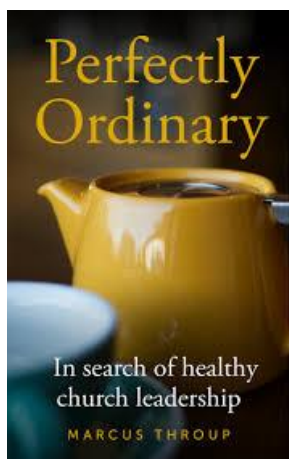


Perfectly Ordinary



Markus Throup

Canterbury Press pbk £14.99 9781786225856

Published 2024

Recent, and not so recent, scandals in the church have brought issues of church leadership and abuse into sharp relief. Such issues potentially affect all of us whatever our connections with or interest in the church may happen to be. So this relatively short book is very apposite.

It is specifically about Christian leadership. It is addressed to those in or preparing for leadership as well as those training or mentoring them and the focus is ordained ministry rather than lay ministry. The context is primarily Anglican and the Church of England. However, it should be of interest to anyone concerned about the issues from whatever standpoint or perspective.

Throup specifically addresses the issue of unhealthy models and patterns of leadership and how they can lead to spiritual abuse in churches. He characterizes three types of spiritually abusive leader as overprotective, egocentric or narcissistic. These and their manifestations he defines and pictures vividly and starkly, though I wondered if, in reality, there are not perhaps more nuanced, less obvious but equally harmful, variations of spiritually abusive leadership to be considered.

Characterising and labelling all manifestations of spiritually abusive leadership as the work of “showmen” enamoured of the spectacular, he urges leadership that is contrastingly unspectacular, authentic, humble, pastoral, prayerful, faithful and Christ-centred.

A longer book might have considered, for example, abusive lay leadership, or how a managerial emphasis on quantifying ‘success,’ centralisation and hierarchy in the institutional church may unwittingly devalue the unspectacular “perfectly ordinary” leadership of the title. Nonetheless this book is insightful and incisive in what it covers. A concluding section on self-care for leaders is a typically thoughtful indication of the whole character of this well-considered book. The style is conversational, making it an accessible read, very relevant at any time but perhaps particularly now.

Peter Wright