

Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church. Edited by Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis. Explorations in Practical, Pastoral, and Empirical Theology 6. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. Pp. xv + 238. \$35.96.

“Ordinary theology” describes the faith discourses and representations of individuals who have received little or no scholarly theological education. Astley and Francis bring together well-researched chapters on what ordinary Christians believe and why it is important to take their faith expressions seriously in academic theological studies and church life. First, there is a pragmatic justification: the majority of Christians express nonscholarly understandings about their faith. Second, ordinary theology articulates a faith and a spirituality that people find to be salvific. Attending to such beliefs and processes of believing can enrich Christian theology and practice.

The volume also offers examples of how such theologizing can be studied. Two complementary approaches are highlighted: an empirical, descriptive approach (involving theological listening) and a more evaluative and reflective approach (involving theological critique, broadly defined). The diversity in exploring the terrain of ordinary theology and in applying these approaches can be regarded as the volume’s major strength. Areas of exploration and application include Christian learning, biblical studies, and prayer and worship, as well as denominational and ecumenical studies. Also significant is the attention given to specific Christian doctrines and activities, such as the doctrine of revelation and the concept of the church. “In many of these areas, the very existence of an ordinary theology challenges certain assumptions of academic and ecclesiastical theology” (7).

However, one can also run into methodological and analytical problems. For instance, ordinary theology cannot just be described; it must be subject to the same careful analysis and critique as is academic theology. The question an academic theologian faces is whether tools used in academic theological analysis will be helpful in articulating an ordinary theology. Reading the chapters, one senses how the different contributors wrestle with this question. While the question is not directly addressed, the sense of “wrestling” serves to enhance the volume’s overall contribution to contemporary theological studies, namely, that engaging in a critical analysis of ordinary theology can enable a conversation between academic and ordinary theology, allowing each to enrich the other. Scholars and students in a variety of theological studies should find this volume very helpful.

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Rekindling the Christic Imagination: Theological Meditations for the New Evangelization. By Robert P. Imbelli. Collegetown, MN: Liturgical, 2014. Pp. xx + 122. \$17.99.

Karl Rahner once startled his more rationalistic colleagues when he stated that Christology cannot be done unless the theologian had previously thrown his or her

arms around Jesus. Imbelli has embraced Jesus not only with his acute theological mind but also with his priestly heart. In tune with the Second Vatican Council's request for a "new evangelization," I. returns to the sources to proclaim the joy of the gospel to the contemporary world by means of a theopoetic, contemplative, mystagogical theology. He rightly comprehends that Christianity is not a theory but a falling in love with the person of Jesus Christ crucified, risen bodily, and ascended into heaven (as the fulfillment of the incarnation). Christianity is also a participation in the trinitarian life this unique Son engenders, especially through his church (which invites all to holiness), and the Eucharist, with its individual, social, and cosmic ramifications. Rejecting a Calvinistic view of the cross, I. understands it as the supreme symbol both of God's love for humanity and of the definitive exorcism that renders the principalities and powers ultimately impotent. Without the cross, authentic humanism cannot exist.

As a Jesuit who takes seriously Ignatius of Loyola's emphasis on "safe doctrine"—by which I do not mean a naïve fundamentalism—I applaud I.'s high Christology (the full God-Man) and Pneumatology (with the Spirit never dissociated from Jesus Christ), orthodox ecclesiology (in Mary the church has attained its fullness), and compelling eucharistic theology (the future Christian will be a eucharistic mystic or not be a Christian at all). He rightly emphasizes Christianity's central mysteries as inexhaustible, "saturated" phenomena. I know of no other author who has called attention to Jesus' imagination.

The attentive reader will note that years of profound study and contemplation of Scripture, the Fathers, the councils, contemporary thinkers, and the liturgy, as well as a deep appreciation of the best in the Christian artistic and literary traditions buttress in an unobtrusive way I.'s excellent exposition of Christianity's heart.

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The Ox-Herder and the Good Shepherd: Finding Christ on the Buddha's Path. By Addison Hodges Hart. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013. Pp. vii + 118. \$15.

This little book is an engaging, rewarding example of comparative spirituality. It seeks to clarify and deepen one form of spiritual practice through conversation with another. Following the methodology recommended for comparative theology, Hart limits his conversation to one particular text, the well-known Ox-Herding Pictures and commentary of the twelfth-century Zen Master Kakuan, and explores how this "Buddhist path" might enable Christians to more effectively "find Christ."

Unlike most comparative theologians, H. forthrightly lays out his theological foundations: that there is a "common religious grammar" among all religions (22); that no religion can/should claim superiority over others (3) (though he also holds up Jesus as the "definitive" manifestation of the Logos [5]); that experience precedes doctrine; that both Buddha and Jesus taught an "authentic spirituality" calling for transformation of the