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L. Gregory Jones and Stephanie Paulsell (eds.). *The Scope of Our Art, The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. Pp. 275. \$20.00 (Paper).

[1] In *The Scope of Our Art, The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*, L. Gregory Jones and Stephanie Paulsell have assembled fourteen essays from theological teachers as an impetus for reflection, not as a systematic analysis of the vocation of the theological teacher. The essayists hope to invite readers "into a living, breathing conversation" about vocation (x). The collection is divided into three sections, "The Formation of the Theological Teacher," "Theological Teachers in Their Classrooms," and "Theological Teachers in Their Schools." Altogether, the essays reflect diverse, personal reflections on the meaning of vocation in the lives of these theological teachers and scholars whose vocational aspirations are bound tightly with the missions, cultures, and curricula of the educational institutions where they receive training, and in which they serve.

[2] Devotees of Ignatian spirituality and pedagogy will recognize within these essays a pervasive determination to approach the topic of vocation with a firm reliance on the fruits of continual reflection. Through reflection on their interior movements of consolation and desolation as teachers of theology, the authors hope to stimulate in their readers, many of whom will likely be other teachers of theology, a renewal of their own vocations. Generally, the essayists avoid presenting caricatures of their academic and pastoral counterparts. They also refrain from advocating strictly delineated roles for teachers of theology versus research scholars. Many are also extraordinarily careful to eschew stereotypical presentations of their students as fraught with acedia, although Paul J. Wadell's humorous description of theology students as orphans from some alien world (120) seems playfully accurate. Students are not to be viewed as "obstacles" to scholarly success. Rather, a conspicuous theme common to all the essays is the requisite role of students, other faculty colleagues, administrators, religious congregations, and societal leaders who represent "community" in its many forms in the vocation of the theological teacher.

[3] The essays develop insights from diverse topics rich in Christian tradition. For example, the spirituality and exegesis of the Cappadocian theologians is used as an illustration of how

the contributions of "theology in the outback" can be valuable to scholarship and society. The Benedictine notion of the "stability of the heart" is employed as a way of understanding how disciplined work and prayer functions in the academy. The stellar pioneering scholarship of Georgia Harkness is an example of addressing the counter-cultural, often harrowing call of the contemporary theologian-qua-prophet, while the notion of the "polycentric present" from David Tracy's systematic theology is used as a hermeneutical matrix for constructing truth in pluralistic contexts. From all the essays, three perceptible facets of the meaning of vocation emerge: 1) the individual's relationship with God; 2) the individual's relationship with the community (in the many ways "community" is identified by an individual), and 3) the necessity of balancing an individual's desire for self-fulfillment with an individual's capacity for self-sacrifice for the good of one's community.

[4] First, regarding the individual's relationship with God, Paulsell utilizes the writing discipline of medieval scholar Marguerite d'Oingt to illustrate the theologian's vocation to enrich her relationship with God (20). Paulsell maintains that writing is a plunge into Mystery; it is the "combination of a loving attention with detachment" (25). Second, in respect to the importance of community inherent in one's vocation, Paulsell views the theologian's writing as an invitation to write on behalf of others, and to evoke thought and love in her readers. She warns against writing for personal benefit, without an eye toward students: "We should teach them, and teach ourselves, that if we write from any other motive than to find out what belongs to what, or to heal and reunite, or to reach across boundaries, or to seek communion with others, or to respond to what is written on our hearts, or to peel back the cotton wool of nonbeing, or to seek the real behind appearances, or to illuminate invisible connections, or to open a path between solitude and community, or to find God, then writing will not change us" (30).

[5] Paul J. Griffiths' essay on "Reading as a Spiritual Discipline" takes a similar approach to the necessity of reading for the purpose of deepening one's relationship with God. He contrasts "academic reading," or the desire to accumulate measurable knowledge, with "Proustian reading," or reading to incite personal reverie. He advocates "Victorine reading," named for Hugh of St. Victor, as appropriate for the vocation of the theologian. "Victorine readers, then, read with the knowledge and love of God always before them as the point and purpose of their reading" (45).

[6] W. Clark Gilpin, in his essay on "The Formation of the Scholar," takes to task those formation programs that encourage theologians to perceive their academic work as separate or in some way superior to more pedestrian endeavors of secular life. "One mark of excellence in doctoral education is the presence of pedagogical strategies that cultivate a student's capacity for reflexive understanding of the way her scholarly questions participate in public questions with wider import" (8). Formative disciplines such as reading, writing, and teaching "should exert a steady pressure on the scholar to articulate the wider human significance of the work to which she has devoted herself" (14).

[7] Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore introduces the third aspect of vocation in her essay, "Contemplation in the Midst of Chaos: Contesting the Maceration of the Theological Teacher." Miller-McLemore decries the academy's insistence upon the compartmentalization of scholars into publication machines, teachers, parents, and responsible community

members. "Many teachers of theology encounter a deep separation between the practice of faith and life in the academy" (52). Like Gilpin, she sees a detrimental severance of the graduate scholar-in-training, in which "developing one's intellect seems to imply abandoning or at least temporarily suspending one's religious convictions. A general disquietude surrounds those of us who see our vocation as helping students know and love God in an academic culture in which we are trained to keep quiet about our faith" (52). Since the vocation of the theologian is marked by serious practical and contemplative commitments, she advocates the Ignatian model of "contemplation in the midst of action." Besides the benefits of occasional solitude and silence, relational connection and authentic conversation are necessary components for a contemplative-in-action, providing sustenance, transformation, and pathways to the sacred (66).

[8] Theological teachers who struggle with balancing their many vocational roles, as well as those considering a vocation as a theological teacher will find this collection beneficial as they navigate their ongoing scholarly formation. L. Gregory Jones' "Negotiating the Tensions of Vocation" offers an incisive summary of the characteristic marks of the vocation of the balanced theological teacher: 1) that it is larger than oneself, and calls the individual to awareness of the "more" of one's life; 2) that it calls for self-sacrifice, 3) that it calls the individual to ongoing conversation with community; and 4) that it incarnates a desire to know and love God more fully. An appropriate supplement to these essays might be a fourth section concentrating on the vocation of the lifelong theological student whose primary work is not in the classroom, but in pastoral ministry. If Gregory Nazianzen was correct, that "the scope of our art is to provide the soul with its wings" (203), then pastoral ministers, research scholars, and theological teachers are all engaged in an enterprise intrinsic to a world in need of unencumbered "flight."

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