

imbibe Thomas from Herbert, as we all did: from the master among us to our master Thomas, to the Master whose word suffuses the prose.

We discover how exciting and surprising that is, as we relish a wit and prose we wish we could deliver ourselves—without envy, in sheer delight. Astute editors waste no time plunging us into the metaphysics of divine action, where we quickly learn how speaking of God outstrips our ordinary prose. Yet nothing heavy burdens these metaphysical forays, lightened by Herbert's incisive wit with prescient examples. So we are reminded forcibly how this God is closer to us than our jugular vein, renewing us daily by a sustaining presence: that is to be created, as we each are. And everything turns on the *ur-fact* of our creation, which alone delivers our creator God to us, and us to ourselves. Yet be prepared for one surprise after another as we learn that we cannot even say that "God is good" lest we end up passing judgment on our creator. And that we can hope to "know God" only as the "unknown."

Thanks to editors and author, this is no "compendium" of sacred doctrine, though each of the neuralgic issues emerge. Now Herbert is known as an "ethicist," yet that portion of this study turns centrally on politics, as we are led by Aristotle beyond the "eighteenth-century abstraction of the individual" (MacIntyre) to those among whom we live, flawed as we each are, and as Jesus's genealogy reminds us he is too (325–31)! So, enjoy this daunting passage through "sacred doctrine" as Thomas practiced it and Herbert delivers it, a journey amazingly up-to-date as we contrast it with "sound bites" assaulting us today on every side. Let the leisure this exercise affords reanimate our own spirit of inquiry.

Faith offers "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). With what we do not see but hope for: "the journey of Abraham into the unknown, a journey simply based on a promise" (Heb. 11:9). "In a way the whole thing is a bit like growing up, becoming in fact fully human" (323). That is the journey Herbert undertook and recommends us to take. Are we ready for it?

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Interreligious Comparisons in Religious Studies and Theology. Edited by Perry Schmidt-Leukel and Andreas Nehring. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. viii + 228. \$114.

Whereas the method of comparison had gradually become suspect in the area of religious studies, it is again gaining some credibility, in particular in the emerging field of comparative theology. This volume therefore seeks to explore the possibilities for "an exciting cross-fertilization between the theological and the non-theological employment of comparative methods" (6). To that end, it builds on Arvind Sharma's notion of "mutual illumination" which may be applied not only to the encounter between religions, but also to the encounter between the disciplines of comparative religion and comparative theology.

There is no doubt that the field of comparative religion and religious studies may profit from new critical and constructive reflection on its method. Many of the articles in this volume do just that. They represent, to my knowledge, the first sustained attempt to revalorize the comparative method since Kimberley Patton's and Benjamin Ray's volume *A Magic Still Dwells* (2000). But this collection of articles goes further in advancing concrete methodological principles and proposals, and in refining the models developed by previous generations of comparativists. It is also less shy in recognizing the merits of former giants in the field such as Mircea Eliade and in rehabilitating some of his insights and approaches. That makes this collection of articles truly refreshing.

With regard to the relationship between comparative religion and comparative theology, and the possibilities for cross-fertilization, I find the volume less helpful. S.'s notion of mutual illumination tends to blur, rather than clarify the distinction between the disciplines. While comparative religion is oriented to understanding one religion in light of another, comparative theology is oriented toward transformation, challenge, and growth, all normative goals that do not belong within the field of comparative religion. And while comparative theology presupposes a confessional starting point, comparative religion may acknowledge a confessional disposition only to minimize its impact on the comparison. These remain fundamental differences which seem to be ignored or downplayed in S.'s own contribution, and in those of the scholars directly engaging his work.

This collection still represents a very important and much needed contribution to methodological questions in the study of religions, and I will be certain to use it in my graduate course on history and method in comparative religion.

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The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III. Edited by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016. Pp. xxxi + 272. \$35.

As Nontando M. Hadebe writes in her contribution to this volume, the Theological Colloquium on Church, Religion, and Society in Africa (TCCRSA) "set a bold vision for a Vatican III Council in Africa" that would create a "distinctive theological process, method, and reflection that is inclusive, contextual, and creative, and that responds to the challenges the Catholic Church in Africa faces" (213). Led by Orobator, this volume beautifully serves its goal. Twenty diverse essays are organized in three parts.

Part 1 examines Pope Francis in relationship to Africa's colonial history and contemporary challenges. Josee Ngalula and Anne Arabome contend with legacies of African and Catholic sexism. Ngalula contends that the Pope's advocacy for a more incisive female presence in the church needs to address both theological illiteracy and cultural prejudices on gender among both clergy and the faithful. Anne Arabome celebrates the Pope's understanding of how women are "doubly poor" and she challenges