

Francesca Aran Murphy, Balázs M. Mezei, and Kenneth Oakes. *Illuminating Faith: An Invitation to Theology*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. 164 pp. \$29.95. Paperback. ISBN: 9780567656056.

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This volume appears in the Bloomsbury series entitled *Illuminating Modernity*, a series “dedicated to the renewal of faith in a world that is both godless and idolatrous.” Such a renewal, the short introduction states at the beginning of the book (v), takes the Christian tradition seriously and is convinced that it has the resources, in the light of Thomistic thought found in contemporary “Continental and phenomenological philosophy and theology.” The authors (it is not clear whether they are also the series editors) speak of their perspective as the *Franciscan option*, which, it becomes clear on the final page of the text, is an option inspired not by the “Franciscan school” of theology, but from the current pope, Pope Francis (v, 153–54). Such a perspective differs from: a *futuristic option*, by which faith is expressed in a universal culture made possible by technological and scientific progress; a *fundamentalist option* that hearkens back to the faith of a “golden age” of Christianity; and a *liberal option* that conforms itself to current culture. Such a Franciscan option appears to be orthodox while being open to contemporary thought forms and movements.

Illuminating Faith develops in twenty-four short, sometimes rather sketchy, chapters that aim to cover the whole history of the development of the understanding of faith. Since theology is “faith seeking understanding” in Anselm of Canterbury’s definition, such a history of faith, the authors hope, can serve as an invitation to doing theology. Indeed, the “study questions” posed after each chapter are invitations for readers and for the students who seem to be the target audience of the text to engage in the theological process all along the way.

Some chapters are more illuminating than others. The chapters on Kierkegaard, Vatican I, Barth, Tillich, von Balthasar, and Rahner are superb, as is the chapter on John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. Sadly, however, it seems as if many key figures in the history of faith are missing: Anselm, ironically, and Bonaventure, as well as John Henry Newman and Bernard Lonergan. Aside from a brief mention of a feminist understanding of faith in Chapter 22 (136), no women theologians appear in the text. It might have been interesting to investigate the understanding of faith in Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, Thérèse of Lisieux—all doctors of the church.

One might look for a more subtle interaction between faith as a gift of God and faith as a radically free human act. This could have been done in a reflection on the Thomistic understanding of *obedientia potentialis*, found in Aquinas but especially in Rahner. More reflection as well could have been done on the more “behavioral” or “transformational” aspect of faith, which has been the special contribution of the theology of liberation. The book provides a provocative reading, nevertheless, of the history of faith, especially—as the series in which it appears aims at doing—reflecting on faith in the context of a modernity shaped and sometimes scarred by the Enlightenment.