Article

Religious Others in (Christian) Seminaries: Three Approaches and Conundrums

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Abstract: The number of students from other religious traditions is increasing in Christian seminaries in the United States. However, seminaries have different motivations, visions, and rationales that determine whether and how they accept these students. The purpose of this article is to examine how seminaries approach this matter and what issues follow. The author suggests that the revised framework of Van der Ven and Ziebertz's models of religious education (the *monoreligious*, *multireligious*, and *interreligious* models) can be particularly helpful in theorizing the current context of seminaries that are becoming multireligious. This article then explores the challenges that each model encounters and finds that those challenges, or conundrums, are closely related to the tensions between values such as openness, educational justice, and institutional identity.

Keywords: theological education with religious other; monoreligious model; multireligious model; interreligious model; conundrums

1. Introduction

The student population in Christian seminaries in the United States is becoming more diverse every year, although the degree of diversity is different from institution to institution and the growth of diversity in faculty is relatively slower.[1] Besides the diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and nationality, what draws attention is the growth in the numbers of non-Christian students in seminaries. In the past, students from other religions were occasionally seen in seminaries, but their numbers are now growing so fast that their presence is challenging seminaries to rethink key elements such as its pedagogy, mission, and identity. About twenty years ago, when Moore (1995, 1996), the current dean of Boston University School of Theology, proposed that "conversation with religious others" needed to be an important method for future theological education, her audience generally assumed religious others to be those who people would meet outside the seminary. However, according to the data from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), these religious others are now *in* the seminary. The total number of students from other religions in all ATS schools is increasing, and so is the number of schools which those students attend. (Exact numbers below.)

Few will doubt the importance of nurturing interreligious sensitivity and interreligious leadership for future leaders. Thus, someone may consider the shift to seminaries accepting more students from diverse religious backgrounds as a timely and welcome opportunity that might prompt theological education that is more relevant to the current multireligious US context. However, the situation brings with it several issues ripe for renegotiation, such as how inclusive seminaries need to be, how seminaries address other religions in class, whether the seminary is capable of offering education that is fair, just,

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[1] For example, the racial/ethnic student population is 41 percent of the total student population, while the racial/ethnic full-time faculty is only 21 percent of the total. "Transitions: 2017 Annual Report" Accessed 20 March 2018, https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/publications-presentations/documents/2017-Annual-Report.pdf, 8.

and effective to all—not only to Christian students but also to other religious students—and, ultimately, how this growing diversity of the student body affects the seminary's mission, pedagogy, and identity.

To discuss these issues is the main task of this article. To do this work more effectively, the author first presents three approaches to theological education that are practiced in seminaries with students from other religions. They are named the *monoreligious, multireligious*, and *interreligious* models. Since these names are the same as and are conceptually similar to the models of public religious education studied by scholars in Europe, especially Johannes van der Ven and Hans-Georg Ziebertz, the article introduces these models in comparison with those of van der Ven and Ziebertz (e.g., Ziebertz 1993, 2003, 2007; Van der Ven 1994; Van der Ven and Ziebertz 1994).

Secondly, the article explores what kind of problems each model intrinsically encounters. For instance, some seminaries, although actively recruiting non-Christian students, have less interest in actively hearing and engaging with the lived experiences and perspectives of the students from other religious traditions, while expecting them to learn *about* and *from* particular Christian perspectives taught in the seminaries. This situation raises a question as to whether this model of theological education is offering a just and fair learning opportunity to *all*. That is, justice is problematized, when openness is practiced without changing identity. This is an important question that the monoreligious model encounters. Likewise, the multireligious model and the interreligious model also encounter questions that are based on the tension between openness, justice, and identity; the questions vary only according to the values highlighted and problematized.

Categorization can never fully grasp the lived reality. Nevertheless, this research is still meaningful in the sense that it provides a framework that helps us examine issues to do with seminaries becoming multireligious and to envision ways to move forward. One of the points that this research reveals is that every model has conundrums. It does not conclude that any model can be or should be the norm of theological education in the future, although the interreligious model seems to offer the most ideal education for all. There is no doubt that theological education must seek ways in which students learn and grow with religious others, but the interreligious model also encounters an issue of an institutional identity and an issue of capability. It must be each seminary's role to determine how to transform its student body, pedagogy, and mission in this multireligious world, but such work should consider the nature of the approach that the school chooses.

2. Seminaries Becoming Multireligious

According to the annual data reports from ATS, a significant increase in the number of students associated with other religious traditions is observed in its member schools.[2] For example, the number of Buddhist students enrolled in ATS schools in 2008–2009 was 36, but that increased to 104 in 2017–2018, spread over 17 schools (ATS 2008, 2017). The category of "Buddhist" had not even appeared in the student affiliation list until the 2007–2008 report (ATS 2007). The number of Jewish students has been relatively steady. There were 65 students enrolled in 23 schools in 2007–2008, and 86 students enrolled in 29 schools in 2017–2018. The number of Muslim students has doubled from 73 students enrolled in 17 schools in 2007–2008 to 179 students in 25 different schools in 2017–2018.

In 2017–2018, the total number of Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim students was thus 369. Though this is only a small portion of the total number of students enrolled (72,138), significantly 12,557 students do not identify with any religious group and are classified as "other" in ATS reports. This group consists of those who are with religious groups other than the three religions specified above (Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam) and Christianity. They also contain what Patel and Meyer (2017) would call "people who orient around religion differently," such as atheists, agnostics, humanists, those with "multiple religious belongings," "nones," and those who identify themselves as "spiritual but not religious" (299).

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2   These numbers are headcounts, not full-time equivalencies (FTE).

The exact programs in which these students are enrolled are not listed, but several factors have contributed to the greater religious diversity in the seminary. One of them is the emergence of new degree programs that target populations broader than Christians. These are typically the programs that focus on social justice, spirituality, and interreligious relations, among them the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, Comparative Religion, Social Work, Social Transformation, Interfaith Studies, and so forth, which do not require the student to have a specific religious affiliation or a vocational goal in a traditional religious organization.[3] Thus, more students of various backgrounds could come to Christian seminaries.

Another likely factor is the increased interest in chaplaincy. This is work that both serves and is done by people of different religions. However, since chaplaincy often requires the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) or equivalency, more seminaries today are offering a chaplaincy track within their Master of Divinity degree program, which welcomes non-Christian students not only to Christian seminaries but also into its traditionally most Christian-exclusive degree program (M.Div.).[4]

Furthermore, many seminaries are deliberately becoming more multireligious. Those schools have hired faculty or staff members who are either from different religious traditions or are already experts in interreligious matters. Claremont School of Theology has also embraced interreligious relations by establishing a formal relationship with Jewish, Islamic, and Buddhist institutions—namely, the Academy for Jewish Religion, Bayan Claremont, and the University of the West. Seminaries such as Hartford Seminary and Graduate Theological Union, which were formerly Christian seminaries or consortiums, have become explicitly interfaith institutions. The contexts of many theological schools have been reformed with their new visions, creating more room for religious others in the seminary context.[5]

3. Models of Theological Education with the Other

The seminary is a complex creature. How to approach and embrace students from other religions differs from institution to institution. Nevertheless, there are certain common patterns or tendencies observed among seminaries, and this enables us to compare the models of theological education with each other theoretically. In this article, the author suggests that we think about three models of theological education, namely, the *monoreligious*, *multireligious*, and *interreligious* models. These are the idealized models according to the levels at which seminaries engage with the perspectives of the religious other. The first (monoreligious) model is an approach in which the seminary accepts religious others as students but has no particular intention to learn about or from those other religious perspectives. The second (multireligious) model is an approach in which the seminary provides opportunities to learn about other religions but may possibly otherize students who are from other religions. The third (interreligious) model is an approach in which the seminary decides to decentralize its Christian identity and attempts to be fully interreligious; thus, they are not Christian seminaries anymore, and this is why the title of this article has "Christian" in parenthesis.

These models are not merely the author's invention but have been formulated with the help of a framework developed in religious education. Since it is a relatively new situation that seminaries educate students from non-Christian religious traditions, few studies have yet addressed what models are practiced or possible. However, since the mid-twentieth century, multiple studies in the field of

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3   Traditionally, the Doctor of Philosophy and the Master of Arts have been programs to which people of different religions come and study in Christian seminary.

4   For example, Claremont School of Theology has recently begun its interfaith chaplaincy track in the Master of Divinity, which is designed to educate students from various religious backgrounds. The interreligious chaplaincy concentration in United Theological School of the Twin Cities also offers education for religiously diverse students in the Master of Divinity program.

5   For more information about the seminaries' practices of multireligious and interreligious education, see "Multifaith Education in Seminaries: A Resource Document (2014)." Auburn Seminary. https://auburnseminary.org/report/multifaith-education-seminaries-resource/; "Seminaries Buzzing with Interfaith Studies." The Interfaith Observer. http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2012/9/15/seminaries-buzzing-with-interfaith-studies.html (Chaffee 2012).

religious education have been conducted to address how to teach religion in public schools (Smart 1968; Smith 1969; Grimmitt 1973; Gooderham 1980; Felderhof 1985; Hull 2004; Van der Ven and Ziebertz 1994; Sterkens 2001). The main discussions have been around questions such as (a) whether religious education should teach Christian perspectives alone or should include perspectives of other religions and (b) whether religion should be taught in a confessional way or an academic-scientific way (e.g., Grimmitt 1973; Gooderham 1980). The works of van der Van and Ziebertz are located on the continuum of this discussion. They have continued and have modernized this discussion by finding that three models are practiced in reality and are empirically identifiable (e.g., Ziebertz 1993, 2003; 2007; Van der Ven 1994; Van der Ven and Ziebertz 1994). Using Buberian language, they introduce the monoreligious model as an "I-perspective" model of education because it addresses Christian perspectives alone. The multireligious model is an education that teaches religion in a scientific and objective—that is, impersonal—way, which they call an "I-It perspective" model of education. The interreligious model is an "I-You perspective" model of education as it allows mutual encounter and interaction (see Van der Ven 1994; Ziebertz 2007). Ziebertz further describes these approaches as the models of "learning-in" (monoreligious), "learning about" (multireligious), and "learning from" (interreligious) (Ziebertz 1993).

Although this typology is suggested for public religious education, it nonetheless provides much insight for theological education today; it shows what approaches education can take and what points need to be recognized when education—which used to focus only on Christian perspectives alone—is challenged to address multiple religions. Thus, below the author attempts to present three models in theological education by using the terms and concepts that van der Ven and Ziebertz have provided. The models are portrayed as mutually exclusive, but note that this attempt is for the sake of analysis and theorization. A seminary that has a multireligious student body may fall somewhere in between these three models.

3.1. Monoreligious Model

For van der Ven and Ziebertz, the monoreligious model is closer to a representation of (Rahnerian) inclusivism. Unlike the exclusivist model that assumes other religions to be merely false, this model "presupposes the existence of other religions" and perceives them as containing something beneficial to a Christian understanding of God and the world (Ziebertz 2007, p. 4; Van der Ven 1994, p. 247). Likewise, the author proposes the monoreligious model in the seminary as an approach that recognizes religious diversity as a reality of society. Generally, the seminary understands that both religious others and Christians have something good to share with one another and can be mutually beneficial. However, it is understood that fostering mutual learning or interreligious competency education is not its primary mission. Its primary mission is considered as formation and education for future Christian leaders. Thus, students, faculty, and staff consist of mostly Christian, and the identity of the school is clearly understood as Christian.

This seminary occasionally welcomes religious others—but with some conditions. Religious others can be part of the community as long as they can make contributions to the seminary's mission of Christian formation and education or as long as they would want to learn what the seminary offers. For example, a seminary may hire one or two faculty members whose religious identities are not Christian. Hiring a Jewish scholar to teach Hebrew Bible or a religious scholar for art or history is something often observed. They are welcomed in the sense that their academic specialty offers particular knowledge and a perspective needed and beneficial for the formation and education of their Christian students. They are hired for their expertise, but *not necessarily because of* their religious identities. Thus, although they are full-time members of the community, they are often felt as (family-like) guests in a sense. The seminary would also welcome non-Christian students as long as they want to come and study. So, a few students from different religious traditions are often present on the campus, usually seeking a specialized degree such as the Master of Social Justice and Leadership, or a more traditional degree such as the Master of Divinity to be a chaplain or to be a minister in a

smaller or newer religious movement. Thus, the door is open to anyone, but one must decide whether this Christian-centered seminary degree satisfies one's need.

3.2. Multireligious Model

For van der Ven and Ziebertz, the multireligious model means approaching religion in an objective if not a "scientific" way, "clarify[ing] the content and manifestations of different religious traditions," and learning them by comparing them equally and objectively (Sterkens 2001, p. 55; Van der Ven 1994, p. 249). This term is employed with some different emphases in this research for the model of theological education. The multireligious model in theological education refers to the seminary that regards knowing about other religions and understanding the issues of a religiously pluralistic society as essential to Christian formation. This model is similar to that of van der Ven and Ziebertz in a sense that this model approaches other religions in an insufficiently nuanced way to address the depth and complexity of other religions and may often fall into a reductionist and "scientific" rut. However, a difference is that seminary is where Christianity is still central and Christian faith is accepted as a valid subject of study. Thus, the multireligious model does not mean having an objective approach to *all* religions. Besides, the ways in which seminaries approach other religions are neither sufficiently nuanced nor scientific. Yet this model views raising religious literacy and awareness of local and global issues related to other religions as a necessary part of theological education. Like the monoreligious model, the seminary understands its mission as Christian formation and education, and, therefore, the members of the community are still predominantly Christian; but, unlike the monoreligious model, this model gives students opportunities to learn about other religions.

This approach is most closely aligned with the ATS's vision and what Roozen (2012) calls "multireligious education." After its major research project entitled "Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices in a Multifaith Society," the ATS changed one of its requirements for the Master of Divinity program to read as follows (Graham 2012, p. 9):

> A.2.3.2 MDiv education shall engage students with the global character of the church as well as ministry in the multifaith and multicultural context of contemporary society. This should include attention to the wide diversity of religious traditions present in potential ministry settings, as well as expressions of social justice and respect congruent with the institution's mission and purpose.

The key change was the addition of the word "multifaith," and Graham (2012), who led this research project, appropriately describes this change as "small but highly significant" (9). According to Roozen (2012), who conducted action research with about eighty seminarians, not only this accreditation agency but current students aspire to this kind of education (95–97), and that they do so for three reasons: First, because it prepares them for their work in the future (the practical reason); second, because it helps them understand themselves and others (the educational reason); and third, because it aids them in seeing the world in a completely different way (the formative reason).

To embody this vision, theological schools engage in various strategies, among them, *first*, requiring one or two courses about individual religions, the socio-historical relationship between Christianity and other religions, or theories such as religious pluralism, interreligious studies, or comparative religion. This strategy mostly pertains to an *intellectual-cognitive* aspect of learning, which can be described as "learning about" and "learning by contrast (or relativization)" (Court and Seymour 2015, pp. 521–22); *second*, offering an immersion program through which students may earn academic credits. In this type of program, the group visits other religious spaces, local or international, and gets to know others by contact, immersion, and interaction. The principle here is to "learn from within," which primarily deals with an *affective-aesthetic* (and even *behavioral*) aspect of learning; *third,* including courses where students learn not only theory but also practice of interreligious engagement by participating in various activities firsthand. Six good examples of such courses appear in *Changing the Way Seminaries Teach: Pedagogies for Interfaith Dialogue*, for instance. Roozen and Hadsell (2009), the coeditors of

the book, explain these courses as ones that move beyond merely being "informational" to being also "confessional," "experiential, "relational," and "practical" (5). These courses deal directly with the formation of interreligious leadership and competency as both the subject matter *and* the major goal. A class designed to learn interreligious dialogue by practice and reflection is a good example of where and how students engage in interreligious learning as a regular religio-epistemological practice. Team-teaching by professors from different religious traditions is widely practiced for these courses, although their students are still mostly Christian. The difference between the first strategy (requiring one or two courses in other religions) and this third strategy (requiring a course particularly focused on interreligious learning and formation) is between *knowledge acquisition* and *formation.* Both the second and the third strategies respect the values of formation; the difference is that the second one places more weight on practice over reflection, while the third one balances the two—that is, it is praxis-centered. The more the curriculum allows direct contact and interaction with religious others, the more opportunities the students have to avoid reductive understanding of other religions.

3.3. Interreligious Model

For van der Ven and Ziebertz, the interreligious model means an education in which multiple religious perspectives are present and exchanged (Van der Ven 1994, p. 253). Using Buberian language, they call it an "I-and-You perspective" model of education. They call the monoreligious model an "I-perspective" form of education and the multireligious model an "I-It perspective" form of education. The interreligious model in theological education closely resembles van der Ven and Ziebertz's idea. As in their typology, the monoreligious model in theological education foregrounds the I-perspective only (here, Christian formation and education). Not that exchange does not happen at all; rather, that there is no recognition of exchange or mutuality. The seminary foregrounds what to give and what to receive for its mission and has little interest in how those activities affect the formation of religious others present in the classroom. The multireligious model recognizes different religious perspectives and values exchange, but its interest is focused on the exchanges that the seminary makes with those outside the seminary, not the students from different traditions within the community. Compared to these two models, the primary pedagogic aim of the interreligious model is to include religious others in the community and have them learn and grow through mutual interaction in the community.

Thus, one of the clearest indications that a seminary employs this model is apparent in its explicit effort to create an interreligious campus. Physically, the seminary attempts to form its board, faculty, staff, and student bodies to be more intentionally multireligious. Strategically, the seminary expands its vision from education for Christians to education for wider populations. In many cases, due to its tradition and history, the seminary will maintain its Christian identity for a while. However, in its body, actively sharing its physical, academic, and administrative space with religious others is already happening. Thus, decentralization of Christianity—or, possibly decolonization of Christian-centered curriculum—begins, and mutual interaction and formation are highly esteemed. More academic programs such as the Master of Arts in Interreligious Studies or the Certificate in Muslim-Christian Relations appear, and more centers and institutes are established that focus on interreligious dialogue or on other religions such as Islam, Judaism, or Buddhism.

In contrast to the previous models, religious others in the seminary with this model are no longer "guests" but legitimate members of the community. They are truly part of the "We"—not the We as in the "We-Other" dichotomy but the We as those who hold equal rights and opportunities as the subjects of the education. They never merely become or remain as the objects of someone else's learning. Although both the multireligious model and the interreligious model acknowledge religious diversity and foster pluralism, the encounter in the multireligious model still happens in an "us-versus-them" way. In the interreligious model, it is an activity happening both among "us" and with those outside the seminary. Of course, there would be variations among the seminaries that implement the interreligious model. They usually exist between two poles: the *structural* interreligious seminary and the *compositional* interreligious seminary, the former being a seminary that gives much

attention to having one or multiple institutions of other religions (e.g., a center for Jewish Studies, a center for Islamic Studies, etc.) and their organizational coexistence and engagement, and the latter being the seminary that tends to create an interreligious environment by the increased number of other religious individuals and that fosters their mutual formation through the grassroots level of interaction.

4. Conundrums We Encounter

Seminaries that affirm the value of religious diversity stand somewhere between these models.[6] The more they are intentional and strategic in what they do with religious others, the more coherent their practices and the more identifiable are their practices in relation to these models. The interreligious model may seem to offer most fair and equal education for all students present, but each model has conundrums that we cannot easily overlook. All three models have limitations, and they revolve around the tensions between openness, educational justice, and institutional identity.

4.1. Openness and Educational Justice

The monoreligious model would be perceived as most valuable when one seeks to acquire a strong education for Christian particularity. The seminary that employs this model does not want to dilute its identity as a Christian seminary. It typically welcomes professors from other religious traditions to come and teach its Christian students, and students from other religious traditions are welcome to come and learn Christian theology—but that is it. One may think that what this model misses in exchange of particularity is thus a chance to learn other religions (and pluralism), and one may also think that this exchange can be acceptable based on the institution's theology and vision. Such questions are, however, misleading. For we form (and are also being formed) as Christian as we engage with other religious traditions both historical and contemporary (Leirvik 2014, p. 1). Thus, it is not an option but an imperative to offer theological education that helps one understand Christian particularity and form Christian identity in conjunction with learning other religions, their adherents, and their lives. The monoreligious model is, in this respect, severely lacking in providing proper education for Christian particularity.

It is also a problem if a seminary is not interested in equipping students with interreligious competencies but is satisfied with teaching Christian particularity only. Rather than being "selective" in its education by doing this, a seminary is actually being "irresponsible," as Lohr (2009) notes (11). Moreover, a bigger problem here is that the seminary is demonstrating little interest in mutuality. Education in this model tends not to give religious others a chance to voice their "auto-interpretation of self" and "auto-interpretation of the other," while it allows Christian students to do so (Van der Ven 1994, p. 253). This raises the question of whether or not education that allows certain people to engage in the classroom in only a limited way is just and acceptable. From a critical pedagogical perspective, this is reminiscent of the "racist, desegregated, white" classroom that Hooks (1994) experienced where she was not welcome to be a critical thinker (3–4). This imbalance of power and colonialism of knowledge led eventually to dehumanization. Failing to attend to religious perspectives of non-Christian students, who are legitimately admitted to the seminary, cannot be justified as sacrificing mutuality for teaching particularity. This is a matter related to humanization and liberation. When such an exclusion happens, this is a violation of "educational justice"—that education should be for all who are present in the room and should enable them to be the subjects of learning and thinking. A conundrum we encounter here is an irony between openness and justice. In this model, openness and justice do not go together easily. When the seminary practices openness, there inevitably follows

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6   These three models are also compatible with the stages described in Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook's "An Interreligious Transformation Continuum." Her "inclusivist/religious tolerance" stage is aligned with the monoreligious model. The "compliant" stage and the "pluralist" stage are similar to the multireligious model, and the "redefining" stage and the "transformed/interfaith community" stage align with the interreligious model. See Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *God beyond Borders: Interreligious Learning among Faith Communities* (Kujawa-Holbrook 2014, pp. 168–70).

the issue of (educational) justice; but the seminary cannot push justice too much, because it cannot give up its primary mission—Christian formation and education.

4.2. Betwixt and between

Compared to the monoreligious model, the primary strength of the multireligious model is its willingness to perceive other religious worlds as important parts of Christian formation. In terms of the presence of the religious other in the community, there is little difference. This model does not radically increase the presence of the religious other on campus, nor does it provide any solutions for the conundrum that appeared above. And this model has its own complex issues, which includes a case that, even though the seminary offers various strategic programs (such as broad course requirements, immersive programs, interreligious formation classes, etc.) because of curricular and financial restrictions, students cannot participate in all of them nor can the school require students to participate in all of them. Thus, whether intended or not, the seminary often ends up offering only a limited multireligious education to students, which unavoidably creates other issues.

One of these issues is that multireligious education may become a token in the curriculum. Roozen (2012) points out that requiring one or two courses is "nice, but that can become the excuse for ignoring multifaith issues and practices in the rest of the curriculum" (102). Another issue is the implicit educational message which this restricted curriculum communicates. Offering only limited chances for learning other religious worlds may translate into the message: *Multireligious education is only somewhat important.* Because of the limitations of this model, Clooney (2013) criticizes it, saying it "would at best have minimal impact, and at worst give the impression that with respect to other religions, superficiality suffices" (325). I agree. Besides, the seminary's various programs for multireligious education are still designed primarily for Christian students in the community, once again leaving us with an issue of educational justice.

To overcome the first two problems, scholars suggest a "cross-curricular" approach. Roozen (2012) asks, "Wouldn't it be better to incorporate a multifaith perspective in all or most of a seminary's foundational courses?" (102). As those who coined the term "the cross-curricular approach," Mary C. Boys and Scott C. Alexander (Boys and Alexander 2012) also suggest that seminaries create a curriculum "through which subject-specific implications of ministry in multifaith contexts would be considered in all courses" (68). Clooney (2013) unpacks this idea more with his expertise in comparative theology. He contends that "comparative theological learning" ought to be conducted as "an ordinary part of theological education," not as an appendix (322, 325). These scholars have in common the desire to include comparative learning across the curriculum. Generally speaking, this approach seems quite feasible because similar practices are already being carried out in many seminaries. In my institution, for example, race and gender/sexuality discourses are central, and faculty members are encouraged to include them in all classes.

Nevertheless, enacting such seismic curricular changes will entail significant challenges. First, not many professors are trained to teach their subjects in a religiously comparative way nor as students themselves did they experience such teaching. Clooney suggests that comparative teaching (not comparative-religious teaching) is what professors are already trained to do in their own areas, so they would need some extra guidance at first but would not need to acquire any additional skillsets (325). However, another religion is a whole new world with a whole new language. Comparative theology is also a particular form of epistemology—that is, a special skill—which scholars need to learn and practice. Thus, an enormous expenditure of time and effort will be required for professors to become well-prepared. Also, it is questionable whether or not all professors would accept comparative theology as the most effective, preferable, and even necessary way to teach their own subject. Some may also ask if we can really teach all subjects in the seminary within a theologically comparative format and if that is the best way to teach them.

Moreover, where would students of other religious backgrounds be located in the community and the classroom? When an interest in learning other religions increases and an effort is made in

earnest, a student whose religion is brought into the classroom as an object to learn is also sitting in the classroom as another learner. One typical danger here is that the student is expected to be a guide or expert in his or her religion. Such an expectation might be alright occasionally but becomes problematic when the student's willingness is taken for granted, his or her particular perspective of that own religion is generalized, and that expectation takes away the student's role as another learner.

In a deeper sense, a conundrum we encounter here lies in an irony of the boundary that religious others in the community would experience. For example, when the seminary, as a Christian institute, expands its conversation to a local Jewish community outside the seminary, Jewish students *in* the seminary are in a tricky situation because they are confused about which direction they need to face—toward the Jews outside the seminary or toward the Christians inside the seminary who are looking at them (the Jewish seminarians) as if they are looking at the Jews outside the seminary? Likewise, when Jewish religious texts are brought into the classroom, Jewish students are neither fully insiders nor outsiders of the seminary. There arises the impulse to "other" such students by asking, "Can you explain . . . ?" In the monoreligious model, their religious identity was not much-recognized, and that was a problem for it meant conditional welcoming. In the multireligious model, it can be a problem when their religious identity is recognized, for it may mean they are unfairly othered.

4.3. Capacity and Identity

The interreligious model overcomes the problems of the multireligious model in at least three ways. First, it most fully achieves educational justice by actively inviting the religious other into the community as another subject and affirming mutual interaction and learning. The other is that it overcomes the restrictions that the multireligious model has—time and money—as it enables interreligious learning in the daily life of the community (although it would require intensive and intentional efforts). This change also overcomes another limitation of the cross-curricular method, especially Clooney's one, which relies heavily on intertextual learning. This model would complement rather than nullify the cross-curricular method by providing more opportunities of "direct engagement" with religious others in the seminary.

Yet the interreligious model also encounters multiple challenges. First, there is a significant challenge of *capacity*. It is in question whether a Christian seminary has sufficient human, material, and financial resources to embody this model justly. It seems highly challenging to educate these non-Christian students using predominantly Christian faculty members. Also, the curriculums forged for Christian formation cannot be quickly changed to embrace all students to be subjects of education in a true sense. A second challenge is *decentralization.* When religious others are not "guests" anymore but legitimate co-creators of the community, decentralization of Christianity in the seminary is essential and inevitable. Christian norms, values, and teachings now cannot and should not have any privilege or unexplained authority over those of other religious traditions. The seminary thus encounters a moment in which it must ask how much the community wants to, or can, share power and space in every aspect of the seminary with their colleagues of other religions. Third, the classroom encounters a challenge of *teaching*, and this is related to the nature of the classroom with religious diversity. Religious diversity in the classroom is not merely the presence of multiple religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Judaism, but "religious people" whose religious identities are individually different from one another. The arrangement of their religious identities is *discursive*—irregular and unstructured—reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) rhizomatic relationship of "and, and, and" (8–9). In this situation, if the seminary pursues the interreligious model, teaching encounters problems of what to teach (content), how to teach (method), and what to achieve (objective), because participants come from different places, have different understandings of their religions and worlds, and have different value systems.

The first two challenges and the last one are connected. The questions they raise are basically these: With still predominantly Christian resources, what and how can we teach and form these diverse students? What knowledge do we want them to gain and produce in this place? These questions are not necessarily unsolvable issues. For example, dialogical pedagogy can be highly effective because,

as Freire (2000) reminds, dialogue can deconstruct the privileged state of the dominant and transform the nature of the organization to be *organic*. Thus, dialogical education will be able to deconstruct the privileged state of Christian knowledge in the seminary and catalyze decentralization of Christianity in various ways. Using dialogue will also justify that the seminary with a predominantly Christian faculty offers education for non-Christians, for this pedagogy does not assume that educators know everything we need to learn (Freire and Macedo 1995, p. 379). A conundrum we encounter in this model is therefore not necessarily how to overcome those challenges but questions of *institutional identity*: Who are we? Who do we want to be? Can we be what we want to be? An institutional identity is no problem if the Christian seminary becomes an interreligious seminary, explicitly decentralizing its Christian culture and body, and establishing its mission as being primarily teaching knowledge and skills for interreligious competencies. However, it becomes an issue when the seminary actively recruits other religious students and pursues interreligious engagement but still maintains a Christian identity in culture, system, and curriculum.

5. Conclusions

So far, this article has called attention to the current context of theological education with religious others in the US. Apparently, not all seminaries are experiencing becoming multireligious. However, a significant number of seminaries already have the presence of religious others and offer courses where students from different religions can learn together. According to the ATS data, it is also likely that more seminaries will experience this situation sooner or later. For this emerging situation, this research has first attempted to theorize how seminaries respond differently by revising the models developed by van der Ven and Ziebertz. And then it has offered what conundrums each model encounters. Based on the discussions suggested, one may understand that the interreligious model offers most just, relevant and preferable education to those who are living in multireligious society today. One may also think that the interreligious model is the way to which all seminaries should move forward. This may be right if we are allowed to imagine Christian seminaries as freely as possible. However, we should remember that Christian seminaries are historical entities that are bound by many concrete factors. It does not mean that seminaries cannot choose the interreligious model, but it means that this model would be possible when the seminary has enough capacity, understanding, and support to decentralize/de-Christianize and transform itself immediately to be fully interreligious. In this respect, that some seminaries prefer the multireligious to the interreligious model is hardly surprising, for changing an institution's mission, curriculum, faculty, financial resource, and so forth, is undoubtedly challenging.

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