

implications for such issues as ecumenism, ecology, and the relation of Christianity to other faiths, will no doubt be pursued further on his *via christiana*. His route deserves the closest study by those growing up in faith, whether or not they choose to follow it.

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SCHILLEBEECKX. OUTSTANDING CHRISTIAN THINKER SERIES, Philip Kennedy OP, *Geoffrey Chapman*, London, 1993.

Most great Christian thinkers if they live long, think a lot, and often write reams. It is then notoriously difficult to introduce lesser thinkers to their thought. Kennedy overcomes this problem. His triumph is to achieve both a fairly comprehensive overview and yet give us a detailed inspection of seminal themes in Schillebeeckx's work: creation, Christology, and God.

He also succeeds in writing in an ordered and succinct manner about a writer who often lacks these virtues. In fact Kennedy gains an imprimatur from Schillebeeckx who praises Kennedy for putting his thought in a biographical context. He criticises the book for its lack of a chapter on eschatology, and for the inevitability of relying on textual evidence for influences, whereas practical experiences may have often been far more significant. Both these criticisms are minor for Schillebeeckx has not published much on eschatology (as he acknowledges, although Kennedy has seen unpublished manuscripts on the topic), and Kennedy could not be expected to write a comprehensive biography. Hence, this book is a success.

Kennedy spends the first four chapters introducing us to Schillebeeckx's historical context, theological concerns and significant influences. He is able to account for Schillebeeckx's many concerns and lack of a systematic style in noting that Schillebeeckx's interests have evolved in response to practical questions facing his local church and get shaped by the many disciplines and sources he constantly absorbs. While sometimes repeating himself, Kennedy produces a helpful portrait of Dutch Catholicism, before and after the Second Vatican Council and the intellectual state of European theology during Schillebeeckx's formative period. What is lacking in depth is balanced by breadth.

Kennedy carefully traces the early influence of De Petter and Chenu in forcing Schillebeeckx to theologize experientially and historically, in contrast to the then prevailing overly conceptual neo-Scholasticism. In the sixties, Schillebeeckx undergoes a profound change in philosophical presuppositions, whereby Critical Theory and hermeneutics signalled a shift in concerns and methods. Kennedy does a fine job of seeing the continuities and discontinuities between the early and late Schillebeeckx. This is borne out in the final four chapters dealing with creation,

Christology and God. Hence, in his chapter on epistemology ('Knowing God negatively'), he shows how Aquinas' classical *via triplex* is transposed into a political eschatological "way". The "knowledge of the *via eminentiae* is no longer regarded as the outgrowth of a *conceptual via negativa*, but of a *practical or experiential one*" (131). This means the practice of solidarity, justice and love in a world of egotism, injustice and hate, disclose the meaning of God in resistance to negativity. Or in his chapter on creation he shows the continuity of Schillebeeckx's thought in terms of his markedly anti-dualist and anti-supernaturalist concerns.

I have one mildly critical observation. Schillebeeckx is widely known through his association with Hans Küng: both got called to Rome to explain themselves. Schillebeeckx has been investigated by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in three different instances, regarding revelation (1968) Christology (1976) and ministry (1981) — and never formally charged. While the reader will get some idea about the controversial aspects of his teachings on these matters, Kennedy fails to explore these issues in sufficient depth. Revelation is not touched upon very helpfully, and in the chapter on Christology one would think the only problem concerned Schillebeeckx's understanding of resurrection. His historical methodology and his claims regarding divinity were also controversial. And it is surely inaccurate to say that Schillebeeckx in his first *Jesus* book "proposed a novel interpretation of Jesus' resurrection" (115). It differed little from Marxsen's. And Kennedy perhaps oversimplifies when he says that "The primary mistake made in criticisms of Schillebeeckx's interpretations of the resurrection and the appearances is the claim that he denies Jesus' bodily and personal resurrection." (116). Some important criticisms derive from an objection to his underlying epistemology, which is in turn related to his understanding of revelation - and here, Kennedy fails to help us understand the critics. The only critical point that Kennedy proffers regards Schillebeeckx's failure to respond to Lessing's challenge (117) and on this count, these objections are surmountable. It might be argued that you can understand a person's thought as much by reading them as by understanding why people object to them. Kennedy is excellent on the former, but at least in this book, not on the latter.

But this should not detract from the very positive service that Kennedy provides in his book. He has given the English speaking world the best overall account of one of the most dynamic and eclectic Roman Catholic theologians of the century.

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