

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

the church to do much more to confront the “subordination, abuse, and exploitation of women in church and society” (59).

Part 2 addresses ecclesiology and theological method. It contends more explicitly with fissures in African cultures as the church contends with chaos and confusion over competing interpretations of globalization and how to negotiate the transformations of the emerging century.

Part 3’s essays offer prophetic visions of a future church. Tina Beattie untangles the intricate complexities of religion, motherhood, and poverty that silence women’s wisdom and suffering. The full and equal participation of women is a prerequisite for a thriving future church. Marquerite Akossi-Mvongo uncovers deep contradictions in ecclesial teaching and practice concerning women and offers a biblical vision of how women ought to be celebrated as prophets, priests, and kings. I highly recommend this rich collection of essays for courses addressing ecclesiology, theological method, contextual theologies, and spirituality in the transforming twenty-first century.

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Polarization in the US Catholic Church: Naming the Wounds, Beginning to Heal. Edited by Mary Ellen Konieczny, Charles C. Camosy, and Tricia C. Bruce. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2016. Pp. xix + 175. \$19.95.

The product of a 2015 conference at the University of Notre Dame, this volume includes perspectives from 19 contributors, including theologians, church leaders, and sociologists who speak from a diverse range of perspectives.

The authors are divided over whether ordinary American Catholics are as polarized as Catholic elites are, or even whether the loudest, most partisan voices who capture the most media attention reflect the reality of American Catholic life. Either way, they agree that polarization, whether defined as left–right or orthodox–progressive, has had a negative impact on Catholic life.

Sociologist Tricia Bruce highlights the degree to which Catholics are shifting allegiance from territorial parishes to ones where they can find a preferred style of worship and like-minded worshippers. Susan Crawford Sullivan sees this phenomenon, but suggests that most parishes try to skate down the middle and steer clear of controversy. As she experiences it in the academy and her parish, there is a disconnect between elite and ordinary discourses, and experiences of polarization in the church.

As the authors helpfully point out, the issues that polarize are not the same across ethnic groups, or age groups. Writing about Latino Catholics, Hosffman Ospino suggests that the “hot-button issues that galvanize liberal and conservative constituencies . . . don’t arouse the passions and the energy of the polarized margins . . . which happens to be largely Hispanic” (141). Christian Smith argues that younger Catholics often tune out of church life precisely because of the debates than engulf many older