

From the Editor

On March 14, 2014 the Advanced Research Programs of Asbury Theological Seminary held their Advanced Research Interdisciplinary Colloquium entitled “The Vocation of Theological Teaching: Teaching as Formation.” In line with what has become traditional practice, *The Asbury Journal* is publishing the four papers presented by the doctoral students at this colloquium and focusing this issue of the *Journal* on the formational role of theological education. For our cover image, and for the complementary essay “From The Archives,” I have highlighted the collection of Sunday school cards from the special collections of the B. L. Fisher Library. Sometimes we forget that theological education begins with the spiritual formation of children, and understanding how such pedagogical tools operate is important for this task. The four colloquium papers also emphasize the importance of education in the formation of Christians of all ages. Joy Ames examines the role of Ephesians 4:11-16 as a model to guide teachers, even in mundane tasks such as grading. Applying Old Testament studies, Jordan Guy looks to the Garden of Eden to locate important pedagogical tools for spiritual formation. Jeremy Griffin presents a formational exploration of short-term missions, and Susan Murithi examines the importance of context for theological education in Africa.

In addition to these papers aimed directly at teaching as formation, there is a much wider application of theological education in the world today. Bill Arnold and Christopher Bounds each apply an in depth study of scripture and understanding of theology to current controversial issues within the United Methodist Church. Such material is the result of good theological education, but publishing such material is also formational by adding to the academic discourse on such issues as the theology of human sexuality and potential schism within the Body of Christ. Historical studies, such as Jody Fleming’s work on women in mission in the Pentecostal and Holiness Movement, and Christopher Momany’s work on the holiness theology of Asa Mahan, also help in the work of theological education and spiritual formation by allowing the past to actively engage people in the

present. Theological articles, such as Samuel Youngs exploration of *creatio ex nihilo*, promote ongoing spiritual formation and theological reflection for those further along in the process of theological education. Finally, but certainly not least, is the work of Moshe Reiss, who speaking and writing from the Jewish tradition explores the understanding of the Jacob and Esau narrative in ways most Christians have never considered. Reiss' work subtly reminds us that spiritual formation and theological education also occurs in the field of inter-religious dialog.

The journey of theological education may begin as a child in Sunday school, but it lasts our entire lives. And along the way it forms us and shapes us into the people God desires us to be. Theological education that fails to form us spiritually produces an intellectual form of religion devoid of life and so has ultimately failed in its task. Spiritual formation without sound theological education opens people up to dangerous pathways of heterodoxy, heresy, and/or syncretism. As an institution committed to preparing theologically educated students, Asbury Theological Seminary is also committed to continuing the work of spiritual formation in our students. In a very Wesleyan sense, the heart and mind work together. Spiritual formation feeds the heart and theological education feeds the mind, and both sides are necessary for balanced and healthy ministry.

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