

## With the Risen Lord: François-Xavier Durrwell (1912-2005): A Tribute

Anne Hunt

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**Abstract:** *Prior to François-Xavier Durrwell's ground-breaking work on the resurrection, the understanding of redemption or salvation had been almost entirely centred on the incarnation and death of Jesus and, following Anselm, had been expressed in juridical terms. By sharply contrasting this prevailing classical teaching against the scriptural witness to the faith and understanding of the early Church, Durrwell effectively rendered such juridically-fashioned theologies of redemption unsustainable. Secondly, his unfailing instinct for the properly theological significance of the resurrection precipitated a renewed appreciation in systematic theology of the paschal mystery, per se, that was to bear two remarkable fruits: the recognition, firstly, of the paschal mystery of death and resurrection as positively constitutive of the mystery of salvation, and, secondly, as profoundly and indeed preeminently revelatory of the trinitarian mystery of God. Thirdly, his insistence that theology return to the biblical sources as its wellsprings remains a most significant contribution.*

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**Key Words:** François-Xavier Durrwell; Jesus Christ – resurrection; Jesus Christ – redemption; Paschal Mystery; Holy Spirit; Trinity; juridical soteriology

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**T**he Easter Triduum or Paschal Triduum, commencing on the evening of Holy Thursday and culminating in the Easter Vigil of Holy Saturday, is the feast of all feasts, the climax of the Church's liturgical year. When we celebrate the mystery of salvation in which our Lord Jesus Christ passes through suffering and death to the new life of the resurrection, it is to enact our participation, individually and collectively, in his paschal mystery. The Church's sense of Jesus' passage to new life through suffering and death emerged very early in the Christian proclamation, prayer and worship, long before the development of doctrine. Faith recognizes the deep structure of the Paschal Triduum liturgies: the resurrection is celebrated not just as a moment of triumph and vindication "after" Jesus' suffering and quite separate from it, but as a mystery born in and of his suffering. We celebrate the one paschal mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is not simply a matter of progression from one stage to another, but a passage or passing over in which both death and resurrection are preserved in the dynamism of the one mystery. This mystery is tangibly expressed in the very body of the risen and glorified Christ who bears for all eternity the wounds of his suffering love. Two thousand years later, the inextricable connection between death and resurrection in the one paschal mystery – so strong and perduring an instinct of the Church – continues to undergird and shape the liturgies of the Great Paschal Triduum and indeed every celebration of the Eucharist.

This raises the question as to how the significance of the resurrection faded from Christian memory and lost its place of preeminence in Christian theology, with a

correlative shift in attention and emphasis to the incarnation. The controversy concerning the status of the Son and his generation from the Father, catapulted to prominence in the fourth century by the teachings of Arius, no doubt contributed to a shift in focus from the resurrection (the return of the Son to the Father) to the incarnation (the descent of the Son from the heavens, wherein his procession from the Father finds expression in his visible mission). To that degree, questions crucial for the clarification of the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation deflected attention away from the theological significance of the resurrection. The Christological question raised by Arius prompted the formulation of trinitarian doctrine. As a result, trinitarian doctrine was shaped by its reactions to Arianism. Its focus was on the eternal generation of the Son and his descent from the Father. The revelation of the Trinity manifested in the death and resurrection of the incarnate Son was pushed to the margins.

The French theologian and Redemptorist priest, François-Xavier Durrwell CSsR, in his book, *La Resurrection de Jésus, mystère de salut: Etude biblique*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1950, was significant in restoring the balance. His study put the resurrection once more at the centre of Christian thinking. Durrwell's rich and brilliant insight continued to inspire him for the rest of his life until his death at the venerable age of ninety-three. Numerous papers and publications followed in the decades after the publication of *The Resurrection*, all elaborating on this same resurrection theme, and culminating in his last book, *Christ Notre Pâque* in 2001, his "evening offering" as he himself described it.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this paper is to pay tribute to Durrwell's highly significant contribution to a renewed appreciation of the paschal and trinitarian dimensions of the mystery of redemption as well as the ramifications of his contribution for theology more generally.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to Durrwell's ground-breaking study, the prevailing approach to an understanding of the mystery of redemption was fashioned along essentially juridical lines. Jesus' work of redemption was understood to have been effected through his incarnation, and principally through his suffering and death. It was not the resurrection, but his death which secured our salvation. When, and if, the resurrection was mentioned, it was not in terms of its decisive role in effecting our salvation, but more as addendum, proof or validation.

Anselm's theory of divine justice and its stress on the notion of satisfaction effectively precipitated the juridical approach to the mystery of redemption which gained strong currency in the West. If, as Anselm argued, redemption equals satisfaction, then the resurrection, which is apparently not a work of satisfaction, is not redemptive in any intrinsic manner. From this perspective, the resurrection is almost incidental and extrinsic to the work of redemption. Even Thomas Aquinas, following Anselm, employed the categories of merit and satisfaction.<sup>4</sup> But, as Bernard Catão has demonstrated, Thomas, unlike Anselm, attributed an efficient causality to the passion, death and resurrection in achieving our salvation.<sup>5</sup> Aquinas, for his part, interpreted the passion as an expression of a

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<sup>1</sup> We shall hereafter refer to the English translation, *The Resurrection: A Biblical Study*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Sheed and Ward, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> We shall hereafter refer to the English translation, *Christ Our Passover: The Indispensable Role of Resurrection in Our Salvation*, trans. John F. Craghan (Liguori Missouri: Liguori, 2004), xiii.

<sup>3</sup> See also the chapter on Durrwell's work in my *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> *STh* III. q. 56, aa. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Catão, *Salut et rédemption chez S. Thomas D'Aquin*, Théologie études publiées sous la direction de la Faculté de Théologie S. J. Lyon-Fourvière, vol. 62. (Paris: Aubier, 1965). Catão observes that, while Aquinas

voluntary human action, a perfect act of love. Later theology, however, drastically truncated the dimension of divine love that was so deeply embedded in Aquinas' explication, and emphasised instead the juridical dimension of the mystery of redemption.

As a result, the theology of redemption was based on theories of reparation, atonement, or satisfaction. Christ's life and death were the focal considerations, as distinct from his resurrection. Jesus' loving obedience constituted the formal element by means of which the divine demand for justice is satisfied. Salvation was understood to be obtained by him, rather than realised in him. The death of Jesus was effectively reduced to a work, which obtained the reconciliation of humanity to God. It was not the person of Jesus but the action of Jesus, an effect essentially exterior to himself, which was recognised as salvific. Other aspects of redemption, most particularly the resurrection, thus came to be regarded as basically peripheral to the essentially juridical nature of redemption. If the resurrection was redemptive in any way at all, it was only to the extent of constituting a motive of credibility. The resurrection was thus relegated to a distinctly lesser role compared to the death of Jesus, and so was consigned to the domain of apologetics. It was more of an epilogue, supplement or apologetic proof in regard to the fullness of redemption, but essentially extrinsic to it. In effect, the mystery of the resurrection was radically shorn of its theological significance.

### *Durrwell's Consuming Passion: The Properly Theological Significance of the Resurrection*

With striking clarity, Durrwell recognised that such a juridically-fashioned theology of redemption is seriously defective and that it does not accord with the New Testament data. He noted that, in apostolic times, the resurrection was source and centre of Christian faith. The Good News which the apostles proclaimed is not that pardon has been accorded, or that a debt has been settled, or that reparation or satisfaction has been effected, but that Jesus is risen as the firstborn of all creation. Scripture speaks in terms of communion with Christ who in the parousia of the resurrection comes to us as the centre of a new communion of life.<sup>6</sup> In the New Testament, the resurrection is no mere epilogue or supplement to the mystery of our salvation, serving a merely apologetic function. Rather, in and through the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, salvation is effected by the triune God.

Durrwell argued that it was when redemption came to be considered, not as a trinitarian event, but instead as a work of the God-man, that juridical notions of redemption developed. Instead of an understanding of the Father who, in the Holy Spirit, engenders his Son in the world and leads him, through his life and death, to the fullness of his Sonship, redemption came to be described in terms of God's infinite justice which required infinite satisfaction. In this way, Jesus' death came to be considered as a payment in satisfaction of a debt and not as entrance into communion. His death was disconnected from the resurrection so as to have a redemptive role imputed to it alone. Durrwell also noted that, not only was an understanding of the role of the resurrection impoverished, but the person of the Holy Spirit was particularly difficult to situate in such juridically-

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employs the categories of merit and satisfaction of his time, he explicates the instrumental efficacy of the actions of Christ in the work of salvation, in a way that is absolutely unique (xiv).

<sup>6</sup> François-Xavier Durrwell, "Mystère pascal et Parousie: L'importance sotériologique de la présence du Christ," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 95 (1973): 253-78, especially 268-70.

fashioned theologies. Durrwell accounted in this way for the fact that a treatment of the Holy Spirit is almost absent from theology in recent centuries.<sup>7</sup>

Durrwell's seminal study, *The Resurrection*, presented a comprehensive treatment of the biblical texts dealing with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this way, he sought to reclaim the properly theological significance of the resurrection by means of a return to the biblical data. The notion of the death and resurrection as two aspects of the one paschal mystery emerged with special clarity,<sup>8</sup> to foreshadow in fact Vatican II's rediscovery of the paschal mystery.<sup>9</sup>

The fruit of a refined biblical scholarship, *The Resurrection* represented a new method of scriptural inquiry and a shift in theological method. As a work of 'biblical theology,' it effectively lies somewhere between exegesis and systematics. It is less critical and less technical compared to current exegetical procedures, yet more ambitious in its systematic effort. At the same time, it eschews philosophical categories and is more fully biblical than the traditional schemes of systematic theology.

### *Durrwell's Deepth of the Mystery of the Resurrection*

Central to Durrwell's understanding of the resurrection was what he described as its permanent actuality and eschatological plenitude. In the resurrection, the Son is raised to the fullness and glory, the plenitude of divine sonship. All the eschatological attributes of Christ, such as power and lordship of the universe, are a reality from the moment of the resurrection onwards. The kingdom of God is established in him. The Spirit, the eschatological gift, is completely communicated through him and, henceforth, all the gifts of the Spirit come from him.<sup>10</sup> The resurrection of all the dead and the last judgement are contained in him; and in him, the summit of salvation history is achieved. For Durrwell, the resurrection is the eschatological event.<sup>11</sup> Logically and theologically, there is nothing more to be added to this eschatological plenitude of the risen Christ, for nothing can be added to plenitude. It is therefore the eschatological mystery. In short, the risen Christ is not only the anticipation of eschatological consummation, but is, in person, eschatology itself.<sup>12</sup>

Since nothing is able to be added to the fullness of the glory of the risen Christ, Jesus' resurrection knows no tomorrow.<sup>13</sup> He lives eternally in this moment of glorification. The eschatological plenitude of the resurrection is effectively synonymous with its permanent reality. Durrwell described it as an eternal (that is, ever present) actuality. The resurrection remains ever present, ever actual. It remains forever in act. The glorification of Jesus is thus a permanent actuality. Durrwell explained:

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<sup>7</sup> Durrwell, original French edition, *L'Esprit du Père et du Fils* (Paris: Médiaspaul, 1989). English translation, *The Spirit of the Father and of the Son: Theological and Ecumenical Perspectives*, trans. Robert Nowell (Middlegreen, Slough: St Paul Publications, 1990), 8. Hereafter, *The Spirit of the Father and of the Son*.

<sup>8</sup> Certainly, the notion of the Paschal Mystery was well established in the Christian tradition, but its use, in both the eastern and western theological traditions, was largely confined to liturgical reference. Durrwell's introduction of the notion into theology as such marked a new development.

<sup>9</sup> See *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), aa. 5, 6, 61, 104, 106; *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), aa. 22, 38, 52; *Optatam Totius* (Decree on Priestly Formation), a. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Durrwell, *The Resurrection*, 103-5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, *Christ Our Passover*, 15, where Durrwell reiterates this point again.

<sup>13</sup> Durrwell, *The Resurrection*, 131.

We must take it that Christ will never grow any older than he was at the Resurrection, that his life remains new, that his body, new-born in the Spirit, never grows beyond the moment of his Easter birth and therefore that the Father's action in raising Christ continues eternally in its single moment.<sup>14</sup>

While the achievement of our redemption has taken place in our past, in Christ it remains already and for always fully actualised. Jesus is ever present in the reality of his death and resurrection. Because he lives eternally in this plenitude, Durrwell recognises his resurrection as a permanent and eternal divine action. As Durrwell writes: "God's act of raising is a permanent lasting reality. We must... see the Resurrection as both an event preceded and followed by others and a divine action outside history."<sup>15</sup> The resurrection is a permanent actuality, both inside and outside of time as we know it.

Reflection on this eternal actuality and plenitude of the resurrection leads Durrwell to the innertrinitarian mystery of the Father's generation of the Son. Here he recognises that the resurrection proceeds from the mystery of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father and in the Spirit. God has raised Jesus, in his humanity, into the fullness of the eternal begetting of the Son:

The Resurrection brought Christ wholly to birth in the life of the Son, extending to his whole being the glory of his eternal generation. And in that birth, there is no "tomorrow". Alongside our ancestor Adam, the old man, who continues to decay within us (2 Cor. iv. 16), here is the young Adam, the new man, Son of God, in the everlasting newness of his sonship.<sup>16</sup>

Acts 13:32-33<sup>17</sup> serves as a highly significant text for Durrwell in understanding the resurrection as the eternal generation of the Son by the Father. He explains, for example:

Then the Father took him to himself, and introducing him totally into the secret of his divine being, into that embrace which confers sonship, he abolished in him the "condition of a slave" and brought his whole, once mortal, humanity into the eternal origins of the life of sonship, into the instant of divine generation. He generated him as Son of God in his entire being, saying in the act of glorifying him: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."<sup>18</sup>

Durrwell would have us recognise that the Father's action of raising Jesus is a divine generation, a divine begetting, which corresponds to the Father's generation of the Son in the innertrinitarian mystery of God. In the resurrection, in this "birth in eternity,"<sup>19</sup> Jesus, the incarnate Son, is reborn into the life of the Son of God. The divine begetting by the Father of the Son in his humanity is thus accomplished in creation. As Durrwell expresses it: "The whole of his human being is woven, by the Spirit, into his eternal filial origin."<sup>20</sup> His whole being, human and divine, is henceforth interior to the trinitarian mystery. Hereafter, in union with Christ, we too are incorporated into the same divine generation,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 130.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 131.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "And we bring you the good news that what God has promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee" (Acts 13: 32-33).

<sup>18</sup> François-Xavier Durrwell, *In the Redeeming Christ*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 329.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 328.

<sup>20</sup> François-Xavier Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God: An Essay in Biblical Theology*, trans. Benedict Davies (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 43.

into that trinitarian embrace. Raised with him, we too are born of God in the Holy Spirit and share fully in the divine birth which is Christ's.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, not just humankind but all creation, in communion with the Son, becomes interior to the trinitarian mystery where God begets his Son. The whole cosmos enters into the eternal begetting of Christ and is taken up into the innertrinitarian communion. Through the resurrection, the universe is drawn into the trinitarian mystery of God wherein the Father begets his beloved Son, and enters into that divine relationality between the three divine persons that is constitutive of God's inner mystery. As Durrwell explains: "In Christ who inhabits the Trinity, this creation is 'within' God; at its height and in its roots, it enters into the eternal begetting of Christ."<sup>22</sup> In and through Christ, all creation therefore becomes filial, sharing in the mystery of the eternal generation of the Son. In and through his paschal mystery, "the Trinitarian mystery is imprinted on creation."<sup>23</sup>

Salvation, from Durrwell's perspective, is not the distribution of merits or the redemption of a debt, but Jesus, in person, the Saviour, in his gift of self in his death and resurrection.<sup>24</sup> It is the intrinsically personal drama of Christ's entry into his own filial glory. It is the personal mystery of Christ, Son of God, who, through his death and resurrection, himself, in person, becomes the event of salvation. Realised in Christ's paschal mystery, salvation is forever in Christ, through his relationship with the Father. To be saved is to be incorporated into Christ's filial being. It is to be raised with him into the mystery of his resurrection and into the mystery of his begetting by the Father. It is birth in him into the trinitarian communion. An intrinsically filial mystery, it is a re-creation, the re-generation of all creation, a filialization, in him.

Durrwell recognises that this accomplishment of the eternal begetting of the Son within creation constitutes the fulfilment of creation:

The resurrection is the synthesis and the climax of creation, beyond which one cannot go, in the permanent today of the Easter birth of Christ (cf. Acts 13:33). Henceforth the eternal begetting of the Son in the Spirit is immanent within the world: the world is steeped, at this its own climax, in the eternal trinitarian movement.<sup>25</sup>

The luminous point of Durrwell's theology can be expressed in this way: the paschal mystery enacts within creation the trinitarian mystery of the Father's generation of the Son in the Holy Spirit. In other words, we have in Jesus' paschal mystery of death and resurrection, not only the revelation of the mystery of God's triune being, but also the accomplishment of the eternal innertrinitarian begetting of the Son by the Father in the Spirit in creation. The eternal trinitarian movement of God ad intra is enacted ad extra. For Durrwell, the paschal mystery is not just redemptive or salvific in its effects, but revelatory of God's own eternal trinitarian being.

Durrwell places great weight on the post-resurrection appearance of the risen and crucified Lord, which reveal that Jesus is not healed of his mortal wounds but bears the stigmata of his suffering and death. The appearances reveal that Christ is glorified precisely in his suffering and death. He is forever the Slain Lamb. In this way, death and

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Durrwell, *In the Redeeming Christ*, 328-36.

<sup>22</sup> Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God*, 140. See also Durrwell, *The Resurrection*, 290-3.

<sup>23</sup> Durrwell, *Christ Our Passover*, 34.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Durrwell, *Christ Our Passover*, 40.

<sup>25</sup> Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God*, 131. "Salvation history has progressed to the rhythm of God's mystery in the world. It reaches its climax in Christ's passover, when the mystery becomes immanent in creation as it has ever been in eternity." *Ibid*, 74.



resurrection are revealed as essential and complementary dimensions of the one paschal mystery: "it is the mystery at once of death and resurrection and final coming."<sup>26</sup> In contrast to earlier juridically-fashioned theologies, here the death of Jesus is essentially and intrinsically related to his resurrection and glorification, without which it has no redemptive meaning.

The role of Jesus' death in Durrwell's paschal theology is also quite different from that which it plays in juridically-fashioned theologies of redemption. The paschal mystery of death and resurrection reveals that it is precisely through death that Christ opened himself to the infinite gift of new life. Death is the vital passage, a way of unreserved self-surrender in love, which opens to the reception of eternal glory. The death itself is a birth. As Durrwell explains: "For Christ and his faithful, death is the birth of completeness; it is the sublime movement carrying them out of this world to God."<sup>27</sup> It is in death that the creative, salvific action of the Spirit culminates. Death is the necessary passage or passover to life in communion in the triune God.

### *The Holy Spirit as the Divine Power of Begetting and Mirror of the Paschal Mystery*

Durrwell's rediscovery of the deeply theological significance of Jesus' resurrection, and his retrieval of the unity of the paschal mystery, led him to an explicitly trinitarian frame of reference. Here, he is particularly intent on the role and person of the Holy Spirit.

Drawing on the New Testament witness to the Spirit as the power of God,<sup>28</sup> Durrwell identifies the Holy Spirit as the power of the resurrection, the operating power of God, the divine action itself. Durrwell thus argues that the Holy Spirit is, in person, the divine begetting:

The resurrection of Jesus, which is the realization in the world of the eternal mystery of the Father and Son, reveals that it is in the Spirit that God is father, that the Spirit is the eternal action, the power, the holiness, the love and the glory in which God begets his Word. That is why we thought we could say that he is in person the eternal begetting. He is the mystery proper to the Father and the mystery proper to the Son. Without being either the beginning or the end of the trinitarian movement, he is at the beginning and at the end, acting in the Father as father, in the Son as son, and it is he who brings about the union of them both. All is accomplished in him who is love, infinitely powerful, the single action of the Father and of the Son.<sup>29</sup>

In Durrwell's theology, redolent of Augustine's Trinity of Lover, Beloved and their mutual Love, the Trinity is these Three: the Begetter, the Begotten, and the divine power of Begetting. The Spirit, Durrwell argues, is the power of the process of begetting. Durrwell thus proposes what is effectively a 'bi-polar' trinitarian model. There are only two poles, not three, he insists, for the Father has only one Son, who, as the only-Begotten, is the unique term of the Father's paternal action. The third divine person, the Holy Spirit, is neither the beginning nor the end, but envelops both poles of the paternal relationship. Durrwell explains:

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<sup>26</sup> François-Xavier Durrwell, "Mystère pascal et Parousie: L'importance sotériologique de la présence du Christ," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 95 (1973): 278

<sup>27</sup> Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God*, 121.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Durrwell, *Spirit of the Father and of the Son*, 17-23; and Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God*, 8-11.

<sup>29</sup> Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God*, 162.

Although it [the Holy Spirit] may be neither the beginning (the Father), nor the conclusion (the Son), it is at the beginning and at the conclusion, since it is in it that the Father begets and the Son is begotten: far from being barren, it is the fertility of God.<sup>30</sup>

Belonging to them both, the Holy Spirit encompasses them, as it were. It is in the Spirit that the Father begets, and is constituted in his paternal character. Likewise, it is in the Spirit that the Son is begotten, and is constituted in his filial character. The eternal movement of begetting goes from one to the other. The Spirit is this movement which envelops and unites them, while holding Father and Son in irreducible distinction.

In this way, Durrwell, though maintaining that there are two processions, insists that both processions be understood in terms of the mystery of the Father's fatherhood, on the grounds that the Father only acts as Father.<sup>31</sup> The Father's person is constituted solely in and through his fatherhood. The Son's person is constituted in and through his sonship. Without being the Son, the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Father, and proceeds from the Father within the mystery of the Father's fatherhood. The paternal being of God is thus as much invested in the procession of the Spirit as in the generation of the Son. Indeed, this is why the Spirit is not inferior to the Father or to the Son and receives the same glory. Durrwell explains:

He [the Holy Spirit] proceeds in the begetting of the Son, he is the Spirit of the Father in his fatherhood. The entire activity of the Father is to beget the Son, and although God does not beget the Spirit, it is nonetheless in his fatherhood that he is the source of the Spirit.<sup>32</sup>

The Holy Spirit is thus constituted in the relationship of the Father and Son. This divine Spirit oscillates between them in a unique movement of unceasing ebb and flow, through which the Father begets and the Son is begotten. The Holy Spirit is, in person, the begetting. Indeed, Durrwell writes:

If the Holy Spirit is the divine power of engendering and if all that theology says of the divine nature is personalised in him then God is essentially Father. The divine nature is there, in the infinite engendering of the infinite Son.<sup>33</sup>

In Durrwell's theology, God is one, not by reason of an impersonal divine nature, but because God is Father and Son in the person of the Holy Spirit.<sup>34</sup> The Spirit is God's nature and unity, in person.<sup>35</sup> By identifying the Spirit with the divine nature in this way, Durrwell is stretching classical trinitarian language and notions in evocative and imaginative ways, even if to an unconventional degree – which lays him open to the charge of failing to appreciate the Thomist tradition. He is so keen to exploit biblical categories that the rich theological and philosophical resources in the history of Christian thought tend to be untapped. But he had a point to make, and he made it in a striking and inspirational manner.

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<sup>30</sup> Durrwell, *Spirit of the Father and of the Son*, 23; also Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God*, 140-7.

<sup>31</sup> See Durrwell, *Spirit of the Father and of the Son*, 23, 44; see also 59-60, where Durrwell rejects the idea that the Father produces the Son on one hand and the Spirit on the other. In such a theology, he explains, the Father would not be acting as Father because the Spirit would proceed from him apart from the mystery of the begetting of the Son.

<sup>32</sup> Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God*, 140.

<sup>33</sup> Durrwell presses Anselm's notion of God as "that which nothing greater can be thought" ("*id quo maius cogitari nequit*", from Anselm's *Proslogion* III) to a notion of God as the One whose *self-gift* nothing greater can be thought: God as Father in the infinite engendering of the infinite Son. See François-Xavier Durrwell, "Pour une Christologie selon l'Esprit Saint," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 114 (1992): 672.

<sup>34</sup> Durrwell, *Holy Spirit of God*, 149.

<sup>35</sup> Durrwell reiterates this understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit in *Christ Our Passover*, 153-174.



### *The Significance of Durrwell's Contribution and the Business as yet Unfinished*

While other books and articles followed the publication of *The Resurrection*, the meaning and significance of the resurrection and its paschal and trinitarian ramifications for theology continued to consume Durrwell's attention. We will conclude this article with a brief survey of his major contribution and its significance for theology more broadly.

Firstly, Durrwell, by setting the prevailing classical teaching regarding the mystery of redemption and the event of the resurrection into sharp relief against the scriptural witness to the faith and understanding of the early Church, which attested to a very different understanding, effectively rendered juridically-fashioned theologies of redemption unsustainable. Through his retrieval of the biblical testimony, he opened the way for a radical refashioning of a theology of redemption, as manifest in his own work, and as would later be manifestly demonstrated in John Paul II's first and highly programmatic encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), wherein the mystery of redemption serves as the beacon shedding light on the dignity of the human person and revealing the glory of the triune God.

Secondly, Durrwell's unfailing instinct for the properly theological significance of the resurrection precipitated a renewed appreciation in systematic theology of the paschal mystery, per se, that was to bear two remarkable fruits: the recognition, firstly, of the paschal mystery of death and resurrection as positively constitutive of the mystery of salvation; secondly, as profoundly and indeed preeminently revelatory of the trinitarian mystery of God. No longer would Jesus' death and resurrection be relegated to treatment merely in terms of the means by which our salvation was achieved, but appreciated as the very summit of divine revelation, as it disclosed the character of the triune God. Augustine and Aquinas, Bonaventure and Richard of Saint Victor, and all those following them, in their explorations of the mystery of the Trinity looked to the human person for an analogy par excellence for trinitarian relationality. In contrast, Durrwell insists that theology attend directly to the originating revelation of the Trinity as manifest in the paschal mystery of Jesus' death and resurrection. He thus contributed to a revolution of Copernican scale in trinitarian theology and to the development of a new method of exploration of the mystery of the Trinity.

In reconnecting death and resurrection in the one mystery, Durrwell's explorations allowed for an imaginative refashioning of other areas of systematics, for example, a theology of death. From an explicitly and comprehensively paschal perspective, death emerges as the culmination of self-yielding and self-giving love. It is through death, in communion with Jesus' death, that humanity and indeed all creation passes over and enters into the trinitarian communion of love. "It is a death like Christ's, who died begotten in the filial embrace of God's creative paternity."<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Durrwell's work prompted a refreshed appreciation of the mystery of the Eucharist, as passover meal, sacrament par excellence of the paschal mystery – sacrament of death, resurrection and presence and of our entry into paschal communion. The Eucharist, Durrwell insisted, "does not reproduce that unique and unrepeatable sacrifice. Nor does it simply evoke a memory of some sacrifice from the past. It is the emergence of that sacrifice into today's world realities, making it accessible to us through communion. It is the paschal sacrament,

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<sup>36</sup> Durrwell, *Christ Our Passover*, 135.

not post-paschal."<sup>37</sup> Durrwell's reflections also served in a retrieval of the profoundly eschatological character of the Eucharist.<sup>38</sup>

Durrwell's most significant advance of all is found, I suggest, in his insistence – again anticipating Vatican II – that theology return to the biblical sources as its wellsprings. In effect, he reconnected theology with the biblical data. Throughout his trinitarian explorations, for example, his constant challenge to the classical approach is that it is not sufficiently biblical in its emphasis on Jesus' death in terms of satisfaction, in its failure to recognise the properly theological significance of the resurrection, in its exposition of the immanent processions by means of the psychological analogy, in its distinction between essentialist and personalist categories, and in its explication of the divine nature.

On publication, Durrwell's magnum opus, *The Resurrection*, blazed across the theological skies of Europe and the English-speaking world of his time with meteoric brilliance. But as with meteors, it was relatively short-lived. Durrwell's theology was "too biblical" for systematic theologians, and too naïve in the rejection of the refined and nuanced philosophical categories and conceptuality that had been developed over the centuries of Christian reflection. At the same time, Durrwell's theology was "too theological" for biblical specialists, too far removed from the critical and increasingly technical exegetical methods of contemporary biblical scholarship. Somewhat maverick in this way, his work was never to find itself at home in either field. Alas, the full impact of his insight into the significance of the mystery of the resurrection is, I suggest, yet to be realised in contemporary theology. The meaning and value of the resurrection still waits for adequate expression and appreciation in systematic theology, though N. T. Wright's recent biblical study offers a very rich resource for exploration.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the liturgies of the Paschal Triduum continue, as they have through the centuries of the Christian era, to proclaim and celebrate this most glorious mystery, this mystery that changes everything, and François-Xavier Durrwell, after a long and fruitful life, has passed over into the risen Christ within the eternal embrace of the Trinity.

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**Author:** Associate Professor Anne Hunt is a lecturer in systematic theology at Australian Catholic University and at Yarra Theological Union (Melbourne) and Rector of the Ballarat Campus of Australian Catholic University. She is the author of several books and articles, most recently *The Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (Orbis, 2005), which has recently been awarded Third Place by the Catholic Press Association in the Education category.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>38</sup> See Paul Vu's doctoral thesis (Australian Catholic University, 2003), and forthcoming book, *The Pledge of Future Glory: The Eschatological Dimension of The Eucharist: A Systematic Exploration*.

<sup>39</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003).