

The remaining chapters offer appropriate explorations of objections to her argument and forgone conclusions that either PWPIDD could not experience relationship with God or God could not breach the human constructions of disability and thereby establish such a relationship with Harshaw's Rebecca, for example, and other PWPIDD. In the penultimate chapter she returns to Scripture with an investigation of Peter's table fellowship with the Gentile Cornelius and his and his household members' baptism, recounted in Acts 10, from which she mines Peter's conclusion that God shows no partiality in extending relationship beyond the people of the covenant. "Similarly ... there is space in this new inclusive community for [PWPIDD], albeit that others might be unable to identify their access route" (138).

Any claims about what the spiritual experiences of PWPIDD may be by their family members, friends, caregivers, community members, and researchers can be made only through a glass darkly. Nevertheless, and as Scripture and tradition testify, such incapacity on the part of the nondisabled does not forgo the assurance that God discloses to PWPIDD and the nondisabled alike a desire for relationship in the mystical experience of divine encounter. Rather than focus on what PWPIDD may or may not reveal to the nondisabled about their experiences, Harshaw turns her and the readers' attention to what is known about the *kenotic* accommodations of the Christian God.

Harshaw considers honestly the questions that many ask about the value and the lives of people with profound intellectual disabilities. This text could serve as a springboard for serious discussion of how God reveals Godself regardless of disability as well as a corrective to presumptions about our own and others' experiences of the divine. *God beyond Words* is recommended for family members of and caregivers for PWPIDD, and for people in ministry, theology, and the helping professions, to approach these concerns with a new appreciation of the possibilities yet to be known. Unfortunately, beyond Harshaw's control, the price of the text will be prohibitive.

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*Comparative Theology: A Critical and Methodological Perspective.* By Paul Hedges. Brill Research Perspectives in Theology. Leiden: Brill, 2017. 89 pages. \$84.00.

doi: 10.1017/hor.2018.109

Let me state upfront and clearly: this book has been for me both rewarding and frustrating—rewarding in what it has to say and frustrating in the way it says it. Unfortunately, the frustrations keep getting in the way of the rewards.

I want to focus on the rewards, since I do believe that Paul Hedges, drawing on his long-standing engagement with things interreligious, makes a needed contribution to the present, often complex, academic discussion about comparative theology (CT).

The intent of his brief but compact investigation is to further the cause of CT by addressing what he feels it lacks—namely, a more intentional and careful exploration of how it works. A conscious methodology, he believes, is essential to a fruitful practice. He proceeds in four major steps: (1) first, a bird's-eye view of what's going on among comparative theologians; (2) then a necessary detour to respond to contemporary critics who debunk all talk of "religion"; (3) a critical appraisal of power dynamics within the CT community; and finally (4) a proposal for more solid hermeneutical foundations for CT.

For the most part, Hedges accepts, but then critiques, the broad project of CT as originally proposed and ongoingly developed by Francis X. Clooney. A theologian who describes herself as "comparative," according to Clooney, goes about her job convinced that she cannot really interpret her own tradition unless she is in dialogue with at least one other tradition. Hedges staunchly sides with Clooney rather than Keith Ward in insisting that CT is *confessional* and therefore distinct from comparative religious studies. The comparative theologian begins with his own faith and beliefs, but then puts those beliefs (not his faith) on the line in dialogue with other religious believers. Hedges laments that such a comparative way of doing theology is still on the fringes, if there at all, in most theology departments.

On the controversial question of whether CT requires grounding in a theology of religions (TR), Hedges is clear in principle but fudges on particulars. To critics of TR such as Marianne Moyaert and Klaus von Stosch, who declare all theologians of religions to be "essentializers," Hedges offers the reminder that all religions, insofar as they make universal claims, are unavoidably essentialist. He clearly affirms that TR must provide the necessary *theory* for an efficient *practice* of CT, but he is unclear as to *what kind* of a theology of religions is needed, suggesting, only, that some form of "inclusivism" seems to be the minimal requirement (16).

Hedges is equally dismissive of the widespread deconstructionist claims of academics that religion is a Western fabrication that doesn't really exist, pointing out how such critics, in rejecting religion, are immediately in search of synonyms. He concludes that "religion" is a necessary but also an "essentially contested concept" (23). Use it, but be careful.

Hedges' examination of power dynamics in CT echoes much of what is heard among the new generation of comparative theologians: so far, CT has been too Western, too male, and too textual. If CT is true to its inherent affirmation that no religion or truth claim is sufficient unto itself but in

need of input from others, then CT, by its very nature, is “inherently subversive” (51), even “an inherently queer discourse” (58).

In his efforts to provide CT with more secure hermeneutical foundations, Hedges draws primarily on Gadamer’s understanding of our given “horizons” as both limiting and expanding. His proposed “hermeneutical tools” sift down to recognizing that in any interpretative exchange, no perspective holds a privileged center but that there is always “a multitude of centres” (73). That sure sounds like a pluralistic theology of religions.

Finally and briefly: my frustrations. I cannot comprehend how this book ever passed Brill’s copy editors. Incomplete and run-on sentences abound, as do dangling participles and missing words. Hedges seems to have an aversion to commas after introductory phrases or clauses and confuses the proper use of commas and semicolons throughout. Given the book’s disregard for English grammar, I could not recommend it for classroom use, especially for undergrads. It’s unfortunate that Hedges’ fine analysis of CT is clouded by such shabby syntax and style.

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*African, Christian, Feminist.* By Teresia Mbari Hinga. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017. xi + 244 pages. \$45.00.

doi: 10.1017/hor.2018.114

To the expanding list of essential books by African women theologians we can add this collection of Teresia Mbari Hinga’s writings of more than twenty years. Hinga is a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and so writes from the perspective of a Circle member with her sisters throughout Africa as they *do* theology.

The book is divided into four sections, which discuss African women’s theological footprint, Afro-Christianity and Afro-theologies, ethics, and theological education, including Hinga’s journey as a theologian. The strength of this book is that it allows the reader to chart the development in Hinga’s theological thinking over these years. Its only weakness is that the two chapters on the Circle are somewhat repetitious, and only one of them should have been chosen.

The introduction presents the story of Kimpa Vita, a prophet in eighteenth-century Congo, who won a large following because of her visions of Saint Anthony. Her fame aroused the envy of the Capuchins, who had originally supported her, and she was arrested and burnt to death. Hinga stresses that Vita’s story is important because so much of women’s history is unknown. In addition, Vita’s struggle with the colonial powers of the Congo