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Antoni Nadbrzeźny

# From Mother of the Redemption to Mother of All Believers

The Mariology of Edward Schillebeeckx



# Lublin Theological Studies

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Antoni Nadbrzeźny

# **From Mother of the Redemption to Mother of All Believers**

The Mariology of Edward Schillebeeckx

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## Introduction

A significant decline in the interest in Mariology was observed in the academic centers of Western Europe shortly after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Despite the richness of innovative content and methodological impulses stemming from Chapter VIII of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, frequently referred to as *Magna Carta* of contemporary Mariology, European theological circles did not respond with an immediate reflection on the mystery of Mary, the Mother of God. The decades-long *moratorium* on Mariological thought and work was an extreme reaction to the dominance of uncritical maximalist Mariology which immediately preceded the Council and was not rooted in the Bible, but was overly abstract, ignorant of its historical-salvific dimension and expressed in an outdated language.

From the outside, this period of “Mariological silence,” characterized by the evident decline in the number of publications on Mariology, can be perceived as an expression of the relegation of Mariological issues to the margins of theological thought. However, looking at the phenomenon from the point of view of the fundamental changes which have been taking place within the Mariological paradigm, one can notice the phases of gradual maturation of theological reflection on the Mother of God. The renewal of Catholic Mariology in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council has surely required some time and reflection.

The secularization of European societies, the positive phenomenon of women’s emancipation, radical cultural, political and religious changes, as well as the crisis of Thomistic metaphysics and the neo-scholastic theological method have become reasons for questioning and rejecting traditional Mariology which is now perceived as an obstacle for the credibility of Christianity. Many contemporaries strongly object to the outdated interpretations of basic Mariological themes, which are often idealistic and legendary. Marian piety is sometimes considered to be a manifestation of human frustration and complexes. In the context of the negative experiences of modern man, such as the rejection of the God hypothesis, a pessimistic sense of one’s own finitude, disappointment with and doubts about the meaning of human life and death, theology must present Mary as a real challenge (*Maria – een uitdaging*) and as a person who has universal meaning for human culture.<sup>1</sup>

In October 1990, during the international congress for Dominicans on Mariology in Huissen, the leading Flemish theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx, said the following words: “Authentic Marian devotion belongs to the essence of Christianity

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1 Wiel Logister, *Maria, een uitdaging* (Baarn: 1995), 6–7.



in which only Jesus Christ, referring all people to the one God, being the guide for all people on the path to the one God, can be called the central or focal point. Mary – the mother of this Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, our Lord – reflects in her gift of faith some of the splendor of her Son – of the *Kyrios Christ*.<sup>2</sup>

Edward Schillebeeckx's standpoint quoted above clearly indicates that after the period of putting aside Mariological issues, the time has come to recognize Mariology as an important field of theology, one that requires a refined theological and anthropological meaning. The statement quoted above not only indicates a renaissance of Mariological reflection in European theology which comes after the phase of "Mariological silence," but it is also an intellectual encouragement to undertake thorough research into the Mariology of one of the most outstanding contemporary theologians, Edward Schillebeeckx. A short presentation of his biography allows one to capture the essential ideological connections between his theology and other theological and philosophical trends mentioned already at the beginning of this study.

Edward Schillebeeckx<sup>3</sup> was born on 12 November 1914 in Antwerp, Belgium. At the age of 20 he entered the Dominican Order in Ghent. He studied in Leuven, where the Flemish Province of the Dominicans had its own research center. After the Second World War, he continued his studies in France at the Dominican center Le Saulchoir, where he met Father Marie-Dominique Chenu<sup>4</sup> and Father

2 "[...] Waarachtige Mariaverering behoort tot het wezen van het christendom, waarbinnen alleen Jezus Christus, verwijzend naar de al-enige God van alle mensen, in zijn van zichzelf weg-wijzen naar de enige God van alle mensen, centrum en focus mag worden genoemd. Maria: moeder van deze Jezus, de Christus, zoon Gods, onze Heer, weerspiegelt in haar gelovige overgave iets van de glans van haar zoon: Kurios Christos." MGVM, 57–8.

3 Stephan van Erp, "Tussen traditie en situatie. Edward Schillebeeckx voor een volgende generatie," *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 1 (2010): 8–18; Annekatrien Depoorter, "Tussen denken en leven. Een beknopte biografie van Edward Schillebeeckx," *Tijdschrift voor Geestelijk Leven* 1 (2009): 5–12; Battista Mondin, "Schillebeeckx," in Battista Mondin, *Dizionario dei teologi*, (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1992), 530–9; Erik Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx: een theoloog in zijn geschiedenis* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1999); John Bowden, *Edward Schillebeeckx. Portrait of a Theologian* (London: SCM Press, 1983); Richard Auwerda, *Dossier Schillebeeckx. Theoloog in de kerk der conflicten* (Bilthoven: Nelissen, 1969); Mark Schoof, "The Later Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx. The New Position of Theology after Vatican II," *The Clergy Review* 55 (1970): 943–60; Boniface Willems, "Edward Schillebeeckx," in *Tendenzen der Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine Geschichte in Porträts*, ed. Hans J. Schulz, (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1966), 602–7; Robert Schreiter, "Schillebeeckx," in *The Modern Theologians*, ed. David F. Ford (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997): 152–61; Antoni Nadbrzeźny, "Schillebeeckx Edward," in *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. 17, ed. Edward Gigilewicz (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2012), 1224–6.

4 Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, "In memoriam M.-D. Chenu (1895–1990)," *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 30 (1990): 184–5; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Je suis un théologien heureux* (Paris: Cerf, 1995), 149–152.

Yves Congar.<sup>5</sup> Then, he studied at Collège de France and at L'École des Hautes Études at the Sorbonne, where he improved his knowledge of patristics, medieval studies and contemporary philosophy. His early work was strongly influenced by the “nouvelle théologie.”<sup>6</sup> After defending his PhD on the basis of the dissertation *De Sacramentele heilseconomie*,<sup>7</sup> Schillebeeckx briefly lectured at Hoger Instituut voor Godsdienstwetenschappen at Leuven. In 1957, he took over the department of dogmatic theology and history of theology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen (now Radboud University), the Netherlands. The then Cardinal Bernard Jan Alfrink (1900–1987)<sup>8</sup> wanted the Theological Faculty of that university to be an intellectual partner in the ecclesiastical dialogue; hence, the Catholic University of Nijmegen was characterized by great independence from the Dutch episcopate.

The Second Vatican Council opened a new phase in Schillebeeckx's life. He was appointed theological expert and advisor to the Dutch episcopate during the Council sessions.<sup>9</sup> Then, he became known as one of the organizers of the Dutch Pastoral Council held in Noordwijkerhout in 1966–1970, which considered the idea of the Second Vatican Council's *aggiornamento* on a national scale.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, as editor-in-chief, Schillebeeckx actively participated in the work of the quarterly of Dutch and Flemish theologians, *Tijdschrift voor Theologie*, and was the head of the dogmatic section of *Concilium: International Journal for Theology*. His closest collaborators were his conciliar colleagues: Y. Congar, H. Küng, H. de Lubac and K. Rahner.

Two periods can be distinguished in Schillebeeckx's theological work. The first period covers the years 1946–1967, when his theological reflection followed phenomenological Thomism. Schillebeeckx discussed here the problems of sacramentology, Mariology and spiritual theology. His works from this period are characterized by the continuation of the method adopted at Le Saulchoir, which consists in the historical reconstruction of positive data, and the acceptance of the gnoseo-

5 Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, “In memoriam Yves Congar (1904–1995),” *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 35 (1995): 271–3.

6 Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie – New Theology. Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 120–2.

7 Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, *De sacramentele heilseconomie. Theologische bezinning op S. Thomas' sacramentenleer in het licht van de traditie en van de hedendaagse sacramentsproblematiek* (Antwerpen: Nelissen, 1952).

8 See Ton H.M. van Schaik, *Alfrink: Een biografie* (Amsterdam: Anthos, 1997).

9 Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Het Tweede Vaticaans Concilie, I* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1964); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Het Tweede Vaticaans Concilie, II* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1966).

10 Cf. Schillebeeckx, *Je suis un théologien heureux*, 58–60.

logical perspective which he adopted from the Dominican philosopher D. M. De Petter.<sup>11</sup>

The second period, which began around 1967, is characterized by a radical change in theological interests and the adoption of new methods. A research trip to the USA was the particular inspiration for this change.<sup>12</sup> During this period, Schillebeeckx abandoned the academic version of Thomism characterized by excessive abstraction, and, as a theologian, confronted intellectually modern hermeneutics. His interests focused on the dialogue between theology and the broadly understood experience of contemporaneity.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the Flemish theologian, as one of the first Catholic thinkers, introduced hermeneutic problems to systematic theology, developing new concepts of Christology, ecclesiology and Mariology.<sup>14</sup>

Some of Schillebeeckx's theological theses became the subject of doctrinal examination on the part of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The first official investigation within the Congregation took place in 1968 and concerned some ambiguities in the interpretation of the idea of secularization. A renewed investigation was undertaken in 1978 after the publication of two monumental works on Christology: *Jesus, het verhaal van een levende* (1974) and *Gerechtigheid en liefde. Genade en bevrijding* (1977). Summoned by the Congregation, Schillebeeckx came to Rome in December 1979 to explain his innovative theological views. The third official investigation at the Congregation began in 1984 and concerned Schillebeeckx's writings on Church ministry.<sup>15</sup> Although ecclesiastical disciplinary sanctions were never imposed, the explanations provided by Schillebeeckx were not considered sufficient.<sup>16</sup> In this period, he received many honorary doctorates (also from the Catholic University of Leuven in 1974) and the prestigious European Erasmus prize in 1983.

11 Cf. Dries Bosschaert and Stephan van Erp, "Schillebeeckx's Metaphysics and Epistemology: The Influence of Dominicus De Petter," in *T&T Clark Handbook of Edward Schillebeeckx*, eds. Stephan van Erp and Daniel Minch (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 29–44.

12 Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, "Katholiek leven in de Verenigde Staten," *De Bazuin* 51, no. 17 (1968): 1–6; Schillebeeckx, "De schok van de toekomst in Amerika," *De Bazuin* 41, no. 41 (1971): 1–8.

13 Rosino Gibellini, "Préface. Honnêtes envers le monde. La théologie de frontière d'Edward Schillebeeckx," in Schillebeeckx, *Je suis un théologien heureux*, 9–14.

14 Cf. Ted Schoof and Jan van de Westelaken, *Bibliography 1936–1996 of Edward Schillebeeckx O.P.* (Nijmegen: Nelissen, 1997).

15 Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Kerkelijk ambt. Voorgangers in de gemeente van Jesus Christus* (Bloemendaal: Nelissen, 1980); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Pleidooi voor mensen in de kerk. Christelijke identiteit en ambten in de kerk* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1985).

16 Schillebeeckx, *Je suis un théologien heureux*, 67–77; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Theologisch testament. Notarieel nog niet verleden* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1994), 59–66; Ted Schoof, *De zaak Schillebeeckx* (Bloemendaal: Nelissen, 1980); Pierre Grelot, *Église et ministères. Pour un dialogue critique avec E. Schillebeeckx* (Paris: Cerf, 1983).

From the second half of the 1960s, Schillebeeckx developed and propagated hermeneutic theology understood as a reflection on Christian experience. By hermeneutics he meant not only the art of interpreting specific passages from the Bible or Tradition, but also the interpretation of the totality of faith in order to obtain its credible actualization in a given cultural context. Until the end of his life, the Flemish theologian focused on Christological, hermeneutic and ecclesiological problems. He died in Nijmegen on 23 December 2009.<sup>17</sup>

After analyzing Schillebeeckx's bibliography, it must be said that due to the relatively small number of published Mariological texts, he is not considered as one of the most prominent contemporary Mariologists, who include G. Roschini, C. Balić, W. Beinert, R. Laurentin, G. Philips, F. Courth, S. de Fiores, and B. Forte. In lexicons, encyclopedias and textbooks of theology, Schillebeeckx is presented mainly as an outstanding theologian in the field of Christology, sacramentology and ecclesiology. He is known internationally as the author of the comprehensive Christological trilogy which has been translated into many languages.<sup>18</sup> It should be remembered, however, that the extensive bibliography of Schillebeeckx's works reveals a wide spectrum of his interests, including issues directly related to Mariology.

When conducting research on Schillebeeckx's Mariology, one should bear in mind the fact that most of his Mariological works had been written before the Second Vatican Council, which does not mean, however, that the neo-scholastic model of theology had been uncritically adopted by him. Schillebeeckx clearly refers in his Mariology to Augustinianism, existentialism, phenomenology, philosophy of dialogue, hermeneutics, and even structuralism, wishing to develop a biblical and historical-salvific perspective which was seriously neglected by Catholic theology in the first half of the 20th century. In the face of intellectual confrontation with Hegelianism, evolutionism and historical materialism, there was a growing need to develop an in-depth theological reflection on history, which could contribute to the construction of a diachronic theology. Research on the Mariological works of Edward Schillebeeckx confirms that also in this field he turned out to be a creative, courageous and innovative theologian. The Latin maxim *non multa sed multum* (not quantity but quality) describes perfectly his achievements in the field of Mariology, which might be small in terms of quantity, but are rich in terms of their content.

17 Antoni Nadbrzeżny, "Edward Schillebeeckx OP (1914–2009) als een pionier van de hermeneutische theologie," in *Plurima sub falso tegmine vera latent. The Embarrassments of Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Agnieszka Flor-Górecka (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2022), 185–6; Nadbrzeżny, "Teolog w świecie konfliktów. In memoriam Edward Schillebeeckx (1914–2009)," *Roczniki Teologii Dogmatycznej* 57, no. 2 (2010): 119–29.

18 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jezus, het verhaal van een levende* (Bloemendaal: Nelissen, 1974); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Gerechtigheid en liefde. Genade en bevrijding* (Bloemendaal: Nelissen, 1977); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Mensen als verhaal van God* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1989).

This book aims to reconstruct, present and evaluate Edward Schillebeeckx's Mariology, to demonstrate the discipline's development from the pre-Vatican II concepts to contemporary approaches, while taking into account the importance of Schillebeeckx's ideas for the renewal of this theological field.

The following specific questions arise from the intellectual encounter with Schillebeeckx's Mariology: What is the significance of the biblical image of Mary for contemporary systematic Mariology? Is the pluralism of biblical Mariologies true? Which biblical themes should be developed in the construction of modern Mariology? Why is Mary's dynamic faith a hermeneutic key to the understanding of her unique place in the history of salvation?

Moreover, it is worth inquiring about the fundamental issue of Mary's participation in the redemption accomplished by Christ: Is the description of Mary as an intermediary, used in the Catholic tradition, theologically correct? In what sense does Mary act as the representative of all humanity before God? An in-depth analysis of Schillebeeckx's Mariological achievements also prompts us to seek answers to the question about the meaning of Mary's universal spiritual motherhood. Should Mary's motherhood continue to be the leading idea in Mariology? What is Mary's relationship with Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church and humanity?

In researching Schillebeeckx's Mariology, issues related to the veneration of the Mother of God cannot be ignored. Hence, theological analysis in this book include Marian piety, its theological and psychological justification, the meaning of popular piety and the extremely interesting function of the so-called private Marian apparitions. In the context of the issues discussed, the following additional questions arise: What is Mary's meaning for the contemporary practice of Christian life? How does the broadly understood human experience influence the shape of contemporary Marian piety? What ways of renewing Marian devotions does Edward Schillebeeckx propose?

Fundamental questions about the merits of Mariology are inevitably accompanied by the issues related to meta-Mariology. They concern not so much the substantial image of Mary, but rather the issues related to the way of practicing Mariology. Again, it is worth asking: Why does the historical-salvific Mariology promoted by Schillebeeckx reflect better the truth about the person and life of Mary than the static, speculative pre-Vatican II Mariology? What are the tasks of contemporary exegesis and hermeneutics in developing Mariology? What methods are induced by the modern way of thinking about reality? Which theological sources (*loci theologici*) should be valued and appreciated in Mariological reflection? What factors influence the shape of Mariological language? What determines the universalistic character of Mariology? Should contemporary Mariology be constructed on the basis of specific systems, trends or philosophical ideas? What context is required for Mariological reflection? What is the role of modern experience in

creating a theological image of Mary? Ultimately, one must attempt to indicate the methodological directions for the future developments in Mariology.

Research into Schillebeeckx's thought conducted for the sake of this book attempts to find reasonable answers to the above questions or, at least, to create theological premises for solving the outlined problems. The results of this search not only draw attention to the importance of Mariological issues in the current cultural context and report on Edward Schillebeeckx's Mariological views, but also show their genesis, development, and connection with the changes typical of our era and with other areas of theology. They also demonstrate consistency or inconsistency with the latest trends in the Catholic doctrine and attempt to evaluate Schillebeeckx's thought.

The book also undertakes the task of exploring the personalistic aspect of Schillebeeckx's thought and presenting his Mariological reflection as a solid basis for developing a dynamic, historical-salvific and realistic Mariology. A significant problem arises at this point: Is it methodologically correct to use the term "personalism" in relation to Schillebeeckx's theology? In this book, I try to prove the thesis that in the period immediately preceding the Second Vatican Council Schillebeeckx sought to develop a phenomenological and personalistic Mariology inspired by Augustinian thought. It was only in the post-conciliar years that his tendency to construct Mariology based on philosophical anthropology weakened. For this reason, it is difficult to talk about Schillebeeckx's personalism understood as a modern version of that philosophical and theological system. Instead, one can discern in his thought a valuable anthropological sensitivity in the appreciation for the conscious subjective side of the personal being (the internal personal dynamism, the dialogic way of being, the freedom-oriented structure of being), which may be at least a starting point for the creation of a coherent personalistic Mariology. An in-depth analysis of Schillebeeckx's entire Mariological work performed in a dynamic relationship with other areas of theology and science allows for the discovery of a whole range of the so-called "personalistic moments" in his Mariology. These are characteristic fundamental themes that may constitute important ideas for building a strictly personalistic Mariology.

In order to achieve my research goal, I had to analyze thoroughly the basic source material which consists of Edward Schillebeeckx's book publications in the field of Mariology and a number of his articles in theological and popular science journals as well as specialized dictionaries. On the occasion of the Marian Year (1954) announced by Pope Pius XII, Schillebeeckx wrote a book on Mariology entitled *Maria, Christus' mooiste wonderschepping*<sup>19</sup> (*Mary, Christ's Most Beautiful*

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19 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Maria, Christus' mooiste wonderschepping. Religieuze grondlijnen van het Maria-mysterie* (Antwerpen: Apostolaat van de Rozenkrans, 1954).

Creation). Soon, the work was extended and given a new title: *Maria, moeder van de verlossing*<sup>20</sup> (*Mary, Mother of the Redemption*). In the following years, the work was translated into many languages.<sup>21</sup> It was enthusiastically received among the supporters of Mariological renewal and undoubtedly contributed to the preparation of Chapter VIII of the constitution *Lumen Gentium*. Due to the historical-salvific, sacramental and personalistic dimension of the proposed Mariology, Schillebeeckx, like M. Schmaus and R. Laurentin, is included among the precursors of the Conciliar concept of Mariology.<sup>22</sup>

The theology of the Flemish Dominican is of particular interest to Western European and American research centers, although it is also necessary to emphasize the growing interest in Schillebeeckx's thought among theologians from Asia.

The authors of the few Polish studies of Schillebeeckx's thought (Andrzej Zuberbier, Czesław Bartnik, Alfons Nossol, Stanisław Napiórkowski, Alfons Skowronek) focus almost exclusively on sacramentological and Christological issues. Particularly noteworthy are the books and articles by Antoni Nadbrzeżny,<sup>23</sup> which are entirely devoted to Schillebeeckx's ecclesiology and soteriology.

The authors of many foreign studies on Edward Schillebeeckx's ideas focus mainly on issues related to sacramentology, Christology, ecclesiology, hermeneutics, eschatology, soteriology and theological anthropology. The works of Stephan van Erp,<sup>24</sup>

20 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Maria, moeder van de verlossing. Religieuze grondlijnen van het Maria-mysterie* (Antwerpen: Apostolaat van de Rozenkrans, 1955).

21 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Marie, mère de la rédemption* (Paris: Cerf, 1963); *Mary, Mother of the Redemption* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964); *Maria, madre della redenzione* (Catania: Paoline, 1965); *Maria, madre de la redención* (Madrid: Fax, 1969).

22 "Schmaus e Laurentin, Schillebeeckx rappresentano la punta dei mariologi che preparano la posizione del Concilio e aprono la strada ad ulteriori traguardi." Stefano de Fiores, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea* (Roma: Centro di Cultura Mariana "Mater Ecclesiae," 1987), 107.

23 Cf. Antoni Nadbrzeżny, "Kerk en bevrijding in het denken van Edward Schillebeeckx," *Roczniki Teologiczne* 64, no. 7 (2017): 97–107; "De receptie van de de theologie van Edward Schillebeeckx in Polen (1965–2016)," in *De Lage Landen en de religie. De positie van de religie in verschillende culturele aspecten*, ed. Bas Hammers and Muriel Waterlot, 65–76 (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2017); "Tussen sacralisatie en banalisering. Lijden in de theologie van Edward Schillebeeckx," *Roczniki Teologiczne* 45, no. 2 (2018): 47–61; *Filozofia zbawienia. Soteriologia egzystencjalna Paula Tillicha i Edwarda Schillebeeckxa* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2020); "Kościół jako sakrament dialogu według Edwarda Schillebeeckxa," *Roczniki Teologiczne* 50, no. 2 (2003): 229–42; *Sakrament wyzwolenia. Zbawcze posłannictwo Kościoła w posoborowej eklezjologii holenderskiej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013).

24 Cf. Stephan van Erp, Martin G. Poulosom, and Lieven Boeve, eds. *Grace, Governance and Globalization* (London: T&T Clark, 2018).

Erik Borgman,<sup>25</sup> Robert Schreiter,<sup>26</sup> Lieven Boeve,<sup>27</sup> Philip Kennedy,<sup>28</sup> Ignace D’hert,<sup>29</sup> Hadewych Snijdwind,<sup>30</sup> Pim Valkenberg,<sup>31</sup> Raymond Winling,<sup>32</sup> Mary Catherine Hilkert,<sup>33</sup> Ted Schoof,<sup>34</sup> and Roger Haight<sup>35</sup> are of great help in interpreting Schillebeeckx’s theological views. They present the main ideas of Schillebeeckx’s theology in the broad context of current religious, theological, ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical experiences. The works of the above authors present the basic epistemological assumptions of the narrative and phenomenological manner of practicing theology, which is also visible in the Mariology he created.

No attempt has been made in theological research so far to comprehensively describe the issues of Mariology developed by Edward Schillebeeckx. This monograph fills the gap. It was written by a Polish theologian and is an extended version of his doctoral dissertation defended at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Poland) in 2002. It is safe to say that the book is an expression of the contextual reception of Edward Schillebeeckx’s Mariology in Poland, where Marian piety – supported and shaped by Cardinal Karol Wojtyła (1920–2005), the later Pope John Paul II,<sup>36</sup> and the Cardinal Primate Stefan Wyszyński (1901–1981) – was a significant spiritual force in a largely Catholic society and an important factor that united the Church community against the pressure of the communist regime.<sup>37</sup>

25 Cf. Erik Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx. A Theologian in His History*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

26 Cf. Mary Catherine Hilkert and Robert J. Schreiter, eds., *The Praxis of the Reign of God. An Introduction to the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

27 Cf. Lieven Boeve, Frederiek Depoortere and Stephan Van Erp, eds. *Edward Schillebeeckx and Contemporary Theology* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010).

28 Cf. Philip Kennedy, *Schillebeeckx* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993).

29 Cf. Ignace D’hert, *Een spoor voor ons getrokken. De Jezustrilogie van Edward Schillebeeckx* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1997).

30 Cf. Hadewych Snijdwind, *Leeswijzer bij “Jezus, het verhaal van een Levende” van Edward Schillebeeckx* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1994).

31 Cf. Pim Valkenberg, *Leeswijzer bij “Mensen als verhaal van God” van Edward Schillebeeckx* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1991).

32 Cf. Raymond Winling, *Teologia współczesna 1945–1980* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo ZNAK, 1990), 349–53.

33 Cf. Mary Catherine Hilkert, “Hermeneutics of History in the Theology of Edward Schillebeeckx,” *The Tomist* 51, no. 1 (1987): 97–145.

34 Cf. Ted Schoof, “Edward Schillebeeckx – De laatste twintig jaar,” *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 50, no. 1 (2010): 144–152.

35 Cf. Roger Haight, “Engagement met de wereld als zaak van God – Christologie & postmoderniteit,” *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 1 (2010): 73–94.

36 Cf. Kazimierz Pek, Stanisław C. Napiórkowski and Waclaw Siwak, eds., *The Debate about Mariology of John Paul II* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Heritage, 2018); Pek, *Totus Tuus Renewed – John Paul II* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2021).

37 Cf. Ryszard Ficek, “Mariological Dimension of the Theological and Pastoral Concepts of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland,” *Studia Sandomierskie* 27 (2021): 229–49.



Although Schillebeeckx's Mariological thought waited a rather long time to be elaborated upon in the form of a monograph, it cannot be argued that it has been overlooked or underestimated in the past decades. It is necessary to notice and appreciate the few minor studies that have been written so far on the Mariology of this outstanding Flemish theologian. A mini-synthesis of Schillebeeckx's Mariology was provided by Stefano de Fiores in the book *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*,<sup>38</sup> which presented historical circumstances of the creation of Schillebeeckx's basic Mariological work, *Maria, moeder van de verlossing (Mary, Mother of the Redemption)*, and provided a short theological description that can serve as a good introduction to the reflection on Schillebeeckx's Mariology practiced in the context of meta-dogmatic (functional) Christology. Unfortunately, the theologically reliable publication by Stefano de Fiores does not include the analysis of a number of Mariological articles written by Schillebeeckx and does not take into account his latest bibliography.

The first part of Carl Straeter's book *La mariologia secondo la "nuova teologia" olandese*<sup>39</sup> presents quite extensively the hermeneutic principles of theology developed by Edward Schillebeeckx, while the second part contains only an outline of the theological image of Mary contained in the historical-salvific orientation of the "Dutch Catechism" written by P. Schoonenberg and E. Schillebeeckx.<sup>40</sup> Straeter's study is limited to a brief and schematic overview of the most important Mariological themes: Mary's divine motherhood, her virginity, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption and the relationship of the Mother of God to the Church. Apart from Schillebeeckx's views, the author presents, in a rather general way, Mariological concepts of other representatives of the so-called "Dutch school": P. Schoonenberg, F. Mamlberg, W. Bless, and F. Haarsma.

An article by D. Fernández entitled "María en las recientes cristologías holandesas"<sup>41</sup> contains a comparative analysis of Mariological views of the representatives of "Dutch Christology." It emphasizes biblical, historical-salvific and functional dimension of the theological image of Mary as the fundamental implication of Christology practiced from a meta-dogmatic perspective by such theologians as E. Schillebeeckx, P. Schoonenberg, or A. Hulsbosch.

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38 Cf. de Fiores, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, 103–7.

39 Cf. Carl Straeter, *La mariologia secondo la "nuova teologia" olandese* (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1972).

40 Cf. *De Nieuwe Katechismus. Geloofsverkondiging voor volwassenen* (Antwerpen: Paul Brand, 1966). German translation: *Glaubensverkündigung für Erwachsene. Deutsche Ausgabe des Holländischen Katechismus* (Nijmegen-Utrecht: Dekker & Van De Vegt, 1968).

41 Cf. Domiciano Fernández, "María en las recientes cristologías holandesas," *Estudios Marianos* 47 (1982): 47–72.

The article “Op zoek naar Maria ... en verder! Schillebeeckx’ mariologie en haar actuele betekenis” authored by Dutch theologian Erik Borgman is worthy of note.<sup>42</sup> It provides useful and inspiring ideas to be studied in my research on the Mariology of Schillebeeckx. Presenting the main lines of Schillebeeckx’s theological thinking, the article encourages us to develop a renewed Mariology in the spirit of Christian personalism and humanism.

A recently published article by American author Julia Feder from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, entitled “Mary, Model of Eschatological Faith” is particularly noteworthy.<sup>43</sup> Based on a thorough analysis of Schillebeeckx’s Mariology, the article is an example of a deep reflection on the mystery of the person of Mary from the perspective of her dynamically developing faith. The presentation of Mary’s eschatological faith as a model for all believers corresponds perfectly to the directions for the renewal of Catholic Mariology indicated by the Second Vatican Council.

Despite the fact that the above-mentioned scientific works undoubtedly contain many interesting and inspiring threads, they are by definition only aspectual approaches to Schillebeeckx’s Mariology. This monograph aims to be an integral presentation of Schillebeeckx’s Mariological thought and to justify the statement that his thought constitutes a solid basis for building axiological Mariology, in which the person of Mary is a fascinating example of fidelity to values such as dialogue, responsibility, cooperation and solidarity. The most prominent commentators on Schillebeeckx’s theology include S. van Erp, E. Borgman, R. Schreiter, Ph. Kennedy, L. Boeve, M.C. Hilker, K. McManus, I. D’hert, H. Snijndewind, T. Schoof, F. Depoortere, D. Minch, and many others.<sup>44</sup> Review of the theological bibliography confirms the lack of a monograph on Edward Schillebeeckx’s Mariology.

The method used in this book is a complex one. According to the classical approach to general methodology, research methods should be distinguished from the methods of a lecture on academic material. In the research process that has led to the writing of this book, I used the analytical and heuristic method at the stage of studying literature. The method covers the entirety of cognitive measures aimed at

42 Cf. Borgman, “Op zoek naar Maria ... en verder! Schillebeeckx’ mariologie en haar actuele betekenis,” *Tijdschrift voor theologie* 33 (1993): 241–66.

43 Cf. Julia Feder, “Mary, Model of Eschatological Faith,” in *T&T Handbook of Edward Schillebeeckx*, eds. Stephan van Erp and Daniel Minch (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 326–39.

44 Cf. Stephan van Erp, Christopher Cimorelli and Christiane Alpers, eds., *Salvation in the World. The Crossroads of Public Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Stephan van Erp and D. Minch, eds., *T&T Handbook of Edward Schillebeeckx* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019); Daniel Minch, *Eschatological Hermeneutics. The Theological Core of Experience and Our Hope For Salvation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Marijn de Jong, *Metaphysics of Mystery. Revisiting the Question of Universality through Rahner and Schillebeeckx* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

determining the scope of the sources, the aspect of research and the identification of the content that constitutes the narrow context of the analyzed issues. After a thorough analysis of the extensive source material, I used the method of interpreting Schillebeeckx's Mariological views in relation to the philosophical assumptions accepted by him, namely, the phenomenological, existentialist, structuralist and personalistic assumptions, and then comparing them to the basic tendencies of contemporary Mariology. Such a methodological procedure allowed me to determine the ideological orientation of the analyzed contents and enabled me to show the interdisciplinary aspects of Schillebeeckx's theology, as well as to outline the possibilities for the development of Mariology as a theological sub-discipline. In the next stage, I made an attempt to identify personalistic elements in Schillebeeckx's Mariology. The main point here was to highlight the fundamental ideas that can constitute a reliable basis for the development of historical-salvific and personalistic Mariology recommended by the Second Vatican Council (cf. LG 55, 24, GS 62).

Upon the completion of the analytical stage, the content obtained was systematized in terms of the concept adopted for this work. For this purpose, I used the method of critical synthesis, which aimed at creating a coherent theological structure that would solve the problems confronted in this work, along with the evaluation of the views discussed. This critical approach, necessary to maintain the scientific nature of this book, allowed me to show the dynamics of the developments in Edward Schillebeeckx's Mariological thought, to define the directions of change in content and methodology, to notice modifications in the field of theological language, and to show the influence of innovative, relational concepts of theological sources (*loci theologici*) on the shape of the theological icon of Mary in the future (such as his original concept of experience, the liturgy, and the Church).

The systematization of the researched material required integration of various types of theological language typical of the subsequent stages of Schillebeeckx's work and reflecting his fascination with many contemporary philosophical, theological and cultural trends, including Thomism, phenomenology, existentialism, philosophy of dialogue, structuralism, liberation theology, feminist theology, hermeneutics, experience, and secularization.

This book consists of six chapters. In each of these chapters, the first section deals with important methodological issues which affect the meritorious originality in the field of Mariology presented in the subsequent parts. The first chapter presents the biblical image of the Mother of God, which allows us to see the essential revelatory and transcendent dimension in the individual story of Mary of Nazareth. Exegetical analysis of the relevant fragments of the Bible allows us to discover the developmental character of faith in the person of the Mother of God, which constitutes the hermeneutic key in determining her role in the history of salvation.

The second chapter addresses the problem of defining Mary's place and role in the history of salvation. Mary's participation in the objective and subjective

redemption is the central subject of analysis here. Theological research allows us to conclude that the category of salvation history constitutes a fundamental idea in the renewal of Mariology postulated by the Second Vatican Council. Departure from a purely biographical Mariology, which is often legendary or static, unrealistic and excessively abstract, is a *sine qua non* condition for a credible presentation of the Catholic doctrine of the Mother of God to contemporary people who are more open to narrative Mariology.

Mary's relationship with the Church is the subject of the third chapter. Due to the relational concept of the Church as a "sacrament of dialogue," Mary can be presented as the Mother of Christ not only from an individual perspective, but also from a universal perspective as the spiritual Mother of all believers. The universal spiritual motherhood of Mary, which is deeply rooted in the Church understood as *communio*, does not exclude the assumption that Mary, as the Mother of the Church, remains for us and with us as our great Sister in faith.

The fourth chapter is a theological reflection on the complex reality of Marian veneration in the context of the basic structure of Christian prayer which is based on the scheme: to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. It also discusses the phenomenon of Marian apparitions and popular piety which is only a subjective "theological source" (*locus theologicus*) within theological methodology.

In the fifth chapter, I attempt to present the directions for the development of Edward Schillebeeckx's Mariology, both in terms of content and methodology. At the same time, I emphasize the need to take into account the biblical dimension more fully, to appreciate the pneumatological and ecclesiological issues in Mariological research and to develop a new theological language, adequate for the mentality and intellect of modern man.

The structure adopted for this book allows for an exhaustive presentation of the results of research on this topic which is the analysis of Edward Schillebeeckx's Mariology in the context of contemporary cultural, social and religious changes. Individual chapters create a coherent system and allow for a comprehensive presentation of the issues discussed and for highlighting the factors that determine both the development of Mariological thought in the work of Edward Schillebeeckx, and its inspiring value for the contemporary reader who experiences difficulties in understanding the deeper meaning of theological statements about the role of Mary in the life of Christ and the Church.



## I. A Biblical Icon of Mary

Pre-Vatican II Mariology, which was mainly constructed on the grounds of the speculative method, had gradually reached the state of deep crisis that manifested itself in the extreme autonomization and isolation from other fields of theology, and the abstraction of theological language. Despite the intellectually high level of rationally presented, revealed truths, speculative Mariology did not take into account the proper hierarchy of theological sources (*loci theologici*). Excessive exposition of the doctrinal statements made by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church had led to a depreciation of biblical sources. As a result, biblical statements, recognized and accepted only as external theological arguments, were completely subordinated to systematic assumptions. They were treated instrumentally as an exemplification of previously adopted Mariological theses. Biblical Mariology, understood as a systematic, historical and critical elaboration of Mariological topics based on biblical literature, was expected to be the remedy for the crisis.

In the mid-1950s, Edward Schillebeeckx showed appreciation for biblical content in Mariological reflection and presented Mary in a new light. The return to the Bible resulted in Schillebeeckx's work in the revival of Mariological language as far as the formal aspect is concerned and, as regards the meritorious aspect, in the identification of Mary's epiphanic character and the presentation of the dynamic development of her faith.

### 1. The Biblical Foundation of Mariological Language

Within modern methodology of theology, more and more attention is paid to the problem of language. The latter is recognized not only as an instrument of cognition and organization of acquired knowledge, but also as the subject of thorough theological reflection. Research into language undertaken by analytical philosophy,

structuralism and hermeneutics led to a “linguistic revolution,” which in theology resulted in an increase in semiological sensitivity.<sup>45</sup>

Each scientific discipline uses its own specialist language, which is a function of both the research subject matter and the adopted method. Specialization within the sciences entails appropriate language specification. This is also the case in theology, in which smaller language units are distinguished within the individual areas of theology. Hence, one can reasonably speak of Mariological language as a linguistic substructure of dogmatic language.

The language of Mariology is not an autonomous system of signs isolated from dogmatic language and nor governed by an independent set of rules, although it should be remembered that, due to its subject matter, Mariological language uses distinctive vocabulary. Under the pressure of numerous contemporary linguistic and hermeneutic trends, Mariology must pose a critical question about the *status quo* of its own language, a language it wishes to use in order to describe the reality it studies.

The construction of Mariological language, although often done in an intuitive way, cannot be the result of chance or randomness. Instead, it requires methodological discipline which will ensure correctness, soundness, orthodoxy, and coherence of the constructed language. These, in turn, are indispensable conditions for objectivity, precision and clarity of communication of theological knowledge.<sup>46</sup> The post-conciliar revival associated with the enhancement of Mariology’s biblical character inclines us to address the problem of the relationship between the modern language of Mariology and the language of the Bible.

The theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx, sees an urgent need to connect the entirety of dogmatic thought with thorough biblical exegesis. At the same time, the

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45 Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, “The Crisis in the Language of Faith as a Hermeneutical Problem,” *Concilium* 9, no. 5 (1973): 31–45; Edward Schillebeeckx, *God the Future of Man* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1969); John Shea, *Religious Language in a Secular Culture. A Study in the Theology of Langdon Gilkey* (Mundelein, IL: University of St. Mary of the Lake, 1976); Langdon Gilkey, *Naming of Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969); Anton Grabner-Haider, *Glaubenssprache. Ihre Struktur und Anwendbarkeit in Verkündigung und Theologie* (Wien: Herder, 1975); Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Józef Życiński, *Three Cultures: Science, the Humanities and Religious Values* (Tucson: Pachart Publishing House, 1990); Günther Schiwy, *Neue Aspekte des Strukturalismus* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1971); Czesław Bartnik, “Możliwość stosowania analizy strukturalistycznej w teologii,” *Znak* 25 (1973): 720–38; Peter Richardson, Charles Mueller and Stephen Pihlaja, *Cognitive Linguistics and Religious Language* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

46 Stanisław C. Napiórkowski, *Matka naszego Pana* (Tarnów: Biblos, 1992), 97–9; cf. Stanisław C. Napiórkowski, “Où en est la mariologie?” *Concilium* 3 no. 29 (1967): 97–112.

connection between dogmatic theology and biblical theology acquires the necessary character and results from the very essence of Christian revelation, which by definition has a dialogic dimension.<sup>47</sup>

Revelation is not a static code of truths of faith, but a vivid dialogue between a human being and God held within a historical context; a dialogue which leads to the formation of the language that communicates redemption and takes the form of things, words, texts, people, and events.<sup>48</sup> The awareness of the revelation – constituted by God’s words and deeds, and handed down in the Tradition – is gradually growing in the People of God. This awareness consistently tends to be expressed in scriptural language, which, as an important element, co-creates the Church.<sup>49</sup> Due to the Bible, theology from the very beginning seems to have had a pre-existing language, which constitutes the basis for the further shaping of dogmatic language.

Mariology arises from biblical exegesis, although it is not identified with it. By analogy, Mariological language is created on the basis of the biblical language, but is not limited to it, because it cannot treat the Bible in an instrumental way as a formal, external or literary justification for the theses expressed as a result of previous speculation. Within theological *topoi*, the Bible always comes in the first place, being a constitutive source of knowledge and argumentation as well as the norm of every theological undertaking (*norma normans non normata*). Biblical Mariology has a critical function in dogmatic theses which are a systematic expression of God’s revelation by means of a new, more adequately formulated contemporary language. The reception of the Word of God can take different forms, depending on the historical and social context of the particular era. The way that Divine Revelation is being reinterpreted again and again is called “Tradition.”<sup>50</sup>

The Bible is read and interpreted in a dual context. The first context is specifically biblical and remains unchanged. It is the subject of exegetical analysis and leads to the emergence of biblical theology. Research on this context is intended to answer the question of how the Word of God addressed to the Chosen People and the original Church was heard, understood and expressed in the language of faith appropriate to the mentality of the time. The second context concerns the historically changing cultural and social environment. The purpose of dogmatic research into this context is to determine the conditions necessary for a modern, faithful understanding of the biblical message and to express the message in a

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47 OTh, 127.

48 MMV, 19–20.

49 Edward Schillebeeckx, “Verschillend standpunt van exegese en dogmatiek,” in *Maria in het boodschapsverhaal. Verslagboek der zestiende Mariale Dagen 1959* (Tongerlo: Secretariaat der Mariale dagen – Norbertijner Abdij, 1960), 57.

50 OTh, 127–8.



sound and understandable language of faith. Both contexts are in a close and inseparable relationship with each other; however, the understanding of the Word of God contained in the Bible, by virtue of belonging to the constitutive phase of Revelation, is the norm for a faithful understanding of this reality in the post-apostolic Church. In addition to the written Word of God, Schillebeeckx also notices the Word's current reality, present in the human subject, which is the work of the Holy Spirit and which he calls *locutio interna*. The language of faith and theology is born of an internal encounter *here and now* between God revealing Himself and the *anamnesis* of reality confirmed by the Bible and Tradition.<sup>51</sup>

Applying the Flemish theologian's principle to Mariology, one can easily conclude that the shape of Mariological language is determined not only by the scriptural language of the Bible, but also by the Holy Spirit currently working within the Church, which, in the context of modernity, reveals what is important in the biblical message. The Holy Spirit becomes the creator of contemporary horizons of understanding and a hermeneut of the biblical meaning for the needs of the language of faith.

The language of Mariology does not stop at expressing the literal understanding of the biblical text, but wishes to add a deeper reality defined by the term *sensus plenior*.<sup>52</sup> Extraction and expression of the fuller meaning of the text assumes the use of historical, philological and literary methods. Due to the fact that the Word of God was expressed in a human way, there is a specific semantic split between the literal sense or meaning (*sensus litteralis*) and the fuller sense or meaning (*sensus plenior*). The typology of meanings results from the very structure of the biblical word which is divine in a human way. The task of Mariological language is then (1) to discover and express clearly the Mariological sense of the biblical images of the Church contained in the book of Revelation and the Gospel of John; (2) to highlight the relationship between the Old Testament motifs concerning the dwelling of God among His people and the infancy gospels; and (3) to connect the eschatological understanding of the Daughter of Zion and the holy city of Jerusalem with the figure of Mary.<sup>53</sup> The Old Testament ideas thus become a prism in the theological view on Mary, and their transposition onto the Mother of God is an expression of the gradual increase in the Mariological awareness of the Church. The use of biblical categories in the language of Mariology is the effect of these procedures.

Schillebeeckx recognizes the objective dynamics of the biblical *sensus plenior*, which has an important internal relationship with the dogma. "Church dogmas are not some theologically expressed conclusions drawn from the New Testament data;

51 OTh, 144.

52 OTh, 148; Schillebeeckx, "Verschillend standpunt van exegese en dogmatiek," 64.

53 OTh, 135: cf. Hugolin Langkammer, *Maria in der Bibel. Was will die Offenbarung von der Mutter Jesu sagen?*, (Wien: Rozenkranz-Sühnekreuzzug, 1988), 95–115. See Aristide Serra, *Myriam, fille de Sion* (Paris: Mádiaspaul, 1999).

they are not *sensus consequens*, but have a much more internal connection with the *sensus plenior* of the Bible. They are an expression of what already existed vaguely in the apostolic consciousness. Theological thinking has an irreplaceable role in making this expression possible in the life of the faith of the Church directed by the Magisterium of the Church.”<sup>54</sup>

Taking into account the *sensus plenior* of the relevant biblical texts, Mariological language undertakes the task of expressing *explicitly* those dogmatic contents which in the apostolic consciousness were formally revealed by God and thus formally, and not only virtually, revealed. It should be remembered that the knowledge of *sensus plenior* is not acquired in a single act of exegetical analysis of the selected texts, but extends in time onto the entire hermeneutic process implemented in Tradition. This gradual increase in the dogmatic awareness, which takes place due to the work of the Holy Spirit and under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church, leads to the search for a new form of language based on the results of exegetical analysis. Dogma expressed in a particular type of theological language might have changed its wording throughout the history, without, however, violating the essential biblical content that constitutes its core.<sup>55</sup>

The literal sense, which actually exists and has its own autonomy, does not exhaust the depth of meaning of the Old Testament texts, because the entire Old Testament remains internally oriented to Christ and that meaning is fulfilled in Christ (Luke 24:44). Jesus is a hermeneutic prism in reading all Old Testament literature. Thanks to its objective dynamics, the literal sense becomes the carrier of a deeper sense. In the context of awaiting the Messiah (*Messias-verwachting*), the books of the Old Testament gain a new and deeper interpretation already in the translation of the Septuagint.<sup>56</sup>

For the language of Mariology, the Holy Bible has a particular significance because it is the source and the testimony of the reality which we theologically call Tradition (*caput divinae traditionis*).<sup>57</sup> Hence, dogmas formulated in a particular type of language do not constitute theologically simple conclusions of exegesis, but can be known as a vivid reality, truly existing in the Bible. Due to the universal purpose of the Bible for people of all times, Mariology must make a permanent reinterpretation of the experience of faith recorded in the books of the Bible.<sup>58</sup>

54 OTh, 135. [translation mine]

55 Edward Schillebeeckx, “O katolickie zastosowanie hermeneutyki. Tożsamość wiary w toku jej reinterpretacji,” *Znak* 20 (1968): 980.

56 Schillebeeckx, “Verschillend standpunt van exegese en dogmatiek,” 70–1.

57 OTh, 138–140.

58 “De Schriftuur blijft immers een *levend* boek van alle gelovigen. Zij werd in de postexilische tijd gelezen en herlezen in het licht van nieuwe volksgebeurtenissen en in het licht van de steeds meer gespannen Messias-verwachting, zodat door het synagogale bidden van wellicht in vroeger tijden