

peoples. These new voices seek to recover the religious symbols and values of their suppressed native traditions. The resulting syntheses, Ruether writes, give rise to “multireligious contextualizations” where Christian symbols become one cultural resource among many in the struggle for liberation that is rooted in many local contexts (257).

The first edition of *Women and Redemption* was a valuable resource for the classroom, providing concise and quite readable summaries of important developments in feminist theology. The second edition will be an even better resource. The larger pages with double columns of text make the book more pleasing visually, which is quite important for engaging students who are accustomed to a world filled with videos and Instagram photos. Text boxes that highlight important ideas throughout the book and bold section headings make finding particular topics quite easy. Each chapter begins with a time line placing the discussion within the wider context of Western Christian history, and each chapter ends with a set of research questions, along with suggestions for further reading that include both primary and secondary sources. In addition, there is a fairly comprehensive index, an essential tool for any book used in the classroom. In a time when women’s struggle for equality and liberation in other parts of the world occasionally makes the evening news, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* provides a historical context that widens a student’s perspective and makes it apparent that women’s struggle for liberation and justice is not confined to places governed by radical religious fundamentalists.

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Divas in the Convent: Nuns, Music, and Defiance in Seventeenth-Century Italy.
By Craig A. Monson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. xxiv + 272
pages. \$29.00 (paper).
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Divas in the Convent, a rewrite of author Craig A. Monson’s 1995 book *Disembodied Voices: Music and Culture in an Early Modern Italian Convent* (1995), provides a gripping tale of a seventeenth-century Bolognese convent named Santa Cristina. While his previous book was densely footnoted for a scholarly audience of music historians, Monson’s rewrite aims more squarely at an educated lay audience. (To that end, the newer book’s cover looks like the cover of a tabloid.) That Monson, a music historian, is also sympathetic to historical, political, and economic context and takes the nuns’ own

stated piety seriously means that his tale of music and convent crisis can be used by scholars from a variety of fields.

One key theme for a broad range of scholars relates to Monson's main argument: that women often create spaces for enhancing their agency in, through, and in spite of patriarchal hierarchies that actively seek to limit women's activity (such as the seventeenth-century Bolognese bishop's prohibition of music in convents). While this argument will be familiar to feminist scholars, all readers will appreciate the particulars of this story because it is well researched and written, and brings to life both the story and music of a specific nun, Lucrezia Orsina Vizzana, as well as the broader story of a conflict that ensued between Vizzana's convent and the Bolognese bishop in her lifetime. Vizzana's story works together with the broader narrative of convent conflict to showcase exactly how these nuns made their small protests against patriarchy.

Music, especially, was one of those ways, and one of the means by which Vizzana comes to the forefront of Monson's tale. (It should also be noted that Vizzana is one of several nuns from the period whose music has enjoyed a recent renaissance in contemporary musical performance.) Monson devotes three chapters to describing Vizzana's extraordinary musical talent in a time and place when women musicians were discouraged, with particular discussion of how she learned her music and who might have influenced her composition. For those without musical background, these are likely to be the most difficult chapters of the book because of Monson's allusion to aspects of music theory that may be unknown to many readers.

However, the chapters on music dovetail with another seven chapters in which Monson details a larger conflict brewing in the convent between two factions of nuns. Most of the work in these seven chapters displays excellent scholarship and attention to detail in hard-to-access Italian archives. The larger conflict Monson narrates "began because of music" (100); specifically, the musical conflict was over the way the nuns' Divine Office was sung. The story Monson tells depicts how two factions try to win the ear of various hierarchical officials (who are calling into question the nuns' chastity) while also aiming for the most freedom possible in bringing music to their convent. The conflict between the factions escalates into successively worse accusations, with the apex of the crisis being a point (during Vizzana's lifetime) when the nuns threw rocks at the bishop's emissaries. Monson continues his theme into subsequent centuries to show how the nuns continually found ways to assert their own particular vision and charisma, even when it worked against the bishop's directives.

While Monson is clearly theologically sympathetic (e.g., 72) to the nuns' stated religious beliefs (a refreshing change from the ways some historical

work is done in relation to religion), it is also his theological presumptions that may prove the most significant drawback for theologians reading his work. For example, I worry that he conflates contemporary debates concerning the respective roles of the laity and the hierarchy with those of Vizzana's period in both the introduction and the conclusion. Still, this is an arresting book; I think this work may even be appropriate for upper-level undergraduate courses, provided that the professor is willing to help students think broadly about lay-hierarchy relationships in the church, both historically and in the present day.

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Accidental Theologians: Four Women Who Shaped Christianity. By Elizabeth A. Dreyer. Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2014. xiv + 160 pages. \$15.99 (paper).

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In her new book, *Accidental Theologians: Four Women Who Shaped Christianity*, Elizabeth A. Dreyer proposes a thoughtful and insightful theological framework for the consideration of four female "Doctors of the Church": Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), Catherine of Siena (1347–80), Teresa of Avila (1515–82), and Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–97). This book demonstrates Dreyer's tireless commitment to serve women who want to develop their spiritual lives by learning more about tradition and Scripture and reflecting theologically on their daily lives.

Dreyer opens her book by suggesting that there are divergent approaches to theology. Echoing other feminist theologians, she affirms that to confine theology to the formal, systematized expression of the academy is to disregard "a wider range of experience that feeds our understanding and expression of the divine identity and God's relationship with the world" (127). The "accidental" but indispensable four female Doctors of the Church invite Christians to such theology—the theology that belongs to life, that welcomes creative innovations, and that attends to the suffering and pains of the world, where the ardent desire for God is vividly felt.

Dreyer's portrayals of the four female Doctors are lively and affectionate. She describes how each of the four women came to know and fall in love with God, as well as how they struggled with ecclesiastical jurisdiction and yet still transformed the church. Dreyer suggests multiple angles from which to engage with the four women: their life and works, their social and political contexts, the main themes of their literature, and the implications of their theologies for Christians today.