



Re-imagining and Updating Catholicity: Building Church Unity in a Globalized and Scattered World*

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Catholic theological debate on catholicity claims to recover a qualitative conception of catholicity, in order to correct the classical emphasis on geographical breadth. The tendencies to identify catholicity with universality, to confuse universality with uniformity and to equate continuity with immutability, prevented the Church from developing a holistic approach to catholicity. In facing the challenge of globalization, Christianity can offer an alternative way of togetherness in diversity, which seems to be the current translation of the theological category of the catholicity of the Church. This article's focus will be therefore on the role and significance of community building and the Church's unity in regard to sustaining creation and addressing globalization.

Key Words: *Catholicity, Church Unity, Globalization, Community building, Ecumenism.*

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REIMAGINANDO Y ACTUALIZANDO LA CATOLICIDAD: CONSTRUYENDO LA UNIDAD DE LA IGLESIA EN UN MUNDO GLOBALIZADO Y DISPERSO

El debate teológico católico contemporáneo acerca de la catolicidad asegura recuperar una concepción cualitativa de la catolicidad con el fin de corregir el énfasis clásico sobre la amplitud geográfica. Las tendencias para identificar la catolicidad con la universalidad, confundir la universalidad con la uniformidad y equiparar la continuidad con la inmutabilidad, impidieron que la Iglesia desarrollara un enfoque holístico respecto de la catolicidad. Al enfrentar el reto de la globalización, el cristianismo ofrece una alternativa de unidad en la diversidad que parece ser la traducción actual de la categoría teológica de la catolicidad de la Iglesia. El punto focal de este artículo será, por ende, el papel y el significado de la construcción de comunidad y la unidad de la Iglesia respecto del sostenimiento de la creación y el abordaje de la globalización. Palabras clave: Catolicidad, unidad de la Iglesia, globalización, construcción de comunidad, ecumenismo.

RE-IMAGINANDO E ATUALIZANDO A CATOLICIDADE: CONSTRUINDO A UNIDADE DA IGREJA EM UM MUNDO GLOBALIZADO E DISPERSO

O debate teológico católico contemporâneo acerca da catolicidade assegura recuperar uma concepção qualitativa desta, com o fim de corrigir a ênfase clássica sobre a amplitude geográfica. As tendências para identificar a catolicidade com a universalidade, confundir a universalidade com a uniformidade, e equiparar a continuidade com a imutabilidade, impediram que a Igreja desenvolvesse um enfoque holístico a respeito da catolicidade. Ao enfrentar o desafio da globalização, o cristianismo oferece uma alternativa de unidade na diversidade que parece ser a tradução atual da categoria teológica da catolicidade da Igreja. O ponto focal deste artigo será, assim, o papel e o significado da construção de comunidade e de unidade da Igreja em relação à sustentação da criação e à abordagem da globalização.

Palavras-Chave: Catolicidade, unidade da Igreja, globalização, construção de comunidade, ecumenismo.

INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the role and significance of community building and the Church's unity in regard to sustaining creation and addressing globalization. From an ecclesiological view, such a task requires a re-imagining of the visible unity of the Church, including differences, localities and contexts.

In facing the challenge of globalization, Christianity can offer an alternative way of togetherness in diversity, which seems to be the current translation of the traditional theological category of the catholicity of the Church. This is what the Belgian theologian Gustave Thils meant with the statement “*actualiser la catholicité de l'Eglise*”.¹ The Church's unity would imply a plurality of forms, rites, style of ecclesial existence, spiritualities and doctrinal emphases.

Consequently, differences in such an ecclesiology do not mean that the other must be wrong in her private or institutional religious convictions; on the contrary, diversities are to be considered as the condition of possibility for re-creating the face of the Church. On this account, updating the Church's catholicity is *de facto* a process of *ecclesiogenesis*, where the differences can be considered as essential elements of the true Church of Christ.

Drawing from Thils' views, we propose, first, that the struggle for true catholicity should be more focused on its local/contextual concretions rather than its universal idealizations. At the same time, we will stress that the updating process of the catholicity of the Church is a matter of ecumenical learning as a total-holistic process. These emphases would allow us to surpass the limited views of catholicity as merely a universal and static characteristic of the Church.

Having stressed that, in the second part of our work, we will point out that the updating process of the catholicity of the Church is able to confront the

¹ We found the statement both in his earliest as well as in his most recent works. Here, it is not our intention to study Thils' ecclesiology exhaustively. We have, therefore, limited ourselves to analyzing his following works: “La notion de catholicité de l'Eglise à l'époque modern”, 5-73; *Les notes de l'Eglise dans l'apologétique catholique depuis la Réforme*, 211-254; *Histoire doctrinale du mouvement œcuménique*; *Syncretisme ou catholicité?*; *Unité catholique ou centralisation à outrance?*

effects of globalization through a discernment of the Christian commitment to the *oikoumene*, namely, the unity of humankind as well as that of creation in its entirety. This commitment is located at the heart of the Church's sacramental mission.

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Since the 1940s, Gustave Thils called for “*actualiser la catholicité de l’Eglise*”. In so doing, he very carefully analyzed the theological evolution of the concept of catholicity. Due to their focus on universality and conditioned by controversial contexts, catholic theology and magisterial teaching have, for centuries, focused on the quantitative elements of the Church's catholicity: temporality (the un-changeability of the doctrinal teaching in faithfulness to the teaching of the apostles), spatiality (geographic universality) and numeric quantity.²

Prior to Vatican II, the qualitative elements of catholicity had been overlooked almost entirely. The strong tendencies to identify catholicity with universality, to confuse universality with uniformity and to equate continuity with immutability, prevented the Church from developing a holistic approach to catholicity.

Towards a holistic understanding of catholicity by considering localities

Contemporary Catholic theological debate on catholicity claims to recover a qualitative conception of catholicity in order to correct the classical Counter-reformation emphasis on geographical breadth. One regularly hears complaints about an uncritical identification of catholicity and universality. A careful analysis of the patristic sources has shown that the fullness denoted by *katholikos* referred to the fullness of faith as much as to geographical universality.

Therefore, Catholicity simultaneously expressed the Church's quality of cohesion and its geographical expansion. Historically, catholicity would have either referred to its universal geographic and temporal extension, to the

² Idem, *Les notes de l'Eglise dans l'apologétique catholique depuis la Réforme*, 211-254.

adaptability of the Church to all cultures and peoples, or to the authenticity, wholeness and fullness of truth present in the Church.³

Those aforementioned debates centre around recovering the qualitative aspects of catholicity by focusing on two interconnected issues: re-thinking (1) the relationship between the Church's catholicity and its unity, and (2) the Church's catholicity and history. In this regard, we look at two different theologies of the Church.⁴

On the one hand, theoretical explorations of the pre-existence of the Church –which stress both its inner unity and transcendence– emphasize that the Church as a worldwide communion finds itself in a sort of vertical alliance to both this inner unity and to this universal transcendent Church. Only this can guarantee its survival as one body against the threat of disintegration in the face of relativism. Hence, it is necessary to hold on to the priority of the universal over the local.

On the other hand, there also exist ecclesiological reflections on catholicity that manifest the fundamental concern of the radically historical and existential nature of God's interaction with human persons, hence, the importance of dialogue and the value of the local and the particular. How do we deal with these seemingly opposite understandings of the Church's catholicity?

³ For example, Cyril of Jerusalem outlined some aspects of the Church's catholicity, as follows: it extends over the whole world, it is united in doctrine, it includes all humanity, and it extends over all time. He explained the meaning of catholicity as used in the Creed as the gathering together of all in one union. Here, catholicity is understood as an inner quality (*Catech.* 18:23 [Migne P.G. 33 c. 1044]). Vincent of Lérins says that as the Church as catholic comprehends almost everything universally, it holds to that which has been believed everywhere, always, and by all. *Katholikos* means, first of all, the inner wholeness and integrity of the Church's life. *Wholeness* is not only *communion*, and in any case not a simple empirical communion. *Ecclesia catholica* never meant a world-wide Church. This has been very forcibly stated in the well known words of St. Ignatius of Antioch: "Where there is a bishop, let there be the whole multitude; just as where Jesus Christ is, there too is the Catholic Church" (*Ignat Smyrn.* 8:2). It seems that only in the West, during the struggle against the Donatists, was the word *catholica* used in the sense of universality, in opposition to the geographical provincialism of the Donatists. See, for instance, Beinert, "Ökumenische Leitbilder und Alternative", 129-131.

⁴ The contemporary Ratzinger-Kasper debate on the universal-local Church makes this tension clear. See Lefebvre, "Conflicting Interpretations of the Council: The Ratzinger-Kasper Debate", 95-105.

It seems that the re-thinking of the relationship between the Church's catholicity and its unity have determined the way in which catholicity has been concretely related to history. In fact, historically, there are two theological approaches on catholicity-unity. A different theological base sustains those perspectives and, in consequence, opposite ecclesial and ecumenical practices are sketched. Those diverse views deal with either a full identification of the Church's catholicity and its unity –as universality– or a proper distinction of the terms.

Thus, in the first case, when we fully identify catholicity with universality, the unity of the Church risks to be seen merely as a condition, a means, nothing else than a formal but indispensable element of the Church's catholicity. This identification indicates an anthropological pessimism where cultures are fundamentally fallen. The ecclesial space is represented as a bright centre where the fullness of revealed truth is embraced. Hence, only a little space is left for ecumenical openness, for the consideration of any sort of ecclesiality in other Churches.

When, on the other hand, we attempt to distinguish universality from catholicity, and catholicity from the Church's unity, diversities –including locality and contexts– come to be considered as an essential component of the Church's unity. This perspective points to a more optimistic Anthropology, which expects God to be already at work in history and in the various Churches.

Each locality is a potential bearer, both of the riches that contribute to the greater fullness of the entire Church and of the nostalgic aspects that require correction and conversion.⁵ Localities and diversities are luckily to be viewed, at best, as passive material to be transformed by being brought into conformity with a centrally mediated Christian truth. This would be different if catholicity would also be understood in a more complementary sense as adding dimensions of plurality and integration to unity. In this way, locality appears as a realization of the Church's unity rather than a threat.⁶

⁵ Congar stresses the same: "La catholicité purifie les diversités humaines en se les assimilant pour se les incorporer, elle les fait mourir à leur trop grand particularisme." (Congar, *Chrétiens désunis: principes d'un oecuménisme catholique*. *Unam Sanctam* 1, 142).

⁶ Kasper, for instance, believes that the working model in the relationship between the local and universal Church is variety in unity and unity in variety. A methodologically balanced

Towards a holistic understanding of catholicity by properly considering its universal meaning

One must also ask if the consideration of the crucial place of localities excludes the universal character of the Church. It must be said that the Church's catholicity also includes universalism, but it is crucial to remember from where this universalism comes. In fact, as far as Christian universalism refers to a person as the essential element of identity, this universalism goes beyond a restrictive geographical breadth.

Having pointed out that the Christian universalism can only be approached christologically, the following question arises: What does "essential identity" mean at a time when significant attention is given to the existence of many localities and diversities within and among the Churches? Does it mean that an ecclesiological program should call for unity occasioned by uniformity of thought and ecclesial practices?

Thils' distinction between unity as a dogmatic value and unity in its historical condition appears to be helpful in this regard. In the first occurrence, the Church's unity would be seen as according to God's will –here the transcendent reality of the Church is emphasized–, whereas, in the second case, the historical-contextual-local concretizations of unity are taken seriously.⁷

Such distinction avoids confusion of the essential identity either with (re) unification or with uniformity. As a result, we think that the theological efforts to systematize the dogmatic meaning of the Church's unity (which depends radically upon God's will) should seriously take its historical representations into account, especially where the Church's unity appears to be concrete.

Local communities appear to be, to a certain extent, the foundations of the visible union: their faith, their sacramental structure, as well as their lifestyle. From this perspective, the so-called qualitative catholicity appears to

approach on the interaction between the praxial and the theoretical presupposes respect for historicity; this would allow the possibility of a new synthesis to come forth through the encounter of Christian truth claims and the context in which they are expressed.

⁷ See Thils, *Unité Catholique ou Centralisation a Oustrance?*, 92-93.

better underline both the supernatural and transcendent element of catholicity, and its historical incarnation in the legitimate diversities.

Therefore, *Lumen Gentium* 13 emphasizes: (1) catholicity as subsisting in the Catholic Church, rather than being identified within it, which implies a recognition that the Church of Christ subsists in other Churches as it does in the Catholic Church⁸; (2) a broadened notion of catholicity that not only embraces Christians outside of the Roman Catholic Church, but ultimately all humankind; and, finally, (3) inculturation as an important facet of catholicity.⁹ Catholicity, consequently, provides an idea of the universal that embraces global diversity, there exists an imperative of unity that must reach into the local, and an ideal of wholeness that embraces differences.

It must be said that the development of the Theology of the local Church was occasioned by the recognition of the local eucharistic gathering as an incarnation of the Church of Christ. Inspired by the theologies of the Orthodox tradition, the retrieval of eucharistic ecclesiology gave catholic Theology the opportunity to affirm its global catholicity by allowing the local Churches to move away from being regarded as mere parts of a corporate ecclesiastical organization, into becoming full ecclesiological subjects, a portion of the people of God.¹⁰ A concrete expression of this can be seen in the so-called praxis-oriented ecclesiologies, such as the ecclesial base communities in Latin America, in the very core of the local Church to which we will refer in the next section.

Lacking an understanding of catholicity that pays attention to the complementarity of the local and the universal/essential of catholicity, we would tend to construe the contemporary moment as a threat to unity alone.

⁸ For an apt historical overview of Vatican II's doctrine of *subsistit in*, see Schelkens, "Lumen Gentium's 'Subsistit in' Revisited: The Catholic Church and Christian Unity after Vatican II", 875-893.

⁹ "From moralizing advice to greater attentiveness to needs. From wrote doctrinal answers to questions people had stopped asking." (Linden, *Global Catholicism. Diversity and Change since Vatican II*, 87).

¹⁰ It also includes a proper recuperation of the pneumatology in the Church's life. See Mc Partlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue*, and De Mey, "Is the Connection of 'Catholicity' and 'Globalization' Fruitful? An Assessment of Recent Reflections on the Notion of Catholicity", 169-181.

A more integrated conception of catholicity, however, provides a much more adequate basis for engaging globalization by properly connecting catholicity and history.

UPDATING CATHOLICITY: BY CONFRONTING THE CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT OF THE *OIKOUMENE* IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

In the 20th Century, both the growth of the Ecumenical Movement and the development of praxis-oriented ecclesiologies challenged a rather particularistic hermeneutic of catholicity, providing an impulse to re-think its qualitative dimensions as well as its concretization. It has also been an ecumenical learning process that has helped to better understand the relationship between the Church's catholicity and history.

The ecumenical focus on catholicity as a learning process

Within the Ecumenical Movement, the above-mentioned learning process has developed differently. On one hand, the ecumenical focus on catholicity around the middle of the 20th Century saw catholicity through the lens of the struggle for unity amongst confessionally divided Churches. The Church's catholicity had in the beginning appeared as little more than a concurrence of local Churches, which kept a sort of quiet communion by mutually recognizing one another's doctrines, ministries and sacraments.¹¹ On the other hand, as long as the limitations of this doctrinal approach were noticed, within ecumenical circles, the discussion also focused on the need of re-founding the Church's catholicity on social and ethical principles in this fractured society.

By understanding catholicity in this inclusive way, within those circles, the Church's catholicity has been stressed by claiming a sort of re-catholization within and among the Churches.¹²

¹¹ Dulles, "The Catholicity of the Church and Globalization", 261.

¹² Lindbeck has offered a compelling ecclesiological argument of constructive dimensions in his suggestion that Protestants must search for a re-catholicized Christianity as a fulfillment of the Reformers' intent. See Lindbeck, "An Assessment Reassessed: Paul Tillich on the Reformation", 376-393.

In fact, the claim to a sort of re-catholization within and among the Churches, has implied a learning process in a threefold way:

1. Given the fact that this so-called re-catholization claim might be considered as a common call to go back to the earliest understanding of catholicity, the one that takes localities seriously into account, Thils' call to "*actualiser la catholicité de l'Eglise*" might correctly be related to it. As briefly mentioned above, early Christian communities had recognized a doctrinal-christological centre that worked as a centripetal force among the expanding communities. It defined the development of ecclesiological boundaries during the first centuries, it was a process which claimed a kind of orthodoxy, as understood as an essential identity, to be the core-basis of its content. In considering Thils' distinction between the dogmatic and the historical-contextual-local meaning of unity, the "essential identity" here would refer to unity in its historical condition rather than to its dogmatic value. This is what the re-catholization would consider as primordial.

2. The updating process of catholicity as well as re-catholization base themselves on the theological presupposition that the Church's catholicity is always incomplete and asks for its completion. From this perspective, catholicity should yet again be considered as a challenge, that is, as a task rather than something already accomplished. Vatican II's ecclesiology of the charismata or gifts stresses the same. The famous paragraph of *Lumen Gentium* 8, as well as 12, can be interpreted in this way. Catholic unity would depend not upon external or institutional structure, but upon these charismata given to the communities, to the people of God as a whole.¹³ Such an ecclesiological statement suggests that catholicity has a dynamic rather than static character; it is a continued process of deploying those gifts as containing true ecclesiality in them.

¹³ We do believe that Dulles was specifically referring to *Lumen Gentium* when he described catholicity as a "present, though imperfect, reality" in the Roman communion (Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 168). The same statement would be accentuated later referring to *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4, by saying that the Church has been catholic from the very beginning, but she has never been completely successful in expressing "the fullness of her catholicity in every respect in actual life" (Idem, "The Catholicity of the Church and Globalization", 269).

3. In this way, the ecclesiological paradigm –according to Thils– had to move from *catholicité-mission* to *catholicité-plénitude*. Far from being a call for institutional and/or theological uniformity, this is a call to the Christian communities to deploy their goods, their richness, and to develop their ecclesiastical and cultural qualities, in order to achieve the visible extension of the universal Church, the *oikoumenè*.¹⁴

This reality has been paraphrased differently as “charismatic diversity” (Cullman), “variety in unity and unity in variety” (Schaffs), “cultural pluralism” (Congar), “fullness in diversity” (Sullivan), “legitimate diversities” (LG 13) among other related expressions. In all the above-mentioned cases, the fullness of catholicity pushes Christianity toward diversity, while the diversities make the fullness concrete (i.e., real), though not yet complete.

This ecumenical inclusive approach to catholicity takes diversities seriously, and not only those that are *ad intra* but also those that are *ad extra*, and as such expanding beyond the horizon marked by Christianity. Here no impositions can be made; Christian life depends not upon a political solution through the application of external force, but rather it depends on the integrity of communities committed to reconciled diversity in and through Jesus Christ in a globalized world.¹⁵ This statement gives place to our next section on catholicity and globalization.

Facing globalization through a comprehensive understanding of catholicity

In avoiding a monolithic model of unity, the Church is becoming aware that it is embedded in both a diverse world within Christianity and in a plurality of cultures and peoples that calls for an open and integrated model of the Church. This awareness implies a dialogical framework *vis-à-vis* ecclesial

¹⁴ Thils, *Histoire doctrinale du mouvement œcuménique*, 271-272.

¹⁵ Since Vatican II, the christological approach to catholicity has consistently been stressed. “Catholic” suggests –according to De Lubac– the idea of an organic whole, of a reality that is not scattered but turned towards a centre which assures its unity. De Lubac points out that it will take place whatever the expanse in area or the internal differentiation might be (De Lubac, *The Motherhood of the Church*, 173-174). The entire cosmos –in Dulles’ view– has in Christ its centre of unity, coherence and fulfilment (Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 168).

communities and history. In this light, some authors have reflected on *oikumene* as a theological foundation for globalization¹⁶, while many others have referred to catholicity as a theological frame for discussing globalization.¹⁷

Avery Dulles, for instance, stresses that ecumenism and catholicity are inextricable; both have to do with basic Christian identity as the foundation of our openness to essential character of diversity. Thus, he argues that both of them are directly related to globalization at the deepest level.¹⁸

What does this mean for our ecclesial life, as we face a reality with heightened attentiveness to the global dimensions, and demands of our admittedly pluralistic ecclesial life? Do we just uncritically admit the secular search for unity as “secular catholicities”?¹⁹

¹⁶ For instance, Kline and Bekker, “Engaging the Other in the Global Village”, 50-62; Burrows, “Globalization, Pluralism, and Ecumenics: the Old Question of Catholicity in a new Cultural Horizon”, 346-367; Duraisingh, “Contextual and Catholic: Conditions for Cross-cultural Hermeneutics”, 679-702.

¹⁷ Marzheuser, “Globalization and Catholicity”, 179-193; Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local*; Dulles, “The Catholicity of the Church and Globalization”, 259-268; Schreiter, “Globalization, Postmodernity, and the New Catholicity”, 13-31; De Mey, “Is the Connection of ‘Catholicity’ and ‘Globalization’ Fruitful? An Assessment of Recent Reflections on the Notion of Catholicity”, 169-181; Koopman, “Confessing and Embodying the Catholicity of the Church in the Context of Glocality”, 29-39; Miller, “Where is the Church”, 412-432.

¹⁸ However, Cavanaugh argues that catholicity provides a fundamentally different and better conception of universality than does global capitalism, which serves as a false catholicity (Cavanaugh, “The City: Beyond Secular Parodies”, 182-200).

¹⁹ In trying to recover the qualitative dimensions of catholicity in a pluralistic and globalized world, the fourth WWC Assembly held at Uppsala, in 1968, introduced the concept of “secular catholicities” referring to the secular forces of globalization as a gift of God to the Church and as a task for the Church (See World Council of Churches, *The Uppsala Report 1968*, 11-18). For some authors, globalization would had been approached so optimistically (Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 26-29; Idem, “The Catholicity of the Church and Globalization”, 259-268). Dulles argues that the Church recognizes that its catholicity, based on grace and faith, cannot be imposed on secular society. Therefore, the secular search for unity must be evangelically evaluated. A less optimistic treatment on globalization is observed 30 years later in the Harare Document, where this phenomenon is mostly seen as in opposition to the christian commitment to *oikoumene* (World Council of Churches, *Together on the Way: Official Report of the Eight Assembly of the World Council of Churches*).

In a 2008 volume of *Theological Studies* entitled “Theology and Globalization”, Vincent Miller has characterized the challenges of globalization from the perspective of catholicity.²⁰ His approach is helpful in coming to understand catholicity as a theological resource for an ecclesial response to the challenges of globalization.

Convinced that those responses must take care of both the theological meaning of catholicity, as well as of its socio-historical concretizations, Miller does not uncritically defend the phenomenon of globalization nor approaches it as a negative process.

In line with our argument, his theological approximation confronts the warnings of contextual or theo-praxis theologies that have shaped the ecclesiological turn characteristic of the 20th Century.

In fact, as contextual theologies emerged, a-contextual and universal notions of catholicity lost their force. That is to say, no longer were confessional differences the central and only threat to the Church’s catholicity. There are other –one could say– inner threats to the Church’s catholicity. This became apparent particularly in contexts where new ecclesial realities surfaced that demanded a rethinking of ecclesiological categories. The strong development of new ecclesial movements constituted one of the most important ecclesiological paradigms to better link history and the Church’s universal presence.²¹

Through his threefold theological characterization of globalization, Miller makes it clear that globalization is challenging Christian communities by bringing along homogenization in addition to heterogenization²² and deterritorialization. Those are the effects of the globalization process from a theological viewpoint.

²⁰ Miller, “Where is the Church”, 412-432.

²¹ For an overview of new ecclesial movements, see Mardones, *El marco socio-cultural de los nuevos movimientos eclesiales*; Comblin, “Os ‘movimentos’ e a pastoral latino-americana”, 244-255.

²² In popular and academic literature, this is primarily known by the term “glocalization” (Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity”, 25-44, Footnote 6). Glocalization is understood as an interaction and interdependence between local and global levels.

In theological literature, homogenization has largely been discussed as the main or even the unique globalization effect being normally taken as a negative secular search to accomplish unity by mostly stressing uniformity. Homogenization means, according to Miller, the erosion of local cultures by the imposition of a single dominant culture.

In reacting to this, it is possible to deduce the concrete results of this process, for instance, in the experience of the Basic Ecclesial Communities of Latin America (also known by their Spanish acronym, CEB). The rise of the CEBs came from the ecclesiological conviction that the local Church is in itself an expression of the Church as it is. Thus, it is in and through the local Churches that the Church is revealed, in the multiple and diverse forms of culture in which they live and celebrate faith.²³

The more or less extended secular tendency to homogenize cultures has found its ecclesial meaning in the ever present tendency to create a uniform expression of ecclesial life. Such a tendency appears to be present not only in the realm of *ad intra* in Catholicism but also in the *ad intra* of Christianity.

On the other hand, globalization as heterogenization, in Miller's views, refers to the fact that global intimacy is not bringing communion but polarization and division. Since the fragmentation has –within this process– been the main goal achieved, heterogenization should never be related with catholicity. From those views, globalization could not be considered as a kind of global Catholicism.²⁴

²³ Sánchez, “Las comunidades eclesiales de base, una alternativa de comunión en un mundo globalizado”, 57-64. In a globalized world characterized by enormous social and cultural changes, the Basic Ecclesial (Christian) Communities, that take their inspiration in the preferential option in contexts such as Latin America, offer both an ecclesial and a social alternative to embody brotherhood/sisterhood and solidarity. A non-catholic approach is found in Cook, *The Expectation of the Poor: Latin American Base Ecclesial Communities in Protestant Perspective*.

²⁴ Linden would say that the communion without any kind of exclusions was the *leit motiv* of this process (Linden, *Global Catholicism. Diversity and Change since Vatican II*, 87-90). Mardones, however, argues that the main challenge in this post-modern age is to enter dialogue with “the fragments” (Mardones, *Posmodernidad y cristianismo. El desafío del fragmento*, especially the Epilogue).

Deterritorialization, in Miller's perspective, intensifies heterogenization. Keeping identities appear to be the main claim, even if it would eventually imply some type of loss of communitarian perspective. If applied to the Christian communities, the Churches would no longer appear as a sacrament of God's salvation, but rather as sectarian communities policing their identity; this indeed threatens the Church's ability to be present in any particular place.²⁵

Both heterogenization and deterritorialization give rise to communities that focus on their own identity. This is not bad by principle; on the contrary, there are some positive aspects to be considered. The ecclesial experience of Latin America seems to confirm this; far from being called to fragmentation, they have consistently been an expression of going back to the original search for Christian unity that contextually includes the differences while respecting the essential identity.

In the light of our argumentation, Miller considers that catholicity "provides both measure and means for engaging these cultural dynamics: an ideal of unity as a harmony of difference that challenges the dominant sectarianism, and a call to the fullness of salvation that cannot settle for purity abstracted from concrete engagement with the world".²⁶

Catholicity is seen as breadth, as communion of difference and as depth.²⁷ Regarding globalization, geographical breadth is the most intuitively obvious aspect of catholicity, because the technologies of globalization allow for a fuller realization of the *koinonia* of the entire Church. But as we have already pointed out, the call to universality and geographic breadth also necessitates engagement in the particular and the local.

²⁵ In this regard, Marzheuser's statement that globalization can find a home in catholicity and vice versa, should at least be questioned (Marzheuser, "Globalization and Catholicity", 179-193).

²⁶ Miller, *Where is the Church*, 421.

²⁷ Dulles' fourfold characterization of the Church's catholicity is likely behind this view. The vertical trinitarian and creational dimensions of catholicity (height and depth) sustain the horizontal aspects of temporal expansion and missionary duties (breadth and length). According to these views, the traditional treatment of spatial and temporal catholicity must be grounded in its vertical dimensions, where the dialectical efforts to maintain equilibrium in these two theological orders at least appear to be difficult (Dulles, *The Catholicity*, especially 30-105).

As communion of difference, catholicity would allow us to face up to the current deterritorialized model of communion where differences appear to be relativistically approached. This does not refer to a sort of sacralisation, neither of cultures nor of any form of ecclesiality within them; on the contrary, every local expression of ecclesiality or catholicity has to be discerned in the light of the “essential identity” we have referred to. It will therefore always be a process of learning from and within the Churches.

Miller does think that the call to engage the diversity of human cultures is also a call to enter into the depths of each. Thus, we cannot simply “de-sacralize” cultures nor the secular search for unity. If this is done, it will imply resonance with the flow of already overcome ecclesiological hermeneutics on the relationship of Church and the World.

From a catholic perspective, this is consistently emphasized in Vatican II’s pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and in the most recent magisterial teaching. There is no pure negativity in the world, since God has given himself in history. In Schreiter’s words, it is important both to read the signs of the times and to discern what new opportunities and dangers globalization presents for the Churches themselves and for the Churches’ mission in the world.²⁸

In our opinion, this lecture and discernment have to be made in community and among communities, which implies a type of discernment that is communal as an authentic expression of catholicity.

By taking history seriously, the notion of catholicity as depth offers resources both to elaborate the response to heterogenization found in catholicity as breadth and communion of difference, and to provide insights for engaging the deterritorializing aspects of globalization.

In the same perspective, Dulles claims that to fully develop her depth dimension, the Church should neither seek total identification with the world, nor consider the world as fully negative.²⁹ As we have already pointed out, the local Church can function as a *locus* for the concrete experience of unity.

²⁸ Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 8.

²⁹ Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 66.

In Miller's view, it functions as a heuristic space where the particularities of cultures and societies are brought into focus for encounter with the Gospel.³⁰

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As Schreiter has rightly pointed out, reflections on the marks of the Church always increase when the Church needs to redefine its identity and find new orientation.³¹

The current globalization process and the simultaneous development of global civil society seem to constitute such a time of reorientation. Thus, reflecting on the Church's catholicity appears to be justified.

Updating the Church's catholicity embraces a qualitative understanding of catholicity, even if catholicity does not only reside in stressing spatial extension, neither in numeric quantity. It does not only reside in cultural and social variety or in continuity over time.

In this comprehensive theological vision, catholicity means that *ad intra* the Church radically moves beyond any kind of particularism or uniformity, and assumes plurality in matter of rites, style of ecclesial existence, spiritualities, theological systems and doctrinal emphases, while always taking care of the "essential identity".³² Consequently, differences in such an ecclesiology do not mean that the other must be wrong in her private or institutional religious convictions or ecclesial practices. On this account, the updating process of the Church's catholicity is *de facto* a process of ecclesio genesis among Christians, as an essential element of the true Church of Christ.

The updating process of the Church's catholicity implies the awareness that Churches *ad extra* are challenged to live their catholicity in the context of diversities and localities. It is more than discerning implications and imperatives; it also has to do with embodying the catholicity in ethos, in structures, in practices and policies, in the very sphere of life wholeness and fullness, albeit

³⁰ Miller, *Where is the Church*, 426.

³¹ Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 119.

³² Thils, *Histoire doctrinale du mouvement œcuménique*, 272. We affirm that the recovery of catholicity overcomes division, and the recovery of ecumenical unity enhances catholicity.

imperfect, preliminary and in penultimate form. The Church has to concretely and sincerely update all diversities in both her structure and everyday life, in order to respect the Holy Spirit's presence and its gifts.³³

That is why local communities appear to be structures that express the Church's catholicity and can be understood as concrete forms that stand against the deterritorializing effects of globalization, a place where the Church can hold and frame the local. In as much as catholicity provides an idea of the universal that embraces global diversity, there exists an imperative of unity that must reach into the local, and an ideal of wholeness that embraces differences.

It is clear that the unity of humankind in this world involves the social-political realm. Homogenization and heterogenization appear to be two faces of the same coin; both bring forth fragmentation and disunity. What is the Churches' role in overcoming rupture and creating unity? The praxis-oriented ecclesiologies, as well as the growth of the ecumenical movement, had challenged a rather particularistic hermeneutic of catholicity, thereby providing an impulse to re-think its qualitative dimensions, as well as its particular concretization.

Catholicity on earth implies that the Church functions in the tension of keeping her eyes focused on the universal; in relation to and in a sense produced by and for, a particular context. The Churches must pay attention to, and acknowledge where God is at work in the world outside their visible, institutional structures.

Nonetheless, the visible Church reflects brokenness and incompleteness, yet already participates in the fullness of the invisible Church that will be revealed in heaven. Such catholicity of life will entail something more demanding and costly than ecclesial or doctrinal uniformity. It will require that we learn a new how to live according to the truth that sets us free, and to do so through a persuasive witnessing *as nations*.

Only in this embodied form will we demonstrate at the very heart of our diversity what it means to embody Christ as a unifying witness of peace

³³ Thils emphasizes that since catholicity is actually a mystery of unity and diversity, the Church's catholicity must be considered as gift and also as mission, as a task to be realized. The Church's catholicity implies identity and diversity, cohesion and expansion, because of the Holy Spirit's action (Thils, *Syncretisme ou catholicité?*, 82).

in our broken Churches and fractured society, re-imagining and updating Church's catholicity.

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