



DOING GOD'S STORY IN WORSHIP: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM ON THE CHURCH'S SANCTUARY

Session 2b: Theological Touchstones for Worship:
Through Jesus Christ, Worship Incorporates
Us Into the Dance of the Triune God

CHRISTOLOGICAL/INCARNATIONAL

With a nod to Edward Schillebeckx

CORE THEOLOGICAL PREMISES

- The Incarnation of Jesus Christ in his two natures is the privileged ground for our embodied interaction with God, i.e., the importance of the body of Jesus Christ for us in our entirety—including our own bodies—to interact redemptively with God.
- The church as the Body of Christ is the normal means by which the embodied ministry of Jesus can continue on the earth after his Ascension.
- Thus, “what was conspicuous in the Redeemer has passed over into the worship life of the church.”
- Not surprisingly, classic definitions of the church highlighting its liturgical activity often feature elements rooted in the embodied ministry of Jesus Christ.

BREAKING IT DOWN: 7 CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS TO THIS THEOLOGY

1. Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine.
2. Jesus' human activity is divine activity.
3. Jesus' ministry is ongoing in both heaven and earth even though he has ascended back to heaven.
4. Jesus' ministry is ongoing to both a divine recipient and human ones.
5. Because we are humans with physical bodies, we still need and want bodily and relational encounter with Christ.
6. Jesus' earlier earthly ministry has 3 key dimensions (speaking, acting, and loving).
7. Those 3 dimensions appear in Christian worship; when they do, there is a potency and power in our worship today.

IMPLICATIONS

- The need for a well-roundedness in Christian worship: Christ spoke/speaks (Word); Christ acted/acts through his body (Sacraments, etc.); and Christ loved/loves (loving fellowship)
- If this speaking/acting/loving continues through the Body of Christ as it worships, this theology gives us a Christ-centered and Christ-fittingness criteria to assess
 - What we talk about in worship
 - How we talk in worship
 - The physicality of our worship in terms of symbols and actions
 - The quality of love expressed in our worship
 - What community we think has been joined to Christ and through which he uniquely resides and acts

ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES FROM SCHILLEBEECKX

“The man Jesus, as the personal visible realization of the divine grace of redemption, is the sacrament, the primordial sacrament, because this man, the Son of God himself is intended by the Father to be in his humanity the only way to the actuality of redemption...Personally to be approached by the man Jesus was, for his contemporaries, an invitation to a personal encounter with the life-giving God, because personally that man was the Son of God. Human encounter with Jesus is (was) therefore the sacrament of the encounter with God...the human saving acts of Jesus are the divine bestowal of grace itself realized in visible form; that is to say they cause what they signify; they are sacraments.”

ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES FROM SCHILLEBEECKX

“...on the foundation of God’s economy of salvation the gift of grace, or the encounter with God, remains bound up with our personal encounter with the man Jesus who is our only way to the Father. Now how can we encounter the glorified Lord, who has withdrawn himself from our sight? For Jesus’ bodiliness, as the means of immediate communication, has vanished from our earthly life.”

ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES FROM SCHILLEBEECKX

“Everything he (Jesus Christ) does as man is an act of the Son of God, a divine act in human form...His human love is the human embodiment of the redeeming love of God.”

ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES FROM SCHILLEBEECKX

“Because the saving acts of the man Jesus are performed by a divine person, they have a divine power to save, but because this divine power to save appears to us in visible form, the saving activity of Jesus is sacramental. For a sacrament is a divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility....the incarnation of the divine life therefore involves bodily aspects.”

ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTES FROM SCHILLEBEECKX

“He can make himself visibly present to and for us earthbound humans only by taking up earthly non-glorified realities into his glorified saving activity. This earthly element replaces for us the invisibility of his bodily life in heaven. This is precisely what the sacraments are: the face of redemption turned visibly towards us, so that in them we are truly able to encounter the living Christ. The heavenly saving activity (past saving activity? future saving activity?), invisible to us, becomes visible in the sacraments... (paraphrasing Leo the Great) What was conspicuous in the Redeemer has passed over into the sacraments of the church.”

CHRISTOLOGICAL/INCARNATIONAL

STRENGTHS

- A stronger way of articulating how we are drawn into Christ's liturgical activity toward God the Father and toward people;
- A stronger emphasis on how worship is Christ's redemptive activity toward people
- A stronger emphasis upon the tactile, embodied enacted aspects of worship

WEAKNESS

- In actuality the theology is dependent upon the quality, breadth, and robustness of the worshipping assembly

QUESTIONS THAT COME TO MIND

- A question of fittingness:
 - Is what we're saying in worship imaginable on the lips of Christ, either addressed to God the Father or to humans?
 - Are the objects we're handling in worship capable of manifesting Christ in his ministry as revealed in Scripture?
 - Are the actions we doing in worship imaginable as the activity of Jesus Christ?
 - Is the Christ-defined love of 1 Corinthians 13 absolutely, foundationally, easily, and quickly revealed in our worship?
 - Does the church's identity, especially as a worshiping assembly, fit how the scriptures relate the church to Jesus Christ?

THE KEY IDEA/BASIC DEFINITION
OF EACH THEOLOGY

1. Dynamic worship narrative: Worship is the *doing* of God's story.
2. Eschatological: Worship is the preliminary in-breaking of the future.
3. Trinitarian: Worship is getting caught up in the dynamics between the three Persons of the Trinity.
4. Christological/Incarnational: Worship is _____.

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4. Christological/Incarnational: Worship is the continuation of Christ's ministry on earth.