

CONFESSING AND EMBODYING THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOCALITY

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Abstract

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part gives a description of the nature and task of civil society in the context of glocality, namely of interaction and interdependence between local and global levels. In a second section the meaning of the catholicity of the church is outlined. In a third and final section an attempt is made to spell out the role of churches in local and global civil society by focusing on what it means to confess and embody catholicity in the context of glocality.

Keywords: Catholicity, Civil society, Glocality

Civil Society – an Inflated Concept

- a) Civil society is not a homogeneous concept. It reflects diversity in terms of historical development, sociological traditions, uses, agendas and reception in different regions of the world.
- b) The notion of civil society developed in a situation of crisis in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sociologist Adam Seligman, identifies two traditions or streams of development of this concept.¹ The first tradition is socialistic, post-Hegelian and Marxist. The second tradition is Anglo-American and more capitalist in origin and consists of thinkers such as John Locke, and various thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment. The modern revival of the term is associated with the resistance and freedom movements in East and Central Europe in the 1980s.²

¹ See Seligman (1992:10-11). He (1992:15) describes the situation in which the idea of civil society developed as follows: "The general crises of the seventeenth century – the commercialization of land, labour and capital; the growth of market economies; the age of discoveries; and the English and later North American and continental revolutions – all brought into question the existing models of social order and of authority. Whereas traditionally the foundation or matrix of social order was seen to reside in some entity external to the social world – God, King or even the givenness of traditional norms and behavior itself – these principles of order became increasingly questioned by the end of the seventeenth century."

² See also Keane 2003. In his helpful description of civil society, the famous Latin American theologian, Julio de Santa Ana (1994:5), focuses mainly on this socialist tradition. He explains that civil society is the product of modern nation-states and the emergence of citizens as new social and political actors. He refers to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's plea for the importance of the development of a general will, consensus, and some degree of hegemony which is expressed in a social contract without which modern societies cannot function. Although Rousseau, according to De Santa Ana, did not use the concept civil society, the idea of civil society was already present in his thinking.

The concept civil society, according to De Santa Ana (1994:5), developed in the context of the Industrial Revolution which paved the way for the Western bourgeois to take power in their societies, for a great influence of economic forces on social and cultural processes, and for massive pauperization. In this context of more complex societies Saint-Simon of France used the concept civil society to describe the so-called private sector, i.e. that part of reality which does not belong to the state, as organized political power. De Santa Ana (1994:6) also refers to Hegel who views civil society as the sector of society that mediates between the indi-

- c) The term civil society has various uses. Seligman identifies three such uses, namely the political, social scientific and philosophical-prescriptive.³ The political use refers to different movements and parties, as well as individuals, who critique government policies.

The term is also used as a scientific tool to analyse and describe the social reality.⁴ Former general secretary of the World Council of Churches, Konrad Raiser, uses the term as an analytical tool and not as a normative and prescriptive concept.⁵ It is a heuristic and analytical tool which enhances our understanding of contemporary social reality and which sheds light on some features of society that might otherwise have remained obscure.

The philosophical-prescriptive use of the term refers to the fact that this term contains an ethical vision of a good society which guides policy and action and which implies the moral bonds of citizens.⁶ Those who reckon that civil society does have an ethical function focus attention on the ambiguous nature of this ethical function. De Santa Ana, for instance, uses Antonio Gramsci's distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals in civil society to demonstrate this point.⁷ Although traditional intellectuals may be critical of the dominant system, they do not break with, what Gramsci calls, the "common sense" of this system, i.e. the consciousness and ideology that protect the interests of the powerful. The organic intellectuals, on the other hand, strengthen the so-called "good sense", i.e. the consciousness about and commitment to the plights and needs of the poor.

- d) The concept of civil society is used differently in different regions of the world. Western societies mainly focus on individuals and on the voluntary association of individuals. This is especially the case in the USA. Societies in Eastern and Central Europe, use the concept of civil society with a communal connotation.⁸ In the same vein South African political scientists, Annie Gagiano and Pierre du Toit, distinguish between liberal societies (i.e. mainly Western societies) that talk about civil society in individualistic terms and liberationist societies (e.g. Latin America and Africa) who emphasize notions such as solidarity and community.⁹ These differences should not be overemphasized. Albeit with different emphases all three functions of civil society are fulfilled in different contexts.
- e) Another point of diversity regarding the use of the notion of civil society has to do with its relationship to the political and economic spheres of society. Some thinkers such as Hegel, Marx and Lenin¹⁰ are, according to De Santa Ana, limiting the autonomy of civil society.¹¹ For Hegel it should be under the authority and management of the state, and for Marx and Lenin civil society should be under the authority of the proletariat. De Santa Ana, however,

vidual and family, on the one hand, and the state on the other hand. Later in the article it is indicated that civil society is not a private, but a public sphere. It is also shown that the family is part of civil society.

³ Seligman 1992:201.

⁴ See also Seligman 1992:203-204.

⁵ Raiser 1994:39.

⁶ See also Seligman 1992:204.

⁷ De Santa Ana 1994:8-9.

⁸ See also Seligman 1992:202-203. Seligman is even sceptical about the prospects of the growth of civil society in non-Western societies such as Hungary, which do not accept the fundamental importance of the individual.

⁹ Gagiano & Du Toit 1996:47-48, 50-55.

¹⁰ For a helpful description of the development of the idea of civil society in the thought of John Locke, the Scottish Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, Hegel and Marx, see Seligman 1992:15-58.

¹¹ De Santa Ana 1994:6.

stresses the importance of the autonomy of civil society. He refers to a comparative study of Alexis de Tocqueville who concludes that, because of the greater freedom of so-called free associations in the USA, democracy late in the 19th century flourished more in the USA than in Europe where the roots of liberal democracies are. Democracy in the USA grew because of measures such as decentralization of power, the federal principle in the constitution, recognition of the autonomy of townships, and above all the commitment of people to associating and organising among themselves in order to address common plights and challenges. Konrad Raiser is also concerned about the continuous threat to the autonomy of civil society from political and economic powers.¹²

In the seventeenth and eighteenth century the development of a civil society and the economic sector were closely related. With the increase of the power of the market, this relationship changed to such an extent that “some contemporary understandings of civil society view the economic sector as being not part of civil society. Raiser explains: “Civil society is usually defined over against the political and economic dimensions of society ... Civil society is as public as the state or the economy, and it has its own rationality and follows its own processes of institutionalization.”¹³ Here it needs to be noted that although the economic sector is not part of civil society, many social theorists would view trade unions specifically as indeed a crucial institution of civil society.

- f) The diverse and conflicting understandings of the term civil society leads – for example for Seligman¹⁴ – to a certain scepticism about the continuous use of this term. Although I appreciate Seligman’s description of the development of the concept civil society, I do not share his scepticism about the continued use of the term. I rather reckon that the diversity and complexity of this term helps us to appreciate the complexity and hybridity of current societies. In the same vein political scientist John Keane comments with reference to global civil society: “For its participants, rather, this society nurtures a culture of self-awareness about the hybridity and complexity of the world.”¹⁵ What Seligman views as a weakness is perhaps rather a strength. Israel Batista of the World Council of Churches also reckons that the variety of understandings of civil society need not inhibit the use of the term. “Not that the term should be reduced to a sort of ‘action without reflection’; but it is preferable to use it as an open-ended, ‘searching’ concept, even if this means that we operate without clear definitions.”¹⁶

Whilst recognising the complexity and diversity of the term civil society, it might be possible to draw some points of convergence regarding the meaning of the term civil society. This can be done without running the risk of oversimplification with all its negative effects.

In this article the term “civil society” will be used with the following meaning: Civil society refers to the institutions, organizations, associations and movements of society which, independently from the political and economic sectors, strive to enhance the quality of life, satisfy the needs and foster the interests of people, change the nature of society and build the common good, that is a life of quality for all. Families, schools, legal bodies, the media, cultural, arts and sports clubs, as well as neighbourhoods are all institutions of civil society. Sociologically spoken churches are part of civil society, albeit institutions

¹² Raiser 1994:39.

¹³ Raiser 1994:39.

¹⁴ Seligman 1992:206.

¹⁵ Keane 2003:15.

¹⁶ Batista 1994:16.

with a unique character. Trade unions are also viewed as part of civil society since they do not form part of the political and economic systems of power. With regard to global civil society it is interesting to note that Keane views international businesses and political movements that advocate justice as being part of international civil society.¹⁷

This use of civil society coincides with Seligman's views sketched above, namely that civil society constitutes a helpful instrument to describe contemporary societies, and that civil society does have a moral function. In so far as institutions of civil society participate in advocacy initiatives and campaign for the political and economic rights of people, this understanding of civil society also adheres to Seligman's proposals about the political function of civil society.

Global Civil Society – a Concept in Evolution

- a) According to South African political scientist, Rupert Taylor, the term global civil society is in development over the last decade or two.¹⁸ It is been used increasingly within academia, the mass media and broader society. The term global civil society is, like civil society on national level, a diversified term. It needs much more development.¹⁹
- b) The idea of a global civil society developed in the context of political, cultural and especially economic globalization. David Held gives a helpful description of four major features of globalization:

Stretched social relations refer to the existence and increasing importance of cultural, economic and political networks of connection across the world. Regionalization, the increased interconnection between states that border on each other, is an important form of this, but there are also many others. *Intensification of flows* refers to the increased density of interaction across the globe which implies that the impacts of events are elsewhere of ten felt much more strongly than before. *Interpenetration* refers to the extent to which apparently distant cultures and societies come face to face with each other at a local level, creating increased (experience of real) diversity. *Global infrastructure* refers to the underlying formal and informal institutional arrangements that are required for globalized networks to operate.²⁰

The world in which we live today is also described by the term glocalisation. In a *Festschrift* for Duncan Forrester, William Storrar borrows the term glocalisation from the sociologist, Roland Robertson, to describe the interaction between the local and the global in the practice of public theology today.

By “glocal”, Robertson means exactly this interactive local-global dynamic at the core of globalization. Instead of seeing globalization as the conflict or polarization be-

¹⁷ Keane 2003:9.

¹⁸ Taylor 2004:1.

¹⁹ Taylor describes the search for clarity regarding the definition of this term as follows: “...the topic of global civil society is one of much confusion and contestation; among commentators there is a sense that this is a phenomenon which is less than fully understood and which defies conventional means of analysis. For example, Henry Milner has made the point that ‘though much is written about GCS (Global Civil Society) both in academe and in the mainstream and alternative media, it remains very much under-researched, and, indeed, under-defined’; and Peter Waterman has remarked that the provenance of the term is not well grounded and that global civil society has not yet passed ‘through the forge of theoretical clarification or the sieve of public debate’. Similarly, writing in the journal *Contemporary Sociology*, Peter Evans has argued that ‘analysis and theory have not caught up to practice when it comes to progress action at the global level’, and Paul Kingsnorth has observed that ‘often the language and the methods are not yet available to describe what is happening’. See Taylor 2004:1.

²⁰ Held 2000:15-21.

tween the extremes of homogenizing global economic, cultural and informational systems and the anti-globalization resistance of heterogeneous local cultures, traditions and identities, Robertson has argued for another conceptual approach: One that recognizes their meeting and melding in “glocal” form around the world.²¹

c) Keane’s definition of global civil society is helpful:

When the term global civil society is used in this way, as an ideal type, it properly refers to a dynamic non governmental system of interconnected socio economic institutions that straddle the whole earth, and that have complex effects that are felt in its four corners. Global civil society is neither a static object nor a fait accompli. It is an unfinished project that consists of sometimes thick, sometimes thinly stretched networks, pyramids and the hub and spoke clusters of socio economic institutions and actors who organize themselves across borders, with the deliberate aim of drawing the world together in new ways. These non governmental institutions and actors tend to pluralise power and to problematise violence; consequently, their peaceful or civil effects are felt everywhere, here and there, afar and wide, to and from local areas, through wider regions, to the planetary level itself.²²

Global civil society is constituted by institutions that transcend national borders. Japanese social thinker and practitioner, Muto Ichiyo, prefers the development of transborder institutions of civil society, since national ones are compromised by their priority to national concerns.²³ To address global problems we indeed need these transnational bodies. However, I believe that there should also be room in global civil society discourses for the international cooperation of national institutions of civil society in different countries. In fact, civil society organizations in South Africa cooperated on international level with civil societies in other countries to abolish apartheid. The same cooperation occurs currently in the endeavour to address the social challenges of post-apartheid South Africa. In the context of glocalization which calls for a focus on both the global and the local, this approach does have merit.

d) Similar to national civil society, global civil society fulfills three functions. Firstly, it fulfills a political function. Through various means institutions of global civil society impacts on governmental decisions and policies. Keane describes this function as follows:

Its social groups and organizations and movements lobby states, bargain with international or organizations, pressure and bounce off other non state bodies, invest in new forms of production, champion different ways of life and engage in charitable direct action in distant local communities, for instance through capacity building programmes that supply jobs, clean running water, sporting facilities, hospitals and schools. In these various ways, the members of global civil society help to conserve or to alter the power relations embedded in the chains of interaction linking the local, regional and planetary orders. Their cross border links and networks help to define and redefine who gets what, when, and how in the world.²⁴

Global civil society also serves as a social scientific tool to make sense of the current global society, especially with regard to the non-governmental spaces of global society.²⁵ Keane describes the socio-ethical function of global civil society as one of

²¹ Storrar 2003:406.

²² Keane 2003:8.

²³ Ichiyo 1994:32.

²⁴ Keane 2003:17.

²⁵ Keane refers to various civil society organizations: “To begin with, the term global civil society refers to non-governmental structures and activities. It comprises individuals, households, profit seeking businesses, not-for-profit non-governmental organizations, coalitions, social movements and linguistic communities and cultural identities. It feeds upon the work of media celebrities and the past or present public personalities from Ghandi, Bill Gates, Primo Levi and Martin Luther King to Bono and Aung San Suu Kyi, Bishop Ximenes Belo, Naomi Klein and al-Waleed bin Talal. It includes charities, think tanks, prominent intellectuals, cam-

building civility, i.e. respect for others, also strangers – and to oppose incivility.²⁶ Batista's description of the ethical role of civil society is very helpful: "Civil society is not a panacea for intellectuals or an easy solution for social activists. Neither should it become an ecumenical slogan. Civil society is rather an ethical ideal, a dreaming of life-centered values in a world 'not standing like this.' It can energize utopias, strengthen people's aspirations for manageable societies and elicit imagination and creativity in the search for alternatives."²⁷

- e) For Raiser, churches are natural partners in the spheres of both national and global civil society: "If national churches are typical actors in civil society at the level of the nation, may we not assume that the WCC (World Council of Churches – addition NK), which understands itself as a fellowship of more than three hundred such churches in about one hundred countries, provides an important and ready-made space for promoting international civil society – particularly in view of the long heritage of ecumenical social thought and engagement?"²⁸

The Catholicity of the Church

- a) According to Robert Schreiter reflection on the marks of the church increase in every situation where the church needs to redefine her identity and find new orientation.²⁹ He quotes Robert JC Young's statement: "Fixity of identity is only sought in situations of instability and disruption, of conflict and change." The current globalization process and the simultaneous development of global civil society constitute such a time of re-orientation. This paper specifically explores the catholicity of the church.
- b) Schreiter notes various meanings of the term. According to Schreiter, Ignatius of Antioch was the first person to use this term with regard to the church in the year 110 AD.³⁰ Ignatius is well known for the formulation: "Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people

paigning and lobby groups, citizens' protests responsible for 'clusters of performances', small and large corporate firms, independent media, internet groups and websites, employers federations, trade unions, international commissions, parallel summits and sporting organizations. It comprises bodies like Amnesty International, Sony, Falun Gong, Christian Aid, al Jazeera, the Catholic Relief Services, the Indigenous Peoples Bio-Diversity Network, FIFA, Transparency International, Sufi networks like Qadiriyya and Naqshabandiyya, the International Red Cross, the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, the Ford Foundation, Shack/Slum Dwellers International, Women Living Under Muslim Laws, News Corporation International, OpnDemocracy.net, and unnamed circles of Buddhist monks, dressed in crimson robes, keeping the mind mindful. Considered together, these institutions and actors constitute a vast, interconnected and multi-layered non-governmental space that comprises many hundreds of thousands of more-or-less self directing ways of life. All of these forms of life have at least one thing in common: across vast geographic distances and despite barriers of time, they deliberately organize themselves and conduct their cross-border social activities, business and politics outside the boundaries of governmental structures." See Keane 2003: 8-9.

²⁶ Keane 2003:12. Keane warns against groups that might also be regarded by some as part of global civil society, but who pursue morally destructive aims and who carry out these aims in a non-civil way. In the ranks of these groups are international criminal gangs, organized international crime groups involved in drug and sex trafficking, war criminals, arms traders and terrorists.

²⁷ Batista 1994: 20.

²⁸ Raiser 1994: 41-41.

²⁹ See Schreiter 2002:119: "Optatus and Augustine invoked the marks of unity and holiness in their disputes with the Donatists. The Cathari and other medieval movements questioned the holiness of the church as well. The controversies over the reform of the church from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries questioned the medieval church's apostolicity: had it lost its connection to the Church of the Apostles? A somewhat similar questioning can be found in the Church of England in the nineteenth century among the Tractarians."

³⁰ Schreiter 2002:121.

be; as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church.”³¹ Ignatius’ formulation reflects a twofold understanding of catholicity. It namely refers to both the *universality and orthodoxy* of the church – orthodoxy in the sense of *pleroma* or fullness of faith, or the rule of faith, i.e. the faith that was believed and professed everywhere.³² According to Moltmann, the meaning of catholicity as fullness of faith developed in the context of conflict with schismatic groups, especially since the third century.³³

The term catholicity also refers to the *geographical extendedness*³⁴ of the church, especially since Christianity became state religion. Just as the Roman empire was seen as embracing the oikumene, the whole inhabited earth, the church was acknowledged as ecumenical. Here the close link between *catholicity and ecumenicity* can be seen.³⁵

Schreiter argues that for centuries a *juridical* meaning was associated with catholicity as the status of the See of Rome increased.³⁶ After the Reformation catholicity referred to *uniformity* achieved through communion with the bishop of Rome. In line with the emphasis on papal authority Pope Pius IX in the nineteenth century added the notion of the *immutability* of the church to the concept of catholicity.

In the Eastern church, according to Schreiter, a *mystical* meaning of catholicity developed.³⁷ Catholicity refers to the eschatological fullness of the church. The visible church reflects brokenness and incompleteness, but already participates in the fullness of the invisible church that will be revealed in heaven. The Reformers as well as Vatican II emphasized this eschatological dimension of catholicity.

Hans Küng paraphrases the meaning of catholicity in a remarkable way. He states that the catholicity of the church does not only reside in her extensiveness in space, neither in her numeric quantity. It does not reside only in her cultural and social variety, or in her continuity in time. It also resides in her comprehensive identity.³⁸

- c) It is especially Schreiter’s attempt to explore the public significance of catholicity which is important for the eventual endeavour of this article to discern the importance of catholicity for the public role of churches in the context of glocality.³⁹ Three dimensions of catholicity is for him of importance in the context of glocality, namely wholeness (the physical extension of the church throughout the world in time and place), fullness (orthodoxy in faith) and, in unison with Siegfried Wiedenhofer, exchange and communication.

³¹ Quoted by Schreiter 2002:121.

³² McGrath (1991:500) states that the Greek expression *kath’holou* means whole, whilst the Latin *catholicus* has the meaning of universal or general. The ecumenical document, *Confessing the one faith* (1991:88-99), coincides with this understanding of catholicity: “This catholic nature of the Church is realized and expressed in a great diversity of Christian spiritual life and witness among all peoples in space and time. This catholicity transcends nationalism, particular traditions and all human barriers. It is a fullness of life. In the life of the Church the whole human being and all human situations are enlisted for the worship and the service to God in the diversity of rites and traditions.”

³³ Moltmann 1977:348. See also Küng 1976:298.

³⁴ In this extensiveness lies the distinction between catholicity and unity, according to Moltmann (1977:348): “The church’s catholicity is a correlative term to its unity. Whereas its unity means its catholicity in intention and trend, its catholicity means its catholicity means its unity in extent.” Küng describes this relationship as follows: ‘...if the Church is one, it must be universal, if it is universal it must be one’. See Küng 1976: 303.

³⁵ Schreiter 2002:121.

³⁶ Schreiter 2002:121.

³⁷ Schreiter 2002:121.

³⁸ Küng 1976:302.

³⁹ See Schreiter 2002:128.

Catholicity in a Glocal World

Schreiter's threefold understanding of catholicity as wholeness, fullness and exchange provides a helpful framework for the last section of this paper that aims to discern the meaning of catholicity in the context of glocality, and the light that it sheds on what it entails confessing and embodying catholicity today.

Confessing and Embodying Wholeness

Confessing and embodying catholicity as wholeness entails that churches pay attention and acknowledge where the triune God is at work in the world outside the church. Schreiter pleads that we recognize the hidden treasures outside the church.⁴⁰

Confessing and embodying wholeness also implies resisting the compartmentalization and fragmentation of modern and postmodern glocalised societies. This wholeness implies overcoming the centrifugal effects of globalization as described by Schreiter: "Globalization only increases the less-than-integrated experience, the experience of conflict, ambiguity, and partial belonging. The asymmetries of power, the experience of loss through forced migration, the sense of risk and contingency in a world threatened ecologically and in other ways."⁴¹

Confessing and embodying wholeness implies solidarity with those who are marginalized and wronged in a glocally fragmented world.⁴² The line of fragmentation, compartmentalization and division between rich and poor runs through continents, northern and southern countries, and through individual countries and cities in both the north and south. Moltmann also emphasizes this notion of catholicity as intentional support for the oppressed that aims to save the oppressor as well. He describes his understanding of catholicity under the heading Catholicity and partisanship. He writes: "The church is related to the whole and is catholic in so far as, in the fragmentation of the whole, it primarily seeks and restores to favour the lost, the rejected and the oppressed."⁴³ For him, catholicity on earth implies that the church functions in the tension of keeping its eyes focused on the universal, while practicing partisanship for the sake of both the oppressed and the oppressors in a situation of oppression and conflict.

The justice associated with wholeness cannot be any other than restorative justice, compassionate justice, justice that paves the way for shalom to reign supreme.⁴⁴

In African contexts the notion of catholicity as wholeness is related to the concept of ubuntu. Ubuntu entails the elements of community and restorative justice implied in the outline in the previous paragraphs.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ For a traditional perspective on the work of the spirit in individuals, the church as well as in broader society, see the ecumenical document *Confessing the one faith* (WCC Publications 1991).

⁴¹ Schreiter 2002:129. Larry Rasmussen (1993) gives an informative account of fragmentation in modern and postmodern societies, spells out its negative implications for moral formation, and appeals to churches and other societal institutions to take up this challenge of catholicity, of restoring community and constructive moral formation.

⁴² See also Schreiter 2002:131-132.

⁴³ Moltmann 1977:352.

⁴⁴ For an outline of justice as restorative and compassionate justice, see my forthcoming article "Justice and land reform". For a discussion of the relationship between unity, reconciliation and justice, see my forthcoming article "Reconciliation and the Confession of Belhar: Some challenges for the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa".

⁴⁵ For a discussion of these features of ubuntu see my article "Bonhoeffer's anthropology and the African anthropology of ubuntu".

Confessing and Embodying Fullness

To confess and embody fullness, integrity and authenticity of faith in a glocalised world implies addressing various concrete challenges.

It entails participation in this world from the position of faith. In making inputs in glocalised societies the church drinks from her own wells. Christian theologians make theological contributions. They do not act as social scientists with a religious interest. Catholicity implies a wholeness and fullness that is eschatologically materialized in the coming kingdom or reign of God. The universal and inclusive time and space transcending reign of God is, with regard to catholicity, perhaps the central theological image to employ in discerning what it implies to confess and embody specifically catholicity. In this regard Moltmann states: "For in the fullest sense of the word, the attribute 'catholic' applies to the lordship of Christ, through which the universe is summed up and united, and the kingdom of God, which the lordship of Christ serves."⁴⁶

Küng⁴⁷ spells out the imperatives of this focus on the kingdom of God. The kingdom as eschatological reality challenges the church to never view herself as ultimate purpose, but to view the coming of the kingdom as the fulfillment of her calling (113-114); the confession of the kingdom as God's act impels the church to live in total dependence upon God and to be aware that she cannot bring into being the kingdom through her own efforts (114-115); to confess the kingdom as a spiritual and not only as a political reality challenges the church to participate in human endeavours in the world as a voice that challenges the powers and systems of this world.

How could it fail constantly to disturb and alienate and challenge these secular powers and systems with its revolutionary message, question their very existence and so experience their resistance and their attacks? How could it invade suffering, scorn, slander, persecution? How could it attempt to turn the way of the cross into a triumphal progress? How could it continue to see outsiders as enemies to be hated and destroyed, rather than as its neighbours, to be embraced in an understanding of helpful love?⁴⁸

Küng⁴⁹ states that where the kingdom is proclaimed as an event of salvation for sinners, the church can never function as an institute that threatens, intimidates, and frightens, but as one that heals, makes whole and forgives; if faith in the kingdom implies a radical choice for God, the church embarks on the road of *metanoia* which implies surrender to the message of the kingdom and a consequent loving turning to and involvement in the world.

This catholic kingdom of shalom, wholeness and fullness, and also of, as Schreiter calls it, dignity for all, provides the theological rationale and contents for the involvement of the church in the world as part of civil society.⁵⁰

Catholicity and Communication

With Schreiter, catholicity today implies that the church communicates her contribution to a higher extent in the world, that she goes public more explicitly with theological convictions. In this regard Leander Keck's threefold plea for communication is helpful.

He firstly pleads for the development of an informational apologetics which implies that

⁴⁶ Moltmann 1977: 348-349.

⁴⁷ Küng 1976:96-104.

⁴⁸ Küng 1976:99.

⁴⁹ Küng 1976:100-102.

⁵⁰ Schreiter 2002:119.

churches “overcome what they have mastered – the art of talking to themselves.”⁵¹ Churches are therefore challenged to revisit the rich tradition of rhetoric as well as the modern sources of communication.⁵²

Keck secondly argues that communication also entails the cultivation of a positive disposition among the public about Christian convictions.⁵³ In this process television, various types of music and art, and one can surely lengthen this list, should be utilized. Although he criticizes televangelism, he refers to research that indicates that these televangelists are experienced by the public in different social strata as people who are more concerned about human needs, hurt, loneliness and meaninglessness.

He lastly states that communication implies commending the gospel more confidently and compassionately. He reckons that the attempts in mainline churches, especially since Schleiermacher, to make the gospel presentable to modern societies, have had two negative consequences: “On the one hand, by making the substance of the faith continually more palatable to the increasingly secular mind, the hearty gumbo of the Christian faith has been thinned so often that there is little nourishment left. On the other hand, by concentrating on how one *can* be a Christian and a modern person at the same time something vital has been lost: The conviction that one *ought to be* a Christian. Unless the mainline recovers its confidence in the gospel enough to commend it heartily, the future of these churches will be bleak indeed.”⁵⁴ One can even echo this plea for confident speaking in addressing complicated public issues such as the impact of global capitalism, HIV/Aids, racism, etc.. So often we feel that these issues are too complicated and that we should rather keep quiet. Whilst guarding against simplistic and often fundamentalist and judgmental public statements, we should, through the hard work of thorough analysis, formulate well-researched and well-argued positions to go public with in a confident manner.

Various attempts are made in the field of public theological discourse to identify appropriate ways of going public with faith convictions.

Conclusion

Churches are challenged to confess and embody catholicity, wholeness and fullness in the context of glocality and to explicitly communicate and commend her unique contribution.

To confess and embody are more than merely determining challenges of catholicity today. It is more than discerning implications and imperatives of this confession to contemporary churches. It is to confess, in word and deed, to embody in ethos, in structures, in practices and policies, in the every sphere of life wholeness and fullness – albeit in imperfect, preliminary and penultimate form.

⁵¹ Keck 1993:108.

⁵² Keck 1993:110.

⁵³ Keck 1993:110-114.

⁵⁴ Keck 1993:116.

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