theological institutions can expect to retain those they attract. All these indicators point to the conclusion that theological schools should be able to recruit and retain excellent faculty in the future.

Professional and Religious Identity

Cutting across the hopeful signs just reviewed is another set of developments that is harder to evaluate. The studies Auburn conducted in the early 1990s concluded that almost all theological faculty members regularly participate in local worshiping communities and render extensive professional service to denominations and other religious agencies. Auburn's findings challenged the impression of many religious leaders that theological faculty are so enmeshed in the structures of academic life that they are disconnected from, or possibly even hostile towards, religious communities. On the contrary, the 1993 research raised the question of whether faculty members were devoting enough time and effort to their scholarly enterprise. Data showed that faculty members' average self-reported rates of publication, especially scholarly publication, were lower than might be expected for faculty of graduate-level institutions (they were about on par for undergraduate faculty, a portion of whom have minimal records of scholarly publishing). The authors of the last set of Auburn reports suggested that greater emphasis on scholarship and publication might be warranted.

The current surveys of faculty and doctoral students show relatively little change over the previous decade in patterns of training. Exact comparisons of faculty degree credentials are not possible, because data gathering formats have changed, but it appears that at both the beginning and end of the period 1991–2001, the same proportion of faculty of ATS member schools, 75–80%, hold academic doctoral degrees—Ph.D., Th.D., Ed.D., and a variety of pontifical and other theological doctorates. Another group, about 10%, has the D.Min. or other professional degree as the highest degree. Approximately 10% do not report having a doctoral degree.

The majority of the academic doctoral degrees, almost two-thirds, are obtained from doctoral programs in twenty-five institutions, each of which in 2001 supplied 1% or more of the academic doctorates of theological faculty. The remaining one-third of academic doctorates are obtained from several hundred different institutions. Note that in compiling statistics on faculty doctorates, different programs in the same institutions (for instance, a Th.D. program and a Ph.D. program), and closely connected programs in two separate institutions (for instance, Union in New York and Columbia University) are counted as a single program. The list of top suppliers, shown in Table 2, is largely the same as the top-supplier list for 1991, with a few notable changes. Three Roman Catholic

Though many of the same institutions are training theological faculty as did so in decades past, there are signs that the professional values and outlook of faculty are changing.

Table 2: Top Supplier Programs of Academic Doctorates 1991 and 2001

Rank	*1991*	*1991%*	*Rank*	*2001*	*2001%*	*Change*
1	Chicago Div.	5.3	1	Chicago Div.	4.6	0
2	Harvard	5.2	2	Harvard	4.5	0
3	Roman schools	4.6	3	Yale	4.2	+1
4	Yale	4.5	4	Princeton Seminary	3.7	+3
5	Union (NY)/Columbia	4.4	5	Southwestern Bapt.	3	+3
6	Southern Baptist	3.8	6	Union (NY)/Columbia	2.9	-1
7	Princeton Seminary	3.7	7	Duke	2.8	+4
8	Southwestern Bapt.	3.5	8	Emory	2.6	+7
9	Catholic U	3.2	9	Roman schools	2.5	-6
10	Boston U	2.7	10	GTU	2.5	+10
11	Duke	2.3	11	Vanderbilt	2.5	+2
12	Toronto/St Michael's	2.1	12	Catholic U	2.4	-3
13	Claremont	2.1	13	Notre Dame	2.4	+2
14	Vanderbilt	1.9	14	Claremont	2.3	-1
15	Notre Dame	1.4	15	Toronto/St. Michael's	2.3	-4
16	Emory	1.7	16	Southern Baptist	2.2	-10
17	Garrett/Northwestern	1.6	17	Fuller	1.5	+1
18	Fuller	1.5	18	Drew	1.4	+1
19	Drew	1.4	19	Dallas Theo. Sem.	1.7	*New*
20	GTU	1.4	20	New Orleans Bapt.	1.6	+1
21	New Orleans Bapt.	1.4	21	Garrett/Northwestern	1.6	-4
22	Oxford U	1.2	22	Boston U	1.5	-12
23	St. Louis U	1.0	23	Aberdeen U	1.2	*New*
24	Fordham	0.8	24	Oxford U	1.2	-2
25	Marquette U	0.6	25	Cambridge U	1.0	*New*
Total		63.7	**Total**		61.0	

Source: ATS / Auburn Database

Table 3: Doctoral Suppliers of Faculty under the Age 53

2001 Rank for Younger Faculty		*Rank for All*	*Change from 1991*	*% of Younger Group*
1	Chicago Div.	1	0	5
2	Princeton Seminary	4	+2	4.6
3	Yale	3	0	4.4
4	Duke	7	+3	3.9
5	Harvard	2	-3	3.6
6	Southwestern Baptist	5	-1	3.4
7	Emory	8	+1	3.2
8	Vanderbilt	11	+3	3
9	Union (NY)/Columbia	6	-3	2.9
10	Notre Dame	13	+3	2.8
11	Toronto/St. Michael's	15	+4	2.6
12/13	Catholic U	12	-.5	2.3
12/13	GTU	10	-2.5	2.3
14	New Orleans Baptist	20	+6	2.2
15	Roman Schools	9	-6	2.1

Source: ATS / Auburn Database

institutions (St. Louis, Fordham and Marquette) are no longer top suppliers, but Dallas Seminary and two European programs, University of Aberdeen and Cambridge University, have joined the list. Several institutions have dropped substantially in the rankings: Boston University, Southern Baptist Seminary, Garrett-Northwestern, the Roman schools associated with the Gregorian University, University of Toronto/ St. Michael's and Catholic University. Several other institutions have gained: the Graduate Theological Union (which has attracted many Roman Catholic students), Emory, Duke, Princeton Seminary and Southwestern Baptist. Shifting conditions in Roman Catholicism and the Southern Baptist world explain some of these changes. The increased strength of several programs (including their capacity to offer financial support for students) probably accounts for other gains.[15] Several of these programs (Duke, Princeton Seminary and Emory) rank even higher as suppliers of younger faculty, as do Toronto, Notre Dame and Vanderbilt (Table 3). These schools may, therefore, be more prominent as suppliers at the end of the present decade.[16]

Though many of the same institutions are training theological faculty as did so in decades past, there are signs that the professional values and outlook of faculty are changing. Current faculty

Figure 7: Theological Faculty Publications in the Last Two Years, 1993 and 2003

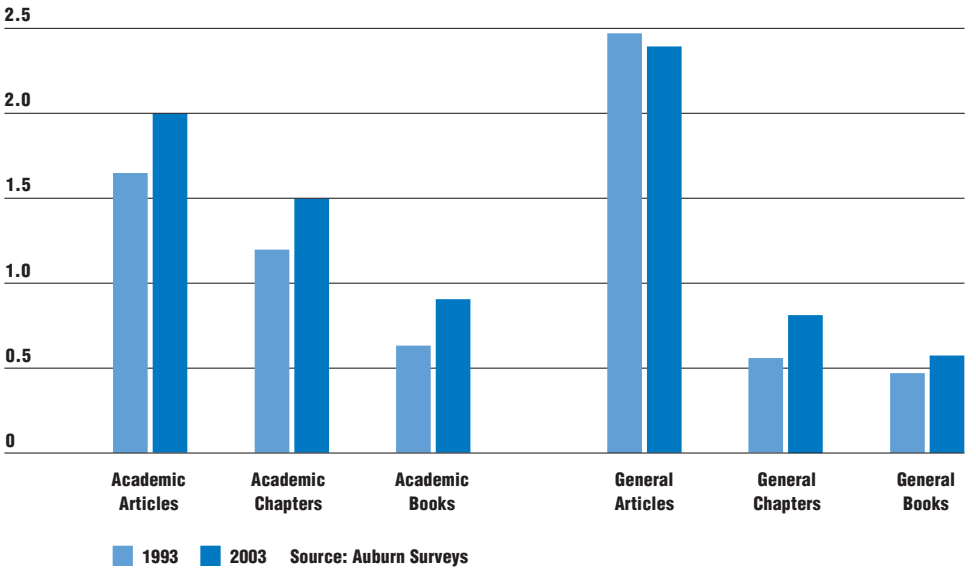


Figure 8: Larger Field in Which Doctoral Students Place Themselves

Top 25 Supplier Programs, 1993 and 2003

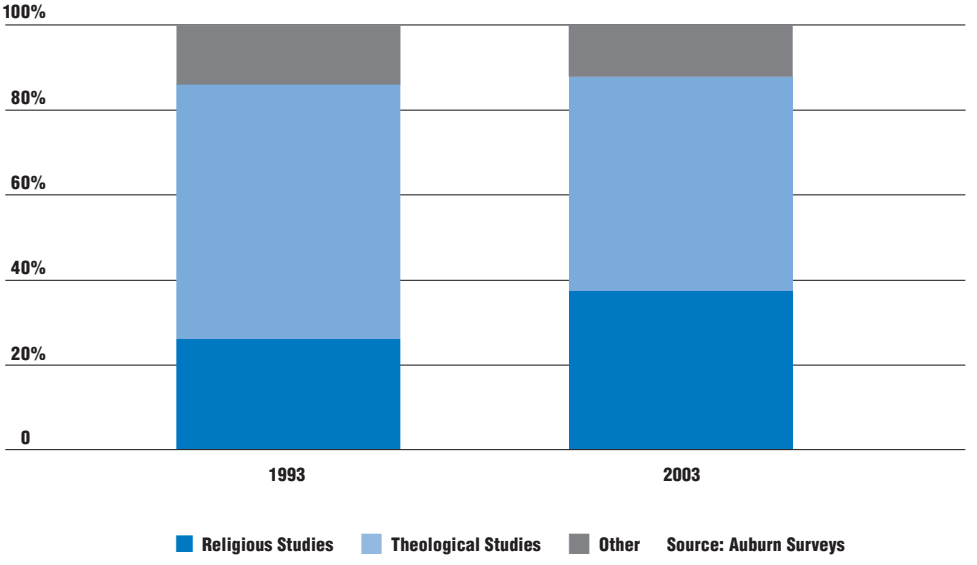
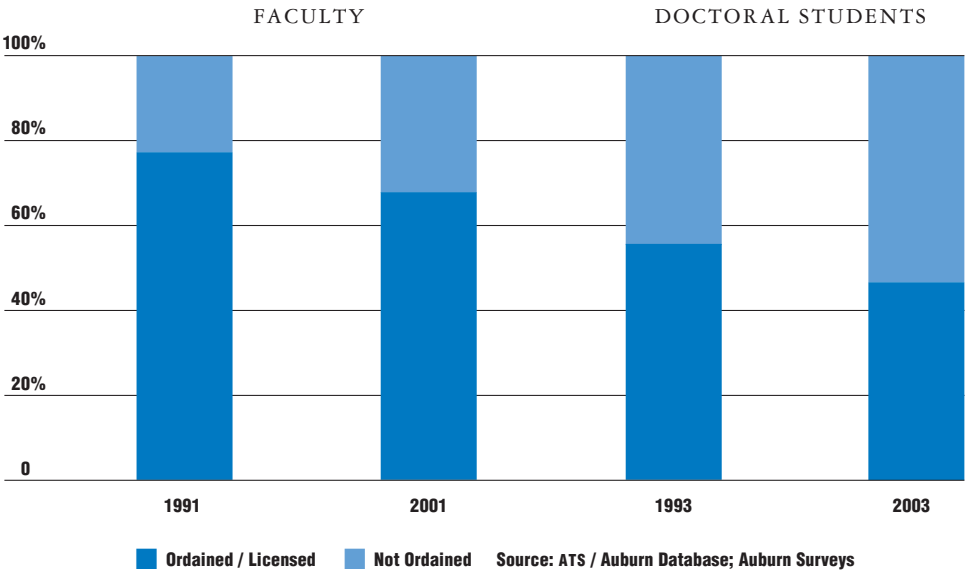


Figure 9: Ordination Status of Theological Faculty and Doctoral Students



members are publishing more, as Figure 7 shows.[17] Higher percentages of doctoral students are joining professional societies, attending guild meetings and making presentations at them. They are less likely than doctoral students ten years ago to say that Christian traditions dominate their programs and that their doctoral studies "should help strengthen students' religious faith"; and, most significantly, they are more likely, as Figure 8 shows, to place themselves in the broad field of "religious studies" than in "theological studies." Although various types of theological institutions, rather than college and university departments, are still the first choices of places to teach, the percentages making those choices are smaller than they were ten years ago (Table 4).

Another striking change of the same magnitude is the decline in percentages of current faculty and doctoral students who are ordained or licensed clergy. Ten percent less of both populations are ordained now than were ten years ago (Figure 9). Faculty ordination varies greatly by religious tradition and type of school: in 2001, less than half of the faculty of non-denominational mainline Protestant schools were ordained, compared with nearly three-quarters of the faculty of denominational Protestant seminaries [U].[18] Women faculty are markedly less likely to be ordained (63 percent are not, compared with 24 percent of men [V]); only in mainline

Protestant denominational schools are more than half of women faculty (56 percent) ordained [W]. But over the last decade rates of ordination have been dropping for faculty in all groups, including men, in schools of all types [X]. (Indeed, rates of ordination of doctoral students decreased more steeply for men than for women between 1993 and 2003 [Y].) The comparison of older and younger faculty suggests that rates will continue to fall as older faculty retire: more than one-third (36 percent) of younger faculty, compared with one-quarter of older faculty, are not ordained [Z].

Lower rates of ordination do not, however, translate into lower rates of religious practice and involvement. Almost all current faculty members

Lower rates of ordination do not, however, translate into lower rates of religious practice and involvement.

attend or lead worship on or off campus. More than 90 percent participate in local congregations (75 percent "often"; an additional 16 percent "occasionally"). Doctoral students' levels of worship leadership and attendance actually increased during the last ten years, as Figure 10 shows. In addition, the average number of days that faculty members report serving religious organizations above the congregational level has increased in the last decade, and faculty members are slightly more likely to hold a professional theological degree today than they were ten years ago.

Table 4: Type of Institution in which Doctoral Students Most Want to Teach

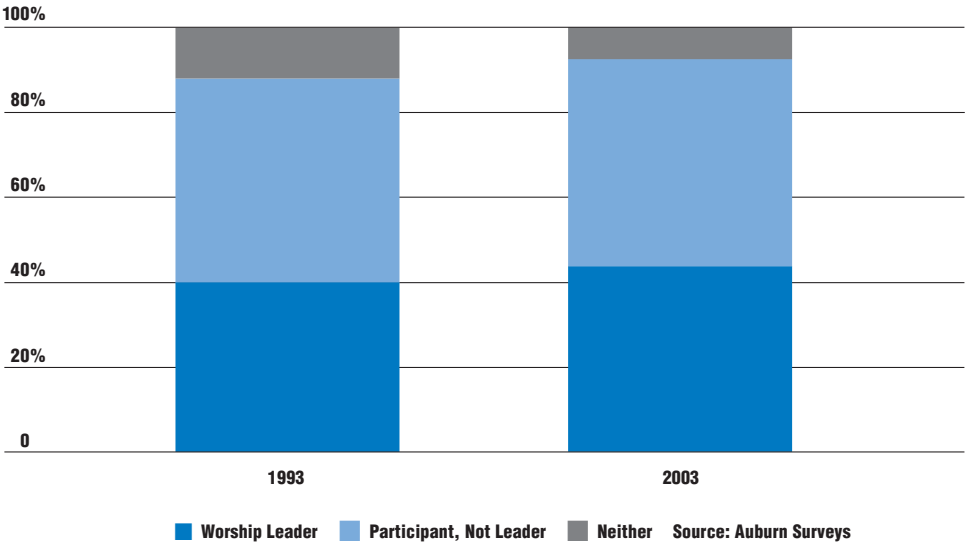
TOP 25 SUPPLIER PROGRAMS

Type of Institution / First Choice	*1993*	*2003*
Denominational seminary	20.9%	17.7%
University divinity school	11.5%	16.4%
Non-denominational seminary	8.9%	11.7%
Religiously affiliated university	12.6%	11.4%
Religiously affiliated college	10.1%	10.4%
Private college	7.9%	9.7%
Private independent university	9.1%	8.4%
Professional ministry	7.4%	4.3%

Source: Auburn Surveys

Figure 10: Doctoral Students' Religious Participation

Top 25 Supplier Programs, 1993 and 2003



Seventy-seven percent hold an M.Div. degree or equivalent [AA]. Younger faculty are almost as likely to hold it as older faculty [BB], despite the fact that women, whose numbers are somewhat greater in the younger group, are much less likely to have such a degree than men (60 percent of women have an M.Div. or similar degree, compared with 82 percent of male faculty [CC]).[19]

These developments can be quickly summarized. Current faculty publish more than their counterparts ten years ago. Doctoral students participate in more professional academic activities, and they are more likely to say that their field is religion rather than theology. Members of both groups are less likely to be ordained, but at the same time, levels of personal religious adherence and practice have remained high.

What is the significance of these developments? The Auburn Center asked its Panel of Advisors, a group of respected theological and rabbinical school leaders and executives from organizations that serve theological schools, for its assessment.[20] Panel members agreed that rising rates of scholarly publishing are a welcome development. Over the last half century, several members observed, the influence of "theological" faculty in shaping the disciplines of theological and religious scholarship has declined, as faculty in the field of "religion" have become more numerous and prominent. More publishing by theological faculty will help to right the

balance, and the scholarly study that produces a published book or article can have beneficial effects on the quality of teaching as well.

Most Panel members were, however, alarmed by the change in self-definition of a significant proportion of doctoral students. Ten percent more now than ten years ago say their field is "religion" rather than "theology." The change may signal a shift in the orientation and content of doctoral studies in the programs that train the majority of theological faculty. Almost all these programs are located in institutions that have religious affiliations and/or offer training for professional ministry. Our Panel was concerned that these doctoral programs may not be as supportive of theological studies as they are of religious studies. Theology, in the broad sense, is what binds together the segments of a theological school's curriculum. If theology ceases to be the framework for the doctoral studies of prospective faculty, theological education will, most members of the Auburn Panel believe, be adversely affected.

Most controversial was the question of whether the sharp drop in the percentage of faculty and doctoral students who are ordained or licensed clergy will have major impact on theological schools. Leaders of Protestant denominational schools, which still have high percentages of ordained faculty, view the development as an alarming signal that seminaries' ties to the religious communities they serve may be on the wane. However, those who work in Roman Catholic institutions, which have fewer ordained prospects to choose from; those in non-denominational evangelical schools, who serve religious communities where ordination is not a prerequisite for leadership; and those in non-denominational mainline Protestant institutions, where ordained faculty are now the minority, saw less significance in the change. There was a measure of agreement on one point. Valuable as ordination and professional ministry experience are as preparation for teaching future religious leaders, some teachers who lack one or both of these nevertheless have a powerful impact on ministry students. Interviews that Auburn researchers have conducted with seminary graduates in various studies confirm this view. The faculty members whom graduates identify as most important in their formation for ministry were not always those who had served in ministry themselves. The essential ingredients of the most powerful teaching for ministry were a passionate concern for religious truth and a deep concern for communities and persons living their faith in the world. Sometimes these "theological" qualities stem from first-hand ministry experience, but sometimes they do not.

Theology is what binds together the segments of a theological school's curriculum. If theology ceases to be the framework for the doctoral studies of prospective faculty, theological education will be adversely affected.

Teaching in the Life and Culture of Theological Schools

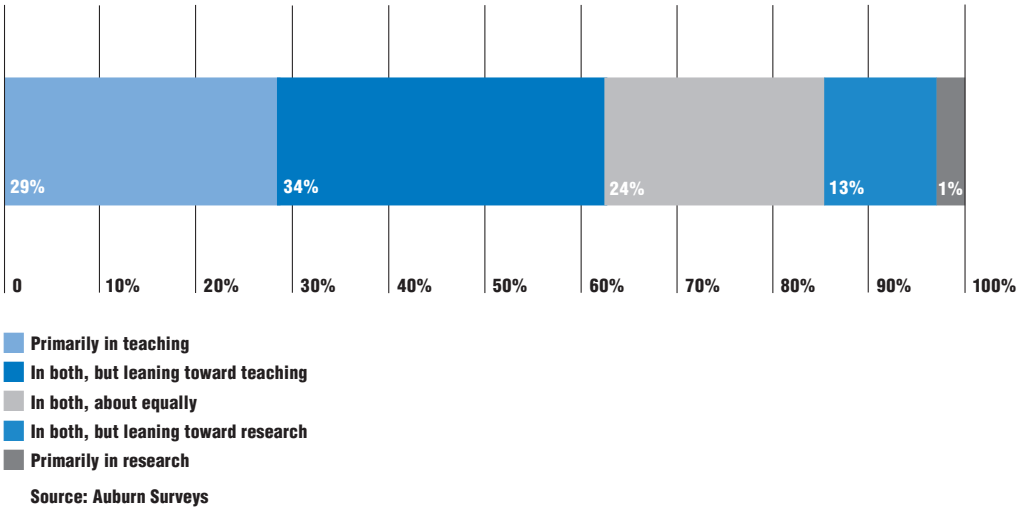
An added feature of the 2003 survey of theological school faculty was a set of questions about theological teaching. These were designed jointly with the staff of the Carnegie Foundation Clergy Education Project (see Footnote 4). The survey results provide an overview of a core element of the internal life of theological schools: teaching practices and attitudes toward teaching.[21] They also document in striking ways a finding that has emerged repeatedly in Auburn research: variations by type of theological school. Because the 2003 survey of faculty included rabbinical schools' faculty for the first time, the characteristics of these Jewish institutions can also be observed in the results of the survey on teaching.

The Carnegie study posed the question of whether theological schools have a distinctive approach to or culture of teaching. Auburn data reveal some common threads among faculty in theological schools. They heavily emphasize teaching over research, as shown in Figure 11.

Only 14 percent say their interest is primarily in or leaning toward research.[22] The 2002 Higher Education Research Institute survey of college and university faculty found that faculty in research universities have a much higher level of primary interest in research than faculty elsewhere. Faculty members in theological schools of all types also favor traditional teaching methods, chiefly discussion and lecture, and they have not been quick to adopt new teaching technologies. Interestingly, younger faculty members are no more likely than older faculty to use computer and video technology in teaching. In response to questions supplied by the Carnegie project about the goals of teaching, theological faculty emphasized a desire to increase students' capacities for critical and theological thinking. Content mastery and professional and spiritual formation ranked lower as goals.

Theological faculty members across the range of institutional types are

Figure 11: Theological and Rabbinical Faculty Interests in Teaching and/or Research (2003)



Source: Auburn Surveys

experienced and self-confident teachers and feel well prepared to teach an increasingly diverse student body. (In the earlier Auburn study, we found that junior faculty in theological institutions experienced few of the early teaching crises reported in many other sectors of higher education, probably because so many had teaching experience before they undertook doctoral study.) Doctoral students in 2003 reported less prior teaching, perhaps a correlate of less ministry experience. If so, teaching may become more of a challenge for beginning theological faculty in the future. Faculty members say that they know where to find resources to improve their teaching. They rate assistance from colleagues, student feedback, and the on-going help of mentors in the field very highly, and in increasing numbers they credit workshops and consultations outside their field, such as those offered by the Wabash Center, with helping them to improve their teaching. Half of all faculty respondents had attended such a workshop and one-third had attended more than one—an impressive level of participation in teaching-oriented professional development.

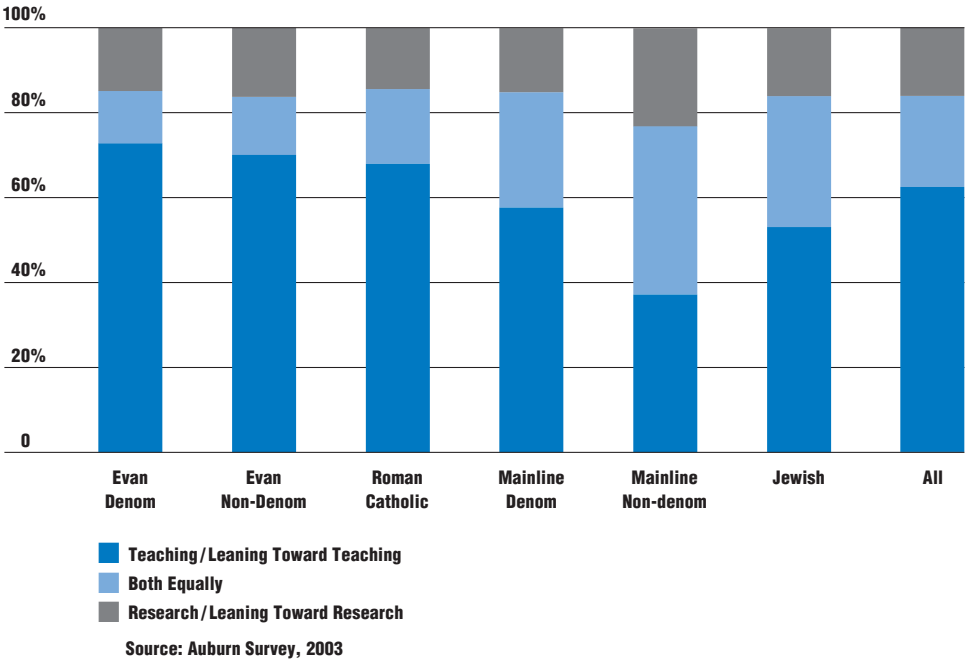
Perhaps the most distinctive quality of theological teaching is, not surprisingly, its religious associations. Faculty "strongly agree" that teaching for them has a spiritual or religious character, and they are almost as likely to agree with the statement that they "rely on God's presence while teaching." Religious and devotional practices in class are somewhat less prevalent, but two-thirds of all faculty members think that it is important to open or close class sessions with prayer or other devotional activity.

This portrait of committed and competent theological teachers, who are conservative in their choice of methods and who perceive integral connections between their teaching and the theological subject matter it conveys, applies to theological institutions of all types. These general tendencies, however, are worked out in different ways, depending on the religious tradition of the school and the structure of its relationship to religious communities. The majority of faculty members in schools of almost all traditions and types (62 percent), for instance, say that their primary emphasis is on teaching rather than research. But the percentage who lean in this direction varies by type of school, as Figure 12 shows, from a high of 70 percent or more in evangelical institutions to a low of only 38 percent in non-denominational mainline Protestant schools.

Theological faculty members across the range of institutional types are experienced and self-confident teachers and feel well prepared to teach an increasingly diverse student body.

Faculty self-concept—"whom or what they see themselves as representing"—

Figure 12: Theological and Rabbinical Faculty:
Interests in Teaching and/or Research by School Tradition and Type (2003)



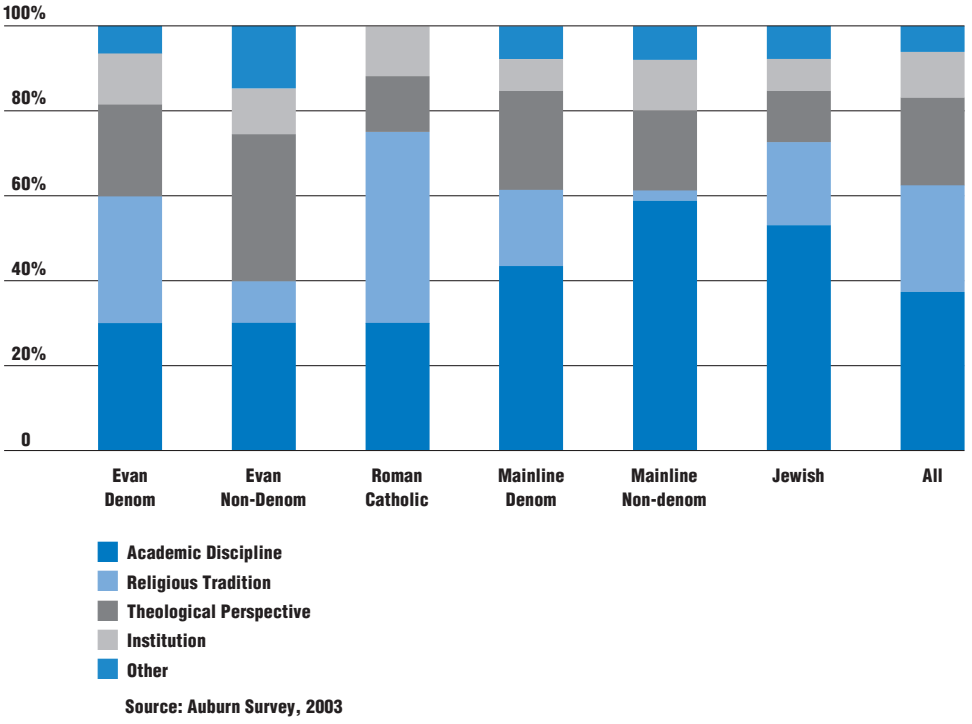
Source: Auburn Survey, 2003

also varies a great deal by school type (Figure 13). On this measure, the averages are not telling. Thirty-eight percent of all faculty members see themselves as representing the academic discipline; this is the case, however, for the majority of faculty (58 percent) in non-denominational mainline Protestant institutions but only for 30 percent in Roman Catholic and evangelical schools, who are much more likely to say that they represent a religious tradition or theological perspective. There are also major variations by school type in what faculty value most in students' work [EE], how they view their role in the classroom [FF], and their goals in teaching ministry students [GG].

Generally, faculty in non-denominational mainline Protestant schools value critical and theological thinking and seek to facilitate it; in rabbinical schools the emphases are critical thinking and content mastery; and in Roman Catholic, Protestant denominational, and evangelical non-denominational

There are major variations by school type in what faculty value most in students' work, how they view their role in the classroom, and their goals in teaching ministry students.

Figure 13: Theological and Rabbinical Faculty:
Whom or What They See Themselves Representing by School Tradition and Type (2003)



Source: Auburn Survey, 2003

schools there are mixed goals and values that include professional and spiritual development.

Differences in religious ethos and piety are evident in the survey data [HH]. On all measures, faculty in non-denominational evangelical schools are most likely to view their teaching as religious activity and to include devotions in class, followed by those in Roman Catholic and evangelical and mainline Protestant denominational schools. The one exception is prayer in class: Roman Catholics are less likely than most other groups to say that it is important to begin or end class with prayer. Faculty in non-denominational mainline institutions and rabbinical schools are least likely to associate their teaching with religious activity.

Finally, approaches to the use of technology vary. No group uses it intensively, but evangelicals use "some" to present information and facilitate programs of distance learning; mainline Protestants are more likely to use "some" to present aesthetic materials or facilitate discussion; and faculty in rabbinical and Roman Catholic schools use technology very little.

From the survey data on teaching emerge profiles of faculty in schools of different religious traditions and types, summarized in the charts below.

Faculty in Evangelical Protestant Schools

- Emphasize content, integration, and ministry formation
- View the teacher as pedagogical planner
- Heavily emphasize their religious role
- Use technology in distance education and to present information
- Denominational schools' faculty
  - —See themselves as representing a tradition
  - —See themselves as representing a theological view

Faculty in Mainline Protestant Schools

- Emphasize critical and theological thinking
- See themselves as representing disciplines
- Denominational schools' faculty
  - —Emphasize integration
  - —Are more likely to be ordained
- Non-denominational schools' faculty
  - —Heavily emphasize disciplines and research
  - —Are least likely to be ordained and say they are religiously motivated
  - —Are most diverse in gender and race

Faculty in Roman Catholic Schools

- Balance teaching and research, critical thinking and integration
- Emphasize their religious tradition and religious role of faculty (though they don't pray as frequently in class and increasing numbers are not ordained)
- Do not use much educational technology

Faculty in Rabbinical Schools

- Emphasize critical thinking and transmission of content
- See themselves as representing disciplines
- Decline to describe their role in religious terms
- Do not use much educational technology

Concluding Reflections

Theological schools' faculties are one of the greatest strengths of theological schools (which are themselves often identified as some of the strongest religious institutions in North America). The two sets of research reviewed in this report, from the early 1990s and from a decade later (2001-2003), give hopeful indications that the quality of faculty, already better than adequate, is improving. Current faculty members are publishing more. At the same time, they remain deeply committed to teaching and give evidence of being competent and resourceful teachers. They are still active participants in religious life and give significant service to denominations and religious agencies.

Meanwhile, doctoral programs are becoming more selective, and it is encouraging that most doctoral students are willing and many are eager to teach in schools whose primary purpose is the formation of religious leaders. Once hired, theological faculty members' morale is high—much higher than reported morale in other sectors of higher education. No doubt the size of theological schools contributes to job satisfaction: even the largest seminaries are small, compared with most other institutions of higher education, giving theological faculty a measure of control over educational programs and policies that faculty in colleges and universities cannot achieve. High morale makes it likely that theological schools will retain the faculty they want and need.

Nevertheless, there are reasons for concern about the future of theological faculties. The reciprocal of the impressive stability of theological faculties, with their well-developed mechanisms for recruitment and training, is that they are very slow to change. They do not adapt readily to shifts in the character of the student body or the way they are expected to teach. Some faculties have indeed incorporated new pedagogies and have learned to teach in new formats. Other institutions have made strides toward the goals of gender and racial diversity in their faculties as well as student bodies. But very few schools have been able to make progress on both fronts, even when they have set such changes as explicit goals.

There are other reasons for concern. The small size of schools, which usually makes them satisfactory places to work, sometimes intensifies intrafaculty and faculty-administration conflict. The advancing age of faculty and doctoral students will soon create pressure for replacements, and in certain fields, notably practical ministry studies, it may be difficult to find replacements who are highly trained and who fit into the religious culture of the school. In all fields, the increasingly "academic" outlook of doctoral students (perhaps a sign of

The reciprocal of the impressive stability of theological faculties, with their well-developed mechanisms for recruitment and training, is that they are very slow to change.

increasing influence of a religious studies framework for doctoral studies) and the slow gravitation toward secular institutions as preferred places to teach give rise to concern about how prospective faculty are being formed and directed in the course of their doctoral studies.

The complexity of this picture is increased by another factor. A signal fact about North American theological education, illustrated by the foregoing charts, is its internal variety. This variety is a great strength. It also, however, complicates attempts to address some of the challenges that all schools face, such as a changing intellectual climate that tends to privilege the study of religion and marginalize theological commitments. Theological and rabbinical schools, along with the associations and foundations that seek to strengthen them, will have to work carefully and intently to respond to the hopeful and worrisome signs of the times highlighted in this report. The schools' richest resource, their well-trained and deeply-committed faculty members, must be carefully developed for the future. Not only the strength of theological schools but also the well-being of the religious communities whose leaders they educate is at stake.

Notes

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

2. A database of all full-time faculty members was compiled with the cooperation of the Association of Theological Schools. A sample of faculty was surveyed, as was a sample of doctoral students in the fields of theology and religion in all programs in North America and selected programs in Europe. Case studies of junior faculty and the climate for faculty work were conducted, and special analyses of faculty compensation and minority recruitment and retention were also undertaken.

3. Two reports were published: Barbara G. Wheeler, "True and False: The first in a series of reports from a study of theological faculty," Auburn Studies 4 (January 1996); and Barbara G. Wheeler and Mark N. Wilhelm, "Tending Talents: The second in a series of reports from a study of theological school faculty," Auburn Studies 5 (March 1997). In addition, an unpublished report is available: Anthony Ruger, "Treasure and Talent: Compensation of theological school faculty, 1987-1993," Auburn Center Background Report 7 (March 1997). The published reports can be downloaded and information about the unpublished report obtained at www.auburnsem.org.

4. The 2001 database contained records for 3825 full-time teaching faculty, plus presidents, deans, directors of graduate and D. Min. programs, head librarians and directors of field education who have faculty status but do not teach full-time. The 1991 database, compiled using the same criteria, contained 3475 records.

5. Fifty percent of faculty members in the 2001 database of ATS faculty were surveyed. All minority faculty members in the ATS database were selected to receive surveys because the numbers were small. The Hispanic faculty (N=117) were mailed surveys by the Center for the Study of Latino Religion at the University of Notre Dame and follow-up reminder letters were sent by them. In addition to the ATS faculty, surveys were sent to all faculty at four rabbinical schools. A total of 2,402 surveys were mailed to faculty and 876 were returned, for a return rate of 36%. The sample was weighted to compensate for oversampling.

6. The Carnegie Clergy Education Project has as its goal to identify and describe pedagogical practices across a range of Christian and Jewish theological schools. Twenty schools participated in this in-depth qualitative study.

7. A total of 1,338 surveys were mailed, 336 were returned, for a return rate of 25%. The 2002 AAR survey was sent to approximately 100 doctoral programs in religion and theology in universities and seminaries in the U.S. and Canada. Fifty-three schools responded with information on their programs and degrees and basic demographics of their faculty and students.

8. There was a slight drop in the percentage of full professors (50% to 47%) almost made up by a slight gain for associates [A]. Data on tenure status are collected in a different format than they were in 1991, so comparisons are not possible.

9. For purposes of analysis, the Auburn Center divides theological schools into four religious "families": Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Jewish. The mainline and evangelical Protestant categories are further divided by institutional type: denominationally related and non-denominational or independent. The resulting typology has six categories. For an explanation of the methods used to assign schools to categories or a list of schools divided by categories, contact the Auburn Center.

10. In higher education in general, women were 34.8% of full-time faculty members in 1999 (The American Faculty Poll, TIAA-CREF/NORC, 2000), and 25% of faculty in departments of theology and religion (AAR 2003 Survey). These figures suggest that the rest of higher education struggles with the same challenges as theological education.

11. In 2003, faculty in theology/religion programs that AAR surveyed were 9.6% non-white; those in ATS schools in 2001 were 13.3% non-white. In 1999, the TIAA-CREF/NORC survey found that 12.4% of full-time faculty in higher education are non-white.

12. Barbara G. Wheeler, "Is There a Problem? Theological students and religious leadership for the future," Auburn Studies 8 (July 2001).

13. "Hard to Find: Searching for practical faculty in the 1990's," Auburn Center Background Report 8 (January 2002).

14. Students are also offered more loans and borrow more, and a majority expects to graduate with substantial debt.

15. We have speculated about whether the rapid rise in the rankings of Princeton, Duke and Emory indicates a new tendency of Protestant theological schools to hire from programs in denominationally-related institutions rather than from those in secular universities. That factor cannot be ruled out, but because other programs in universities with denominational ties have fallen in the rankings (Boston, for instance) and several programs in secular universities have maintained or improved their rankings (Chicago, Yale, Vanderbilt), the strength of individual programs seems more likely as the primary explanation.

16. Charts showing the top doctoral supplier by types of theological schools and academic fields are available [L-T].

17. The graph does not include rabbinical school faculty, who were not surveyed in 1993. Their high publishing rates would increase the already higher 2003 averages.

18. Percentage of ordained faculty also varies by teaching field. The percentage is close to average in Biblical studies (71%), less than average in religious education, ethics, theology and history (62-66%), and above average in practical ministry (78%).

19. As might be expected, percentages of faculty holding the M.Div. degree vary by the religious tradition and type of school [DD].

20. The membership of the Panel of Advisers is listed at: http://www.auburnsem.org/study/staff_advisors.asp

21. The report of the Clergy Education Project, to be published in Winter 2004/05, will be based on intensive qualitative site studies by the researchers that will deepen, nuance and expand the survey findings reported here.

22. The questions were asked differently on the two surveys and require re-computation of the Auburn results in order to make comparisons. If the "both" category in Figure 11 is divided equally between teaching and research, 74% of theological faculty fall into the teaching category, compared with 48% in research universities. Even the most research-oriented theological schools, mainline Protestant non-denominational institutions, 56% of whose faculty lean toward teaching, do not reach the level of interest in research of private university faculty.

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Auburn Seminary was founded in 1818 by the presbyteries of central New York State. Progressive theological ideas and ecumenical sensibilities guided Auburn's original work of preparing ministers for frontier churches and foreign missions. After the seminary relocated from Auburn, New York, to the campus of Union Theological Seminary in New York City in 1939, Auburn ceased to grant degrees, but its commitment to progressive and ecumenical theological education remained firm.

As a free-standing seminary working in close cooperation with other institutions, Auburn found new forms for its educational mission: programs of serious, sustained theological education for laity and practicing clergy; a course of denominational studies for Presbyterians enrolled at Union; and research into the history, aims and purposes of theological education.

In 1991, building on its national reputation for research, Auburn established the Center for the Study of Theological Education to foster research on current issues in theological education, an enterprise that Auburn believes is critical to the well-being of religious communities and the world that they serve. Auburn Seminary also sponsors the Center for Church Life, to help strengthen the leadership of mainline churches, and the Center for Multifaith Education, to provide life-long learning for persons of diverse faith backgrounds.

Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education

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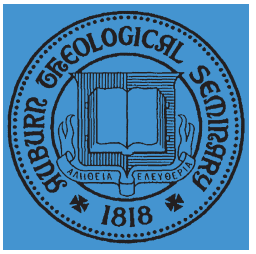
Anthony T. Ruger, Senior Research Fellow



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