

Edward Schillebeeckx's Position on Resurrection and the Time Test

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What Is Resurrection Today?



EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX
(1914–2009)

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Introduction: A Resurrection for the Future

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL future or the “eschatological perfection and freedom” (Schillebeeckx 1987, 29) of human beings receives with Edward Schillebeeckx (1914–2009) a distinctive name which few theologians, including Hans Küng, make use of. As the concept of *humanum* has been investigated here particularly for the accent it receives with Schillebeeckx (and thus Küng), it can be traced back to the Church fathers like Irenaeus and Athanasius, for instance, for whom being truly human involves both deification and humanization. This means that the *humanum*

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contains a hint to the sanctification in Christ and the individual's accommodation with fellow human beings in ethics within history, so that in the end they might become true sons of God (see Pelikan 1977; Küng 1993; and Casanova 1999, 22, as quoted in Mong 2010, 23–41). The *humanum* in Schillebeeckx is the perfect human society formed of men and women liberated of all social and political barriers. (To expand, however, this is not South America's liberationism like in the liberation theology; instead, it is a "liberating" state, as Schillebeeckx calls it in his "Reflection on J.-B. Metz's political theology" in Schillebeeckx 2014b, chapter 4, especially pp. 69–70). This subject offers Schillebeeckx in his modern social context yet another opportunity to talk about the outcome of Christ's resurrection for modern men and women, i.e. the possibility to gain freedom and to be converted from their previous oppressive way of life. In other words, the *humanum* in Schillebeeckx is the Kingdom of God, which is the first metaphor describing what the future of our history will look like. The second metaphor that goes hand in hand with and is the condition for this first perfect human state is thus the "resurrection of the body." Because the Kingdom of God is a perfect community, men and women living in it are called to be completely saved and happy. This calling is the equivalent of the resurrection of the body in Schillebeeckx's opinion. The bodily resurrection presupposes the "human person, including his or her human corporeality as a visible orchestration, the distinctive melody of a person which others enjoy" (Schillebeeckx 1987, 29). However, Schillebeeckx is not very keen on saying that a bodily resurrection necessarily implies a real body, because we are bound by our historical situation to live in one and the same body received through natural birth. The bodily resurrection rather means an elevation to the *humanum* state in the same body, yet transformed to please our fellow human beings. It is a body with the same characteristics "of the individual (called *sarx*/body/flesh in the Bible)" (ibid., 29), but analyzed on a different basis, i.e. spiritually. These thoughts are especially meaningful for this discussion since the final part of this study is an analysis of Bultmann's radical position on the resurrection as a parallel view to Schillebeeckx's particular take on the subject, however without consigning it to the test of a genuine development of the doctrine. The debate envisages especially the question of the possibility or impossibility of the resurrection considering their respective thought on the relationship between Jesus and God in the context of a whole body of mystical interpretations of the miracles, of which the resurrection is the supreme demonstration of power displayed by divinity within the history of mankind.

Thus, if the resurrection of the body implies only a person's transformation in accordance with human ethics and expectations, it should be very similar to what Schillebeeckx describes as the resurrection of nature or "the ecological

milieu.” From Schillebeeckx’s description of this ecological milieu it is obvious that he not only associates it with the idea of perfection represented by God’s kingdom, but also identifies it with the Kingdom of God: “The consummation of the undamaged ‘ecological milieu’ which human beings need to live in is suggested by the great metaphor of the ‘new heaven and the new earth’” (Schillebeeckx 1987, 29–30). Jesus’s resurrection would thus exceed all our mundane political expectations about nature and our life in nature, since the results it brought upon nature are not perfectible: they are already perfect. And since this perfection is not easily seen right now, it seems that Schillebeeckx opened the possibility for a definition of ecology and nature in the same spiritual terms he used to define Jesus’ bodily resurrection. But how does one recognize a resurrected body/nature? A hundred years ago several tests have been proposed for a correct teaching about the resurrection.

The Test of a Faithful Doctrine of Resurrection: A Commentary

FROM A traditional perspective on the resurrection, it would seem that Schillebeeckx is heading into the problems of not only developing a doctrine of the resurrection to match the biblical data, but also in constructing a Christology which preserves the faith in Jesus’ post-Easter appearances as historical facts different from abnormal phenomena. Debates concerning the resurrection as a sound Catholic dogma have disclosed so far the real issues against which Schillebeeckx builds his paradigmatic views on the subject, as they have been concentrated into several tests, namely the test of faithfulness, consistency, logical sequence, conservative tendency, and chronic vigor.

Precisely because of his *Essay on the Development of the Christian Doctrine*, John Henry Newman is mentioned by Gerald O’Collins in the chapter “The Case of the Resurrection” (see Ker and Hill 1990, 338) as the promoter of the Oxford Movement in Britain in the second half of the 19th century. Newman is particularly pointed to as he offered, a hundred years before Schillebeeckx, his seven tests on the “faithful development and corruption” of the doctrine of resurrection from the standing point of his expertise in Christology. To a certain extent, however, the tests can be easily applied to all Christian doctrines which have been the object of controversies throughout the centuries. In a later paper entitled *Newman’s Seven Notes: The Case for Resurrection*, Gerald O’Collins analyses Schillebeeckx’s thesis on Jesus’ post-Easter appearances as expressed in *Jesus, Christ*, and *Interim Report on the Books ‘Jesus’ and ‘Christ’*, in the light of

Newman's seven notes. He also considers Küng's arguments on the empty tomb from his book *On Being a Christian*.

O'Collins identifies Newman's seven notes on the faithful development or perversion of the Christian doctrine as follows: "preservation of the doctrinal type, continuity of the principles of the doctrine, power of assimilation, logical sequence, anticipation of the doctrine's future, conservative action upon its past, and chronic vigor or duration" of the doctrine (Ker and Hill 1990, 338–9). O'Collins reckons that the most important accent should be on Newman's second, fourth, sixth, and seventh tests because they draw attention on Schillebeeckx's failure to preserve the biblical data unmodified and the doctrine undamaged.

The Test of Consistency with Traditional Doctrine

WHILE HE deals with the idea of the empty tomb, Küng stresses the personal (corporeal, bodily) resurrection of Jesus. However, his thesis is that Jesus' spiritual body does not require the former earthly body. Consequently, the resurrection is approached from a new level of understanding, i.e. spiritual. Schillebeeckx, in his turn, explains Jesus' appearances after his death in the light of the disciples' change of perception about their experience with Jesus at his crucifixion. This means that the faith in Jesus' resurrection was a reflection of their mind and spirit as they experienced forgiveness and conversion at Jesus' death: "New Testament's talk of appearances was only a way of summarizing what the risen but invisible Jesus had done for the disciples and did not refer to genuinely historical events" (cf. O'Collins 1990, 343).

As we have shown, the primary emphasis here is on the disciples' internal transfiguration rather than on the real event of Jesus' physical raise from the grave. In other words, the invisibility of Jesus' resurrection has a greater power of suggesting the apostles' faith in Christ. Thus Schillebeeckx infers that records of Jesus' visible and bodily resurrection could not have strengthened the apostles' hope more than the hidden Christ strengthened their faith.

At this point, Schillebeeckx's inconsistency with the traditional Christian doctrine of the resurrection is in some respect problematic. It is not to say that Schillebeeckx fails to stress the necessity of the resurrection for the rise of the Christian faith. He nevertheless fails Newman's second test on the faithfulness and consistency with the principles involved in the doctrine of resurrection. Schillebeeckx does not elaborate on the importance of Jesus' visible appearances to individuals or groups of people and consequently he does not pay proper heed to God's power to intervene miraculously into human history: "Faith is

emasculated when we insist on grounding it in pseudo-empiricism, thereby raising all sorts of false problems: whether, for instance, this ‘Christological mode of seeing’ was a sensory seeing of Jesus, whether it was ‘objective’ or ‘subjective’ seeing, a ‘manifestation’ or a ‘vision,’ and things of that sort” (Schillebeeckx, in Ker and Hill 1990, 340; see also Schillebeeckx 2014a, 384).

It is interesting how, within the experience of everyday Christian life, faith has its own status as it is seated above the power of God’s grace. This is a legitimate observation in what Schillebeeckx is concerned because he argues against the major influence of visible signs in Jesus’ post-Easter appearances or, for that matter, of any historical experience in the sphere of faith. Faith is exclusively an internal feeling. This takes us one step further into noticing that Schillebeeckx places faith within the grasp of human assessment. In the end, one believes either intellectually or emotionally. Moreover, Schillebeeckx posits, “there are always intermediary historical factors in occurrences of divine grace” (cf. O’Collins 1990, 340). If we relate this assertion to the observation made earlier, it can be said that “Schillebeeckx’s doctrine of grace may be slipping from rightly affirming that intermediary historical factors are *always* present to implying that, in the realm of visible history *nothing* but such factors are present” (ibid., 340).

This objection to Schillebeeckx’s position on history and faith shows just how much Schillebeeckx owes to existentialist thought. History is not the most appropriate realm in which existentialist thinkers would search the roots of faith. One may conclude that such intermediary factors hindered Schillebeeckx from making more profound statements about the soteriological value of Jesus’ death.

The Test of “Logical Sequence”

NEWMAN’S FOURTH test of the true development of Christian doctrine is the “logical succession or sequence of views from the original testimony to the appearances of the risen Christ” (O’Collins 1990, 341). In Schillebeeckx this dimension has to do with the apostle Paul and other New Testament writers’ ability to follow the logical line of events which contributed to the disciples’ awareness and faith in the risen Christ. Traditional hermeneutics approached the doctrine of resurrection by first mentioning the impact of the external visible signs of Jesus’ appearances and as a sequel the power of these experiences to raise faith in the risen Christ. Schillebeeckx recognizes and admits to this major gap between traditionalism and his views. In his opinion the disciples first believed in the risen Christ. Their faith was thus strong enough to further stories about Jesus’ appearances and the empty tomb.

In other words, testimonies like Paul's and other biblical writers' are void of substance for their modern interpreters. Newman, on the other hand, challenges us to reconsider this situation: it is either the apostles' writings showing a high degree of incompetence or modern hermeneutics trying to seem less corrupted while dealing with its primary sources. One has to be aware that Christian creeds and faith are not based on a myth of resurrection, Newman explains, which would make them compatible with a collection of fantastic stories. Moreover, O'Collins adds, even if Schillebeeckx is keen on noticing that the accounts on the resurrection are not "the object of Christian faith," the point is that "[the] appearances were the primary way the disciples came to know that Jesus had been raised from the dead. In that sense the appearances were essential means for first triggering knowledge of the resurrection and faith in the risen Lord. Any adequate discussion of the Eastern appearances would be usefully enriched by distinguishing between the (normal) object of New Testament faith and the (primary) means for generating the original Easter faith" (O'Collins 1990, 344).

With this we are reminded that most probably the primal formulation of the Christian faith was founded mainly on the primal material at hand for the church. The credal confession of Jesus' resurrection had an objective foundation in Jesus' post-Easter appearances and not in mere presuppositions regarding the disciples' visions and the empty tomb.

The Test of "Conservative Tendency"

NEWMAN'S SIXTH note on the true development of the doctrine of resurrection is "a tendency conservative of what has gone before it" (Newman, in Ker and Hill 1990, 344). According to this test, if Schillebeeckx maintains suspicion regarding the apostles' ability to appreciate correctly the role of these appearances, he is also suspicious regarding the apostles' normative role in witnessing and giving an authoritative interpretation of both Jesus' teaching and their post-Eastern experience. When things are put this way, Schillebeeckx does not pay proper heed to the importance of the time spent by the apostles in the company of Jesus during his earthly life. The reason is, he implies, that such experiences are the same for any individual. The only thing that could have distinguished the apostles from other people in their experience with Jesus was the fact that "they knew Jesus before his death" (Schillebeeckx, in Ker and Hill 1990, 344).

It would seem that Schillebeeckx finds it difficult to ascertain the importance of the apostles' election as forefathers of the Christian church and their normative authority in writing the New Testament in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another question is who or what else could have been the norm for their experience with Jesus or for the Christian's experience in the world. Should Christians find other models for their faith or is the experience of their conversion to Christianity just another step towards a cosmic sense of the Kingdom of God? This test has its own sequel in the fifth and final evaluation that we are going to investigate here as proposed by Newman.

The Test of "Chronic Vigor"

NEWMAN'S SEVENTH test for the true development of the doctrine of resurrection is its "chronic vigor." The "chronic vigor" is opposed to the "transitory character of corruption" (Newman, in Ker and Hill 1990, 345). O'Collins points to the lack of consistency regarding the accounts on the appearances from Schillebeeckx's *Jesus* (1974) to his *Interim Report on the books Jesus and Christ* (1982). Between the three books there seems to be a change of input as to what was the real status of the resurrection appearances. Were they real historical events or just another way of expressing gratitude for what Jesus has done for the disciples in his lifetime? Or, rather, is resurrection a revelation of the way in which God himself identifies with humans as a "personal event" before or after a person's death (Cooper 2009, 180)? It is not clear from his various writings on this subject what Schillebeeckx's conclusion at this point might be. That is because he more than once hesitates between first denying the reality of appearances as visible historical signs, while in his *Interim Report* he admits that "when they experienced the living presence of the risen Lord, [the disciples] may have seen him alive" (Schillebeeckx, in Ker and Hill 1990, 346).

One may say that Newman's observations applied to Schillebeeckx's outlines on the doctrine of resurrection are frail because they were suggestions made a hundred years ago. It is possible, however, that suggestions very similar to Newman's appear even in nowadays critiques to Schillebeeckx's writings on the resurrection, at least if the "chronic vigor" that Newman referred to is the opposite of the symbolist notes in which Schillebeeckx also treated Jesus' death (see McManus 2005, 638–650), with his idea of diluting the meaning of Jesus' death into a metaphorical, non-historical attempt to save human beings from their own death (see Mosely 2008). Despite his critics, who find doctrinal flaws in his views on the resurrection, there are others for whom Schillebeeckx is none other than "a herald of God among us" (see Hilbert 2011, 15, 17) referring precisely to such issues as his teaching on the Holy Ghost, Christology, Christian faith,

the Eucharist and church ministry. As for his second teaching, we are informed here that the theologian was known to the English-speaking world prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) through the ideas gathered in his *Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, which could not have been the case since it was only translated into English in 1963 from its Flemish 1959 original. But the accent on Schillebeeckx's preoccupation with Christ as sacrament is worth mentioning him in the context of the mid- and late 1960s, when he was both a *peritus* (advisor, assistant) to the Dutch bishops participating in the meetings of the Second Vatican Council and an astute defender of the church-world relationship during his American conference tours. From Hilkert's interpretation of Schillebeeckx's notion of sacrament we gather that the sacrament is not a "magic ritual," but as a medium through which God's grace is "bestowed" upon the believer, it points towards the make up between God and men achieved in the incarnation of Christ, in which "God's love became tangible (and) historical" (Hilkert 2011, 16). Taking this discussion further, Schillebeeckx is shown here and elsewhere (see also Sison 2006, 199) as the theological architect of a new "political holiness" in what the church/God-world/man relationship is concerned: God is not, we are told, a *Deus ex machina* in Schillebeeckx's eschatological teaching; instead, paraphrasing one of Kennedy's works, he is *Deus Humanissimus* (see Kennedy 1993a) who is more and more accessible to people today, provided that the "later believers have access to the mystery of the Resurrection" (Hilkert 2011, 17). However, given the fact that Schillebeeckx's both personal advices to the bishops and his lectures to the American public in the 1960s went against the "doctrine of the magisterium" and underlined human experience in questions of grace and truth (debate followed by Hilkert and Schreiter 2002, xix–xxi, where he is quoted as saying that the entire humanity is the people of God), he was accused of tempering with the faith of the church as comprised in the Nicaea and Chalcedon creedal formula (see Sison 2006, 201). Lest one should forget, both discussions are kept within the area of politics, since the sacrament itself becomes economic in purpose, and today men and women get to know the mystery of the resurrection, i.e. Jesus the Christ in the same political and ecological milieu dominated by suffering and destruction. Finally, due to the fact that human experience is thus shaped by negative experiences, it can hardly be consistent with divine truth and revelation, and it is easy to see how it can be altered or corrupted by being generalized to contain all the people, believers or unbelievers, and by sin, which is not specific to divinity nor to the sacraments. But do all these tests of a sound doctrine of the resurrection mean anything for people today? Do they involve them in any way?

Two Positions on the Resurrection

IN ONE of his early papers on resurrection seen from a modern perspective, Fergusson (1985, 297) focuses on the relationship between the Christian faith and the doctrine of resurrection following three different interpretations. Two of them make the object of our present debate. When the criterion of historicity or non-historicity of this relationship is concerned, these two “rival” interpretations are labeled as radical and liberal. They come in this order following the answer each of them gives to Fergusson’s question “Is the resurrection an event in the life of Jesus or an event in the life of the believer?” (ibid.).

1. Resurrection and Radicalism

FERGUSSON HOLDS that the most referential aspect in Bultmann’s radical interpretation of the rise of the Christian faith was a profoundly non-historical event. This implies first that historical judgments cannot “verify the truth claims of the Christian faith.” Secondly, it is implied that there is no place for the idea of miracles within human history. And thirdly, as a consequence of this latter statement, all New Testament data on Jesus’ empty tomb and appearances should be critically verified and brought to date with the help of the historical-critical method.

Bultmann equated the birth of Christian faith with the efficiency of the Cross. Consequently, the raise of the Christian faith is not historically considered but it stands under the powerful meaning/significance of Jesus’ death. Just as Jesus’ bodily existence cannot be traced after the event of his death, faith and the idea of resurrection do not depend on historical data. They are rather interrelated and co-extensive.

What can be easily noticed is that Bultmann’s concepts of resurrection and Christian faith were not meant to support a genuine Christology. The reason for this is that, to answer Fergusson’s initial question, “the resurrection belongs not so much to the history of Jesus as to that of the Christian faith” (Fergusson 1985, 288). And again, to verify Newman’s observation on the question of miracles and God’s power to intervene in human history, Bultmann not only supports the idea that miracles are historically impossible, but accordingly that divine power in history is undesirable, and this is also Schillebeeckx’s case when he says that God is not a *Deus ex machina*, meaning that he left history to mankind, thus people are endowed with free will (Kennedy 1993a). Moreover, as Schillebeeckx too reckons, Bultmann considered that such demonstration of supernatural force would only confess to the drama of war between men and gods

described in mythological stories and legends. To avoid such conflicts one has to do justice to modern biblical interpretation as it tries to explain things like divine or angelic appearances in the New Testament. It would be more convenient to understand them idealistically and spiritually. Likewise, the resurrection is to be understood at best as a formula for Christian faith and hope: “If the event of Easter Day is in any sense a historical event additional to the event of the cross, it is nothing else than the rise of faith in the risen Lord” (Bultmann, in Fergusson 1985, 288).

The logical nuances that Bultmann gives here to his “interpretation” of the cross is understandably an effort to correct some errors related to the definition and existence of miracles. It implies, nevertheless, that the spectators at the developing “drama” between men and God/gods which Jesus’ death involved recognized Jesus as a deity and thus tried to get rid of his tempering with human life manifested through his “miracles.” Bultmann’s version in Christian context of a rather Greek tragedy is nevertheless missing its very point: gods’ “miracles” in the Ancient world more often than not afflicted the human race and were punishments for their transgression, whereas the miracles in the New Testament were always a blessing for their recipients either physically or spiritually. No divine power was forced upon people when those miracles were performed, just as no interpretation of them, be it ancient or modern, could question their reality as historical events, precisely because no interpretation falls short from the interpreter. (On the problem of ostensibly interpreting a doctrine with different nuances over the centuries, especially the reality of the resurrection, see Alison 1999, 163–164, review to Kenan B. Osborne, 1997.) In what the resurrection is concerned, fairly because Bultmann considers its possibility against the context of faith in the risen Jesus, a question could logically sum up Bultmann’s efforts to undermine its theological importance: if the resurrection was an addition to the historical event of the cross, why can it not be inferred that the resurrection had itself a historical extension? In Schillebeeckx’s thought, Bultmann stands here corrected, since, as previously stated, Schillebeeckx did not deny the possibility that Jesus’ appearances after his death were real.

2. Resurrection and Liberalism

SCHILLEBEECKX IS of interest also in relation to the second type of interpreting Christian faith and the resurrection, labeled as liberal. On the one hand, the radical position left us with a feeling of incertitude concerning the motivation for the apostles’ faith in Jesus. On the other hand, Schillebeeckx attempts to explain why Jesus’ life was so important that it required total trust

and faith in him after his death. Schillebeeckx indeed feels at ease when faced with the problem of miracles. He agrees that what Jesus did for the sick and dead may have been miracles because the eye-witnesses perceived them as such, even if one might not define them accordingly. In the same way, the miracle of Jesus' resurrection may have been real because the disciples found themselves believing in Jesus after his death.

At this point, David Fergusson suggests that Schillebeeckx offers inadequate explanations, and uses Hume's "criticism concerning the mutual destruction of arguments" (Fergusson 1985, 297). The problem he sees with Schillebeeckx's comments is that, historically, it is easier to think of the disciples' faith in a resurrected Jesus than to suggest the probability of the bodily resurrection of a dead person. The reason for this explanation is that Schillebeeckx, precisely like his pupil Roger Haight, is interested in making Christian tenets easier to grasp by the unbeliever, though one many would ask to what avail.

Paul Lakeland, for instance, sees the lax views and "reductionist" statements of faith in both theologians' thought (referring as well to those statements found in Schillebeeckx's *Christ: The Sacrament of the Encounter with God*) since, as Lakeland quotes Cavadini (2007, 19–22), "there is a difference between rendering Christian faith intelligible to a culture and reducing its central theological claim to a statement that even an atheist can affirm." Going back to the resurrection debate and seeing how Schillebeeckx presents Jesus "as merely pointing to God than . . . being himself God," this is a point well taken. In Schillebeeckx's likeness, Haight proposed that Jesus was a mere symbol of God in his *Jesus Symbol of God* from 1999. (Somehow belatedly, this proposition was sanctioned by the Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2004, see the notification to his book at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20041213_notification-fr-haight_en.html, retrieved October 2016.) Nevertheless, one should also be mindful of Cavadini's take on the outcome of the resurrection within nature and his accent on love as its most imperative result, since love is "always re-born and renewed," thus proposing a selective and simulating theology (see Cavadini 2003, 27).

To resume, however, it should be stated that unless the same person is not hypothetically resurrected, their faith would be a pretense. Unlike Schillebeeckx, one may not be at ease with the idea that the elimination of radicalism in the case of the resurrection makes every attempts like his plausible, since modern people would always have to ask what the miracles were as opposed to what the miracles mean. This distinction is thus perceived as something added to their essence and the need for an analogy begs the questions as to what the role of faith really was in the post-Easter events (see Meier 1995, 92).

However, we have already seen that Schillebeeckx does not leave us with mere allegations concerning the resurrection, but adds something to support his explanation. He did specify at some point that Jesus' post-Easter appearances might have been a genuine historical event. This is clearly very different from the thesis of the existential self which authenticates the appearances in the radical thought. Schillebeeckx seems convinced that faith in the resurrection is co-extensive with historical truth due to the reality of those appearances. However, not far from Bulmann's position, Schillebeeckx strongly maintains that faith and history are not internally related. In other words, faith does not stand on historical grounds. Faith in the resurrection is at first "the recognition of the intrinsic significance of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom." Secondly, it is "the manifestation of Jesus' communion of life with the living God." And thirdly, it is "the installation of the kingdom of God: the exaltation and glorification of Jesus to God" (Schillebeeckx 1987, 27). In every way, Schillebeeckx's faith in the resurrection transgresses history and is as independent from it as it can possibly be.

To sum up, the appearances show indeed a continuity in Jesus' ministry and teaching, but the question is do they stand for a continuity in Jesus' life? In Fergusson's words: "Is the resurrection an event in the life of Jesus or an event in the life of the believer?" (and this was a central aspect of the general resurrection that he followed in the Barth-Bultmann debate on the problem, see also Fergusson 2003, 65). Do they express only a change in the disciples' minds, a change of vision, or are they genuine visions of the living Jesus? The question has its significance as there is now a state of increasingly good feeling about the outcome of Jesus' suffering on the cross and his subsequent resurrection. This is even a news subject of great interest arousing from the folklore around the resurrection, which is always kept in the context of the meaning of the resurrection for the Christian world, for instance, and the meaning of a Passover in the Jewish tradition, and as we are informed the experiences "overlap": the disclaimer, however, is that one does not necessarily have to identify as a Christian in order to feel the power of the resurrection, just as one does not have to belong to a Jewish community in order to grasp the full sense of the suffering in all its variety. To continue this thought in the news, for "Christians, resurrection is a central article of faith. But even those who are not believers can see [its] value. It addresses one of the central anxieties of mankind: why is there so much suffering in the world? Easter says that suffering need not be in vain; that out of great despair, a new start is possible" (Freedland 2006, 13). If we are to disregard the journalese of the news in today's papers, a question still arises: how is it that the all-encompassing idea of suffering and its power to gather Christians, non-Christians, and even non-believers in the same experience at a fixed moment of

the year, i.e. Easter, is linked here with the concept of resurrection? It is indeed clear from these accounts that we are in fact recalling the/a resurrection whenever we celebrate Easter/the Passover, but the fact that such a resurrection could be “a new start” is far from comforting if it only lasts for a moment in time. Schillebeeckx would not maintain that the resurrection is all about the people and their momentous history, if, as we further read his work, the resurrection is in itself the “manifestation” of Jesus sharing in the life of the living God.

If, on the other hand, Jesus’ appearances imply only a change of mind, Jesus’ teachings would have certainly been sufficient and he would have been honorably remembered. But if the disciples believed in Jesus based on genuine visions of him alive, then their faith expresses the experience of a historical event and cannot be reduced to a spiritual uplifting. If the resurrection faith encountered Jesus in the historical realm of his living presence, Schillebeeckx’s strive to detach faith from empiricism cannot be explained, thus his theory of the resurrection cannot elude the Bultmannian tradition.

It is felt like it is an increasing necessity that Christians (and this is a case for lay Christians, those who outlive their faith and are thus seen by the non-believers) learned to make the “fundamental” difference between “‘the historical Jesus’, who is ‘available to us through the scientific study of the sources’, and ‘the real Jesus’ who is ‘much more than we can discover,’” especially since getting to the “real Jesus” need not contradict “our belief in either the Divinity or the humanity of Jesus” (Green 2000, 90–92). It appears that the real Jesus and him alive/risen cannot be divided into what was seen and what is known about him. Thus, if one is prone to changing his/her mind about Jesus on a regular basis, he/she could hardly be called a Christian. Since no contradiction may exist between Jesus and the living God, according to the Bible through which one knows Jesus and God, there cannot be, either logically or spiritually, a dead Jesus who is today honorably remembered by men and women based on his post Easter appearances or their fabricated faith in him. A different perception on the resurrection and Jesus would collide both logically and spiritually with the Christian teaching on both the event and the person who has risen and is now alive.

Final Analysis and Conclusions

THIS PAPER presented some aspects and metaphors used by Edward Schillebeeckx to define his concept of *humanum* (such as the Kingdom of God, the future of history, well-being, and the perfect human state as the “resurrection of the body”). Because Schillebeeckx views the Kingdom of God as a perfect community, he extends this image upon men and women living

in it, and thus called to be completely saved and happy. This calling was analyzed here as an equivalent of the resurrection of the body in Schillebeeckx's thought, a bodily resurrection by all means, which presupposes the human person in its corporeality and harmony.

This study showed more in depth that for Schillebeeckx the bodily resurrection infers an elevation of this same body to its *humanum* state for both aesthetic and ethical ends, a body with the individual properties of the *sarx*, yet always referred to in spiritual terms. Since we also wanted to see the implications of the resurrection for its beneficiaries, i.e. those who believe in it, our study looked at the development of the doctrine through John Henry Newman's seven tests of the so called "faithful development" and also the "corruption" of the doctrine from the standing point of his expertise in Christology.

Because Newman invested a considerable amount of energy and attention in these tests a hundred years before Schillebeeckx even began to write about the resurrection, we can place his efforts at the heart of modernism, thus applying, to a certain extent, to all Christian doctrines which made the object of controversies throughout the centuries. The fact that later on Newman's interest on the "faithful" development of this doctrine was resumed by Gerald O'Collins in *Newman's Seven Notes: The Case for Resurrection*, made us wonder as to the possibility of analyzing Schillebeeckx's thesis on Jesus' post-Easter appearances in the light of Newman's seven notes.

Out of Newman's seven notes on the resurrection we only considered five for this purpose (of which only four were deemed relevant by O'Collins), namely, the test of a faithful doctrine, the test of consistency with the traditional doctrine, the test of "logical sequence," "conservative tendency," and finally the test of "chronic vigor." In what Newman's test of "the power of assimilation" and "the anticipation of the doctrine's future" are concerned, O'Collins is more silent than reserved, as he is interested in how Schillebeeckx's failed to preserve the biblical data unmodified and the doctrine undamaged, rather than question the nature and consequences of the first and third tests, which perhaps are easy to assume from the other tests. However, as far as the "anticipation of the doctrine's future" goes, we feel that more time should have been spent in asking whether the resurrection still stands as a doctrine per se or is it just an appendix to Christology for that matter.

Given that the test of consistency with the traditional doctrine also considers the corporeal implications of resurrection, the stress here was on the extent of this image on modern theologians such as Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng, who both deal with the idea of an empty tomb. While Küng stresses the personal or bodily resurrection of Jesus, he is nevertheless doubtful that a spiritual body of (the risen) Jesus also requires his former earthly body. Consequently, the res-

urrection is approached from a new level of understanding, i.e. spiritual. The support he receives from Schillebeeckx is significant in that the latter explains Jesus' post-resurrection appearances by way of empiricism and concludes that the disciples had a change of heart/perception about the crucified Jesus. This double experiment, of the impact of the crucifixion and the impression of his bodily appearance secured, in Schillebeeckx's words, their faith in Jesus' resurrection as an experience of forgiveness and conversion by Jesus' death.

We further inspected the linearity of Newman's tests applied to Schillebeeckx's teaching on the resurrection by especially following his test of "logical sequence," because in O'Collins words it is the "logical succession or sequence of views from the original testimony to the appearances of the risen Christ." In our opinion, though, this test is wanting, too, since it does not do justice to the future generations of believers. In the light of this test, Schillebeeckx's view is only analyzed through his exegetical abilities of rendering the apostle Paul and other New Testament writers' capacity to logically explain the line of events which contributed to the disciples' awareness and faith in the risen Christ. In so doing, Schillebeeckx seems more conscious than Newman that Jesus' words should have precedence over his appearances. Thus, it can be inferred that while traditional hermeneutics approached the doctrine of resurrection by first mentioning the impact of the external visible signs of Jesus' appearances, and as a sequel the power of these experiences to raise faith in the risen Christ, Schillebeeckx wanted to fill the gap between the traditionalists and his times with the help of his exegetical abilities. The explanations he gave to the post Easter events moved him to say that the disciples first believed in the risen Christ, and only afterwards was their faith strong enough to further stories about Jesus' appearances and the empty tomb.

The fourth test analyzed here dealt with Newman's sixth note on the true development of the doctrine of resurrection, which O'Collins emphasized as "a tendency conservative of what has gone before it." According to this new test of faith in the resurrection, Schillebeeckx has his doubts regarding the apostles' ability to appreciate correctly the role of these appearances both for them and their posterity, as he is also suspicious of the apostles' normative role in witnessing and giving an interpretation of both Jesus' teaching and their post-Eastern experience. Thus, when confronted with this test of faith, Schillebeeckx fails to consider in more depth the importance of the time the apostles spent in the company of Jesus during his earthly life, which he essentially motivates with the comment that such experiences are the same for each individual.

As the final test for the true development of the doctrine of resurrection was considered, the "chronic vigor" of this doctrine was confronted with what Newman called the "transitory character of corruption" or deformation of said

doctrine. We proceeded from O'Collins's discussion on the lack of consistency regarding the accounts on the appearances which Schillebeeckx presented in his books on Jesus and Christ from 1974 to 1982. Disconcerted with the fact that there is a change in accent and heart between Schillebeeckx's three books concerning the real status of the resurrection appearances, O'Collins tried to estimate how much bearing history has on Schillebeeckx's view. Though we did not reassess the texts referring to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples in the light of his resurrection, we looked at the function of the appearances as real historical events or, quite the opposite, as stories indicative of the disciple's gratitude towards the blessings with which Jesus surrounded them in his lifetime. This objective-subjective attitude was also considered over against the view on the resurrection a revelation of the way in which God himself identifies with humans in the most strategic moments of their life.

A conclusion reached at this final test was that Schillebeeckx's thoughts on the appearances are somewhat indecisive, as he first denies the reality of the appearances as historical signs, while subsequently admitting to the possibility of the bodily presence on account of Jesus' living presence as the risen Lord. This hesitation prompted us to look further into the problem of historicity in the second half of this study, where we investigated the two positions on the resurrection as formulated by David Fergusson, whose discussion about the relationship between the Christian faith and the doctrine of resurrection was followed along two conflicting interpretations emerging from the historicity debate.

The first type of interpreting the resurrection comes from radicalism, mainly from the Bultmannian tradition, which states that the rise of the Christian faith was a profoundly non-historical event, thus a direct implication of this argument would be that no historical judgments can speak for the truth claims of the Christian faith. As a consequence, we analyzed the role and place of divine miracles within human history, which is clearly disproved by this type of interpretation, as is the idea of the Jesus' empty tomb and his appearances present in the New Testament account on the resurrection.

At this point Bultmann's thesis on the resurrection was verified against the second major implication stemming from his historical-critical method, namely the utilitarian character of the resurrection, since Bultmann implies that the birth of the Christian faith is a result of the efficiency of the Cross. In the light of his statement that Christian faith cannot be looked upon historically, but only symbolically based on the significance of Jesus' death, the radical interpretation says that resurrection is rather co-extensive with, not backed up by historical data.

Under these auspices the character of the resurrection today was deemed as a pretense: unless the same person is not hypothetically resurrected, faith in the resurrection is nonsensical, just like faith in mythical stories. Here we also

considered the second type of interpreting the resurrection, namely the liberal position and Schillebeeckx's attempt to explain why Jesus' life was so important that it required total trust and faith in him after his death. This position was analyzed as an experiment which relates Schillebeeckx back to the Christian tradition by admitting to the reality of miracles within the *humanum* as proven by Jesus' deeds for the sick and the dead, notwithstanding their different assimilation and explanation over the centuries. Though not sufficiently poignant and conclusive, Schillebeeckx' input on the resurrection from this angle seems to be, among the myriad of interpretations nowadays, a clearer view on this problem particularly because it links Jesus' miracles performed during his earthly mission to the miracles of his resurrection. However, Schillebeeckx' conclusion that this is precisely why Jesus' followers then and now believe in him may not be the most brilliant finding of this type of interpretation regarding the rationality of their faith in the resurrection.

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Abstract

Edward Schillebeeckx's Position on Resurrection and the Time Test: What is Resurrection Today?

This paper is an inquiry into Edward Schillebeeckx' (1914–2009) concept of resurrection, though it is fairly different from a thorough analysis of the meaning of resurrection per se. The difference comes from the fact that we will not simply view his take on the concept as a peculiar experiment, but the question of the importance of resurrection today receives special attention. This does not mean that a certain effort of defining and elaborating on the significance of Schillebeeckx's concept of resurrection will want; however, the purpose here will be to literally put this concept to the test and emerge into the tradition associated with this term over the years. A final purpose will be to see where Schillebeeckx stands at the end of this experiment, as it will be linked to the two poignant interpretations of resurrection today, namely the radical and liberal positions. The aim in this experiment is to decide on whether or not there is still need to talk about resurrection nowadays and how critical it is to seriously ask about it in this human history facing its end. This paper explores this concept based on its impact on the *humanum* or the potential of human history, always with an eye to its future, where in Schillebeeckx's thought the perfect human state will be completed.

Keywords

Edward Schillebeeckx, resurrection, eschatology, *humanum*, tradition