

SCHILLEBEECKX HISTORY BASED VIEW ON THE CRISES IN MINISTRY

AND THE DOMINICAN BROCHURE 'KERK EN AMBT'

INTRODUCTION

I remember 1977/1978.

We, members of the Leidse Studentenecclesia, discussed the question, if we should participate in the national movement of basic communities and critical communities and send a delegation to the day of reflection and study about ministry in the church. We were intensely involved by the ongoing conflicts and tensions with the church leaders in the Netherlands who were trying to keep us within the borders of the church tradition of Rome. At the same time we kept up hope that Rome would understand our reasonable stands.

Ten years before, after the Vatican II council and the following Dutch pastoral council there had been promising signs in the direction of opening up the ministry to renewal. That was the time I participated as an Amsterdam University student in the student Ecclesia led by Verstappen, Oosterhuis and van Kilsdonk. Hours of intensive praying, with a never before experienced passionate preaching and proclamation on critical points like the Eucharist and the Resurrection. For me those were years of intense involvement in Religion. And not only for me. The Jesuit chapel in Amsterdam and the Hooglandse kerk in Leiden, the town where I had got a job after my graduation, were always crowded.

Communities gathering in services that were crowded by involved Christians. Wasn't that what church ment to be? A church formed by people, praying and thinking and being inspired together. I way of being church together, a living body of Christ, in great contrast to the passiv and forced way people attended Mass in the fifties. And the present situation where bishops close churches because there are not enough priests to perform the Eucharist

I was really thrilled to find back the book 'Basis & Ambt' by Edward Schillebeeckx and others. A document to prepare a day of reflection and discussion initiated by The 'Basisbeweging' in Beverwijk. That special meeting to which our Leidse Studenten Ecclesia sent their delegates. The historic importance of that movement becomes now obvious in the perspective of Schillebeeckx historic and theological studies on the subject of church development and ministry.

I will give a survey of Schillebeeckx historical investigations and mark the essential points in relation to the present crises in church to see, how this crises in priesthood and this crises in church leadership could happen. Are we still an apostolic church or are we driven away? Is this church of people susceptible for the ferment of a theologian like Schillebeeckx and his fellow Dominicans to find a way to the future?

Edward Schillebeeckx gathered the historical and theological data that allow us now to assess the changes and developments the ministry went through in the evolving church. In the following paper I consider four of his many works starting with 'Basis and Ambt' 1978 via *Kerkelijk ambt* (1980), = *Ministry. A Case for Change*, London: SCM Press, 1981 = *Ministry. Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, New York: Crossroad Publ., 1981 'Pleidooi voor mensen in de kerk' = *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry*, New York: Crossroad Publ., 1985. and from a wider point of view, 'Mensen als verhaal van God' = *Church. The Human Story of God*, New York: Crossroad, 1990; London: SCM, 1990.. Where did it end, or didn't it and could the Dominican publication 'Kerk en ambt' (2009) be a sign that 'the ferment of his contributions' is still doing its work?

Four of his works provide the facts and stands we will need, to make up our minds on the theme. The New Testament data, Schillebeeckx presents to us, offer clear normative and surprising possibilities for ministry. The early Christian periods, The apostolic and New Testamental period offer us a contrast experience to the present-day situation in ministry. But as he describes in 'The church with a human face', the post New Testament developments in the structure and spirituality of ministry, offer us both positive and negative trends that caused the present crises. Schillebeeckx has shown us in his publications since Vatican II how in the progress of history a progressive narrowing has taken place of the understanding of ministry¹In several stages Schillebeeckx showed during his career how religion is a religion of men. It is the human being who tries through the ages to express his divine experience and his ideas about how to worship his God. How people organize their worship, how tradition is passed from one generation to another, how it is preserved and distorted sometimes. The history of the human story of God shows mankind in his strength, his piety, his deep devotion but also his pride, and weakness his addiction to wealth and power. And let us not forget his dependence upon cultural and political influences. Therefore let us see what the change and development have brought.

BASIS & AMBT , ambt in dienst van nieuwe gemeentevorming, (1979)

The first book I will present to you contains a few reflections and statements of members of critical communities and as central document a lecture of Edward Schillebeeckx: 'Basis en Ambt'. It was written as preparation for the reflection of the critical communities in the Netherlands. There he tunes in from the scientific theologian perspective, an independent position at the sideline, as he calls it, considering the subject at stake: The crisis of leadership in the church. He takes a critical stand to the official hierarchy of the church as well as to the praxis of several critical communities. He wants to give a biblical historical overview of the first, basic communities in the new Testament – offering a contrast experience - and gives a description of how there and then groups were built and how people came to the insight that there was a necessity to install ministry and leadership in the community to guarantee the apostolic tradition. He wants to correlate the broad insight in the development of church leadership with the new church praxis in conflict with the canonical church order in order to come to a form of criteriology of church ministry. In doing so, the New Testament ministry could be confronted with the ministry of the seventies of the twentieth century. And so meet the needs of the time.²

¹ I use in my commentary : Mary E.Hines : *Ministry: Leadership in the community of Christ*. in: *Praxis of the Reign of God* .Hrsg, Hilkert & Schreitner New York 2002

² I will refer to this book as 'A' Basis & Ambt Bloemendaal Nelissen 1979, grotendeels geïntegreerd in 'Kerkelijk ambt' Edward Schillebeeckx, Bloemendaal, Nelissen

in Basis & Ambt Schillebeeckx does not describe the second millennium. As a useful contrast experience the apostolical period would do in the case of the critical communities, this historical background was sufficient.

2, 'Kerkelijk Ambt, voorgangers in de gemeente van Jezus Christus'. (1980)³

In this work Schillebeeckx elaborates the line he indicated in the publication 'Basis & Ambt'. More details sharper arguments more focused on priests and their difficulties not in the least their difficulties with changes. Gradually, after 25 years of studying and publishing, his publications reflect the growing crisis of ministry. Here not only history of the first millennium, but also of the second millennium. Here he shows where, at the beginning of the second millennium the basic errors were made. In this work he incorporates most of the lecture Basis & Ambt and now emphasis historical and sociological perspective, with a reason. It is also his defence against misunderstanding and unjust critique that can harm the pastoral results of ecclesial experiments. In my opinion this remark is in line with his conviction that these experiments, this 'illegality' is needed⁴, as history has proven, to attain results that might help the church to overcome this crises of ministry.

The third work I use is 'pleidooi voor mensen in de kerk' christelijke identiteit en ambten in de kerk (1984). *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry*, New York: Crossroad Publ., 1985.

I agree with Mary Hines⁵ The church with a human face provides a good synthesis of Schillebeeckx most developed thought on the subject. This work on ministry is also a good example of his methodology. He begins with the present-day praxis of ministry in church. He finds there a major crises and emphasizes the urgency of the situation. In Schillebeeckx words: "The dominant conceptions about the practice and the theology of ministry seem to be robbing the gospel of his force in communities of believers'. (pg 1)

Than Schillebeeckx looks for a contrast experience that will help to diagnose the situation and provide possibilities for its solution. He turns again to the data of history There he recognizes a pattern of response to changing social and cultural situations. He sees in that a revelation that takes place through history. The normative principle throughout history is to find in the broad perspective, in the variety of forms in ministry in different periods. As he shows in his historical investigations, church has been adapting to social, cultural and spiritual needs of the time for the sake of the gospel. So, change and development are and have been the answer to the necessity to preserve fidelity to the gospel as the fundament of christianity⁶

3 (A)Basis &Ambt Bloemendaal Nelissen 1979,grotendeels geïntegreerd in 'Kerkelijk ambt' Edward Schillebeeckx, Bloemendaal, Nelissen , 1980pg.43 *Ministry. A Case for Change*, London: SCM Press, 1981 = *Ministry. Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, New York: Crossroad Publ., 1981 Pg. 43 I will refer to this book as 'B'

⁴ (A) Basis &Ambt pg. 80

⁵ Mary E.Hines : *Ministry: Leadership in the community of Christ*. in: *Praxis of the Reign of God* .Hrsg, Hilbert & Schreitner New York 2002

⁶ I will refer to this book as 'C'

Change and development of community and ministry in the church .

Edward Schillebeeckx chooses a historical biblical investigation of the origin of the leadership in church to contribute to the answer on the question: How did we end up with this hierarchical institute that is in crises now?

Let us now follow the history of leadership as Schillebeeckx describes it in the above mentioned books which deliver us a goldmine of data and analyses, and see how they reflect his consistent view on the subject. We will go along *key elements* in his historic data

The first millennium

1. No leadership or institutional form ordered by Jesus.

To begin with, E.S. makes clear :apart from the apostleship, the Christian communities did not get any kind of church order from their leader Jesus. (A pg 45; B.pg 13; C pg 81) Besides, The Twelve were the symbol of the coming eschatological community of God. So let us be careful , E.Schillebeeckx ads, to speak about Godgiven rules about community or ministry. In the self concept of the first Christians they were community of God, community of Jesus, temple of the spirit, body of Christ.⁷ According to laws of group building we can assume that these communities came together informel, spontaneously on shared interests and they felt it as a gift of the Lord. (Ef. 4,8-11;1Tim.4,14,2Tim. 1,6)

2. Apostolicity

Apostolicity is the main task and main characteristic of the early Christian communities. It is the origin and the central concern of a community that is passing on the story of Jesus as the apostles had received it from him. As such it is also part of the religious symbolum. (A pg. 48)

That being said, Schillebeeckx describes mostly on the basis of Acts and letters and on the basis of the Gospel how communities were founded by apostles. Apostolicity being the main concern, this became the more important as the apostles died and new communities called themselves apostolic.

3. From tasks and functions to leadership

The apostles had helpers . (A, pg. 49; B, pg.16; C, pg.84) but their functions had no names .

Paul addresses them in the oldest document on this behalf 1Tess, 5,12 he mentions three functions, "we bid you brothers, them who work amongst you, who lead you in the Lord and who discipline you, to appreciate en to love them with more than usual love. In Rom.12,8-9 becomes obvious, that in brotherhoods without hierarchy the one who profiled him or herself as a leader sometimes was confronted with resistance. Paul remembers the people of the many charismatic gifts that are among the community members. One of these gifts being the gift to lead. Leading is than a gift and is not yet a hierarchical ministerial (ambtelijke) function. There were bigger local communities as well as house communities. Besides apostles there were prophets and teachers⁸

There were men as well as women among the helpers and leaders: Appia the wife of Philemon , Aquila and Prisca.

⁷ (A)Basis &Ambt, Edward Schillebeeckx, Bloemendaal, Nelissen , 1979 pg. 45

⁸ ebda: pg 52: E.S. uses not the regular plural of teacher: leraren but the special form leraars to distinguish the special form of teaching in the community of the Lord.

E.S. makes clear, that passing on the apostolic message and keeping the community together was the main task of the leaders and their helpers. Important to notice that not the Eucharist was the main task.

For the first scriptural period Paul and the Paulinic communities did not have presbyters nor a presbyteral church order. Nevertheless such an order was very old especially in Jerusalem, where Jacob, the brother of the Lord and de great leader of Jerusalem organized a group of presbyters around him according to the synagogic jewish model .⁹

After the apostles died, we see that others write under their names. This pseudonymia proves again , that passing on the apostolic tradition is the most important issue, and not, as is often said in our time, the succession of the ministries.

In the first lecture as well as in 'Church with a human face' Schillebeeckx defines criteria of apostolic succession¹⁰.

1. The churches are built on the apostles and prophets;
2. The apostolic tradition of which the New Testaments writings are a permanent foundation document;
3. the apostolicity of the whole community, which is signified by doing as Jesus did in his ministry;
4. the apostolicity of church ministries, which became known as apostolic succession (the church with a human face pg. 116)

For Schillebeeckx all of these elements in relationship to one another are important in the characterization of the community as apostolic.

The realization of apostolic succession could not take place if the leaders did not take up their task as true keepers of the apostolic tradition. That means ¹¹: They are in servants in the name of Christ and they are bound by the parathéke (1Tim.6,20) on the fundament of Paul.(1Kor.3,5-15). They are responsible for the apostolicity of the community as a guarantee that they remain true communities of Jesus. Tasks are proclamation, leadership and building up the community

4. *Introduction of the presbyter, a secondary development.(A,B,C)*

After Efese the ministry becomes more constitutionally led, understandable due to the growing number of Christians. Presbyters are incorporated by laying on hands. Laying on hands ment passing on the charisma of the holy Ghost. Titus and Timoteus are Pauls successors as 'Theou synergoi'.

After Pauls death, under the influence of Jerusalem and Rome the charismatic church order was gradually pushed aside by the originally jewish presbyterial church order . This more tight organisation was considered as a means against prosecution and gnostic and other ' heretic' interpretations of Christian belief. Institutionalizing had obviously still the function to protect the apostolic tradition and was not to protect institutions of ministries. Ministry serves the maintaining of the Christian identity. The character of Leadership was diaconia, was serving.

⁹ This is mentioned in A,B and C.

¹⁰ I give the English text as in Mary E.Hines : *Ministry: Leadership in the community of Christ.* in: *Praxis of the Reign of God* .Hrsg, Hilkert & Schreitner New York 2002 pg 156

¹¹ A pg. 56

But soon, institutionalization and worldly leadership took their influence. In Basis & Ambt Schillebeeckx indicates already the tension that can rise between charisma and institution. But Ministry without charisma impoverishes en is in danger to abuse power, charisma without institution tends to lose its way in fanaticism or subjectivity.

5. Priesthood separated from apostolic leadership

In 'Church with a human face' Schillebeeckx elaborates this point. In the early centuries already we see the building up of a hierarchy and a sacerdotalization of ministry. From the fourth century on there were priests who were not part of a community therefore not chosen by their own people. They were presbyters who operated out of urban centers of Christianity mainly to celebrate the Eucharist for rural communities.

We see a cultic form of sacerdotalization since Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. Christianity was presented as a cultic community analogous to other imperial religions in the Roman past. As Priesthood and Cult were connected traditionally now priesthood and Eucharist became a cultic connection.

This development led between 1100 and 1300 in fact to a narrowing of the apostolic leadership. The separation of priesthood from leadership of the community is a significant break in the history of ministry. It also meant a mixing up between worldly leadership and Christian leadership. That is what the author of 1Peter 5 1-4 warned for:

There the presbyters are summoned to be like good shepherds for their herd and not to rule with force or out of pursuit of gain, as worldly rulers do, don't be the boss, but be a role model for the herds, Don't rule like the rulers of the world.¹²

6. Eucharist in apostolic period (A,B,C)

The history of the first millennium shows that especially in the New Testamentic period the apostolicity was far more important than the Eucharist. Who presides the Eucharist was not important either at first, but the habit grew that the prophet or the leader presided. In a house community it was the leader of the house. He or she prayed and thanked as he or she chose to do. Gradually The status of the priest changed as we have seen.

The second millennium (B,C)

The developments in the second millennium seem more problematic than those in the first millennium. They lack the biblical apostolic basis and concentrate more on the constitution of the church after the model of worldly institutions. Political power and church leadership got mixed up, particularly after Christianity had become state religion. Roman and German emperors competed for power, and the wealth and fame of worldly leaders seemed to be the model of the church leadership as well. In 'Ministry A case for Change' and 'Church with a Human Face' Schillebeeckx describes the developments in the second millennium where further institutionalizing and a changing status of the priest are the most important issues..

¹² **1 Peter 5:2** Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

1 Peter 5:3 Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

1 Peter 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

7 a. *A new status for the Priest : The priest is no longer community leader, but sacred performer of the Eucharist*

As the second millennium begins, there had been already one important shift. Not the passing on of the Gospel, but the Eucharist became the most important focus. Ministry was the constitutive element of a community of Jesus, it was essential for the 'sequela Jesu'. But in this period, community and priesthood were driven apart by an ever more isolated and sanctified priesthood.

Cyprianus had played a role in this: He loved the old Testament terminology of the temple sacrifice. He compares the Eucharist with it. First the word sacerdos was used allegorically, but the use spread. At first the bishop was called sacerdos as he presided the Eucharist. But as presbiteroi also presided the Eucharist even they were called sacerdos, and so the connection between Priest and Eucharist became unique.

Primarily there was a natural connection between community and community leader and even so between community leader and the Eucharist celebrating community. The change becomes obvious in Tertullianus words which express an important nuance: we receive the Eucharist from nobody else than the community leader. (B.pg 65). In fact the apostolicity and the unity of the church were here at stake : since Chalcedon the rule 'outside the community there can be no Eucharist, than tota aetas concelebrat, than the whole community concelebrated was in force. This is important because it indicates a development that isolates the Eucharist celebrating sacerdos from the community. according to Chalcedon this was an absolute ordination and so it was illegal.¹³

Some historians mentioned that already in the 3th and 4th Laterane council a theory came up that there was a mysterious sacramental mark given to the receiver of a sacrament it should be the fundament of the whole 'sacramentum ordinis'. The priest became magical characteristics.

And so the fundamental change was a fact: in the old church a minister was incorporated to be the leader of a community. in the new church order from the middle ages on a priest was ordained to perform the Eucharist. The ecclesia became less important Christian believers, members of the ecclesia became more and more passive spectators. So not only the role of the priest, but the role of the community changed as well. But didn't the author of the first letter of Peter warned his people not to follow the example of worldly leaders, in his words:

1Petr. 5,1-4: The presbyters are summoned to be like good shepherds for their herd and not rule with force of out of pursuit of gain, as worldly leaders do...?

Rich nobels even built themselves chapels and churches and hired priests or let man be ordained to their priests. They were not connected to any community, nor were the chosen in a community. This was the start of priests being ordained by bishops and sent to churches to which they had no connection. The apostolicity was broken. As a result, the original relationship between community and priest between ecclesia and ministerium shifts to the relationship potestas and Eucharistia. Ordination power and Eucharist. The corpus verum Christi became the corpus mysticum Christi. and in due course one stated, that only an ordained priest could perform the Eucharist.

¹³ (in C pg189 a. f. describes this change in detail)

And didn't Paul warn the church communities not to rule with power and force like worldly leaders? It seems as if church organization went out of control and the apostolical tradition had come to an end.

8. Trente

Another step in change was set in the council of Trente.¹⁴ Here the modern priest became his definitive stature for a long time. And again, the way to this step in the development started earlier. We saw already how the community leader became presbyter, how the presbyter became the only one to preside the Eucharist and how the presbyter became a sacerdos performing the Eucharist. Then the next step followed.

Josse van Clichthove (1472 – 1543) depicted the image of a solitary cultpriest, almost too holy to touch, only living to perform the sacraments, living in celibacy as by law of nature, even the pope could not give dispensation from this claustrum.

In France Bérulle, Jean Endes, Olier, the oratoire and Saint Sulpice, the so called École Française defined priesthood in such an elite way that every priest 'in the field' caring for his people must have sensed the impossibility of this kind of ministry. But even the education of priests in the Great Seminaries founded after the council of Trent were modeled after this image of the sacred isolated priest. Up to Vatican II this style was maintained.

Schillebeeckx sees besides the beautiful things that were said about spirituality also dangerous elements which really influenced the image of the modern priest. For instance the idea, expressed by Jean Eudes that the Son of God had made the priests part of his mediatorship between God and men, his dignity as sovereign judge of the world, his name and service as redeemer of the world.

John Henry Newman opposed to this idea¹⁵ and then one of the sources of this misunderstanding was discovered in Origenes' *Dialektos*. That text says something different: In the Eucharist sacrifice of the church the *man Jesus*, is 'the propheros' (sacrificing priest). But this sacrifice was pleasant for God due to his deity.¹⁶

The 'Wirkungsgeschichte' of Trente is characterized by the one sided hardening of the ministry in the second millennium. The canones of Trente might well have been among the most influential ones in history. If this was really the true object of Trente or not. Then, during the council bishops were divided in Scotists, Thomists and Augustiniani who disagreed on issues like the sacrament of ordination, the relation between bishops and presbyters and the participation of the Christian community in the church mandate, the vocation of the candidates and the meaning of the so called priestly mark. Many issues were not even defined. Priesthood seemed a mystical elevation to a godlike standard. It was bishop Newman who in the last century criticized particularly this status of the minister.

So this episode in the development of theology on church leadership left us with celibacy, isolation of the sacred priest and a lot of power play. It left the communities with practically no other spiritual guidance than watching the Eucharist in church. We see that under Christians many developed so called popular piety, popular rituals, people prayed to various saints, to Maria, made pilgrimages to holy places, religion lived on while theologians and churchleaders went their own way.

¹⁴ The church with a human Face and Hines pg 161 ff.

¹⁵ J.H.Newman, Select treatises of St. Anastasius, 2, Oxford 1888., 245-246

¹⁶ J. Crehan, The *Dialektos* of Origen and John 20, 17, in: Theol. St. 11 (1950) 368-373

Vaticanum II made a first effort to bridge the gap between ecclesia and priesthood by describing on the one hand the richness of the spiritual charisma of the baptism on the other hand by emphasizing not only in priestly but also prophetic and pastoral words the ministry in the church. But the heritage of Trente weight heavy on the organization, the bishops and priests , not as far as the theological content of the council is concerned, but because of the way Trente functioned in the life of the church community in the west. The Mark of the priest, that isolated him from other people had only a modest role in the documents of VaticanII. For the council the ministry that the community herself asked for was the starting point. (Lumen Gentium.) In the post- Vatican aera the ministry of the priest in the community and how he experienced this was more inportant than “the mark”.

What did not change, against all the hopes that people had, was the admittance of married priests tot the ministry, and the admittance of women to the ministry. But the ecclesia felt liberated and an enormous energy found its way. Everywhere in parishes and churches people worked to actualize the services nearer to particularly younger people. Not always immediately in the right way, and often in active opposition to what had been service for so many years.

The tension between dominant and alternative church order

Not long after Vatican II, it was as if Church leadership was shocked by the energy and drive to renewal that came out of the ecclesia out of the communities. And Rome started to take their power back. It is a tension up till now particularly in the Netherlands.

It is clear, that Schillebeeckx saw in that time this largely democratic period of the church as a good example for solutions in our time.

Important for the discussion to follow seem to me his remarks that in relation to the present churchorder , new and possibly necessary alternatives are mostly visible as illegal. but according to Schillebeeckx, there always have been ways from alternative praxis to dominant praxis. Critical alternative forms of church and ministerial praxis have to take into account that they stand in an apostolic tradition in the first place.

One can value the alternative Christian praxis vis à vis our historical experiences, but according to his experiences with systems he thinks that it would be wise to start with the ways of community building , shared by both the official church hierarchy and the new alternative critical communities. Starting with what is necessary to be a true community of Jesus. and from there try to expand in critical relationship.

As a theologian he states, that the alternative praxis of critical communities is:

1. a dogmatic and apostological possibility. ¹⁷
2. vis à vis the present canonical church order the alternative praxis is not contra but praeter ordinem : it is literally not according to church order but it is according to what historical church order wanted to keep safe , to guarantee. Therefore on this base, in difficult circumstances, the new alternatives are ethically worth defending.
3. But no one should practice alternative ways in an triumphalistic manner.

In a time where people are hyper sensitive against power structures the system should not try to fix the system to its position while accusing critical people of heresy. He said that 1979 and it still appears to be his best solution for the present time. looking at Church with a Human Face and Church. *The Human Story of God, (1990).*

¹⁷ Basis & Ambt pg 85

To me Schillebeeckx' elaborate historical lecture about the building of communities and the organization of ministry shows his effort to legitimate a critical positive try to meet the crisis in church as long as it stays in line with the original apostolic tradition. Solutions from the past might well meet problems of today, when it is allowed to work from inside by taking a critical stand Edward Schillebeeckx sees the critical communities as the ferment in a general building of consciousness. An exceptional position of the critical community works so to say as a mirror for the official church, a marginal position by which consciousness is constantly stimulated and the big church gets prepared for the implementation of a different present-day pastoral church order that in our time can build the apostolicity of de Christian community.

Is there a future for the church?

Members of the secularized community, atheists and agnostics think there is not. But Schillebeeckx sees a future, despite the many difficulties and out of the experience, that we have not been very good prophets in the past. 'Did we see the wall to the communist part of Europe fall?' is one of his examples..

Again he points at history. In *Church. The Human Story of God*,¹⁸ seeing the outcome of particularly the last millennium where the neoplatonic- hierarchical conception of the church, the multiple stage pyramid, came to its full extend, he plees for a democratic future in which the relationship between hierarchy and the living church community will be restored and the relationship with God is opened up to accept the Grace of the Lord. The Holy Ghost being the fundament of all authority and of the many mediating channels of the Holy Ghost in the church. Why shouldn't the church in her way of ruling be able to act democratically without being detrimental to the submission to the word of God?

Schillebeeckx has a harsh reproach against the hierarchical institute. : 'We can say that a church which obscures his own truth, especially the liberating freedom of Jesus Christ , through the form of its authoritarian and hierarchical mediation , becomes an unattractive and abstract institution for believers.¹⁹ Here he lays the finger on the enormous gap that has grown particularly since Trente between hierarchy and priest versus the believers as Schillebeeckx has described in his historical investigations . In his eyes, the first assignment of the church should be to watch over the opening to Gods self revelation in the history of the risen Lord Jesus. The main concern should be to practice as Jesus preached and as we should do as we preach in his name.

Theology could well play an adequate role in this. Thinking, including theological thinking should witness to God in the situation of violence and struggle, of repression and the yearning for liberation that is the situation of our world. God is a God of salvation and hope, but in the middle of this situation.

Theology is part of the church by being part of and being focused on the contemporary world.²⁰

¹⁸ *Church. The Human Story of God*,¹⁸New York: Crossroad, 1990; London: SCM, 1990.

¹⁹ The human story of God pg 231

²⁰ Erik Borgman Edward Schillebeeckx – the theological legacy.handout 2010 27 may , Soeterbeeck programma

Kerk en Ambt, Church and ministry ²¹

Caring for the future that was also the goal of the Dutch Dominicans who bravely spread their brochure among Dutch parishes in an effort to find a relief for the suffering communities in the Netherlands.

They owe a lot to Schillebeeckx who is referred to as 'the serene Flemish expert that monitored the second Vatican council'

Like him, starting from the present crisis in church, they react on the most crucial issues. The same that Schillebeeckx in his work elaborated.

A crucial point they bring up seems to me: That during Vatican II the statement was made, that the people and the hail of the people should be the main object, the goal of the church community. The hierarchy being a means to attain that goal and therefore being secondary in place.²² After the council this step was quickly forgotten being pushed aside by the powerful hierarchy so to say.

The image of the church needed a reorientation. Church should be less hierarchic and more organic following Paul's Idea of the church as a body (of Christ), but as long as the pyramidal organization stayed in power there is little room for change. Nevertheless, democratic changes should not be seen as a threat but as a challenge.

One of the urgent issues they present is celibacy, unknown in the first millennium of the church, and now being a heavy burden in the service of the many communities.

The Eucharist, which was in the beginning a honourable task for the leader of a community, became a chosen leader, a man or a woman. But later on clung to the function of the presbyter and after a few hundred years being the unique task of the sacerdos, the priest.

Now people are trying hard to share the holy bread in their service, but the lack of priests leads to forced solutions that are not organically bound to the community service as it was meant to be. This makes a reevaluation of the ministry necessary.

In this time much harm is done trying by all means to maintain the unique position of the priest and his rights at the cost of shutting down churches and sending people away. That is how many experience it, particularly elderly people for whom other churches are too far away. The Dominicans including Schillebeeckx, see that many so called lay people men and women, trained and involved, even theologically educated, inspired Christians are available to help out in the many parishes. Many married priests are really longing to lay hands on. They plea let them do it and incorporate lay people in church praxis by training them and giving them a status through blessing or laying on hands.

Church really needs able leaders instead of powerful leaders to attain this correction of a history that went astray.

Schillebeeckx left us an impressive oeuvre that can be a good fundament for a sound future.

²¹ Kerk & Ambt onderweg naar een kerk met toekomst. vanuit het bestuur van de Nederlandse dominicanen Nijmegen 2007

²² Kerk en ambt pg 34

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