Book Reviews

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Perry L. Glanzer, Nathan F. Alleman, and Todd Ream, *Restoring the Soul of the University: Unifying Christian Higher Education in a Fragmented Age* (IVP Academic, 2017), 324 pages, $35.99.

This timely and thoughtful evaluation of the state of Christian higher education is written for two primary audiences: Christians in the "multiversity" (that is, Christian faculty who work in a secular setting) and faculty, administrators, and staff at Christian schools (p. 12). In particular, the book speaks to the aspirations of those who wish to remake Christian higher education, framing this task as a process of "restoration."

The authors' program has three parts. The first section, "Building the University," gives a thematic overview of historical developments, including the evolution of the liberal arts since the ancient Greek and Roman conception and the history of the university from its origins in medieval Europe. This also includes the way European universities have been shaped by their complicated relationship to the state, especially after the Reformation, as well as the origins of academic freedom and pluralism. One chapter is devoted to explaining how the university was transplanted to the American context, resulting in some divergent trajectories.

The second section, "The Fragmentation of the Multiversity," identifies the historical and contemporary developments that have divided or

dismantled a holistic understanding of the Christian liberal arts. These include the competing roles and responsibilities imposed on and assumed by professors, the coherence of the curriculum or lack thereof, the innovations brought by changes in administrative culture, the pros and cons of athletic programs, and the perils of online and for-profit higher education.

The final section, "Restoring the Soul of the University," identifies a remedy for these problems, which is first and foremost to return theology to the center of academic life. The authors conclude with several chapters that offer recommendations for how Christians in academia should reimagine their disciplines, the leadership of their schools, and their own vocation as well as that of their students.

While a framework of "restoration" might risk creating an idealized past that never was, the authors are careful to explain what they mean by restoration. The "soul" that was lost or is at stake is "the study of God—theology" (p. 7), which they explain as a holistic and formative influence that is allowed to pervade academic life. This book is not first and foremost a work of history. Rather it engages history as a conversation partner in developing a thesis about the essence of Christian higher education. That said, the section on the historical background is sufficiently robust to lay a convincing groundwork for the later chapters. The authors' contention is that Christians "need to think critically about past educational structures and institutions they helped to build and perhaps where they went wrong" (p. 7). Even the architects of the first universities struggled in implementing an education centered on theology, namely with how to organize the disciplines. The authors point out how the medieval view of theology as "queen of the sciences" is in part responsible for its later decline, in that it was seen as one discipline among many. Thus, while there may be no perfect past to return to, that should not prevent the reforming pursuits of modern-day educators. Restoring this "soul" is not as simple as re-establishing a hierarchy of disciplines with theology at the top. Rather, Christian educators must creatively cultivate an integrated learning experience for their students.

This historical section is one of the book's strengths, worthwhile reading in itself for anyone who teaches courses on the liberal arts. The tour that the authors give of this history offers a clear and well-reasoned definition of what the liberal arts are and what they have to do with a holistic Christian education. Their assessment of the twelfth-century educator Hugh of St. Victor and the subsequent development of the University of Paris is substantive and not overly romanticized. They write, convinc-

ingly, that the centrality of theology as the soul of the medieval university lay not in its fragmentation into one department, reigning supremely and separately from all others, but rather in the integration of theology throughout the life of students and faculty (p. 21).

The other two sections offer insightful discussion of the challenges faced by Christian colleges today. "Multiversity" may not be a natural enough term to become common parlance anytime soon, but it serves the authors' purposes well in identifying why it is that most universities lack a "singular soul" (p. 3). Instead of the university serving to unify its plurality of departments, programs, and constituents, the reality on many campuses is that there are competing communities as well as a "tournament of ideas" that are left unmediated.

This is perhaps the main accomplishment of this book: it does not simply identify pluralism as a problem, as many Christian critiques do. Rather than a naïve appeal to a unity of truth, the authors assert that the multiversity is not something Christians should fear but something that should be properly understood. The framework for understanding how to restore the multiversity begins and ends with 1 Corinthians 12:12–14 and its analogy of the body of many members (p. 5). This perspective thus claims a dynamic pluralism on *theological* grounds and identifies *relativistic* pluralism as the hazard. The remedy is to reestablish a hierarchy of truths, as well as a "core identity, story, and source of moral insight and inspiration" (p. 6). This may not be the same as a college adopting a binding confession of faith or behavioral covenant. Rather, the multiversity that has had its soul restored is one that has re-centered itself on a hierarchy of curricular priorities and which regularly rehearses the biblical story in the center of its teaching and campus life, as well as in the community's narrative about itself.

Although one of the intended audiences is Christians in the secular setting, there is relatively less practical advice given to this group than the Christian setting receives. Yet much can be inferred from the authors' notion of apprenticeship in that professors in any setting can serve as models of a holistic and integrated approach to their academic discipline. Curricular choices must also be strategically made so as to further model the desired academic culture. Furthermore, these professors, as well as administrators and other staff, must also learn "to speak theologically" (p. 241), rather than purging themselves of this kind of language in misguided deference to the assumption that objectivity always demands it.

The final section on application is inspiring in its tone; if it is read

as a motivational sermon, it will likely satisfy the reform-minded reader in need of a pep talk. On the other hand, if this section is read by those looking for a detailed plan for their particular university's setting and challenges, they may find it heavier on Scripture references and lighter on plans for action.

On balance, this book serves its purpose in providing a working thesis for addressing the concerns that many Christian schools face from pressures on their tuition models that have often misled leadership to focus too much on practical educational programs at the expense of a classic, holistic, Christian liberal arts education. Academic departments in the humanities may gain the most grist for their mills from this book, as the liberal arts serve a common thread closely woven with the kind of theological education that is being identified as the university's "soul."

MARK SAFSTROM

Annette Brownlee, *Preaching Jesus Christ Today: Six Questions for Moving from Scripture to Sermon* (Baker Academic, 2018), 208 pages, $23.

Anna Carter Florence, *Rehearsing Scripture: Discovering God's Word in Community* (Eerdmans, 2018), 215 pages, $17.

Two publications by teachers of preaching offer motivation and insight for the minister's weekly work of biblical interpretation. Each urges readers and preachers to linger with the text. For Annette Brownlee, the task is to "stay in the room of Scripture" and not leave too quickly after grasping a sermon nugget. Using a theater metaphor, Anna Carter Florence urges us to stay on the scene: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet…of those who walk straight into a text and wait for a word to say" (p. 54). Each author begins with close reading of the text then heads in a different direction of emphasis: Brownlee follows the theological thread, Carter the experiential, although each attends to both.

Annette Brownlee, an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church USA, is chaplain, professor of pastoral theology, and director of field education at Wycliffe College in Toronto. She calls her work a practical book on preaching and it is, but it wouldn't be an exaggeration to call it a practical theology. Brownlee's guiding questions, expanded in separate chapters, are best summarized in her own words: "The Six Questions move from attentiveness to the scriptural text (What do I see?); to the text's center and completion, Jesus Christ (Whom do I see?); to Christ's address to

us personally (What is Christ's word to me?); to Christ's address to us as the church (What is Christ's word to us?); to the identity Christ offers the church and disciples (What is Christ's word about us?); to how we inhabit our identity in Christ for and in a disobedient world (What does it look like?)" (p. xv).

The questions follow out of the conviction that the preacher has three roles: witness, confessor, and theologian. Although it is the church that interprets Scripture, the preacher is called to lead the way by attending to what is in the text, allowing it to speak to herself and proclaiming the same as a member of the listening congregation. Another list of six activities guides the preacher in careful reading: read slowly and attentively; focus on the movement of the passage; read around; read through the eyes of your congregation; do your homework; and identify God's activity in the passage (pp. 26–27). The last is especially important, as the simple noticing of nouns, verbs, and direct objects points to God as main actor.

"Reading around the Scriptures" involves noting references to common words, motifs, and images, including a figural reading that seeks fulfilment in Jesus Christ, the telos and center of Scripture. For example, Brownlee's intratextual reading connects the silence of the rich man before Jesus (Mark 10:22), the uninvited guest without a wedding garment (Matthew 22:11–12), and unrepentant Israel in the prophet Isaiah. A figural reading will see this inability (or unwillingness) to plead for mercy fulfilled as Jesus takes on the sin of the world before his accusers, "as the sheep before its shearers is silent" (Isaiah 53:7).

Chapters three and four are perhaps the best, reminding preachers that the step of letting the word address them is the most important. Because those first-person discoveries are not usually presented in the sermon, this step is most easily passed over or forgotten. Yet the preacher witnesses as one of the many addressed by the word. Luther taught that the word creates its hearers, so whatever our similarities and differences as a congregation, we are all Ezekiel's dry bones in need of prophecy. As the preacher moves from witness to confessor to theologian, differences of identity are not erased but embraced.

Brownlee's work leans on theological writers like David Yeago and William Abraham along with their precursors Augustine and Luther, George Lindbeck and Hans Frei. It is therefore an essential complement to preaching advice that looks to literary studies, sociology, or communication theory. Examples of reading with the six questions and resulting sermons keep the emphasis on preaching practice.

Anna Carter Florence is the Peter Marshall professor of preaching at Columbia Theological Seminary and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church USA. She took a theater course in college and learned that repertory companies interpret scripts by reading and rehearsing together. Her guide to reading Scripture is therefore directed to groups, although preachers are encouraged to join. In that way, the book complements her predecessor Lucy Atkinson Rose's *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Westminster John Knox, 1997), a call for preachers and hearers to do sermon work together. Florence uses repertory practice to offer additional ways for sermon study groups (and any other Bible study group) to venture into a text and listen for a true word to speak.

Florence believes that we hear the life-giving word when we pay special attention to the verbs in the text. Nouns like "Philistines" and "fleshpots" put distance between the biblical world and ours, but we all know what it is to take, eat, have eyes opened, and hide, whether or not those actions come in the order of the Genesis story. Best practices of close reading are on display as Florence teaches us to ask what verbs surprise us, how God's verbs differ from human verbs, and how adjectives and nouns take on their meaning in juxtaposition with the verbs. The exercise helps readers slow down and use imagination to explore what is said, what is not, and why.

Once the verb's actions have been unpacked, the repertory group can further explore what happens when readers get out of their chairs to embody the action, when characters are placed or even switched, and when "what if?" and other questions are asked. A list of six questions reviews the experience of reading and enacting before moving on to what will be said: Where did the text get you? Why does it get you? Based on that reflection, what do you know about God? Why does your community need to hear this today? What do you want to say? What do you hope these words will do? (pp. 196–97)

A series of dispatches from the field shows how reading groups can ask new questions of familiar texts in Mark, stay with hard texts of terror like the rape of Tamar, and learn to speak truth by considering Esther's own reluctance to speak. One example: Florence shares her own amazement that the life-over-death stories in Mark 5 opened up in new ways when, after years of reading it in seminary classes, she took it to church groups. People who weren't learning to preach asked the question that had never come up before: why is it that some of the people Jesus helps are allowed to speak? They are not professionals like Jairus the synagogue

ruler; they are unnamed, common people like the woman who told her story of healing (Mark 5:33) and the demoniac whom Jesus ordered to go tell (Mark 5:19–20). Further examples of group readings follow in appendices, with specific procedures the reader can use and adapt. More than any other I know, this book helps its readers get at the life issues in Scripture texts, the matters people care about, and the reason they come to hear sermons.

I hope preachers and teachers will read about and try out each approach and then go back to their usual practice to observe how it has been enriched. Better yet, preachers could recruit a sermon prep and review group to try out both approaches and debrief after the resulting sermons have been preached.

PAUL KOPTAK

Amy Laura Hall, *Laughing at the Devil: Seeing the World with Julian of Norwich* (Duke University Press, 2018), 144 pages, $18.95.

Laughing at the Devil: Seeing the World with Julian of Norwich is primarily a work of theological ethics, but it is also, at times, a spiritual memoir. There is a richness to Amy Laura Hall's book despite the volume's slimness. It is a book that resists easy characterization and summary. Hall demonstrates that Julian's visions about time, truth, blood, and bodies were both formed in a particular social and political context and speak powerfully to our own post-9/11 era marked by the politics of fear and anxiety. This is a book about statist violence but also a reflection on domestic abuse and divorce. Hall's admixture of personal and political is intentional. In *Laughing at the Devil*, she insists that seeing the world with Julian of Norwich requires a radical recalibration of how theologians categorize what is significant and what is insignificant.

Laughing at the Devil sees in the theology of Julian of Norwich a repudiation of what Hall terms a "Gospel of Austerity" (p. 8). The resurgence of Calvinism in the post-9/11 era is a central example of this austerity theology. Purveyors of the Gospel of Austerity insist that human desires and needs are petty compared to God's grand scheme. Hall seeks to demonstrate that this vision of God's providence can easily lend itself to moral utilitarianism reflected in drone strikes, torture, and treating other human beings as moral contagions. Julian's theology of providence scrambles Calvinist providence—in large part because Julian insists that

God is not only all-knowing and all-powerful but that God is also all-loving. Hall refers to this all-loving as God's "omniamity." Julian refuses to deny either the horrors of this world or the sufficiency of divine love: cruelty is truth, but Jesus is also the truth (p. 9).

Julian also, according to Hall, challenges the Gospel of Austerity by her refusal to see time as progressive. Because of this, modern readers must resist reading Julian's most famous statement, "All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well," through the lens of an enlightenment faith in inevitable progress. Julian never argues that pain is being transformed "incrementally into blessing" (p. 23). Instead, Hall insists that Julian offers a personal God who is working toward the salvation, reclamation, and restoration of little things as well as big things, but this happened and is happening all the time through a "poynte"—that one decisive moment on the cross. Hall refers to this as Julian's doctrine of "eschatological reclamation" (p. 110). That the little things and the big things are held by God means that they are "held in a way that scrambles calculation and the usual ways we weigh, measure, and sort ourselves, strangers, our children, our churches, or our neighborhoods" (p. 23).

Hall believes that this Gospel of Austerity shapes Christians who are inclined to misunderstand radically what it means to follow Jesus and, in particular, to suffer with Jesus. "Jesus's sacrifice is not to be repurposed for yet another political agenda.…What Jesus suffered is not to be suffered by anyone else as part of God's work of salvation" (p. 82). It would have been good to have seen this point fleshed out further, as it would hold significant ramifications for practical questions around criminal justice. Hall's account of Julian's theology also has implications for atonement theology. Hall sees the danger of reading the cross through the metric of utility. She notes, "the cross is gratuitous, non-necessary, and a creation of love out of non-sense and non necessity of evil" (p. 84). In other words, the cross of Jesus Christ is first and foremost about the Trinity's profligate love and grace. To continue to see the life of Jesus through the metric of the grand plan is always to risk missing that the cross is essentially a message about God's love.

Hall's book is valuable because she resists a bloodless and spiritualized vision of Julian's theology. Covenant theologians seeking to understand the significance of Waldenström's insistence that the cross was a demonstration of divine love will find in Hall's Julian an important conversation partner. Moreover, a parish pastor might find solace in a vision of a God who does not see his followers as cogs in some divine program—the God

who "uses us"—but instead realizes that our lives are sustained by a God whose love for us is total and non-instrumental.

JODIE BOYER HATLEM