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**The Hermeneutics of Sacrament in the Theology of
Edward Schillebeeckx: A theological inquiry of the church
as sacrament**

by

Revd Dennis Dawson Elliott

BTh, MTh

#25360698

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Promoter: **Prof Dr PR Wells**
Co-Promoter: **Prof Dr ALR du Plooy**

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ABSTRACT

This polemical study aims at exploring the sacramental theology of the late Roman Catholic theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) and to use it as a 'foil' against which to propose an alternative, if not renewed, ecclesiology more amenable to Protestant Evangelicals. This study accomplishes this aim within the framework of a systematic theological method with an approach that is inclusive of theological inquiry as well as sociological theory and praxis. Engaging Schillebeeckx with some significant conversation partners, both Roman Catholic and Protestants, draws out his hermeneutical inconsistencies. Two observations emerge from this informed dialogue: Firstly, it establishes Schillebeeckx's sacramental theology as upholding the systemic awareness of his Roman Catholic tradition. Secondly, insofar as the Protestant tradition is concerned, it establishes that in spite of the diverse sacramental views within Reformation thought and Protestant Evangelicalism in particular, the doctrine of grace is upheld as triumphant over the doctrine of the church. With a more directed focus on the diverse views concerning the Lord's Supper, this dissertation hones in on the trajectories of Zwingli ("symbolic memorialism"), Bullinger ("symbolic parallelism") and Calvin ("symbolic instrumentalism"). Emerging from this exploration, a Zwingli-Bullinger confluence is proposed.

Key Words:

Ecclesiology, Sacraments, Sign, Sacramental Grace, Sacramental Theology, Continuing Incarnation, Ecclesial Mediation, Pneumatology, Symbolic Memorialism, Symbolic Parallelism, Symbolic Instrumentalism, Evangelicalism.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INDICATIONS: INTEREST, AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The interest in this research project is borne out of the tension that exists between Christian faith and church. That there are indications in theological circles for a churchless faith is of concern to me. The fact that people are dropping out of the church in view of the human-divine complexities that they have encountered and resorting to a churchless faith as an alternative does indeed require a research project of this type. In addressing and exploring the conceptualization of the *sacramental mystery* of the church as predicated by Schillebeeckx, this study is attempting to rediscover the essence of the church by considering the working union between the divine and human elements in the church. Initially this study began its exploration of the above primary issue with intensive analysis of the Roman Catholic ecclesiological perspectives via *Lumen Gentium* which is Vatican II's official document on the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* that views the Church as both divine and human: a divine-human (mystical sacramental body of Christ) communion.

This research then became more pointed to the sacramental hermeneutics of Schillebeeckx who argues that the sacraments are the primary modes of encounter with God and that they bestow grace. Schillebeeckx's perspectives on sacramental ecclesiology are undergirded by the Roman Catholic notion of the continuing incarnation of Christ in the church. This sacramental theological-ecclesiological trajectory of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in *Lumen Gentium* and that of Schillebeeckx in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* is a theological-ecclesiological problem. This dissertation therefore intends to explore critically the sacramental ecclesiological hermeneutics of the late Roman Catholic theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) and to use it as a 'foil' against which to propose an alternative, if not renewed, ecclesiology, more amenable to Protestant Evangelicals. This will be done within the framework of a systematic theological method with an approach that is inclusive of theological inquiry as well as sociological theory and praxis. In the first instance, rather than approaching the dissertation with a mere unsympathetic apologetic, this study attempts to address his hermeneutical inconsistencies by engaging him with some significant conversation partners, both Roman Catholic and Protestants and in this way draw value from what is valued as intrinsic to the nature of the church and sacraments. This would at least subject my criticism within a sympathetic yet critical framework of informed dialogue.

Since Schillebeeckx is adamant about his sacramental arguments, Flanagan's wise counsel on systematic theological method, which considers among others, "the assistance of the values of clarity, consistency, theoretical judgement, argument" and "dialectical comparison", is helpful (Flanagan, 2011:11). The problem with Schillebeeckx's theologizing (1963:6,15) is that he attempts to arrive at a clear and distinct idea of the church as sacramental continuing incarnation of Christ and does so by claiming that his way of theologizing is the only proper way of doing so. Again, Flanagan (2011:11) offers a critical view on theologizing by arguing: "While systematic theologians generally no longer naively assume that theologies aiming at 'clear and distinct ideas' are the only legitimate modes of theologizing, they also insist that such theologies have a continuing value in the attempt to understand the church." Chapter Five will therefore focus on the dialogue within Roman Catholicism and Chapter Six will focus on the dialogue within Evangelicalism.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND SUBSTANTIATION

Schillebeeckx (1963:15) defines sacrament as a "divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility". This is a theologically problematic definition in that Schillebeeckx (1963:66) declares the sacraments to be saving ecclesial acts, that is, the recipient receives grace through the sacraments. Undergirding this definition is his notion of the church as the continuing incarnation of Christ. The incarnation of Christ is his general context of sacramental mystery in the church.

For Schillebeeckx (1963:3) what obscures our encounter with God in terms of grace and sacraments is the failure to distinguish between our uniquely peculiar existence and "the mode of being, mere objective *being there*, which is proper to the things of nature". God's incarnational approach into human existence is frequently lost in the "too severely objective examination" of such core tenet of the Christian faith (Schillebeeckx, 1963:3). When applied to the sacraments, the result of this "tendency towards a purely impersonal, almost mechanical approach was that they were considered chiefly in terms of physical categories" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:3). Hence the sacraments were considered as another application albeit with a more focused approach (Schillebeeckx, 1963:3). This view resulted in adherents appearing to be "merely passive recipients of sacramental grace, which seemed to be put into us automatically" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:3).

He argues that since God took the initiative in Christ to commune with humanity, the Christian faith must be viewed as our personal encounter with God. The essence of God's grace therefore is sacramental since it is set in full strength in human history. This

supernatural reality in history reveals the extent of God's saving activity in Christ. Christ then, as historically human and divine redeemer, continues in the world, seeking to encounter humanity with the message of grace (Schillebeeckx, 1963:4-6).

Schillebeeckx (1963:6) directs his attention to this inquiry of "sacramentality in religion" so that he may conclude that the "sacraments are the properly human mode of encounter with God". As his point of departure, Schillebeeckx (1963:7) alludes to Augustine's treatise as the "first insight into the meaning of the sacramentality of the Church". He explores this development in Augustinian ecclesiology, which identifies the development of the Church in human history in three distinct phases, namely:

- "The 'Church' of the devout heathen." (Schillebeeckx, 1963:7). The sacramental Church is present for all humanity. The inward call of God, obscurely present in every human being, is the un-encountered grace or anonymous grace that manifests itself to some degree. However, Church and sacrament are essential to the grace of God taking on visible form and expression (Schillebeeckx, 1963:10).
- "The pre-Christian phase of the Christian Church in the form of the chosen race of Israel." (Schillebeeckx 1963:7). This is the first phase of the Church since grace manifested itself in divine revelation (Yahweh) and thus became a "partial realization of the mystery of Christ" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:12). The Christian age began with the Church of the Old Testament.
- "The emergence of the mature Church, the Church of the first-born (Heb.12: 23)." (Schillebeeckx, 1963:7). The Church of the Old Testament, a "sign and cause of grace" found its fulfilment in Christ's redemptive work (Christ-event). Grace was now explicit in actualization. Christ was now God's ultimate redemptive sacrament (Schillebeeckx, 1963:12).

However, in discussing Christ as the ultimate redemptive sacrament of God, Schillebeeckx (1963:55) concludes that the sacraments are the earthly extension of the body of the Lord. This sacramental extension is, for him, the earthly prolongation of Christ's glorified humanity. The visible manifestation of the mystery of Christ in the sacraments is the visible Church (Schillebeeckx, 1963:45). He then elaborates on the outworking of the mystery of Christ in the visible Church. He refers to the Church as the earthly sacrament of the risen Christ (Schillebeeckx, 1963:47-49). He argues further that the Church in its entirety (hierarchy and laity) is actually the "sacramental or mystical Christ" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:49). Just as the

risen Christ is both head and body, so too is the Church hierarchical (head) and body (members/laity). He concludes that the hierarchical Church is the realization of the sacramental manifestation of the Lord. In other words, the Church itself offers grace through the Apostolic office (*Ecclesial Administration*) to those who approach it and this grace is bestowed through the sacraments. Hence the Church offers sacramental grace and the sacraments are “ecclesial acts of worship” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:54,66).

Schillebeeckx (1963:62) contends that the sacraments as “mediation” between Christ and us must be seen within its threefold historical orientation, namely, *anamnesis*, *visible affirmation* and *eschatological salvation*. Here he argues (1963:62) that the sacraments are not to be placed immediately between the Christ’s historical event at the Cross and our present world context but “rather between the Christ who is living now and our earthly world”. In the sacraments there is the “immediate encounter in mutual availability between the living *Kyrios* and ourselves” (Schillebeeckx 1963:62). This sacramental encounter with the ascended Christ in the Church is the “beginning of eschatological salvation on earth” (Schillebeeckx 1963: 62-63).

Schillebeeckx argues for sacramental salvation through the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) by leaning heavily on his notion of the Church as the continuing incarnation of Christ and the sacraments as the genuine, mediatory means of encounter with God. The sacraments, as argued by Schillebeeckx, are the ecclesial acts of God with a substance of continuing incarnational saving grace. The ecclesiological problem of Schillebeeckx’s hermeneutic is that the church and sacraments are salvific in themselves. So “Is the church and sacraments salvific in themselves?” Schillebeeckx certainly thinks so. This remains the central question in this dissertation. This dissertation argues that the sacraments are not saving ecclesial acts of the church, nor do they offer sacramental grace for these then substitutes the grace that is in Christ alone. Alluding to Christ as the “primordial sacrament” and the Church as the “sacrament of the risen Christ” (Schillebeeckx 1963:13, 47) is a theologically problematic trajectory since the Church itself becomes the mystical Christ.

1.3 CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT

Schillebeeckx’s hermeneutics of sacrament put thus far in broad strokes needs contextualizing and developing. This will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Four: *Schillebeeckx – Context and Development of his Theology*. Since Vatican I, the theological and ecclesiological development of the notion of sacramentality has opened up discussions on linguistic theory and reflection on the relationship between the sign, the thing signified and the signifier. The twentieth century has seen many Catholic theologians appeal to the

“Church as Sacrament” in order to “bring together the external and internal aspects into some intelligible synthesis” (Dulles, 1987:63). The re-emergence of this type of ecclesiology anticipated by Cyprian, Augustine, Aquinas and Scheeben was elucidated at Vatican II in many key passages (Dulles 1987:64). *Lumen Gentium* (Vatican Translation, 2009:17) for example, alludes to the Church as mystery and sacrament: “the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race”.

Schillebeeckx’s hermeneutics of the Church as sacramental mystery also finds synthesis with the theological persuasions of the Roman Catholic Church. The New Catholic Encyclopaedia, Volume XII (1967:786) states that “The intrinsic relationship, or unity, of Christ with the Church, two correlative aspects of the identical sacrament, proceeds from an ontological and juridico-canonical causality. Ontologically man is universally consecrated by a participation in divine existence; this participation in, or unity with, the divine results concretely from the *gratia unionis* whereby the hypostatic Incarnation of the Logos is realized (Heb.1.1-3; 2.14-15).” This intrinsic sacramental structure of the Church (primal sacrament and sign-mystery) alludes to the “definitive grace” manifested by the Incarnational Christ through the Church (1967:786). Schillebeeckx (1963:48) does not view the Church and the grace of Christ in dualistic terms. To do this would be “the work of evil – as if one could play off the inward communion in grace with Christ against the juridical society of the Church, or vice versa” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:48).

In discussing the Church as the “Sacrament of the Risen Christ” with particular reference to “The Presence of the Mystery of Christ in the Sacraments”, Schillebeeckx (1963: 54) asks the question: “how, precisely, is the heavenly mystery of grace present in the sacraments?” He affirms Casel’s controversial works as giving the greatest contribution to a move away “from the individualistic, sometimes excessively objectivised approach characteristic of the post-Renaissance period up till the last decades of the nineteenth century” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:55). He also maintains that Casel’s “development of the critical study of Scripture and the Fathers led inevitably to a renewed appreciation and awareness of the community character of the Church as Mystical Body, and of the essentially sacramental character of salvation” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:55).

However, Schillebeeckx finds contradiction in Casel’s thesis whereby Casel claims that the historical past of the Christ redemptive event is “actualized anew mystically in the sacrament” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:55). Casel (1962:153-154) speaks of the sacraments as not just pointing to but containing the “saving action” of Christ whereby the death of Christ is “made present”. For Schillebeeckx (1963:55), the past redemptive event, although having a

“perennial character” cannot “be made once more actually present, not even by God himself, not even “in mystery” “. He contends, “the past influences the present and has, especially in the human person, some form of actuality still. But this cannot be regarded as “the historical actuality of an event as it occurs now. So this aspect cannot be fundamental to a true ‘presence in mystery’” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:55). He is content to speak of “an enduring trans-historical element which now becomes sacramentalized in an earthly event of our own time in a visible act of the Church” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:56).

1.4 OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONVERSATION PARTNERS

Flanagan (2011) explores the ecclesiological perspectives of Jean-Marie Tillard by engaging Tillard’s work with current debates concerning communion ecclesiology and theological and ecclesiological methods. Flanagan (2011:65) points to four aspects of Tillard’s sacramental theology that are crucial for his hermeneutics of “ecclesial communion” and would no doubt be helpful in the progress of my dissertation. These four aspects, which form the basis of Tillard’s sacramental hermeneutics, more specifically, Eucharist, will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Five. Apart from Flanagan and Tillard, included here will also be the hermeneutics of Wood (1998) who gives a fairly comprehensive exploration of the hermeneutics of de Lubac.

Tillard posits that any understanding of the church must engender “ecclesial communion” (Flanagan, 2011, 118). By offering a systematic analysis of the church as a “Communion”, Flanagan believes that Tillard’s contribution in this one aspect or model is of “lasting value in the investigation of other aspects of the church” (Flanagan, 2011:118). This is where this study anticipates Dulles (1987) being helpful especially in the matter of one model of the church being exclusive, as is the case with Tillard (communion) and Schillebeeckx (sacrament). Dulles’ work is vital in elucidating some aspects of the arguments of Tillard and more specifically that of Schillebeeckx. Dulles (1987:15-33) presents a critical comparative ecclesiology by sifting out five major approaches from among the writings of both Protestant and Catholic scholars. He argues that the Church is a “mystery” and prefers to refer to these approaches as “models”. Since mysteries can only be addressed by drawing on analogies based on one’s experience, it is therefore these analogies that provide models. He considers and evaluates the following approaches or types: *The Church as Institution; The Church as Mystical Communion; The Church as Sacrament; The Church as Herald; The Church as Servant*. He contributes to ecclesiological perspectives by concluding “that a balanced theology of the Church must find a way of incorporating the major affirmations of each ecclesiological type” (Dulles, 1987:13).

He acknowledges that 'mystery' has been used in a variety of ways in biblical traditions as well as non-biblical religions. For the purposes of his treatment on the subject of 'mystery', he confines his exploration to 1 Corinthians, Ephesians and Colossians. For him the "mystery par excellence" is found in the redemptive work of Christ (Dulles, 1987:17). For Dulles (1987:17) the unsearchable riches (Eph.3:8) are in Christ; the fullness of God (Col.3:9) dwells in Christ; and this fullness is revealed to those who open their hearts to the Spirit which comes from God (1 Cor.2:12). For Vatican Council II, the title of Chapter 1, "The Mystery of the Church" defined its ecclesiology. By implication this meant that the Church as mystery "is not fully intelligible to the finite mind of man" (Dulles, 1987:17). Conclusively then for Dulles, "the Church pertains to the mystery of Christ; Christ is carrying out in the Church his plan of redemption. He is dynamically at work in the Church through his Spirit" (Dulles, 1987:18).

According to Dulles (1987:18), since we are involved in the Church, we cannot fully objectify it; we can only know the Church through inter-subjectivity. The union of people (human) with Christ (divine) is evident in the Church. The *mystery* lies in "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col.1: 27). Since the Church is characterized by its mysterious nature (connaturality), this does have significant implications for methodology for "it rules out the possibility of proceeding from clear and univocal concepts" (Dulles, 1987:18). For Dulles (1987:18), human communion with Christ is mystical and therefore conceptualizations drawn from the realities we observe in our objective world cannot readily or directly be applied to this mystery of human communion with God in Christ. Dulles' work in *Models of the Church* will be explored at greater length in Chapter Three.

A good evangelical point of departure for assessing the problematic trajectory of Schillebeeckx would be the work of Leonardo De Chirico. In working out an Evangelical theological hypothesis, Chirico (2003:13-47) focuses his attention on post-Vatican II Evangelical theological developments. More specifically, he analyzes contemporary Evangelical theology against the backdrop of its relationship with post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism. This he does by firstly attempting to define 'Evangelicalism' within the socio-cultural, historical, theological, ecclesiastical and composite categories. Secondly, he assesses the current state of Evangelical theological perspectives in dialogue with post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism. Here, he analyzes the varied theological perspectives of a few significant Evangelical theologians who have engaged themselves with post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism, namely, Gerrit Berkouwer, Cornelius van Til, David Wells, Donald Bloesch, Herbert Carson and John Stott.

Berkouwer, for example, views the Roman Catholic doctrine of grace as the “core problem” that divides Protestants and Roman Catholics (Chirico, 2003, 57). His discourse on the Roman Catholic hermeneutics “of the Incarnation as the cosmological principle determining the *telos* of all reality” is relevant for this dissertation since it “enhances the already emerged conviction that, even in the case of the dilation of the historical uniqueness of the Incarnation into a universal category of ontic transfiguration of the world, *‘the discussion is about sin and grace’*” (Chirico, 2003:56). Since Schillebeeckx argues for a sacramental church with sacramental salvation and sacramental grace with a continuing incarnation of Christ the risen Lord, Berkouwer’s discussion about grace would offer an engaging build-up for this dissertation.

De Chirico’s work on the whole here is highly significant for this thesis and will play a major part in determining if anything is of “lasting value” in Schillebeeckx’s sacramental hermeneutics. Chirico (2003:273) rightly concludes that the traditional Roman Catholic development of the Church as sacrament is anchored in the “ecclesiological presupposition” that is “based on the Christological analogy”. Since the Roman Catholic Church sees itself as the “extension of the Incarnation”, and defines the mystery of the Church through sacramentality, Chirico (2003:273) maintains that it is vital for any Evangelical analysis of Roman Catholic ecclesiology to explore “the crucial relationship between Christ and the Church as worked out in both the Roman Catholic and Evangelical traditions”. The exploration of Schillebeeckx’s ecclesiological understanding will no doubt engender this crucial relational aspect.

This dissertation, I believe, would not be holistic without the ecclesiological exploration of John Calvin. Gerard Mannion and Eduardus Van der Borght (2011) offer some significant ecclesiological perspectives relevant for this thesis. Intersecting Schillebeeckx’s sacramental trajectory with Calvin’s theological trajectory of Word and Sacrament would be fruitful in finding further directions with regard to sacramental theology and more specifically, sacramental ecclesiology. Mannion (2011:14) alludes to Roger Haight’s (2005) evaluation of Calvin’s ecclesiology: “in Calvin’s ecclesiology, we see an exemplary case of the (theological) principle of incarnation (or sacramental principle), as that which defines and supports the role of the church in human history. So, too, do we see an exemplary emphasis upon the theological principle of the relation between the Word and the Spirit of God in the life of the church – a Christocentric theology of the Word is reinforced by a ‘developed theology of the Spirit’”. By engaging this pneumatological trajectory of Calvin in dialogue with the Christological trajectory of Schillebeeckx, this study is hopeful of progressing this thesis towards a more nuanced Evangelical critique.

In Chapter Ten, Mannion and Borght (2011:185-199) provide a paper by Maclean, S.S. entitled, “*Regnum Christi: Thomas Torrance’s Appropriation of John Calvin’s Ecclesiology*”. Torrance expands Calvin’s ecclesiology by strengthening the “Christological foundation” and giving a “clearer eschatological orientation” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:185). These theological conceptualizations are common to both Calvin and Schillebeeckx but with varying degrees of interpretation as they relate to the nature of the church. Calvin’s ecclesiological hermeneutics, that is, the “dynamic” nature of the church as the Body of Christ, is for Torrance, “a corollary of its ontological nature” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:189). It is this “principle of analogy” (of Christ to the sacrament) that requires an in-depth exploration in this thesis as it forms the crux of the ontology of the church. Like Calvin, this study argues that the mystery of Christ has to be seen within this framework of the dynamic outworking of the Spirit. This is a prerequisite for any understanding of the nature of the church. Torrance does well to refresh Calvin’s analogous thought of Christ to the sacraments and in so doing highlights a relevant area of investigation in this thesis, namely the Eucharist. He emphasizes Calvin’s hermeneutics of the sacraments: “a true sign...has in it something of that which it signifies; it is analogous to the thing signified, and corresponds appropriately to its nature” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:191). He underscores the Calvinistic repudiation of the Roman Catholic Mass which “confounded the sign and the thing signified” and the Zwinglian view of the Eucharist which “separated them” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:191). Torrance’s conclusion here is that “the sacramental relation between the bread and Christ is neither one of ‘identity or difference’” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:191). When juxtaposed to Schillebeeckx, this study intends to develop this further with specific emphasis on the Spirit’s role in the sacraments.

In summary then, Schillebeeckx’s model of the church as sacrament is the model of the church as *Christus prolongatus*. This refers to his understanding of the church as the continuing incarnation of Christ. Viewing the church this way, Schillebeeckx complicates the incarnation of Christ and the *presence* of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Moltmann (1977:72-73) offers some insightful thoughts here concerning the Roman Catholic’s view of the church as “the other Christ”. For him, “Either the incarnation must be reduced to an indwelling of the Spirit in Jesus, which is then continued in the Spirit’s indwelling in the church; or the indwelling of the Spirit must be understood as the continued incarnation of the Logos” (Moltmann, 1977:73). From this one can see that Schillebeeckx has indeed created a theological and ecclesiological assertion that makes it “very difficult to capture the necessary difference between the incarnation of the Logos and Christ’s indwelling in his church through the Spirit” (Moltmann, 1977:73). He maintains that “in both cases the otherness of Christ, his mission, his death and his future for the church are all shut out. Out of the critical and

liberating relationship of Christ to the church an affirmative, continuing or 'organic' relationship arises between the head and the body. This blurs Christ's freedom with regard to his church" (Moltmann, 1977:73). He concludes that "in these ideas pneumatology and Christology slide into one another and merge to such an extent that their difference and solidarity within the Trinity is no longer visible. The particular work of the Spirit is subordinated to the work of Christ" (Moltmann, 1977:73).

1.5 DEFINING NEW TESTAMENT *MYSTERION* AND ITS LINGUISTIC AND THEOLOGICAL LINKS WITH SACRAMENT

Included in this chapter will be a brief exploration and definition of the New Testament *Mysterion*, and its links with sacrament both linguistically and theologically. Since Schillebeeckx leans heavily on Aquinas and posits a sacramental metaphysics with an existentialist and phenomenological orientation, it would be good for this dissertation to furnish a brief overview of Aquinas' perspectives on sacramentality. Karl Rahner too was influenced by Aquinas and, his hermeneutics on sacramentality, which has the same existentialist and phenomenological orientation as Schillebeeckx and yet differs in some aspects of interpretation, will also be explored here. This approach will allow this dissertation to identify much more clearly the hermeneutics of Schillebeeckx.

Since Schillebeeckx's intention is to maintain a sacramental metaphysics in his thesis of the church as sacramental mystery and as the mystery of salvation for all humanity, it is appropriate to explore and define mystery (*mysterion*) as it appears in the New Testament, more specifically the letters of Paul. This section will investigate Paul's use of mystery in his New Testament letters by considering its usage in the context as well as its conceptual implications for sacramental theology as a whole. This would include contributory 'feeders' that elucidate Paul's development of 'mystery'.

In the New Testament the term mystery "does not mean something incomprehensible but something that had been kept secret and now has been disclosed" (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, 1999:1446). "In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed" (The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, 1984:769). In the New Testament, the term mystery is used in three ways, namely, definitively, directly and indirectly (Creany, 2003). Creany (2003) states that when the term is used definitively, it refers to the concept of mystery; when the term is used directly it states a mystery and when the term is used indirectly it reveals the mystery. The distinction between the directly stated mysteries and indirectly revealed

mysteries is this: A directly stated mystery contains the term 'mystery' within it. 1 Corinthians 15:51 is a good example, ("*Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed*").

On the other hand, "indirectly revealed mysteries contain spiritual truths unique to the Church Age, Since the Church Age itself is a directly stated mystery (Ephesians 3), any doctrine unique to it qualifies as 'mystery' doctrine. God establishes the priesthood of all believers only in the Church Age, and whilst not directly stated as a 'mystery', this definition fits the biblical definition of one" (Creany, 2003). Paul uses 'mystery' in each of these ways, for example, in Romans 16:25-26a where he uses mystery definitively alluding to the concept. In Romans 11:25 he uses the term directly indicating a stated mystery that is now revealed for the first time.

1.5.1 The Revelation of the Mystery

In Galatians 4:4 ("But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son...") and Ephesians 1:9-10 ("And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ"), Paul alludes to the mystery (directly stated) that has now been revealed. In explicating this fullness of time within the whole framework of redemptive salvation history, Ridderbos (1992: 44) says that this fullness of time "is not only in the maturation of a specific matter" this being "the eschatological time of salvation inaugurated with Christ's advent, death, and resurrection but the fulfilment of time in the absolute sense". This fulfilment of time, however, has a "provisional character and the *perfectum* is followed yet again by a *futurum*, nevertheless the *plērōma* of the time or of the times is here spoken of as a matter that has already taken effect and thus in principle has been settled" (Ridderbos, 1992:45). In 2 Corinthians 6:2 Paul emphasizes the 'nowness' or commencement of God's salvation. The mystery has been revealed now, conclusive within redemptive salvation history yet bearing a provisional character.

For Paul then this "revelation of the mystery" (the Christ event/gospel) which makes us "new creations" (2 Cor.5:17) is indicative that the eschatological character of this redemption in Christ is paramount. He saw his own conversion to Christ as the beginning of a new creation. Dunn (1998:180) refers to this as Paul's "eschatological transformation" which is expressed in the "But now" of Rom. 3:21. This "eschatological now" is indeed a key feature of Paul's exposition of the core of the gospel in Romans and elsewhere (Dunn, 1998:180). Conclusively then, one can say that Paul's preaching does not merely "interpret and translate

the original eschatological message contained in such concepts as justification and reconciliation, but rather, conversely, that these concepts which in themselves were not new, now receive their background and their new content out of the realization of the divine plan of redemption embracing man and the world, the revelation of the mystery” (Ridderbos, 1992:160).

It would be good here then to look at Paul’s other “revelation of the mystery” texts to glean how he uses the term against the backdrop of his proclamation of this revealed mystery (the Gospel or Christ event) as the eschatological time of salvation (Ridderbos, 1992:46):

- “The revelation (*apokalypsis*) of the mystery (*to mystērion*) which was kept secret for long ages (*sesigēmenon*), but is now disclosed (*phanerōthentos*)” (Rom. 16:25-26).
- “The mystery (*to mystērion*) which has been hidden (*apokekrymenon*) for ages and generations but now has been revealed (*ephanerōthē*) to his saints” (Col. 1:26; cf.2: 2-3).
- “Making known (*gnōrisas*) unto us the mystery (*to mystērion*) of his [God’s] will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times...” (Eph.1: 9-10).
- “My insight into the mystery (*to mystērion*) of Christ, which was not made known (*egnōristhē*) to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed (*apekalyphthē*) to his holy apostles and prophets...” (Eph.3: 4-5).
- “But we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery (*en mystēriō*), even the wisdom that has been hidden (*apokekrymmenēn*), which God foreordained before the ages...” (1 Cor.2: 7).
- “The grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, but has now been manifested (*phanerōtheisan*) by the appearing of our Saviour” (2 Tim.1: 9-10; cf. also Tit.1: 2-3).

Whilst the ancient mystery religions understood ‘mystery’ in the sense of ‘secret’ teaching that was ‘revealed’ only to a few, for Paul, it was understood in a different sense (as can be seen in the aforementioned texts) in that it is to be understood “in connection with the hidden counsel of God in relation to his redemptive work in history” (Ridderbos, 1992:46). ‘Mystery’ for Paul then, has a historical connotation and its corresponding word, ‘revealed’ “not only

means the divulging of a specific truth but the appearance itself, the becoming historical reality of that which until now did not exist as such, but was kept by God, hidden, held back” (Ridderbos, 1992:47). This ‘mystery’ is the realized redemptive plan of God in Christ and this is the object of Paul’s proclamation of the ‘revelation of the mystery’. He uses ‘mystery’ in Romans 11 and 16 to refer to the switch of God’s program between Israel and the Church. He says that the ‘mystery’ here is that there was a partial hardening of Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles came in.

This transition to a new age and dispensation of God’s grace was a ‘mystery’ to all who lived before this transition took place. It was God’s secret that he revealed when he chose to. In 1 Corinthians 2 Paul says that this wisdom of God was hidden in a ‘mystery’ before the ages. Paul’s emphasis here is that God’s program of redemptive historical salvation for all (including Gentiles) was planned from the beginning of time but was kept secret until now. The divine mysteries that Paul alludes to in 1 Cor. 4:1 refers to the secret things of God (wisdom of God hidden in a mystery before the ages) that have now been entrusted to Paul and others. Paul’s ministry serves to reveal these divine mysteries (as God’s design or program to include the Gentiles) to those who are mature to receive them in the Corinthian church (Bockmuehl, 1990:166). In Colossians 1, Paul explicitly states how this ‘mystery’ has now been revealed to the saints. It was kept a secret before and was hidden by God since the beginning of time. The ‘mystery’ is “Christ in you (Gentiles) the hope of glory” (v27). God was widening his program to include the Gentiles and not only that but it was God’s historical-eschatological salvific program from the beginning.

In 1 Cor. 15:51, Paul explicitly discloses a specific eschatological aspect of the *mystery*: “Behold, I tell you a *mystery* (μυστήριον); we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed”. He is here referring to “the sudden transformation of believers alive at the *parousia*” (Bockmuehl, 1990:172). Paul is emphatic in his disclosure of this mystery (λέγω, present active indicative). He wants them to understand that this *mystery* (μυστήριον) which was previously hidden, is now being revealed. Paul was revealing that this was an event God had kept hidden. He had not revealed it to or through His Old Testament prophets, nor did Jesus disclose it to his disciples. God revealed this secret to Paul. The revelation of the mystery here is not the ‘resurrection of the dead in Christ’ for Jesus had already revealed and taught this (John 5:24, 28-29; 11:25). Therefore, Paul was not revealing something new when he wrote about the resurrection for it was already a known teaching. This new revelation is the *Rapture* at the *parousia* which was a secret aspect of the resurrection. Only here (1 Cor.15:51ff.) and Rom. 11:25ff. does Paul explicitly disclose elements of new teaching which he refers to as *mystery* (μυστήριον): The former referring to the Rapture and the latter to the fullness of time for the Gentiles to be included in God’s redemptive design.

In Ephesians 3 Paul says that this 'mystery' that was hidden was made known to him by revelation from God. It was Paul's vocation to make this revelation of God's 'mystery' known to the Gentiles. And this is the 'mystery' being referred to: Gentiles are fellow heirs and partakers of the promise of Christ Jesus through the eschatological salvation of God now revealed through the Christ event (gospel) and recognized as the fulfilment of the 'mystery' to the present age. The larger context goes back to Ephesians 2:11-22 where Paul states that the Gentiles "who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (v13). The 'mystery' that was kept a secret therefore was a partial hardening of Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles was realized in the Christ event (gospel). This secret is referred to as "God's wisdom in a mystery" (1 Cor.2:7) being foreordained before the ages for our glory. God kept it a secret for all that time, but now he has revealed it to us (Gentiles) by entrusting the ministry to Paul whose sole objective was the unfolding of this "mystery" to us. There is in Paul then the eschatological nature of the content of his proclamation of *mysterion*. Bockmuehl (1990, 172) asserts that the "mystery" has reference to the eternal purpose of God in Christ with a view to the fullness of times (Eph.1:9-10).

Bockmuehl (1990:161) agrees that Paul's use of the expression, "God's wisdom in the/a mystery" is far more intelligible and profitable when he speaks of God's wisdom demonstrated in His "saving design" which Paul does. To speak of God's eschatological saving design, meant for Paul that, this 'mystery' relates also to God's future purposes in Christ and hence the work of God in Christ definitely has wider implications for the believer's (new creation) eschatological inheritance – for what has been revealed is provisional in that there are things concerning God's future purposes which are yet to be revealed (Bockmuehl, 1990:162). Conclusively then, in 1 Cor.2: 6-10 Paul is affirming God's hidden wisdom being expressed primarily but not exclusively in the cross and Paul's message about the crucified Christ is called the *mystery of God* (Bockmuehl, 1990:165-166).

The Spirit has disclosed God's wisdom in a mystery to the Apostles who now proclaim it to the mature. In 1 Cor. 13:2, Paul is writing in strong eschatological overtones ("If I have prophecy, and know all mysteries"). Even the knowledge of "all mysteries" of the future as perceived now remains dim in relation to the eschatological realization -v.12 (Bockmuel, 1990:167). Since no one can fathom all mysteries and knowledge, Bockmuehl suggests and rightly so that "Paul may be speaking hyperbolically of ideal rather than real prophecy: for the knowledge of all mysteries belongs only to God" (Bockmuehl, 1990:167). Interestingly, Raymond Brown (1968:46) expresses the same view in *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament*.

Bockmuehl (1990:168) argues that for Paul then, ‘tongues’ remain in the arena of heavenly mysteries (13:1; 14:2), not intelligible to men but to God, whilst ‘prophecy’ remain in the arena of revealed knowledge for the edification of the church. However, both allude to ‘mystery’. ‘Tongues’ and ‘prophecy’ are to be seen as eschatological ‘signs’ (14:21ff) and manifestations of the Holy Spirit (12:7ff.; 14:1ff.) Since, according to Paul, one is capable of speaking mysteries to God in one’s spirit (tongues), Bockmuehl (1990:170) rightly says that it “seems a reasonable working hypothesis to locate such notions - at least in Paul’s mind - in the realm of Jewish apocalyptic and early mysticism” (refer 2 Cor. 12: 1-4). Here we encounter with Paul the concept of mystery. Whilst not explicitly stated as a ‘mystery’ it nonetheless pertains to unrevealed mysteries.

It was Paul’s ‘foretaste’ of the eschatological paradise; “the mystical revelation of heavenly realities” (Bockmuehl, 1990:175). This experience was ecstatic and he seemed to have had these mystical experiences quite regularly in his private devotions (v.7; 1 Cor. 14:18). The question that needs to be asked then at this stage is this: “How did Paul obtain the revelation or knowledge of these mysteries (Rom. 11; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 12)?” Was it through “direct oracular revelation” or through “speculative imagination” or through simple “exegesis of the Old Testament” against the backdrop of the gospel events? (Bockmuehl 1990:174). Certainly Paul restrains himself and his readers from basing the authority of doctrine on private visions or ecstatic experiences (2 Cor. 12; Col. 2:18). In 1 Cor. 15:51ff and Rom. 11:25-27, Paul reveals the divine mysteries by exegesis. It is “revelation by exegesis: a dynamic inter-reaction of Scripture, [exegetical] tradition, and religious experience (which may or may not include a vision)” (Bockmuehl 1990:174).

Conclusively then, according to Paul the *mystery* (*mysterion/ secret*) has already been revealed in the gospel through Christ and includes Gentiles. Notwithstanding his personal ‘paradise’ encounter with God, this is what Paul amplifies as integral to *mysterion*. This being the case, one is inclined to ask, “On what basis therefore is Schillebeeckx asserting that the Church should be regarded as a sacramental *mystery*?” His notion of sacramentality and *mysterion* is linguistically and theologically inconsistent and needs a corrective critique to arrive at a holistic view of sacramentality in the church.

- [Rom. 16:25-26] “Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the *mystery* hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him”.

- [Eph. 3:2-6] “Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the *mystery* made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This *mystery* is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus”.

This brief New Testament exploration and definition of the New Testament *Mysterion* means that the sacraments, namely that of Baptism and Eucharist are dynamic symbolic expressions of the mystery that has been revealed in the redemptive work of Christ. We openly declare our participation in this revealed mystery in Baptism and celebrate the dynamic remembrance of Christ’s salvific mystery as revealed in the Christ-event for his Church. Of themselves, these sacraments do not confer grace but point to the grace in Christ which has been lavished upon us. Hence ours is a dynamic participation and remembrance with thankfulness to God for Christ. In the light of Paul’s basic definition of *mysterion*, it is difficult to maintain Schillebeeckx’s thesis of the Church as the “sacramental or mystical Christ” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:49). Neither does the incarnation of Christ continue through the church but the *pneuma* of Christ continues in the church making Christ and his revealed incarnational mystery a present dynamic reality.

1.6 CHAPTER TRAJECTORY

Following from this Chapter, this dissertation will develop as follows:

Chapter Two: Lumen Gentium: The Mystery of the Church

Chapter Three: Dulles: Models of the Church.

Chapter Four: Schillebeeckx: Context and Development of his Theology.

Chapter Five: Roman Catholic Dialogue.

Chapter Six: Evangelical Dialogue.

Chapter Seven: Theological and Ecclesiological Reflections, Challenges and Proposal.

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 2:

LUMEN GENTIUM: THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

Lumen Gentium (Light of the Nations) is the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, promulgated at Vatican II on 21 November 1964. It sets out in eight chapters its ecclesiology and ecclesial life. This chapter aims to furnish an overview of the ecclesiological hermeneutics of *Lumen Gentium* as it pertains to the sacramental mystery of the church. The abbreviated RCC would be used to denote the Roman Catholic Church and where Church with a capital 'C' is used, this would denote the RCC as is the case in *Lumen Gentium*.

Mystery is the essential nature of the Church. Accordingly, Jesus revealed his redemptive mystery to the Church. The Church is therefore seen as “the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery” (Vatican Translation, 2009:18). Of foundational significance for Vatican II as expressed in *Lumen Gentium*, is the description of the Church as sacrament: “Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission” (Vatican Translation, 2009:17).

As sacrament, the Church is also the symbolic expression of the mystery of grace and salvation found in Christ (Lamb and Levering, 2008:26). This sacramental Church is endowed with the gifts of its founder, Christ, for the continued apostolic proclamation and establishment of the “Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom” (Vatican Translation, 2009:19). Growing into maturity, the Church awaits the finality of that Kingdom. Until then, the unity of believers is expressed through the sacraments and all of humanity is called to this union with Christ who is the light of humanity (Vatican Translation, 2009:21).

The Church as a mystery is further elaborated in articles 7 and 8 where it is described as the “Mystical Body of Christ.” (Vatican Translation, 2009:21-22). In alluding to Chalcedonian Christology – where in the hypostasis of Jesus, that is, the divine and human natures subsists, inseparably united to Jesus – *Lumen Gentium* considers the Church, not as two separate realities – that is, as a visible society and spiritual community; as earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly things – but as “one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element” (Vatican Translation, 2009:22). The Church as *mystery* is predicated on this coalition. The Church is compared to the mystery of the incarnate Word:

“As the assumed nature inseparably united to Him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the visible social structure of the Church serves the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in the building up of the body (cf. Eph. 4:16).” (Vatican Translation, 2009:22-23).

Jesus, having the human nature united to his divine nature (Son of God), redeemed humanity through his death and resurrection and “by communicating His Spirit, Christ made His brothers, called from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body” (Vatican Translation, 2009:21). What therefore subsists in the Church is this complex working together of the divine and human elements. Christ is the head of the Church which is the body and in this body “the life of Christ is poured into the believers” who, through the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are “united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified” (Vatican Translation, 2009:21). Hence the RCC presupposes itself as a mystical communion; as the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church which subsists in the RCC (Vatican Translation, 2009:23).

As can be seen thus far, *Lumen Gentium* maintains that the RCC is Christ’s chosen sign and instrument, - *The Church in apostolic succession* - on earth for the salvation of all humanity. As *Mother Church*, she has always been the sign and instrument of God’s love for humanity, since it has always been God’s desire that all of humanity may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one Temple of the Holy Spirit *through her*. This presupposition has not changed since Vatican I (Lamb and Levering, 2008: 26). In *Lumen Gentium* the instrumentalist view of the RCC is further amplified when it asserts conclusively that it is “the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery” (Vatican Translation, 2009:18).

This assertion alludes to the essence or being of the Church. Therefore, the instrumentalist view of the RCC is altogether different to the Protestant instrumentalist view of the church that rests on the church’s expression of itself in terms of *function*, which Chan (2006:21-40) alludes to as the church doing what it has to do in order to fulfil the greater purposes of God. Chan’s hermeneutics on liturgical theology would offer some correctives to the sacramental ecclesiology found in *Lumen Gentium* and that of Schillebeeckx. “Is the church to be seen as an instrument to accomplish God’s purpose in creation, or is the church the expression of God’s ultimate purpose itself?” (Chan, 2006:21).

It would be good to see how some other scholars have read, understood, affirmed and criticized this document. To begin with, this chapter considers Avery Dulles, a Roman Catholic theologian who in addressing the conciliar hermeneutics of Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium*) in *Nature, Mission, and Structure of the Church*, is mindful of a “general impression

that Vatican II accomplished a major revolution in ecclesiology” (Lamb and Levering, 2008:25). He cites some scholars who, among others, “popularized a rather radical interpretation of the council’s impact on ecclesiology” (Lamb and Levering, 2008:25):

O’ Malley (1989:73), a Roman Catholic priest and church history scholar with specialty in 16th and 17th century Europe, views the document as having achieved “a reform by transformation or revolution rather than by adjustment or development”. Baum (1970), a Roman Catholic theologian who was actively involved in Vatican II, maintains that the documents of Vatican II “reflect a “Blondelian shift” from extrinsicism toward experience and immanence”. The “Blondelian shift” was the new style of thinking in the RCC, initiated by Maurice Blondel, a French philosopher, who focused on God as the transcendent, redemptive mystery in human history. Baum was greatly inspired by his thinking. McBrien (1969), a Roman Catholic theologian, alludes to it as having “Copernican and Einsteinian revolutions that overcame the unhealthy ecclesiocentrism of the past.” McBrien (1969) saw the “People of God” innovation at Vatican II as great revolutionary reform. Lindbeck (1970), an American Lutheran theologian who was one of the delegated Protestant observers at Vatican II, sees in these documents “a mixture of classical and progressive elements but holds that the old is to be understood in terms of the new rather than vice versa”.

Dulles elaborates further on these generalizations: Prior to Vatican II, the RCC was seen “as an institution founded by Christ with definite and immutable structures” and after Vatican II it was seen “as a pilgrim community constantly restructuring itself to suit the times” (Lamb and Levering: 2008:25). Prior to Vatican II, the RCC was “necessary for salvation” and after Vatican II “as one of many places in which people could live a life of grace” (Lamb and Levering, 2008:25). Prior to Vatican II, the RCC claimed to be the “sole legitimate Church” and after Vatican II “as one of many realizations of the Church of Christ, all imperfect” (Lamb and Levering, 2008:25). Prior to Vatican II, the RCC saw herself as the “divinely instituted monarchy in which all authority descended from the pope” and after Vatican II “as a People of God that governed itself through consensus” (Lamb and Levering, 2008:25).

For Dulles (Lamb and Levering, 2008:25), the above generalizations are not true and they are misleading since they “overlook the nuances both in the pre-conciliar period and in Vatican II.” He agrees that a number of significant developments in ecclesiology were effected by the council but disagrees that they “were revolutionary in character” (Lamb and Levering, 2008:26). He argues that “any aggiornamento that it accomplished was intrinsically connected with the principle of resourcement” (Lamb and Levering, 2008:26). He alludes here to the RCC’s Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* - “Every renewal of the

Church is essentially grounded in an increase of fidelity to her own calling.” (Vatican Translation, 2009:213).

For Dulles then, the principles of interpretation are significant. He alludes to the stance of Pope John Paul II who called for an extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985 and reiterated that Vatican II’s documents be interpreted “in continuity with the great tradition of the Church” and that the “authentic newness” of Vatican II must not be seen as a rupture with the past (Lamb and Levering, 2008:26). He asserts that the title of Chapter 1, “*The Mystery of the Church*” in *Lumen Gentium* defined RCC ecclesiology. By implication this means that the Church as mystery “is not fully intelligible to the finite mind of man” (Dulles, 1987:17). Conclusively then for Dulles, “the Church pertains to the mystery of Christ; Christ is carrying out in the Church his plan of redemption. He is dynamically at work in the Church through his Spirit” (Dulles, 1987:18).

In critical assessment of the institutional model of the RCC, Dulles (1987:44) comments that this model “fails to account for the spiritual vitality of non-Roman Catholic churches” and for the RCC itself this model “fails to give sufficient scope to the charismatic element” since it appears that “the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit must wait upon the approbation of the official leadership”. Dulles further affirms that since we are involved in the Church, we cannot fully objectify it; we can only know the Church through inter-subjectivity (Dulles, 1987:18). For him, “the Church pertains to the mystery of Christ; Christ is carrying out in the Church his plan of redemption. He is dynamically at work in the Church through his Spirit” (Dulles, 1987:17-18). Alluding to Eph. 5:32 that marriage is “a great mystery in reference to Christ in the Church” (Dulles 1987:18), he argues that the union of people (human) with Christ (divine) “goes on in the Church; otherwise marriage would not be a figure of the Church” (Dulles, 1987:18).

This *mystery* according to Dulles, is “Christ in you, your hope of glory (Col.1: 27)” (Dulles, 1987:18). For Dulles the “you” is the believer and he acknowledges that the union between the believer and Christ is a mystery but chooses to treat this union within the context of the Church as mystery rather than the believer as mystery. Since the Church is characterized by its mysterious nature (connaturality), he argues that this does have significant implications for methodology for “it rules out the possibility of proceeding from clear and univocal concepts” (Dulles, 1987:18). Human communion with Christ is mystical and therefore conceptualizations drawn from the realities we observe in our objective world cannot readily or directly be applied to this mystery of human communion with God in Christ (Dulles, 1987:18).

Badcock, (Husbands and Treier, 2005:188-200), a Canadian Anglican theologian reflects in his paper, “*The Church as Sacrament*” on the nature of the church as “sacramental” in which he considers the context of this theological paradigm as it arose in Roman Catholic ecclesiology. His thesis is that the concept of *mystery (mystērion)* in the New Testament is suggestive that “Christ’s work is completed in the gathering of the church” (Husbands and Treier, 2005:15). Sympathetic towards the RCC’s renewal in its self-understanding, he appreciates the ecumenical spirit of Vatican II. Recognizing that the “priesthood of all believers” and the “ministry of all the baptized” is evident, though not well founded, in *Lumen Gentium*, he is only too aware of the hierarchical power that is entrenched in the documents of Vatican II (Husbands and Treier, 2005:188).

In spite of the difficulties of the hierarchical model of the RCC’s self-understanding, Badcock suggests that the sacramental idea of the RCC’s self-understanding as found in *Lumen Gentium* merits due consideration by other Christian traditions (Husbands and Treier, 2005:189). Badcock conclusively asserts for “the church *itself* is to be understood and embraced as sacrament” (Husbands and Treier, 2005:189). The church is not one of the seven sacraments of the RCC, nor is it the eighth sacrament but is *the* sacrament that encapsulates all other sacraments “and it is in this context that the church is defined as a sacrament, or sign and instrument, of union with God and of the unity of humanity” (Husbands and Treier, 2005:189).

He notes that the RCC has a remarkable vision that is stated at the beginning of *Lumen Gentium*. However, he is also aware that this vision, which highlights the unity in Christ of the church and of the whole human race, is characterized by its hermeneutic of *apostolic succession* but looks beyond this to the richness of its theology that has a biblical basis (Husbands and Treier, 2005:193). He postulates that the nature of the church as “sacrament” is rooted in the mystery of Christ and advocates the New Testament notion of the church as the “body of Christ” as a significant strand for a holistic understanding of the church as sacrament: “the body of Christ is at the same time also what is offered to the church in the sacrament of Holy Communion. The very being of the church, therefore, can be intimately related to what happens in this sacrament of the Eucharist, so that here again, the church is associated closely with the concept of a sacrament. Taken together with the idea that the church is part of the *mystērion* of the gospel, such ideas have the potential to reinforce in a powerful way the theme of the church as sacramental” (Husbands and Treier, 2005:194).

CHAPTER 3:
EVERY DULLES: MODELS OF THE CHURCH

3.1 THE USE OF MODELS IN ECCLESIOLOGY

Paul Minear (1960) lists ninety-six images of the church. Although this number could be a matter for debate, there is general consensus among theologians that the New Testament is quite inundated with ecclesiological imagery. For Dulles (1987:21), “religious imagery is both functional and cognitive” and the images, if they are to be accepted, “must resonate with the experience of the faithful”. He concludes that spiritual reality or religious experience is significant for the understanding and interpretation of images. He adds that, “To be fully effective, images must be deeply rooted in the corporate experience of the faithful.” (Dulles, 1987:21). He also rightly says that “the contemporary crisis of faith is, in very large part a crisis of images. How can we as city contemporaries supplement images of the ancient Near East like sheep, lamb, wolves, vines, etc since we know nothing or little from direct experience about these images? There has to be “some isomorphism between what the image depicts and the spiritual reality with which the faithful are in existential contact” (Dulles, 1987:21).

Dulles then goes on to say that “when an image is employed reflectively and critically to deepen one’s theoretical understanding of a reality it becomes a model” (Dulles, 1987:23). However some models are also images in that they can be readily imagined. Since theology is concerned with religious mystery, the use of models in theology is generally in two types, namely, explanatory and exploratory. “At the explanatory level, models serve to synthesize what we already know or at least are inclined to believe. A model is accepted if it accounts for a large number of biblical and traditional data and accords with what history and experience tell us about the Christian life.” (Dulles, 1987:25).

The exploratory use of models has the “capacity to lead to new theological insights” (Dulles, 1987:25). Since theology is not an experimental science like physics is, this role is therefore more difficult to identify. Every new theological insight or discovery must be validated in terms of what was already given in Scripture and tradition in that there can be no ‘other gospel’ (Gal.1:8) and that “the revelation has been once and for all in Jesus Christ. Theology has an abiding objective norm in the past” (Dulles, 1987:25). However, the past cannot be revelation to us unless Christ was still living among us. Therefore our “present experience of

grace enters intrinsically into the method of theology” (Dulles, 1987:25). Dulles concludes his treatise on *The Use of Models in Ecclesiology* by saying that since “images are derived from the finite realities of experience, they are never adequate to represent the mystery of grace” (Dulles, 1987:32). He does admit that “each model of the Church has its weaknesses; no one model should be canonized as the measure of all the rest” (Dulles, 1987:32). With Dulles’ insight into images and models, it would be appropriate now to explore his perspectives on the sacramental church.

3.2 THE CHURCH AS SACRAMENT

In an effort for an “intelligible synthesis” concerning the tension of the internal and external aspects of the Church, many twentieth century Catholic scholars have turned to the model of “The Church as Sacrament” (Dulles, 1987:63), bearing in mind that the sacramentality of the Church was anticipated by Cyprian, Augustine, Aquinas and Scheeben (Dulles, 1987:63). Drawing from patristic and medieval sources, Henri de Lubac contributed largely to this ecclesiology by arguing that the divine and the human in the Church can never be separated but must be seen as a harmonious whole and this is found in the model of the Church as Sacrament. When the life of grace is viewed as “excessively spiritual and individualistic”, the result is a “merely secular and sociological understanding of the Church as institution” (Dulles, 1987:63). De Lubac (1950:29) categorically states that “If Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is for us the sacrament of Christ; she represents him, in the full and ancient meaning of the term, she really makes him present. She not only carries on his work, but she is his very continuation, in a sense far more real than that in which it can be said that any human institution is its founder’s continuation.”

This model sees the Church, in the first instance, as a sign of God’s love and grace in Christ for all humanity. The Church, therefore, carries with her the apostolic and historical tangibility of the grace of God in Christ that now becomes visible as the Church incarnates herself in the world. Dulles (1987:69) concludes that the Church as sacrament is a “sign of grace realizing itself. Sacrament has an event character; it is dynamic”. He contends further that “The Church becomes an actual event of grace when it appears most concretely as a sacrament - that is, in the actions of the Church as such whereby men are bound together in grace by a visible expression. The more widely and intensely the faithful participate in this corporate action of the Church, the more the Church achieves itself” (Dulles, 1987:69).

Dulles (1987: 69-71) alludes to Rahner's thought on sacrament realizing itself most completely at the Eucharist:

Essentially the Church is the historically continuing presence in the world of the incarnate Word of God. She is the historical tangibility of the salvific will of God as revealed in Christ. Therefore the Church is most tangibly and intensively an 'event' where (through the words of consecration) Christ himself is present in his own congregation as the crucified and resurrected Saviour, the fount of salvation: where the Redemption makes itself felt in the congregation by becoming sacramentally visible; where the 'New and Eternal Testament' which he founded on the cross is most palpably and actually present in the holy remembrance of its first institution (Rahner, 1963:317).

Dulles argues that the Eucharist is both Christological and ecclesiological and that these two aspects cannot be separated. The presence of Christ is actualized at the Eucharist in a palpable way with the congregation of the faithful. Ecclesologically, the Eucharist "celebrates and solidifies the union of the faithful with one another" (Dulles, 1987:70). It signifies the 'already' aspect of the 'not yet' sacramental eschatological anticipation of the final, eternal form of the heavenly marriage celebration (Dulles, 1987:70). The sacrifice of Christ being the source of the Church is present. Hence the Church is just not a sign, for Dulles, but also a sacrament. This model is useful for dialogue with Schillebeeckx since Dulles (1987:197) argues for the sacramental model as having "special merit for blending the values" of the other models. He reiterates this argument by postulating that this is the only model that seems to have the exceptional capacities to incorporate the 'sound' features of the other four models and hints at the "possibility of using this model as the basis for a systematic ecclesiology" (Dulles, 1987:206).

Of relevance for this dissertation are the three significant questions posed to the sacramental model by Dulles. These questions are as follows: "What are the bonds of union? Who are the beneficiaries? What is the goal or purpose of the Church?" (Dulles, 1987: 72). He asserts that the bonds of union "are all the social, visible signs of the grace of Christ operative in believing Christians" (Dulles, 1987: 72). He asserts that the beneficiaries are those who articulate their faith through the Church – this, Dulles refers to as "The sign value of the Church" (Dulles, 1987: 72). He asserts that the goal of the Church is to "purify and intensify men's response to the grace of Christ" (Dulles, 1987: 72). On the basis of his answers, one notes Dulles' synchronistic stance with that of Schillebeeckx. However, Dulles is at pains to explain his sacramental ecclesiology further which makes his answers to questions two and

three somewhat dubious. It is a noteworthy mark of Dulles, as compared to Schillebeeckx, to subject his own bias to critical examination.

This is clear in his evaluation of models. Dulles (1987:191) concludes that adherents of the *kerygmatic* ecclesiological model “find the sacramental model too complacent and insufficiently prophetic” whilst those adhering to it, “appealing to the principle of incarnation, find the kerygmatic theologies too exclusively centered on the word”. In seeking to propose a balanced ecclesiology, Dulles admits to the recognized tensions found “in comparative ecclesiology under rubrics such as priestly vs. prophetic, catholic vs. protestant, sacred vs. secular” (Dulles 1987:191). In consideration of Dulles’ view of evaluation of models, he notes that adherents tend to polemicize from their preferred theological position (Dulles, 1987: 191). Schillebeeckx, no doubt, polemicizes from his preferred sacramental position thus rendering his sacramental ecclesiology theologically biased.

To overcome any bias, Dulles (1987:191-192) suggests seven criteria against which all ecclesiological models must be measured, namely, “Basis in Scripture; Basis in Christian tradition; Capacity to give Church members a sense of their corporate identity and mission; Tendency to foster the virtues and values generally admired by Christians; Correspondence with the religious experience of men today; Theological fruitfulness; Fruitfulness in enabling Church members to relate successfully to those outside their own group”. This is a helpful set of criteria, which this study proposes to use to engage Schillebeeckx’s arguments. When comparing Dulles to Schillebeeckx, it is worth noting that Dulles is holistic in his theological approach and seeks ways to find reasonable (based, *inter alia*, on the aforementioned criteria) solutions to a holistic ecclesiology that embraces Protestant theological thought.

Schillebeeckx, on the other hand, is focused on a narrow Roman Catholic perspective on sacramentality and predicates an ecclesiological model founded on *Lumen Gentium*. Dulles, by implication, categorizes the adherents of the sacramental model as speculative theologians who adhere to their own fixed taste (Dulles, 1987: 193). He intimates this approach as being “humanly and spiritually disastrous” and calls for an open and broader theological dialogue among the varying theological entities (Dulles, 1987: 193). In order to develop a reconciling approach, Dulles furthermore suggests two general working principles: (1) Seek truth at the core of the theological flaw, error or heresy and (2) People are more prone to be right in what they profess than in what they deny (Dulles 1987: 193). This second working principle is the view held by John Stuart Mill, which “commended itself to H. R. Niebuhr and F. D. Maurice” (Dulles, 1987: 193). Whether Schillebeeckx is more prone to be correct remains a matter of contention.

This evaluation by Dulles will be brought to bear as this dissertation progresses. Regarding Dulles' arguments here, it is interesting to note his final remarks concerning the sacramental model. He argues that the sacramental model can "lead to a sterile aestheticism and to an almost narcissistic self-contemplation" (Dulles 1987: 195). He suggests, as a remedy to this development, the consideration of the "values of structure, community, and mission brought out in the other models" (Dulles, 1987: 195)

CHAPTER 4:
SCHILLEBEECKX: CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT OF
HIS THEOLOGY

It is significant to note that Schillebeeckx (1963:13) works from an exploration of Christ as the “visible presence of grace” so that he may better arrive at his notion of the “Sacramentality of the Church”. Against the backdrop of neo-scholasticism that characterized the Church during the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, Schillebeeckx’s Christological and ecclesiological sacramental ontology and epistemology are Thomistic (Schillebeeckx, 1963:82-89). He leans heavily on Aquinas and posits a sacramental metaphysics with an existentialist and phenomenological orientation. His contact with other major interpreters of Aquinas such as Dominicus De Petter (philosophical), Marie-Dominique Chenu (historical) and Yves Congar (ecclesiological – “The Church is, of its essence, sacramental” - 1960:78) helped shape further his sacramental hermeneutics of the Church “in a way which left room for a real conversation and confrontation between church faith on the one hand and the modern world, human nature and contemporary philosophy based on human reason on the other” (Borgman, 2003:39). In this chapter, these influences will be explored in much more depth to gain a better understanding of the context and development of Schillebeeck’s hermeneutics.

4.1 THOMAS AQUINAS

The revival of Thomistic thought within neo-scholasticism began around 1860 and was embraced and enforced by Pope Leo XIII in 1879 lasting up until the proceedings of Vatican II (Chia, 2012:57). Thomism, having its roots in Aristotelian philosophy, is fundamentally a “philosophical theology that begins on the premise that created human beings are in participation with nature as with grace” (Chia, 2012:57). Aquinas therefore asserted that since human beings are active participants in God’s creation, relationship with God is possible. He posits further that since human knowledge is “being” oriented and “since the first being is God, human knowledge is oriented finally toward God” (Chia: 2012:57-58). Since this knowledge is conveyed to us through nature or creation, this does imply that our senses become the medium for understanding and experiencing such knowledge (Chia, 2012:58). It is reasonable to conclude that sense experience is the primary starting point of all knowledge (Chia, 2012:58). Schreiter (2001:20) gives a summary of Aquinas’ conceptual thought as follows: “God communicates with us through the medium of the created world and

not through some other channel. That relative optimism means that, sinful and broken though the world may be, it remains the medium for this divine-human communication”.

Schillebeeckx (1963:8-9) embraces this philosophical approach of Aquinas as his starting point for his discussion on the existence of humanity in relation to “dialogue with God”. Drawing from Aquinas’ thought on heathen religion, he posits that humanity’s natural inward grace has “inner expectations” of God and is therefore constantly seeking to shape a “visible manifestation” of God (Schillebeeckx, 1963:8). Here he alludes to Aquinas’ “sacraments of nature” as the traditional conceptualization of recognizing the supernatural element of God (Schillebeeckx, 1963:8). Humanity is “created for Christ” and this remains the core element of the existence of humanity as a “supernatural order” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:8). The psychology of human religiosity seeking the supernatural element manifested in nature and “influenced by the attraction of divine grace”, requires the “development of rites or ‘sacramentality’ as an expression of, and a field of experience for, the fundamental human need to approach God” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:9). Humanity’s authentic religious experience must therefore be seen as the “manifestation of an anonymous” yet “effective operation of grace” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:9). Schillebeeckx is alluding to the prevenient grace of God.

Hence the “sacraments of nature” together with its embodiment of natural forms and rites became one of the sources (the other being the Jewish sacraments) from which the Roman Catholic Church drew upon in order to solidify the “Christian mystery of worship” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:9). How then, did Aquinas view the Church? In the High Middle Ages, he viewed the Church as “theological” rather than institutional (Dulles, 1987:51). The Church is a communion of grace. Like Augustine, the Body of Christ was for him not essentially visible or societal (Dulles, 1987:51). He argued that “the Church essentially consists in a divinizing communion with God, whether incompletely in this life or completely in the life of glory. The grace that is the seed of glory is the grace of Christ, and hence the Church is made up of all who are brought into union with God by supernatural grace flowing from Christ as head” (Dulles, 1987:51).

Congar (1960:97-117) furnishes a commentary on Aquinas’ “Idea of the Church”. Aquinas’ hermeneutics comprised a “triple phase: pneumatological, anthropological or moral, and Christological” (Congar, 1960:109). Aquinas posits a pneumatological ecclesiology with an “ecclesiological reality of Christ” (Congar, 1960:100-109) and concludes that the Church is a “living body compacted out of the plurality of members, all quickened and governed by a single living principle or soul, the Holy Ghost” (Congar, 1960:100). For Aquinas, the Church as “body” is not merely a sociological entity; “rather it is conceived in a manner which must remain profoundly mysterious, in the biological sense of the word. When St. Thomas inquires

into the nature of the law which operates in the economy of the New Covenant, he finds that it is before all else the grace of the Holy Spirit: that is to say, not a text or a sociological structure, but an inward reality, a supernatural living thing (Congar, 1960:101). From this he further concludes that the Church “is the very mode of being of the Mystical Body and of the new life in Christ; as well as the Sacrament of the ministry, that is, the instrument of realization of the Mystical Body” (Congar, 1960:110). He asserts that the sacraments bring to us the salvific act of the Cross but the Eucharist gives “purpose” to all the other sacraments since in the Eucharist “the redeeming Body and Blood of Christ are really present” (Congar, 1960:113). From this it can be seen that Schillebeeckx had his foundational hermeneutics in Aquinas. However, Schillebeeckx’s thesis focused on a ‘double phase’, namely, Christological and anthropological in sacramental mystery with a lesser emphasis on pneumatology.

4.2 DOMINICUS DE PETER

De Petter became Schillebeeckx’s most influential philosophical-phenomenological teacher in 1934. A Dominican since 1923, De Petter taught metaphysics and anthropology to Dominican students in Ghent and had the responsibility of developing their spirituality (Kennedy, 1993:19). Using the modern disciplines and theories of psychology, sociology and knowledge, De Petter reinterpreted Aquinas’ philosophical thought from a phenomenological viewpoint – “a twentieth-century philosophy that analyses human experience and structures of consciousness” (Kennedy, 1993:19). His research in the fields of metaphysics and epistemology drew from two sources, namely, the philosophical work of Aquinas and the phenomenological perspectives of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Kennedy, 1993:40). Like Aquinas, De Petter was a “metaphysical realist who believed that reality is not a product of human mental activities” (Kennedy, 1993:40). Within the context of phenomenological thought, he built on Aquinas’ methodological approach to knowledge and predicated that “human consciousness is not like a mirror that simply and passively reflects images of a reality external to consciousness: the perception of that which is real involves the thing or reality perceived (object), and an actively interpreting function of the perceiver’s consciousness (subject)” (Kennedy, 1993:40).

De Petter was a significant “influence on Schillebeeckx because he sought to overcome the philosophical conceptualism and dualism” prior to Kant (Kennedy, 1993:40). He was convinced that all philosophy prior to Kant was metaphysically conceptualistic, that is, it reduced reality to the status of concepts, or, it hypostasized concepts” (Kennedy, 1993:40). He furthermore posited that “modern philosophy was epistemologically dualistic, by which he

meant that it divided too sharply objective (extra-mental) reality from subjective (perceiving) reality” (Kennedy, 1993:40).

Through De Petter’s influence, Schillebeeckx’s read the philosophical works of Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger. De Petter’s concern became Schillebeeckx’s research project. This dealt with the problematic issues of conceptualism and finding ways to overcome these problems, which De Petter held “characterized all philosophy before Kant” (O’ Boyle, 2003:246-247). It was towards this end that Schillebeeckx researched the “interplay between question and answer and speculated about the possibility of a non-conceptual component in reason” (O’ Boyle, 2003: 25-27). This academic interest of Schillebeeckx to discard conceptualism in theology served as a springboard for him to delve deeper into the concept of experience” (O’ Boyle, 2003:247).

Schillebeeckx became more aware that phenomenology comprised a deeper exploration of the subject’s experience by “analyzing and describing the essential structures of experience on the experiential ground of knowledge, and on the analysis of the structures of the life-world” (Chia, 2012:58). In this exploration it became necessary to minimize and/or eliminate the subject-object dualism (Chia, 2012:58). To achieve this end, the method of phenomenological reduction was applied so as to ensure a “return to the original experience, to consciousness, where there is subject-object unity” (Chia, 2012:58). Chia (2012:58) maintains that “within this tradition Merleau-Ponty’s work was the most significant influence on Schillebeeckx and represents the philosophical roots of his use of the term ‘bodiliness’ as well as his emphasis on the concrete and the incarnational in most of his theology”. Schillebeeckx’s research within this phenomenological tradition then led him to a keen interest in existentialist phenomenology, with its emphasis on experience as well as metaphor and narrative” (Chia, 2012:58).

4.3 CHENU AND CONGAR

Schillebeeckx’s two years in Paris (1945-1946) saw him further his Thomistic studies. However, this period of studies exposed him to Thomism interpreted from the French *Nouvelle Theologie* (Chia, 2012:59). Dominicans, Chenu and Congar were the main theologians associated with *Nouvelle Theologie*, which focused primarily on the “back to the sources” method (Chia: 2012:59). They posited that the Thomistic texts had to be read in its historical context of production that is, going back to the “patristic and medieval sources” (Chia, 2012:59). This, they termed as the “historical-critical approach to doing theology, an approach that imprinted on Schillebeeckx that texts and teachings are culturally and historically conditioned” (Chia, 2012:59). Furthermore, Schillebeeckx was so strongly

influenced by Chenu's theology of justice that he thereafter focused to a larger extent on theology rather than philosophy, more particularly, Chenu's integration of "theological research with social-political engagement" (Chia, 2012:59). This resulted in Schillebeeckx's preoccupation with the relationship between church and the world rather than a narrow concentration on Church issues (Chia, 2012:59).

Like Congar, Schillebeeckx (1963:48) argued that the Church is the mystical body of Christ and maintained that the Church is fundamentally defined by the "visibility of grace". Congar (1960:129) asserts emphatically (an assertion carried forward by Schillebeeckx as continuing incarnation) that the mystical body of Christ is the continuation of Christ's life in humanity. He argued further that the "life of the Mystical Body" is actually the life of Christ and that this continuing incarnation is the "meaning and function of the Christian sacraments" (Congar, 1960:129). The sacraments, he maintained, connect us to the historical redemptive act of Christ "by a special efficacy attached by Christ to their symbolism" (Congar, 1960:129-130). Congar's fundamental thesis on the sacraments meant that they are modes of symbolic and real substance and presence of the redemptive mystery of Christ (Congar, 1960:129). He posits that whilst in the sacraments the "Mystical Body and the visible Church" merge as one, it is the visible Church that is the "sacramentality of the unique mediation of Christ dead and risen" (Congar, 1960:129-130). Thus far it can be seen that Schillebeeckx's Thomism was largely reshaped and influenced by De Petter's philosophical phenomenology whilst Chenu's and Congar's influence, more specifically Chenu, largely reshaped and influenced his theological thought with Congar largely reshaping and influencing his ecclesiological and sacramental thought.

4.4 KARL RAHNER

Since Vatican II, both Schillebeeckx and Rahner have focused increasingly on the recipient (human subject) in the sacramental encounter and the renewal of the category of the symbol (Power, 1992:270). Their increased focus on the human subject shifts the notion of symbolic causality used in explaining the Eucharistic encounter:

The term symbolic causality instead of simply efficient instrumental causality, was used by Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx. Both wanted to remove any idea of material production from the operation of sacrament, to take fuller account of the interpersonal, and at the same time keep ontological considerations in mind. It was through the understanding of symbol that they developed and expanded on the definition of sacrament as sign in Thomistic theology and related it to the reality

and activity of the assembly of faithful, in distinction from Thomas's emphasis on the role of the priest (Power, 1992:270).

Rahner asserts (Kelly, 1992:264): "God is present in the church as mystery" and "The church is the action of human beings insofar as God creatively makes possible and actualizes free human action". Rahner offers some helpful Christological and pneumatological insights concerning sacramental ecclesiology that shall be discussed in chapter four. Interesting to note here is that Rahner does not view the church as being identical with Christ (Kelly, 1992:265). He posits that the church can be referred to as the "primal sacrament" but "it is not our goal and fulfillment" as Christ is (Kelly, 1992: 265). Rahner's thought here concerning the identity of church and Christ differs from that of Schillebeeckx's. For Rahner, the church is not God's representative of salvation on earth as espoused by Schillebeeckx; rather the church serves as a "*representation*" that "serves to draw our attention to God's own *presence*" (Kelly, 1992:264). Like Rahner, the hermeneutic adopted in this study is that this representation does not imply *exactness* so that the church is Christ. The church is a *dynamic pneumatological community* of the redeemed and a *symbolic pointer* to the coming again of Christ to finalize God's eternal plan of salvation for the world.

4.5 Schillebeeckx's Development of Sacramental Ecclesiology: Continuity or Discontinuity

The multi-faceted elements of philosophy, phenomenology, theology, ecclesiology, history and tradition mediated through the aforementioned influences shaped Schillebeeckx's hermeneutics found in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*. Having had his sacramental ecclesiology strongly influenced by Aquinas, his subsequent critical dialogue with De Petter, Chenu and Congar spurred him to re-appropriate his historical methodology of theologizing and his philosophical methodology on the subjective (human) experience as the channel of revelation. The one feature of his theological hermeneutics that remained constant throughout his scholarly career (formative and later years) was his fundamental view of the church as sacrament. Since Vatican II, Schillebeeckx was also focused on the question of the relationship between the church and the world. Schreiter (2001:10) posits that this ecclesiological concern of Schillebeeckx was another constant feature in his theological hermeneutics: "What does it mean to be a Christian, a Christian community, in the contemporary world?" Lee (2011:2) posits that this recurring question in Schillebeeckx's work dominated his hermeneutics, "yet his many answers come in ways that make it difficult to systematize his thought due to its changing content, framework, and perspective".

To substantiate this, Lee (2011:2) compares his two works, namely, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, and *Church: The Human Story of God*. He points out Schillebeeckx's largely contrasting views on the relationship between the church and the world: "In the former, the church is the sacrament and extension on earth of the risen Christ who himself is the sacrament of God; in the latter, he discusses the church in a minor key shifting the focal point to the concrete lives of the people rather than the institutional church" (Lee: 2011: 2). In terms of situating Schillebeeckx's sacramental hermeneutics within the framework of this dissertation, it is significant to note that his later theological development did not alter his fundamental thesis found in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*. His focus remained on the human experience of sacramental "encounter" which he underscored as the "medium of revelation" (Lee, 2011:19). Whatever theological challenges he may have had within the Church, he nevertheless stayed rooted in his conviction that the sacramental ecclesiological hermeneutic of the Church was necessary for the bestowal of grace and encounter with Christ.

Lee's work is helpful here in terms of subjecting Schillebeeckx's theology to the question of: did it change or not? The "differing assessments" offered by critics and commentators of the changes in Schillebeeckx's theology hinges on continuity, despite his theological shifts, or clear discontinuity from his earlier works and "an almost heterodox discontinuity from the tradition of the church" (Lee, 2011:3). An example arguing for clear discontinuity is seen in the investigations of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Congregation objects to his "historical methodology, experiential starting point and dialectical pattern of thought" (Lee, 2011:4). Another critic, Scheffczyk (1984:398) approves of Schillebeeckx's "pre-critical" Christological positions "while objecting to his effort at updating the tradition through the frameworks of hermeneutics and critical theory". Scheffczyk argues further that Schillebeeckx "subordinates biblical and dogmatic faith to the subjective modern self-understanding, and thus distorts the former" (Scheffczyk, 1984:398). Portier (1984:361-367) offers an ambivalent assessment and asserts that the "later Schillebeeckx still shows elements of a minimal, negative realistic metaphysics" in continuity with Aquinas. However, this metaphysics collides with Schillebeeckx's fundamental theological hermeneutic operative in his later thought and one that is based on critical theory (Portier, 1984:361-367).

Hilkert (1987:99) sees a "fundamental continuity in Schillebeeckx's insight that revelation occurs in history" (Lee, 2011:4). She posits that Schillebeeckx was constantly doing theology within a historical framework. Lee asserts that "when this fundamental framework is acknowledged, one can interpret his shifts to hermeneutical and critical methods and corresponding theologies basically as adaptations to new world contexts of the experience of God" (Lee, 2011:4). Put another way, "Schillebeeckx's shifts are indications of his constant

effort at contextualization and inculturation of the experience of God's absolute saving grace" (Lee, 2011:4). Kennedy (1989:275) asserts Schillebeeckx's continuity with philosophical foundations. He argues that, "although Schillebeeckx's pursuit of criteria for judging contemporary experiences of God led him to hermeneutics and eventually to praxis, his epistemological premise remains Thomistic, in that there is no source of knowledge of God other than through creation" (Lee, 2011:4). Kennedy (1989:275) sees no difference in Schillebeeckx's formative Thomistic-De Petterian notion of "implicit intuition" and later neo-Marxist notion of negative contrast experiences" (Lee, 2011:4). He posits that "they both refer to a salvific reality independent of human beings" (Kennedy, 1989:275).

Ross (2002:133-148) in addressing Schillebeeckx's sacramentality of the church, "distinguishes his changing content and style from his constant concern for the concrete and historical life of the church in the world" (Lee: 2011:5). She summarizes the elements of contrast that exist between Schillebeeckx's early and later thought on the church's sacramentality as intensification, growing specificity, and awareness of suffering (Lee 2011:5). Thompson (1998:33) argues that Schillebeeckx's sacramentality of the church remains central in Schillebeeckx's later thought despite shifts in its content. Schillebeeckx does this in a way that allows his sacramental ecclesiology to deal with contemporary issues like "pluralism and communion, authority and dissent, change and tradition" (Thompson, 1998:33). Lee's arguments are consistent with the latter set of critics cited here. He posits that "a careful reading of Schillebeeckx's work can reveal an evolution in which certain 'breaks' keep his ideas continuous with his own earlier thought that is expressed in the language of the tradition, while they enable his conceptions of the church to be relevant and effective in the changing world" (Lee, 2011:5).

Lee (2011:5) contends that none of the works cited here "deals comprehensively or systematically with Schillebeeckx's theological and methodological development on the issue of the church and world relationship; nor has any of them placed the church-world relationship at the center of their discussions of the dialectical relationship between continuity and discontinuity". He concludes his arguments here by reiterating that none of them "make an explicit correlation between Schillebeeckx's evolution of thought on the topic and his effort at safeguarding the unique role of the church that transcends the world even in its dialectical, mutually-informing and non-dualistic relationship to the world" (Lee, 2011:5-6). His research project undertakes two tasks: firstly, to ascertain whether or not Schillebeeckx's "changes on the church-world question essentially express his consistent effort to see the church as sacrament always in relation to what it serves, namely, God, Jesus Christ and humanity"; and secondly, to "assess whether or not in this process Schillebeeckx has undermined the church's identity in pursuit of the 'relevance, communicability, and credibility' of the church in

the world” (Lee, 2011:5-6). Lee argues that in spite of Schillebeeckx “hermeneutical and critical shifts in his discussion on the church-world relationship, he nevertheless maintains a more fundamental continuity in his view of the church as sacrament. The shifts constitute a consistent development of thought, in which one finds Schillebeeckx’s dialectic of continuity and discontinuity” (Lee, 2011:6).

To end this chapter, it is interesting to note that Schillebeeckx, since the early 70’s, placed “less emphasis on sacramental mediation, such as religion and churches, in favour of the broader, worldly and human mediation, since the sacraments were the second order of interpretation about the first realization of salvation, namely the world and human history” (Lee, 2011:12). Despite his sacramental ecclesiological optimism of the 60’s, Schillebeeckx emphasized that the Church can learn aspects of God’s revelation from the world and was content to term this as “foreign prophecy” (Schillebeeckx, 1968:136). Within this hermeneutic he “identified a special kind of foreign prophecy which would later become one of his key notions to describe a mediating experience of God” (Lee, 2011: 10).

This mediating experience of God he termed “negative contrast experience”, that is, “a pre-reflective response of protest (‘this cannot go on’) prompted by negative experiences” (Schillebeeckx, 1968:158; Lee, 2011: 10-11). Developing this hermeneutic further over the years, Schillebeeckx argues, “there is no salvation, not even religious salvation, outside the human world” (Schillebeeckx, 1991:12). More specifically, for Schillebeeckx, the “human experience of negative contrast” became the “medium of God’s salvation” rather than the just world in general (Lee, 2011:12). Henceforth, Schillebeeckx’s “ecclesiology became negative in a minor key and critical” (Lee, 2011:12). His later hermeneutic points to his notion of the world being at a “dead end” - “a pluralistic and uncertain world where God had become a problem” (Schillebeeckx, 1973:48-61; Lee, 2011:12). Is God really the problem or is his sacramental understanding of the Church the problem? This thesis opts for the latter. His theological shift in terms of church and world relations does make his early sacramental ecclesiology highly questionable which favours the aim of the present dissertation.

What then does one make of his thesis in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*? He seems to have blown his own sacramental ecclesiological hermeneutic right out of the water by positing a certain kind of sacramentality of the world. His hermeneutic of sacramentality is indeed a concocted one. In *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, he posits a sacramental Church in which Jesus lives out his glorified bodily existence (continued incarnation): the Church is salvation; the Church is revelation; the Church is the grace of God in Christ. The sacraments bestow grace: the Church offers sacramental grace to the point that the Church is Christ on earth. His trilogy that commenced in 1974 shows

God, Christ and humanity as his concentrated hermeneutics: “The church is there for men and women and not vice versa” and “the human is the medium of the possible revelation of God” (Schillebeeckx, 1990:160; 1991:10).

CHAPTER 5: **ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE**

This chapter will engage with the Roman Catholic scholarship. Firstly, it will engage with chapters two, three and four in conversation with each other to determine the synoptic orientation on sacramentality as found in *Lumen Gentium*, Dulles and Schillebeeckx. Secondly, it will explore the critical thought on sacramentality among a few other significant Roman Catholic scholars, namely, Flanagan, Tillard, Wood and de Lubac. Wood (1998:105) in alluding to de Lubac's viewpoint on the Church as the sacrament of Christ, affirms that this view was also upheld at Vatican II by Rahner, Schillebeeckx, Congar and Dulles, among others. She affirms further that although 'sacrament' in relation to ecclesiology has roots in the traditional theology of Augustine and Aquinas, "the widespread use of the term, however, can be misleading since it is not used univocally by all authors" (Wood, 1998:105). One significant difference, she alludes to, is the "referent of the sacramental symbol which is sometimes taken to be Christ and sometimes human history or even the worshiping community" (Wood, 1998:105). Her work on de Lubac is relevant and helpful for this thesis and will be explored in greater depth later on in this chapter but suffice to say here that she attempts to unravel this difference by situating "de Lubac's work in relation to that of Edward Schillebeeckx, who represents a notion of ecclesial sacramentality counter to that of de Lubac. The choice of Schillebeeckx is not arbitrary, but sanctioned by de Lubac's own explicit criticism of him" (Wood, 1998:105).

To begin the first thrust of exploration here, this chapter would juxtapose the focal points on sacramentality and Church from the document of *Lumen Gentium* as explored in chapter two; the work of Dulles (*Models of the Church*) as explored in chapter three and the work of Schillebeeckx (*Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*) as explored thus far. This approach will solidify the sacramental ecclesiological building blocks laid down in chapter one: introduction and the subsequent three chapters. Then a critical discussion will ensue which will shape the present thesis in terms of using the Roman Catholic hermeneutic, and more specifically that of Schillebeeckx, as a kind of foil against which to develop a renewed Evangelical Free church ecclesiology (Congregationalist churches practicing believer's baptism and commonly known as believer's church) in relation to sacramentality.

5.1 CHURCH AND SACRAMENT

5.1.1 The Church as Sacrament in *Lumen Gentium*

Of foundational significance for Vatican II is the description of the Church as sacrament: “Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission” (Vatican Translation, 2009:17). The sacramentality of the Church is found within the context of mystery. Sacrament is not specifically defined in *Lumen Gentium* but given meaning and purpose in the *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy* - the sacraments bestow grace (SC, 10).

5.1.2 The Church as Sacrament in Schillebeeckx

Sacrament is defined as a “divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:15). Undergirding this definition is his notion of the Church as the continuing incarnation of Christ. The incarnation of Christ is his general context of sacramental mystery in the Church. Schillebeeckx (1963:55) concludes that the sacraments are the earthly extension of the body of the Lord. This sacramental extension is, for him, the earthly prolongation of Christ’s glorified humanity. The visible manifestation of the mystery of Christ in the sacraments is the visible Church (Schillebeeckx, 1963:45). The Church in its entirety (hierarchy and laity) is actually the “sacramental or mystical Christ” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:49). The sacraments are saving ecclesial acts, that is, the recipient receives grace through the sacraments (Schillebeeckx, 1963:66).

5.1.3 The Church as Sacrament in Dulles

The Church is a sign of God’s love and grace in Christ for all humanity. The Church, therefore, carries with her the apostolic and historical tangibility of the grace of God in Christ that now becomes visible as the Church incarnates herself in the world. He concludes that the Church as sacrament is a “sign of grace realizing itself. Sacrament has an event character; it is dynamic” (Dulles, 1987:69). He further contends – “The Church becomes an actual event of grace when it appears most concretely as a sacrament - that is, in the actions of the Church as such whereby men are bound together in grace by a

visible expression. The more widely and intensely the faithful participate in this corporate action of the Church, the more the Church achieves itself” (Dulles, 1987:69). The Church is a mystery (Dulles, 1987:9). A sacrament is “the visible form of an invisible grace”, that is, “sacraments contain the grace they signify, and confer the grace they contain” (Dulles, 1987:66, 223). The Church is the sacrament of Christ (Dulles, 1987:223).

This juxtaposition shows clearly the common thread of ecclesiological hermeneutics on “Church and Sacramentality” in the Roman Catholic Church which arguably is espoused by Schillebeeckx and Dulles. They all agree that Christ is the sacrament of God and that the Church is the sacrament of Christ. Hence the Church is sacramental mystery. They all agree that the grace of God in Christ is found in the Church and is bestowed to believers through the sacraments. Hence the Church offers sacramental grace. In the case of these three Roman Catholic voices, one can categorically conclude that their voices are univocal. Dulles (1987:35) endorses *Lumen Gentium*’s primary notions of the Church: “mystery, sacrament, Body of Christ and People of God” and goes so far as to claim that Vatican II “avoided the pitfalls of juridicism”, since discussions on the “inner nature of the Church” were given pre-eminence over the “formal structures of ecclesiastical government”. Whilst this issue of the ‘institutionalism’ of the Roman Catholic Church is not the primary matter of investigation in this dissertation, this study however, disagrees with Dulles’ view that the “Church cannot be fairly accused of institutionalism” (Dulles, 1987:35). To base his argument on the chronology of the discussions cited in *Lumen Gentium* is a weak one since this chronology was a matter of contextual priority. This priority, in no way, undermined the institutionalism of the Church. Interestingly, for Congar, Roman Catholic ecclesiology during this period was defined by the tendency to view the Church “as machinery of hierarchical mediation, of the powers and primacy of the Roman see, in a word, ‘hierarchology.’ The two terms between which that mediation comes, the Holy Spirit on the one side, the faithful people or the religious subject on the other, were as it were kept out of ecclesiological consideration” (Congar, 1965:45).

For Dulles, (1987:65), Vatican II entrenched the “connection between the Church as primordial sacrament and the seven ritual sacraments that express, in privileged ways, the sacramentality of the Church as a whole”. Schillebeeckx, like Dulles, maintains Vatican II’s sacramental ecclesiology: The essence of the Church is seen in the visible manifestation, in the whole Church, of the “final goal of grace achieved by Christ” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:48). The whole Church refers to the hierarchy and the “believing people” who “belong essentially to the primordial sacrament” – the Church. Conclusively then, *Lumen Gentium*, Dulles and Schillebeeckx’s hermeneutics resonate with one another. Dulles, although sharing the same sacramental ecclesiological hermeneutic as Schillebeeckx, offers a more systematic treatise

on ecclesiology as a whole. He goes beyond sacramentality and posits “that a balanced theology of the Church must find a way of incorporating the major affirmations of each ecclesiological type” (Dulles, 1987:13).

Schillebeeckx (1963:13) works from an exploration of Christ as the “visible presence of grace” so that he may better arrive at his notion of the “Sacramentality of the Church”. Dulles, on the other hand, works from an exploration of the various ecclesiological types (“method of typology”) so that he may better arrive at his notion of the Church as mystery (Dulles, 1987:9-14). He argues that his method of models or types has “great value in helping people to get beyond the limitations of their own particular outlook, and to enter into fruitful conversation with others having a fundamentally different mentality” (Dulles, 1987:12). He believes that his method would have positive implications for ecclesiology as a whole and for “ecumenism”, if it were to move “beyond its present impasses” (Dulles, 1987:12). Although he does not posit one prototype or “supermodel” – “The Church, as a mystery, transcends all creaturely analogies and defies reduction to a single theological paradigm”, he admits his own bias towards the sacramental model and “hints at the possibility of using that model as a basis for a systematic ecclesiology” (Dulles, 1987:206).

Dulles argues that “The sacramental model seems to have exceptional capacities for incorporating what is sound in each of the other four models” (Dulles, 1987:206). The sacramental model, Dulles believes, is helpful in correlating the institutional and mystical communion models by supporting the “best features” of both “while solving problems that prove intractable such as the relationship between the visible institution and the communion of grace” (Dulles, 1987:73). Dulles concludes that the sacramental model provide “ample scope to the workings of divine grace beyond the limits of the institutional Church” (Dulles, 1987:73). Dulles’ ecclesiological objectivity is dimmed by his sacramental subjectivity since he predicates a ‘base’ model that becomes the common thread of his ecclesiological hermeneutics. Moving along the trajectory of Dulles’ thought here, one finds similar subjectivity albeit exclusivity in Schillebeeckx (sacrament) and Tillard (communion). It is to the work of Flanagan and Tillard that this dissertation now turns to.

5.2 BRIAN FLANAGAN AND JEAN-MARIE TILLARD

Chapter One of this study pointed to Flanagan (2011) who explores the ecclesiological perspectives of Jean-Marie Tillard by engaging Tillard’s work with current debates concerning communion ecclesiology and theological and ecclesiological methods. It is here that this study would pursue an in-depth discussion of Tillard’s work, more specifically his hermeneutics of “Sacrament and Eucharist”. Flanagan begins his work by reflecting on

“Methods, Images, and Systematic Ecclesiology” over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Though not exhaustive, he does present some pertinent issues concerning systematic method in theology, more specifically ecclesiology. In the early nineteenth century Roman Catholic ecclesiology began to move away from the “relatively static post-Tridentine consensus on the treatise *De Ecclesia*” (Flanagan, 2011:2). Delving more deeply into the ecclesiological hermeneutics of the Tübingen School, Roman Catholic ecclesiology took on this new development in terms of ecclesiological thought – a development that was fast tracked into the mid-twentieth century (Flanagan, 2011:2). With the likes of Drey and Möhler positing an ecclesiology that views “the church not only as a visible, legal structure, but also as an object for direct theological reflection”, that is, “as an object of Christian faith in its own right”, the Roman Catholic ecclesiology was spurred to consider such reflection (Flanagan, 2011:2). In the late nineteenth-century Roman Catholic ecclesiology focused on the Jesuit theologians such as Perrone, Passaglia, Franzelin, Schrader, and Scheeben (Flanagan, 2011:2). This focus combined with the Tübingen School’s ecclesiological perspectives of the church as an “object of theological reflection”, – that is, “the church is not reducible to canon law or ecclesial apologetics”, – saw Roman Catholic ecclesiology embrace this albeit with an “emphasis on the visible, hierarchical church as the *continuing incarnation* of Christ in the world” (Flanagan, 2011:2).

Möhler’s application of the image of the church as the “Mystical Body of Christ” was carried further by the Roman school and “culminated in the theology of the Mystical Body found in Pius XII’s *Mystici Corporis Christi* in 1943” (Flanagan, 2011:2). The twentieth century saw the construction and development of ecclesiologies that were fixated on a primary image/metaphor or model of the church obtained from the Bible. (Flanagan, 2011:2). This ecclesiological method was a “reaction against ecclesiological reflection that focused upon the visible, hierarchical structure of the church to the neglect of the church’s graced, invisible, and *Supernatural* reality” (Flanagan, 2011:3). Following from Vatican II, the description of the church as the *People of God* became a dominant theme in Roman Catholic ecclesiology (Flanagan, 2011:3). This gave impetus to the description of the church as *Communion*, which became a “key theme in post-Vatican II Roman Catholic ecclesiology” (Flanagan, 2011:3).

The acceptable and growing notion of *communion* was an attempt to point to the “graced reality” of the Church (Flanagan, 2011:3) – a focus that Schillebeeckx is at pains to explain in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*. Reflections on the Church in *Lumen Gentium* begin with metaphoric/image pointers to explain what the inner nature of the Church is (Vatican Translation, 2009:19-19-22). The challenge to explain the inner nature of the Church in various images points to the difficulty experienced within Roman Catholicism in “understanding both the visible, human structure of the church and the graced reality of the

church” (Flanagan, 2011:4). The terminology “graced reality” will be explored much more in depth later on in this dissertation for it is the crux of Schillebeeckx’s ecclesiological hermeneutics. His thrust obviously finds its basis in a fundamental Roman Catholic ecclesiology. Flanagan (2011:5) notes that by the “latter half of the twentieth century”, there was “broad consensus across Christian ecclesiologies” on the “need to attend” to the issues of “institutional structures” and the “deeper, spiritual or theological reality” of the church. The method of attending to these issues remained “open” more so within Roman Catholic scholarship, “for whom the new perspectives were both creatively liberating and profoundly underdetermined by comparison to the textbook ecclesiologies of their youth” (Flanagan, 2011:5).

Roman Catholic ecclesiology applied two strategic methods – both were anchored in the application of key metaphors and images. The first method was “found in pre-conciliar reflection on the Mystical Body and in much post-conciliar reflection on the People of God” (Flanagan, 2011:5). This followed a “pattern” where one metaphor was used as a “dominant hermeneutical key” in the construction and development of an ecclesiology (Flanagan, 2011:5). Undoubtedly, Flanagan argues that the Mystical Body of Christ provided a “touchstone of continuity” (Flanagan, 2011:5). The second method was one that was “anticipated by Yves Congar” which “attended to the plurality of biblical metaphors presented in *Lumen Gentium* and proceeds to construct an ecclesiology which balanced the relative strengths and weakness thought to be present in them” (Flanagan, 2011:5). Of course, one is here reminded of the work of Dulles in *Models of the Church*. Dulles rightly posits that even the best attempts at harmonizing the various models to arrive at a comprehensive ecclesiology fall short of explaining the “enduring mystery” of the church (Flanagan, 2011:6). Dulles expresses his own hermeneutical ‘struggle’ when in his later revised edition of *Models of the Church*, he “argues that an additional model of the church, the church as *community of disciples*, comes close to doing so” (Flanagan, 2011:6). One would note that earlier on Dulles vouched for the sacramental model of the Church in a similar hermeneutical tone. At this point of my dissertation, one does note that there are perceived ‘struggles’ in the hermeneutics of Schillebeeckx and Dulles and presumably Roman Catholic ecclesiology via *Lumen Gentium*.

Although Dulles (1987:207) suggests that the model of *community of disciples* may be a good starting point for a “comprehensive ecclesiology”, in spite of it falling short of “being adequate to the full reality of the Church”, Flanagan argues that “an ecclesiology that moves beyond the enumeration of ecclesial metaphors to construct a more systematic theology of the church is both possible and necessary” (2011:7). Flanagan (2011:8) at this early stage of his work intends to explain “systematic theology” and “systematic ecclesiology”. An

understanding of these terms is necessary and he is helpful here since the investigations into Schillebeeckx's hermeneutics on the "Sacramentality of the Church" questions whether or not his sacramental understanding of the Church is a systematic one. Flanagan (2011:8) alludes to Lonergan's understanding of systematic theology or systematic ecclesiology which attempts "to work out appropriate systems of conceptualization, to remove apparent inconsistencies, to move towards some grasp of spiritual matters both from their own inner coherence and from the analogies offered by more familiar human experience" (Lonergan, 1971:132). Whilst Flanagan admits that Lonergan's "categorization of the functional specialties" is "helpful in understanding what it is one is doing in systematic theology", he cautions that the "language of 'systematics' and 'systematic theology' need not be tied exclusively to Lonerganian theological and philosophical assumptions, and too stark a distinction between 'systematic' theology and other kinds of theology betrays modernist assumptions that systematic discourses are the only kinds of discourses worth having" (Flanagan, 2011:8).

For Flanagan (2011:8) "systematic ecclesiologies investigate the church methodically, critically, and constructively, in contrast to catechetical and pastoral exercises in theological communication and academic religious studies approaches to religious phenomena". He argues that "Systematic ecclesiologies" must "attempt to answer" ecclesiological questions by "raising relevant questions, defining terms and the relations between those terms in relatively stable ways, and attempting to understand a reality through consistent methodological choices" (Flanagan, 2011:8). In the light of Flanagan's 'systematic' pointers, this dissertation must then ask of Schillebeeckx some serious questions in terms of systematic theological method: Does his "theoretical discourse" in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* "aim at an understanding of the church by viewing the patterns, relations, and structures of the church in relative abstraction from the concrete churches themselves"; and is this done "with critical attention to the factors that limit one's ability to produce an all-encompassing or complete theological system?" (Flanagan, 2011:8). The theological system that Schillebeeckx presents in his work is that the Church is sacramental mystery and he is content to refer to the graced reality in the Church as sacramental grace to the extent that the Church is Christ or put another way, the Church is the continuing incarnation of Christ. Regarding Flanagan's treatise here in terms of theological method as it relates to Schillebeeckx's work, it is worth noting the three definite criteria that he posits as "necessary for a further understanding of the church": Does the "theology aim at a consistent system of defined terms and relations?"; does the "theology establish the relations of ecclesiology with other theological, philosophical, and social-scientific theories?"; and does the "theology attend to the church experienced as a reality that is "already" graced but "not

yet” full of grace?” (Flanagan, 2011:23). These questions will be answered as this dissertation progresses.

5.2.1 Jean-Marie Tillard

Tillard was a Dominican who, like Schillebeeckx, was influenced by Aquinas (Flanagan, 2011:47-59). His theological and ecclesiological “reflections on communion” focused on two areas, namely, “Eucharist” and “religious life” (Flanagan, 2011:51). He posited that to be in Christ meant that one ought to be “sacramentally in Christ” (Flanagan, 2011:63). This is the “key relation on which communion with God (the Father) and with others is founded” (Flanagan, 2011:63-64). His “ecclesiological interest” in the “sacraments and the Eucharist” defined his theology and remained the “guiding light” throughout his theological career (Flanagan, 2011:64). For Tillard, “the Eucharist makes the Church” (Flanagan, 2011:64). Whilst Tillard’s earlier theology of the Eucharist remains essentially Christocentric, his later writings give much more attention to “the Holy Spirit’s role in bringing about the Eucharist in its *res* and *sacramentum*” (Flanagan, 2011:72).

Tillard also argues for a Eucharistic communion created by “the Spirit of the Lord – neither the Spirit alone, nor Christ alone” (Flanagan, 2011:72). It is important to note though that his pneumatological thinking and application is not just an “import” from an Eastern Christian hermeneutic of the Holy Spirit; rather he first and foremost develops his pneumatology from “the Scriptures and the patristic period”, being influenced by Irenaeus’ thoughts “on the Spirit as one of the two hands of God” (Flanagan, 2011:72). Tillard posits that any understanding of the church must engender “ecclesial communion” (Flanagan, 2011:118). By offering a systematic analysis of the church as a “Communion”, Flanagan believes that Tillard’s contribution in this one aspect or model is of “lasting value in the investigation of other aspects of the church” (Flanagan, 2011:118).

Tillard’s theological and ecclesiological method was most strongly influenced by the “*nouvelle théologie*” and “*ressourcement*” movements “around Dominicans Chenu and Congar and the Jesuits de Lubac and Daniélou” (Flanagan, 2011:53). His Thomistic influence is largely evident in his work and he allows his “authorities” to “speak for themselves” (Flanagan, 2011:53). This he does “to reinforce or rhetorically enhance his argument” (Flanagan, 2011:53). Tillard seeks to “create a theological language” that appeals to the ecumenical movement since his theology was deeply impacted by his involvement in ecumenism (Flanagan, 2011:53). Tillard’s ecclesiological understanding was inextricably linked with Christology and he viewed his ecclesiological work as a “contribution to

Christology” (Flanagan, 2011:61). His whole theological thrust of “communion” finds its locus at the “crossroads of soteriology, theological anthropology, and ecclesiology” (Flanagan, 2011:61).

5.2.1.1 Tillard on Sacrament and Eucharist

For Tillard, the Eucharist is pivotal in understanding the notion of the church as communion: it is this “sacrament that best symbolizes and makes present the communion with God and with others in Christ” (Flanagan, 2011:64). Flanagan (2011:65) notes four aspects of Tillard’s sacramental theology as significant factors for his hermeneutics of “ecclesial communion”. Firstly, “the connection of Eucharist with his soteriology”; secondly, “the descriptions of the Eucharist as meal, sacrifice, and memorial and their relation to sacraments and time”; thirdly, “the language of *res* and *sacramentum* which he uses to nuance an understanding of the limits and presence of the church, and fourthly, “the connection of the Eucharist with the reality of the local church” (Flanagan, 2011:65).

With the first aspect, Tillard understands the Eucharist as progressively salvific, that is, the Eucharist “progressively erases sin by plunging each of those who participate in it into all the realism of the redeeming death of Jesus, which eliminates attachment to the world of the old Adam and makes easier the ascent of all towards the Parousia” (Flanagan, 2011:65). With the second aspect, for Tillard every sacrament has “three temporal dimensions, the past historical event, the present grace given in the sacrament, and the future, eschatological event towards which the sacrament points” (Flanagan, 2011:65). He prefers to give attention to this “intersection of time and eternity in the eschatological reality of the sacraments” (Flanagan, 2011:65). With the third aspect, for Tillard there is the “‘osmosis’ between the Eucharist and the Church, the Eucharist ‘Body of Christ’ and the ecclesial ‘Body of Christ,’ communion as Eucharist and as lived, ecclesial reality” (Flanagan, 2011:66). Tillard often applies the Thomistic “distinction of the *res* and *sacramentum* of the Eucharist, to discuss ecclesial communion, the reality of the church, as the *res* of the sacrament” (Flanagan, 2011:67).

This, he posits, has two effects: firstly, his hermeneutics of the church is inextricably linked to the “sacramental event of the Eucharist”, and secondly, “it opens a way to understand communion ecumenically as always Eucharistic yet not only limited to the full communion indicated by mutual reception of Eucharist” (Flanagan, 2011:67). For Tillard, this “real yet incomplete communion of Christians” is the “real sharing in the *res* of the sacrament” (Flanagan, 2011:67). This hermeneutical presupposition of the “Church/Eucharist relation allows for a more porous understanding of ecclesial ‘membership’ without dissociating

ecclesiality from the Eucharist or the Pauline language of the Body of Christ” (Flanagan, 2011:67). With the fourth aspect, Tillard connects the “celebration of the Eucharist with the full ecclesiality of the local church” (Flanagan, 2011:67). Tillard builds on one of the key themes of Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium* by propagating afresh the “presence of the universal church in and through the local churches” – an ecclesiology beginning from the local church rather than from the universal church (Flanagan, 2011:67). He concludes that this is only possible because of the “Eucharistic nature of the local church” (Flanagan, 2011:67).

Whilst Tillard’s sacramental theology is firmly rooted in Roman Catholicism, it must be noted that his theology shows “the strong influence of his ecumenical involvement” (Vanderwilt, 1998:122). Additionally, Tillard’s ‘rootedness’ in Roman Catholic theology and ecclesiology is conveyed with ecumenical sensitivity towards his conversation partners, namely, Orthodox, Anglican and Evangelical (Vanderwilt, 1998:122). Like Schillebeeckx, Tillard qualifies the presence of Christ in the church as “sacramental presence” and also asserts that the Eucharist is the sacramental medium for the exchange of being, the *osmosis*, between Christ and his Church” (Vanderwilt, 1998:133-134). Tillard was content to hold that “sacramentality is a mode of being” (Vanderwilt, 1998:133). Tillard defines ‘sacramental existence’ as finding one’s salvation progressively in the Eucharist since the “Eucharist is *sacrificial* to the extent that its communion in the sacrifice of Christ is effectively signified” (Vanderwilt, 1998:133). It would be good to map out more closely Tillard’s hermeneutics of communion ecclesiology with reference to his four major works, namely, *Eucharistie: Pâque de l’Église (Eucharist: Pasch of God’s People)*; *Église d’Églises (Church of Churches)*; *Chair de l’Église, Chair du Christ (Body of the Church, Body of Christ)*, and *L’Église locale (The Local Church)*. A brief exploration of these four works would show the progression of Tillard’s communion ecclesiology and would be helpful to clarify what exactly he meant by sacramental salvation or sacramental grace in the Eucharist.

In the first work, *Eucharist: Pasch of God’s People*, Tillard deals with the Eucharist in salvation terms for both the individual and the Church and develops his salvific notion in terms of the “two moments of grace”, namely, “offer” and “acceptance”; “creation” and “recapitulation” (Vanderwilt, 1998:122-123). These “two moments of grace” form the backbone of Tillard’s conception of Eucharist and the Church. In his second work, *Church of Churches*, Tillard views the structures of the Church from a communion ecclesiological perspective, that is, he views the universal Church as a “communion of local churches” (Vanderwilt, 1998:122). The local church is his ecclesiological focus whilst the communion of local churches exemplifies the “unity in diversity” of the whole “Church of God” (Vanderwilt, 1998:122). In his third work, *Body of the Church, Body of Christ*, a sequel to *Church of the Churches*, he describes the Church as a “structure of grace” that is created by the Spirit and

argues that these “structures of grace” undergird the ecclesial structures in the Church (Vanderwilt, 1998:122). This work was his attempt to overcome the prevalent “overly one-sided emphasis” on the hierarchical structures of the church (Vanderwilt, 1998:123). In his fourth work, *The Local Church*, Tillard links the Eucharist of the local church with the communion of the whole Church, that is, the Eucharist cannot be seen as a local, isolated, sacramental event – it is to be viewed as being “constituted in communion with the entire Church” (Vanderwilt, 1998:123).

Tillard’s works emphasizes the Augustinian (“become who you are”) and Thomistic (two movements or moments of grace). He asserts that the local church is not to be seen as a ‘part’ or ‘fragment’ of the whole Church; rather it is the Church gathered in its present space and time, having its Eucharistic identity (“become who you are”) in communion with all other local churches. (Vanderwilt 1998:123). Tillard is content to promote Augustinian hermeneutics here. For Augustine, Christ is present in the Eucharistic bread and cup and must be received in the Eucharistic bread and cup. When a Christian partakes of the Eucharist, that person receives Christ and in receiving Christ that person receives his or her identity (in the case of a new believer, he or she receives a “new identity”) – “they are to *become* the Christ” whom they receive (Vanderwilt, 1998:123). The same principle applies to the Church – the Church receives Christ in the Eucharist, thus it receives its identity – “the Church becomes the Christ whom it has received” (Vanderwilt, 1998:123). The challenge of sanctification is to both the individual Christian and the Church as community of believers – to be conformed progressively to the salvation plan of God’s grace in Christ (Vanderwilt, 1998:123). Since the paschal mystery was revealed in Christ pouring out himself for the sake of others, so too must the Christian’s pouring out of oneself be “mirrored in the life of the Church” - this trajectory Tillard called “*dessaisissement*, or self-abandonment” - which was crucial in his sacramental ecclesiological hermeneutics (Vanderwilt, 1998:123).

Tillard’s Thomistic notion of the “two moments of grace” asserts the *exitus* (the moment of God’s offer of salvation to us) and *reditus* (the moment of our reception of God’s offer of salvation to us). These two moments are ‘salvifically’ complementary in that they “together form a conceptual pair on every level of the sacramental economy” (Vanderwilt, 1998:124). Tillard posits that these “two moments” are evident in every sacramental act such as “baptism, Eucharist, reconciliation, preaching, orders, the reading of Scripture, prayer, even in the singing of a hymn”. (Vanderwilt, 1998:124). In stark contrast to Schillebeeckx, Tillard posits categories of sacramental acts very different to Schillebeeckx’s Roman Catholic Church sacraments (7 sacraments). One would note that Schillebeeckx argues, “the sacraments are the properly human mode of encounter with God” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:6). For Tillard then, the Eucharist embodies a *consecratory* moment signifying God’s offer and a

receptive moment signifying the acceptance of God's offer, which as a sacramental Eucharistic act ensures "a return into communion with God" (Vanderwilt, 1998:124). Schillebeeckx's Thomistic notion of sacramentality comprises of two sides that are strongly interconnected, namely, "validity and fruitfulness" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:142). He elaborates further by suggesting "an objective side to sacramentality: the ecclesial expression of Christ's will to encounter, directed to a particular individual" and "a corresponding subjective side: the personal acceptance of Christ's grace-giving will" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:142).

In essence, both Tillard and Schillebeeckx are positing a sacramental ecclesiology based on the same two aspects or sides, however differently expressed. Both scholars are alluding to God's offer of salvific encounter in the sacraments as well as to the believer's spiritual intent that undergirds receptivity. Tillard argues that the "presence of Christ is neither arbitrary" nor does it disappear when there is a lack of faith (Vanderwilt, 1998:133). The presence of Christ in the Eucharist is God's "gift" to the Church and he argues that "through reception" of this gift is the "purpose for Christ's presence fulfilled" (Vanderwilt, 1998:133). Tillard believes that this paradigm gives answer to the "Evangelical objections that, for some, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is made to seem like an end in itself" (Vanderwilt, 1998:133). He also believes that this paradigm gives answer to the [Roman] "Catholic objections that, for some, the emphasis on the need for a subjective relationship between Christ and the communicant calls into question their confidence in the objective promise of Christ to be present for the Church *in the breaking of bread*" (Vanderwilt, 1998:34). Tillard unravels this tension by applying the term "sacramental" to the presence of Christ: "The presence of Christ is always a qualified, as opposed to absolute, presence. It is always a *sacramental* presence which describes a *presence in absence*" (Vanderwilt, 1998:134). For Tillard, sacramentality describes humanity's limitations in conveying the realities of God and at the same time it describes God's limitlessness (Vanderwilt, 1998:134).

Like Schillebeeckx, Tillard does not hold the view of "two incarnations of God, one in Jesus and the other in the Church" (Vanderwilt, 1998:135). He argues that "there is one incarnation expressed in two modalities" (Vanderwilt, 1998:135). Does Tillard's hermeneutics on sacramental theology and communion ecclesiology fit into an ecclesiological model as predicated by Dulles? Tillard refrained from alluding to his communion ecclesiology as an ecclesiological model (Vanderwilt, 1998:140). Whilst recognizing its potential to serve as a model for the Church, it cannot be expressed as a 'model' since "it extends far beneath other explanatory systems" (Vanderwilt, 1998:140). For Tillard, his communion ecclesiology points to the "existential core of the Church" through his exploration of the fundamental or "primordial structures of grace" which he considers as pivotal for any valid ecclesiological model (Vanderwilt, 1998:140). Tillard conclusively defines the Church as the "communion of

communions appearing as a communion of local churches, spread throughout the world, each one itself being a communion of the baptized gathered together into communities by the Holy Spirit, on the basis of their baptism, for their Eucharistic celebration” (tr. DePeaux: 1992:29).

Tillard maintained that the local church must “incarnate the church of God in both its apostolicity and its catholicity” and that the local church must be instrumental in negotiating that “incarnation, internally, in relation to its contemporary Christian churches, and in relation to the tradition of the past and the churches of the future” (Flanagan, 2011:117). Since for Tillard, Eucharistic celebration is synonymous with Eucharistic union with Christ, the theological question that needs to be asked here is of course the meaning of Eucharistic union with Christ. Is union reduced to that? How does union with Christ sacramentally function in relation to this very broad category and over against faith procuring union in Protestant theology? To answer these crucial questions as this dissertation progresses, one must note here that towards the end of his work in *Église d’Églises*, Tillard makes the bold claim, “There is nothing in it [the Church] that is not *communion*” (Flanagan, 2011:117). However, in his writings in the 1990’s, in *Chair de l’Église*, and specifically in *L’Église locale*, Tillard emphatically posits communion ecclesiology “as a necessary but not sufficient component of further ecclesiological reflection” (Flanagan, 2011:117).

In his own words Tillard predicates that “it is not enough to say that the Church is communion” (Flanagan, 2011:118). This shows Tillard’s ecclesiological “development in his use of communion language” (Flanagan, 2011:118). Flanagan (2011:118) notes how this is different from Dulles’ ecclesiology of models. Whilst Dulles shares the same view as Tillard in terms of the “inadequacy of a particular concept to capture the mystery of the church”, nevertheless, Dulles’ work aimed at delineating a “series of ecclesiological models, none of which encapsulated the full mystery of the church, that in combination pointed toward an understanding of the church, balancing and correcting each other’s shortcomings. This is not the kind of complementarity of concepts one finds in Tillard’s use of communion” (Flanagan, 2011:118). In the light of Flanagan, Tillard and Dulles’ arguments, it would be fair to posit that it is not enough to say that the Church is sacramental.

5.3 SUSAN WOOD AND HENRI DE LUBAC

Like Tillard, de Lubac stressed how the “sacrament made the church”, noting that the emphasis on the organization and authority of the church was only “a partial cure because it works only from without by way of authority, instead of effective union” (de Lubac, 1999:76). He posits that “If the Church is thus the fullness of Christ, Christ in His Eucharist is truly the

heart of the Church” (de Lubac, 1999:92). Thus de Lubac (1999:78) boldly claims that “The Church produces the Eucharist, but the Eucharist also produces the Church”. Additionally, like Schillebeeckx, de Lubac argues that the Church is the sacrament of Christ in the same way as Christ is the sacrament of God: “If Christ is the sacrament of God, the Church is the sacrament of Christ for us; she represents him, in the full ancient meaning of the term: she really makes him present to us. She not only carries on his work, but she is his very continuation, in a sense incomparably more real than any human institution can be said to be a continuation of its founder” (de Lubac, 1983:50; Wood, 1998:106). This is the crux of de Lubac’s ecclesial sacramentality that firstly, as Wood observes, “presumes a communication of idioms between Christ and the Church” (Wood, 1998:106). With the image of the Church as the body of Christ, de Lubac argued that the “communication of idioms preserves the inseparability of the divine and human elements in the Church” (Wood, 1998:106). Since the “divine element is intrinsic to the human element” there can be no dualism (Wood, 1998:106).

Following de Lubac’s view mentioned above, Schillebeeckx (1963:48) argues that there can be no dualism between the Church and the grace of Christ [applicable to the believer] in the Church and boldly says that to think in dualistic terms would be the “work of evil”. De Lubac contends that in spite of their “paradoxical tensions” the divine and human elements in the Church can be held together to overcome an overly emphasized “secular and sociological” hermeneutic of the “Church as institution” (Wood, 1998:106). Regarding the “mystery of the causality of the sacraments”, de Lubac argues that the causality does not “reside so much in the paradoxical efficacy in the supernatural order of a rite or a sensible gesture as in the existence of a society which, under the appearances of a human institution, hides a divine reality” (de Lubac, 1983:51; Wood, 1998:106). Secondly, Wood (1998:106) observes that the “notion of sacramentality is grounded in a mystical signification understood by spiritual exegesis”. De Lubac holds the same view of the ‘mystical’ correlation between Church and Eucharist that was evident before the middle of the twelfth century. Therefore his sacramental ecclesiology is firmly grounded in spiritual exegesis (Wood, 1998:107). Put another way, de Lubac “perceives the relationship of the sign and that which is signified in sacramentally to be analogous to that between type and antitype within spiritual exegesis” (Wood, 1998:107). Like Schillebeeckx, de Lubac insinuates that the Church is the mystical Christ since “Christ is His Church” (Wood, 1998:106-107). Wood’s third observation is that for de Lubac, “a sacrament is an efficacious mediatory sign between the human and the divine” (Wood, 1998:106). De Lubac categorically posits that the “human element in the Church makes the divine element present by making Christ present” (Wood, 1998:107). The

sacramental sign makes Christ present; therefore the Church makes Christ present to humanity (Wood, 1998:107).

For de Lubac, the union between the divine and human elements in the Church must not negate their differences. He asserts their distinctiveness at the same time that he asserts their union (Wood, 1998:107). He argues that “If Christ is indeed His Church, this does not imply that Christ is so immanent to the Church as to be absorbed or assimilated into the Church any more than grace is absorbed into nature” (Wood, 1998:107). The paradoxical structure of de Lubac’s hermeneutics insists that “Christ and Church, grace and nature, be distinct at the same time that they are united” and he “warned against a kind of immanentism” referring to this hermeneutical approach as a “sacramentalism turned inside out” (Wood, 1998:107). De Lubac insists on an immanent and transcendent hermeneutic which is quite a different approach to that of Schillebeeckx who places more emphasis on sacramental union as immanent encounter between Christ and the individual in the sacraments, more specifically, the Eucharist. By positing ecclesial sacramental immanence and encounter with Christ – to the extent that the otherness of Christ remains in the shadows with the Church as sacrament at the forefront of his hermeneutics, – Schillebeeckx creates for himself a problematic trajectory with regard to the transcendence of the risen Christ. His thesis of the continuing incarnation of Christ in the Church makes encounter with Christ sacramentally salvific to the extent that the Church is Christ. Whilst de Lubac attempts to strike a proportionate balance between the immanence and transcendence of Christ in the Church and in the world, it must be noted, however, that “a number of corollaries, not mentioned by de Lubac”, is evident in Schillebeeckx’s work (Wood, 1998:114).

Firstly, for Schillebeeckx, when human existence is viewed as a visible manifestation of grace, then human existentialism together with its associated responsibilities must be construed as an act of “theological” faith (Schillebeeckx, 1971:99). Secondly, Schillebeeckx views the world from the perspective of the “contemporary saving situation of the incarnation” and thereby posits that “implicit Christianity” is at work which he defines as “a distinctive, non-sacral, but sanctified expression of man’s living with the living God” (Schillebeeckx, 1971:101). The Church, he asserts, is a “set aside” sacral expression of this implicit Christianity (Schillebeeckx, 1971:101). The world (implicit Christianity) and the Church (explicit Christianity) constitute two complementary forms of Christianity (Wood, 1998:114). Thirdly, according to this view the world is considered “holy” by virtue of its identification with creation and redemption and, actions initiated by the world towards improvement of its quality of life are actions that “inherently contributes to the eschatological kingdom and is included in the life of grace” (Schillebeeckx, 1971:102). Conversely, if this were not the case, these actions would be outside the ambit of Christianity and there would be a “dualism

between the world of grace and the secular world, a dualism reflected in the two-story universe of nature and grace as articulated in some scholastic commentaries on Thomas which de Lubac criticizes in his *Surnaturel*" (Wood, 1998:115). Fourthly, when one considers the relationship between the supernatural and nature, one must proceed primarily from the "existential experience of Christians who question the place of religion and the Church in their lives" and not from theological and theoretical formulations (Wood, 1998:115). This approach emphasizes the "inherent significance of human history, which is seen as sanctified but not sacral" (Wood, 1998: 115). The Church, according to this approach, is viewed as "sacral, but in a process of secularization" (Wood, 1998:115). This means that as grace becomes historically manifested in the world, the "world strives to become Church" (Wood, 1998:115). Conversely, the Church as the sign of the continuing salvific incarnation of Christ in the world, experiences "sanctifying secularization" (Wood, 1998:115). This implies that there is a certain "reciprocity between Church and the world in which the distance and tension between the two is minimalized. Ultimately the secular predominates in its new state of having been sanctified" (Wood, 1998:115).

When one compares Schillebeeckx with de Lubac, one notices that whilst both hermeneutical views are concerned with the unity of humanity albeit with different terms of discussion (for Schillebeeckx it is world and eschatological kingdom and, for de Lubac it is nature and the supernatural), one finds, some ambiguity in Schillebeeckx's hermeneutics (Wood, 1998:118). Schillebeeckx, on the one hand, asserts that the unity of humanity is based on God's universal grace as his salvific will for all of humanity (Schillebeeckx, 1971:118). He further asserts that the source of this universal grace "is not human solidarity in itself, but human solidarity with Christ through his body the Church since Christ himself has disappeared from our empirical horizon since his death" (Schillebeeckx, 1971:124). Yet, on the other hand, he asserts that the Church is the "momentous visible or meaningful presence in the world of an already accomplished communion of men" (Schillebeeckx, 1971:92). This raises the following questions: does union with Christ constitute the unity of humanity? Or, is the Church to be viewed merely as the visible expression of a unity that exists prior to it? (Wood, 1998:116). Wood (1998:116) argues that in both cases, "unity with Christ occurs apart from the Church" and that "in either case, the relationship between Christ and the Church is not addressed, although Schillebeeckx does refer to the Church as the body of Christ". For Wood and likewise this study, there is evidence of some "unresolved tension occurring in his own exposition, which Schillebeeckx sees in the language of *Gaudium et Spes*, resulting in a certain ambiguity" (Wood, 1998:116).

Put another way, Schillebeeckx identifies the Church as the body of Christ and as institution necessary for salvation but does not here "show how these themes are systematically

integrated with his position on the relationship between the Church and the world. It is the lack of systematic coherence which leads to ambiguity” (Wood, 1998:116). One finds similar lack of coherence in his *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*. There is no solid systematic integration with his hermeneutics on the relationship between Church and sacrament, Church and grace, and Church and Christ. De Lubac sees the unity of humanity as a significant theme since he believes that humanity is “organically one by its divine structure” and that the mission of the Church is “both to reveal the unity that has been lost and to restore and complete it” (Wood, 1998:116; de Lubac, 1983:33). The Church, therefore, is not only a means of unity between humanity and God, but is itself, for de Lubac, that “union in consummation” because of its Eucharistic or sacramental union with Christ (Wood, 1998:116). Conclusively then for de Lubac “unity is not prior to the Church, but always exists through the Church” (Wood, 1998:116). He contends that this “unity exceeds the unity of faith and love described by Schillebeeckx, since it is an incorporation into the body of Christ” (Wood, 1998:116). One notices that de Lubac’s primary theological hermeneutics is centred on his identification of the Church as the “social embodiment of grace” (Wood, 1998:116).

De Lubac posits that “if the union of nature and the supernatural was brought about in principle by the mystery of the Incarnation, the union of nature and grace can be fully accomplished only through the mystery of the redemption” (de Lubac, 1968:132). Wood (1998:120-121) argues that effectively de Lubac “responds to a structural problem of the relation between nature and grace in terms of the historical event of redemption. To resolve this tension between nature and grace, creation and redemption, Church and world, it is imperative, for de Lubac, that the event of the Cross with its salvific role be considered for a holistic understanding of these terms and their role in God’s salvific history for humanity” (Wood, 1998:120). The Cross, therefore, must be viewed as the resolution for the polarities that exist between nature and grace, creation and redemption, and Church and world. This resolution is the New Covenant and also depicts a “historical resolution of the polarities, not only in the incarnation-redemption, but in the Eucharist where the Covenant is actualized sacramentally” (Wood, 1998:120).

This chapter has outlined and explored the ecclesiological hermeneutics of a few key scholars within Roman Catholicism. The aim of this dialogical approach was to identify the similarities and differences that exist within Roman Catholic ecclesiology, with particular reference to sacramentality. Whatever differences have been identified here among the various scholars does not in any way undermine their uniform conviction that the Church is in essence the sacrament of Christ. Considering that there are Roman Catholic issues of methodology in their own systematic ecclesiology does leave ample room for a Protestant,

and in particular, a Free Evangelical theological and ecclesiological inquiry as to the very nature of a sacramental understanding of the church. Flanagan (2011:134) points out that Tillard's ecclesiology, like Aquinas', is situated on a "map of systematic ecclesiology at the intersection of Christology, pneumatology, and theological anthropology". This trajectory, not surprisingly, is found in all of the scholars mentioned here. Despite Tillard asserting communion and sacrament as necessary aspects for any systematic ecclesiological exploration, he agrees that one cannot use any of these exclusively as an adequate basis for a systematic ecclesiology. He suggests a methodology of systematic ecclesiology that considers the "potential of communion language" and by implication the potential of sacramental language, as developed by the broad spectrum of theologians, "without overstating or overextending this language by attempting to make it the only essential ecclesiological concept" (Flanagan, 2011:135).

Despite all of the mentioned scholars having their theological and ecclesiological work "rooted in a particular context", this study is inclined to apply Flanagan's criticism of Tillard to these scholars and more in particular to Schillebeeckx (Flanagan, 2011:136). Flanagan criticizes Tillard by pointing to his "lack of systematic investigation of the empirical reality of the church, either through social scientific methodologies or other social-theoretical models" (Flanagan, 2011:136). This, Flanagan argues, has indeed weakened Tillard's "theory of communion by making it seem idealistic and removed from the concrete practices of the church", and has also weakened his "practical ecclesial proposals by not determining the relation of ecclesiological theory and possible practice more critically" (Flanagan, 2011:136). This study asserts that this would be also a fair criticism of Schillebeeckx since his idealistic hermeneutics on sacramental ecclesiology has indeed created a problematic trajectory in terms of Christology, pneumatology and theological anthropology.

CHAPTER 6: **EVANGELICAL CHURCH DIALOGUE**

As mentioned in Chapter One: Introduction, this Chapter will focus on the perspectives of a few significant Evangelical scholars. In the first instance, the work of de Chirico will be explored. He presents a theological landscape of Evangelicalism and offers a critical analysis of the works of Gerrit Berkouwer, Cornelius Van Til, David Wells, Donald Bloesch, Herbert Carson, and John Stott in terms of their appraisal of Roman Catholicism. He argues that the prevailing Evangelical appraisal of Roman Catholicism has been characterized by a lack of systemic awareness and the hermeneutical approach applied is atomistic (Chirico, 2003:217). He concludes that the contemporary Evangelical systemic analysis is “deficient in its ability to come to terms with the theological core of its system, i.e. its own articulation of the nature-grace motif and the incarnational model of its ecclesial self-awareness” (Chirico, 2003:303). In terms of the sacramentality of the Church, de Chirico provides an understanding of Vatican II’s insistence on the category of sacrament that became the significant building block for coming to terms with its “incarnational motif of the Church” (Chirico, 2003:267).

After a lengthy discussion on the Roman Catholic Church as the “Mediator” of sacramental grace (Chirico, 2003: 246-283) it is noted yet again that Schillebeeckx’s work on sacramental encounter fits within the central ecclesiological systemic framework of Roman Catholicism. De Chirico (2003: 251) notes that the centrality of the Church is primarily worked out in terms of “Christological analogy and sacramental presence within the framework of a hierarchically understood law of Incarnation”. This understanding of the “Church as sacrament” became “another way of exegeting the Christological thrust of the traditional definition of the Church as the continuation of the incarnation of Jesus Christ” (Chirico, 2003:268).

This Chapter will also explore the sacramental ecclesiology of John Calvin. Schillebeeckx alludes to Calvin’s sacramental understanding as “containing and giving grace” but goes on to say that there exists an array of differences between the various Calvinist proponents and Catholic interpretations (Schillebeeckx, 1963:185). Mannion and Borght present a wide range of perspectives in terms of the traditional-historical and contemporary interpretative analysis of the ecclesiology of Calvin. In exploring the ecclesiology of Calvin in the light of Schillebeeckx’s work, this dissertation is mindful of what Paul Avis has to say:

Most of what Calvin writes in the *Institutes* is mainstream Christian theology and can be owned by many who do not stand overtly in the Reformed tradition. Some of what Calvin says is badly distorted by polemic, and in this he is a man of his time. From the controversies of the Reformation period we should learn the dangers of polemic theology, or digging ourselves steadily deeper into entrenched positions, from which it becomes ever more difficult to hear what our interlocutor is saying. Theology should not be reactive, but contemplative. The 'object' of theology (as Barth and Torrance would remind us) is not a particular Christian tradition, or an individual theologian who argues a different case, but the revelation of the triune God as it is embodied and embedded in created reality (Mannion and Borght, 2011: Foreword, VII).

To conclude this Chapter, the work of Moltmann will be explored with particular reference to the work of the Spirit. Moltmann starts the engine of *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* by discussing the dimensions of a theology of Church and then shifts gear into the historical church where he highlights the ecclesiological problem as being the "difference between faith and experience" (Moltmann, 1977, 20). Since Schillebeeckx's work is about faith and sacramental encounter (experience) in an ecclesiological context, Moltmann's exploration of possible solutions to this ecclesiological problem is a good point of departure in elucidating some of the inconsistencies found in Schillebeeckx's hermeneutics on faith and experience.

6.1 LEONARDO DE CHIRICO

6.1.1 Defining Evangelicalism

Before embarking on his thesis of finding a working hypothesis for an Evangelical interpretation of Roman Catholicism, de Chirico (2003:27), in his methodology, wisely considers the meaning, use, approaches and applications of the term 'Evangelical' by stating that "the attempt to define the contours of an Evangelical *theology* involves a deeper understanding of the *Evangelical* connotation of that kind of theology". As this dissertation is an attempt to propose an alternative if not renewed Evangelical ecclesiology against the backdrop of sacramentality, Chirico's initial approach in defining Evangelicalism is appropriate. He affirms that defining the term is not a simple task for three reasons:

Firstly, "the increasing vagueness of the use of the word is making its semantic value less and less precise" (Chirico, 2003:28). The term does take on overtones in the different languages and nationalities, for example, in German *Evangelisch* means Protestant whilst

Evangelikal is applied to communities of faith outside the State church and in the USA the term *Evangelical* is generally interpreted as “a mute substantive that gains its voice only when coupled to another, and more clarifying, adjective” (Chirico, 2003:28). The multiple connotation of the term has given rise to “hybrids” thus creating a “semantic potpourri” since it is now “combined with adjectives like radical, liberal, charismatic, catholic, liberationist, ecumenicalist, feminist, orthodox and others” (Chirico, 2003:28). This “lexical supplementation” is suggestive of the “growing taxonomy” of the term and one has to consider whether the term in the contemporary landscape and contours of Christendom is still a meaningful one (Chirico, 2003:28). Secondly, “the intrinsic complexity of the reality” conveyed by the term does create problems of what exactly is meant by the term (Chirico, 2003:29). Since the term is constituted by a “variety” or “multiplicity of elements” does make it challenging to define (Chirico, 2003:29). Thirdly, the multifaceted approaches in attempting to understand the term by way of a “range of interpretative keys, controlling principles, and privileged perspectives” does make it increasingly difficult to arrive at a “univocal and comprehensive understanding” (Chirico, 2003:29).

De Chirico (2003:30-40) affirms the Evangelical landscape as being constituted by

- **“Socio-Cultural Categories”** – Evangelicalism is beyond “Church or Churches” and therefore must be described as a “movement”. Institutionally, contemporary Evangelicalism comprises a “network of Churches and para-church agencies of corporate bodies and influential personalities” as well as a “religious culture or a cluster of subcultures” held together by a “common nucleus” albeit with different specifications.
- **“Historical Categories”** – Evangelicalism can be traced back to “historico-theological” traditions rooted in the Reformation. These historical categories can also be traced in the “XVII century orthodoxy (Protestant Scholasticism), Puritanism, continental Pietism, Revivalism, the worldwide missionary movement, classical Pentecostalism, Dispensationalism, the early XX century anti-modernism Fundamentalist movement, the strongly separatist subsequent Neo-Fundamentalist offshoots, the Neo-Evangelical ‘renaissance’ (as it is called by Bloesch, 1973) after the Second World War and, more recently, the wide Charismatic movement”.
- **“Theological Categories Proper”** – Evangelicalism is defined by doctrinal beliefs. Wells (1987:22) describes Evangelicals as consistently “doctrinal” people. This

means that Evangelicalism is inextricably linked “within the western tradition of Reformation-Revivalist theology”. Marsden (1984:9-10) argues that Evangelicalism is a “conceptual unity” based upon its doctrinal emphases which are: “the final authority of Scripture”; “the real, historical character of God’s saving work recorded in Scripture”; “eternal salvation through personal trust in Christ”; “evangelism and missions” and a “spiritually transformed life”. France and McGrath (1993) affirm the “shape of Evangelicalism” through a similar approach. In his later work, McGrath (1994: 53-80) also stresses the significance of “Christian community”.

- **“Ecclesiastical Categories”** – The ecclesiastical element (“churchly dimension”) is fundamental in understanding the “institutional configuration” of Evangelical ecclesiology.
- **“Composite Categories”** – Bebbington (1989: 2-3) notes four key distinctives that form the quadrilateral of Evangelicalism, namely, “conversionism” (turning away from self and sin to Christ), “biblicism” (the Bible is the ultimate authority for all matters of faith and religious experience), “activism” (the works of social reform and charity but as a priority the work of spreading the Gospel message) and “crucicentrism” (Jesus’ death on the cross). De Chirico (2003: 39) contends that not all of these distinctives are “theological, nor are they strictly socio-cultural. Instead, they are a mixture of theological, spiritual and social Evangelical distinctives forming what might be called an Evangelical ethos”. He alludes to and prefers Tidball’s “Rubik’s cube” as a more “multifaceted approach” with more “refined composite” categories than that of Bebbington (Chirico, 2003:39). The cube accounts for Evangelical diversity with many possible combinations based on three key variables, namely, Denomination, World and Spirituality (Tidball, 1994:21).

Regarding the diverse theological mindsets, methods and approaches within the diverse landscape of Evangelical Theology in terms of “theological boundaries, the nature of doctrine, progress in theology, and relating to non-evangelical theologies and culture in general”, Olson (1998:41) proposes a necessary distinction to be made between ‘traditionalists’ and ‘reformists’. In this proposed distinction, traditionalists view the Church as “bounded set” whilst the reformists as “centred set”, doctrine is viewed either as “revelation” or “interpretation”, postmodernism is viewed as an “enemy” or a “dialogue partner” (Olson, 1998: 40-50). There are other ways to describe the above-mentioned dualistic system, for example, Erickson (1997), a traditionalist, defines the reformist wing as “left” or “post-

conservative” Evangelicalism whilst Grenz (1993 and 1994), a reformist, prefers to refer to it as a “revisionist” mindset with regard to the “older” or “established” Evangelicalism (Chirico, 2003: 46). Notwithstanding the “plausibility of such clear cut analysis”, Chirico argues that the “Evangelical theological camp is split over fundamental issues of theological method which influence the whole theological enterprise and make it possible to discern a wide spectrum of Evangelical theologies within the broad Evangelical tradition” (Chirico, 2003: 46). He concludes that the “diverging sensitivities and contrasting mindsets impinges on the present state and future prospects of Evangelical theology” (Chirico, 2003: 46).

In view of the varied degrees of diversity within Evangelical Theology, this dissertation chooses to work from the angle of Noll’s definition of “Evangelical” that does incorporate all of the distinguishing characteristics mentioned above and yet does not include Protestantism in general (Noll, 2010:19-32). For him “Evangelicalism” refers to “those Protestants who, beginning more than three hundred years ago, strongly emphasized the redeeming work of Christ, personally appropriated, and who stressed spreading the good news of that message, whether to those with only a nominal attachment to Christianity or to those who had never heard the Christian gospel” (Noll, 2010: 21). Noll (2010:29) endorses and lists the nine “founding commitments” of the Evangelical Alliance (formed in 1846 in England with delegates from churches across Britain, North America and many other parts of Europe) that are central to the global contemporary Evangelical movement:

1. “The divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures”
2. “The right and privacy of private judgement in the interpretation of Holy Scriptures”
3. “The Unity of the Godhead and the Trinity of the Persons therein”
4. “The utter depravity of human nature in consequence of the Fall”
5. “The incarnation of the Son of God, His work of atonement for the sins of mankind, and His mediatorial intercession and reign”
6. “The justification of the sinner by faith alone”
7. “The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner”
8. “The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, with eternal blessedness of the righteous and the eternal punishment of the wicked”

9. "The divine institution of the Christian ministry, and the obligation and perpetuity of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper".

It is interesting to note that the word 'church' is not used in 9 above but "Christian ministry" which signifies the Evangelical mindset in terms of the essence of 'church'. De Chirico (2003:30) alludes to this as "Socio-Cultural Categories – beyond Church or Churches" - a "movement".

6.1.2 Nature-Grace Motif

In seeking to present a model that will systemically appraise the theological system of Roman Catholicism, de Chirico asserts that the entire debate evolves around the nature-grace motif (Chirico, 2003:219). Considering this motif as that which furnishes the "theological scope" of the Roman Catholic system, it becomes necessary to view the "ecclesial self-understanding" as its primary "reference point determining its orientation and expressions" (Chirico, 2003:219). The latter is grafted into the former to such an extent that together they constitute the whole framework of Roman Catholic theology, which enables "the system to be what it is and to do what it does" (Chirico, 2003:219). Applying this interpretative key to Schillebeeckx, it becomes clear that he works from the angle of the 'sacramental' ecclesial self-understanding [orientation and expression] of the Church that is grafted into the nature-grace motif of the Roman Catholic system. This is why he can conclude that grace is bestowed through the sacraments since the Church is the continuation of the incarnation of Christ [nature-grace]. He is content to speak of the "ecclesial character of sacramental action" which for him means that "by the sacraments Christ's personal act of redemption, which is eternally actual, becomes sacramentalized in the Church" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:112).

In assessing Schillebeeckx, it would do this dissertation well to be mindful of de Chirico's hermeneutical model which in its "essential profile" posits "interpreting interpretations needs an interpretative key in order to make interpretation itself possible" (Chirico, 2003:165-166). However, de Chirico has favoured the systemic hermeneutical strategies and interpretative frameworks of Roman Catholicism as against that of Evangelicalism to such an extent that his own interpretative key becomes questionable. For example, he argues that Roman Catholicism is a unified system with diversity whilst Evangelicalism "lacks a unified hermeneutics of Roman Catholicism" and is "deficient" in its own hermeneutical articulation of the nature-grace motif. A careful, deeper reading of his work shows his atomistic appraisal of Evangelicalism based on his interpretation of "system", "unified" and "diversity". The so-

called “unified” system of Roman Catholicism is also seen in the work of Schillebeeckx as institutional or Roman unification rather than unified diversity. In his exploration, which also includes a surface touch of the Augustinian and Thomistic traditions, de Chirico refers to the Roman Catholic theological tradition as “a rich and complex typology of ways” for the articulation of the nature-grace motif (Chirico, 2003:228). He emphasizes the “comprehensiveness” of the Roman Catholic “system” albeit with “some tensions and unresolved polarizations” (Chirico, 2003:228). The way that the “magisterial office tends to synthesize different orientations to safeguard the system from being attacked by disruptive trends” so as to ensure a “manifold, yet unitary outlook”, is for de Chirico a system of “harmonious co-existence of different typologies” (Chirico, 2003:229).

In Christian theology, nature refers to the “created world” resulting from “God’s creating activity and the recipient of His saving purposes” (Chirico, 2003:219). God’s dealings with this created world (nature) have been accounted for through His ‘grace’, which is “what God does in relation to the world, both providentially and redemptively” (Chirico, 2003:219). Nature and grace are therefore elements having a “particularly anthropological thrust” (Chirico, 2003:220). De Chirico (2003:220) believes that this nature-grace correlation has been more comprehensively reflected upon in Roman Catholicism than in Protestantism, which has “neglected” it. Here again, Chirico’s conclusion is atomistic as he does not furnish enough evidence to back his claim. In discussing the nature-grace motif, which in effect places emphasis on the ontological framework of Roman Catholicism articulations, Chirico (2003:224) prefers to follow a criterion that places it linearly between two poles, namely, “dualistic thinking and tendentially holistic thinking”.

Within this ontological spectrum, this scheme is based on the fundamental lines of neo-Thomism which constitutes a “two-tiered reality (*duplex ordo*)” whereby, in the first instance, nature which is seen as a lower state is autonomous and self-sufficient with regard to grace which is seen as a higher state (Chirico, 2003:224). Here, grace is envisaged as the “*superadditus*” (superadded) gift to nature, thereby causing nature, at least insofar as humanity is concerned, to be “elevated” to a “superior” level of existence which corresponds to the “*visio beatifica*” (Chirico, 2003:224). He adds further that in view of the sharp distinction between these two orders, this “typology is characterized by a thoroughgoing extrinsicism, as if, at least potentially, they could function independently” (Chirico, 2003:224). In the second instance, the nature-grace motif has been “argued for in terms of a reciprocal relation between nature and grace, as if the world and the elevating operations of divine dealings with it were part of the same, though composite, order of reality” (Chirico, 2003:224). Henri de Lubac gave this dichotomous “two-tier reality”, which allowed for much of the 20th century rethinking of the nature-grace motif, greater impetus in his work called

Surnaturel (1946). Chirico argues, that this motif reached its theological climax since de Lubac embarked on a holistic exploration of various theological strands instead of merely “restating the neo-Thomistic grid” (Chirico, 2003:224).

In *Surnaturel*, grace is depicted as “immanent to nature whereas nature is seen as interspersed with grace” (Chirico, 2003:225). This view, argued by Chirico as holistic in its approach, predicates that the “notion of *natura pura* is categorically rejected” since nature cannot be seen as “mere nature” but must always be seen as “graced nature” (Chirico, 2003:225). Furthermore, Chirico argues that de Lubac’s *théologie à deux étages* (1996) offers a theological framework “capable of accounting for the horns” of the “dilemma” of the nature-grace motif: “a dynamic understanding of nature in which grace is not a superimposed factor together with the safeguarding of the gratuity of grace or, to put it differently, both an in-built, natural desire of creation for grace and a supernatural gift” Chirico, 2003:225). Rahner (1963:15) conveys the Roman Catholic perspective as follows: “the grace of God no longer comes (when it does come), steeply on high, from a God absolutely transcending the world, in a manner that is without history, purely episodic; it is permanently in the world in tangible historical form, established in the flesh of Christ as part of the world, of humanity and of its very history” (Chirico, 2003:225).

In keeping within the ontological Roman Catholic historical framework and development but offering a different perspective, Chirico (2003:225-226) alludes to the “essentialist and personalist or existentialist approaches to the nature-grace debate. Firstly, nature and grace have been viewed in terms of “essence as if they were static substances and abstract objects”. Of course, this thinking resembled the “broad patristic tradition” inherent within Roman Catholicism (Chirico, 2003: 225). Gelpi (2001:3), in exploring the Graeco-Roman philosophical influences on the “Christian reflection” of nature and grace, alludes to an “essence fallacy” which perceived conceptualizations of nature and grace as “objects of thought rather than as modes of perceiving the realities and actualities which the human mind knows”. Chirico (2003:226) argues that the perceptions on *natura pura* is one example, which with all of its “abstractness and lack of reality, was partly generated by this fallacy, which has also fostered a rather unrealistic way of theologizing in spite of all its interest for formal neatness”.

For de Chirico, historically in the “articulation of the nature-grace motif, ontological dualism and essentialism have overlapped in significant ways to the extent that when the former has been questioned the latter has also undergone severe criticism” (Chirico, 2003:226). Secondly, the nature-grace matrix has been “reformulated according to radically different conceptual patterns which have introduced an altogether new framework of reference in

which the motif is enveloped” (Chirico, 2003:226). In this regard, nature and grace have been interpreted in terms of the 20th century anthropological categories of personalist and existentialist thinking (Chirico, 2003:226). Here, de Chirico argues, the primary focus was personhood and existence instead of “the substance of an abstract reality dualistically envisioned and this considerable shift has been possible because of a change in the implied ontology” (Chirico, 2003:226). Evidencing the above, Chirico alludes to Karl Rahner’s “programmatic expression introducing a new approach to the old issue, i.e. *supernatural existentialia*” which “indicates in its language and in the way it highlights an existential concern another ontological vision compared to the essentialism of scholastic Thomism” (Chirico, 2003:226).

What one gathers from de Chirico’s constructive analysis is that the Roman Catholic theological system is unified and diversely comprehensive with a “consistent systemic self-awareness” in contrast to the “much less systemic awareness” of Evangelicalism, whose theology is not perceived as a system “by many Evangelical theologians themselves” (Chirico, 2003:307). De Chirico uses three approaches in positing an appraisal model by which Evangelicals can better assess the Roman Catholic system: the first, historical by supporting the feasibility of the category of system as applied to Roman Catholicism thereby relating its use to the hermeneutics of Abraham Kuyper in terms of Kuyper’s expressions in his *Lectures on Calvinism* at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1898; the second, relative in which he presents a few “contemporary catholic reflections” on the notion of “Catholicism” [synthetic aspect] which apparently points to “agreement with the category of system” and the third, a “constructive effort” which attempts to “delineate the theoretical thrust of the category of system with reference to Roman Catholicism” [analytical aspect] (Chirico, 2003:167). The relevant aspects of Kuyper’s hermeneutics, which have a bearing on Schillebeeckx’s work and for this dissertation as a whole, will follow here.

6.1.3 Abraham Kuyper

De Chirico (2003:167) admits that the systemic approach is not alien to Evangelicalism for it has been consistently used in that strand of Dutch Calvinism associated with Kuyper (1837-1920). Kuyper’s profoundly vast work has contributed significantly in shaping the hermeneutics of Neo-Calvinism (Chirico, 2003:167). Hesham (1998:11) argues that Kuyper’s *Lectures on Calvinism* can be viewed as the most “complete, cogent, and visionary expression” of the central themes of “Kuyperian Calvinism”. His *Lectures* are integral in any attempt to delineate an Evangelical perspective on Roman Catholicism (Chirico, 2003:167). Kuyper underscores his interpretation of Calvinistic thought as an “all embracing life-system”

or “worldview” and sees Roman Catholicism as “a competing life-system” (Chirico, 2003:169). Heselam (1998:255) summarized Kuyper’s key thoughts on Calvinism at Princeton as follows: Calvinism “represented a broad movement in society and culture, not restricted to the Church or doctrine; that it emanated outwards from its central source in the religious consciousness; that this religious consciousness represented the purest and most advanced stage in the development of religion; and that Calvinism offered the best prospects for the future of Christianity”. Whilst Kuyper does not give a thorough definition of his meaning of “life-system” which is a derivative English translation of the *Weltanschauung* (German), there are adequate nuances in his thought on *Weltanschauung* that make it possible to come to terms with “life-system” from a Kuyperian perspective (Chirico, 2003:171-172).

Wolters (1985:2) defines worldview as “the comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things”, which would be affirmed by Kuyper (Chirico, 2003:172). This broad and loose framework of “life-system” suits Kuyperian thinking and what becomes clear is that his notion of “life-system” is the “pre-scientific framework which informs ontology, epistemology, ethics, etc.,” and is therefore “responsible for their basic orientation” (Chirico, 2003:173). Kuyper argues for a “life-system” that needs not necessarily be theoretical but always practical since it is vital in “shaping behavior, choices and projects” (Chirico, 2003:173). Conclusively, for Kuyper, his translation of *Weltanschauung* hinges on “a single over-arching principle, which not only permeates the whole life-system but also every expression of it” (Chirico, 2003:173). Kuyper refers to the central core of the “life-system” as the “mother-principle”, “mother-thought”, “life-principle”, “well-defined principle” and “inflexible principle” (Chirico, 2003:173).

Applying this line of thought to Schillebeeckx, it is noted that his hermeneutics hinges on the continuing incarnation of Christ and sacramental grace. He undoubtedly argues for the central core of the “life-system” of the Roman Catholic Church. In Kuyperian thought therefore, can Schillebeeckx’s thesis in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* be regarded as a life-system? For Kuyper, a life-system must constitute the three essential ingredients expressed by him as the “three fundamental relations of all human life”, namely, one’s “relation to God”, one’s “relation to man”, and one’s “relation to the world” (Chirico, 2003:175). Whilst Schillebeeckx’s is more ecclesiological in his thesis in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, he does, however, conclude [albeit without a comprehensive exploration of one’s relation to man and to the world] that this ecclesial sacramental grace experienced by the believer must have a “redeeming presence” in one’s relationship with fellow man and the world (Schillebeeckx, 1963:208). In effect therefore it would be true to say that Schillebeeckx’s thesis is nothing more than a hermeneutical reflection of the Roman Catholic life-system. Put another way and drawing from Kuyper’s thought, one can affirm that Schillebeeckx’s sacramental principle is profiled in such a way

and to such an extent, that it actually “determines the whole framework” of the Roman Catholic system (Chirico, 2003:174).

In this regard, Kuyper, in comparing and contrasting Luther’s “special-soteriological principle of a justifying faith” and Calvin’s “general cosmological principle of the sovereignty of God”, alludes to their “starting point” within their primary “reformatory principle” which for Luther was “subjective” and “anthropological” and for Calvin was “objective” and “cosmological” (Chirico, 2003:174). Since Schillebeeckx’s starting point was his notion of the sacramentality of the Church within the Roman Catholic principle of the Church as the continuing incarnation of Christ, it is argued in this dissertation that his starting point was purely subjective. Interesting to note in this regard is Cooper’s argument that Schillebeeckx “has never written a theological anthropology” (Cooper, 2009: ix). Chirico (2003:175) concludes that Kuyper’s contributions and conceptualizations regarding the category of life-system is “on the whole, as it is chiefly applied to Calvinism, while involving some linguistic ambiguity and a lack of semantic precision, a penetrating interpretative tool which could help to form the basis for an Evangelical hermeneutic of Roman Catholicism”. Kuyper’s category of life-system is indeed a significant contributive interpretative key for Schillebeeckx’s work too.

6.1.4 Gerrit Berkouwer

Berkouwer, an Evangelical Dutch Reformed theologian, is well known for his eighteen volumes of *Studies in Dogmatics*. A theologian strongly committed to Reformed confessionalism, Berkouwer’s work covers the time span before and the beginning of Vatican II (Chirico, 2003:51). Berkouwer’s two works on Roman Catholicism, namely, *Conflict with Rome* (1948) and *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism* (1965) are significant theological discourses on the dialogue between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Whilst one notes that in his writings are definitive references to Roman Catholic authorship or teaching, it is significant that one views this element within his broad spectrum of “dogmatic, biblical and historical *loci* of interest” otherwise one cannot readily understand theology (Chirico 2003:51). Berkouwer (1958:12) describes the primary issue of conflict between Roman Catholicism and the Reformation as the “struggle for the gospel of free sovereign grace”. He asserts that this historical conflict still remains the problem of division between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism (Chirico, 2003:53).

Two influences shape his apologetics here: Firstly, his correlative approach stems from “continuity with his Dutch neo-Calvinistic tradition which, mainly through the works of Abraham Kuyper, developed a consistent approach to contemporary worldviews competing with Calvinism in terms of the concept of ‘antithesis’” (Chirico, 2003:53). Following from this

“antithetical thrust of Calvinism”, the “clashes” between the various worldviews were not explained “on the basis of sheer cultural, historical, or social dynamics; rather, their opposing pre-suppositional matrices were always and effectually operating in their outworking” (Chirico, 2003:53). Secondly, Berkouwer’s in-depth study of Barth, published in 1954 called *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, had a profound effect on his dealing with the “theological and confessional framework” of the Roman Catholic Church (Chirico, 2003:54). He argues that the *analogia entis* (analogy of being), which lies at the very heart of Roman Catholicism, was the central point of Barth’s polemic (Chirico, 2003:54). On this “onto-theological postulate” which permeates the entire systemic theological structure of Roman Catholicism, “the resemblance with Berkouwer’s own approach is apparent” (Chirico, 2003:54).

The Roman Catholic ecclesiological self-understanding as being the continuation of the incarnation of Christ and that the Church is therefore the sacrament of the risen Christ, are points of contention for Berkouwer. He refers to this conceptualization as the “identity-view” inasmuch as an “ontical identity” between Christ and the Church is given an “a priori character” that ultimately secures the stability of the Church (Berkouwer, 1958:27, 28, 33). The Roman Catholic contention with the Reformation is at the very heart of the words “identity” versus “communion through the Word and the Spirit” (Berkouwer, 1958:24). He argues that this is only a “provisional reduction of the contrast in that it is the ecclesiological side” of the dispute which eventually is involved with “sin and grace, *corruptio naturae*, and the sovereign grace of God” (Berkouwer, 1958:73). Berkouwer tackles the “conflict of grace” in terms of “justification by faith” and concludes that the problem of Roman Catholicism’s doctrine of salvation is that it propagates the “reality of salvation” as being “*dependent* on human activity” and that this salvific “complement-scheme” that exists between the divine and human elements, “in spite of all the emphasis on divine grace”, is suggestive of the “Catholic synthesis” that shows the “irreligious nature of the Roman view of grace” (Berkouwer, 1958:76, 86, 89, 135, 138).

De Chirico (2003:56) recognizes that for Berkouwer the central issue is the doctrine of grace. His critique of Berkouwer’s thesis on grace is that it is not presented and discussed systematically nor is it methodologically coherent since there are “accumulating repetitions of the same assertion” and suggests that his method falls short of “building a cumulative argument”. To be fair to Berkouwer, de Chirico adds that he does correlate grace to the “question of freedom, sin and salvation in such a way as to suggest some corollary ramifications of the problem” (Chirico, 2003:57). De Chirico argues that whilst Berkouwer recognises the core issue of division between Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism and the need of pursuing a pathway that allows for an “integrated articulation” of the central

issue, he “stops at the threshold of it” (Chirico, 2003:57). De Chirico contends that Berkouwer’s “methodological and theological reductionism” is typical of “Protestant scholarship” and attributes his “clever intuition” as “inherited from his Dutch Neo-Calvinistic tradition and confirmed by his studies on Barth” (Chirico, 2003:57).

Furthermore de Chirico (2003:57) argues that Berkouwer does not “construe a definitive dogmatic case capable of encompassing the multi-dimensionality of the conflict”. In his final analysis of Berkouwer’s thesis, Chirico asserts that Berkouwer merely points to the various elements of the conflict and “engages in preliminary exercises towards it, yet fails to produce a comprehensive model of explanation completely freed from the limitations of being based on fragmentary insights” (Chirico, 2003:57). Applying the fundamental categories of Berkouwer’s exploration of the conflict of grace to that of Schillebeeckx’s sacramental grace would certainly be of intrinsic value for this dissertation since Berkouwer’s work does “enrich Evangelical theology in terms of providing a model of serious scholarship, fair interpretation of Roman Catholic sources, and passionate concern for the Gospel’s sake” (Chirico, 2003:65).

In considering Berkouwer’s works on Roman Catholicism in retrospect, it becomes evident that he has forged a closer link between *Recent Developments in Roman Catholic Thought* and *The Second Vatican Council and the New Catholicism* in terms of theological methodology and focus than what was evident between *The Conflict with Rome* and *Recent Developments in Roman Catholic Thought* (Chirico, 2003:60). Berkouwer (1965: 41-45) views the New Catholicism’s openness to revise the existing Catholic “historico-theological negative evaluation of the Reformation”, *inter alia*, as “qualified signals” of “the new interpretative phase” (Chirico: 2003:60-61). Berkouwer (1965: 57-88) concentrated his analysis of this phase in the areas of the “unchangeability and changeability” of the Roman Catholic doctrinal system. In his final analysis, Berkouwer concludes that the New Catholicism maintains the “*a priori* vision” of the “infallibility” of the RCC. However sincere this “interpretative phase” seemed to be Berkouwer (1965: 71) insinuates that it was nothing more than a “revived form of modernism” and a “masked version of revisionism”.

Ecclesiologically, the New Theology focused on the dynamics of the Church as pilgrim Church gathered as the “eschatological congregation” (Chirico: 2003: 62). The four traditional ecclesiological aspects of unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity are not merely descriptors of “what the Church *per se* is, but what the Church is *summoned to become*; the mystery of the Church is therefore *both gift and responsibility*” (Chirico, 2003:62). In the New Theology there is a “tension between the *already* and the *not yet*” which was previously seen as a “static perception of the Church’s prerogatives” (Chirico, 2003:62). Berkouwer admits

that finding theological consistency between the New Theology and the traditional Roman Catholic 'identity-view' is a huge hermeneutical task for the 'new interpretative phase' and problematic from a Protestant view (Chirico, 2003:62).

6.1.5 Cornelius Van Til

Frame (1993:162) regards van Til as "perhaps the most important Christian thinker since John Calvin" and Edgar (1991:3) views him as "one of the greatest apologists of our time". Edgar (1995:5-20) argues that van Til's apologetics is "*radical* because of its refusal of epistemological neutrality, *integral* because it involves a worldview, and *transcendental* because it evokes the importance of presuppositions" (Chirico, 2003: 65). Like Berkouwer, Van Til's theological thought draws from the Dutch Neo-Calvinistic tradition. He argues his apologetics in "systemic terms, that is, assuming that each Christian tradition implies a *Weltanschauung* forging all areas of life" (Chirico, 2003:67). Accordingly, the various "systems of thought are nothing but coherent expressions of a more or less integrated worldview stemming from a religious pre-theoretical core" (Chirico, 2003:67). An interesting note by de Chirico is that Van Til does not consider Eastern Orthodoxy in his works (Chirico, 2003:67). Apart from his leaning on the Neo-Calvinistic school, Van Til also applies the Kuyperian conceptualization of "antithesis" as posited by Machen (1923). This pervasive apologetical category in his writings and polemics meant that for Van Til, "all variety of Christian theisms" as well "all non-Christian configurations of thought, stand in antithetical relation with Reformed orthodoxy in that the opposition between them is traceable in their ultimate reference points which, in turn, shape their respective ontologies, epistemologies and ethics" (Chirico, 2003:67). In his exploration of this fundamental antithetical relation, Van Til has particularly considered Karl Barth and neo-orthodoxy, which he categorized as the "new modernism" (Chirico, 2003:67; Van Til, 1946, 1962).

Van Til (1969:175, 188, 192) argues that Roman Catholicism is a "synthesis" between the various non-Christian and Christian elements. This is echoed strongly in his conclusive claim that "Romanists mix a great deal of the clay of paganism with the iron of Christ" and "the concrete blocks may be those of Christianity, but the cement is nothing other than the sand of paganism" (Van Til, 1955: 221). De Chirico (2003:71) adds that this "composite and manifold essence" has resulted in "a religious framework in which a variety of dishomogeneous presuppositional features merge so as to form a newly constructed configuration of thought where they find theological citizenship". In effect, Van Til posits that Roman Catholicism is a "*deformation* of Christianity" since the form-matter scheme is "a synthesis of Aristotle plus Christ" (Van Til, 1955:71; 1969:175). Historically, it was Thomas

Aquinas who initially embraced Aristotelianism as part of the Christian faith and “Catholic Scholasticism which eventually promoted an unstable compromise between Christian theism and Greek philosophy” (Chirico, 2003:71).

Since Van Til posits that traditional Catholicism is Aristotle plus Christ, he is deliberate also about positing that “in modern Catholicism, the form-matter motif of Aristotelian derivation is superseded by the freedom-nature one championed by Kant” and that “the difference between the two lies in the scheme of thought and its main philosophical advocate, which acquire prominence in the process of synthesis” (Chirico, 2003:72). The modern Catholic Christ came to be “the Kant-Christ synthesis” effectively meaning that “the former Aristotle-Christ synthesis and the former Kant-Christ synthesis have joined hands to form the Aristotle-Kant-Christ synthesis” (Van Til, 1969:185, 192, 185). Van Til (1955:135) asserts that one “cannot start with Aristotle without eventually falling prey to Kant”. De Chirico (2003, 72) summarizes that “in this rather deterministic view, Van Til seems to be saying that once the Christian system has been affected by the infiltration of pagan elements it is forcedly subject to be always directed by the fundamental orientations imposed by the shifting trends of secular thought”. Whilst Van Til tests his critical approach through systemic “categorical analysis” and “apologetical exercises” within Roman Catholic epistemology, ontology, anthropology and ethics, he is aware that from a “systemic point of view the research on the Catholic synthesis could have been conducted on ‘every point of doctrine’ or ‘along the entire gamut of doctrinal expression’ without dispersing its focus into matters of fragmentary details” (Chirico, 2003:73).

Another crucial aspect of Van Til’s exploration is his treatment of the nature-grace motif in Roman Catholicism. He asserts that this scheme is representative of their “natural-supernatural theology” and posits that it is merely “an attempt to fit the god of Aristotle in its relationship to the world of space and time as it conceived by the philosopher to the God of Christianity and the creation He has made” (Van Til, 1964: 57). Frame (1995:267) asserts that in this regard Aquinas has superimposed “the Christian worldview on top of Aristotle’s scheme of abstract form and chaotic matter”. For Van Til, nature and grace are relationally “juxtaposed one to the other in order to retain both the freedom of man and the sovereignty of God as well as a rational relation between the two” and furthermore maintains that any autonomy of nature from God compromises the sovereignty of God (Van Til, 1964: 57). Interestingly he notes that this “extrinsic version” of the relationship between nature and grace does not pertain to von Balthasar and Küng since they work with “more dynamic categories” and “within the context of a more open system tending towards Barthian dialecticism” (Chirico, 2003:74).

In considering the anthropological emphases within the Roman Catholic system, Van Til argues that Roman Catholic anthropology is Aristotelian since “man needs God’s superadded grace more because of his finitude than because of his sin” (Chirico, 2003:75). Roman Catholicism, he argues, views the fall in terms of its “ethical rebellion” and it is less important “than man’s constitutive status in tracing the existential disturbance in human nature” (Chirico, 2003:75). He concludes that both Roman Catholicism and Aristotle share the same anthropological view that “man is made up, in part, of non-rational elements” (Van Til, 1976: 43) which are not part of his own making (Van Til, 1976: 43). He asserts that the Aristotle-Aquinas axis is indicative of man’s participation in “non-being as well as being” (Van Til, 1969: 160). Concerning sin “fallen man is therefore only partly guilty and only partly to blame” which is contrary to the Reformed anthropological emphasis of humanity’s total depravity and inexcusability (Van Til, 1955: 57). This being the case, Van Til asserts that the Roman Catholic doctrine of sin is “defective” since this doctrine impinges “on the whole Roman Catholic anthropology whose connotation is a biblically unwarranted optimism” (Chirico, 2003: 75).

Van Til also alludes to the “epistemological implications” attached to the traditional Roman Catholic position on “epistemological authority” (Chirico, 2003: 75). He argues against the notion that there is “a certain degree of autonomy granted to the realm of nature” (Chirico, 2003: 75). He posits that “if man is considered as an autonomous being in some respects he, and not God, will become the ultimate reference point of predication” with “intelligibility of the world and its comprehension” a possibility “without reference to God” (Chirico, 2003: 75). This being the case then “the decisive pre-supposition for all knowledge and life will not be God’s revelation in Christ through the Scriptures but human would-be autonomous reason, consciousness or experience” (Chirico, 2003: 75).

For Van Til, whilst the traditional Roman Catholic stance on epistemological authority does not readily accept this “radical secular assumption”, it does however, “tragically compromise the Christian and non-Christian views on the matter which are nothing but ‘mutually opposed systems’ ” (Chirico, 2003: 75; Van Til, 1969: 13, 168). Van Til argues further that “epistemological autonomy necessarily involves ethical autonomy” and that “in Roman Catholic theology man retains ethical ability as it were an irrevocable heritage of his metaphysical make-up” (Chirico, 2003:76). Within this framework of thought, the “Scholastic cardinal virtues become comprehensible to human intellect and practicable to human volition even a part of divine grace” (Chirico, 2003:76). Van Til (1955: 57) finally concludes “even the regenerate consciousness need not and cannot subject itself fully to Scripture”. He asserts, “Roman Catholics grant the Bible only a partial necessity, formal authority, opacified perspicuity and practical insufficiency” (Chirico, 2003:76; Van Til, 1969:156-168).

In considering Van Til's work with Schillebeeckx's thought on sacramental grace and sacramental encounter, it is perceived that Schillebeeckx who had a significant impact on Roman Catholicism catechism since Vatican II represents the underlying categorical framework of Catholicism which Van Til calls "synthesis" (Van Til, 1969:175, 188, 192). Schillebeeckx (1963:8-10) echoes the hermeneutics of Roman Catholicism in his departure of his thesis by alluding to humanity's creatureliness with its subsequent finitude. Van Til (1969:163) rightfully argues against this Roman Catholic position, which in essence asserts that man is not totally depraved and has the potential to work with God's grace towards final justification. Schillebeeckx's salvific hermeneutics has a categorical bent towards an ontological concept that views humanity as created and since this is so man requires added grace. He also holds the ethical concept that humanity, in view of its rebellion against God, requires forgiveness and sanctification through the Roman Catholic Church. This is contrary to the Reformed perspectives on salvation to which Van Til adheres.

6.1.6 Other Contemporary Evangelicals: David Wells, Donald Bloesch, Herbert Carson and John Stott

De Chirico includes some perspectives of these four significant contemporary scholars in his thesis albeit not exhaustive. They do however play a major role in the conversation on Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism. From within the American Evangelical scene and against the prevailing nuances of modernity, Wells is representative of rediscovering and redefining the identity of Evangelicalism. In his approach, he refuses "self-complacency and glorification" and adopts, on the one hand, a deeply introspective, "self-questioning, at times devastating, line of assessment" (Chirico, 2003:79). On the other hand, he researches Roman Catholicism as a "corollary field" since Vatican II (Chirico, 2003:79). Here, de Chirico (2003:79-80) considers three significant "poles" of Wells' exploration: firstly, the interpretative complexities raised from his study of Vatican II documents; secondly, the crucial theological "areas, issues and themes" that Roman Catholic theology is grappling with "in the aftermath" of Vatican II; and thirdly, "the issue regarding the presumptive delayed impact of Modernism on its theological achievements. Wells notes that there are varying hermeneutical positions concerning the conciliar documents, depicting a "sharp division between conservative and progressive theological wings" (Chirico, 2003:80). Two such examples would be the question of unlimited or limited inerrancy of Scripture and the other being the "blatant contrast between the fairly progressive thrust of *Lumen Gentium* and the substantial repudiation at its key points as expressed in the *Nota Explicative Praevia*" (Chirico, 2003:81). Where then would one locate Schillebeeckx? It seems quite clear that his hermeneutics on sacramental encounter and grace is tied up in the bundle of theological conservatism.

Whilst de Chirico (2003:82) admits that there are many hermeneutical tensions within Roman Catholic conciliar teaching, he does assert that there is adequate “cognitive equipment to locate different doctrinal poles within a wide enough synthesis in whose theological rationale contradictions can be reconciled”. He attributes this to the “absolutely fundamental aspect of the Roman Catholic genius” which he argues is “overlooked” in Wells’ critique (Chirico, 2003:82). Accusing Wells of applying the “typical old Protestant *aut-aut* mindset”, de Chirico claims that Wells has failed “to come to terms with the Roman Catholic well trained epistemological ability to deal with theological diversity in terms of *complexio oppositorum*” (Chirico, 2003:82).

On the subject of the nature-grace motif, Wells is mindful of the stance of the new theology within Roman Catholicism that has taken steps away from the dichotomic two-tiered view of reality predicated within its Thomistic tradition (Chirico, 2003:83). The new theology articulates the nature-grace correlation, that is, the relation between the natural and the supernatural, “as blended and intermingled in one another” (Wells, 1972:50). Viewed this way, the world must be seen as a “graced composite whole” with Wells (1972:52) noting further that “the prophet of this development was Teilhard de Chardin, but the most brilliant exponent is Karl Rahner”. This “onto-theological presupposition” means that the “sacred is found in the secular, Christ is *in* the world” (Wells, 1972:54). De Chirico (2003:83) adds that “according to Wells, this move does not mean an endorsement of ‘the new secular theology’; it is rather another instance of a juxtaposition of ideas within the conciliar documents”. De Chirico also affirms that Wells’ critique of the new theology concerning the nature-grace motif is “theologically telling” (Chirico, 2003:85). Wells argues that the new theology is one of “further refinement” rather than one of “substantial correction” (Chirico, 2003:85; Wells, 1978:161).

Whilst Wells rightfully maintains that there is continuity in the Roman Catholic framework of grace (Mariology, for example), he is also appreciative of the positive gains of the new theology in terms of a “renewed emphasis on scriptural teaching, God’s initiative in grace, the less wooden functioning of the sacraments, the subjective side of the Christian life, and the reinterpretation of the *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* formula” (Chirico, 2003:85; Wells, 1978:154-155). In the light of Wells’ assessment then, it is clear that Schillebeeckx presents his hermeneutics within Roman Catholic continuity and fosters a rather “wooden functioning” of the sacraments. Alluding to Aquinas’ view that the “faith and devotion of the whole Church is operative in the sacraments”, Schillebeeckx argues that the “sacramental rite is indeed an act of Christ together with his mystical body; an act of Christ in and through the Church. The faith and devotion of all who are united with Christ in grace, as a participation in the fullness of Christ, contributes to the fullness of the sacrament” (Schillebeeckx, 1963: 103-104). In

Schillebeeckx's work there is no substantial theological corrective, rather one finds a continued endorsement of Roman Catholic doctrinal rigidity which cannot be construed as "theologically telling", at least for the purposes of this research thesis.

Donald Bloesch, in his investigation of Evangelical identity, seeks out a renewed awareness of the primary tenets of the Christian faith. He does this against the backdrop of his Barthian influence and engenders the exploration of the "co-fundamental type" within Roman Catholicism "whose main concerns are the institution and the rites of the church in the light of her historico-theological tradition, the universality of grace and the community of faith, the incarnation and the body of Christ, and the means of grace" (Chirico, 2003:92-93; Bloesch, 1978:9-10). In his two volumes on the "Essentials of Evangelical Theology", Bloesch seeks a "viable alternative beyond the perilous liberal drift and the stifling fundamentalist position" (Chirico, 2003:91). Bloesch (1979:278; 1978:9-10) argues that the "Catholic substance" viewed in terms of "continuity with the tradition of the whole church, including its sacramental side" must be constitutively integrated with the "Protestant principle". The outcome of this argument being that the "evangelical message" and the "catholic heritage" are both indispensable for a "biblical, ecumenical church" (Bloesch, 1978:12). Put another way, Bloesch sees the integration or "organic symbiosis" of the typologies "Catholic" and "Evangelical" as integral for the whole of Christianity so that he can arrive at his notion of "catholic evangelicalism" (Bloesch, 1978:12; Chirico, 2003:93). His notion affirms a strong emphasis on "Evangelical essentials within the context of Catholic faith" (Chirico, 2003:93; Bloesch, 1983:48-52).

Bloesch also alludes to Luther and Calvin as historic players for this notion, arguing that "they sought the reform of the Catholic Church, not the creation of a sect divorced from catholic tradition" (Bloesch, 1983:165). They "sought to stand in the historic tradition of the Roman church and appealed to many of the church fathers as well as Scripture" (Bloesch, 1978:12). He also lists other exponents of "catholic evangelicalism" such as Count von Zinzendorf, Peter Forsythe, John Nevin, Nathan Söderblom, Wilhelm Löhe, Daniel Jenkins, and Thomas Torrance (Bloesch, 1978:12; 1979:296). It must be noted however that in championing the notion of "catholic evangelicalism", Bloesch is well aware of and does not overlook the Evangelical critique of the Roman Catholic presumptive lapses ("Romanizing and Latinizing tendencies") into "sacramentalism and sacerdotalism", "ecclesiasticism" and "traditionalism" (Bloesch, 1979:279, 282; 1983:51). In relation to sacramentalism, Bloesch (2002:177) argues that Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry - "BEM rightly affirms the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but it needs to warn against focusing on the outward signs rather than on the transcendent reality to which the signs point".

Herbert Carson's works epitomize that strand of theology that is firmly rooted in the "non-conformist wing of Evangelicalism" (Chirico, 2003:102). In his exploration of Roman Catholicism, Carson concludes that a "serious distortion of the Gospel is at stake in the doctrinal system constructed by the Roman Church" and he calls on Evangelicals to point out these theological deformations "by means of engaging in honest discussion with Roman Catholics at any level" (Chirico, 2003:104). In spite of all the recent magisterial pronouncements shaped by *aggiornamento*, Carson is prone to argue that the Roman Church is still in continuity with the Council of Trent (Carson, 1996:12). John Stott, like Carson, affirms that although there have been new promises since Vatican II there are still the loud echoes of Tridentine pronouncements. He asserts that "Vatican II has so let Scripture loose in the Church that no man can guess what the final result may be" (Stott, 1986:23). Because the Roman Catholic Church is so entrenched in tradition and is deemed to have "a biblical yeast at work in her ancient dough, whose full fermentation she may find herself unable to stop", Stott calls on the Roman church to experience "a thoroughgoing biblical reformation" which would include its overarching sacramental structure (Stott, 1970:23, 80).

To bring de Chirico's exploration to a conclusion, it is his thesis that Roman Catholicism has a more "consistent systemic self-awareness" than Evangelicalism (Chirico, 2003:307). Grounding a most plausible Evangelical systemic approach to Roman Catholicism on the works of Abraham Kuyper, de Chirico argues that "it is in the Reformed tradition within Evangelicalism that more articulated forms of systemic self-awareness are to be found and it is within this tradition that further work needs to be done in order to refine an even more coherent systemic understanding of Roman Catholicism" (Chirico, 2003:307). In his evaluation, de Chirico is not surprised to find the "most plausible attempts to elaborate a systemic analysis of post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism in contemporary Reformed theologians like Gerrit Berkouwer, Cornelius Van Til and David Wells" (Chirico, 2003:307). He argues that any attempt in this field of theological and ecclesiological systemic exploration must be entrenched in the roots of the Reformation as articulated within the "systemic awareness of the Reformed tradition" (Chirico, 2003:308).

6.1.7 John Calvin

Whilst "Luther had defined the church in terms of the ministry of the Word of God, which was of little help in distinguishing the magisterial Reformation from the catholic position on the one hand and the position of the radicals on the other, Calvin, whilst retaining an emphasis on the ministry of the Word of God, insisted that this same Word of God specified one

particular form of government” (McGrath, 1993:195). Calvin, in making this bold new hermeneutical claim, developed “a criterion by which to judge – and find wanting – his catholic and radical opponents. Where Luther was vague, Calvin was precise” (McGrath, 1993:195). Calvin (1960:24-25) defines the primary marks of the church as “the pure preaching of God’s Word and the lawful administration of the sacraments”. He argued that “Catholicity is grounded in Christ” and [ecclesial] “unity is given through the Spirit” and both are essential for the church to be one (Mannion and Borght, 2011:125). He projects his claim this way: “there could not be two or three churches unless Christ be torn asunder” (Calvin, Institutes, IV.1.2, 2:1014). However, he argued strongly against the notion that “ecclesial unity is established by visible allegiance to Rome” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:125). Catholicity as a theological reality of the true church “is not identified by external indicators, but by the internal working of the Spirit in the faithful through the Word, Font and Table” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:125). Zachman (2007: 403) also agrees with Calvin’s thought here: “The form of the church is not to be found in the splendour of the Roman episcopacy but rather in the Word and the sacraments; and this form is at times not seen in the world”.

Schillebeeckx argues that whilst Calvinistic sacramental terminology is “superficially similar” to Catholicism, there is however a “world of difference” between Calvinistic and Catholic interpretations concerning the “sacraments containing and really giving grace” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:185). He asserts that the “Protestant notion of the sacraments can be understood only in the light of the peculiarly Protestant theology of the Covenant” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:185). For Calvin, the sacraments were more than “mere signs” as espoused by Zwingli since sacraments have a saving worth and reality “beyond the psychological force of their value as signs: they are full of power for the faith” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:186-187). Effectively then, in Calvinistic thought, sacrament and faith cannot be disjoined – “they are constituted by the divine promise precisely in their relation to each other” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:187). The benchmark of the Protestant sacramental understanding lies in the preaching of the Word as primary with the sacraments underscoring the message of the preaching (Schillebeeckx, 1963:185). Schillebeeckx (1963:6) takes issue with this line of thought, arguing that the sacraments are the only proper human mode of encounter with God. He sarcastically alludes to what he interprets as the Protestant hermeneutic of grace as “irresistible, its movement cannot be checked by the free will of man” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:187). He alludes to Berkouwer as a proponent of this view: “[A sacrament] has meaning only in relation to the word of promise, and so it can enter the personal sphere of God’s addressing us in promise which at the same time makes room for a relationship in which subjectivity is not opposed to objectivity, but in which the subjectivity of

faith rests in the Word of God” (De Sacramentum, 91; Schillebeeckx, 1963:187). Berkouwer is theologically sound, however it is this very thrust that Schillebeeckx is at pains with.

Joshua Ralston in his publication entitled, *Preaching makes the Church: Recovering a Missing Ecclesial Mark*, posits that Calvin’s polemic, in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church, emphasized Word and sacrament so that the reform of the church may be in accordance with the Gospel (Mannion and Borght, 2011:126). He alludes to Douglass (2004:306) who argues that Calvin’s development and formulation of the marks of the church “permit a Christian to find the church of Jesus Christ under many forms or structures”. These marks of the church are not intended in any way to function as dividing boundaries between Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox churches (Mannion and Borght, 2011:126). Small (2003:312) posits that Calvin’s marks of the church “are better understood as directional signs that point to the core of faithful church life”. Whilst Calvin believed that the sixteenth century Roman Catholic Church “betrayed the Word and the sacraments” he however attests that the “true church has been hidden within the Roman Catholic Church” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:126). Applying Calvin’s injunction of Word and sacraments: “whenever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists” it becomes clear, at least for Calvinists, that “no church can be written off completely” (Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.9, 1023; Mannion and Borght, 2011:126). However, there is much needed exploration and research, “engagement and debate on the fundamental issues of sacramental theology and the preaching that divide Christ’s one church” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:126).

Rodney Peterson in his publication entitled, *The Spirit, The Church and The Decade to Overcome Violence: Trajectories in Reformed and Orthodox Theology*, reflects upon both Orthodox and Reformed Eucharistic theologies with the aim of “fostering theological clarity” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204). He argues that for much of the Reformed tradition, Calvin’s theology has been “foundational, if not always determinative” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204). He asserts further that Calvin’s Eucharistic hermeneutic in terms of “spiritual depth” found in the Eucharist has significant “marks of identity” with that of Eastern Orthodoxy: “While the Reformed perspective on the Eucharist is not unified, moving from a mnemonic perspective (Zwingli) to one of deep spiritual presence (Bucer), Calvin’s view of the presence of the Spirit in the Lord’s Supper and of how the Spirit is conveyed to us provides an important point of departure for ecumenical dialogue. It is developed in such a way as to promise union with Christ, spiritual presence and a depth of participation seen in the mystery of Christ’s Body” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204). In developing his Eucharistic theology as “spiritual participation”, Calvin leaned on some Orthodox theologians like John

Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem, Basil of Caesarea, the Cappadocians and John of Damascus (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204).

Horton (2008) in his work posits that the “essence-energies” distinction whereby “God interact with God’s creatures” developed within Eastern Orthodoxy, enhances the Reformed hermeneutics of covenant whereby “God has chosen to interact with humanity” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204). Here, substance is given to the notion that “Eucharistic remembrance is not merely a repetition or mnemonic reality but a manifestation of the whole of Christ to the whole people of God. The Lord’s Supper does not remember, complete or extend Christ’s work; rather, all was accomplished and is exemplified in it” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204). In this instance, through the Eucharist we “see our access to the Father, find communion in the Spirit and anticipate the fullness of life in the kingdom” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204-205).

Petersen claims that Calvin’s ecclesiology “comports” with the communion theology of twentieth century Eastern Orthodoxy albeit with “certain tensions” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:205). He concludes that:

While Orthodoxy affirms the real, physical presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, Orthodoxy refrains from explaining how this happens. For example, it affirms mystery rather than making appeal to a doctrine of transubstantiation (Roman Catholic), consubstantiation (Lutheranism) or an array of theories (Anglicanism within one ecclesial tradition or in the diverse churches of the Reformed tradition). The baptized participant in the Eucharist is fully a member of the communion, marking a point of sacramental regeneration that stands in tension with normative practice in the Reformed churches (Mannion and Borght, 2011:205).

This is an interesting conclusion and the ‘tension’ is no doubt one that invites further contemporary theological reflection and engagement. In the light of this, it must be asked, “What was Calvin’s and what is the Reformed church’s theological position concerning sacramental grace?” In an article published in *The Calvinist International* (14 March 2013) and entitled, *The Sacraments do not Confer Grace*, one finds a definitive stance on this issue:

Despite the strong re-affirmation of sacramental grace in Reformed theology over the last few decades, there is a curious feature in the history of Reformed theology when it comes to the use of the expression ‘to confer grace’. Among the 16th and 17th century Reformed theologians, the sacraments are overwhelmingly affirmed

as genuine instruments of the Holy Spirit, and the claim is consistently maintained that there is a real exhibition of Jesus Christ through the sacramental union, and yet the Reformed have generally not approved of saying that the sacraments 'confer grace'.

The Westminster Confession of Faith gives a determinative position of the Reformed view: Grace is "*exhibited* in or by the sacraments" but "not *conferred* by any power in them" (WCF, 27.3). "This would seem to be following in the tradition of rejecting the expression 'confer' with regard to sacramental grace. The term 'exhibit' is employed, which shows the influence of Calvin over Bullinger, but just as Calvin had done, the Westminster Confession seems to downplay or reject the term 'confer'" (The Calvinist International, 14 March 2013). Calvin's opposition to the notion of the sacraments conferring grace is seen in his "comments in letters or conciliatory statements written to Zwinglians, especially to Heinrich Bullinger. This is then a part of the tricky business of navigating inter-Reformational debates. The use of 'sacrament' is thus in reference to the visible sign only, and the position being refuted is an *ex opere operato* view in which the visible sign always bestows grace from its own working and power" (The Calvinist International, 14 March 2013).

6.1.8 Jürgen Moltmann

To conclude this chapter, some relevant aspects of Moltmann's work in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* will be considered. These aspects are "sacramental identification"; "The sending of the Spirit as the sacrament of the kingdom"; and the Lord's Supper as the "sign of remembered hope". Before turning to any one of these crucial aspects, it is worth noting again that for Moltmann, the Roman Catholic view (and the one espoused by Schillebeeckx) of the church as the continuing incarnation of Christ is a problematic one. Moltmann (1977:73) sees the difficulty in capturing "the necessary difference between the incarnation of the Logos and Christ's indwelling in his church through the Spirit". He rightly argues against the Catholic Augustinian notion that "Christ can only be called the *totus Christus* together with the church" and further asserts that the "Protestant inclination to resolve ecclesiology in Christology corresponds to the opposite inclination on the Catholic side" (Moltmann, 1977:72). His eschatological ecclesiological orientation serves as the basis for his thesis whereby the church is the messianic community or eschatological community of faith. He entrenches his polemic that in view of the "eschatological person of Christ", the church cannot primarily "live from the past", its existence is one of "present liberation" through the Spirit of Christ – a trajectory between "remembrance" of the history of Jesus and the "hope of his kingdom" (Moltmann, 1977:75).

The remembrance of the historical earthly mission of Jesus culminating in his death, resurrection and ascension with the promise of his messianic or eschatological return is the “past made present” which Moltmann terms as “remembrance in the mode of hope” and “hope in the mode of remembrance” (Moltmann, 1977:75). In addressing the theological tensions concerning “the place of the Church in the presence of Christ”, Moltmann (1977:122) argues that one “cannot start from the concept of the church in order to discover the happening of Christ’s presence”; one has to “start from the event of Christ’s presence in order to find the church”. In the light of this he advocates that any discussion on this matter must “start from the proposition: *ubi Christus – ibi ecclesia*” which is in contrast to the thought of Ambrose, *ubi petrus, ibi ecclesia* (Moltmann, 1977:122).

Moltmann (1977:122) asks, “Where, then, is Christ present?” His response is that “Christ, as the crucified and risen one, is only where he promised to be present – there he is truly present” (Moltmann, 1977:122). Here one must distinguish between the promises of the presence of Christ “in something other than himself”, and the promises of the presence of Christ “through himself”; “between the identifications according to which he is to be expected in something else, and his own identity, according to which he himself is to be expected” (Moltmann, 1977:122-123). Stemming from this hermeneutical proposition, *ubi Christus – ibi ecclesia*, the existence of the church and its *modus operandi* finds unity in itself and mediates to others, “by virtue of the identifying assurance” of Christ, the following three modes of the “promised presence” of Christ: (1) “Christ is present in the apostolate, in the sacraments, and in the fellowship of the brethren”; (2) “Christ is present in ‘the least of the brethren’”; (3) “Christ is present as his own self in his parousia” (Moltmann, 1977:123). Rather than opt for Schillebeeckx’s Catholic view of the continuing incarnation of Christ in the Church, Moltmann is content to speak of the continuing promised presence of Christ through his Spirit in the church.

Moltmann (1977:20) touches on the generally perceived problem of ecclesiology as “being the difference between faith and experience”. The two points of departure for ecclesiology, namely, “from above” and “from below” does cause tensions in coming to terms with the essence and form of the church, especially when the different aspects “reveal contradictions” (Moltmann, 1977:21). “From above” views the church as the “object of faith” within the “framework of the confession of the triune God in the third article of the creed” and “from below” views the church as “one empirical object among others, and then direct its thinking upwards in order to enquire into the theological significance of this object” (Moltmann, 1977:21). Moltmann (1977:22) then offers three solutions to bring theological clarity to these contradictions: Firstly, by applying the “notion of paradoxical identity”, he argues that “the church is ‘at the same time’ the object of faith and the object of empiricism”. Bultmann

(1957:154) is a proponent of this thought arguing that Christian existence, including its social and psychological facets, is 'at the same time' historical (emanating from the cross as historical power) and eschatological saving event. Secondly, by applying the "notion of anticipation", he argues that "the church is 'at the same time' the object of hope and the object of experience" implying that the "future element of the church's hope brings the actual fact of its experience into the process of becoming" (Moltmann, 1977:25). Within this relationship of hope and experience the nature of the church is viewed "teleologically" (Moltmann, 1977:25).

A third solution offered by Moltmann is that of "sacramental thinking" which "links together the remembrance of Christ with the hope of glory in the present tokens of liberating and uniting grace. The eschatological and the present, the particular and the universal, the heavenly and the earthly come together symbolically in the Gospel and in the Eucharist" (Moltmann, 1977:26). The "history of Christ" as the "definite sacramental event" cannot be "created" nor "calculated" and it is this sacramental event which defines the church, that is, "the preaching of the Word", "the presence of Christ's coming in the bread and wine", and "the coming of the Spirit in baptism" (Moltmann, 1977:27). Conclusively then, for Moltmann, "the solution of the problem of faith and experience, hope and reality, the nature and form of the church, has to be looked for in *pneumatology*" (Moltmann, 1977:27-28).

"Remembrance" of Christ crucified and resurrected as well as the subsequent eschatological hope that this brings is termed "the power of the Holy Spirit" (Moltmann, 1977:197). Faith does not create Jesus as the Christ; rather Jesus as the Christ creates faith and "it is not hope that makes the future into God's future; it is this future that wakens hope" meaning that "faith in Christ and hope for the kingdom are due to the presence of God in the Spirit" (Moltmann, 1977:197). The church becomes understandable as the "messianic fellowship" through the "processes and experiences" depicted by the Holy Spirit (Moltmann, 1977:198). Moltmann argues that these "processes and experiences" are to be seen in a twofold manner: firstly, as the "means of salvation" and secondly, as the "charismata" (Moltmann, 1977:198). As "means of salvation" they are evident in "proclamation, baptism, the Lord's Supper, worship, prayer, acts of blessing, and the way in which individual and fellowship live"; as "charismata" they are "the ministries, gifts and tasks (offices)" in the messianic fellowship (Moltmann, 1977:198). He concludes that these "means of salvation" and "charismata" are "mediations" and "powers" of the Spirit that "lead the church beyond itself, out into the suffering of the world and into the divine future" (Moltmann, 1977:198).

The church, viewed in Moltmann's hermeneutic, means that the "sending of the Spirit" must be seen as the "sacrament of the Kingdom" (Moltmann, 1977:199). Moltmann (1977: 200-

201) alludes to Rahner (the church as “the fundamental sacrament of salvation”) and Barth (the incarnation as “the great Christian mystery or sacrament”). Whilst Rahner starts with the Church as the “the fundamental sacrament of salvation” which in turn points to the “primal sacrament” of God in Christ, Barth starts with Christ as the “primal sacrament” thus maintaining “the qualitative priority of Christ before his church through the exclusively Christological use of the word sacrament, and relates the attestations through the word, baptism and the Lord’s supper just as exclusively to God’s promise of himself in Christ” (Moltmann, 1977:201). For Moltmann, whilst this Christological turn on both sides clarifies the “uniform origin and unique content” of the church’s sacraments, it still “leaves untouched the question why the attestation of Christ and the mediation of salvation has to take these precise forms” (Moltmann, 1977:202). Moltmann then offers the solution of “the sending of the Holy Spirit as the Sacrament of the Kingdom”: “Granted the remaining difference in Protestant-Catholic convergence – Christ as the exclusive sacrament of God, or the church as the fundamental sacrament and Christ as the primal sacrament – could this not be overcome through the Trinitarian understanding of the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit as the sacrament?” (Moltmann, 1977:202).

Moltmann (1977: 243) sees baptism as the “eschatological *sign of starting out*, valid once and for all” and participation in the Lord’s Supper as the “eschatological *sign of being on the way*. If baptism is the unique *sign of grace*, then the Lord’s supper must be understood as the repeatable *sign of hope*”. The Lord’s Supper is “the sign of remembered hope” in that the “history of Christ” is “present in the act of remembrance”; however, “it is not the historical remembrance as such which provides the foundation of the Lord’s Supper, but the presence of the crucified one in the Spirit of the resurrection” (Moltmann, 1977: 246-250). Conclusively then for Moltmann, as opposed to Schillebeeckx, the Lord’s Supper is an “outward sign of our spiritual communion with Christ” which is Zwinglian. However, he asserted that Zwingli’s “Platonic concept of spirit hindered him from perceiving the presence of the crucified one in the Spirit of the resurrection” (Moltmann, 1977:252).

This chapter has considered some significant discussion from an Evangelical perspective concerning ecclesiological sacramental positions. These positions reflect the antithesis of Schillebeeckx’s thesis. On the whole, I have attempted in all the previous chapters to compile critically the relevant scholarship on this research project, covering both Roman Catholic and Protestant elements. Chapter seven will hone the research in a more nuanced way so that the intended reflections, challenges and proposal may be presented for an alternative, if not renewed, Protestant Evangelical ecclesiology.

CHAPTER 7:
**THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS,
CHALLENGES AND PROPOSAL**

This chapter will attempt to engage with the views presented in the previous chapters and to present a systematic critical examination of the inconsistencies found in Schillebeeckx's sacramental theological-ecclesiological hermeneutics as presented in his work, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*. This study argues against Schillebeeckx's notion of sacramental grace and his depiction of the church as the continuing incarnation of Christ, which attributes to the church a wholly Roman Catholic understanding of her true nature, essence and form. This study attempts here to elucidate his inconsistencies by testing his notion of sacramental ecclesiology within the contemporary systematic and ecclesiological Protestant framework, more specifically that of Protestant Evangelicalism. In following this approach, this study hopes to mount some critical questions and offer a proposal for an alternative, if not renewed, understanding of church and sacraments. We will present a brief recap of the critical issues involved here.

Schillebeeckx perceives the *sacramental mystery* of the church to be realized in working union between the divine and human elements in the church, specifically in the sacraments and more pointedly in the Eucharist. Effectively, Schillebeeckx's work is but a subsidiary of the Roman Catholic system. This study has attempted to draw intrinsic value concerning the essence of the church and sacraments: (1) we explored Schillebeeckx's subsidiary hermeneutics as a 'foil' against which to develop an alternative, if not renewed, ecclesiology, more amenable to Protestant Evangelicals, and (2) we engaged Schillebeeckx's views with some significant conversation partners, both Roman Catholic and Protestants. This approach has subjected, and will subject, this study's criticism within a sympathetic yet critical framework of informed dialogue.

It is worth noting again Dulles' argument "that a balanced theology of the Church must find a way of incorporating the major affirmations of each ecclesiological type" (Dulles, 1987:13). According to Dulles (1987:18), since we are involved in the Church, we cannot fully objectify it; we can only know the Church through inter-subjectivity. Since the union of people (human) with Christ (divine) is evident in the Church, it must be that the *mystery* lies in "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Since the Church is characterized by its mysterious nature

(connaturality), this does have significant implications for methodology for “it rules out the possibility of proceeding from clear and univocal concepts” (Dulles, 1987:18). For Dulles (1987:18), human communion with Christ is mystical and therefore conceptualizations drawn from the realities we observe in our objective world cannot readily or directly be applied to this mystery of human communion with God in Christ. Whereas Dulles places a more nuanced, objective emphasis on Christ as the mystery in the believer, Schillebeeckx is content to place a more univocal subjective emphasis on the mysterious outworking of the sacraments themselves as bestowing grace.

Schillebeeckx (1963:62) posits that the sacraments are ‘mediatory’ between Christ and the community of the faithful and therefore must be viewed within its threefold historical orientation, namely, *anamnesis*, *visible affirmation* and *eschatological salvation*. Here he argues that the sacraments do not merely fill the memorial gap between the historical Christ [the event of the cross] and our contemporary context but they bring to us the immediate encounter with the risen Christ in the Church, which marks the “beginning of eschatological salvation on earth” (Schillebeeckx, 1963: 62-63). The remaining ecclesiological problem in Schillebeeckx’s hermeneutics is that the Church and sacraments bestow grace and are salvific in nature. Furthermore, it is difficult to maintain Schillebeeckx’s thesis of the Church as sacramental mystery if we consider Paul’s basic definition of *mysterion*. These primary issues need to be deconstructed here by applying a methodological and theological-ecclesiological reductionism to Schillebeeckx’s work. To achieve this end, this chapter intends to firstly, cement the crucial theological-ecclesiological elements within Protestant Evangelical ecclesiology. This will trace some relevant historical Reformation as well as subsequent Protestant Evangelical insights; secondly, this chapter intends to reflect on the Protestant Evangelical notion of ‘sacramental thinking’ against the backdrop of Schillebeeckx’s argument that the sacraments actually bestow grace; thirdly, this chapter intends to reflect on Christ’s presence in the church in the light of the considerable difficulties posed by Schillebeeckx’s argument of “continuing incarnation”; and fourthly, to present some re-appropriations and a proposal for an alternative, if not renewed, ecclesiology for Protestant Evangelicalism. Hopefully, this approach will bring about a more nuanced systemic awareness of our own Protestant hermeneutics and contribute to a systematic ecclesiological-theological unity albeit in diversity. It is to this task that this chapter now embarks upon.

7.1 CRUCIAL ELEMENTS IN PROTESTANT EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

One of the principal factors that started Protestantism as a counter Christian movement to Roman Catholicism was the revolt against the Catholic Church's monopoly of the Holy Spirit whom, the Roman Catholic Church had claimed, had given them "special guidance" so much so that individualism was downplayed (Quick, 1924:6). For the Protestants, individualism – as one experiencing God in Christ through the Spirit as revealed in Scripture and thereby expressed in one's own experience, was imperative as a foundational reality for faith. Protestants argued that "the Holy Spirit is primarily the Inspirer of the individual soul and conscience, not of the Christian community as such" (Quick, 1924:6-7). "Typical Protestants", as referred to by Quick, argued further that the Roman Catholic Church "should not be regarded as belonging to the primary essence of the Christian Gospel at all" (Quick, 1924:6-7). Quick here asserts that:

This argument belongs originally to nonconformity rather than to the Church-Protestantism either of Luther or of Calvin, which did not tolerate secession from its own ranks and exercised a strong central authority. Nevertheless Lutheranism and Calvinism were from the first individualistic in the sense that they found the individual's assurance of salvation, not in obedience to the official hierarchy and sacramental system, but in a simple and personal decision to believe, which can assure itself from the revelation of the Bible (Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, pp.59-62). Once this position is taken, a more radical individualism must logically follow, as the history of Protestantism seems to show (Quick, 1924:7).

The typical Protestants to which Quick is referring were those that belonged to the radical Reformation such as Thomas Müntzer, Caspar Schwenkfeld and Sebastian Franck. They advocated an individual's "right to interpret Scripture, subject to the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (McGrath, 1993:144). Luther, Zwingli and Calvin represented the magisterial Reformation. They advocated the church's traditional interpretation of Scripture where it was seen to be correct (McGrath, 1993:145). McGrath (1993:146) argues further that a "certain degree of variation can be detected within the mainstream of the Reformation on the application of the *scriptura sola* principle: Zwingli is closer to the radical position than Calvin is, while Luther is closer to the Catholic position". McGrath, however, emphasizes that neither Luther, Zwingli nor Calvin were prepared "to abandon the concept of a traditional interpretation of Scripture in favour of the radical alternative" (McGrath, 1993:146).

Justification by faith (Rom. 5:1) became the central tenet of the Reformation and since 'individualism' was given its due theological undergirding, this had serious implications for ecclesiology. MacGregor (1959:5) asserts that one can argue strongly that ecclesiology was the main concern of the Reformation. Individualism meant that every believer was a part of the royal priesthood in Christ with 'unveiled' access to God. Anything or anyone 'ecclesiastically' mediatory was viewed as non-scriptural as it denied the individual the free access to God through his justifying grace in Christ. Giles (1995:216) argues that in view of the aforementioned, "the church as an empirical community, an identifiable number of people in the world, could not be exactly equated with the community of salvation, a spiritual reality created solely by the justifying grace of God". He argues further that "in making this distinction, the Reformers revived Augustine's categories of the visible and invisible church" (Giles, 1995:216). Luther and Calvin subscribed to these two aspects of the church but never interpreted them as "two separate churches" (Giles, 1995:191). Bauer (1968) differentiates between the "Catholic idea" of the church and "the Protestant principle" ["the essence and the form of the church always coexist in tension; the historical and sociological form of the church can never be regarded as the perfect embodiment of the gospel-created community"] of the church (Giles, 1995:192). In Catholicism, as is evident in Schillebeeckx, the church's "historical sociological form" is wholly identified with the "divine reality" whilst in Protestantism, the Reformers argued for a "dialectical relationship between the two" – "they are neither to be separated nor identified" (Giles, 1995:192).

Tillich (1959:237-259) developed this Protestant theological thrust thematically and defined it as "the protest against any absolute claim for a relative reality". Later, he proposed this hermeneutic as "the key to a modern reformulation of the invisible-visible ecclesiological schema" (Tillich, 1964: 173-180; Giles, 1995:192). Looking back at the difficulties that the Reformers faced as they addressed the complexity of the heavenly-earthly church dichotomy, Tillich (1964:176) argued that the solution to this complexity would be resolved in viewing the church as "both an ambiguous social reality and a 'spiritual community' - the latter constituted by the 'spiritual presence' (the Holy Spirit or the divine life), but this also creates the former" (Giles, 1995:192-193). Tillich (1964:176) insisted further that "the term 'the spiritual community' alludes neither to an other-worldly, heavenly entity, nor to an ideal conceptual projection, but to the essential spiritual essence or 'inner telos' of the church that is the source of everything that makes the church" (Giles, 1995:192-193). Tillich offers some thought provoking perspectives in his philosophical-theology and points to the value of religious symbols over and above that of models or analogical discourse in religious language (Thiselton, 96). He argues that God cannot be God as the ultimate divine reality

through mere conceptualization, which involves cognitive discourse emanating from the use of models or analogy (Thiselton, 96). He posits that ‘symbols’ are the best way to point to God as our ultimate concern: “Religious symbols...are a representation of that which is *beyond the conceptual sphere*...Religious symbols represent the transcendent...They do not make God a part of the empirical world...They transcend the realm that is split into subjectivity and objectivity” (Tillich, 1962:303).

Alluding to Torrance (1965:276), Giles affirms that the ecclesiology of the Reformers was “not fully realized” in that they still maintained a defective view of the ordained ministry, which held a monopoly over the preaching and teaching ministry as well as over the administering of the sacraments. The ministry of the laity was not considered and added to this shortcoming was a “deficit in pneumatology” (Giles, 1995:216). The Spirit’s role in sealing and sanctifying the believer in regeneration was stressed but the “empowering and equipping” of the believer for ministry was overlooked (Giles, 1995:216). What is evident here is the preservation of the ordained ministry, which although defined in “prophetic terms”, was practically priestly (Giles, 1995:216). For Schillebeeckx (1963:48), the “whole Church” (hierarchical and laity) is defined by the “visibility of grace”. Here he distinguishes between the terms “ecclesiastical” and “ecclesial” – positing that the former is closely aligned with the hierarchical Church which is misleading whilst the latter “is used to signify all that is proper to the Church in its entirety, a synthesis of hierarchical and lay elements” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:49).

He alludes to the “sacramental manifestation” of Christ, as the head of the Church, being realized “formally and functionally” through the ecclesiastical hierarchy as represented in the apostolic office (Schillebeeckx, 1963:49). In view of this claim, he maintains that the “hierarchical Church is sovereign with regard to the community of the faithful” but then concludes that both the apostolic office and the community of the faithful are the Church which is the “sacramental or mystical Christ” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:49). The Reformers also believed that both the ordained and laity formed the church. Whilst Schillebeeckx reiterates Vatican II’s innovation – “People of God”, the Reformers re-imagined the church with its teachings and practices for a new era. In attempting this challenging task and being true to Scripture, “the reformers have sought an ecclesiology and ecclesiastical polity of retrieval, not innovation, and rather they have sought to strip away the innovations and additions of the centuries in-between, to re-inspire the study of scripture and theology for ministry alike, to encourage meaningful preaching once more, on this point offering some words in the final sentence which can speak beyond their age, and perhaps remind all theologians to be attentive to method and intelligibility when plying their craft” (Mannion, 2011:8).

The Reformers reconstructed the “People of God” motif to mean what it should always have been – “the royal priesthood of believers” (1 Peter 2:9). Schillebeeckx’s hermeneutical methodology has been attentive and intelligible to the Roman Catholic system but in the light of Reformation analysis, he certainly missed the mark of sound ecclesiological method and synthesis. He attempted to draw the community of the faithful to Christ but ended up drawing them to the Roman Catholic Church. For Luther the church as organization was “a matter of historical contingency”, which did not require “theological prescription”, whilst for Calvin church organization meant that there must be “a definite pattern of church government” requiring Scriptural prescription (Mannion, 2011:200). However, Mannion (2011:200) notes: “Curiously, the lists of ecclesiastical offices (IV.iii.3; IV.iii.4; IV.iv.1) which Calvin presents within the *Institutes* do not harmonize, and leave both the status of elders (or presbyters) and the number of ministries in some doubt”.

The Reformation did not seek to undermine the spiritual rights of the laity and confer special graces to the clergy. Calvin maintained that the church “is endowed with ‘spiritual power’ (IV.viii.1), although he is careful not to explain this in any manner that might suggest a comparison with the canon law of the medieval church” (Mannion, 2011:200). The intent of the Reformation to release the laity from Roman Catholic sacerdotalism and sacramentalism, undergirded by the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the priesthood of all believers, became a reality but not without its problems. In spite of the magisterial Reformers adopting the Augustinian model (corresponding sociologically to a ‘church’), and the radical Reformers adopting the Donatist model (corresponding sociologically to a ‘sect’) – the freedom of believers as having direct access to God without the church conferring grace, was indeed an ecclesiological accomplishment. Notwithstanding that Reformation ecclesiology had its challenges like church government, the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and relations between church and state – the foundational thread still remained: “The Reformation, inwardly considered, was just the ultimate triumph of Augustine’s doctrine of grace over Augustine’s doctrine of the church” (Warfield, 1956:322). Schillebeeckx’s argument of sacramental grace and church as sacrament is constitutive of the “distortions and perversions” of the medieval church’s hermeneutics on Augustine’s doctrines of grace which the Reformers undoubtedly recovered (McGrath, 1993:131).

Essentially, the magisterial Reformers argued that the church was “a product of the grace of God” and at the same time “the divinely ordained means of grace” (McGrath, 1993:132,192,200). Reformation-Lutheran ecclesiology appeared vague, as Luther’s definition of the church “in terms of the ministry of the Word of God” was not very helpful in “distinguishing the magisterial Reformation from the catholic position on the one hand and

the position of the radicals on the other” (McGrath, 1993:195). Calvin, whilst retaining Luther’s emphasis on the ministry of the Word of God, argued precisely “that this same Word of God specified one particular form of church government” (McGrath, 1993:195). Using this criterion as an interpretative key, Calvin judged and found wanting – both his radical and catholic opponents (McGrath, 1993:195). However, by the time of Calvin’s death in 1564, the Reformed church was as institutionalized as Catholicism and became its most powerful opponent (McGrath, 1993:196). Considering the relevant aspects of Reformation ecclesiology here, it is worth reflecting and expanding on Avis’s comments: “From the controversies of the Reformation period we should learn the dangers of polemic theology, or digging ourselves steadily deeper into entrenched positions, from which it becomes ever more difficult to hear what our interlocutor is saying. Theology should not be reactive, but contemplative. The ‘object’ of theology (as Barth and Torrance would remind us) is not a particular Christian tradition, or an individual theologian who argues a different case, but the revelation of the triune God as it is embodied and embedded in created reality” (Mannion and Borght, 2011: Foreword, VII).

The tension in Schillebeeckx’s sacramental ecclesiology – on the one hand as the community of faith whereby all have access to God and encounter with him through the sacraments with his grace being bestowed upon them through the Church; and on the other hand as a divinely ordered ecclesiastical (hierarchical) institution where spiritually unique powers are allotted to ecclesiastical persons – shows a clear division between ecclesiastical Christian and lay Christian.—Schillebeeckx’s use of “ecclesial” as representing both ecclesiastical persons and laity is ambiguous since he plays off one against the other, eventually subordinating laity to ecclesiastical notions. The understanding that the Lord of the Church, the ‘risen Christ’ (seated at the right hand of God), is now represented as continuous incarnation through mediation of the apostolic office of the Church, creates further tension in Schillebeeckx’s ecclesiology.

On the one hand, Schillebeeckx’s entrenched form of encounter with God through sacramental ecclesiology impinges upon the freedom of the believer from having direct access to God and elevates the Church as being identical to Christ. On the other hand, Reformation ecclesiology (magisterial) had its own tensions that created ambiguities and inconsistencies insofar as church government was concerned. Distinction between clergy and laity caused greater division and also impinged upon the freedom of the believer from having direct access to God. Calvin’s insistence on safeguarding the flock through the institution of ministerial orders meant that the church became the means of grace. To overcome these tensions found in Schillebeeckx, Reformation ecclesiology as well as those

within contemporary Protestant Evangelical ecclesiology, many contemporary theologians are arguing for an ecclesiology grounded in the Trinity (Giles, 1995:218).

Schillebeeckx does not give detailed attention to pneumatology in his somewhat vague Trinitarian perspectives concerning the nature of the church; rather he proceeds from Christ, as the sacrament of God to the Church as the sacrament of the risen Christ. He argues that the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is essentially an “Easter event” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:34). His sacramental perspectives accommodate the Spirit only insofar as Christ is the “sender” of the Spirit and Christ is the “principle” of the Spirit (Schillebeeckx, 1963:33). His sacramental Christological ecclesiology outweighs a comprehensive Trinitarian ecclesiology. This he does in a typical Roman Catholic interpretative key so that he may arrive at the univocal systemic awareness that “Christ makes his presence among us actively visible and tangible too, not directly through his own bodiliness, but by extending among us on earth in visible form the function of his bodily reality which is in heaven. This precisely is what the sacraments are: the earthly extension of the body of the Lord” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:41). A sound Protestant Evangelical Trinitarian ecclesiology has the potential to serve as a corrective to Schillebeeckx’s systemic yet unsound ecclesiology as well as to those diverse inadequate ecclesiologies within Protestant Evangelicalism.

By advocating ‘sacramental extension’, Schillebeeckx is undermining the role of the Spirit in the life of the church and of the believer. McDonnel’s comment that more often than not the Spirit is viewed as “an extra, or addendum” in Christocentric ecclesiology, is certainly true of Schillebeeckx as well as pietistic Protestant Evangelicalism (McDonnel, 1982:142). Trinitarian perspectives must undergird a sound Protestant Evangelical ecclesiology. Giles correctly (1995:225-226) argues that “Trinitarian ecclesiology does not question the need of leaders or the exercise of authority as such in the life of the church, but it does call into question all forms of domination by those who claim some innate right to rule, and all expressions of authoritarianism. It encourages instead the ministry of all believers, democratic and participatory decision-making, and everything that promotes the communal nature of the church. If the contribution of every believer is to be respected and facilitated, the best way to do this is to encourage the democratization of the church”. He alludes to Dulles (1982) as one of many Roman Catholics who agree with such thinking (Giles, 1995:226).

LaCugna (1991:304-305) posits that “God’s way of being in relationship with us – which is God’s personhood – is a perfect expression of God’s being as God.” She argues that only in God’s revelation of himself in Jesus and in the Spirit can the life of the church be understood

(Giles, 1995:229). She emphasizes further that in the community of the church “it is incongruous that a pattern of subordination between persons” should exist (LaCugna, 1991:397). Subordination of the laity misplaces the economy of the Trinity. LaCugna (1991:398) asserts that “when the Christian doctrine of God is Trinitarian, explicitly rooted in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the Spirit, God’s *arché* is seen as the antithesis of tyrannical, solitary, or patriarchal rule.” Moltmann (1977:202) advocates overcoming the impasse through the Trinitarian understanding of the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit as the sacrament. How he qualifies this thinking of the church in terms of sacramentality will be dealt with in the section following.

7.2 SACRAMENTAL THINKING

What does one make of the diverse understanding of sacramental thinking within Protestant Evangelicalism? Is de Chirico’s atomistic appraisal of Protestant Evangelicalism justified on the basis of a Roman Catholic unified system? He alludes to the safeguarding of the system and this is exactly what Schillebeeckx has done. He leans on the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church [his interpretative key] just so that he can maintain a univocal voice on sacramental thinking. The Reformation has taught us that critical theological reform is a constant in any given age and yet it is not without its tensions. Given that Protestant Evangelicalism has maintained, since the Reformation, a unified systemic awareness of the triumph of the doctrine of grace over the doctrine of the church, it is imperative for the scope of this dissertation to delve into the critical aspects of Protestant sacramental thinking. Bouyer, a convert from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism, furnishes a very vague appraisal of Protestant sacramental thinking. He alludes to “uncertainty” in Protestant sacramental identification, thinking and application: “Yet if we ask why they [Protestants] perform these different rites, what use they have, the answers given seem as a general rule forced and somewhat embarrassed. As regards baptism and the Lord’s Supper, they entrench themselves behind the express command of our Lord. But as they understand it the purpose of what he prescribed does not seem very clear” (Bouyer, 2004:68). Like de Chirico, Bouyer is viewing Protestant diversity as not having a univocal voice and on this basis he charges Protestantism with no clarity with regard to sacramental interpretation. It is significant to not discard his claim since it is evident within Protestantism that not all the tensions of sacramental thinking have been resolved.

With this in mind, it is well worth reflecting on Moltmann’s perspectives as a point of departure for a reductionism in Schillebeeckx’s sacramental identification and thinking as

well as for a renewed hermeneutic for Protestant Evangelicalism. Since the church cannot live and move without the power of the Spirit, it is of paramount importance that sacramental identification and thinking within Protestant Evangelicalism be crystallized for the church today. Moltmann advocates “sacramental thinking” that links together the remembrance of the atoning work of Christ with the eschatological hope. The “history of Christ” as the “definite sacramental event” cannot be “created” nor “calculated” and it is this sacramental event which defines the church, that is, “the preaching of the Word, the presence of Christ’s coming in the bread and wine”, and “the coming of the Spirit in baptism” (Moltmann, 1977:27). Conclusively then, for Moltmann, “the solution of the problem of faith and experience, hope and reality, the nature and form of the church, has to be looked for in *pneumatology*” (Moltmann, 1977:27-28). Moltmann (1977:26) posits further that sacramental thinking is always applied elaborately to the “interpretation of the believed and experienced church” where it is spoken of as “the being of the one *in* the other”. The “paradoxical identity” (faith and experience) and the “dialectical process” (hope and experience) of the church is “grounded and expanded” through sacramental thinking which affirms “the existence of the one in the other” (Moltmann, 1977:26).

He alludes to Tillich who aligns this sacramental thinking with the paradox of the Lutheran ‘in spite of’: “The churches are holy because of the holiness of their foundation, the New Being, which is present in them. The churches are holy, but they are so in terms of an ‘in spite of’ or as a paradox” (Moltmann, 1977:26). Tillich (1948:94) cautions Protestants not to totally eliminate the “sacramental element” otherwise it would “lead to the dissolution of the visible church”. With the aid of “depth psychology”, he argues that Protestants need to “recover appreciation for the sacraments, rather than only words, as mediators of Spiritual Presence in order to understand multidimensional unity” (Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:397; Tillich, 1948:94; 1963:121ff). White (1983) posits that Protestants have come to a greater awareness of the role of the sacraments in “faith formation”. Boersma (2011) proposes that Protestant Evangelicalism “recover a pre-modern worldview in which created things have value only as they participate in heavenly realities – what he calls ‘a *sacramental tapestry*’” (Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015).

The primary tension that surrounds sacramental thinking within Protestantism is whether or not the sacraments are the means of grace and how is one to interpret the presence of Christ in the sacraments. This debate of the Reformation has since marked a separation in theological Eucharistic thought between the Lutheran tradition and the Reformed tradition. Luther, whilst opposing the Roman Catholic concept of transubstantiation, held that the body and blood of Christ were present “in, with, and under” the bread and wine (Erickson,

2001:364). This way of thinking came to be known as consubstantiation, a term not coined by Luther. Luther's view of the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist strongly emphasizes the real presence of Christ rather than a mere spiritual presence (Lee, 2011). Luther is vague in his sacramental thinking:

He insists that by partaking of the sacrament one experiences a real benefit – forgiveness of sin and confirmation of faith. This benefit is due, however, not to the elements in the sacrament, but to one's reception of the Word by faith. At this point Luther sounds almost as if he regards the sacrament as simply a means of proclamation to which one responds as to a sermon. If the sacrament is merely a form of proclamation, what is the point of the physical presence of Christ's body and blood? At other times Luther appears to have held that the benefit comes from actually eating the body of Christ. What is clear from Luther's disparate statements is that by virtue of taking the elements believers receive a spiritual benefit which they otherwise would not experience (Erickson, 2001:364-365).

Where Luther was vague, Calvin was precise. Calvin held that Christ is not "physically or bodily" present in the Lord's Supper but that his presence is "spiritual or dynamic" (Erickson, 2001:365). Van der Borght (2011:223) argues that "Calvin's understanding of Christ's presence in the sacrament in the Spirit is generally understood as an alternative for Roman Catholic transubstantiation and Lutheran consubstantiation". It is certainly viable but not adequate since, for example, Janse, the historical theologian, concludes in his work that one cannot speak any longer of 'The' sacramental theology of Calvin since in his varied Eucharistic interpretations one finds him more Zwinglian and yet in another more Lutheran (Janse, 2008; Borght, 2011:227). Calvin's hermeneutics on the sacraments as the means of grace is problematic and Kuyper rightfully posits that Calvin "incorrectly ascribed a 'magical power' and 'excessive stability' to the sacraments (John Halsey Wood, Jr. in Mannion and Borght, 2011:171). Kuyper's spiritualized ecclesiology was exemplified by the sacraments and he correctly argued that the sacraments "promoted Christian unity but lacked any gracious efficacy" (John Halsey Wood, Jr. in Mannion and Borght, 2011:171). Conclusively, for Kuyper, "Baptism and the Supper are actions of a *symbolic appointing*, which in the glorious memory of our Lord advance the unity of the institute of the church, and at the same time also pricking and inspiring us, in order that we may embrace Christ with a whole heart and that we may foster the most tender love towards our brothers" (John Halsey Wood, Jr. in Mannion and Borght, 2011:171). Kuyper's sacramental thinking is undoubtedly aligned with that of Zwingli.

Zwingli's views on sacramental thinking and more specifically that on the Lord's Supper are a more viable alternative for Schillebeeckx's hermeneutics. Zwingli held that the Lord's Supper is basically a commemoration of the death of Christ on the cross and that its sacramental value "lies in simply receiving by faith the benefits of Christ's death" (Erickson, 2001:365; Hodge, 1952:627-628). Zwingli argues further that the effect of the Lord's Supper is no different in nature from the preaching of the Word since both are "types of proclamation" which require the "absolute essential of faith if there is to be any benefit" (Erickson, 2001:365; Strong, 1907:541-543). Put another way, he posited "that it is not so much that the sacrament brings Christ to the communicant as that the believer's faith brings Christ to the sacrament" (Erickson, 2001:365). Zwingli held that the bread and wine represent the body and blood of Christ (Erickson, 2001:366; Strong, 1907:653-654).

When Moltmann argues for "the presence of Christ's coming in the bread and wine", he affirms Christ's sacramental presence in the Spirit as definitive and dynamic. He discusses the Lord's Supper as a sign that can be understood in various ways. Firstly, the Lord's Supper as signified by the bread and wine can be understood as "an evident *sign of spiritual recollection*" (Moltmann, 1977:252). As a remembrance feast, Christ is present by his Spirit who "recalls him to us, and the bread and wine are merely the outwards signs of our spiritual communion with Christ" (Moltmann, 1977:252). Zwingli interpreted the Lord's Supper in this sense. However, Zwingli's "Platonic concept of spirit hindered him from perceiving the presence of the crucified one in the Spirit of the resurrection" (Moltmann, 1977:252). Secondly, the Lord's Supper can be understood as the earthly "*sign of the presence* of the God who has become man and of the man who has been exalted to God. Then the bread and wine signify that which they are according to Christ's promise – the body and blood of Christ" (Moltmann, 1977:252). Moltmann alludes to Luther as interpreting the Lord's Supper within this framework. When we understand the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper "along the same lines as the incarnation, then the Christological difference between what happened on Golgotha and what happens on the altar can be easily overlooked; while if we understand it in the framework of his exaltation, then it is easy to ignore the eschatological difference between the supper in history and the feast in the kingdom of God" (Moltmann, 1977:253).

Thirdly, the Lord's Supper can be understood as "*a token of the future*" (Moltmann, 1977:253). The bread and wine are symbols or "fore-tokens" of the eschatological feast (Moltmann, 1977:253). The groups who celebrate the Lord's Supper in this sense – understand the celebration to be a "love feast for the celebration of life, fellowship, hope and work for peace and righteousness in the world. The remembrance on which this hope is

based reaches back to Old Testament prophecy” (Moltmann, 1977:253). With this line of thought, Moltmann (1977:253) argues that interpreting the Lord’s Supper in spatial concepts is indicative of a “one-sided view”. Against the backdrop of the eschatological context of the Lord’s Supper, “the experience of time is itself transformed” – it is “opened up once and for all, in order to be consummated in his parousia” (Moltmann, 1977:254). The proclamation of the Word, the bread and wine, the fellowship and the spirit of the Lord’s Supper, are embraced by the “eschatological presence of Christ so that there is no need to localize it any further” (Moltmann, 1977:254). Moltmann (1977:255) advocates a renewed way of sacramental thinking here: “not – Christ is present in the feast here or there, but – the feast is held in his presence and carries those who partake of it into the eschatological history of Christ, into the time between the cross and the kingdom which takes its quality from his presence”. He conclusively views the sacraments as the means of proclamation and not as the means of grace. The sacraments serve as the means of remembered hope and is a “mark of the history of the Spirit” which does not confer grace as Schillebeeckx argues but “joins the past and the future, history and eschatology in a unique way, and becomes [present] the token of liberating grace” (Moltmann, 1977:256-257).

The twentieth century Protestant theological impulse to identify Christ or the Spirit as primal sacrament, led to the conclusive emphasis that Christ and the Spirit are both acting in and through the sacraments to “bind believers to Christ” and to each other within the church (Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:399). Forsythe (1917:177) posits that the sacraments are “acts of Christ really present by his Holy Spirit in the church. It is Christ doing something through the Church as His body”. Sacraments, he adds further, are not mere keepsakes reminding us of Jesus who has departed: “they are real means by which the risen Christ is present, conveying love to believers here and now. Nor are they tokens for separate individuals; sacraments are inherently public, corporate acts of the church” (Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:399). Torrance, whilst affirming Barth’s understanding of Christ as the primal sacrament, in whom the sacraments are grounded, emphasized further that the sacraments serve as the means of the believer’s participation or *koinonia* “in the mystery of Christ and his church through the *koinonia* or communion of the Holy Spirit” (Torrance, 1975:82). In this way he was able to clarify the corporate nature of the sacraments as well as the “resistance to any kind of sacramental minimalism” (Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:400).

Protestantism, in the early twentieth century, encountered varied interpretations as to whether the sacraments were mere *signs* or *symbols* “pointing beyond themselves to a reality elsewhere – a view often (perhaps unfairly) attributed to Zwingli” (Moore-Keish Martha

in Boersma and Levering, 2015:400). The response to such variations has proposed “fuller understandings of *sign* and *symbol*, challenging dualistic presumptions that divide *sign* from *reality*” (Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:400). Many Protestant theologians have posited that sacraments as signs are “modes of personal communication from God to humanity” (Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:400). Forsythe, for example, argues that the sacraments are “Christ in a real presence giving anew his redemption” (Forsythe, 1917:176). He further viewed them as the means by which Christ in and through the Spirit acts in the church (Forsythe, 1917:176). Tillich, however, argues that the “sacraments are not *signs* but *symbols*. Signs point beyond themselves; symbols participate in the power of what they symbolize. In sacraments, the Spirit uses inherent qualities of symbols (water, bread, wine) to *enter man’s spirit*” (Tillich, 1963:123; Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:400). Torrance and Pannenberg likewise insist that “sacramental theology has suffered from a rigid separation of *sign* and *thing*, stemming from Augustine’s definition of sacrament, and that sacramental signs participate in the reality that they signify. Signs do not merely illustrate the thing signified, but establish and represent it (Torrance, 1975:95-99; Pannenberg, 1998:292, 348ff). Boersma posits a “sacramental ontology in which symbol and reality are not separated, but symbols participate in the reality to which they point” (Boersma, 2011:111-112; Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:401). As sacramental symbol, other Protestant scholars have argued that in the sacraments and more specifically the Eucharist, believers encounter “the presence of the absence of God,” which gives us the awareness of the “radical otherness of the risen Christ” (Pickstock, 1998; Farwell 2005:73-78; Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:401). Torrance cautions that too much concentration on the liturgical acts of the church “could distract from the main meaning of sacrament, which is the mystery of Christ” (Torrance, 1975:82-84; Moore-Keish Martha in Boersma and Levering, 2015:401).

Dulles’ sacramental thinking affirms that the sacramental model of the church can “lead to a sterile aestheticism and to an almost narcissistic self-contemplation” which is the case with Schillebeeckx’s hermeneutics (Dulles 1987: 195). To avoid this he suggests, as a remedy to this development, the consideration of the “values of structure, community, and mission brought out in the other models” (Dulles, 1987: 195). Since the Eucharist “celebrates and solidifies the union of the faithful with one another” and signifies the ‘already’ aspect of the ‘not yet’ sacramental eschatological anticipation of the final, eternal form of the heavenly marriage celebration, he postulates that this is the only model that seems to have the exceptional capacities to incorporate the ‘sound’ features of the other four models and hints

at the “possibility of using this model as the basis for a systematic ecclesiology” (Dulles, 1987:70, 206).

“What are the bonds of union? Who are the beneficiaries? What is the goal or purpose of the Church?” – these are the three crucial questions that Dulles asks and gives answers to (Dulles, 1987: 72). He correctly asserts that the bonds of union “are all the social, visible signs of the grace of Christ operative in believing Christians” (Dulles, 1987: 72). He asserts that the beneficiaries are those who articulate their faith through the Church. He refers to this as “The sign value of the Church” (Dulles, 1987: 72). This is problematic since Dulles refers to the Church as being Roman Catholic. He asserts that the goal of the Church is to “purify and intensify men’s response to the grace of Christ” (Dulles, 1987: 72). This is also problematic since he refers to the Roman Catholic Church as purifying the community of the faithful. This study would prefer to use the term ‘nurturing’ in place of “purify”. These aspects will be critically expanded upon in the last section of this chapter. In spite of Dulles’ Roman Catholic bias, it is noteworthy however to contrast Dulles and Schillebeeckx’s views, and subject Schillebeeckx’s own bias views to critical examination. According to Dulles, Schillebeeckx is a speculative theologian in that he has fixed and rigid sacramental hermeneutical taste (Dulles, 1987: 193). Dulles intimates the exclusive sacramental approach as being “humanly and spiritually disastrous” and calls for an open and broader theological dialogue among the varying theological entities – this is precisely what this dissertation has attempted to achieve (Dulles, 1987: 193).

In consideration of Dulles’ suggested general working principle of seeking “truth at the core of the theological flaw, error or heresy” (Dulles 1987: 193), it is clear that Schillebeeckx has presented serious flaws in his sacramental thinking whilst opting to adhere to Roman Catholic systemic awareness. For the sake of a holistic systematic ecclesiology, it is integral to consider Dulles’ suggested seven criteria against which sacramental thinking must be measured, namely, (1) “Basis in Scripture”; (2) “Basis in Christian tradition” [if we add here sound Christian tradition]; (3) “Capacity to give Church members a sense of their corporate identity and mission”; (4) “Tendency to foster the virtues and values generally admired by Christians”; (5) “Correspondence with the religious experience of believers today”; (6) “Theological fruitfulness”; (7) “Fruitfulness in enabling Church members to relate successfully to those outside their own group” (1987:191-192). Dulles, undoubtedly in contrast to Schillebeeckx, maintains an inclusive approach in his ecclesiology and seeks ways to find reasonable solutions to a holistic ecclesiology that embraces Protestant theological thought. Again, these aspects will be critically discussed further in the last section of this chapter.

Chauvet (1995: 177-178) correctly proposes a helpful corrective to Rahner's triumphalist view of the Church which is also applicable to Schillebeeckx's triumphalist propagation and application: "those who live too comfortably in the Church also misunderstand it; they are then in danger of forgetting that the Church is not Christ and that if, in faith, it is recognized as the privileged place of his presence, it is also, in this same faith, the most radical mediation of his absence. This is why to consent to the sacramental mediation of the Church is to consent to...*the presence of the absence of God*. The Church radicalizes the vacancy of this place of God. To accept its mediation is to agree that this vacancy will never be filled...*those who kill this sense of the absence of Christ make Christ a corpse again*". Unlike Schillebeeckx, Chauvet posits that the Church is not identical with Christ (Chauvet, 1995:177-178; Hancock, 2014:29). The "*presence of the absence of God*" is the "paradox of the God who is fully disclosed in the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ and yet whose absence is (re) narrated in the Church's sacramental celebration as presence" (Chauvet, 1995:177-178; Hancock, 2014:29).

This dissertation has attempted to show that Protestant Evangelicalism can only benefit from a contemporary cohesive exploration of sacramental ecclesiology, over against Schillebeeckx's thesis that the sacraments confer grace and are the only proper modes of encounter with God. Though not exhaustive, it does open up avenues of critical thought of not letting sacramental ecclesiology triumph over the grace of God in Christ by his Spirit. The sacraments - as essential marks, signs and symbols of the church with dynamic pneumatological spiritual value signifying the thing signified (the atoning eschatological work of Christ) - remains at the heart of Protestant Evangelicalism thought but not in the Roman Catholic sense. Like the proclamation of the Word, the sacraments are the means of proclamation that attest to the past, present and future work of Christ within the eternal Trinitarian outworking dynamic. In spite of the tensions surrounding the 'real' and 'spiritual' presence of Christ in the sacraments, there is still a definitive and dynamic systemic awareness of the Word, sacraments and church that serve as the proclamatory means to an end (parousia). It is that particular discussion on the church as "the continuing incarnation of Christ", as espoused by Schillebeeckx, that this chapter must now give attention to.

7.3 THE CONTINUING INCARNATION OF CHRIST

Schillebeeckx (1963:59) categorically argues:

That without assuming earthly form, Christ's heavenly activity cannot become visibly present to us and for us, because of our unglorified state. The man Jesus is

the presence of the redeeming God among us, though in the mode of a human presence bodying that presence forth to us. Precisely for this reason the plan of the incarnation requires, from the moment of Christ's ascension, a prolongation of his bodily mediation in time. We know already that this sacramental body of the Lord is the Church. We called the sacraments the specific activity of this ecclesial reality and sign. Just as Christ though his risen body acts invisibly in the world, he acts visibly in and through his earthly body, the Church, in such away that the sacraments are the personal saving acts of Christ realized as institutional acts in the Church.

Saucy (2000:211) offers some helpful insights to combat Schillebeeckx's argument concerning the continuing "incarnational paradigm which does not leave sufficiently separate the two subjects of Christ and his body the way the New Testament demands. A better paradigm, one that can retain the essential features of mysterious union and yet provide sufficient distinction of subjects in the Church, is the one suggested in the *perichoretic* relationships of the divine Trinity". He entrenches his argument further by alluding to Paul's analogy of marriage in Eph. 5:30-32 and posits that Paul must be viewed "more in terms of *identity*" (2000:211). Küng (1976:310) asserts that to speak of the Church in terms of "the continuing life of Christ" or as a "permanent incarnation" is "extremely misleading". These misleading views attribute to the Church precedence over Christ "which pretends to be the Christ of the present in constantly new incarnation" (Küng, 1976:310). As the continuing incarnation of Christ, the implication here is that people "have only to keep the Church and thereby they will be keeping to Christ himself" (Küng, 1976:310). This foundational hermeneutic, evident in Schillebeeckx and undoubtedly in Roman Catholicism, has been one of Küng's primary arguments with the Roman Catholic Church. Küng concludes that the Church, which sees itself as the continuing incarnation of Christ has moved away from being a "believing Church" to a "knowing Church", a "needy Church" to a "possessing Church", and a Church where "obedience" has been replaced by "total authority". Such a Church is "its own mistress and no longer needs a master" – "such a Church is a caricature of itself" (Küng, 1976:310-311).

Schillebeeckx's hermeneutics is undoubtedly punctuated with incarnational rhetoric so that he can maintain his sacramental-ecclesiological claim of the Church as a dispenser of grace (Saucy, 2000:195). Ratzinger (1969:179) also propagates the notion of the Church as a "single subject with Christ". Saucy (2000:195) asks some pertinent questions here: "Does the New Testament corroborate such claims for the Church? Can the Church at points functions as a single subject with Christ to continue his soteriological mission? Is an incarnational

paradigm useful for ecclesiology, or is it inherently dangerous?” He then proposes the “traditional *Munus Triplex Christi*, the incarnated Christ’s fulfillment of the offices of prophet, priest, and king” as his “primary tool for testing the Church’s incarnational claims because of its focus on the functional rather than ontological aspects of the incarnation” (Saucy, 2000:195). He adds “though it is rarely a category for Christological reflection in newer systematic theologies, with Berkouwer a case could be made for Christ’s offices of prophet, priest, and king as a useful tool of Christological inquiry when applied with the necessary caveats” (Saucy, 2000:195; Berkouwer, 1965: 58-88). He argues that “the New Testament is fundamentally resistant to the manner in which incarnational categories press ecclesiology toward the identity of Christ and Church, and further, that the New Testament itself suggests a different category to understand Christ’s relationship to his Church” (Saucy, 2000:196).

In understanding the exalted identity of Christ to his church, Saucy rightly posits two salient considerations that make Schillebeeckx’s incarnational hermeneutics unsustainable. Schillebeeckx (1963:48) denies any form of dualism between Christ and his Church arguing that the Church is “by a kind of identity, the body of the Lord”. Firstly, Saucy considers the issue of “self-reflectivity” in the prophetic office of Christ (Saucy, 2000: 196). Christ’s followers [contemporaries] undoubtedly understood him as Christ understood himself – as the spokesman of God, John 3:34 (Berkouwer, 1965:66-69; Hawthorne, 1991: 160-168; de Jonge, 1988:154-165). Self-reflectivity in the prophetic office means that what Jesus preaches is also explicit – for example, Christ, as God incarnate, proclaims to be the way, the truth and the life, - John 14:6 (Saucy, 200:196). In preaching the kingdom of God, Jesus is uniquely that kingdom, “the *autobasileia*, of his own proclamation – cf. Luke 11:20” (Saucy, 2000:196-197; Recker, 1979:171). In contrast, the New Testament church “never proclaims her message in such a self-reflective manner. With an incredible variety of terminology, the Church always and without fail preaches Christ, and never herself. The Church *proclaims* (Acts 8:5), *preaches* (Acts 5:42), *testifies* (Acts 18:5), *convinces others* (Acts 28:23), *shows* (Acts 18:28), *teaches* (Acts 28:31), *remembers* (2 Tim 2:8), and *confesses* (1 Cor. 12:3) that Jesus is the Christ” (Saucy, 2000:196-197). The church is “Christocentric and theocentric, but never ecclesiocentric” (Saucy, 2000:197). The church’s proclamation to “*believe in* (Rom 10:11), *have faith in* (Mark 11:22), or *call upon* (Rom 10:13) is never directed to the Church or any object other than God or Christ” (Saucy, 2000:197). Whilst Christ is the foundation of the church’s faith, he is, however, “independent of the Church in the faith act” (Saucy, 2000:198).

Secondly, Saucy considers the role of the Holy Spirit in the respective proclamations of Jesus and the church, arguing again that an incarnational pattern cannot be maintained. The

incarnational paradigm presses for a “single personality in the Church” by means of the “immanence of Christ’s spirit in the body” (Saucy, 2000: 198). He rightly emphasizes, “it is by the Holy Spirit that the Church confesses the Lordship of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:3), not the lordship (i.e. authority) of the Church” (Saucy, 2000:198). Schillebeeckx’s incarnational paradigm subordinates the role of the Holy Spirit to that of the church. Rather than the Spirit possessing the church, the church possesses the Spirit. Hendry rightly asserts, “In the New Testament the authority of the Holy Spirit is an authority to which the Church remains subject; it is the principle of the Church’s obedience...for the Church of the New Testament did not experience the Spirit as an immanent principle for which it succeeded to the authority of its Lord but as a presence in whom its living Lord continues to exercise his own authority” (Hendry, 1965: 57). Saucy concludes that the apostles were the “Spirit’s unique agents” of the Gospel message and their transmission of the Lord’s teaching, “both orally and in their writings, alone comprises the *tradition* which the New Testament recognizes as authoritative for the Church. Such was also the clear belief and practice of the earliest post-apostolic Church. It is this unique standing of the Spirit-inspired apostles vis-à-vis the rest of the Church that came after them or that existed contemporaneous to them that is stunted when incarnational categories determine ecclesiology” (Saucy, 2000: 199).

Christ alone through his atonement grants the “benefits of salvation to those for whom he mediates” (Saucy, 2000: 201; Berkouwer, 1965: 69-72). It is not the doing of the church. Christ as Priest (the second aspect of the *Munus Triplex Christi*) has paid the price of salvation once for all. He is our high Priest (Heb. 7:11-28). Therefore, the church maintaining a priestly role as Schillebeeckx posits is contrary to the New Testament teaching. In the New Testament, it is clear that there is “a distance between Christ and his Church” that is “inconsistent with incarnational categories” (Saucy, 2000:201). Saucy elaborates that “distance” is not suggestive of “separateness or aloofness as in a devaluation of the rich communion the Church has with Christ” (Saucy, 2000:201). In the New Testament “Christ or God are Savior” with Christ being the “single subject of salvific activities” and not the church (Rom. 5:6; Eph. 5:2; Rom. 15:7; Gal. 3:13; Acts 9:34; Eph. 5:29; Phil. 3:12; Eph. 5:14; 1 Tim. 1:15; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:18; 1 John 2:1; 4:9-10) (Saucy, 2000:201). In contrast to Schillebeeckx’s hermeneutics, Saucy advocates, “against incarnational ecclesiology, saving faith is never presented in the New Testament as the gift of the Church, but as the gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29). Thus, the New Testament itself seems to be at odds with the *totus Christus* ecclesiology that sees the Roman mass, for example, as the re-presentation of ‘an offering to the Father which is presented by *the whole Christ (totus Christus)*, by the Head and the members’” (Saucy, 2000:201).

The New Testament also reveals Christ as our King (Luke 1:30-33; 19:11-26; John 18:36-37; Heb. 2:7-9) (Saucy, 2000:205). This third aspect of the *Munus Triplex Christi* also makes it clear that the exalted Christ reigns with full authority over the church. Since Christ has given to the Church the “keys to the Kingdom” (Matt. 16:19), “should the relationship of authority between Christ and his Church be made in terms of her identity with Christ?” (Saucy, 2000:205). Saucy argues that the New Testament evidence “seems to say no” along two strands, namely, “Self-reflectivity” and “Pneumatology and Eschatology” (Saucy, 2000:205). In terms of “Self-Reflectivity” as in the case of the prophetic office of Christ, here too Theocentricity and Christocentricity override ecclesiocentricity. It is the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ but never the kingdom of the church (Mark 13:13; Matt. 10:22; Luke 21:12; John 15:21; Acts 9:16; 1 Peter 4:14-19). It is Christ who proclaims oneness with the Father (John 14:1); it is Christ who has all authority (Matt. 28:19) (Saucy, 2000:205). Berkouwer (1958:28) cites Viering (1938:86), “the element of obedience is the sharp impassable boundary-line against any church speculation [regarding identity with Christ]”. The Church must remain a loyal and obedient subject of Christ but can never claim to be the kingdom as Roman Catholicism and undoubtedly Schillebeeckx do: The Church is “the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery” (Vatican Translation, 2009:18). The Church “is still being transformed in her mind (Rom. 12:1–2), and still needs Christ formed in her (Gal 6:14). It is in this way that she goes into the world to carry out her Lord’s commands, not as a single subject with him (Saucy, 2000:206).

The dualistic strand of “Pneumatology and Eschatology” also shows that it is the Spirit who establishes and appropriates God’s reign in Christ over the church. This is overlooked in the “incarnational ecclesiological reading of the New Testament” (Saucy, 2000:207). The Spirit is the true “successor of Christ (John 16:7), not the Church. The Church’s mission is dependent on his, not vice versa. The Spirit is not simply the facilitator of the Church’s authority, the channel of Christ’s authority to his Church, the principle of the Church’s empowerment, or the Church’s possession, but rather the Spirit is the Church’s maker (1 Cor. 12:13), guide (Acts 8:29, 39; 10:19; 11:12), oracle revealing the future (John 16:13), and he is her judge (Acts 5:3–11), (Saucy, 2000:207). Schillebeeckx’s incarnational notion of God, Christ, and the Church rather than the Trinitarian notion of God, Christ, and the Spirit is a rendition of the Roman Catholic core system which, when weighed against the New Testament evidence, falls far short of true Biblical and theological-ecclesiological interpretation. Schillebeeckx’s incarnational ecclesiology also overlooks the role of the Spirit in the *eschaton* thus doing “injustice to the eschatological theme of the kingdom of God” (Saucy, 2000:208). In

subordinating the Spirit to the Church and attributing an equivalent identity of kingdom to the Church, Schillebeeckx has without doubt elevated the Church to a divine status.

Considering Schillebeeckx's assertion that "by the incarnation of the Son, God intended to divinize man by redeeming him", it becomes obvious why he argues for the continuing incarnation of the Church (Schillebeeckx, 1963:17). However, "in Scripture, it is God's reign over his creation that envelopes all history and absorbs even the Church's history. That the Biblical testimony demands the release of eschatology from the confines of ecclesiology is a fact long recognized by Protestant exegetes, and one recognized by certain Catholic ones" (Saucy, 2000:208). Saucy alludes to Schnackenburg's summary of the church and kingdom as revealed in the New Testament: "God's reign is not so associated with the Church that we can speak of it as a 'present form of God's kingdom', since this would suppose an amalgamation with the Church's history on earth. God's reign as such has no organization and goes through no process; it does not embrace the just and sinners, it is in no sense dependent upon earthly and human factors. It is not 'built up' by men and thus brought to its goal. Yet all this can be said of the Church in its mundane form" (Schnackenburg, 1963:233-234). Saucy's polemic using the *Munus Triplex Christi* has indeed been an excellent theological tool for arguing against the continuing incarnation of Christ in the church as espoused by Schillebeeckx. In terms of theological reflection, Schillebeeckx has relied upon his Roman Catholic tradition rather than propagate a systematic treatise based upon a comprehensive Biblical and theological exploration. The *Munus Triplex Christi* categorically demonstrates the relative subordinate position of ecclesiology within God's (Trinitarian) redemptive plan for humanity. A high ecclesiology, as is the case with Schillebeeckx, means a low Christology, Pneumatology and Eschatology, which the New Testament certainly does not propagate.

7.4 RE-APPROPRIATION AND PROPOSAL FOR A RENEWED ALTERNATIVE ECCLESIOLOGY FOR PROTESTANT EVANGELICALISM

This dissertation has attempted to show some of the varied interpretations of sacramental ecclesiology insofar as its scope has allowed it to. The remaining differences between the Roman Catholic, as espoused here by Schillebeeckx, Orthodox and Protestant positions, notwithstanding the in-house differences within each of these movements – is a clarion call for more contemporary work on this subject. Tillich (1948:112) came to the conclusion that "the solution of the problem of *nature and sacrament* is today a task on which the very

destiny of Protestantism depends". It was vital, he argued, that "if Protestantism is to come to its full realization" that a "rediscovery of the sacramental sphere" take place (Tillich, 1948:94). He proposed that "natural objects can become bearers of transcendent power and meaning...by being brought into the context of the history of salvation" (Tillich, 1948:102-103). Was he right? Both Tillich (conceptualizing of God through symbols) and Schillebeeckx (encounter with God through the sacraments) argue for mediating symbols to encounter God. When one limits one's encounter with God to the sacraments or symbols, one does a disservice to the work the Holy Spirit. Contrary to what Scripture says in John 3:8: "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit", - Schillebeeckx persists with his traditional argument.

Whilst Schillebeeckx views the church as "*sacrament*" (in keeping with his Roman Catholic tradition), the Protestant tradition views the church as "*creatura verbi*" (Boersma and Levering, 2015:689). Scampini argues that:

In both expressions it is possible to recognize the radical dependence of the church in receiving the transcendental gift that God conveys to her and to acknowledge that gift as the basis of the church's activity for the salvation of humanity. Even if it has not yet become possible for the two traditions to understand the nature of this salutary activity in the same way, the two conceptions of church as *creatura verbi* and as 'sacrament of grace' can in fact be seen as expressing the same instrumental reality from different angles, as complementary to each other or as two sides of the same coin (Boersma and Levering, 2015:689-690).

Scampini is very vague in his claims here. Contrary to his claims, this study has come to the conclusion that *sacramental grace* and *creatura verbi* cannot converge as a united front of New Testament teaching. It is this aspect of the sacramental instrumentality of the church and the reality it signifies that has indeed been the foremost contention of the Reformers. They argued, on the one hand, that "the worship of the Roman Church was not consonant with the gospel of Jesus Christ" and "more often than not they pointed to liturgical deficiencies as their presenting concerns" (Boersma and Levering, 2015:283).

On the other hand, Reformation thought has developed its own complexities. Whilst Luther advocated a co-existence, containing or "interpenetration" of Jesus' physical body and blood in the bread and wine, Calvin maintained a purely influential ("spiritual or dynamic") presence of Christ therein, that is, "the bread and wine contain spiritually the body and blood" of Jesus

(Erickson, 2001:364-366). He defined the church in terms of the proclamation of the Word and the proper administration of the sacraments. Zwingli, however, advocated the Lord's Supper as a "mere commemoration" of the death of Christ but not without value, that is, the believer receives "by faith the benefits of Christ's death" (Erickson, 2001:365). His interpretation undoubtedly found its basis in 1 Cor. 11:26 - "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (Erickson, 2001:366). The view of "mere commemoration" is not universally held. Bruce Ware, for example, in Schreiner and Crawford (2010:229-247), holds a more nuanced view of Zwingli's position. Ware alludes to the "textured character of Zwingli's view" which has its "relative richness, when compared to popular reductionist (mis?) understandings of his position" as well as the "striking similarities he shared with John Calvin's view of the Supper when compared to that of Martin Luther or of the Roman Catholic Church" (Schreiner and Crawford, 2010:229). Moltmann (1977:289-300) is right when he argues that the church as God's eschatological or messianic community [instrument] is in "the process of the Holy Spirit" and is best defined as the "Church in the power of the Holy Spirit". This is the essence of the instrumental reality of the grace of God in Christ in the church. Furthermore, when considering the sacraments, one must "not see the Spirit in the sacraments, but the sacraments in the movement and the presence of the Spirit" (Moltmann, 1977:289). This is a significant hermeneutic element that Schillebeeckx has neglected. Moltmann poignantly puts this matter to rest by categorically emphasizing that "there is no 'Spirit of the sacraments' and no 'Spirit of the ministry', there are sacraments and ministries of the Spirit" (Moltmann, 1977:289).

Scampini posits that although the contemporary dialogues on sacramentality have not yet resolved all the divergent issues, they have, however, laid the foundational springboard in resolving these divergences (Boersma and Levering, 2015:687). Firstly, there is an "acknowledgement of the Christological roots of the sacraments". Secondly, there is the "recognition that the unique and unrepeatable event of Jesus Christ presents itself in his church through the Word proclaimed and the sacrament celebrated". Thirdly, there is the "increasing assumption within the Protestantism realm of the ecclesial dimension of worship and, consequently, of the value of sacramental rites for the life of the church" and fourthly, "our theological-doctrinal understanding has been enriched by a greater awareness of the anthropological and cultural foundations underlying the sacramental event, brought to the fore by contemporary research into symbolism, semiotics, and linguistics" (Boersma and Levering, 2015:687). The sacraments are Christ's instruction that must be acted upon. Like the proclamation of the Word, they communicate the gift from God, which undoubtedly seeks a response. Therefore, the effect of the sacraments in each recipient is "always the result of

a harmonic exchange between the gift of God and one's personal attitude" (Boersma and Levering, 2015:688). They bring to the fore the "mystery of the Incarnation" through the Spirit which by faith is visibly expressed and celebrated by the worshipers in the church (Boersma and Levering, 2015:689).

Gerrish (1982:118-130) presents a typology of three approaches in which the Reformers sought to interpret the Lord's Supper (Boersma and Levering, 2015:292). Firstly, Zwingli's approach was one of "symbolic memorialism", that is, "the Supper as a prompt for faithful spiritual remembrance" (Burnett, 2011:91-114; Boersma and Levering, 2015:292). Zwingli, it must be noted, "insisted that his approach was markedly different from Andreas Karlstadt and the sacramentarians, who believed in mere memorialism" (Boersma and Levering, 2015:292). Secondly, Bullinger's approach was one of "symbolic parallelism", which "admits to the significance of the Holy Spirit, but repeatedly with respect to *faith*, never with respect to the media of the sacraments themselves as Calvin does" (Rozeboom, 2010:87; Boersma and Levering, 2015:292). According to Rozeboom (2010:87), "The Spirit brings the believer and Christ together by faith, but this occurs alongside rather than through the sacramental media" (Boersma and Levering, 2015:292). Bullinger "was concerned that Calvin's use of the noun *instrumentum*, the verb, *exhibere*, and the preposition *per* ascribes more efficacy to the sacramental signs than to the Holy Spirit" (Bierma, 1999: 24; Boersma and Levering, 2015:292). Thirdly, Calvin's approach was one of "symbolic instrumentalism", which maintained that "the Supper and the very partaking of the elements served as a conduit or instrumental means by which Christ and the believer communed in the Spirit" (Boersma and Levering, 2015:292). Billings argues, "the sacramental sign has a 'union' with the substance of the sacrament (Christ) such that the substance must always be distinguished from the sign, that we may not transfer to the one what belongs to the other" (Billings, 2007: 119; Boersma and Levering, 2015: 292). Calvin posited that the fellowship between the believer and Christ "occurred by the Spirit's drawing the believer up to the local presence of Christ in the heavenly places, rather than by the incarnate Son being present to multiple earthly spatialities. He continued to oppose the doctrine of ubiquity even in affirming a real presence through the instrument of the sacrament" (Boersma and Levering, 2015: 292-293).

Moving beyond Zwingli's sacramental thinking, "The Reformed confessions affirm either 'symbolic parallelism' or 'symbolic instrumentalism' (Gerrish, 1982:128; Venema, 2001:167-168; Boersma and Levering, 2015:293). Rorem (1994:90) emphasizes:

In any case, the two views of the Lord's Supper have managed to live side by side within the Reformed tradition for centuries. Does a given Reformed statement of

faith consider the Lord's Supper as a testimony, an analogy, a parallel, even a simultaneous parallel to the internal workings of God's grace in granting communion with Christ? If so, the actual ancestor may be Bullinger, Zwingli's successor in Zurich. Or does it explicitly identify the Supper as the very instrument or means through which God offers and confers the grace of full communion with Christ's body? The lineage would then go back to John Calvin and Bucer (Boersma and Levering, 2015:293).

This thesis proposes that a confluence of the first two of these three approaches, notwithstanding that "all the confessions were clear that the Zwinglian approach was not viable as an alternative to the Roman and Lutheran doctrine's of Christ's presence", has the potential to offer a renewed alternative, ecclesiology for Protestant Evangelicalism (Boersma and Levering, 2015:293).

"Symbolic memorialism" or remembrance and "symbolic parallelism" make dynamic the rhythms of constant grace. This means that God's grace, which was lavished on the regenerate person through the act of repentance (crisis moment), is celebrated in remembered gratitude. The celebration of the grace bestowed then parallels the faith of the recipient as faith is nourished. The celebration is one of 'remembered hope'. It recaptures in memory the atoning eschatological work of Christ thereby reassuring the recipient of the constant grace that was bestowed or conferred upon regeneration. Ongoing faith in the power of the Spirit actualizes the reality of what is signified in the sacraments. Therefore, there is no magical, spiritual or influential power in the sacramental elements themselves. One needs to move away from drawing out the presence of Christ in the actual elements and focus on the presence of Christ in the life of the recipient. The proclamation of the Word (Gospel message) and the sacraments as the constant rhythms of grace are vital institutions of the Lord for His church. It is the church that is instrumental in proclaiming God's constant grace in Christ through the power of the Spirit. At no stage is the instrument (Church) or its sub-instruments (Word and Sacraments) equivalent to or greater than its creator (Christ). Nor are they equivalent to or greater than the sustaining Holy Spirit.

Grace ought not to be expressed in numeric conceptualizations, which is the case with Billings who alludes to the "double grace" of the Gospel message, that is, "justification in Christ and sanctification by his Spirit" (Billings, 2007:132). This assertion of "double grace" is a misleading term which undermines the regenerative thrust of Eph 2:8, - "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God". One's ongoing faith (through the ongoing sustenance of the Spirit) affirms the grace once revealed and received. Therefore, the Lord's Supper outworks through the Spirit, the once

revealed and received grace as a present continuous reality. Put this way, the sacraments in themselves do not “transubstantiate” or “consubstantiate”; rather they spiritually ‘substantiate’ the salvific work of Christ. In Chapter Six it was noted that among the list of the nine “founding commitments” of the Evangelical Alliance Noll endorses, “The work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of the sinner” (Noll, 2010:29). This ought to mean that it is the Spirit who “actualizes” or “keeps real” the grace of God in Christ in the life of the believer. The sacraments in themselves do not fulfil this role. The ‘thing’ they signify is paramount and its reality is mediated through the power of the Spirit. The Zwingli-Bullinger confluence, finds much of its sacramental ecclesiological expression in the work of Moltmann who offers the solution of “the sending of the Holy Spirit as the Sacrament of the Kingdom”: “Granted the remaining difference in Protestant-Catholic convergence – Christ as the exclusive sacrament of God, or the church as the fundamental sacrament and Christ as the primal sacrament – could this not be overcome through the Trinitarian understanding of the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit as the sacrament?” (Moltmann, 1977:202). This solution has Biblical and theological merit.

Furthermore, this study argues that Calvin’s ‘dynamic’ or ‘influential’ (Holy Spirit) sense need not be neglected or discarded altogether. It can be re-appropriated to the extent that Calvin can be a man of our time of Protestantism and not just a man caged within the confines of Reformed thought. Peterson, as noted in Chapter Six, asserts that Calvin’s Eucharistic hermeneutic had “spiritual depth” in that it was developed in such a way as to promise union with Christ, spiritual presence and a depth of participation seen in the mystery of Christ’s Body” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204). In developing his Eucharistic theology as “spiritual participation”, Calvin grounded the Reformed hermeneutic of covenant whereby “God has chosen to interact with humanity” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204). Here, substance is given to the notion that “Eucharistic remembrance is not merely a repetition or mnemonic reality but a manifestation of the whole of Christ to the whole people of God” (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204). The Reformed perspective that “the Lord’s Supper does not remember, complete or extend Christ’s work; rather, all was accomplished and is exemplified in it”, as well as the perspective that through the Eucharist we “see our access to the Father, find communion in the Spirit and anticipate the fullness of life in the kingdom”, are good points of departure for any renewed alternative, ecclesiology for Protestant Evangelicalism (Mannion and Borght, 2011:204-205). This study posits further that Calvin’s expressions (not necessarily what he meant by them) of “spiritual depth” and “spiritual participation” be reinterpreted and re-appropriated within the Zwingli-Bullinger confluence for a more nuanced renewed alternative, ecclesiology for Protestantism as a whole.

Stephens (2010:76) explores the sacramental understanding of Bullinger in the light of Zwingli. He seeks to establish the extent of continuity as well as the significant differences between them. He does this by analyzing Zwingli's later works on sacramental theology with reference to the Confessions of 1536, 1549, and 1566. He also considers some of the crucial aspects of Bullinger's 'correspondence' dialogue with Calvin. Stephens (2010:76) argues, "Much of what Zwingli wrote is concerned with what the sacraments are not, whereas the Confessions are more concerned with what they are. In the Confessions, moreover, God is the subject of the sacraments, and there is a clear conjunction as well as a distinction between the sign and what it signifies". This study proposes a confluence of Zwingli and Bullinger for the explicit reason that Bullinger, whilst generally viewed as a successor to Zwinglian sacramental thought, had developed some of Zwingli's ideas further in the light of his discussions with Calvin. Carrie Euler posits that Bullinger's sacramental thought "is best understood in the context of three priorities", namely, "the defense of Zwingli's reputation and the orthodoxy of the Zurich church, both of which required the refutation of any corporeal presence in the bread and wine; the development of Bullinger's own, more positive, spiritual interpretation of the Supper; and the desire to forge a Reformed consensus on the Eucharist, especially through agreement with John Calvin" (Euler in Wandel, 2013:66).

Zwingli rightly defines a sacrament as "a sign of a sacred thing, a visible form of invisible grace, and a public testimony" (Stephens, 2010:52). His positive affirmation is grounded in his hermeneutic that "the true body of Christ is present by the contemplation of faith" (Stephens, 2010:53). He held strongly that the sign (sacrament) and the thing signified (reality of the crucified, risen and ascended Christ) must be kept separate since the "sovereignty and freedom of God is not bound to the sacramental elements" (Van Dyke in Smith, 2008:69). Bromiley (1953:225) reiterates Zwingli's stance, "The sign was one thing, and in itself it was only as sign. The thing signified was quite another, and it had no necessary connection with the sign except that it was represented by it". Zwingli contended till his death that the sacraments could never be construed as the means of grace. He maintained that his "representational" interpretation was consistent with "Scripture" as well as "patristic authorities" (Van Dyke in Smith, 2008:69). In alluding to the church fathers, Zwingli posits, "They use exactly the same speech as we do, for they call the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ, although what they really mean is that they are the representation and memorial of his body and blood" (Bromiley, 1953:234).

Having established the key features in Zwingli's hermeneutics, which is most prevalent in the Free churches today, it is significant to note Van Dyke's comment: "it is a mistake to conclude that he [Zwingli] holds a 'mere' memorialism. He has no wish to deny the divine

presence of Jesus Christ in the Supper or in the community of faith. For Zwingli, the sacrament is much more than a 'calling to mind' of the person of Jesus Christ" (Smith, 2008:70). Bromiley (1953:183) posits, "The Supper cannot be merely a commemorative rite when the one commemorated is himself present and active amongst those who keep the feast". Zwingli, in his sacramental hermeneutics of "eating and drinking", cautiously "avoids language that both Bullinger and Calvin would, in later years, affirm" (Van Dyke in Smith, 2008:71). Zwingli posited that the sacraments give "historical faith" and explains this by alluding to "celebrations, monuments and statues" that impart "historical faith" or a "reminder of some past event" (Van Dyke in Smith, 2008:71). After the death of Zwingli, Bullinger continued to develop Zwingli's symbolic and representational sacramental understanding further. His defence of Zwingli's trajectory of "symbolic memorialism" was tested when confronted by Calvin. Van Dyke argues, "like Calvin, Bullinger affirmed the active role of Jesus Christ in self-giving grace at the Table" (Smith, 2008:72). Her conclusion is based on her interpretation of Bullinger's comments: "The Supper of the Lord is an holy action instituted unto the church from God, wherein the Lord, by the setting of bread and wine before us at the banquet, doth certify unto us his promise and communion, and sheweth unto us his gifts and layeth them before our senses" (Bullinger in *Decades*, V.9.403 quoted in Rorem, 1989:15).

Bullinger's comments here certainly do not argue for the conferring of grace or the sacraments as the means of grace as Calvin advocated. Van Dyke's terminology of "self-giving grace at the Table" is better described as the "presence of the Spirit at the table" that certifies and confirms, before our senses, the eschatological benefits (already and not-yet) of God's grace in Christ. Bullinger is certainly advocating the Zwinglian notion that the Lord instituted the Supper "not only that we might never forget" his "death for our sakes" but also "that we might publicly attest it with praise and thanksgiving, joining together for the greater magnifying and proclaiming of the matter in the eating and drinking of the sacrament" (Van Dyke in Smith, 2008:70; Bromiley, 1953:234). In the same token, Bullinger is moving beyond Zwingli to accommodate Calvin as best as he can. This is not so that he may present a Calvinistic view of the Lord's Supper but that he may, independently of both Calvin and Zwingli, present a view that is uniquely Bullingerian. Van Dyke argues that Bullinger's "affirmation of divine gracious activity in the Lord's Supper signals an important difference from Zwingli, who understood the congregation, in its acts of dedication and gratitude, to be the primary subjects in the sacrament" (Smith, 2008:72). Van Dyke's expression of "divine gracious activity" is better described as the "rhythms of grace".

Effectively, Bullinger builds on Zwingli's foundation of "symbolic memorialism" with its subjective emphasis by 'accommodating' Calvin's objective emphasis in the Supper. Stephens argues, "The Zurich Agreement is neither Bullingerian nor Calvinian. Both would have expressed their views differently, but both could affirm what it affirmed, even if offering their own interpretations. It could be described as a Calvinian view within the constraints imposed by Bullinger's theology or Bullinger's view stretched to embrace Calvin. The correspondence reveals their differences, for example, on the sacraments as instruments or as exhibiting. Yet both were able largely to accommodate the other's views, in substance if not in emphasis" (Stephens, 2010:67). Stephens furnishes an example of Calvin's "accommodating" when in responding to Bucer, "Calvin implies that he would have been glad to have expressed more clearly and fully the effect of the sacraments and what the Lord confers. Calvin accepts the use of *organum* instead of *instrumentum*, although that is neutralized for Bullinger by the assertion that all power is of God" (Stephens, 2010:68).

Bullinger's "symbolic parallelism" meant that the "eating of sacramental elements does not in itself confer grace, but the eating of the sacramental elements 'parallels' the analogous action. The bread and wine are a testimony to divine grace, not an instrument of divine grace" (Van Dyke in Smith, 2008:73). Bullinger also applies this parallel structure in contrasting the inward and outward aspects of the Lord's Supper which he expresses in the Second Helvetic Confession (Van Dyke in Smith, 2008:73). Bullinger's "symbolic parallelism" contrasts with the "symbolic instrumentalism" of Calvin. Whilst Zwingli was comfortable with the use of the term "instrument" to describe the Lord's Supper (albeit in a different way to Calvin), Bullinger, however, regarded the use of the term as misleading and avoided it (Stephens, 2010:74). The Zwingli-Bullinger confluence has the potential to revise and retrieve a unified system of sacramentality within the Reformed and Free Church traditions. Zwingli and Bullinger, in contrast to Schillebeeckx, present views on sacramental theology that are consistent with Scripture. It is interesting that both Baptist and Pentecostal responses to the Reformed View presented by Van Dyke have been well received: "Hers [Van Dyke's] is the best brief explanation of the subject I have ever read. Most leave Zwingli completely out, as if he were not Reformed! I am delighted to know that at least Van Dyke considers it to be a part of the Reformed tradition" (A Baptist Response, Smith, 2008: 87).

CHAPTER 8: **CONCLUSION**

This dissertation has explored the sacramental-ecclesiological hermeneutics of Schillebeeckx with specific reference to his work in *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*. Schillebeeckx undoubtedly works from the systemic awareness of Roman Catholic thought. He represents a system of sacramental ecclesiology that has localized Christ and his grace within the Roman Catholic Church and its sacraments. He attributes divine status to the Church and sacraments to the extent that the “Church itself is the Lord’s mystical body” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:48). He argues against any kind of dualism. His trajectory of the sacraments as “Christ’s heavenly activity in ecclesial-institutional form”, deals specifically with the crucial question of, “how, precisely, is the heavenly mystery of grace present in the sacraments?” (Schillebeeckx, 1963:54). He is convinced beyond doubt that the sacraments, including the sacrament of the risen Christ, are the only true means of grace for one’s personal encounter with God (Schillebeeckx, 1963:6). His hermeneutics have been counteracted in this dissertation on the basis that there is hardly any solid Scriptural support for his claims. This is the general Protestant Evangelical thinking concerning Schillebeeckx’s hermeneutics. His theological-ecclesiological framework and anthropological insinuations are undergirded by his church tradition. It is within this framework that this dissertation has sought its exploration and counter critique.

Furthermore, this dissertation has sought to use his hermeneutics as a foil against which to propose a renewed alternative, ecclesiology for Protestant Evangelicalism. Chapter Seven has proposed a confluence (though not exhaustive), which has the potential to overcome the impasse of sacramentality within Protestant Evangelicalism. Käsemann rightly posits, “Primitive Christianity proclaimed the one Church, not in the sense of a theory of organic development but in the name of the reality and the truth of the Holy Spirit” (1969: 257). He asks, “How was this possible? How can we take up this task in our own day? How can our insight into this diversity of ecclesiologies deepen and clarify our confession of the unity of Christ’s Church rather than destroy it? That is the central problem which we now have to put to ourselves. I am convinced that the solution of this problem lies neither on the historical plane nor at the level of organizational strategy. The unity of the Church was, is and remains primarily an eschatological property, to be enjoyed as a gift, never as an assured possession” (Käsemann, 1969:257). Schillebeeckx’s theology advocates a possession of the

Holy Spirit rather than the Holy Spirit possessing the church. The pre-eminence of the Holy Spirit in his Christological-ecclesiological perspectives is vastly undermined.

Chapter One (Introduction) has highlighted the interest, aims and methodology of this dissertation. Subsequent chapters have contextualized Schillebeeckx's theologizing and engaged with his views in conversation with scholars from within his own tradition as well as from within the Protestant Evangelical tradition. Schillebeeckx is an advocate of the "sacramental mystery" found in *Lumen Gentium* and he highly depends on it to amplify what is already an established hermeneutic within his tradition. His work is therefore not one of critical theory *per se*. In examining aspects of an earlier Schillebeeckx and a later Schillebeeckx, there seems to be a 'struggle' within his own theological mindset. However, he still articulates his hermeneutics within the constraints of his tradition. His sacramental hermeneutics advance a "sterile aestheticism and an almost narcissistic self-contemplation" (Dulles 1987: 195). As a remedy to his understanding, Dulles rightly suggests the consideration of the "values of structure, community, and mission" that is brought out in the other ecclesiological models (Dulles, 1987: 195). In terms of systematic theological method, he has not wholly considered "the assistance of the values of clarity, consistency, theoretical judgement, argument and dialectical comparison" (Flanagan, 2011:11). This dissertation has been set on a trajectory of openness by including both the Roman Catholic and Protestant Evangelical traditions to arrive at a holistic critique of his work. At the same time, it has reignited the need for more work (re-visioning and retrieval) to overcome the impasse of sacramental thought within Protestant Evangelicalism itself.

The sacraments as the unique mediation of Christ's salvific grace occupy Schillebeeckx's primary thought, which has been constantly brought out in this dissertation as problematic in terms of theological interpretation and method. Schillebeeckx's argues, "By the necessity of the minister's intention it is clearly shown that the sacraments are ecclesial acts. The minister performs the ritual act in the name of the Church and thus in the name of Christ; therefore he must will to do precisely what the Church asks. When the visible act is ecclesial it also manifests the sacramental meaning: viz., a ritual prayer of Christ and the Church which by that very fact bestows grace" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:106). He advocates further, "The sense and purpose of the whole sacramental event is to bring about encounter with Christ. Since such an encounter must involve both parties, the religious intent of the recipient (who in this context is the one going towards the encounter) belongs to the essence of any authentic sacrament; one, that is, which is a personal encounter with the living God. If the sacrament is thus not personally lived with religious intent the sacramentally mediated personal encounter with Christ, and therefore with God, cannot take place" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:133).

Propagating the unique mediation of Christ in the sacraments, as Schillebeeckx does, certainly attributes a 'glorified' status to the sacraments.

Van Dyke posits that the differences and similarities between Zwingli, Bullinger and Calvin, "mean that the Reformed tradition allows greater variety in sacramental understanding than either the Lutheran tradition or the Roman Catholic tradition" (Smith, 2008:79). Schillebeeckx refers to Calvinistic sacramental terminology as "superficially similar" to Catholicism but posits a "world of difference" between Calvinistic and Catholic interpretations concerning the "sacraments containing and really giving grace" (Schillebeeckx, 1963:185). MacGregor (2006:214) asserts that "throughout the *Institutes*, Calvin uses the term 'grace' equivocally: when discussing exegetical matters, grace refers, as in the Lutheran maxim *sola gratia*, to the unmerited favor of God; when teaching his flock how to live as faithful servants of God, however, grace alludes to a divine quasi-substance which empowers believers to perform works of righteousness". He concludes "since the sacraments fall for Calvin into the realm of practical theology, his doctrine of the mediation of grace through the Eucharist is predicated upon the latter instead of the former definition" (MacGregor, 2006: 214; Pelikan, 1984:152-153). In the *Institutes* Calvin asserts, "[The elements] offer Christ to us, and in him, the treasures of grace. They are useless if not received in faith" (Calvin, *Institutes*: 4.14.17). He amplifies his concept of Eucharistic grace by equating it with the omnipresent divinity of Christ, such that "the soul partakes of Christ in reality [and] by his energy it may grow spiritually" (Calvin, *Institutes*: 4.17.5).

Whilst Calvin advocates a mediatory role of the sacraments through the Holy Spirit, it is certainly different from the hermeneutics of Schillebeeckx. Davis (1995:7-8) summarizes, "We will see Calvin move from denying the Eucharist as an instrument of grace to affirming it as such. We will see Calvin develop a notion of substantial partaking of the true body and blood of Christ over his career; an emphasis that is practically absent, even denied, in his earliest teaching". It is best to let Calvin speak for himself here:

The office of the sacraments differs not from the word of God. They confer nothing, and avail nothing, if not received in faith. We must be aware of being led into a kindred error by the terms, somewhat too extravagant, which ancient Christian writers have employed in extolling the dignity of the sacraments. We must not suppose that there is some latent virtue inherent in the sacraments by which they, in themselves, confer the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon us, in the same way in which wine is drunk out of a cup, since the only office divinely assigned them is to attest and ratify the benevolence of the Lord towards us; and they avail no farther than accompanied by the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts, and make us capable of receiving this testimony, in which various distinguished graces are

clearly manifested. They do not of themselves bestow any grace, but they announce and manifest it, and, like earnest and badges, give a ratification of the gifts, which the divine liberality has bestowed upon us. Still we maintain that the internal grace of the Spirit, as it is distinct from the external ministration, ought to be viewed and considered separately. God, therefore, truly performs whatever he promises and figures by signs; nor are the signs without effect, for they prove that he is their true and faithful author. The only question here is, whether the Lord works by proper and intrinsic virtue (as it is called), or resigns his office to external symbols? We maintain, that whatever organs he employs detract nothing from his primary operation. In this doctrine of the sacraments, their dignity is highly extolled, their use plainly shown, their utility sufficiently proclaimed, and moderation in all things duly maintained; so that nothing is attributed to them, which ought not to be attributed, and nothing denied them, which they ought to possess. We ought to observe, that what the minister figures and attests by outward action, God performs inwardly, lest that which God claims for himself alone should be ascribed to mortal man. This Augustine is careful to observe: 'How does both God and Moses sanctify? Not Moses for God, but Moses by visible sacraments through his ministry, God by invisible grace through the Holy Spirit. Herein is the whole fruit of visible sacraments; for what do these visible sacraments avail without that sanctification of invisible grace?' (Calvin, Institutes: 4.14.17).

The sacramental theology of Schillebeeckx has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. This dissertation has established inconsistencies within his sacramental hermeneutics, which have been addressed within a sympathetic yet critical framework of informed dialogue. One need only be reminded of what Paul Avis asserts:

From the controversies of the Reformation period we should learn the dangers of polemic theology, or digging ourselves steadily deeper into entrenched positions, from which it becomes ever more difficult to hear what our interlocutor is saying. Theology should not be reactive, but contemplative. The 'object' of theology (as Barth and Torrance would remind us) is not a particular Christian tradition, or an individual theologian who argues a different case, but the revelation of the triune God as it is embodied and embedded in created reality (Mannion and Borght, 2011: Foreword, VII).

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