

Pneumatology: Edward Schillebeeckx's Recent Theology

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Introduction

The Christian theological tradition has always found discussion of the Holy Spirit difficult. In early patristic writings, for example, the Holy Spirit was often treated as an adjunct to discussions about the relationship between Jesus and God. For both Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, the Spirit was "love" or "gift"—designations which are indeed real, but also to a certain extent elusive. Today, some contemporary theologians find the task of describing the Holy Spirit no less difficult. William Hill and Colin Gunton both speak of the "self-effacing" Spirit;² Leonardo Boff speaks of the Spirit who "cannot be imagined"³ while Paul Evdokimov speaks of the "mysterious face" of the Spirit.⁴ Other contemporary theologians speak of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Spirit's function of making connections. Some time ago, John Taylor called the Holy Spirit *The Go-Between God*.⁵ Latterly, Mary Grey and Elizabeth Johnson have been exploring the Spirit's function as that of bringing different entities into relationship.⁶ Kilian McDonnell suggests that the Holy Spirit is the "horizon" *in which* believers pray and reflect, but the Spirit is never an "object."⁷ Such comments about the Holy Spirit from believers prior to and contemporary with Edward Schillebeeckx provide a background for discussing and assessing his treatment of the Holy Spirit.

This discussion has three parts. I will first describe the theology of the Holy Spirit presented in the theological writings of Edward Schillebeeckx between 1974 and 1994; second, I will offer some critique on his treatment of the Holy Spirit; third, I will draw on Schillebeeckx's theology to suggest future directions for pneumatology.

One of the distinctive aspects of Schillebeeckx's recent theology is the lack of overt reference to the Holy Spirit. This aspect is picked up in a quite recent study on Schillebeeckx's life and theology. Philip Kennedy's *Schillebeeckx* has one chapter "I Believe in God, Creator of Heaven and Earth" followed by another entitled "I Believe in Jesus of Nazareth." There is no chapter "I Believe in the Holy Spirit."⁸

I hope to show, nonetheless, that Schillebeeckx does develop a

particular theology of the Spirit and that this pneumatology can offer much that is fruitful for future understandings of the Spirit.

Let me state initially that the period under discussion marks the beginning of Schillebeeckx's intensive study of scriptural exegesis, the fruits of which then led to his major works *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*⁹ and *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*.¹⁰ The period selected culminates in the publication of Schillebeeckx's short work *I am a Happy Theologian*,¹¹ one of Schillebeeckx's latest writings in which explicit reference is made to the Holy Spirit.

Part One: Schillebeeckx's Pneumatology, 1974–1994

A Jesus' Gift of the Spirit at Easter

In Schillebeeckx's theology, the Spirit is constantly mentioned as being sent from Jesus at the moment of his glorification and exaltation.¹² It is when Jesus is raised and acknowledged as the 'Christ' that the Spirit is simultaneously released.¹³ The mysteries of Easter and Pentecost are perceived as one reality.¹⁴ Of special significance is Schillebeeckx's statement that the Spirit is the greatest gift of salvation offered through the risen Jesus: "As the basis of all other gifts, the gift of the Holy Spirit given with the status of being a child of God is God's greatest gift of salvation in and through the risen Jesus."¹⁵

In light of the immense variety of saving and liberating deeds witnessed during Jesus' life, his parting gift of the Spirit is certainly not mere and inconsequential—despite our difficulty in describing and articulating such a gift. As the resurrection is significant for the total meaning of Jesus' historical mission from God, so it is only fully completed when the Spirit is released into the community and into the world. It is when the risen Jesus gives the Spirit that the pledge of 'eschatological' liberation offered by the earthly Jesus begins to be effected. 'Eschatological' salvation will not be fulfilled until the end of time. The irrevocable seed of its presence now is manifest in Jesus' gift of the Spirit who is simultaneously Jesus' continuing presence among the community. Schillebeeckx describes the particular community left by Jesus as:

a movement, a living fellowship of believers who had become conscious of being the new people of God, the eschatological 'gathering' of God. . . an eschatological liberation movement for bringing together all people, bringing them together in unity.¹⁶

The fact that God's ultimate saving deed has been offered to humanity and the world through the person of Jesus is undeniable. The offer of the Spirit is the sign of God's activity brought to fulfilment within Jesus'

410

person and work.

There is an intrinsic link between Jesus' leaving and the Spirit's coming. Schillebeeckx understands the various New Testament authors, themselves dependent on the Spirit's guidance, to express the following. *Luke* stresses that while Jesus is about to depart, the Spirit is coming to continue what was begun by Jesus.¹⁷ *John* links the gift of the Spirit to the resurrection of Jesus. For John the evangelist, at the completion of Jesus' life there is only the one moment of Jesus' dying and rising into life as the Spirit is being offered.¹⁸ *Mark* understands the Spirit and Jesus as intrinsically one, between the time of the resurrection and the ascension. While still not ascended, Jesus offers pneumatic gifts as the pledge of what is still to come at his exaltation.¹⁹ After Jesus' death and resurrection, the Spirit engages Jesus in a way perceptible to the community different from what was evident during his earthly life.

Each of these scriptural expressions of how the raised Jesus relates to the Spirit issuing from him brings out the intimate connection existing between Jesus and the Spirit. A homily by Schillebeeckx on the Spirit makes the link between Jesus and the Spirit even closer. He states:

Pentecost is not really a feast *in honour of the Holy Spirit*, a so-called 'third God' in a divine three-member family. The Spirit is and remains the real redemptive gift of Jesus as the Christ, 'the man of God': 'the Father and I are one.' Pentecost is a feast of Christ. Pentecost has to do with the Jew Jesus of Nazareth.²⁰

The indispensable link between the Spirit's coming and Jesus' departing indicates that God's intention of offering salvation and liberation to all in Jesus' person is to be continued now through the Spirit of Jesus.

Another Christian perspective, however, affirms that Jesus and the Spirit are integrally linked during Jesus' whole life. Christian tradition asserts, and Schillebeeckx himself stresses, that Jesus is raised "in the power of the Spirit."²¹ What then is the link between Jesus of Nazareth and the Spirit?

B Jesus' being filled with the Spirit

In his presentation of the christological mystery, Schillebeeckx describes Jesus' life, death and resurrection as essentially conjoined. While holding that it is in the light of Jesus' life that we may fathom the event of Jesus' death, Schillebeeckx does not interpret Jesus' life and death apart from his resurrection. In line with the formation of the gospel narratives themselves, Schillebeeckx stresses that it is through the resurrection that the early community could recognize in Jesus "the one imbued to the full with God's Spirit."²² A post-Easter perception was, as it were, 'back-dated' onto

the whole mission and person of Jesus. Schillebeeckx also makes it clear that the recognition of Jesus as the 'Christ', even in the Easter events, is possible only in the act of faith. Recognition of Jesus as the one in some way linked with God's Spirit requires that persons believe and not simply be convinced by reason.

In his christology, Schillebeeckx uncovers the path of Jesus' historical life as first interpreted in the experience of his early followers. Schillebeeckx wishes to recapture something of their journey towards faith. For this reason, it is particularly significant that he does not emphasize the presence of the Spirit with Jesus during his historical life. When speaking of Jesus' death, however, Schillebeeckx does associate Jesus with the Spirit because, at least in *Christ*, Schillebeeckx highlights John's gospel to interpret this death. Jesus' yielding his Spirit is in *John* Jesus' last sacrificial action.

Once interpretations of Jesus were made after his death and resurrection, Schillebeeckx contends, questions about Jesus' identity as the Spirit-filled, religious 'latter-day prophet' began to emerge.²³ The title of 'Christ' given Jesus after his resurrection was consistent with the tradition of the eschatological prophet figure, the one described in the book of *Isaiah* as filled with God's Spirit. The depth of what was meant by 'being filled with God's Spirit' could not be glimpsed prior to Jesus' entrance into history. However, within the limits of the Jewish interpretive categories, the possibility that Jesus might be the Spirit-filled one spoken of in the Old Testament, was an interpretation to which Schillebeeckx himself gives much weight and with which he bridges both historical and theological understandings of the pre-Christian and early Christian experiences.²⁴

While underplaying rather than highlighting the extraordinary nature of events associated with Jesus' earthly history, Schillebeeckx refers more than once to Jesus' baptism where both *John* as well as the *Synoptic* writers interpret Jesus as the one filled with God's Spirit. Regarding Jesus' birth, Schillebeeckx accepts *Luke's* description of Jesus' being "born of the Spirit." He also follows the *Matthean* and *Lucan* interpretations that the Spirit was integrally connected with Jesus from the moment of his birth. Finally, *Luke's* description of Jesus being filled with the Spirit from the time of his conception is acknowledged by Schillebeeckx as a *Lucan* reflection on an *Isaian* prophecy. It leads *Luke* to describe Jesus as "the fruit of the Spirit who begets him."²⁵ *Matthew* and *Luke* in particular stress the entire human existence of Jesus as permeated by God's Spirit. *Mark* claims that Jesus is the one anointed with Pneuma. For *John*, Jesus possesses the Spirit permanently. In fact, it is through the power of the Spirit that Jesus is enabled to exercise power and therefore to perform cures, although, according to Schillebeeckx, the number of Jesus' cures

must be subject to careful exegetical scrutiny.

Schillebeeckx never presumes that Jesus' possessing the Spirit of God was an indisputable faith-claim for those who first encountered him. Yet, he does accept what at later stages was recorded in the gospel stories and in the Acts about Jesus' living in the presence of the Spirit. It is a later theological perspective that recognizes in Jesus the one 'indwelt by' another, i.e. by the Holy Spirit. Schillebeeckx's emphasis in his christology is not an exploration of the Spirit, except insofar as the Spirit helps to elucidate, even a little, the mystery of Jesus' person. Consequently, in following *Luke*, Schillebeeckx speaks of Christians encountering not the 'Father' directly but the gift of the Spirit in Jesus Christ.²⁶ Yet, it is the Spirit who links Jesus with his God.

While the special mission of Jesus was to bring God's unconditional liberation to all, it was in hindsight that New Testament writers recognized the nature of Jesus, as God's Son, and thus could perceive the connection between Jesus and the Spirit assisting him in offering God's gift of salvation.

In Schillebeeckx's theology, it is in the Spirit's connection with "liberation" that we note the function or task of the Spirit. It is always the Spirit's role to lead humanity to Jesus as well as to continue his work. The next two aspects of my treatment of the Spirit therefore relate directly to what the Spirit effects in the community as well as to the goal of this activity.

C The Spirit's Task of Recalling Jesus

Just as Jesus points away from himself in the direction of God,²⁷ so too the Spirit points to the person of Jesus. The Spirit puts people into contact with Jesus of Nazareth,²⁸ leading them to know him directly and only indirectly to know the Spirit. The Spirit teaches people about Jesus of Nazareth, completing and confirming the revelation offered humanity in the person of Jesus.²⁹ The Spirit witnesses to Jesus and leads the community to a greater depth of understanding about his person. Schillebeeckx agrees with what *Luke* offers regarding one's witnessing to the resurrection. He states:

To be a witness to the resurrection is not being a witness to the mere event of the resurrection (which Luke is not speaking about), but to the resurrection as a salvific event in God's plan of salvation.³⁰

The Spirit recalls Jesus and what he revealed about himself.³¹ In the task of 'recalling' and making present the memory of Jesus, the Spirit most clearly manifests the role of referring to Jesus and thus of reviewing the liberating deeds exemplified in his life and person. In so doing, the Spirit enables Jesus to have the "permanent and constitutive" significance attributed by the Christian community to him.³² The Spirit's task is to keep

alive in the community, and in the whole of history, the saving action of God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth, acclaimed as the Christ. There is not a hiatus between what the Spirit does and what Jesus did while in Palestine. The saving experience is mediated in each age through the church, but in the power of the Spirit. Schillebeeckx recognizes that in essence the function of both Jesus then, and the Spirit now, is the same—that of liberating and of saving.

It is not clear in Schillebeeckx's theology whether what Jesus effected in the past and still effects now through the Spirit can actually lead to our identifying the Spirit with the Risen Jesus. Generally, Schillebeeckx sees their functions as identical, especially when he has recourse to Pauline theology which identifies the Spirit with the "Lord." Schillebeeckx also speaks of Jesus being present now with the community in the Spirit and that, for believers in generations after Jesus' time, being "in Christ" was almost identical with being "in the Spirit."³³

However, when referring to John's gospel, Schillebeeckx agrees with the distinction made there between Jesus and the Spirit.³⁴ Certainly, the Spirit brings people into contact with Jesus and is an effective power for liberating the believer, as was Jesus, but their respective presence in the community is different. Schillebeeckx emphasizes that it is only through the work of the Spirit that individual people can recognize Jesus as "the Lord," thus himself suggesting that there is a distinction between the two. He also holds that it is the Spirit alone who can enable people to believe both in God and in Jesus.³⁵

From the preceding, it can be asserted that for Schillebeeckx the Spirit is 'recognized' in pointing beyond self, hence our difficulty in attempting to grasp precisely the Spirit's nature. Perhaps this realization hints at something quite significant about the complex nature of God's total reality and not only something about the reality of the Spirit. Schillebeeckx suggests something important about his own understanding of the Spirit when he states: "We will do better to investigate, i.e. to learn to see and hear, what the fruits of the Spirit are than directly to ask after his name and credentials."³⁶

D The Spirit and the Identity of the Christian Community

Schillebeeckx's understanding of Jesus' resurrection is that at the moment when Jesus is raised to new life, the gift of the Spirit is poured out and the formerly scattered disciples are gathered and formed into church. As the Spirit enabled believers in the first Christian communities to remain grounded in the message which Jesus preached, and for which he acted and

died, so the Spirit brings Jesus' followers into contact with him so that the liberating mission given him by God might be continued in his own Spirit until the end of time.

The first Christian communities received Jesus' Spirit as gift, always reminding them of Jesus. It is through this Spirit/Pneuma that Jesus keeps on impressing the communities with his features. Schillebeeckx states:

Pneuma and anamnesis, both the living recollection of the story, conduct and career of Jesus of Nazareth, handed down through the church, and the active presence of the Spirit of Christ in the church community of faith, form two sides of the one and the same coin.³⁷

It is Jesus who sends the Spirit to his followers. It is the Spirit of the Son who is sent. In all ages, it is the reception of the Spirit and the following at the Spirit's invitation that makes the church part of Jesus' own identity. Schillebeeckx succinctly sums up the nature of the church:

We allow the history of Jesus, the living one, to continue in history as a piece of living christology, the work of the Spirit among us, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.³⁸

The Spirit leads people to be the body of Christ for the ongoing effecting of Christ's mission. As is so clearly stated in *Colossians*, Christians are the body of the risen Lord. Without either Jesus or the Spirit, there could be no church. To reduce the impact of either is to diminish the life and effectiveness of the church.

The New Testament writings on which Schillebeeckx builds his theology stress that in order for followers of Jesus to be like Him, they need to be "born of the Spirit."³⁹ Thus, they will be able to know spiritual realities. In the sacramental life of the church and in what is preached about Jesus, the Spirit is present as guide and agent. Just as Jesus forgave sins in the power of the Spirit, so now the Spirit's function in forgiving sin is indispensable. Where the Spirit is truly present, there can be no sin. What was begun during Jesus' ministry regarding the freeing of people from sin is now continued in the effectiveness of the Spirit for the same freeing of people.

In *Christ*, there is a comprehensive listing of the powers of the Spirit at work in the church. They have their origin in what Jesus did for his community.⁴⁰ The Spirit is responsible for salvation, for redemption, for sanctification, for making followers children of God—for all the acts that liberate people from the powers that threaten them. The Spirit constantly renews the church in its call of fidelity to Jesus. The church lives authentically when open to the Spirit impelling it. Any authority that the

church possesses from its source in Christ's gift of his life and death is authority given now through the Spirit of Jesus. Any other authority claiming to represent Jesus is suspect.

However, Schillebeeckx never views the church as an 'enclosed garden'. In the power of the Spirit, the church witnesses to Jesus so that others who do not know him or who have no connection with the church may recognize therein a source of liberating speech and action—and perhaps be drawn to become disciples also. Schillebeeckx believes that Christianity will remain a living reality offering something to others only if "each successive period, from out of its relationship to Jesus Christ, declares anew for Jesus of Nazareth."⁴¹

Moreover, Schillebeeckx envisages the church as represented in *Ephesians* as the sacrament of peace for the world in which Jesus the Christ works his salvation through believers for others.⁴² Jesus' life is continued in the church in the Spirit of Christ. Schillebeeckx notes that *John* is so conscious of the significance of the Spirit that for him there are only two times—the time before and the time after the coming of the Spirit.⁴³ For Schillebeeckx, the division would accord with the traditionally accepted time before and time after Jesus' resurrection. Nevertheless, both hold that without Jesus' gift of the Spirit there would be no church.

It is the Spirit who constantly enables the church to exist and who does this in fidelity to the one by whom he was sent. The Spirit is always beholden to Jesus and does what he did. The Spirit inspires Christians to make liberation a reality at secular and ecclesial levels. Early in his work Jesus, Schillebeeckx says: "In Jesus' conduct of his own life we have not a theoretical but practical and proleptic realization ... of the 'new world'."⁴⁴ It is this 'new world' initiated by Jesus out of love for his Father that the Spirit invites Jesus' followers to continue creating in his memory. Thus, the Spirit ensures that the identity of the Christian community comes from and leads to Jesus, the reconciler of all humanity with God.

Part Two: Critique of the Holy Spirit in Schillebeeckx's Theology

Having described several key elements in Schillebeeckx's recent pneumatology I would now like to offer three reservations about this subject.

A Identity of the Risen Jesus and the Holy Spirit

The first reservation, as hinted before, concerns the lack of clarity between the identity of the Risen Jesus and that of the Holy Spirit in Schillebeeckx's theology. In one respect, this situation is not surprising, in

view of the fact that, as others have noted, the New Testament itself gives conflicting views about the identity of both.⁴⁵ The intimate connections Schillebeeckx draws between the Risen Jesus and the Spirit have already been noted—the *pneuma* and *anamnesis* that are the one single reality and two sides of the one coin; the “living pneumatic presence” which is that “of the glorified Lord in his church.”⁴⁶ However, in such passages, we might ask whether Schillebeeckx is identifying the Holy Spirit with Jesus, rather than showing the Spirit as subject to Jesus, as referring to him, as revelatory of him. There is a fine distinction between the Jesus of glory and the Spirit, but Schillebeeckx does not sufficiently account for the distinctiveness of the Spirit. Might Schillebeeckx not suggest mutuality and interdependence between both rather than identity?

Such indistinctness could be acceptable were Schillebeeckx not taking his scriptural reflection into dialogue with contemporary theological perspectives and issues. In *Christ and Church*, Schillebeeckx’s exegesis of the New Testament becomes a basis for his consideration of God in relation to personal, social, political, and philosophical themes. It seems that for the benefit of the church today, where the Spirit is the catalyst of all theology, a clearer presentation of the Spirit in the Spirit’s own right would be desirable. Schillebeeckx remarks at the conclusion of *Christ* that he had wanted

to end by discussing pneumatology and ecclesiology, i.e., the view of the Spirit of God as it is at work in the church and the world, a view which is implicit both in *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* and in this book.⁴⁷

This intention could not, however, be carried out for the practical reason of length. It is unfortunate that Schillebeeckx was also unable to fulfil this plan in his subsequent work *Church*. It seems that unless such a theologian engages in discussion of the Holy Spirit through scriptural and extended theological reflection, there will continue to be a lack of attention to the reality of the Spirit in our midst.

It may be that Schillebeeckx’s growing disappointment with aspects of the institutional church in recent times accounts for the comparatively undeveloped theology of the Spirit in the trilogy.⁴⁸ Traditionally, in the Catholic church the Spirit and ecclesiology have always been closely connected.

B Nature of the Holy Spirit as Functional

The second reservation about Schillebeeckx’s treatment of the Holy Spirit concerns the functional manner in which the Spirit is presented in the trilogy and in later writings. As has already been noted, the Spirit acts to continue Jesus’ salvation, to recall Jesus, to elucidate Jesus, to deepen people’s experiences of Jesus. It seems to be Schillebeeckx’s intention to

depict the Spirit as one who acts, one who bears fruits rather than one who is identifiable by name. Is there not a tendency in a functional approach to deny the Spirit both as personal and as personally present to the community? Schillebeeckx does not ignore the Spirit's role as confirmer of faith, or as associated with the inner life of human beings,⁴⁹ but the Spirit is principally presented in the trilogy as a divine agent directed towards Jesus. I wonder, however, whether one is not ultimately drawn to desire the Spirit, as Holy Spirit, even while recognizing the Spirit's gifts. Hendrikus Berkhof praises Schillebeeckx for his emphasis on the Spirit as first-fruits and pledge of the eschaton.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Berkhof also asks whether Schillebeeckx's associating the first-fruits with praxis, even with justice and truth, might not at the same time overlook the Spirit's role of gracing and renewing inwardly the human person. McDonnell speaks of this problem in relation to a future vision of church. He says:

One will have to move beyond the functional pneumatology, which has dominated the field up until now. Pneumatological functionalism is preoccupied with what the Spirit effects and does. A more phenomenological pneumatology looks at the works of the Spirit in order to speak about who the Spirit is.⁵¹

If Schillebeeckx were to link the personal dimension of the Spirit with the functional, his concept of liberation would become more profound both for individuals and groups. He speaks, for example, of God (Father) as the ally in our cause and of God (Jesus) as "bent upon humanity."⁵² Is it not the Spirit of God and of Jesus who in every age is the ally accompanying, encouraging, challenging, strengthening the community to be makers of justice and doers of truth? In 1988, Schillebeeckx's homily "The Johannine Easter: The Feast of the Giving of the Spirit," offered glimpses of such a depiction of the Spirit. I would wish for more.

C The Holy Spirit and Prayer

The third reservation concerns the Spirit's role in prayer. In the insightful section on mysticism towards the end of *Christ*, little place is given explicitly to the Spirit in the relationship of the creature to the Creator in prayer. In the reflection on the God who "plays hide and seek" with the creature,⁵³—or the God who is present to us in extreme moments of darkness,⁵⁴ nothing is said of the Holy Spirit as the one enabling this relationship to occur. In the New Testament, people prayed "in" the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ Today, theologians such as Moltmann,⁵⁶ the late Catherine LaCugna,⁵⁷ and Panikkar,⁵⁸ emphasize the confidence of believers who know that their prayer is made "in" or "out of" the Holy Spirit. This is an aspect which, unfortunately, Schillebeeckx has not

developed.

In summary, I have noted the lack of clarity in Schillebeeckx's presentation of the identity of the Risen Jesus and the Spirit, his almost exclusive emphasis on the Spirit's functional role, and the absence of explicit reference to the Spirit in mystical life. The salvific life of the early communities was attributed both to Jesus and the Spirit. However, an important aspect of total liberation—the inner liberation of the person—is insufficiently addressed by Schillebeeckx. If the Spirit were depicted more clearly as personal and as more intrinsically connected with worship and prayer, the liberation Schillebeeckx presents would be even more visibly the gift of God, communicated in individual hearts as well as transforming faith celebrations of the Christian community.

Let me now turn to a discussion of several features of Schillebeeckx's pneumatology that seem promising for a renewed understanding of the Spirit today.

Part Three: Schillebeeckx's Contribution to Future Pneumatology

A The Link between the Holy Spirit, Creation and Ecclesiology

First, there are many qualities used by Schillebeeckx of God generally—transcendent, elusive, making new, surprising, eternally youthful, future-oriented—that suggest creative life and which consequently are particularly applicable to the Holy Spirit. Especially is this so in regard to Schillebeeckx's reflections on creation and ecclesiology. Schillebeeckx regards creation as a gift which bears “the inexhaustible potential of expectation and inspiration.”⁵⁹ While always careful to distinguish between the Creator and the created, Schillebeeckx regards creation as fundamentally resourceful, renewing, open to receiving God's invitations. I suggest that such qualities are often specifically associated with the agency and person of the Spirit. Schillebeeckx's theology acknowledges creation as continually dependent on the Creator who ceaselessly enables it to exist and to flourish. Is it not the Spirit who is leading creation towards its fulfilment?

With regard to ecclesiology, Schillebeeckx acknowledges the Spirit working at every level of the church's existence. His vision of the church as “the eschatological liberation movement” can be integrally connected with the Spirit empowering the church to be “living christology” in fidelity to Jesus.⁶⁰ Moreover, the Spirit keeps the church focussed on encouraging liberation at all levels of human existence and on bringing to birth the new future, the sign of the ultimate eschatological reality. Schillebeeckx says:

Through the gift of the Spirit, redemption and liberation becomes the work of spirit-filled people - and of Jesus and all people who follow him, in his spirit.⁶¹

Schillebeeckx's interpretation of the Resurrection as the event in which the Spirit forms the disciples into the church indicates the important perspective of pneumatology in constituting church. Schillebeeckx affirms the indispensable role of the Spirit in ensuring that the Christ-event be the heart of the church. At the same time, he recognizes the unbreakable link between the initial grounding of the church in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the keeping of the church in existence through the power of the Spirit. This aspect of Schillebeeckx's ecclesiology is strictly pneumatological and presents possibilities for a theology which might more explicitly describe the intrinsic role of the Spirit in continually effecting the church. John Zizioulas, for example, emphasises the constitutive role of the Spirit in creating church.⁶² Likewise, McDonnell, who hopes to see pneumatology gradually more integrated with all theology, says:

On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit does not come to infuse with power the already existing church structure; the coming belongs to the first, to the constitutive moment.⁶³

The pneumatological sources already present in Schillebeeckx's reflection on creation and ecclesiology present fertile areas for further discussion.

B Links between Christology and Pneumatology

A second area for exploration concerns Schillebeeckx's insistence that christology and pneumatology as theological disciplines be linked. The need for such a connection is evident also in contemporary theology.⁶⁴

In concluding that the New Testament functions of the Spirit and Christ are the same Schillebeeckx remarks: "This raises the question of the relationship between christology and pneumatology."⁶⁵ In fact, in the first two books of the trilogy—*Jesus* and *Christ*, Schillebeeckx speaks of the "pneumatology implicitly present" in both.⁶⁶ It is this implicit presence which could fruitfully be made more explicit. I have already indicated the many scriptural links drawn by Schillebeeckx between Jesus and the Spirit, but the links need to be furthered beyond their New Testament context into contemporary theological reflection. It is a question of moving from a highlighting in Scripture of the Spirit's relation to Jesus Christ, to the stage where pneumatology in Schillebeeckx's theology is recognized as central to the understanding and undertaking of christology. It is also a question of moving from the link between the Spirit and the early Christian communities to theology where ecclesiology is consciously affected by

pneumatology. While some theologians have consciously connected ecclesiology and pneumatology, only the beginnings of this process are present in Schillebeeckx's theology.

As is illustrated by Elizabeth Johnson,⁶⁷ an alternative method might begin with pneumatology and move via christology to the doctrine of God. Christology would benefit from the impact of pneumatology on it.⁶⁸ Ecclesiology would benefit from the combined influence on it of christology and pneumatology.⁶⁹ Schillebeeckx offers yet-to-be-developed insights into the retrieval of pneumatology for contemporary theology.

C The Holy Spirit and the Public Domain

The third area of possible development in Schillebeeckx's treatment of the Spirit concerns the broadening of the role of the Spirit outwards from the private to the public domains of life. It seems that the ingredients for recognizing the Spirit's role in the public areas of cultural, social, economic and political life are already present in Schillebeeckx's theology.⁷⁰ Schillebeeckx claims that wherever people work to bring about a new world, signs of the eschaton exist. Wherever people join in solidarity to resist evil and suffering, they act in the name of God.⁷¹ Wherever people take on the responsibility of changing harmful political and economic structures yet remain open to God's "eschatological proviso," they act in favour of the *humanum*. In such cases, more than individual lives are being transformed. The power of the Spirit is set loose for a new creation. It seems that recognition of the Spirit's role in attaining such situations is an area for further fruitful study in Schillebeeckx's theology.

One recurring mark of Schillebeeckx's reflection has been concern with major human questions such as meaning and meaninglessness, political and social responsibility, interaction of church and world. It is of special interest that his work entitled *Church: The Human Story of God* raises christological and ecclesial questions only after a lengthy discussion of humanness, historicity, suffering and the phenomenon of religion. Throughout, little specific reference is made to the Spirit. Yet, there is a sense in which the questions raised about church, in the second half of the work, are intrinsic to the church's survival and may point to the creative presence of the Spirit in world and in church. Challenges to be a church that liberates in fidelity to Jesus, that witnesses to God's reign, that is a living anticipation of God's new creation posit the church squarely within creation and humanity. They are challenges that invite disciples of Jesus to seek signs of life and liberation in various earthly contexts and to attempt to incarnate church from there. Are such challenges promptings of the Spirit that might enable Jesus' community of believers to be "an eschatological liberation movement" at the dawn of this new era?

Conclusion

Although for the purposes of this discussion I have concentrated on the distinctiveness of the Spirit, there is a strong sense in Schillebeeckx's theology of the unity of God. In reply to Duquoc, Schillebeeckx spoke of the need to maintain the polarity between individual distinctions in the Trinity and the notion of *perichoresis* in order to preserve divine unity.⁷² My attempt, therefore, to single out the Spirit may seem contrary to his general approach. Yet, the Spirit does not operate apart from the Spirit's relation to the other divine persons nor apart from the world. The Spirit and pneumatology are relevant to humanity because of salvation history in the past and in the future. The following statement by Schillebeeckx about the Holy Spirit takes us back not only to the beginning of this discussion on the Holy Spirit but recalls a central aspect of his theology. "Is he not the great unknown and *wills to remain so*?"⁷³

We have seen that Edward Schillebeeckx develops his pneumatology closely in relationship to christology and that his understanding of the Holy Spirit is largely functional. We have also seen that there are hints throughout much of his theology that can provide sound starting points for a more explicit pneumatology. While awaiting such development let me, in conclusion, raise three rhetorical questions: In Schillebeeckx's theology, is it not the Spirit's principal task to encourage human beings to look towards Jesus? Is it not then Jesus' task to point human beings towards his *Abba*? Ultimately, does Schillebeeckx not describe God as Mystery? Perhaps it is this element of mystery so often applied to the Spirit that is fundamentally the only enduring description of God.

- 1 Edmund J Dobbin, "References to the Spirit became notoriously sparse in the writings of the apologists, and the references when explicit, are often vaguely related to the Word." See "Trinity" in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. J. Komonchak, M.Collins, D.Lane (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 3rd Printing, 1989), 1053.
- 2 William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington DC: CUA Press, 1982), 302; Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1991), 168.
- 3 Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. P. Burns (New York: Orbis, 1988), 189.
- 4 Paul Evdokimov, *L'Esprit Saint dans la Tradition Orthodoxe*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1969), 88.
- 5 John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1972)
- 6 See Mary Grey "Where does the Wild Goose Fly to? Seeking a New Theology of Spirit for Feminist Theology," *New Blackfriars*, Feb. 1991:89-96; Elizabeth Johnson *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 57 and *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), esp. ch.7. See too Maria Harris, *Proclaim Jubilee: A Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996),7. Feminist theologians and eco-theologians are presently

- offering significant insights about the functions and nature of the Holy Spirit.
- 7 Kilian McDonnell, "The Determinative Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *ThT* 39 (1982–3):145.
 - 8 Philip Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx* (London: Chapman, 1993).
 - 9 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Crossroad, 1981). Orig. pub. 1974. Hereafter cited as *Jesus*.
 - 10 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1980). Orig. pub. 1977. Hereafter cited as *Christ*.
 - 11 Edward Schillebeeckx, *I am a Happy Theologian*, trans. John Bowden (London:SCM Press Ltd., 1994). Orig. pub. 1993.
 - 12 See *Jesus*, 646; *Christ*, 339; *Interim Report on the Books "Jesus" and "Christ"*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 135. Orig. pub. 1978. Hereafter cited as *Interim Report*. This view is also constant in earlier theology.
 - 14 See Jésus de Nazareth: "Le Récit d'un Vivant," *Lumière et vie* 26/134 (1977):36.
 - 15 *Christ*, 471.
 - 16 *Jesus*, 47.
 - 17 See *Jesus*, 343.
 - 18 *Jesus*, 46.
 - 19 See *Jesus*, 540.
 - 20 "The Johannine Easter: the Feast of the Giving of the Spirit," in *For the Sake of the Gospel*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 73. Homily hereafter cited as "The Johannine Easter."
 21. *Christ*, 534.
 - 22 *Jesus*, 312.
 23. *Jesus*, 473.
 24. In fact, so committed is Schillebeeckx to this interpretation for Jesus that he says: "To put it baldly: if the model had not already existed, the impression that Jesus had made on them in his whole ministry would have obliged them to invent it." *Jesus*, 473. In 1977, Schillebeeckx reaffirms this position when he argues against critics who claim that the 'eschatological prophet' is of minor significance. See "Jésus de Nazareth: Le Récit d'un Vivant," 21.
 - 25 *Christ*, 534.
 - 26 See *Jesus*, 535.
 - 27 See *Interim Report*, 142 and *Church*, 101.
 - 29 See *Christ*, 421.
 - 30 *Jesus*, 356.
 - 31 See *Jesus*, 421.
 - 32 *Interim Report*, 131.
 - 33 See *Church: The Human Story of God*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 158 Orig. pub. 1989. Hereafter cited as *Church*.
 - 34 See *Christ*, 347.
 - 35 See *Interim Report*, 125.
 - 36 "The Johannine Easter," 70.
 - 37 *Church*, 158.
 - 38 *Christ*, 641.
 - 39 See *Christ*, 322, 422.
 - 40 *Christ*, 534–35.
 - 41 *Jesus*, 574.
 - 42 See *Christ*, 210.
 - 43 See *Christ*, 349.
 - 44 *Jesus*, 153.

- 45 See references to Paul's identification of being "in Christ" and being "in the Spirit" in Dobbin, "The Trinity," 1050.
- 46 *Church*, 109.
- 47 *Christ*, 840.
- 48 Schillebeeckx used the word "trilogy" to refer to his works *Jesus*, *Christ* and *Church*. See *Interim Report*, 95.
- 49 Schillebeeckx suggests that many of the works done by Jesus, such as sanctifying, making disciples, forgiving sins, were transferred after his death to the Spirit. In *Christ*, 534–5, Schillebeeckx speaks of the Spirit being given to the community and to all individual believers. McDonnell credits Schillebeeckx with having brought a pneumatological dimension to the sacraments in his early work, *Christ the Sacrament*. See "The Determinative Doctrine," 159, n.95. This was truer, however, of Schillebeeckx's earlier rather than later works.
- 50 Hendrikus Berkhof "Les Arrhes de l'Esprit," *Mélanges Edward Schillebeeckx: L'Expérience de l'Esprit* (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1976) 197, 203. See also Maureen Carroll, "Framework for a Theology of Christian Conversion in the Jesus-Project of Edward Schillebeeckx." (PhD. diss., CUA, 1984), 465.
- 51 McDonnell, "The Determinative Doctrine," 146.
- 52 *Jesus*, 267.
- 53 *Christ*, 816.
- 54 See *Christ*, 815–6.
- 55 See Dobbin, "The Trinity," 1051.
- 56 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 157.
- 57 Catherine LaCugna with K. McDonnell, "'Returning from the Far Country': Theses for a Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *SJTh* 41 (1988): 197.
- 58 Raimundo Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (New York: Orbis, 1973), 63.
- 59 *Interim Report*, III.
- 60 *Christ*, 641.
- 61 "The Johannine Easter," 74.
- 62 John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: in personhood and the Church* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 110–111.
- 63 McDonnell, "The Determinative Doctrine," 158.
- 64 See, too example, John J. O'Donnell, "In Him and Over Him: The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus," *Greg*, 70, Vol. 1 (1989). See LaCugna and McDonnell, "Returning from 'The Far Country'," 200, 215.
- 65 *Christ*, 535.
- 66 *Interim Report*, 102.
- 67 See *She Who Is*, Part Three.
- 68 Walter Kasper says, "A more profound pneumatology can help fill in the gaps of traditional Christology. "See "Esprit-Christ-Eglise" *Mélanges Edward Schillebeeckx: L'Expérience de l'Esprit*: (Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1976), 63.
- 69 See Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 59.
- 70 See section in *Christ* 804–810, "Political and mystical activity."
- 71 "L'avenir de l'Église est fondamentalement lié à la présence de l'Église à l'avenir du monde et à sa présence aux grands problèmes et souffrances de l'humanité dans ce monde". Conférence de Presse, unpublished manuscript, Rome, 1993, I.
- 72 See *Church* 257.
- 73 "The Johannine Easter," 70.