

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.

JANA M. BENNETT
University of Dayton

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.

The title of each chapter includes a characteristic of each of the four Doctors' theologies and succinctly captures the contribution of each to the shaping of Christianity. Hildegard's "theology of the Holy Spirit" shows her "ability to honor the tradition without sacrificing intellectual innovation and creativity" (40); Catherine's "theology of Incarnation" reminds us of the "sacralizing effect of Incarnation on all creation" (64); Teresa's "theology of the human person" invites us to "pray and serve" so that "the state and intensity of our desire [for God] fuel perseverance" (84); and finally Thérèse's "theology of the cross" compels us to encounter the Crucified, who embraces our weakness and failure and changes them into tender love for God and for neighbor (114). Thoughtful questions for reflection at the end of each chapter help readers delve more deeply into the significance of the lives and works of these women, and make them more relevant to our time.

Although the four Doctors were women of extraordinary gifts and courage, Dreyer does not present them as examples or models of ideal identification. Dreyer points out that they were quite human; they lived in particular historical circumstances and sought to love God while dealing with different challenges generated by their contexts. Their stories are accounts of real women, who, just like those who struggle with their own challenges today, sometimes experienced severe self-doubt, discouragement, and depression. They engaged in struggles with a church and society that tried to limit their spiritual power. Nevertheless, they never gave up. Their desire for God enabled them to overcome doubts and fears, and drove them to continue speaking out against injustice and corruption.

This book is a cordial invitation to recognize and acknowledge the voices of the women Doctors and to have Christians, particularly women, to tell their stories. Thus, the stories of the four women Doctors of the Church are to be remembered, recited, and rewritten by women, rather than dictated by male traditions. The voices of the four women who resisted the roles imposed by the church and society are magnified when they are echoed by women throughout history who have had similar struggles. Once the four Doctors' theologies join with the theologies of other women who have been rejected by patriarchy and religious authority, their voices can revive and shatter the tradition's ownership of their stories. Thus, women theologians take part in a narrative bonding through which they see themselves and construct their theologies in relation to other women.

MIN-AH CHO

Saint Catherine University