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# Winds of the Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology, by Peter C. Hodgson

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## Peer Reviewed

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works are confused. There is some inconsistency in citing works that have been translated into English, including P.'s own *Basic Questions in Theology*.

*Fordham University, N.Y.*

RICHARD VILADESAU

**WINDS OF THE SPIRIT: A CONSTRUCTIVE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.** By Peter C. Hodgson. Louisville: Westminster/Knox, 1994. Pp. xv + 421. \$25.

In his challenging and original systematic theology, Hodgson brings to completion the Hegelian project initiated in *God in History: Shapes of Freedom* (1989). There H. developed an Hegelian trinitarian theology in somewhat speculative terms. Here he rereads the Christian doctrine of God in the light of the Hegelian studies, and comes to some provocative conclusions. The introductory third of the book surveys both the role of theology today and the types of theological thinking that can be included under the "postmodern" umbrella. The remainder is divided into three subdivisions, corresponding to the three moments of the (postmodern) trinity: God as "the one who loves in freedom," "world" in which Christ is at work as the "shape of redemptive love," and "spirit."

The importance of H.'s work is evident from the opening pages, where he insists on the necessity for theology, even of a postmodern kind, to see God as its object. Self-professedly postmodern, H.'s text stands as a corrective to much of the theology that bears that label, where authors so frequently seem not to have noticed the absence of God from the text. While H., in contrast, accepts of course that God is only known in and through the world, through the self and other selves, he contends that this is real knowledge of God. God's revelation is a partial disclosure through the effects of God in the world. As H. puts it so eloquently, "we do not see wind but rather what it moves, we do not listen to breath but to the words that it forms" (129). This profoundly Hegelian idea allows for the focus on God to be at the same time a focus on the world.

H. presents a radical revisioning of trinitarian thought. He dismisses the traditional trinitarian formulation of God as "patriarchal and hierarchical." Instead, God is the "ultimate event of communication," nameable cognitively and existentially as the Hegelian "dialectic of identity, difference, and mediation," open to description in more personal terms as "the One who loves in freedom," and finally expressible symbolically as "God, world, and Spirit." Secondly, he proposes to "loosen up" the connection between Jesus and the Christ. While Jesus incarnates the "Christ-gestalt," that is, the God-given normative shape or paradigm of transformative praxis, he does not exhaust it. Indeed, says H., it empowers the distinctive being of human being, and thus the more human Jesus is the more he is the Incarnation of the Christ-gestalt. This feels a little bit like salvation by semantics, and it shows up again in his treatment of death and resurrection. Since, H. argues, both the individual self and the world within which the risen

self is newly embodied are contained—in Hegelian terms—within God, so we can say that “in rising into the world, we rise into God” (274). Finally and perhaps most interesting is H.’s treatment of Spirit as an “emergent person,” an actualization of what would only have been a potentiality in God without the creation of the world. So the Spirit proceeds from God and the world, not from Father and Son, though it is “a world in process of being shaped and configured by Christ” (291). At the same time the world grows into Christ through the power of the spirit.

H.’s book works on a number of levels. It is a presentation and rehabilitation of Hegel’s Christology. It is a postmodern revisioning of trinitarian theology. And it is a contribution, as he avows early in the book, to Reformed theology. Conservative and evangelical theologians will not welcome H.’s prioritizing of context over text. The book is certainly beyond “the house of authority,” to use Edward Farley’s term. H.’s metaphor of theology as sailing gets this right. The postmodern theological boat is unmoored, buffeted by the winds, finding its own way across the seas. Some would say that it is merely drifting. However, in an extension of the metaphor that H. does not make, we might recognize the importance of navigational charts. H. uses Hegelian charts, venerable but reliable. With charts in hand, there is little danger of running aground, but this is not enough. The art of the theological navigator lies in catching the breezes and controlling the boat, and the fun lies in what you do within the boundaries the chart lays down. In the present work, the theological soundness and security are provided by the Hegelian charts. The elegant play of the text comes from H. the sailor. But its creativity and importance lie in the marriage of system and *bricolage*. Even Karl Barth would be heartened, I imagine, by the intensity of focus on God.

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PAUL LAKELAND

DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT: THEOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE SECULAR. By Stanley Hauerwas. Durham: Duke University, 1994. Pp. 235. \$24.95

Theology should be fun, says Hauerwas in the Preface to his most recent collection of essays. By “fun,” he means that theology should risk the potentially humorous consequences of letting unapologetic Christian discourse reframe the way we see and talk about the world.

H. is largely successful in making this book fun. A good example is the short essay entitled “Why Gays (as a Group) are Morally Superior to Christians (as a Group).” This essay is not about homosexuality. Instead it illustrates the kind of difference H. thinks Christian convictions should make: if Christians were known to take their convictions seriously, then they would “be seen by the military as being as problematic as gays” (153). Christians trained in just-war considerations would worry about bombing civilians and would try to incapacitate