

SCHILLEBEECKX ON THE RESURRECTION:
EFFECTS AND REACTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP

Convener: Kathleen McManus, University of Portland
Moderator: Diane Steele, University of St. Mary, Leavenworth KS
Presenter: Daniel Speed Thompson, Fordham University
Respondents: Robert J. Schreiter, Catholic Theological Union
Mary Margaret Pazdan, Aquinas Institute of Theology

Daniel Speed Thompson presented his view of Schillebeeckx's approach to the resurrection, his analysis of the variety of reactions to this approach in reviews and in exegetical and theological scholarship in the last thirty years, and his assessment, in the light of these reactions, of the merit of Schillebeeckx's approach for understanding the resurrection today. Thompson's own illumination of Schillebeeckx's epistemological framework was central to his analysis and assessment. The nonantithetical, dialectical relationship of objective revelation and salvation and its subjective appropriation by real human beings in history is, Thompson emphasized, the claim that is at stake in the controversy over the *Jesus* book. His thesis was that Schillebeeckx's treatment of the resurrection concretely displays this claim; thus, critiques of this treatment are ultimately concerned with the type of theology that Schillebeeckx practices.

Examining the resurrection material in the *Jesus* book, Thompson explored Schillebeeckx's account of the nature of the disciples' faith, the significance of the empty tomb, and the source and function of the appearance narratives. He discussed representative contemporary critiques, followed by an analysis of Schillebeeckx's responses to these, highlighting Schillebeeckx's reiteration of the inseparability of the objective and subjective dimensions of the resurrection experience. Thompson noted that the whole controversy raises the more fundamental question of the use of exegesis in relation to systematic theology as a whole.

Thompson concluded with an evaluation of the cogency, credibility, and fidelity of Schillebeeckx's views on the resurrection, which he addressed in reverse order. In terms of fidelity, Thompson judged Schillebeeckx's view as orthodox, if minimalist. He evaluated Schillebeeckx's resurrection theology as meeting the criterion of credibility, with two caveats. First, Thompson concurred with the challenge raised by later exegetes, especially feminists, arguing for the retrieval of the role of women in analysis of the resurrection appearances. Second, Thompson noted that it would be interesting to see how Schillebeeckx's theology of the resurrection would be stated now, thirty years later, in the wake of new studies on the historical Jesus. He suggested that Roger Haight's work on Jesus is, in fact, the child of Schillebeeckx's *Jesus*, and has raised some of the same critiques and problems in a new and different context. Finally, regarding the cogency of Schillebeeckx's presentation, Thompson admitted to being left with a question about what happened to the disciples and what happened to Jesus' body.

Robert Schreiter responded to Thompson's presentation from his own experience of conversations that were taking place while Schillebeeckx was developing his theology of the resurrection. He affirmed Thompson's recasting of Schillebeeckx's epistemology, but critiqued his analysis of Schillebeeckx's use of experience as a foundational category. Schreiter noted that we tend to read Schillebeeckx in light of his excursus on experience in *Christ* and in a later article; however, this development was not quite in place when Schillebeeckx wrote *Jesus*. Schreiter went on to say that he is not sure Schillebeeckx entirely succeeded in his intent of holding subjectivity and objectivity together. Further, Schreiter noted that Schillebeeckx relied very much on the exegesis of his time, whose view that tomb and appearance stories were later developments is not widely held now. Today, in the wake of the third Quest, the fact that the disciples would have had visionary experiences is taken for granted, Schreiter said. Methodological limitations and cultural biases will continue to shape our understanding of Schillebeeckx's work, but, in the final analysis, Schreiter tellingly observed, "thirty years is a long time to be talking about a book."

Biblical theologian Mary Margaret Pazdan concretely engaged the key challenges raised above. Implementing her own appropriation of Ricoeur's hermeneutical method in the context of developments over the last thirty years, Pazdan evaluated select pericopes which Schillebeeckx, in her view, interprets according to a particular conviction. Pazdan rejected Schillebeeckx's thesis of a preexisting resurrection faith based on her analysis of the Johannine text. Instead, she located the emergence of resurrection faith in Mary Magdalene's encounter and commissioning. Pazdan agreed with Raymond Brown that resurrectional agency should be attributed to God rather than to Jesus. Finally, Pazdan cogently analyzed Schillebeeckx's use of Pauline texts in light of Paul's foundational theology of the Body of Christ. She concluded that what Schillebeeckx's doesn't comment on here is emblematic of what he doesn't deal with regarding the theologies of embodiment and of creation.

The ensuing rich discussion included profitable references to Schneiders' keynote.

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