

## Theological Considerations for Liturgical Renewal with Edward Schillebeeckx<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Edward Schillebeeckx's contribution to Catholic theology has not been without controversy, even compared with his contemporaries who are supposedly also 'liberals'. Particular attention was pointed to his famous *Jesus* trilogy, and the use of hermeneutics he turned to at that stage in his career.<sup>2</sup> Aside from the later controversies, Schillebeeckx's career began with the works on sacramental theology, particularly with his doctoral thesis *De Sacramentele Heilseconomie* and his first major published work, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*.<sup>3</sup> That this remained a significant theme for Schillebeeckx is highlighted by the return to it he made towards the end of his life.<sup>4</sup> Despite the obvious influence of a lived liturgical life upon his sacramental works, Schillebeeckx never wrote what we might straightforwardly call a liturgical theology, or at great length on the topic of liturgical reform. However, I believe, based on his sacramental thought, that there are many areas in which his insights can contribute to liturgical thought. I will begin to address some of them here, namely, History and the Incarnation, the nature of Christ as Sacrament, and derivative from that, the nature of the Church

<sup>1</sup> This paper began as an MA by Research thesis for the University of Leeds. An earlier version was read as a Short Communication at the 2017 Congress of Societas Liturgica.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus, an Experiment in Christology*, The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx 6 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ, the Christian Experience in the Modern World*, The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx 7 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx 10 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Henricus Schillebeeckx, *De Sacramentele Heilseconomie* (Antwerpen: 'T Groeit, 1952); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter of God*, The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx 1 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Ted Mark Schoof and Jan van de Westelaken, "Bibliography 1936 - 1996 of Edward Schillebeeckx OP," *The Schillebeeckx Foundation*, 2010 [http://schillebeeckx.nl/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/Bibliografie\\_Sx-nwe-versie.pdf](http://schillebeeckx.nl/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/Bibliografie_Sx-nwe-versie.pdf), p. (1).

as Sacrament. This paper makes no greater claims than those of an initial exploration – a fuller treatment would need also to deal with other significant themes that emerge from Schillebeeckx’s theology of revelation and his fundamentally sacramental anthropology.

### History and Incarnation

To understand the first of these themes, we cannot just begin with Schillebeeckx, but must also turn to his formation and training, and in particular the influence of Marie-Dominique Chenu on his thought. Chenu was one of the first wave of *ressourcement* thinkers, challenging neo-scholastic orthodoxy. The principal element Chenu sought to restore was the significance of history consequent on the Incarnation – it was for him a fundamental part of the structure of the *donnés* of theology. Chenu’s concern was for the prominence of the historical event for theology by recognising history as the place where salvation ‘happens’ – which is a recovery in many ways of the patristic sense of the economy of salvation. This must be set against the neo-scholastic orthodoxy that prevailed at the time, which included Chenu’s own teacher – Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, that had removed the study of theology from any historical context, and thus read Thomas as – at least according to Chenu – ‘a perennial philosophy’.<sup>5</sup> Chenu, in contrast, wished to emphasise the need to recognise that ‘understanding a text or doctrine is inseparable from knowing the setting in which they originated, for the simple reason that the insight which produced them is encountered in the context, literary, cultural, philosophical, theological, spiritual, in which they took shape’.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, for Chenu, because of the incarnation, ‘it is the human condition that decides the basic configuration of the *donné*’.<sup>7</sup> That is, the incarnation includes ‘the temporality [which] is one of the signs of human reality’.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Une École de Théologie: Le Saulchoir* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), p. 154; see Fergus Kerr, “A Different World: Neoscholasticism and Its Discontents,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8, no. 2 (April 2006) doi:10.1111/j.1468-2400.2006.00187.x: pp. 128–48 (138–39).

<sup>6</sup> Chenu, *Une École*, p. 125; ET: Fergus Kerr, “Chenu’s Little Book,” *New Blackfriars* 66 (1985): pp. 108–12 (111).

<sup>7</sup> Christophe Potworowski, *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu*, McGill-Queen’s Studies in the History of Ideas 33 (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), p. 83; see Claude Geffré, “Le Réalisme de l’Incarnation Dans La Théologie Du Père M-D Chenu,” *Revue Des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 69 (1985): pp. 389–99 (392).

<sup>8</sup> Marie-Dominique Chenu, “The Human Situation: Corporality and Temporality,” in *Faith and Theology* (trans. Denis Hickey; Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1968), pp. 116–36 (131).

Chenu's principle here is sound. The problem with his approach is that there is tendency to lose sight of the particular to recover this general principle. He focuses on a 'law of incarnation' but does not place an historical Jesus of Nazareth at the centre at its heart. At the other end of the same problem, there is also a sense in which all history becomes salvation history for Chenu, rather than there being particular moments of specific importance.

Schillebeeckx, in contrast, grounds the use of history in the concrete, and because of this is able to discriminate between history and those historical events that have particular place in the economy of salvation. His approach is not a transformation of Chenu's, simply a rooting of it. Thus, he leans far more heavily on the historicity of Christ as the primary anchor and location of the *donnés* of theology. This is then played out in the importance of the Paschal Mystery, and the life of the Church, to which I return below.

But what does this say for the liturgy? The first idea that must be prominent is the significance of the event in history as the place for the encounter with God. Whilst the human-to-human encounter with Jesus of Nazareth in the streets of Galilee or Jerusalem was the preeminent example of this, as I will return to, for Schillebeeckx the sacraments retain this human quality of encounter. And so, the prior experience of the Church in encountering God through the Church's liturgical worship, through the sacraments, must be taken seriously in addressing the future space for such encounters. The simply legalistic question of validity is motivated by the correct inspiration – to know what will 'work', we must at least consider what the past teaches us has 'worked'. Or more directly, as Robert Taft has observed, the liturgy 'can only be understood in motion, just as the only way to understand a top is to spin it'.<sup>9</sup> It is by the use – in the case of the liturgy, that is undertaken in an historical framework – that we can understand.

Undoubtedly, this requires a careful reading of history. Many of the critics – and indeed some of those generally more positive about twentieth century liturgical reform – have highlighted the degree to which those reforms looked to an imagined golden age in the fourth century. Perhaps the more vocal comments in this regard relate to the Roman Catholic reforms following the Second Vatican Council, but given the degree of commonality between Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, etc. revised liturgical material, some of the critique applies more broadly. As Paul Bradshaw has described it:

<sup>9</sup> Robert F. Taft, "The Structural Analysis of Liturgical Units: An Essay in Methodology," in *Beyond East and West: Problems in Liturgical Understanding* (2nd rev. and enlarged ed edition; Roma: Ed. Orientalia Christiana, 1997), pp. 187–202 (192).

*Traditional scholarship has also tended to paint a picture of post-Constantinian forms of worship as constituting the classic expression of the Christian faith. Liturgy is viewed as evolving from its inchoate roots in the New Testament through the refining processes of the second and third centuries and then bursting into full bloom in the light of the Constantinian era. It then threw off the shackles that persecution and poverty had put upon it, and became what it was always intended to be, reaching the zenith of form and articulation in this golden age, before its long period of slow decline, disintegration and obfuscation in the course of the Middle Ages.*<sup>10</sup>

Sadly, many of the critics of the reform have not managed any better. As examples, I will briefly consider here the contributions of Klaus Gamber and Alcuin Reid. Gamber takes as given that the Roman Rite is – or at least, was, before the reforms – unchanging and unchangeable in any essential matter, dating back perhaps even as far as Pope Damasus I at the end of the fourth century, but certainly to Gregory the Great and thus the end of the sixth century. Gamber compares this to the gradual development of the Byzantine Rite. Such an approach not only leaves him unable to take seriously the development of the Roman Rite after that – the seventh century addition of the Agnus Dei or the Last Gospel in the thirteenth century, changes on a par with those which he sees in the Byzantine – but significantly for his thesis is also unable to truly even take seriously the Baroque golden age to which he himself seems to want to point.<sup>11</sup>

Reid perhaps does better justice to the changes to the Roman Rite with his model of ‘organic development’ than Gamber’s static approach, but still seeks to point to a golden age with the Carolingian reforms, where the melding of the received Roman traditions with the local Gallican material needed to fill the gaps is – for Reid at least – the perfect form of liturgical reform and renewal. The problem with Reid’s ‘organic development’ is that it is development built around a fundamentally arbitrary sense of a core tradition. He presumes – for example – the presence and recitation of the Institution Narrative at the heart of a core tradition, from earliest days, without giving any serious attention to ancient evidence that does not include the Narrative, or what about that Narrative is important. Even within his narrow Roman focus, Reid presumes the Roman Canon becomes part of this tradition without any consideration to its status as a text that

<sup>10</sup> Paul F. Bradshaw, “The Effects of the Coming of Christendom on Early Christian Worship,” in *The Origins of Christendom in the West* (ed. Alan Kreider; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), pp. 269–86 (270).

<sup>11</sup> Klaus Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background* (San Juan Capistrano, Calif.: Una Voce Press, 1993), p. 10–11,18; Paul F. Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies* (London: SPCK, 2012), pp. 209–10.

has a history of development – he treats it almost as though it was recorded from the lips of Christ at the Last Supper, and has been in continuous use ever since. Perhaps on this point, he would be inclined to agree with the Council Father at Trent who argued that Christ must have spoken the Words of Institution in Latin as that was the received ‘core tradition’.<sup>12</sup>

Aside from disputing which golden age should be referenced, there are at least two problems with the turn to any golden age. First, it is fundamentally pointless because we can never restore such an age. At best, an imagined version is created. As might reasonably be said regarding the current popularity of fantasy fiction like *Game of Thrones* – we choose not to include the dysentery, just the marketable bits. Second, the history alone does not justify the return to a particular age. We must also apply a theological discernment as to what should be retained or restored, and what should not. And as has pointed out with regard to, for example, the Peace, the theological significance of a restored element need not be the same as its original justification.<sup>13</sup>

It is for Schillebeeckx ‘the objective reality of dogma’ that is ‘actively experienced in the liturgy’.<sup>14</sup> And it is has always been such. But it is necessary to seek out the dogma in the historical – just as all history is not salvation history, not all liturgical history is concerned with the objective reality of the dogma – and certainly not in a timeless and unchanging way. Instead, the approach to liturgical history must recognise that the task of the liturgy was to proclaim that, in Schillebeeckx’s phrase, ‘Christ lives *now*’.<sup>15</sup> It has the same task now as it has had in previous generations, and it is only by recognising how it has done so that we can ensure it continues to do so.

<sup>12</sup> Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and Their Relation to the Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council* (2nd edition; San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005), pp. 19–21, 24–25, 54. The reference to the Council of Trent is from Susan K. Roll, “Mystery without Mystique: The Question of Sacred Language, Post Roman Missal 2011,” in *Mediating Mysteries, Understanding Liturgies: On Bridging the Gap between Liturgy and Systematic Theology* (ed. Joris Geldhof; Leuven: Peeters, 2015), pp. 67–82 (82).

<sup>13</sup> Paul F. Bradshaw, “The Relationship Between Historical Research and Modern Liturgical Practice,” in *A Living Tradition: On the Intersection of Liturgical History and Pastoral Practice* (ed. David Andrew Pitt, Stefanos Alexopoulos, and Christian McConnell; Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2012), pp. 3–18 (7–9).

<sup>14</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, “The Liturgy and Theology,” in *Revelation and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 157–59 (158).

<sup>15</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 44. Emphasis changed.

## Christ as Sacrament

The second element to which I give attention gives a theological principle that must stand alongside history, and which can be used for discernment from it. Primary for Schillebeeckx is the place of Christ as sacrament of the encounter with God. Central to this is the mystery of redemption, the historical actions of which are, for Schillebeeckx, the ‘great liturgical mystery of worship’ offered by Christ to the Father, for the grace of redemption for all.<sup>16</sup> Central also is the continuing human encounter with Christ.

Schillebeeckx describes the mystery of redemption – that which we commonly call the Paschal Mystery – in four movements:<sup>17</sup>

*First: The initiative of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. This initiative is the trinitarian background within the Godhead which, though veiled, can be discerned through the temporal order of salvation in the incarnate Son, “who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to the Father”.*

*Second: The human response of Christ’s life to the Father’s initiative in sending him: “. . . becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross” – in other words, the religious obedience of the “Holy One of Yahweh” or of the “Servant of God”.*

*Third: The divine response to Jesus’ obedience in the humiliation of his life. “For which cause also God [i.e., the Father] has exalted him exceedingly, and given him a name which is above all name”, that is, given him above all powers: Jesus has become the Lord, the Kyrios, meaning “the Mighty”, he who exercises lordship – “God has made him Kyrios”.*

*Fourth: The sending of the Holy Spirit upon the world of men by the glorified Kyrios or Lord. Christ, “having reached the consummation [only now] became. . . the source of eternal salvation” for us. The force of the Redemption came fully into operation only when Jesus was exalted at God’s right hand. “And I, when I am lifted up. . . will draw all things to myself.” The last phase of the mystery of Christ, between the Ascension and the parousia, is therefore the mystery of the sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ as the climax of the work of salvation.*

Construed in this way, the Mystery spans (and extends beyond) Christ’s earthly life – and certainly not just the Passion and Death. In contrast with the tempting idea to view the Paschal Mystery as simply the activity of the Father and the Son, either together or simply one of them, Schillebeeckx’s framework is inherently Trinitarian.

As has been demonstrated by – amongst others – Patrick Regan, there was a deliberate shift from the focus on the Passion and Death to

<sup>16</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, pp. 14–15.

the broader sense of the Paschal Mystery in the liturgical reforms that produced the post-conciliar Roman Missal.<sup>18</sup> The liturgical recovery parallels the broader theological recovery of the concept of mystery generally, and the centrality of the Paschal Mystery in particular, a move of which Schillebeeckx's work is a part. The move to the Paschal Mystery though is only a part of the direction Schillebeeckx points to here though.

The shaping of worship around the Paschal Mystery is only correct for Schillebeeckx because it is the shaping of worship around the revelation of God. As Bruce Morrill has described,

*The content, shape and scope of Christian worship is a function of the God who is both its subject and object, namely the God of biblical revelation, the God of Jesus, the triune God revealed through his life, death and resurrection.*<sup>19</sup>

This leads quickly back to the theological justification for the historical reference: the Incarnation. Schillebeeckx suggests that Christ grows and develops as a human being does. In other words, Christ does not become fully himself, the Incarnate Lord, until his exaltation by the Father. It is only through the events of his life – the historic events that reveal the Paschal Mystery standing prominent amongst them – that Christ becomes incarnate. The Incarnation is not a single moment, either when Mary consents to Gabriel's message or when her child is born and laid in the manger. The unfolding of the mystery of the Incarnation extends throughout the whole of the earthly life of Jesus, only finding its fulfilment in the glorification of the Crucified-and-Living One. In this, the covenant faithfulness of God – in continuity with its expression in the covenants with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses, seen in the witness of the prophets and throughout the history of the economy of salvation – is revealed definitively in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Christian worship cannot focus simply on the Crib, or the Cross, or the Empty Tomb, but the whole mystery must always be in mind, even if through the lens of a particular aspect being considered at a given time or season. It must be allowed to be entirely shaped by the

<sup>18</sup> See Patrick Regan, "The Centrality of the Paschal Mystery in the Missal of Paul VI," *Worship* 90, no. 2 (March 2016); Patrick Regan, *Advent to Pentecost: Comparing the Seasons in the Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms of the Roman Rite* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2012). Indeed this is one of the major points of the critique of the reformed missal made by the Society of St Pius X, see The Society of Saint Pius X, *The Problem of the Liturgical Reform: A Theological and Liturgical Study* (Kansas, MO: Angelus Press, 2001), pp. 50–51.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce T. Morrill, "Liturgy, Ethics and Politics: Constructive Inquiry into the Traditional Notion of Participation in Mystery," in *Mediating Mysteries, Understanding Liturgies: On Bridging the Gap between Liturgy and Systematic Theology* (ed. Joris Geldhof; Leuven: Peeters, 2015), pp. 188–206 (188).

God to whom it is directed. And it can only be so by being shaped by the one who is the fullest revelation of God – Christ himself.

This should not lead to a purely didactic liturgy. The shaping is not for the purpose of teaching those who ‘hear Mass’ a series of propositions. As the Second Vatican Council’s constitution on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, described it, the liturgy must be ‘the summit toward which the *activity* of the Church is directed’ and ‘the fount from which all the Church’s *power* flows’.<sup>20</sup> It is more dynamic than mere didacticism and more than simply an intellectual engagement. Nevertheless, it is appropriate for the liturgy to teach – and in any many pastoral contexts, it is perhaps the only opportunity for teaching, when many of the worshipping community will have no direct or explicit opportunity to be taught the Christian faith outside the liturgical celebration.

First and foremost, though, the liturgy should facilitate the sacramental encounter with Christ and through Christ with God – Christ being the sacrament of the encounter with God. Schillebeeckx highlights two aspects to this encounter: that it is an encounter with the Word, and that it is a human encounter.

Schillebeeckx’s consideration of the encounter with the Word begins with what in the context of the Eucharist is called the ‘Liturgy of the Word’, but is present in the liturgical celebration of other sacraments: ‘every sacrament is introduced, surrounded, and enclosed by the ministry of the word’.<sup>21</sup> Schillebeeckx makes clear that this extends beyond the Liturgy of the Word, and indeed extends beyond the apostolic *kerygma*, into ‘a “word of prayer”, a “word of hymn” or song of divine praise, a doxology, an acclamation or a priestly blessing. All these variations. . . are so many different forms of the one word of God.’<sup>22</sup> In the Liturgy of the Word, these elements that comprise the ministry of the Word serve to prompt ‘obedience and surrender in faith’, to prepare the gathered assembly for what follows – though not in contrast to it, but as integral component thereof. The proclamation of the word continues in the proclamation of the same word by liturgical action, and the accompanying formulae.<sup>23</sup> For Schillebeeckx, it is ‘in the very core of the *anaphora* – that the

<sup>20</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10. ET: Thomas C. O’Brien, ed., *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979: Conciliar, Papal, and Curial Texts* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1982), p. 7. Emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, “Revelation-in-Reality and Revelation-in-Word,” in *Revelation and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 25–41 (36). Note this essay was originally published in 1960, when this would have been less explicit than it was in the reformed liturgies.

<sup>22</sup> Schillebeeckx, “Revelation-in-Reality and Revelation-in-Word,” p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Schillebeeckx, “Revelation-in-Reality and Revelation-in-Word,” p. 38.



word reveals its supreme saving power and, as it were transcending itself, becomes *compressed* into a personal reality.<sup>24</sup>

Here the encounter with the word becomes the personal encounter: ‘The spoken word finally gives way here to the pre-eminent word, the person of the living Christ.’<sup>25</sup> That this is a human encounter with the same Christ who lived, and died and was raised is essential for Schillebeeckx. Nevertheless, this is not through the removal of the historical life of Jesus into an ahistorical frame – Schillebeeckx suggesting such moves support ‘a new form of Docetism’.<sup>26</sup> As such, the human encounter with Christ is somehow *in mysterio*, but yet not inhuman – it differs significantly from the human encounters between Jesus and others recorded in the Gospels, but is still fundamentally an encounter of the same type. The historical drama of redemption located in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth collides with, but is not eliminated by, the meta-historical drama of the resurrection and glorification of the very same Jesus. Schillebeeckx does not – cannot – resolve the mystery, but is confident in the maxim of Leo the Great: ‘What was visible in Christ has now passed over into the sacraments of the Church’.<sup>27</sup>

### The Church as Sacrament

It is of course no great statement that the Church celebrates sacraments, but one of the great shifts made by the theological *ressourcement* was the recovery of the idea the Church, wherein these encounters are facilitated, is itself a sacrament. One of the central proponents of this idea was Henri de Lubac, with whom Schillebeeckx was drawn into controversy later in his career over his formulation of the nature and of the direction of this sacramentality. De Lubac was very critical of the way Schillebeeckx presented the Church as ‘sacrament of the world’. In contrast, for de Lubac, it was imperative the Church was seen as the sacrament of Christ, mediating Christ to the world as Christ mediates God.<sup>28</sup>

There are, though, two aspects to Schillebeeckx’s formulation here. In his later works, Schillebeeckx does indeed draw out a sacramental relationship between the Church and the World. His starting point is the position stated by the Council in *Lumen Gentium*: ‘the church, in

<sup>24</sup> Schillebeeckx, “Revelation-in-Reality and Revelation-in-Word,” p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> Schillebeeckx, “Revelation-in-Reality and Revelation-in-Word,” p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 32, quoting Leo the Great, *Sermo LXXIV*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> cf. Henri de Lubac, *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), pp. 191–234.

Christ, is a sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race’.<sup>29</sup> Schillebeeckx develops this into a presumption that God’s grace is already and active and present beyond the boundaries of the Church. It is the task of the Church to make known and to name this activity, and the One who works it.<sup>30</sup>

This leaves Schillebeeckx with a phenomenon of ‘Anonymous but real Christianity’ where the life of grace is lived out – albeit in a stumbling and faltering way – in the ‘absolute and gratuitous nearness of the mystery’ without the name of the Giver being known.<sup>31</sup> The Church, in its true identity, is the persistent ‘yes’ to the call to live this life of grace, and does so in explicit and sacral form; nevertheless, there remains a ‘distinctive, non-sacral, but sanctified expression of man’s living community with the living God’.<sup>32</sup> This capacity to make known is fundamental to the sacramentality of the Church *vis-à-vis* the world – and perhaps it would be better to render the insight as ‘sacrament *for* the world’ than ‘sacrament *of* the world’.

The explicit and sacral form of the life of grace within the Church must be placed alongside, what for Schillebeeckx, is the indistinguishability of the inward communion and the visible society of the Church: it ‘is Christ’s salvation itself, this salvation as visibly realized in this world’.<sup>33</sup> And not just that, for it is also Christ himself that is the ‘eschatological redemptive community’.<sup>34</sup> In other words, being ‘filled with the reality to which it is giving form’, the Church is the sacrament of *Christ*.<sup>35</sup>

Schillebeeckx does not constrain this to a list of the seven sacraments, but extends it throughout the Church’s life. Nevertheless, for Schillebeeckx, it is certainly the case that ‘To receive the sacraments of the Church [i.e. the seven] in faith is. . . the same thing as to encounter Christ himself’, and the seven sacraments remain central within the sacramentality of the Church, and the manifestation there of Christ’s loving worship of the Father.<sup>36</sup> However, Schillebeeckx argues that this sacramental character goes beyond simply the hierarchical activity of the Church, seeking to also emphasis the place in this of the lay faithful – ‘in virtue of their baptismal and

<sup>29</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 1. ET: Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Dublin, Ireland: Dominican Publications, 1996), p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, “Church and World,” in *World and Church* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 73– 87 (75).

<sup>31</sup> Schillebeeckx, “Church and World,” p. 75.

<sup>32</sup> Schillebeeckx, “Church and World,” p. 77.

<sup>33</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 34.

<sup>34</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 33.

<sup>35</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 36.

<sup>36</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 38.

conformational mission' – who sacramentally present Christ by the charisms given them.<sup>37</sup>

These two aspects to the sacramentality of the Church outlined by Schillebeeckx are really two sides of the same coin. It is by manifesting the work and worship of Christ that the Church names and identifies the work and worship of the same Christ that already happens in the world. That is, it is because the Church is the sacrament of Christ that the Church is the sacrament of the world, and by being the sacrament of the world that the Church lives out its vocation to be the sacrament of Christ.

The liturgical theological implications for this are significant. That the Church's activity as 'Church' is Christ's worship of the Father means it cannot be otherwise – especially as this extends throughout the life and work of the Church, not just shaping the sacraments and their rites. And it is not insignificant to the interaction of our worship and our mission that the other side of this task is recognising the way that this work is already being done around us. But this is quite different to any calls to make the Church's worship 'relevant' and 'accessible' by what amounts to reducing it to the lowest common denominator. It is only because of the grounding in the human actions of Jesus that the Church achieves what it should. Whilst we may now criticise the scholastic attempts to found each sacrament on an event in Christ's earthly life, the motivation that drove it is correct: the Christological foundation is imperative. The Church is only sacrament of Christ or of the world because it is shaped by and in the image of Christ himself. It is therefore necessary to extend this into the liturgy, for – and whilst Schillebeeckx may well have chosen a different formulation to de Lubac here, but the principle applies – the Eucharist makes the Church.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

I do not pretend that the few principles I have pointed to here are enough from which to proclaim a liturgical theology for Schillebeeckx on their own. There is much I have not said about those ideas and Schillebeeckx's formulation of them, and much more that needs to be addressed – especially with regard to his theological anthropology and understanding of the nature of revelation. Nevertheless, I hope that I have been able to point towards some elements on three significant areas: the need for a genuine, careful and honest approach to history, a structural openness to the encounter with Christ

<sup>37</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> cf. Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), p. 133.

in his Paschal Mystery, and a recognition of the bi-directionality of the sacramentality of the Church extending into its worship. Through all this, central must be the guiding principle and primary task of recalling and re-presenting that ‘Christ lives now’.<sup>39</sup>

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