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Schäffer, W. (1987). *Erneuerte Glaube – verwirklichtes Menschsein. Die Korrelation von Glauben und Erfahrung in der Lebenspraxis christlicher Erneuerung*. St.Ottilien: EOS-Verlag

This book is a reprint of a dissertation published in 1983. The author examines the so-called 'religious renewal' in three different religious movements: the Foculare, the Catholic Charismatic church-movement, and the community of Taizé. Those three movements are presented as specific examples of a 'spiritual disclosure-experience'. The author wants to analyze the spiritual experiences within their different contexts, by means of a method of correlation as developed by P. Tillich and E. Schillebeeckx. After a broad presentation of the relations between Christian faith and human experience, in a kind of foundational theology, he offers a detailed description of the history, organization and the main spiritual and theological ideas of each subject. Then he examines the theories of Tillich and Schillebeeckx, and constructs, especially with aspects of the latter's theology, a kind of matrix (ultimate concern; basic trust and self-expression; group-dynamics). This matrix makes it possible to give a reflection on the correlation between ultimate concern and fellowship with God; self-expression and living according to the will of God; group-dynamics and an alternative Christian community. The book ends with a short chapter of pastoral reflections.

The author presents his research as an explorative-descriptive study. He looks for new perspectives and he is aware of the lack of verified data, as he says. In fact his study is set up more as a systematic theology than as a practical theology. The core of his research is the application of the method of correlation to the 'pragmatic experience' within the context of spiritual renewal. Information about the subject is gathered by means of a broad study of texts and literature and by participation. The author gives no indication about his method of collecting the information. The definition of 'spiritual disclosure' is a substantive definition, not a functional one. So the results are rather hermeneutical. He tries to refine the method of correlation and to offer a balanced evaluation of the religious experiences and community-praxis of the three movements of spiritual renewal. His conclusions tend towards a positive evaluation of the authenticity of these experiences, the plausibility of the different social patterns of organization and some critical questions about the way authority is structured and brought into praxis.

The main point in my evaluation of this study is the gap between the matrix and the analysis. In fact the author does not really analyze in a scientific sense of the word the religious experiences. Rather he analyzes texts, and the way he does it is not coherent with his fundamental theory. Moreover he continuously draws a wrong parallel between the binomium experience – faith and the binomium situation – message. He never explains his criteria of 'authentic' belief, and he never justifies why the theory of correlation, being a creative answer to modern secularization, can afford a matrix for the analysis of religious movements that are a reaction to modern secularization. Besides one wonders if the three movements are different 'ideal-types' (in a Weberian sense of the word) of that reaction to modern secularization.

(A.J.M. van den Hoogen, Heerlen)