

# *A Holistic Model of Engagement*

## *Theological Literacy, Education, and Libraries*

CHRISTOPHER A. ROGERS, MUNDELEIN SEMINARY/UNIVERSITY OF SAINT MARY OF THE LAKE

**S**t. Augustine's often-analyzed dictum in Book XIII of his *Confessions*—*pondus meum amor meus*, generally translated as “my weight is my love”—conveys a concept of love not as a weight or burden to be borne, but as one's own weight or selfhood by which they are directed, moved, and transformed. Understanding this formulation requires delving into the field of ancient theoretical science, the pre-Newtonian conception of gravity in particular. Augustine illustrates his familiarity with classical physics in this passage in referencing the precept that each of the elements that comprised the cosmos—air, fire, water, and earth—had a proper realm to which it belonged, a natural place toward which “a body by its weight tends to move.” Fire tends to move upwards, a stone downwards, Augustine noted. “They are acted upon by their respective densities, they seek their own place” (*Confessions* 13.9.10).<sup>1</sup>

Augustine's interest in adopting these prevailing cosmological tenets was not so much to identify or explicate the physical processes of causation in the material world as it was to apply these principles in a teleological manner to an explanation of the movement of objects through space in terms of their end (*telos*), design, or purpose they served. The significance of weight for a body rested not in its upward

or downward movement but in its following the direction that was intended for it—its own place or the place proper to it. Thus Augustine writes, “Weight is like a force within each thing that seems to make it strain toward its proper place” (*Expositions of the Psalms* 29.2.10). Moreover, objects which are not in their intended position become “restless. Once they are in their ordered position, they are at rest.” Achieving this rest Augustine therefore equated with order or stability. Rest is defined as a place or destination, the end for which a body’s movement was intended. Unrest, on the other hand, was indicative of an absence of proper order, the unrealized natural movement of a body to its final and purposed end (*Confessions* 13.9.10).

Augustine’s ultimate concern, of course, was not the movement of inert physical bodies across space but the disposition of one’s own self or soul, and his genius lay in his ability to apply these theoretical constructs of physics to the human person in relation to God. “My weight is my love,” he wrote in concluding this passage from the *Confessions*. “Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me” (13.9.10). Love was the agent, principle, or force for Augustine that ordered and moved human beings to their proper and natural place of rest. He expresses in a similar vein that “the weight of bodies is, as it were, their love, whether carried downwards by gravity or upwards by their lightness. For the body is carried by its weight wherever it is carried, just as the soul is carried by its love” (*De civitate Dei* 11.28). In Augustine’s theological anthropology, all beings hold a fierce desire for their own proper place and order, and for human beings that place and order is determined by their love. Love in this sense is a principle of movement: we move physically or mentally in the direction we tend—toward the beloved, the object(s) we love or desire. Augustine cautioned at length of the dangers of being displaced or misdirected by improper, inordinate, and disordered loves, “our love of lower things” or impermanent and fleeting goods. Human life was a pilgrimage toward one’s ultimate destination, which for Augustine could only be life with God. “You gathered me together from the state of disintegration in which I had been fruitlessly divided,” he exclaimed. “I turned from unity in you to be lost in multiplicity” (*Confessions* 2.1.1). Only God’s love and love of God could provide the wholeness, direction, place of rest, and order one sought and was intended to receive. To love in this manner is to move toward God who awaits us. “You stir [us] to take pleasure in praising you,” Augustine proclaimed in the first paragraph of his *Confessions*, “because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (1.1).

## *Augustine and Theological Literacy*

How does one move from a consideration of Augustinian anthropology to an exploration of methods and approaches to literacy in theological education in the twenty-first century? And what critical roles should theological libraries and librarians take in contributing toward and advocating these pedagogical principles and practices? The objective of this chapter is to illustrate the ways in which the movements of the self or soul in pursuit of the finality of God's purpose and love can serve as an apt model for the literacies fundamental to becoming theologically adept and astute. It is also to address some of the means by which theological librarianship can more fruitfully participate in and foster the development of these literacies for its students. There are two movements at work in the process outlined by Augustine that at first glance might seem paradoxically opposite. The first concerns the direction and trajectory toward which we are naturally moving to an intended end—a movement which must inevitably move one from their initial location to a new and more proper place and therefore must also take that person beyond or outside of their original selves toward another place and self where they will find their truest rest and purpose. This necessarily engages a person in theological education as *transformation*, which will be discussed as a key aspect of theological literacy. The second movement requires our human *will and commitment* to adhere to, and not place obstacles in the way of, the direction that is set before us. Augustine wrote passionately of this challenge grounded in his own life experiences. "I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you" (*Confessions* 10.27.38), which conveys the sense of a choice or decision to be made. Whereas one's loving is a given, the object of one's love is not. "Love as much as you like," Augustine counseled, "but take care what you love" (*Expositions of the Psalms* 31[2].5). The movement toward the love of God as our intended place of rest requires a concerted act of the will in opposition to other loves one might pursue. These two movements together should be considered essential to becoming theologically literate in the context of formal theological education in our times: *the movement of transformation* beyond one's initial selfhood and *the movement of commitment and fidelity* toward attaining one's ultimate intended end. It is these dual objectives that distinguish theological literacy and education from all other academic endeavors—what the Catholic theologian David Tracy (2002, 15) has described as the systematic bringing together of "action and thought, academy and church, faith and reason, the community of inquiry and the community of commitment and faith."

The need to reconsider the meaning and purpose of theological education and literacy becomes especially imperative in light of a 2015 Lilly Endowment-funded project entitled *Theological Education Between the Times* that sought, through a series of consultations, the assessments from nearly sixty theological educators across a wide and deeply diverse spectrum of institutions and faith traditions on the current state of theological education and its hopes and expectations for the future. The project's guiding precept characterized being "between the times" in relation to the dramatic changes occurring in schools, churches, and the wider society, pointing to "a time of transition from one prevailing paradigm in theological education to another." The project also identified the "professional model" of theological education, which stressed the formation of ministers as professionals with the requisite skills and knowledge in the standard theological disciplines, as having been the prevailing pedagogical norm for more than a century. That "professional constellation of institutions, ideas, and individual life courses is breaking up," the study contends, and "it is not yet clear what will replace it." What is needed in a time of rapid and profound cultural change is the capacity to discern anew "signs of God's activity" and work in the world, enabling us to craft creative and faithful responses and leading us to new forms of discipleship (Smith, Jewell, and Kang 2018, 1-9).

The project's participants did not come to any conclusions about one model or vision of theological education that should be the guiding *telos* for all. This chapter also does not seek to hold forth a blueprint for theological education and literacy to which all institutions in our sharply multivalent culture should ascribe. My viewpoints are in many respects representative of my experiences as the director of a theological library and faculty member in church history at a seminary of the Roman Catholic Church—the University of Saint Mary of the Lake—whose principal stated mission is to "prepare candidates for the diocesan priesthood" and to provide "initial, post-graduate or ongoing formation for priests and those who collaborate with them in ministry." Formation as a crucial aspect of preparation for ministry, as others have noted, tends in its emphasis to set Roman Catholic seminaries apart from their Protestant counterparts. Within the Catholic tradition, theological education itself is defined as a process of formation. As expressed in the United States' Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) *Program for Priestly Formation*, "Formation, as the Church understands it, is not equivalent to a secular sense of schooling or, even less, job training. Formation is first and foremost cooperation with the grace of God" (USCCB 2006, 28). A related document from the USCCB (2001) explains how, when "moved by that grace... we make ourselves available to God's work of transformation. And that making ready a place for the Lord to dwell in us and transform us we call formation." Augustine, as bishop to his fourth-century North African churches, shared similar concerns about the need to

prepare able and dedicated pastors.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore perhaps not coincidental that both he and today’s American Catholic leadership have identified formation as the key to readying persons for pastoral ministry and have defined this as a movement within the individual: one, toward cooperation or *fidelity* to the grace and love of God; and two, as *transformation* that becomes available through our movement toward faith and in turn leads us toward that “place” God intends for us. Formation of this nature identifies and seeks to build upon the “vital connection” between pastors’ identities and what they will do as ministers; it is “the continuing integration of identity and function for the sake of [the church’s] mission” (USCCB 2001).



Image 1: Mundelein Seminary student in the Saint John Paul II Chapel (© University of Saint Mary of the Lake, used with permission).

## *Literacy as Transformation*

A focus on transformation as a key component of a formational model of theological education and literacy points to an openness to inquiry, to genuine

conversation and dialogue with the abundance of voices past and present that we encounter, to an embrace of change through new possibilities, understandings, and experiences, to a willingness to let go of fears and apprehensions that inhibit us, and to full-fledged freedom of thinking. This broad conception of theological literacy invites a much more dynamic pedagogical participation among theological libraries and librarians, as it extends well beyond explications of information literacy in academic library pedagogy that emphasize knowledge and mastery of the fundamental tools, technologies, and resources necessary to access and produce written information. The critical thinking skills that are stressed as central to this pedagogy are those that enable students to coherently navigate and utilize the copious amounts of information at hand—designing appropriate search strategies, identifying and discerning proper sources, evaluating the reliability or quality of these sources, and using them effectively in making arguments and composing independent research. The ACRL’s paradigmatic *Framework for Information Literacy* (2016) does encourage innovation and openness in academic inquiry, particularly in its sixth conceptual “frame” where it advocates “Strategic Exploration” that is “nonlinear,” encourages “mental flexibility and creativity,” and utilizes divergent as well as convergent modes of thinking.

This standard is different in degree, however, from the claim by pedagogical philosopher Paulo Freire (1974), for example, that literacy should be an act of self-emancipation. Freire’s liberationist concerns seek to address the plight of those individuals and communities who have been heretofore embedded in oppressive sociopolitical environments and to utilize the methods of literacy as a means of lifting them out of their oppression. Although forged in an entirely different context, theological literacy in its ideal form should also be conceived as an emancipatory process by which one is moving beyond or out of embedded faith tradition, gaining new knowledge and modes of learning, developing a more profound self-identity, and taking responsibility for and trusting what one has newly come to know. Movement away from this embeddedness can in fact be viewed as a critical step in becoming theologically literate. Psychologist Robert Kegan (1994, 103–6) has claimed that, until recently, an individual’s embeddedness in their cultural environment ensured that they could function well on an “adolescent” level of moral consciousness; the uniformity and familiarity of their surroundings entailed that they did not need to expand developmentally beyond this. The rise of tremendous cultural diversity and heterogeneity with conflicting values concerning the most fundamental issues of human life has significantly altered the ability to remain comfortably embedded in our social milieus.

One’s faith traditions and religious life can often, of course, be an essential facet of one’s cultural embeddedness. How we arrive at an understanding of the meaning of our faith—of what it means to be a Christian—often develops within us

from our earliest formative experiences, much like learning a language. From countless daily encounters with what the church says and does, and from contact and involvement with others in our homes, churches, and broader communities, our embedded theological thinking is the *implicit* theology deeply in place that Christians live out in their daily lives. This includes the theological messages intrinsic to and communicated by praying, preaching, worshipping, hymn singing, liturgy, personal conduct, and social action—everything that people say and do in the name of their faith.

The ability to move beyond the innate or inherited religious practices, communities, relationships, values, understandings, and mores through which one was formed thus becomes a critical component in developing a more profound level of theological literacy or vibrant consciousness about one's life of faith. It is this probing, transformative, self-aware form of literacy that should be encouraged and cultivated in the context of theological education. For theological librarians and other educators who are tasked with teaching courses in theological research and writing, it is important to grasp that in order to teach students to research and write theologically they must first be fundamentally able to *think* theologically. This has been described by one recent text in theological education as the movement from an embedded to a deliberative mode of theological thinking—a skill or gift that is much more difficult to attain and can be more troubling or disturbing as well, as it generally involves moving beyond prior settled convictions and understandings. Our embedded theologies seem natural, familiar, and comfortable to us, and we carry them within us for years, often unquestioned and even unspoken. Situations can arise, however, or circumstances can change which lead us to a reconsideration of our previous theological suppositions and to subject these to serious re-analysis and reflection. This moves us into the transformative realm of deliberative theology, an understanding of our faith that emerges from the process of carefully reflecting upon embedded theological convictions or the implicit understandings enmeshed in the life of faith. Feelings, memories, and preconceptions are often set aside or reevaluated in order to discover new insights that our narrower and more intensely personal views might have inhibited. Deliberative theological thinking questions what had previously been taken for granted, pressing beneath the surface to examine alternative understandings, seeking that which is most satisfactory and reformulating the meaning of faith as clearly and coherently as possible (Stone and Duke 2006, 13–20).

How, then, does one acquire this level of transformational theological literacy? In one sense, it is already manifest in those who have elected to engage in formal theological education. This is a self-selected vast minority within our modern culture who, by enrolling in a theological course of study have for the most part identified themselves as having moved beyond their earlier embedded practices,

concepts, and customs and displayed a willingness or open-mindedness to progress toward a more deliberative theological mindset. I regularly teach courses in theological research and composition to first-year seminarians at Mundelein Seminary, and one of the first assignments that I generally request of them is to write a reflection paper that describes the nature, character, and sources of their embedded religious faith, and then to identify, if they can, a time or circumstance in their lives when they sensed themselves moving toward a more deliberative mode of theologizing. The occasions of this transformative movement vary to be sure. Some have written of a moment of trial or crisis that led to questions and doubts about their faith for which their embedded understandings had not fully prepared them or seemed inadequate. Others have described more of a gradual unfolding of an impulse within them or a conscientiousness that compels their efforts to seek a deeper understanding of their faith and to live out their Christian witness in well-informed and responsible ways, which has ultimately led to their following a calling to become priests. In whatever manner students may have arrived at this point, in all cases they share in this movement toward innovation and openness to new or different ways of thinking and seeing. I will often refer in my classes to the scriptural model of the apostle Paul, who wrote of himself and others in a highly authentic manner in 1 Corinthians 13:12, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.” These students’ election to move toward becoming more diligent and deliberative theological thinkers is a step toward seeing and understanding their lives of faith more clearly through deepening, broadening, enriching, and possibly revising their initial understandings by critical analysis concerning their character and adequacy. It is only the next step, however, in the lengthy and intricate movement toward attaining our ultimate end as people of faith—more fully knowing and being known by the divine.

Seminary students, as well as other Christian seekers, will often find themselves at different points along a continuum between the poles of embedded and deliberative theological thinking. Some may experience the shift toward a deliberative mode as a sharp or hard and conflicted break from their past embeddedness. More often, these two ways of thinking and being theologically merge together or overlap, and the boundaries between them can be difficult to discern or even indistinct. While theological students may have set themselves apart in their move toward the pole of deliberative thought, eschewing the tendency of most others to adhere more closely to the familiar, predictable, and desirable in our embedded thinking, they now face a daunting challenge and difficult work in moving further along this path. For one, those who set out in this direction don’t quite know where it may lead. They may hope and anticipate that it will be an enjoyable, meaningful, and inspiring experience, but that’s not a

certainty. Distancing oneself from embedded understandings of faith and subjecting these to searching examination can be an arduous and painful task. It tends to bring to an end, or at least lead to a diminishment of, our previous foundations and assurances that provided stability and cohesion and formed our self-identity—a disquieting experience of incertitude to which Christian mystics and theologians through the centuries referred in expressive and graphic imagery such as “a dark night of the soul” or a sojourn in the “wilderness” (Stone and Duke 2006, 20-5).

For those, then, who have chosen through their engagement in theological education to take on this challenging and transformative task, that which is needed foremost is a self-conscious receptivity to new thoughts and ideas that leads to participation in an extensive inherited conversation. This is at the heart of becoming engaged in the community of inquiry that defines academic education. To become educated, David Tracy (2002, 13-14) observes, is “to be freed to enter the conversation of all the living and dead.” Tracy further claims that, in order to genuinely enter this critical conversation, one must let go of whatever it is that has inhibited one from taking part before—a liberating process that allows us to truly listen and question, to enable our thoughts and opinions to be examined and tested, to discover fresh possibilities, and to encounter a myriad of novel understandings and experiences that become available when we are open to them.

Entry into this inherited conversation is especially vital in relation to theological literacy and education. The Christian tradition has thrived, developed, and adapted during all its centuries largely through its capacity to embrace an authentic, critical community of inquiry that informs and shapes it. Each generation is called upon to reconceive and re-form the tradition they have inherited in ever-changing circumstances that reflect and respond to their unique contexts. The ability to participate in this ongoing, perpetual conversation that extends well before and beyond us is thus a crucial part of deliberative or critical theological thinking. Those who are intent on some form of ministry or Christian service will be expected, in response to their calling, to provide a public witness or testimony of their faith, to contribute their part toward the conversation that defines and enfolds them. The theological understanding and Christian witness one attains through deliberative thinking is uniquely one’s own. Yet it is a faith and set of convictions deeply shared by others, addressing common themes and issues, and drawing upon a common stock of theological concepts and resources (the language of faith)—points of connection that enable others to identify and acknowledge one’s theology as distinctively “Christian.” One’s individual theologizing hence also bears the responsibility of contributing to the Christian faith and its people’s well-being, each person’s contribution enlivening and enriching the conversation as a whole.



Image 2: Mundelein Seminary students studying in McEssy Theological Resource Center (© University of Saint Mary of the Lake, used with permission).

## *Literacy as Engagement in an Extended Conversation*

To participate in and contribute to this conversation in the theological community of inquiry therefore requires first being informed and made knowledgeable *by* this conversation. Anglican theologian Alister McGrath (2017) has noted that “it is virtually impossible to do theology as if it had never been done before... [there is] always an element of looking over one’s shoulder to see how things were done in the past, and what answers were then given” in order to illumine and provide answers to current questions and issues. “To serve the community of today,” Karl Barth (1963, 42) expressed in similar fashion, “theology itself must be rooted in the community of yesterday.” Theological understanding and discourse are developed in conversation with prior sources that provide us with present resources, and the theological library becomes, to be sure, a central locus for this conversational encounter. Fundamental knowledge about these sources is not the final objective of deliberative theological thinking, however. Barth wrote in another place (2011, 216) that the founders of the faith, “in their seeking, questioning, confusion, and affliction... could challenge us to become founders *ourselves*, also responding to *our* time.” True participation in and contribution to the extended conversation

demands the appropriation of the sources one consults through an independent critical lens, or a *dynamic integration* between the sources studied and one's own creative thought whereby one can discern truth and meaning through engagement in the conversation while also seeking to discover and express one's authentic self relative to one's own personal context. The theological librarian, I would maintain, through courses, workshops, and individual conversations on theological research and literacy, is in a distinctive position in being able to guide students in identifying and then appropriating the sources they study in ways that integrate their independent, critical, and authentic thinking.

How, then, does one determine the appropriate conversation partners for one's particular form of deliberative theological thinking? The response to this question often leads to a highly personalized engagement within the extended theological conversation, and this is again an area in which theological library instructors can assist students in identifying their prior conversation partners as well as those with whom they they might engage in the present and future. Essays received from my seminary students on the sources of their embedded theologies have vividly, and not surprisingly, illustrated the significant influences of those close to them, family members both immediate and extended, in sharing and passing on the theological understandings gained from their own life experiences. This points to the larger truth that many, if not most, voices who might have something to contribute to this conversation are also never or barely heard outside their own immediate, very narrow sphere. A large-scale effort to rectify this yawning void has been undertaken in recent decades in embracing other voices of interpretation that had long been excluded from the theological conversation, transforming this into a more participatory, inclusive, and global dialogue among those who enter into it. The objective of theological literacy and education should be to continually expand the circle of conversation partners with which we engage, for limiting or restricting this is the nascent seminarian theologian's, and thus the church's, loss. Theological literacy requires an engagement with the horizons of Christian diversity across time, traditions, and cultures. It should be the objective of the theological librarian to expand these conversational horizons both through their personal interactions and consultations with students as well as through collection development practices that can provide and often introduce students to new voices and resources, enriching an ever-evolving theological discourse.

This essential pedagogical goal raises a unique curricular challenge for theological institutions in our current academic environment, however, in defining what makes a theological student literate. Theological education has traditionally sought to maintain a balance between what has been termed as *critical* (the ability to read and write about theological ideas, often in dialogue with non-theological methods and disciplines) and *practical* (utilizing theological ideas as a basis for

religious praxis) literacy, or what has also been described as the distinction between knowledge *about* and knowledge of *how* in relation to one's faith tradition. Yet this is an integrative balance facing increasing obstacles, whose plausibility and direction for the future of theological institutions is being questioned amid the challenges and possibilities of a rapidly pluralizing culture.<sup>3</sup>

Theological education in its recent Western context has characteristically been focused principally on the dimension of critical literacy—on knowledge *about* that presupposes but may only be loosely associated with knowledge of *how*. One reason for this can be discerned in John Paul II's encyclical letter *Fides et ratio* (1998), in which he famously proclaims, in his opening statement of greeting and blessing, the essential unity of faith and reason working together “like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of the truth... And God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth,” he writes, “in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.” On the one hand, the Christian tradition has sought through the centuries to identify and define itself over and against the conventions and norms of the prevailing socio-historical context. It has been attentive and responsive to the manifold cultural challenges to it, and it has sought to form faithful disciples who in certain respects transcend and are not defined by the cultures and societies in which they live. At the same time, however, Christian tradition seeks to make universal claims about itself as embodying a revelatory, objective truth that applies and is accessible to all peoples and cultures across time and space, as John Paul II acknowledged.

To make claims to universality of this nature that are persuasive and have relevance beyond an enclosed and private parochialism requires an engagement with the larger intellectual culture, and especially with the efforts of other disciplines and fields of study to identify objective, universal truths. Recently canonized Roman Catholic theologian John Henry Newman similarly stated it as his goal “to find the means, by which, the training of the mind and unity of [universal knowledge] understood as a good in itself, could be given life and power in a way that would be congruent also with the prescriptions of faith and obedience” (1996, 78-9, 89-90). This has largely defined critical theological literacy as well as the nature and standards of curricula in theological education in the modern era, as they have striven to dialogue with and be informed by intellectual currents such as Enlightenment philosophical rationalism, social-historical criticism, and the scientific method in arriving at similar or opposite truths. The theological disciplines have found their conversation partners primarily within the secular academic realm, through the literary-historical-critical methods of the modern humanities and social sciences, the critiques of modern analytic

philosophy, and, to a lesser degree, the methodologies of the natural sciences (Heim 2002, 59).

The ironic dilemma for theological education and literacy, as noted also in *Fides et ratio*, is that philosophy as well as other fields of study have in large part abandoned the belief in and search for universal truth. The academic community of inquiry, including literature, historical study, and the humanities and social sciences in general, have been reshaped by postmodern theory, which casts a shadow of cynicism if not outright negation upon any efforts at objectivity or universality and champions instead the culturally contextual, contingent, and localized character of all perspectives, actions, and developments. Religious studies scholars, for example, commonly draw a distinction between what is *real*—by which is meant particular experiences, practices, encounters, and beliefs that are not universally real but real *only for* local, circumscribed cultures or peoples—and what is *true*, which is determined unequivocally by empirical scientific or historical truth—e.g., that which occurs solely in naturalistic terms either through human agency or the operations of the natural world.

On this view, for the study of religion to be rigorously scientific and pure it must rid itself of all theological vestiges that are irredeemably tainted as being authoritarian, uncritical, and ideological.<sup>4</sup> From an opposing perspective, Orthodox theologian Vigen Guroian (2018, 17-20) speaks in a similar vein nonetheless of an “aggressive, monolithic secularism” that often rejects “transcendental reality, or at least regards the possibility that it exists as irrelevant to human endeavor... persuaded that the perfect or best of all possible worlds is a strictly human and historical project.” Postmodernity, he argues, is “the empty shell” of a desacralized Christianity “inhabited by alien ideologies” that have a “certain predilection for the unknown, or ‘secondary religiosity’, after which complete secularity follows.” The growing chasm between the academic interests and endeavors represented in departments of religious studies in colleges or universities and seminary programs of theological study often reflects this theoretical and polemical divide. Theological education today within institutions such as those in the Catholic tradition, whose principal goal is preparing students for ministry, can often find itself somewhat isolated within the broader academic community of inquiry in its adherence to the pursuit of ultimate, objective truths about God and human existence, including a fuller understanding of oneself in relation to God, as John Paul II described.<sup>5</sup>

## *Literacy as Formation for Leadership*

Where then does the future lie for theological education and the disciplines that comprise it? Can its character and priorities be reconceived in a post-Christian age in a way that enables it to maintain its engagement in and contributions to the wider public of intellectual inquiry and discourse while also preserving its unique objectives and purposes in educating men and women for ordained and lay leadership in Christian ministries? Twentieth-century Roman Catholic theologian Romano Guardini (1998) maintained that the Christian faith's response to this age should be to "take on a new decisiveness" that would "strip itself of all secularism, all analogies with the secular world, all flabbiness and eclectic mixtures," and that Christians would find revitalization through "being forced to distinguish [themselves] more sharply from a dominantly non-Christian ethos" (quoted in Guroian 2018, 20-1). Without, perhaps, moving quite to that extreme, other creative directions for theological education can be found through the identification and incorporation of new conversation partners with which it can be engaged, embracing and espousing certain of these intellectual and cultural trends without being wholly subsumed by them. This circles us back to the need in theological education for integration between practical or applied literacy and the more "academic" disciplines (i.e., biblical studies, ethics or moral theology, systematic or dogmatic theology, and church history) that have traditionally been ascribed to critical modes of literacy and which have tended to take primacy of place in the theological curriculum. As the bonds of the theological-critical disciplines to the academic community of inquiry have been fragmented through the postmodern turn, this may be an opportune moment to reassert academic theology's traditional ties to the formational or spiritual emphases that define theological education uniquely apart from its counterparts in the academy. "Theological education crunches souls and moves hearts as much as it informs minds," observes Daniel O. Aleshire (2018, 26). Karl Barth's (1963) counsel that theological work can only be done "in the indissoluble unity of prayer and study" is illuminating in this context. "Prayer without study would be empty," he observed, and "study without prayer would be blind." The unifying nature of theological education is also pointed to in *Fides et ratio*, in John Paul II's description of the innate human desire and yearning for both the *knowledge* and *love* of God—and ourselves.

This unity of academic and spiritual dimensions should therefore be an essential feature of holistic programs in theological education, with each playing an equivalent role in the transformative experience of students. Knowledge about the various theological disciplines, however sophisticated and profound, cannot be an end in itself for those whose ultimate objective is to be a spiritual leader in their

own faith communities. Skills in critical thinking and literacy should be purposed toward attaining a practical fluency that enables students to understand and respond to the spiritual and psychological needs they will encounter, to be able to stand before a congregation and speak on hard matters or stand beside a family in times of grief and sorrow or be pastorally present at the sacred moments and experiences in people's lives. Augustine maintained that the ability of a pastoral leader "derives more from his devotion to prayer than his dedication to oratory... by praying for himself and for those he is about to address, he must become a man of prayer before becoming a man of words" (*De doctrina christiana* 4.15.32). Education in the traditional theological disciplines supports and is supported by spiritual formation and practice in the means by which one's education and formation are to be enacted in the ministries of the church.

In reconceiving programs for theological literacy in the current postmodern and post-Christian context, one should therefore consider transformative engagement with those disciplines, courses of study, and conversation partners that will be most likely to benefit and enhance the formation of students toward religious leadership and service in their communities. Theological libraries and librarians should be accorded an important place in this discussion, as it will enable them to better guide their collection development practices in these new directions as well as craft their education and instruction programs in ways that take into account the newer research resources and foci for study in pastoral leadership. I will note here some of the recent curricular emphases that have been identified in reshaping theological education in ways that can give it new meaning, vitality, and relevance in dialogue with the larger twenty-first century world.

One is a renewed focus on ecumenical studies in its interdenominational or intra-Christian dimensions. The massive trends toward globalization in modern society and the resulting tremendously diverse culture in which we live presents challenge and opportunity for the Christian tradition. In the face of such frequently non-Christian diversity, it becomes increasingly important for Christians of different faith communities to be able to perceive and understand themselves in more unified ways that bridge the tensions and oppositions that have long differentiated them—to resemble more the church catholic and universal it has historically professed and aspired to be. Theological education can assist toward that end by modeling in its curricula, to the extent possible, the objective of comprehensive access to the full breadth and depth of the Christian faith's resources across time, geographic space, and traditions. Theological literacy in this ecumenical vein mandates a fundamental level of knowledge about Christian belief and practice as it is understood and carried forth in the various other communions of the Christian church. Pastoral leaders should be able to better comprehend and value the full richness of faith expressions that comprise the universal church, so

that they may be well-positioned to interpret and apply these expressions in relation to their own faith communities and also be more equipped to guide their church members to those Christian resources and practices that will best assist them in their faith development, even if these may be outside of their own particular traditions strictly speaking (Heim 2002, 63-4). As an example of this ecumenical thrust, the University of St. Mary of the Lake, while a seminary of the Roman Catholic Church, makes a concerted effort also to educate and familiarize its students with regard to the traditions, liturgies, and theologies of the Eastern Orthodox Church in its various historical manifestations. The seminary also encourages student and faculty participation through joint coursework in a local ecumenical association, the Northside Chicago Theological Institute, comprised of five seminaries that seek to include a variety of theological perspectives: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Jewish. The seminar offered in the fall of 2019 was on “Global Theologies: How the Growth of the Church within the Majority World is Affecting Theology.”

A curricular focus on interfaith relations affords, similarly to ecumenism, an opportunity for future pastoral leaders to forge more vital and meaningful connections and conversations with the complex societies in which they'll be ministering. The globalization of modern culture elicits a pressing need to be able to explain one's faith traditions to an increasingly non-Christian population. The relationship of Christianity to other religious faiths is a convoluted one, and schools of theology today will differ as to thcone proper methods and approaches to follow. In all cases, however, theological literacy should entail the capacity to communicate a Christian witness for one's faith to those who do not share it. To be effective in this type of communication requires sufficient knowledge of these other faiths and their stance toward or critiques of Christianity to be able to conduct an authentic dialogue that is not one-sided but interactive, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial in gaining an understanding of one another. Seminary degree program standards of education have been introduced that require ministerial competency “in the multi-faith and multicultural context of contemporary society.” Here, too, theological libraries and librarians can assume a prominent role in adopting collections practices and implementing instructional programs that strive to familiarize and educate students more fully concerning the resources of the universal church and non-Christian faiths. In a time of notable budget austerities for both seminaries and their libraries, it can be a daunting challenge to find a means for allocating significant funds for resources outside of one's own institutional traditions, beliefs, and practices, but efforts should be made nonetheless. Becoming well-informed about other faith traditions through interreligious pedagogy and literacy can help in forming the mature intellectual and spiritual identities of a Christian minister, enabling one to better define,

understand, deepen, and live out one's own faith commitments and sense of vocation within a religiously plural society (Alexander 2018, 49, 58-9).<sup>6</sup>

A key element in developing a more profound ecumenical and interreligious literacy in theological education is an expansion of our conceptions and representations concerning what constitutes Christianity and the Christian church in the present era. The shift of Christianity's pre-eminence and influence to the global South and East (Africa, Latin and South America, Asia)—or the “majority world”—has been well-documented. To what extent theological literacy and education should seek to address and incorporate this reality in its programs of study is much less certain and often not significantly considered. Yet as the churches of these regions continue to generate a profusion of theological literature and scholarship that conveys the unique languages, conceptions, and practices of their faith, theological institutions in North America should at least take up the question of whether the contributions of these faith communities are to be included in the resources and curricula that are offered in redefining what it means to be theologically literate. One possible connective force in this context, justifying a greater emphasis on study of these global Christianities, would be the resonances as well as dissimilarities found between these faith communities and the racially and ethnically-oriented Christian communities in North America (African, Hispanic, Asian) that are increasingly well-represented in theological education. While often embodying very different backgrounds and cultural identities than the emerging churches on other continents, many seminary students from these as well as other faith communities might find studies of this nature informative and insightful in presenting a broader portrait of world Christianities today, especially in connection with their intended ministries in local churches that mirror this racial and/or ethnic composition. Multicultural faith perspectives that enable North American theological schools to engage in conversation and bridge their religious and socio-cultural distances with the global Christian church may soon become an important facet of theological education and literacy (Heim 2002, 64-5).

Beyond wholesale curricular changes in these newer areas of theological study, which are often difficult given the lack of resources and opportunity in an already over-extended seminary curriculum, there are other programmatic means of introducing ecumenical, interreligious, and global aspects of Christianity to seminary students. Mundelein Seminary, for example, has in the past couple of years convened on its campus the National Muslim Catholic Dialogue conference, as well as more recently held a symposium of African Catholic theologians on the topic of “Joseph Ratzinger and the Future of African Theology.” An important place for theological librarianship also exists in this context in augmenting collections in these specialized areas that are likely not too well-established, as well as conducting workshops or other instructional sessions on the use of these

resources. The ability to pool together and utilize emerging technologies to provide for a genuine global sharing of open access library resources would be an additional invaluable contribution of Western theological institutions and libraries toward conjoining the worldwide Christian church in unity and fellowship, the growth and maturation of which in its vibrancy and fullness would belong, and be of benefit, to all.



Image 3: Conference on Joseph Ratzinger and the Future of African Theology, sponsored by the Center for Scriptural Exegesis, Philosophy and Doctrine at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in collaboration with the Benedict XVI Institute for Africa, October 17-19, 2019 (© University of Saint Mary of the Lake, used with permission).

Another very different avenue of curricular development that has the potential to redefine theological education and literacy is to be found within the disciplines of the hard or natural sciences. The complex relationship of religion or faith to the various fields of science has witnessed an explosion of interest and written scholarship in recent years, and this is certainly a burgeoning and dynamic area for collection development and literacy instruction in theological libraries. How the concepts and theories of the sciences can be integrated into formal programs in

theological studies is a challenge that has not been fully resolved. To the extent this is feasible, the key pedagogical questions must concern how these scientific insights can better equip one for pastoral leadership in the local life of the church. Mundelein Seminary, for example, recently received through its rector and president Fr. John Kartje a grant from the John Templeton Foundation to encourage scientific literacy and the integration of theology and science in the formation of Catholic seminarians. The Templeton Grant was awarded through the Science in Seminaries Initiative at John Carroll University, whose express goal is to “recover and reintegrate the tradition of teaching scientific literacy in the seminary intellectual formation program.” It is an initiative that clearly re-envision the purposes and character of theological education in our contemporary context, anticipating “a clergy prepared to engage the bigger questions of science that are foundational for effective evangelization in a scientific and technological world.” Mundelein Seminary also aspires to build upon the Templeton project through the endowment of a Center for Faith and Science.

Of course, the scientific disciplines are tremendously varied in their nature and purposes and thus in their suitability for incorporation into theological education. Studies in the cognitive or neurophysiological sciences as applied to psychological insights for pastoral counseling are one possible candidate, as are evolutionary psychology in relation to matters of personal and social behavior and more refined anthropological conceptions of what it means to be human through an analysis of ethical issues like artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and biotechnologies. Engagement in current cutting-edge scientific debates about the origins of life and the universe that hold theological import might also be beneficial in preparing students for openly discussing the intricacies of these ideas and concepts within their congregations (Heim 2002, 65–6).

The various disciplinary and curricular emphases outlined briefly here can be a means of reconceiving and reinterpreting theological education and literacy in meaningful and compelling ways in the postmodern era. Undergirding each of these potential new academic engagements, however, is formation for theological and pastoral leadership as the lynchpin by which all pedagogical considerations should be measured. Schools of theology have traditionally viewed as their principal task the education in critical literacy that has been discussed, in close consort with the broader academic community of inquiry. Practical literacy, or the molding of one’s spirituality and character to become a spiritual leader in the church, was largely perceived as something to be attained and nurtured through one’s own faith community either prior to or as a part of ministerial service. It is one thing, however, to be well-educated and knowledgeable in the theological disciplines; it is another altogether to have not only a mind but a heart and spirit for Christian pastoral leadership. Daniel Aleshire (2018, 32–6) presents this as a

distinctively Christian *habitus*, a way of perceiving, responding to, and being in the world that involves both patterns of thinking and living. This type of personal formation, he contends, should be central, and not co-curricular or secondary, in programs of theological education. Augustine likewise asserted that the pastor's "way of life becomes, in a sense, an abundant source of eloquence" (*De doctrina christiana* 4.29.61). Theological literacy and education are purposed to equip students vocationally to be steadfast Christian leaders for a lifetime. Theological institutions that do not place a strong emphasis on formation as an integral component of the educational program and its resources, including those of the theological library, are abdicating an essential aspect of this preparation, whose objective should be to form not only educated but *committed* and *faithful* leaders of the Christian church. Informed theological reasoning and reflection, sacramental and liturgical life, and spiritual formation should be conceived as mutually interdependent aspects of the one reality as a Christian minister that connects the whole person with God—to be "grafted onto Christ," as the Catholic bishop Robert Barron (2020) writes, "and hence drawn into the very dynamics of the inner life of God."

## *Literacy as an Act of Will and Love*

This brings us back full circle to the second element of St. Augustine's characterization of weight as love that I cited earlier in the chapter. Augustine was very cognizant of the difficulties in avoiding temptations and distractions that might inhibit one on the course toward attaining their ultimate end of happiness in God. To reach this end requires our abiding will and commitment to persevere and move forward in the face of numerous deterrent forces. He often characterized one's efforts to fully love and become one with God as a "pilgrimage" that was demanding and strenuous but also a destination of complete fulfillment for those who remained true. The key to success on this pilgrim's path was placing love of God above all other lesser loves—our love of good and beautiful but "lower things." A principal concern of Augustine's, in setting forth the character of this pilgrimage, rested again in preparing skilled ministers of the church. In *De doctrina christiana*, he stated forthrightly in the last paragraph of this text his purpose in writing it: "to set out to the best of my poor ability, not what sort of pastor I am myself, lacking many of the necessary qualities as I do, but what sort the pastor should be who is eager to toil away, not only for his own sake but for others, in the teaching of sound, that is of Christian, doctrine" (4.31.64).

Augustine illustrates in this passage the importance in Christian formation for ministry of being educated in correct Christian doctrine, sufficiently to be able to

teach it to others, which would seem to correspond largely with aspects of the critical literacy in theological education that have been discussed. Preceding or providing the foundation for this knowledge acquisition, however, are two crucial personality or character traits noted by Augustine: 1) an *eagerness* or *love* for the ministry that perseveres no matter the hardships; and 2) a willingness or commitment to *serve others* in a community of faith. For Augustine, theological literacy and education must be about more than the knowledge that comes through engagement in the theological community of inquiry and a facility with the discourses, methods, and sources of theological study if it is to attain its truest end of forming persons for ministry. In my personal experience as a theological library director and faculty member, I have observed that those who attend theological schools often do so with the explicit intent of being formed to be faithful leaders in communities of faith. The knowledge they gain through their studies they yearn to apply as teachers and preachers, worship and liturgical leaders, counselors, caregivers, and healers to congregants searching and praying for answers to life's most pressing questions.

The critical question, then, for programs in theological education and literacy concerns how they can assist and guide students in this endeavor, effectively forming them for the ministries in which they will engage. And how can theological libraries and librarians meaningfully contribute to this extensive and far-reaching formational process, which admittedly lies outside the purview of most academic library objectives? Augustine's counsel in *De doctrina christiana* provides us with a basic twofold method. The first step is to encourage and cultivate the eagerness and love for ministry they are seeking for their lives, to nurture them in being formed spiritually as Christian leaders-to-be, to enliven within them and build upon a vibrant personal faith while also challenging them to strive toward a deeper, more prayerful life of faith, and ultimately to enable them toward full experience of that profound love of God displacing all other loves that Augustine stressed as necessary to reach our pilgrimage's end. Attaining this level of spiritual maturity and wholeness is not a simple or easy development; it often demands some form of personal conversion and renewal on the part of seminarians. Augustine wrote frequently of Christian salvation in a discourse of health and healing—a restoration from “this devastating disease in the souls of men and women” whose cure required a cleansing of our transgressions (*Expositions of the Psalms* 18[2].15). It must also be a continual healing process, for “the mind itself, in which by nature our reason and intelligence abide,” is “weakened by certain darkening and long-standing faults, too weak to cling in enjoyment to the unchangeable light (of God).” It had to be renewed, strengthened, and healed day after day to become capable of such a blessed state, which meant “to be steeped in faith and cleansed” in order to “more confidently proceed toward the truth” (*De civitate Dei* 11.2.2).

In Augustinian theology, our ability to move in love toward God, in the face of our weaknesses and incapacities, depends upon God's initial movement in love toward us. We could not love God, Augustine acknowledged, "if he had not first loved us and made us lovers of him. For love comes from him." And again he wrote, "Man has no capacity to love God except from God" (*The Trinity* 15.31). According to this conception, God's love for us stirs deeply in us a desire to more fully *love* and *know* God. In this we see the integration of love and knowledge, or faith and the rational mind. Faith seeks understanding; "yearning is the bosom of the heart... we shall understand if we extend our yearning as far as we can" (*Homilies on the Gospel of John* 40.10).<sup>7</sup> To grasp what is true, we must continually seek to expand upon our longings for God's love. For Augustine, the formation of pastors for ministry, and thus the character of theological education, should embrace a wide range of our godly desires and yearnings, each of which sheds its own light on the truth of God. "This is what the divine scriptures do for us," he proclaimed, "what the assembly of the people does for us, what the celebration of the sacraments, holy baptism, hymns in praise of God, and my own preaching do for us; all this yearning is not only sown and grows in us, but it also increases to such a capacity that it is ready to welcome what eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor has it entered the heart of man," to be able to receive, in other words, the unanticipated and unforeseen gifts of God's grace that are open to those who strive in these ways to grow in knowledge and love of him (*Homilies on the Gospel of John* 40.10).

In Augustine's model for preparing the pastorate we thus observe the coalescence of critical and practical literacy—of knowledge *about* and knowledge of *how*—each of which serves the unified pedagogical goal of interconnecting one's knowledge and love of God. Only as we develop and refine our longing for God in the many ways we can, intellectually as well as through formational practice, can we mature in our knowledge, experience, and understanding of God and his designs for us. It is this interconnective mode of theological education, an interwoven effort or fusion that connects the whole person to God in knowledge and love, which I would suggest as a means of revitalization for theological literacy, and theological librarianship's participation in this, in a postmodern culture that largely spurns the objectives and aspirations it holds.

There is one other essential aspect of a renewed theological literacy implicit in Augustine's description of the various means of devotion through which we seek to meet our desire for God. Other than the study of Scripture, all of those practices he cites—gathering for worship, celebration of the sacraments, congregational singing, and preaching—do not occur in isolation but within a communal context. This hearkens back to Augustine's second measure in *De doctrina christiana* of what should define a qualified pastor—that is, a commitment to serving others. A

Christian leader's knowledge and love of God can only be truly formed to reach its intended end through commitment to a communion of the faithful in which one lives out, builds upon, and sustains one's own faith through serving their needs. Augustine often commented in parallel terms of our need to grow in the knowledge and love of God and neighbor. "So it is God," he wrote, "who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when he has been given to him" (*The Trinity* 15.31). The maturation of our faith, love, and understanding is predicated in large part on engagement in forms of grace that are communal in nature. Augustine cautioned that love of God could not be superseded by love of neighbor. "Love of God comes first and the manner of loving him is clearly laid down, in such a way that everything else flows into it." Every human being "should be loved on God's account, and God should be loved for himself" (*De doctrina christiana* 1.26.27, 1.27.28). To do otherwise would be to risk forming other persons into idols on whom was bestowed a misdirected and distorted love that impeded our ability to relate to them with Christian love, as fellow pilgrims loved by and in need of God. At the same time, counsels Augustine, other persons could be a means of helping us on the path toward attaining our ultimate end of happiness with God. He drew a distinction in this context between "enjoyment" of what should be held fast to "in love for its own sake" and the "use" or application of something "to the purpose of obtaining what you (ultimately) love" (*De doctrina christiana* 1.4.4; Jenson 2019, 72). The pilgrimage Augustine describes toward the love and knowledge of God is necessarily one of communion and accompaniment with fellow pilgrims. One becomes more loving and knowledgeable as a Christian pastor through engagement in a community that nurtures faith and a true understanding of its teachings. An authentic spiritual leader is enabled to guide others to greater Christian knowledge and love because they are engaged in this same prayerful seeking, receiving in the process of giving and sharing one another's burdens. The highest expression of Christian ministry, as Augustine conceived it, is a radical self-gifting, or love for the sake of the other. This comes through the movement of the committed theological student, as this chapter has illustrated, toward transformation of life and gift of self, through which one is able to share and participate most fully in the love and knowledge of God.

It is in one's Christian ministries, therefore, that the quality and depth of their theological literacy and education in all the dimensions we have discussed becomes most fully realized and revealed. The ultimate determination of the extent to which one has become theologically literate rests in one's ability to stand before one's believing and practicing community—the true *locus theologicus*—and effectively interpret, articulate, and apply theological learning to the life of the people, addressing and responding to their deepest Christian needs and yearnings. This demands a Christian wisdom, sensibility, perceptiveness, spiritual awareness or

disposition, and quality of being that can be hard to pinpoint as to its source for those who have attained it, for formational theological development of this sort can be gained in many ways throughout one’s theological education—both within the classroom and without, through one’s academic reading and study in the library or in private reflection, in communal worship settings, small-group gatherings, or personal prayer, in ministry encounters or informal conversations. It is often a tangible part of the character or fabric of a theological institution—an educational ethos that permeates all singular academic or spiritual forms and experiences.



Image 4: Newly ordained priest from Mundelein Seminary offering blessings and prayer, July 10, 2020 (used by permission).

Mundelein Seminary, as noted previously, is comprised of several different formational elements, which together aspire to the goal for theological education and literacy I have portrayed in connecting the whole person to God in knowledge and love for the service of God’s people. The four intertwined components—human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral formation—hold as their unified objective the development of “true pastors, mature and holy, who will live, work, and pray with the people they serve in parish ministry” (Mundelein Seminary n.d.). The

seminary's educational structure further reflects the primacy given to seminarian formation, as there is both a formation faculty, including advisors and spiritual directors, and an academic or teaching faculty who work closely and collaboratively together in their distinctive capacities to provide for the seminarian's preparation for ministry in the holistic sense I have described. The theological library and librarians can also be integral to the ministerial formation of students in both the more academic and intellectual or spiritual aspects of their education. This occurs through collection development and augmentation of resources that address newer as well as more traditional emphases in critical and practical literacy that have been discussed in this chapter. It can also frequently involve the offering of various forms of literacy instruction (e.g., courses, workshops, seminars, tutorials, and classroom sessions) that encompass aspects of these two modes of theological literacy.

The challenge for theological librarianship at Mundelein and elsewhere is that education for theological literacy has traditionally been seen almost exclusively within the realm of content provision and instruction in the utilization of the resources, tools, and technologies that foster theological research and study. To a certain extent, theological librarians can be expected to familiarize students with the content being studied sufficiently for their being able to design effective search methods or strategies as well as discern and evaluate appropriate, high-quality sources for their research projects. Even in this respect, however, the body of knowledge one acquires in order to navigate this content often comes largely outside of classes or instruction in theological literacy itself and within the various academic disciplines of theology proper. In considering the new curricular and disciplinary emphases I've cited, such as ecumenism, interfaith relations, global Christianities, and theology and the natural sciences, as well as the more traditional theological disciplines, I believe there should be more of a concerted effort in literacy instruction to fluently incorporate students' knowledge of the content on particular topics with their knowledge about how to proficiently access this content through the various library resources. Education in theological literacy in this vein, however, remains largely within the dimension of critical literacy or intellectual inquiry and has little bearing on the aspects of practical and formational literacy I have highlighted as intrinsic to students' theological and pastoral development. This largely corresponds with the ACRL's (2016) recent comprehensive reconceptualization of information literacy to focus on the cultivation of students' critical and analytical modes of thinking, grounded in a transdisciplinary set of "threshold concepts" that center on various dispositions and practices associated principally with knowledge acquisition.<sup>8</sup> Theological librarianship thus often finds itself at something of a pedagogical remove from both academic libraries and the larger program of seminary education. If, however, theological literacy and

education are to be understood in the broad formational manner I have characterized—as an embrace and connection of the student in his or her entire personhood to God—then the literacy taught as an aspect of theological librarianship needs to be more fully incorporated within this more expansive vision. This should involve, following the Augustinian conception of readiness for Christian ministry, both a transformative movement in one’s theological knowledge and self-understanding as well as spiritual development and commitment in faith to love of God and God’s people.

A holistic paradigm for theological literacy and education may in fact invite a more participatory engagement of theological librarians in the preparation of students for ministry, as it strives to broaden conceptions of what this education should involve beyond the academic-critical inquiry and professionalization model of the traditional disciplinary framework. The emphasis in students’ formation on the integration of intellectual knowledge and personal or spiritual maturation breaks down the distinctions between critical and practical literacy and thus opens new avenues for theological education that may at least give equal place to formational concerns. This could also allow instruction in theological literacy to be more integrated within the broader seminary program through collaborative pedagogical efforts and experiences—in co-taught, embedded, or online and blended courses that are part of a growing trend in theological curricula—whether the emphasis in these is more critical or formational in nature. This approach has the potential of conveying to students with greater clarity the ways in which the fundamental skills in critical thinking, research, and writing integral to theological literacy can be more concretely applied to their learning in particular disciplines and subjects—so that literacy is not simply something taught on an intellectual island.<sup>9</sup> One’s own courses, workshops, or individual consultations with students as a theological librarian should also seek to value, understand, and engage with the broader formational conceptions I have discussed about what makes a student theologically literate. Integrative methods such as these can communicate and reflect the desired unities of theological education, both in terms of the unity of theological study across the disciplines—from academic-critical to practical-formational—as well as the larger unities that uniquely define theological education, as the conjoining of faith and understanding, mind and spirit, and the fullness of truth that comes through the knowledge and love of God. Ultimately the efficacy of this holistic model of theological literacy depends in large part upon the interest, motivation, and investment of the theological librarian committed to fully engaging with it and carrying it forward in all its transformative dimensions.

This is a vision and depth of literacy for theological education that is understandably scarcely addressed in the ACRL’s redrawn standards for *information* literacy, as it necessarily involves more than attention to critical-

analytical thinking skills and knowledge acquisition. It is, however, what makes theological literacy and librarianship unique and distinctive in relation to other forms of academic literacy. It is also what can define theological education powerfully apart from the broader academic community of inquiry that has largely turned away from its singular modes of thinking and being. As described by the Catholic theologian John Courtney Murray (1965, 4) in vivid terms in adopting a phrase from Blaise Pascal, theological study and learning “takes us by the throat” in engaging the whole person— “as intelligent and free, as a body, as a psychic apparatus, and a soul—an engagement whose personal nature touches every aspect of [our] conduct, character, and consciousness.” A Presbyterian minister I have known has characterized the theological librarian in similarly evocative and expansive words as one who educates, equips, and prepares students with the resources they will need to be ministers to the people of God. It is this dynamic and fulsome conception of theological education, literacy, and librarianship, echoing Augustine’s own convictions about love of God’s grasp and direction of our whole being, that can serve as an apt model and guide for schools and libraries of theology today in forming students for ministry in a world that sorely needs their knowledge, love, and steadfast commitment.

## Works Cited

- Aleshire, Daniel O. 2018. “The Emerging Model of Formational Theological Education.” *Theological Education* 51, no. 2: 25-38.
- Alexander, Scott C. 2018. “Encountering the Religious ‘Stranger’: Interreligious Pedagogy and the Future of Theological Education.” *Theological Education* 51, no. 2: 49-60.
- Association of College and Research Libraries. 2016. *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*. [www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework](http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework).
- Augustine. 1991. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1995. *De doctrina christiana*. Translated by R. P. H. Green. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- . 2005. *De civitate Dei*. Translated by P. G. Walsh. Cambridge: Aris & Phillips/Oxbow.
- . 2009. *Homilies on the Gospel of John*. Translated by Edmund Hill, O. P. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press.
- . 2015. *Essential Expositions of the Psalms*. Translated by Maria Boulding. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press of the Focolare.
- Barron, Robert. 2020. *Daily Gospel Reflections*, January 3, 2020.

- Barth, Karl. 1963. *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*. Translated by Grover Foley. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- . 2011. *Word of God and Theology*. Translated by Amy Marga. London: T&T Clark.
- Freire, Paulo. 1974. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Seabury Press.
- Guroian, Vigen. 2018. *The Orthodox Reality: Culture, Theology, and Ethics in the Modern World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Heim, S. Mark. 2002. "Renewing Ways of Life: The Shape of Theological Education." In *Theological Literacy for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Rodney L. Petersen and Nancy M. Rourke, 55–67. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Jenson, Matt. 2019. *Theology in the Democracy of the Dead: A Dialogue with a Living Tradition*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press.
- John Paul II. 1998. *Fides et ratio*. Encyclical letter. [www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091998\\_fides-et-ratio.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html).
- Kegan, Robert. 1994. *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- McGrath, Alister. 2017. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mundelein Seminary. n.d. *The Ten Aims of Mundelein Seminary Formation*. [usml.edu/mundelein-seminary/formation/walking-three-paths/](http://usml.edu/mundelein-seminary/formation/walking-three-paths/).
- Murray, John Courtney, S. J. 1965. *The Problem of God*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Newman, John Henry. 1996. *The Idea of a University*. Edited by Frank M. Turner. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Smith, Ted A., Marti R. Jewell, and S. Steve Kang. 2018. "A Special Issue with Essays from Theological Education Between the Times." *Theological Education* 51, no. 2: 1–9.
- Stone, Howard W. and James O. Duke. 2006. *How to Think Theologically*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Tracy, David. 2002. "On Theological Education: A Reflection." In *Theological Literacy for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Rodney L. Petersen and Nancy M. Rourke, 13–22. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. 2001. *The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests*. [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/priesthood/priestly-life-and-ministry/national-plan-for-the-ongoing-formation-of-priests.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/priesthood/priestly-life-and-ministry/national-plan-for-the-ongoing-formation-of-priests.cfm).

—. 2006. *Program of Priestly Formation*. Fifth edition. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Washington, DC.

## Notes

1. For further recent discussion on this Augustinian theme, see Vincent Carraud, “*Pondus meum amor meus*, or Contradictory Self-Love,” in *Augustine Our Contemporary: Examining the Self in Past and Present*, eds. Willemein Otten and Susan E. Schreiner (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 105–33; Joseph Torchia, “‘*Pondus meum amor meus*’: The Weight-Metaphor in St. Augustine’s Early Philosophy,” *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990): 163–76.
2. Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana* was intended to set forth the “necessary qualities” for strong and effective pastors.
3. For recent examples of this discourse on the purpose, nature, and priorities of theological education, see *Disruption and Hope: Religious Traditions and the Future of Theological Education*, ed. Barbara Wheeler (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019); Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008); David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Robert J. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1999); David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What’s Theological about a Theological School?* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); Max Stackhouse, *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization, and Mission in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1988); Edward Farley, *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988); Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983).
4. Amy M. Hollywood of Harvard Divinity School discusses this postmodern critique of theology and Christianity while also largely adhering to it. Religion, according to this view, is necessarily a mere localized product of the human imagination. See her *Acute Melancholia and Other Essays: Mysticism, History, and the Study of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). Robert A. Orsi, a religious studies scholar at Northwestern University, offers a somewhat different rendering of the scholarly detachment intrinsic to the

academic study of religion and the distinction between localized and empirical truths or realities as an “in-between orientation, located at the intersection between self and the other” that is the object of one’s study. See Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 198. For Orsi, this involves encounter and engagement with “lived religion” or the religious experiences and lives of others. This is a vastly different project of religious literacy than the one put forth here, which calls for not only an understanding of, but sharing and uniting with, those with whom one will be engaged. See also Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); Loren D. Lybarger, “How Far is Too Far: Defining Self and Other in Religious Studies and Christian Missiology,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84, no. 1 (March 2016): 127–56.

5. For discussion of these broader academic and cultural trends, see Perry L. Glanzer, Nathan F. Alleman, and Todd C. Ream, *Restoring the Soul of the University: Unifying Christian Higher Education in a Fragmented Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017); *Christianity and the Soul of the University: Faith as a Foundation for Intellectual Community*, eds. Douglas V. Henry and Michael D. Beatty (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); James Tunstead Burtchaeall, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
6. See also Douglas McConnell, “Evangelicals, Mission, and Multifaith Education” and Judith A. Berling, “What about Other Religions? Opportunities and Challenges in Mainline Theological Education,” in *Disruption and Hope: Religious Traditions and the Future of Theological Education*, ed. Barbara G. Wheeler (Baylor University Press, 2019).
7. See also Matt Jenson, *Theology in the Democracy of the Dead: A Dialogue with a Living Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2019), 80.
8. For further explanation of this turn toward critical literacy, see James Elmborg, “Critical Information Literacy: Implications for Instructional Practice,” *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 32, no. 2 (2006): 192–9; Amanda L. Folk, “Reframing Information Literacy as Academic Cultural Capital: A Critical and Equity-Based Foundation for Practice, Assessment, and Scholarship,” *College & Research Libraries* 80, no. 5 (2019): 1–27.
9. Mundelein Seminary has at times integrated its course in theological literacy, research, and writing with Master of Divinity courses in spiritual formation. It is

an approach that has generally been received positively by students and is a model I would advocate strongly for the reasons outlined above.