

BOOKS

# Schillebeeckx: A Romance with the Truth

By Father Augustine P. Hennessy

Every great theologian must have a kinship of mind and heart with the patriarch Jacob.

Jacob wrestled all night with a mysterious angelic presence and at daybreak emerged victorious but wounded. Thereafter, Jacob's life was a strange commingling of leaping and limping.

Father Edward Schillebeeckx's life and experience as a theologian has also involved the phenomenon of leaping and limping. From the days of his preordination studies when he wrote a paper on "the way in which conceptualism could be transcended" until the unfinished works of his 70-year lifespan, he has been engaged in leaping broad jumps in the

"Edward Schillebeeckx: In Search of the Kingdom of God," by John Bowden. Crossroad (New York, N.Y., 1983). 164 pp., \$8.95.

arena of a theologian's pondering and a lover's yearning for the integration of his experience.

As one whose life experience in the area of theologizing runs parallel with the time-span of Father Schillebeeckx, I cannot help but find John Bowden's study of his mind and heart a challenge to engage in deep soul-searching myself. What should theology do for a man who makes it his profession? Above all, it should make him a lover of the mystery who is Jesus Christ.

Father Schillebeeckx is blessed in having as an expositor and critic one who loves him, especially for his

integrity as an inner-directed thinker. Bowden is an editor, a theologian, a translator of Father Schillebeeckx's books, and a pedagogue of exquisite skill.

Bowden's chapter on the life of Father Schillebeeckx is so insightful that it enables us to understand the man even when we may not be able to understand the theologian. One of 14 children, Edward was strongly influenced by his father, Constant Johannes Schillebeeckx, who was conscious of his own priestly function as head of his household.

When the young Dominican student, Edward, wrote home in a romanticiz-

ing way about his getting up in the middle of the night to chant matins, the father responded, "My boy, your mother and I have had to get up three or four times a night to calm a crying baby and that is less romantic than your night office. Think about it; religion is not an emotional state but an attitude of service."

The elder Schillebeeckx was not ready to yield his priestly role even to his two priest-sons. When his mother suggested that Edward say grace at a family meal, his father objected, saying, "In this house, I'm the priest."

A chapter in Bowden's book is called, "Jesus." Father Schillebeeckx's two volumes, "Jesus" and "Christ" come to cumulatively more than 1,000 pages. This is surely a monumental effort

but is marked by excessive humanization of the sacred humanity of the Word of God made flesh.

Still more controversial, however, is the material in Bowden's chapter on ministry. Here, so it seems, Father Schillebeeckx has too close a kinship with other declericalization efforts which have little tolerance for the need for an ordained ministry in the church.

But ultimately it is the heart which brings any believer to full theological insight. Father Schillebeeckx's treatment of Dominican spirituality is a beautiful tribute to the tradition of Dominican teachers who have made him who he is.

Two sayings of St. Thomas Aquinas should be kept in mind while reflecting on the

grandeur and the misery of a theologian's romance with truth.

The first is from his commentary on St. John's Gospel: "The knowledge of truth is given to us through the fervor of charity." The second comes from his treatise on faith; translated freely, it avers: the act of faith does not reach its goal when we can put a truth of faith into words, but rather when we can embrace a reality too wonderful for words.

In this respect, a theologian must be a lover; and in this book Father Schillebeeckx emerges as a man in love with truth.

Passionist Father Hennessy is a former theology professor and editor and was a charter member and president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

"The Practice of Faith," by Father Karl Rahner. Crossroad (New York, 1983). 316 pp., \$19.50.

Reviewed by William F. Loewe  
NC News Service

Subtitled "A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality," this volume comprises 65 brief excerpts from Father Rahner's writings over the past two decades, loosely arranged by the editors under the headings of "Faith," "Love" and "Hope."

Now approaching his 80th birthday, Father Rahner has won, by his efforts to trace the taproots of Christian belief deep in our common human existence, a secure place among the fathers of the Church in our century.

The heart of Father Rahner's vision is simplicity, an analysis of our being human as a thirst and a drive, beyond any

particular intellectual or moral accomplishment, toward the incomprehensible mystery which supports and guides all our efforts and which alone can finally satisfy us.

In Christ we find that this God of mystery has come to meet us, offering divine love and pledging our ultimate fulfillment. Christian faith, then, centers on the single three-fold mystery of grace, incarnation and Trinity.

In Father Rahner this single-minded vision draws nourishment from a thoroughly Catholic sensibility, and so the present volume ranges over such traditional topics as indulgences, purgatory, confession, and devotion to Mary and to the Sacred Heart.

But if he cherishes the riches of tradition, he refuses to ossify them. His writing

evinces enormous pastoral concern and patience for those who find even the weightiest dogmas of the faith simply unintelligible, and the same concern issues in sharp criticism of clerical bureaucrats whose smugness in administering the community dulls them to the challenge of a faith which no one can claim as an assured personal possession.

Because, for Father Rahner, God has chosen human experience as the medium of grace, Christian spirituality must renounce any elitism. Hence this "handbook" can tackle subjects as complex as the modern responsibility for structuring societies in accord with justice, but it can also offer advice on home Masses, choosing a vocation and catechizing children.

As the French novelist Georges Bernanos had it, all is, or can be, grace, and Father Rahner would direct us to embrace, rather

than escape, the ordinariness of our everyday lives as the place in which God calls us to himself.

Father Rahner is, of course, not an easy author to read. Still, at a time when spirituality is in danger of becoming a fad and a lucrative commodity, it seems especially worthwhile to turn to a writer of classic stature. Especially in his case, even when the thought becomes complex or the style heavy, the personal experience of the mystery of God comes through.

The comprehensiveness of the present volume, together with the brevity of its selections, enable it to serve well as a sampler for the reader to explore at a leisurely, reflective pace.

(Loewe teaches systematic theology in the Department of Religion and Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America.)

TELEVISION

## Woody Guthrie Takes TV's Center Stage

New York (NC) — The phonograph and the radio prevented the folk song tradition from being limited to a particular region or group, allowing it to become part of the musical mainstream of the nation. The man most responsible for making such folk songs as popular as any Tin Pan Alley tune is the subject of "Woody Guthrie: Hard Travelin'," a documentary airing Saturday, March 3, 8-9:30 p.m. EST on PBS.

Guthrie sang about the common problems and pleasures of people he met on the road and in the workplace with a homespun lyricism that still touches listeners today.

A Dust Bowl refugee from Oklahoma, he brought his guitar to Los Angeles in 1937 and became a radio balladeer popular with other displaced Oakies. There he met labor organizer Will Geer, later to

become well known as TV's Grandpa Walton, who invited Guthrie to sing at labor meetings and rallies for social causes.

Guthrie's reputation grew and CBS soon brought him to New York for a weekly network radio show. The money was good but instead of settling down, he soon quit for a job with Oregon's Bonneville Dam. There, in 1940, he wrote 26 songs in 30 days.

After he served in the Merchant Marine during World War II, his songs were turned into juke-box hits sought after by top recording stars. The royalties poured in.

Tragically, his health was deteriorating because of Huntington's Disease, an incurable hereditary disorder of the nervous system. From 1952 he was in and out of hospitals until his death in 1967.

Guthrie's creative years comprised little more than a decade in which he wrote more than 1,000 songs. Many of those have become popular standards, such as "This Land Is Your Land" and "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You." Much of their continuing appeal stems from Guthrie's empathy for the common struggle of ordinary people and his love for the land and its bounty.

Never losing the idealism of his rural youth or the strong sense of solidarity with the victims of the Depression, Guthrie's songs derided the bosses, politicians, financiers and all the others he saw as exploiting the common good for their own benefit. It is this part of his legacy that inspired the songs of social protest later sung by civil rights marchers, the anti-Vietnam movement, environmentalists and peace groups.

Among Guthrie's many heirs, the anti-establishment, Bob Dylan began his career by imitating Guthrie's style and even his voice.

Woody's son Arlo Guthrie, who established his own identity as a folksinger, takes the viewer on a cross-country journey to meet those who knew his father and played some part in his career.

It is Woody himself, however, whose voice on an old recording describes the hard times of his Oklahoma youth. Other folksingers, most notably Pete Seeger, a folk legend in his own right, provide an anecdotal account of the man and his gift of song.

Although the film's emphasis is on Guthrie's contributions as a folk artist, it becomes clear that his personal life was troubled and less than exemplary. His first wife left him because of

his wanderings and for a time, he strayed from his second wife, Arlo's mother. But she stood by him through all the difficult years of hospitalization that followed.

Omitted, however, is any mention of the political climate after the war in which a number of folksingers found themselves blacklisted for having alleged pro-communist sympathies — an accusation which meant little for Guthrie, who was largely inactive during those years.

"Ingrid," PBS, March 7

Ingrid Bergman, a Swedish actress who became an American movie star, was exiled from Hollywood because of an affair with foreign director Roberto Rossellini. Welcomed back eight years later, she became the superstar whose story is told in "Ingrid," a documentary airing Wednesday, March 7, 9:10-10:33 p.m. EST on PBS.

The uneven time period indicates that PBS is once again in a fundraising mode, this one called "Festival '84" whose motto is "TV worth paying for." One of the standard offerings in these public appeals for support is a nostalgic profile of a popular movie star. This has proved successful over the years but in the case of Miss Bergman, no such excuse is necessary.

All such screen biographies are necessarily dissatisfying because they rely on bits and pieces of films that mean little to those who have never seen them and they are never enough for those who have.

In this regard, Gene Feldman's "Ingrid" is no better or worse than the others. But it is in the interviews with those who knew and worked with her that the film rises above most of its kind.

Jose Ferrar, who worked with her on "Joan of Arc," explains tactfully but sensibly Miss Bergman's growing alienation from the Hollywood studio system and the outrage of the public when her affair with Rossellini became front-page news.

Liv Ullmann, recalling Miss Bergman's professionalism in making "Autumn Sonata" without anyone knowing that she was receiving treatments for cancer, pays tribute not only to Miss Bergman's craft but to her force of personality and independent spirit. She suffered because of this, but Ullmann believes that made her a better person and a better actress.

In trying to get beyond the usual fan magazine awe of its subject and to seek the person behind the image, "Ingrid" succeeds better than most.

## CATHOLIC BROADCAST SCHEDULE

PROGRAM	CABLE COMPANY	CHANNEL	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.
American Catholic with Fr. John Powell, S.J.	American Cable (Rochester)	5	(3/5) 2:00 PM	(3/6)	(3/7)	(3/8) 10:00 AM	(3/9) 7:00 PM
	American Cable (Webster)	5	8:00 PM				
	Peoples Cable (Subr. Rochester)	19	7:30 PM				
	Channel 12 West (Greece, Gates, Chili)	12				8:00 PM	
The Glory of God with Fr. John Bertolucci	American Cable (Rochester)	5	4:00 PM			12:00 Noon	9:00 PM
	Channel 12 West (Greece, Gates, Chili)	12				7:30 PM	