

Adding a chapter on this ‘Brussels’-dimension between Hans Joas’s contribution on the Catholic Church’s interventions in national debates, and Massimo Franco’s discussion on the role of the Holy See (which he mistakenly calls ‘the Vatican’) in world-politics would have provided the reader with a more complete picture of the current state of the debate. At the same time, it could have provided some interesting insights in the role and functioning of regional bishops’ conferences, which are currently under discussion at the highest levels of the Church. A surprising detail, at least to this Dutch reviewer, was Franco’s claim that the Netherlands has a Lutheran majority, which is not, and never has been the case (For those interested, the figures in 2013 were: 26% Roman Catholics, 16% Protestants, 5% Muslims, 6% others, i.e., Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, 47% of the population does not define themselves as religious).

Reading Stephen Calleya’s chapter on a strategic perspective for a new era in Euro-Mediterranean relations is like reading a prophet, but too late. Calleya warns that Europe should get ready to the rising challenge of irregular migration in the Mediterranean in the wake of the Arab Spring, and the impact this could have on national attitudes towards migrants. At the time of writing Calleya could not have foreseen how the Calais refugee camps, the Syrian refugee crisis, and the attacks in Paris on November 13th, 2015 would change European attitudes and politics almost beyond recognition.

In conclusion, we should welcome studies in which practitioners in the field of law and religion share their academic reflections on their experiences with the world. In this respect the book contains some valuable insights and thoughtful arguments. But because Kmiec and his interlocutors have not engaged seriously with an important part of the European public square, Brussels, I feel that the reader is a bit let down.

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**HOPE IN ACTION: SUBVERSIVE ESCHATOLOGY IN THE THEOLOGY OF EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX AND JOHANN BAPTIST METZ** by Steven M. Rodenborn, *Fortress Press*, Minneapolis, 2014, pp. 366, £25.99, pbk

Hans Urs von Balthasar once called eschatology the ‘storm zone’ of contemporary theology, and Joseph Ratzinger added the commentary that eschatology has not only moved into the centre of the theological stage, but appears even to dominate the entire theological landscape. Two of the main representatives of this ‘eschatological turn’ in theology in the 1960s are the German theologian Johann Baptist Metz and his Belgian colleague Edward Schillebeeckx. Both theologians developed very similar approaches in their theology, and it is therefore only natural

to compare both models and their theological development towards a new emphasis on the eschatological character of Christian faith.

The American theologian Steven M. Rodenborn now presents with his book *Hope in Action* just such a comparison between Schillebeeckx and Metz, and he does not simply want to describe both models of theology. He also asks the question, whether these models provide any resources for the vital questions in theology today. Both Metz and Schillebeeckx show in their different approaches the move in theology from an emphasis on individual eschatology, which means the question of the life after death of the individual, to universal eschatology as the question of the end of history in general and the radical change of the social and political conditions of mankind in the *Eschaton*. This can be seen in the theologies of Schillebeeckx and Metz themselves, who changed their theological models from a more transcendental model, which was interested in the conditions for the justification of Christian hope in the individual subject, to the focus on the social conditions of Christian faith within a more and more secularized society. Rodenborn describes how both theologians respond to the challenge of secularization, including their attempt at finding positive connections between Christian faith and secularization, in their earlier theologies, until both realised that, as Rodenborn points out, the main challenge to the apologetic task of justifying Christian hope is not secularisation as such, but the contrast between this hope and the reality of suffering in this world. Both theologians became more critical of the modern optimism of secular progress, and they tried to present the Christian narrative of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as a motivation for the resistance of Christian hope against the ongoing history of human suffering.

The main difference between Schillebeeckx and Metz, as Rodenborn points out, is the question whether the hope is already, but only implicitly, present in this history, based on the general trust in the God of creation, as Schillebeeckx emphasizes, or if the encounter with the 'dangerous memory' of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ only opens the space where a hope in the saving action of God might be possible, as the model of Metz suggests. Rodenborn calls this model 'apocalyptic eschatology', while Schillebeeckx's approach offers a model of 'prophetic eschatology', with Jesus Christ as the figure of the 'eschatological prophet'. Both models nevertheless coincide in the primacy of Christian praxis and their critique of a more theoretical and speculative form of theology, which tries to reconcile the contrast between suffering and salvation prematurely in abstract and theoretical concepts. The 'New Political Theology', developed by Metz, put instead the practical categories of the 'dangerous memories' and 'anamnesic reason' at the centre of theology, while Schillebeeckx points out that the so-called 'contrast experience' is a universal experience of all human beings and as an explicit 'No' against human suffering, it is carried by an implicit 'Yes', which can be identified by Christians as the hope in the God of creation,

without being able to transform this implicit 'Yes' into certain knowledge of reason. This hope can only be anticipated today in a praxis of liberation, which tries already to overcome the conditions of suffering, which nevertheless can only be achieved ultimately in the *Eschaton* itself.

Rodenborn's book gives a very good account of the development of Schillebeeckx and Metz, and he is able to show how both are influenced by the changes in contemporary culture, philosophy and social sciences. By addressing the main challenge of suffering and eschatology, his book presents an excellent introduction to the theologies of Schillebeeckx and Metz with its wide range of material used. In the end, however, the question remains whether Rodenborn keeps his promise of discussing the contemporary challenges for theology in the light of the eschatological theology of Metz and Schillebeeckx. He clearly recognizes the main point of this challenge, by stating that it has become very difficult to connect the Christian narrative of hope with a society which has become increasingly apathetic and indifferent to the history of suffering.

Rodenborn also appreciates the earlier writings of Metz and Schillebeeckx, which distinguishes his work from many other studies which only focus on the later work of both theologians. But Rodenborn still also considers these earlier writings only as steps in the development of both theologians, but not as possible resources for a renewal of the theological task of justifying Christian hope today. It seems that he shares the suspicion against the more metaphysical and transcendental approaches of these earlier stages of theology. But the crisis of Christian hope in our world today might call for a new approach in theology towards an explicitly transcendental and metaphysical understanding of the existential human conditions, which only enables human beings to experience the contrast of suffering and the interruption of dangerous memories. This would lead to the question of a transcendental concept of human freedom, which both Schillebeeckx and Metz only very superficially address in their theologies, while focusing on human liberation in general. The question of the future of Political Theology, which Rodenborn raises in his study, is in any case still important in the context of theology today and his study provides a remarkable starting point for a necessary debate.

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