

Hooked: Or called

by [John Buchanan](#) in the [February 13, 2002](#) issue

This issue contains some personal musings and reflections on how and when theological education happens—or perhaps doesn't happen. Many of us have our own musings and memories about situations in which teachers and students become engaged and motivated.

Those of us who have attended theological school have probably been asked at one time or another how and why we decided to go to seminary. For many, the decision to enter the world of theological education actually preceded a vocational decision. That is, seminary was the context in which we decided what to do with the rest of our lives, not merely the means to the end, the academic hoop through which to jump before winning the prize of ordination.

That's certainly how it was for me. I managed to complete an undergraduate liberal arts degree without getting a clue about what to do next. A wise counselor said, "Why don't you take a year and go to divinity school?" His name was G. Wayne Glick, who later became president of Bangor Theological Seminary. He was then professor of religion at Franklin and Marshall College. He could see straight through me. He knew I had spent four years avoiding the status of "pretheological" and, if truth be told, staying as far away as possible from what used to be called "pretheological" students.

Glick told me about a school that would push me to think about issues that were engaging me—like the meaning of life and the existence of God—without forcing me into a vocational decision I was not prepared to make. "They don't care what you do with your theological education," he said. "They'll just make sure you know how to think. And if it doesn't work out, the city has two major league baseball teams and you can watch a lot of baseball."

So I ended up at the University of Chicago Divinity School and Chicago Theological Seminary, and, sure enough, near the end of the first year, reading and writing and thinking about the way the Christian faith intersects with the life of the mind, I was hooked—or called. And so began my sense of gratitude for the task of theological

education and for the committed and creative people who make it happen.