

Inculturation : The Local Church Emerges.

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1. Introduction

Inculturation has become, in a very short time, one of the central issues of the Church in Africa. In its ministry, the African Church is perceiving the vital necessity of taking the culture and experience of Africans seriously. This has led to the emergence of a more vibrant African liturgy as well as some attempts to develop local ministries which respond to the African context. Examples of these would be the emphasis on community placed in local Small Christian communities and the attempt to develop ministries relating to funerals, healing and social upliftment. Inculturation concerns itself with these developments on the level of ministry but is not confined to this level. In fact the focus of inculturation is human beings and in particular human beings in community. Consequently, inculturation is intimately tied up with Salvation, the Kingdom of God and the Church. Nevertheless, for effective and genuine mission it is always necessary to attempt to ground the emergence of new forms of ministry within an adequate missiology. The inculturation model can help in this regard.

2 The Term "Inculturation" in the Literature

The term inculturation is very new in missiology. Its appearance can initially be linked to the attempt to find a model whereby "the Church becomes part of the culture of a people" (Roest Crolius 1978:725). An analogy is made with the process of "enculturation" apparently coined by Herskovits (1952:39) to describe "the aspects of the learning experience which mark off man from other creatures, and by means of which, initially, and in later life, he achieves competence in his culture" (1).

The term inculturation emerged during the period 1974-1981 when it was the subject of some theological enquiry particularly amongst Jesuits as a result of discussions on the role of culture in the Church in the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (Roest Crolius 1978:722) (2). This enquiry culminated in an interdisciplinary seminar on inculturation in Jerusalem in 1981 and the emergence of the series of "Working Papers" on inculturation (3).

Since then, the theme has been taken up particularly by Catholic missiologists, throughout the world. It has, however, also entered into Protestant missionary discourse so that by 1991, Bosch (1991:447) could say that inculturation "is today one of the most widely used concepts in missiological circles". The rapidity of its dissemination has, however, meant that the term has become multivocal and it will be necessary to indicate something of the multivocality before proceeding to our own understanding.

2.1 Bipolarity in the Inculturation Model

Definitions and understandings of inculturation revolve around the dynamic relationship or interpenetration of two elements: a religious one and a worldly one. The latter is normally expressed as "culture" or "cultures" although some authors (cf. Waliggo 1986:13) prefer the term "people". The other pole of the relationship is more problematic being expressed diversely as: the faith (George 1990:124; Shorter 1988:11; Bosch 1991:453 *Lineamenta* 1990:52) (4); the Christian message or gospel (Shorter 1988:11, 60; Azevedo 1982:7; Arbuckle 1990:7; CT 53); Jesus Christ (Shorter 1988:61; Okure 1990:59) and the Church (Roest Crolius 1978:725; Mutiso-Mbinda 1986:81; Onwubiko 1992:166; RM 52). Most of these authors nuance the religious pole of the relationship by including more than one of these terms within it and so it is important not to read the understandings expressed above as exclusive. Nevertheless, the choice of theological category to describe the inculturation relationship does involve a theological judgement and leads to theological conclusions in the understanding of the term.

2.2 The Subject of the Inculturation Process

Inculturation is always seen as a process and we have commented elsewhere on the importance of the diachronic dimension of the inculturation model against the usually more static approach of most forms of contextualisation (Bate 1991:98-99). However, as with the bipolar model, there is divergence as to the subject of this process. Variously it is seen as the gospel, Christ, Faith, People and the Church. We intend to briefly examine these divergent, though in some ways complementary, approaches.

2.2.1 The Gospel as Subject of the Inculturation Process

Approaches which consider the relationship of the gospel to culture are similar to those which speak of "contextualisation of the gospel" (cf. Bate 1991:88-97). The image here is that of the Incarnation and in this model inculturation becomes evangelisation (De Napoli 1987). This model informed much of the earlier understanding of inculturation before the distinction between inculturation and "evangelisation of cultures" had been clarified. Thus in *Cathechesi*

Tradendae (CT 53) Pope John Paul II refers to inculturation as a "neologism...[which] expresses very well one factor of the great mystery of the incarnation". He goes on to point to the role of catechesis as evangelisation in bringing "the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures" (CT 53.) The relationship with *Evangelii Nuntiandi* on the evangelisation of cultures (EN 20) is clear. The incarnational model appears regularly in papal documents (5) and forms part of John Paul II's understanding of the term "inculturation" which he defines as "the incarnation of the Gospel in native cultures" (SA 21) (cf. George 1990:83).

In Africa, Theresa Okure leans strongly on this model. Following Sarpong (1988) and the teachings of John Paul II and Paul VI she affirms that "our understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation should serve as the solid foundation for understanding inculturation" (Okure 1990:57). As the Good News of Jesus Christ meets the African reality of peoples of different cultures there is a mutual enrichment which occurs. This meeting and enriching process is what is meant by inculturation. However at the centre of this process is not only the Good News, but Jesus himself.

2.2.2 Jesus Christ as Subject of the Inculturation Process

Okure's incarnational model of inculturation goes beyond the Evangelisation of culture's discourse to posit Jesus Christ as the real subject of inculturation.

Inculturation functions as the process by which Christ becomes "native to or incarnated in" particular African cultures. Without it Christ remains an outsider or a foreigner to a culture, he does not become a citizen; and then the culture itself cannot be redeemed by him. [Okure 1990:59]

The approach which considers Christ as the subject of the inculturation process is also accepted by Shorter (1988:61). Nyamiti's work (1991) focuses on the developments within African Christology in providing understandings of Jesus which relate to African cultural categories. He points out that "christology is the subject which has been most developed in today's African theology" (:3).

This model of inculturation sets itself two tasks. Firstly it attempts to discover the Jesus who is already present in the culture and to allow him to come into view. This is the attempt to allow the risen Christ, who has already redeemed Africa to be manifest from within the traditions, history and culture of the people. The works of Pénoukou (1991), Sanon (1991) and Bujo (1992) would be examples of such an approach. The second task of this model revolves around the attempt to transform the Christ who has been preached within a Western

cultural matrix into an African. This is not so much an attempt to express Christ and Christianity within African cultural forms but rather the attempt to ask:

whether or not any of us wants Christ to assume his or her culture, so as to become substantially part of it, to enrich it and be enriched by it, and transform it from within, so that it can become the Yoruba, the Kikuyu, the Zulu or any other Christianised culture. [Okure 1990:59]

The incarnational and redemptive dimensions of the Christian message both play an essential role in the process of inculturation which has Jesus Christ as its subject. The incarnational dimension expresses the truth of the manifestation of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Jesus for all peoples and cultures and the kenotic effort required to enable this manifestation. This implies much deconstruction, purifying, clearing away and cleaning up of the structures, vessels and containers which were the vehicles in which the missionaries brought Jesus. These were forms of the missionaries' own experience and articulation of Jesus and were themselves cultural artifacts. This deconstruction process is only a first step in allowing Christ for Africa to emerge. It is also easier said than done and a highly emotive issue, since the missionaries did also bring Jesus and their own faith experience of him. This faith experience has transformed, and continues to transform, the lives of many people. Often the conversion in Africa has meant a rejection of the past and attempts to recover a perceived "pagan" past seem strange to many who have associated Christianity with progress, prosperity and freedom from the curse of magic and spirits.

The redemptive dimension of the Christian message and its role in inculturation implies all that the transformation of the cross means. Incarnation always points to the Cross and the Resurrection. Redemption is won through the power of the Father raising up Jesus on the third day. This central Christological dimension is essential to the understanding of inculturation as the transformation of a people and its culture (Shorter 1988:83). The people and their culture is called to die and rise with Christ in order to become a Christian people: a Christian culture.

2.2.3 The Faith as Subject of Inculturation

Writers with a more Western background tend to this model of inculturation (Shorter 1988:59; George 1990:31;4; Bosch 1991:452). Faith in this sense is described by Shorter (1988:59) as "a religious tradition or affiliation...a broad and undefined concept".

Traditionally the term has two senses: in its objective sense it refers to the body of truths, practices and traditions as expressed in the Scripture and tradition of the Church's teaching:

Scripture, Creeds, Council definitions, Magisterial teaching and so forth. It is a *complexus* of doctrine to which one is called to assent to when making a profession of faith (cf. Livingstone 1977:188). In its second, more subjective sense, it refers to the personal act of assenting to God's presence in one's life. Such an act of faith is the result of grace and is itself a gift of God. It occurs both on the personal and communal level.

Now "faith" in both these senses is seen, in this model, to be in dialogue with the culture of a people. But faith, particularly in the second sense, is also understood as the coming together of the divine and the human in the human response of faith to the divine, of faith which is also itself, in some sense, a divine gift. So it is "the faith" itself, understood in the complexity of both senses, which is called to become a culture. George (1990:40) asserts that "the faith needs to be part of a cultural synthesis" and quotes Pope John Paul II in this regard: "a faith which does not become a culture is a faith not fully received" (:44) (6). He goes on to define inculturation as "the process by which the faith becomes culture, thereby synthesizing man's entire existence around Christ the wisdom of God" (:44).

2.2.4 The People as Subject of the Inculturation Process

Although it does not appear much in the literature, a model of inculturation which sees "the people" as a theological category as subject of the inculturation process would seem to be useful. This is perhaps more true in South Africa where "the people" as a category already exists both within the religious and non-religious discourse about the human person (cf. Gaybba 1990).

Gaybba (1990) and Nolan (1988) use the concept in the sense of the poor and oppressed: "any exploited group" (Gaybba 1990:68). One may argue that such an exclusive understanding could not inform a theology of inculturation, but a moment's reflection on the meaning of the Incarnation and the Kenosis as well as the declared mission of Jesus (cf Lk 4, Mt 5) indicates the importance of this understanding for any person or group or culture which wishes to be Christian. In a specific reference to inculturation, Waliggo (1986:13) asserts that "Inculturation, therefore, is that movement which aims at making christianity permanent in Africa by making it a people's religion and a way of life which no enemy or hostility can ever succeed in supplanting or weakening". He goes on to affirm that "it is the inculturated christianity that can attempt to give an answer of hope to the anxieties and anguishes of the people of Africa" (:24).

The discourse on "the people" also raises the vexed question of "the people and the peoples"

(*ochlos* against *ethne*). Moltmann (1978:100) raises this crucial issue indicating the importance of the emergence of "the people, that collective identity made up of the various nations languages and races..." in the Christian discourse. He concludes that "There is hope only in a new collective identity of the people which takes up into itself also the ethnic and religious identities" (:101). It is from such a people that the Church emerges. Indeed it is a Church *of* these people rather than one *for* them which identifies the true nature of the Church: "The true Church is where Christ is...His community is...the brotherhood of the believers and the poor, the lovers and the imprisoned, the hoppers and the sick...The least of these are already subjects before the missionaries and helpers come" (:105).

2.2.5 The Church as the Subject of the Inculturation Process

The discourse which sees "the people" as the subject of the process of inculturation is clearly related to the vision of the people of God on their journey to the Kingdom: the promised land. This is an image which comes from the book of Exodus and which also reflects Paul's teachings (Rm 9-11). It was one of the major understandings of the Church to emerge from Vatican II (LG 9-17). In itself the term reflects the two poles of the inculturation dialectic: "The people" on the one hand and "God" on the other. The step to a model which recognises the Church as the subject of the inculturation process is then a relatively short one.

Nonetheless, Shorter (1988:60) rejects this model: "we do not usually speak about the Church being inculturated". This is surprising since he both indicates and seems to affirm the other models which we have presented thus far. On the other hand, Mutiso-Mbinda (1986:81) suggests that "[i]nculturation must lead to a truly authentic African Church" and Onwubiko (1992:166) points out that "[i]nculturation is concerned then, not with the individual as such but with the community in which he lives his faith...[it] demands the correct understanding of the Church, Religion and Culture and how they are related".

The value of the inculturation model which sees the people or the Church as the subject of the inculturation process is that it is the same community of people who both live within the Church and live within the culture: "the community links the Church and culture firmly" (Onwubiko 1992:171). This apparently simple and obvious statement is nevertheless very important. People are already living and expressing inculturated faith to the extent that there is a coherence or integrity within their personal and community life. Whilst dichotomies and compartmentalisations do exist and need to be dealt with in the inculturation process, much of lived Christianity, albeit often in a simple, unreflective and localised way, already manifests inculturation. The recognition of the life and practice of the community of faith and

the affirmation of this as Christian life and practice is essential to the process of inculturation understood in this way.

Roest Crolius' (1978:728-729) original understanding of inculturation comes under this model: "Thus understood, the term 'inculturation' refers primarily to the dynamic relationship between the local Church and 'its own culture', i.e. the culture of its own people" (:728-729). He understands the process to be analogous to the process of enculturation whereby a person grows up and becomes inserted into the culture of the people. By analogy "we can speak of the Church becoming inserted into a given culture" (:726).

In Roest Crolius' work the concept of the local Church emerges as the central theological category:

One of the characteristics of the local Church, in a developed status, is precisely that it is "already rooted in social life and considerably adapted to the local culture" (AG 19). This note was also stressed by the Bishops of Asia at their meeting in Taipei in 1974: "The local Church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions - in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own". The present day discussion on inculturation, therefore, has to be seen in the context of the new awareness of the reality and the mission of the local Church. [Roest Crolius 1978:727-728]

The concept of local Church at the centre of the inculturation process is also seen in the work of Onwubiko (1992:111): "the inculturation of Christianity...leads to the Incarnation of the universal Church in a local culture to give birth to a local Church into which individuals old and new are enculturated". We consider the concept of local Church to be essentially correlated to that of inculturation. The local Church is seen as the manifestation of the universal Church in a place (cf AG 20; LG 26). The Church is deemed to be fully present when the local Church exists in a place. This process involves the:

Church's insertion into peoples' cultures...[which] means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures....Through inculturation the Church, for her part, becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of mission. [RM 52]

We contend that the historical process which is the emergence of a local Church in a place is

the best model to describe inculturation. The Church model is the best model to work with because it roots the process in the same common denominator: human beings. It is human beings as community who make up the Church and it is human beings as community who live within a cultural matrix. The community based model avoids analogical jumps and provides a common ground where the discourse of the human sciences can meet the discourse of theology: "In the venture of inculturation, the central point is neither Evangelisation nor Context but the human person...The human person is the way of the Church" (Roest Crolius in Bate 1991:VII).

Nevertheless, the category "the people" is not enough to capture the symbol "Church". Nolan (1988:166) uses the term in the sense of the poor of Yahweh, those somehow favoured by him and even equates "the power of the people that is manifest in the struggle" with "the power of God". Gaybba (1990:71) cautions against an over-identification of these since it "comes perilously close to placing 'the people' as a concrete entity beyond all possible criticism". Gaybba's comment is perhaps a little unfair since all theological appropriations run the risk of exaggeration and absolutisation. Nolan clearly feels that the theological category "the people" is one whose time has arrived in South Africa. But he does not equate the concept to the Church since he devotes a full chapter of his book to the "role of the Church" which he defines not in terms of the people but through its specific difference, the gospel. "The Church is defined and constituted by the gospel" (Nolan 1988:210). The ability of the category "Church" to encompass and transcend the various symbols of a people communicated to, humanised and sanctified; communicating, humanising and sanctifying, makes it the best model to adopt for our understanding of inculturation.

A decision to adopt the model of Church does not in anyway negate the other models which have been presented and which illuminate the inculturation process from different perspectives (7). However in choosing the Church based model we take a clear standpoint within the discussion. We say that inculturation is a word which describes a process. This process is the emergence of the local Church in a place. Clearly such an affirmation requires a clear statement of what we mean by the term local Church and we hope to provide this in the next section. We also affirm that our choice is particularly important within the South African context. This is because of the large gap between the disunity manifest in a context which comprises some five thousand separated ecclesial traditions and the growing unity of purpose and action thrust upon this tattered fabric by the situation it finds itself confronting as a result of the *kairos* it finds itself living within. The development of an ecclesiology which can speak to the South African context is both urgent and difficult: a challenge whose

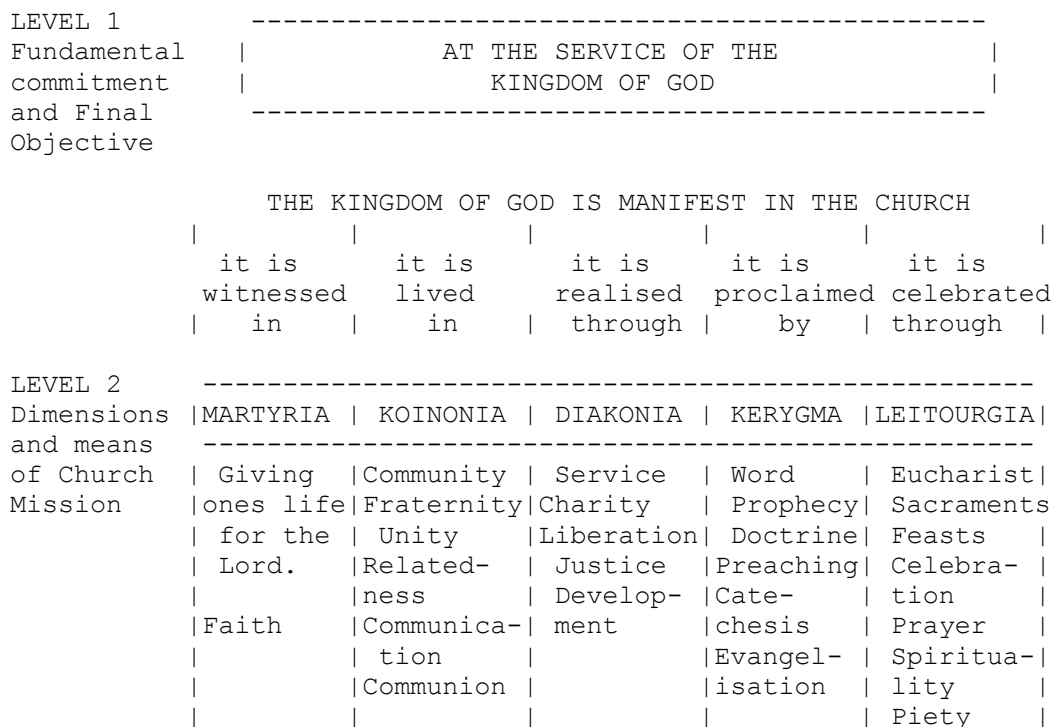
time has come.

3 Inculturation as the Emergence of the Local Church

3.1 A Notion of the Church

The discourse on inculturation as the emergence of the local Church demands an adequate ecclesiology and clearly it is impossible to develop such here. Nevertheless we need to at least indicate some parameters. Firstly, we affirm a notion of the Church as "the community of faith" (De Gruchy 1986:27, 35-38); "the community of faith, hope and charity....one, holy, catholic and apostolic" (LG 8). Such a statement is already a challenge to the fragmentation we see in South Africa. We also affirm the notion of the Church as the People of God on the journey to the promised land: a people somehow searching to express the unity of the common journey led by one Spirit and motivated by the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of the one Lord Jesus Christ (cf. UR 3). At the same time we affirm the diversity expressed by contextual, historical, traditional and cultural factors. The model is then one of Unity in Diversity, of a community of communities, of a family of families, which is called to manifest and express the Unity and Trinity which is itself part of the Mystery of God, a mystery also reflected in God's image: the human family (8).

Fig. 1 attempts to express the essentials of the Church's praxis in the world. The diagram is a modification of Alberich's (1987) model of Ecclesial Practice.



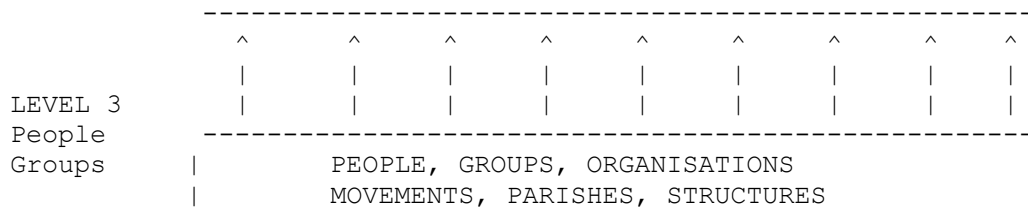


Fig. 1 THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD TODAY
 [Source Alberich 1987:19 with modifications]

The figure indicates three levels of ecclesial praxis. The first level shows that the Church does not exist for itself but is at the service of God's divine plan of salvation which is expressed as his Kingdom. This is the Kingdom which Jesus preached and which was actualised through his life, death and Resurrection and which is now manifest through the Holy Spirit in the world. It is the Church which is called to be the medium of the manifestation of the Kingdom in the world (cf. also Verkuyl 1973:197-204). The second level articulates, on the existential mediated level, how the Kingdom is manifest through the gospel values of *martyria* - witness; *koinonia* - relatedness; *diakonia* - service; *kerygma* - message and *leitourgia* - worship or sacrifice. The diagram also indicates some of the ways in which these gospel values are articulated in the Church's praxis. The third level points to the fact that there is a diversity of groups, agents, institutions and communities called to the various dimensions of praxis. Each group or community may emphasise one or other aspect according to its charisms and its context. This articulation will always be culture-conditioned. These groups are called to praxis within a totality: a unity. This unity expresses the relatedness both of the one Holy Spirit which animates the Church as well as the recognition of the participation in such unity by all the groups and agents.

3.2 The Local Church

Coming to the question of the local Church, we wish to emphasise the understanding of this concept which sees it as the fullness of the Church in a place rather than a piece or section of the Church covering a certain area. Kalu's (1978:164) comments are enlightening in this regard. Speaking from an apparently Protestant perspective, he bemoans the division and factionalism brought by the importation of "the implacable war in Europe among these confessional groups". However he points out that unity does not mean a mere merger of denominations but is "a process of establishing a community in order that a humane future may be developed....Christ prescribed one-ness as the *esse* of His Church, the people who know and celebrate His task of reconciling the world to His Father" (:174). Clearly such a demand for unity as communion implies that the fullness of the Church has to be manifest in

the local Church and that inculturation cannot be seen as the diversification of the Church according to culture since this would lead us into a geographico-culturo-denominationalism somewhat parallel to the historical fragmentation brought about by schism and reformation in history.

Since Vatican II, a more developed understanding of the local Church has emerged. Because of the nature of the Roman Catholic Church and its greater emphasis on preserving and safeguarding visible unity, the attempts to accommodate the notion of local Church have led to a greater focus within this tradition on the question of unity and diversity as related to the nature of the local Church.

Vatican II uses two terms: "local Church" and "particular Church" to express this reality. There are also a few references to "indigenous", "new" and "young" Churches (9). The meaning being conveyed is that the one Church is realised concretely in different places. We find this in Scripture as well. Thus Paul speaks of "the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Th 1,1, 2 Th 1,1) and "the churches of God" (2 Th 2,4) in the earliest New Testament references. Acts, on the other hand, stresses the one-ness of the Church: "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up" (Ac 9,31). When referring to specific places, Acts refers to "The Church in Jerusalem" (8,1; 11,22) and the Church at Antioch (13,1). Amongst the early Church Fathers, Clement (PG 1,1) addresses his work "The Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth" (cf. Jurgens 1970:7). Consequently the twin strands of universality and particularity seem to be present right from the beginning of the Church.

It is not our purpose here to follow these strands through history but rather to affirm the link between the reality in early Church and the theology of Vatican II. *Lumen Gentium* suggests that "This multiplicity of local Churches, unified in a common effort, shows all the more resplendently the catholicity of the undivided Church" (LG 23). This reference to local Churches - the only specific one in *Lumen Gentium* - refers principally to the emergence of different rites, traditions and Patriarchal Churches throughout history. This document refers more often to "particular Churches" and here, as well as in other documents (CD, AG. Code of Canon Law), the reference is mainly to a diocese: "A diocese is a section of the People of God entrusted to a bishop...formed by him into one community in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes one particular church in which the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active" (CD 11, cf. LG 25, AG 19; CCL 368-374). *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN 62) says that "this universal Church is in practice incarnate in the particular Churches made up of such and such an actual part of mankind,

speaking such and such a language, heirs of a cultural patrimony, a vision of the world, of an historical past, of a particular human substratum". At the same time the letter points out that the universal Church is not a federation or a sum of particular Churches but remains One, present in a particularist reality. This reality is socio-cultural, theologico-christological and juridico-geographical (cf. Wolanin 1987:99-112).

Ad Gentes (AG 19) refers to "a definite point" which the "assembly of the faithful" reaches in a historical process which begins when a community of the faithful is raised up in a place through the work of missionaries sent there. This "definite point" can be said to be linked to the emergence of a "young Church", a "particular Church" or a "local Church" (9). The text goes on to indicate ten characteristics or criteria which can be said to describe this "definite point" as follows (cf. AG 19):

The assembly of the faithful

- is rooted in the social life of the people
- is to some extent conformed to its culture
- enjoys a certain stability
- enjoys a certain permanence
- has its own priests (although insufficient)
- has its own religious and laity
- has its own ministries and institutions
 - to lead the people of God
 - to spread the faith
- is under the leadership of its own, autochthonous bishop
- is involved in civil and apostolic action in the state
- has fostered its own theological, psychological and human studies which allow elements of the "tradition to be grafted onto their own culture".

Redemptoris Missio (RM48) also refers to this point as a "precise stage" which "is hard to identify" in the "great and lengthy process" of the formation of a local Church. Further to the above criteria, this document points to the "evangelising activity of the Christian community, first in its own locality, and then elsewhere as part of the Church's universal mission...[as] the clearest sign of a mature faith" (RM49). The Church is missionary by its very nature and the manifestation of a missionary dimension beyond itself is a further necessary sign that the "definite point" has been reached.

The notion of local Church is clearly extended beyond that of a particular Church in the work of George (1990:233-250) who bases himself on the teaching of John Paul II. In a review of this Pope's teaching on the "local Church as inculturated Church" he concludes that "cultural unity is...a legitimate basis for describing a group of culturally similar dioceses as a 'local Church'" (1990:247). George makes this statement in the context of his affirmation that "attention to culture entails rethinking theologically the relationship between the universal and particular in all areas of human experience" (:233). Such an enquiry impinges on the impact of the cultural upon the very nature of humankind. The cultural dimension is indeed part of what it actually means to *be* human. Only a small reflection leads us to see that this conclusion is already a theological judgement. George points out, however, that the same debate also impacts upon the question of unity and plurality in "the faith" and in "the Church". This occurs firstly in the local component of both the understanding and expression of the "universals" or "sources of our faith unity" (:234) which emerge in the local context. It also appears in the manifestation of the one Church as expressed in the local Churches linked together in an essential communion but where each reflects the presence of the risen Lord within a locally constituted community of faith. Each particular community of faith is a community of people whose particularity is manifest most fundamentally through their culture.

George (1990:240ff.) indicates the theological weight of culture as it relates to the translation of the message of the gospel and the tradition (cf. also Sanneh 1989:1-8; 200-209). But he also points to the contribution of different cultural expressions both in the formulation as well as the illumination of the one faith as expressed in, for example, the creeds. In this way he shows how culture has already contributed to the Church's understanding of revelation:

A new expression of the faith in a new inculturation may, in fact, be more adequate to the objective content of the faith than an older expression. The Church's understanding of revelation can never be complete, although it is always accurate. [George 1990:235]

People who have heard the Good News, accepted it, and been born again into the community of the faithful, actually find, when the local Church emerges in the sense we have indicated, that it is their culture which "becomes, analogically a kind of theological *locus*, a place to look for a deeper understanding of what God has revealed" (George 1990:242). It is in this sense that Roest Crolius (1978:728-729) explains inculturation as the "dynamic relationship between the local Church and 'its own culture' i.e. the culture of its own people". Culture thus

becomes a theological category, playing a part, although not an exclusive one, in indicating the nature and praxis of a local Church.

It is probably an affirmation of the historical and contextual conditionedness of much of the fragmentation that has occurred in the Christian Church that the teaching of the "Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches" (WCC 1991) reflects an almost identical understanding to that which has been presented above from a Roman Catholic perspective. The Church is seen as "the community of those who are in communion with Christ and, through him, with one another....This community finds its full manifestation wherever people are gathered together by word and sacrament in obedience to the apostolic faith - i.e. in a local Church" (:84).

Hoedemaker (1991:626) points out that the World Council of Churches has focused on the local Church as "the basic unit of unity". The 1975 assembly at Nairobi understood the One Church as "a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united" emphasising that "each local church possesses, in communion with the others, the fullness of catholicity" (:626). Hoedemaker points out that as a result of historical ecclesial developments the notion of local Church has come to be multivocal referring to "dioceses, archdioceses, parishes, national churches and other territorial-ecclesial units" (:627). Whilst indicating the revival of the understanding of the Eucharist as a core determinant of unity (cf. also LG 23, CD 11; Lima:E19 in WCC 1982:14) he suggests that other factors are also emerging pointing to: "a new emphasis on the missionary quality of church structures...and to a proliferation of small groups intent upon a creative interaction between church and context" (:627).

Clearly these two large ecclesial bodies are moving towards one another. The Roman Catholic Church is moving towards a more pluriform understanding of its visible unity and the World Council of Churches towards a more united vision of its own pluriformity. The pluriformity is being seen as a response to context and mission within the WCC milieu and towards culture in the Roman Catholic milieu (10).

The terms context or culture would seem to represent different expressions of the same wish that a local Church should be responding to the world where it finds itself: being in but not of the world. Schreiter (1985:1;5-6;12-16;21), amongst others (11), suggests that the two realities, context and culture, are fundamentally the same but opts, as we do, for the notion of culture as being "the concrete context" in which the Church, the gospel and theology happen.

Culture represents "a way of life for a given time and place, replete with values, symbols and meanings, reaching out with hopes and dreams, often struggling for a better world" (:21). Culture represents the human locus of a people's context. It is the site of the humanisation of the *oikos* and thus the site where the meeting occurs between the Church as the human community of faith and the world as the human community in life. This being so, we see that, in fact, to some extent, every local Church is inculturated, whether acknowledged or not, since culture is part of the human condition, whether acknowledged or not. Yet it is the dialogue of Church and culture as the explication of this otherwise hidden or implicit relationship which is what marks the inculturation process. It is in the coming to consciousness of identity as a people through the affirmation of humanity and the local expression of values, attitudes and behaviour, redeemed through conversion and commitment to the risen Lord, manifest as a willingness to do his will, which marks the inculturated Church.

This coming to consciousness of a community's own humanity is at the same time an affirmation of the humanity of other peoples. The tragedy of apartheid was that rather than being built on this principle, the identity of a people and its church was instead built upon fear and group interests to the detriment of others. This has often been the case in denominationalism and the rivalry between church groups. Within denominations in South Africa, this demon has also been active in church structures such as parishes which have emphasised division by class and race by conforming to the geographical entities set up by the state (cf. De Gruchy 1986:37). Such facts within our own history should warn us to the dangers of the inculturation process and in particular they illustrate the necessity that such a process must always affirm and manifest the essential unity both of the human community and of the Church. Any inculturation process which leads people and churches to deny this unity needs to be questioned regarding its premises. The affirmation of our own humanity and goodness as image of God is surely the pathway to the recognition of the same humanity and goodness expressed in different ways in others and is a challenge to communication, to community and to unity as a human family: the one people of God, the one Body of Christ.

3.3 Inculturation and the Emergence of the Local Church

We have tried to show how culture provides a valid key for understanding diversity in the manifestation of the One Church from one site to another. Since culture is part of what it means to be human, so culture is called to die and rise with Christ to new life and become a new creation. This is the meaning and purpose of the evangelisation of cultures. We re-affirm an unwillingness to reify the concept of culture by indicating that such a process occurs in the

human person or rather in the community of human persons. So inculturation is the dialogue between the community of the saints (12): the Church within a context, and others of the same culture. In this way inculturation is mission. This mission is carried out by bringing good news to the culture and in this sense, inculturation is evangelisation: the evangelisation of culture. This evangelisation leads to conversion and the acceptance of the new faith both within the cultural categories in which it has been preached but also beyond these to a recognition of the universality of salvation and communion beyond one's own culture within the fellowship of the sons and daughters of God.

Further to this, inculturation also has a mission *ad intra*, to affirm the values, attitudes and culture of those people who already belong to the Church. It is an affirmation of all that is good as well as a challenge to reject what is evil and redeem what has been distorted by sin. This is an ecclesial process since the local Church needs to dialogue with its own culture in order to make these theological judgements under the guidance of the Spirit it has been given and in the presence of the risen Christ now revealed. Such theological judgements inform a local, contextual theology. So inculturation implies the construction of local theology. It is a theology which reveals the presence of the risen Christ already in the culture before the missionaries came, as well as articulating his incarnate presence in the now present community of faith.

Local theology is not only christology but also pneumatology and ecclesiology. This latter has important practical consequences since inculturation as a process guides the praxis of the Church as it sets up the structures and institutions which allow it to be the Church in the world responding to the "joy and hope, grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially those who are poor and afflicted in any way" (GS 1). This transformational role which is the Church's praxis is also part of the process of inculturation. The Church's praxis is bound up with its ministry and the ministries which articulate it. As a consequence any process of inculturation will clearly impinge upon ministry and the ministries of the local Church both in regard to their nature as well as their form and style. Indeed any discourse on inculturation needs to provide some kind of theological model which can inform ministry.

4 A Model of Inculturation to Inform Ministry

The process of the emergence of a local Church can be described in terms of a series of significant historical events which have an effect on the relationship between a local Church and the culture of the people in which it is emerging. In fig. 2 we describe this relationship in terms of four major elements: the identity and function of the missionary, the identity and

role of the local people, the praxis of the local Church and the understanding of the local culture by the local Church.

The process is described in terms of seven moments or events which are experienced in different ways from the perspective of different agents or elements of the process. The diagram provides a simple schematic map of the inculturation process. The model is an expansion of Roest Crolius' (1978:733) model of inculturation which comprises three moments. In the *translation* moment the evangelisation and Church implantation occur in the categories of the sending Church. In a second, *assimilation* moment the Church is assimilated into the local culture and ethos. In the third, *transformation*, moment the local Church in dialogue with its own culture seeks to transform that culture into a genuine Christian culture. Clearly the moments are not discrete in actuality and occur at differing rates in different contexts of the culture. In our own model (fig.2) steps 1-4 would roughly correspond to the *translation* moment, steps 3-6 to the *assimilation* moment and steps 4-7 to the *translation* moment. Clearly, the discrete steps of our analysis shown in the model, would be more holistically related in reality.

In looking at the relationship between ministry and inculturation it is the third element, the identity and praxis of the new Church, which is of particular interest. We note that with step 4, a set of indigenous Christian practices and ministries begin, which find their source in the group which is reacting to the missionaries. Since the missionaries lead the emerging Church whose identity is that of a translated Church (translated from the sending Church), these practices occur either on the fringes of or outside the emerging local Church. This is clearly the case, for example in the emergence of Coping-healing churches amongst both Blacks and Whites in South Africa (cf. Bate 1991:57-70). It is experienced as a reaction and a resistance to the "official" way of being Church amongst a group of people who have nevertheless discovered Christ and received faith in some way. The medium through which ministry is expressed in these reacting groups is primarily the local cultures involved, together with some acculturated elements of the new transformed culture and the emerging local Church.

| EVENT OR STEP | IDENTITY & ROLE OF MISSIONARY | IDENTITY & ROLE OF LOCAL PEOPLE | IDENTITY & PRAXIS OF THE NEW CHURCH | ROLE OF LOCAL CULTURE |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Sending Church called | Christians of the | Not Christian | None | Seen as pagan |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| to mission | Sending Church | | | |
| ----- | | | | |
| 2. Sending Church sends missionaries | Christians of sending Church & explorers | Not Christian | None | Seen as pagan |
| ----- | | | | |
| 3. Missionaries arrive and evangelise using mode (culture/vision) of the sending Church | Evangelisers: witnesses of faith as expressed in the sending Church | Followers of missionaries or not Christian | Follows that of the sending Church | Seen as pagan all practices to be dropped on conversion |
| ----- | | | | |
| 4. Church implantation; acculturation process some of enters self | Leaders of emerging local Church | Followers of missionaries and reacting group (against missionary style and approach) | Follows that of sending Church; some specific local practices begin causing tension with local Church understanding of the local Church | Officially pagan but cultural religious continued by cultural values and cultural world-view into the practice and |
| ----- | | | | |
| 5. Transition Moment. Change in Church leadership | Some leaders Differing vision | Some leaders and praxis | Follows that of sending Church with emerging local structures & ministries | Greater openness to and participation of the local culture & world-view in the local Church |
| ----- | | | | |
| 6. Inculturation process into is more explicit & urgent tensions Local Church relationship emerges | Some local people become missionaries. They open up the inculturation process | | local identity emerges with a growing awareness of requirement to respond to local needs | More values of the community are accepted Church praxis. New are approved but some remain in the with the universal |
| ----- | | | | |
| 7. LOCAL culture; CHURCH through within; Christian of diff- reaffirmation of missionaries | Local People sent as missionaries | leaders | Local identity affirmed; unity with Universal Church affirmed; missionary ideal emerges | Acceptance of local transformation of it Christian witness emergence of new culture; Affirmation erence and unity. Sending |
| ----- | | | | |

Fig. 2 The Process of The Emergence of the Local Church

In the assimilation moment (steps 3-6), the grip of the sending Church is loosened as the new Church becomes predominantly of the people of the area and leadership moves into local hands. At this point, as a result both of osmosis and of the reflection of Christian communities on their experience of God, there is a greater openness to, and acceptance of, the local culture. Those ministries which respond to the real needs of people persevere and some of these are the indigenous Christian practices and ministries of step 4. These are reflected on and theologised about, to the extent that they have affected the life of the Christian community. This reflection process, carried out in the light of faith, is a process which takes the ministry through steps 5 and 6 so that the ministry may become part of the praxis of the emerged local Church in step 7.

This reflection process is the process of pastoral praxis as outlined by Vela (1984). The reflection on pastoral praxis starts from an analysis of pastoral practices using the human sciences, where necessary, and then moving on to a theological reflection on each particular practice and the context within which it occurs. This meeting of practice with faith leads to new praxis (13). Theological reflection on the institutions, ministries and practices of the local Church forms part of pastoral planning and is an essential part of step 5 if a truly local Church is to emerge. It needs to take into account a large number of factors and at the risk of appearing to make the matter extremely complicated we wish to illustrate these through a series of models.

The process of the birth of a local Church has both an assimilation moment and a transformation moment. Our first diagram (fig. 2: see above) indicates step 5, we attempt a synchronic presentation of the process during the assimilation moment where the importance of the transformation moment is increasing and that of the transformation moment is increasing. The factors which influence this process as well as

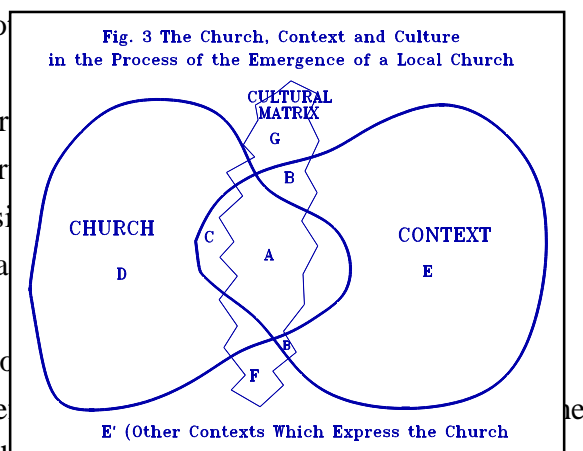
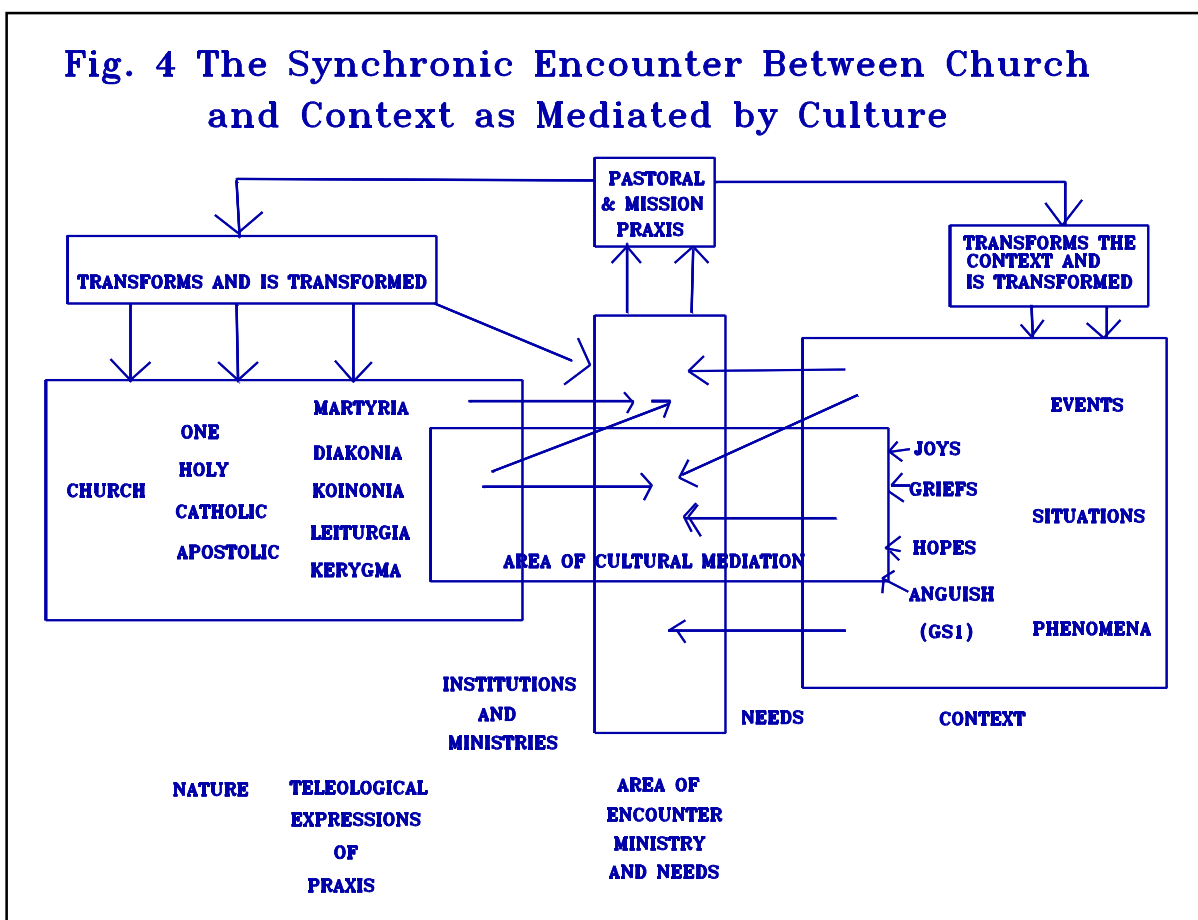


Fig. 3 describes something of the human condition in this diagram. The context refers to the life of the people of the particular area (14). Such a context has physical, geographical, socio-

economic, political, cultural, religious and philosophical dimensions to it. It forms an *oikos*. Some events in the *oikos* are relatively transient. Others are more permanent and become situations which can affect the cultural matrix (15). The cultural dimension provides the epistemological lens through which the context and the Church are both accepted and understood. It also informs the behaviour of the people through the value and attitude system it affirms. Context and culture work upon one another as indicated by regions A and B in a kind of dialectic. Crises and short term events in the context will affect the culture to the extent of their intensity whereas longer term events and situations even though less intense



can have an equal or even greater force through the effects of inertia.

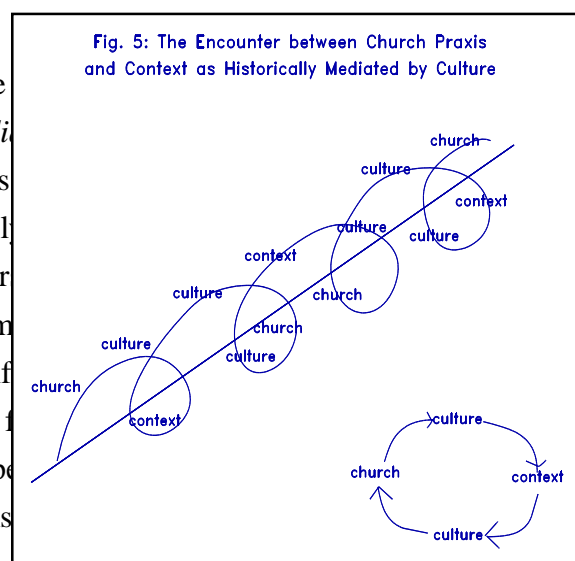
The Church gradually inserts itself into the context-culture matrix as people are evangelised and join it. As the insertion increases so the intensity of its own dialectical relationship with both the context and the culture increases. The reaction to context tends to be swifter and clearer as needs are quickly perceived and responded to. Intensity tends to be the yardstick

here. So floods, drought, famine, a new group of evangelised people, violence, detentions and so on elicit an immediate response. These tend to occur in regions C and H of our diagram. More long-lasting situations within the context lead to the establishing of ministries and institutions to deal with them and it is this level that we are most concerned with. The more long-lasting situations also affect the culture in a deeper way since they eventually generate the required inertia to be able to dialogue with it. These ministries and institutions enter into region A where context, culture and Church meet. The region is one of mutual interpenetration or dialogue, not one of identity. The Coping-healing ministry which is growing so much in South Africa is one such ministry.

Fig. 4 is a schematic expansion of fig. 3 attempting to explicate some of the important dimensions of culture, context and Church which are dialogue-ing in this process.

Again we emphasise that the model is reflecting life and that any separation and categorisation is clearly both artificial and reductionist. A model is not reality but attempts to deal with some aspect of it. Its purpose is merely to indicate elements and the differences between them as well as to illustrate relationships. We note in fig. 4 that the context generates a set of events, phenomena and situations expressed in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS1) as joys, griefs, hopes and anguishes. These are variously mediated and immediate. The immediate ones present areas of need which are often responded to in a direct way as "reactive ministry". The mediated ones are of more interest to us here. The mediation occurs in various ways through psychological, cultural, socioeconomic, political and other "epistemological lenses".

The mediated needs encounter the Church on the categories we have described above: *martyria, di*
 The response occurs on this level. However in its always thrown back onto its nature to be one, hol themselves a challenge to the Church's self under and the Church's nature is a challenge to the form is the dialogue of this mutual challenge which inf encounter of needs with praxis gives rise to new f this way they become part of the context of the pe more influencing the needs and mediated respons



We emphasise here that the model in fig. 4 is synchronic. However inculturation is

quintessentially diachronic: historical. The inculturation process occurs through the ongoing cultural mediation of needs and ministries. As time goes on the cultural dimension of the need and its expression, as well as the ministry and its expression, become clearer. This is the time at which the assimilation phase occurs (cf. fig. 2). From there we move on to the transformation phase and it is this historical process which gives rise to inculturation in ministry. This process is schematised in fig. 5.

1. CHURCH

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------|------|------------------|
| Nature : | One | ---- | |
| | Holy | \ | act as a litmus |
| | Catholic | / | test for praxis |
| | Apostolic | ---- | |
| | | | |
| Telos of Praxis : | Martyria | ---- | |
| | Diakonia | | Express goals of |
| | Koinonia | > | all ministries |
| | Leitourgia | | and institutions |
| | Kerygma | ---- | |

2. CONTEXT.

Events, Situations, Phenomena
 Experienced as Joys, Grievs, hopes, anguish
 Expressed as needs.
 Needs are of different kinds:
 Short term, urgent
 medium/long term, urgent
 medium/long term, less urgent
 chronic, of varying intensity

3. CULTURE.

Culture mediates longer term needs, ministries and institutions more powerfully since they contain the inertia required to affect the culture in its historical dimensions i.e. they can affect tradition.

Culture is communication, humanisation, sanctification

**Fig. 6 The Role of Church, Context and Culture in
 Determining Criteria for Mission**

Our model, then, comprises the following elements: Church, context and culture as

explicitated in fig. 6. The encounter of Church, expressed as ministries and institutions, and context, expressed as needs occurring within a cultural medium, allows the emergence of an inculturated ministry which, as praxis, returns both to the context, to become a new event or phenomenon within the context, as well as to the Church where it challenges the nature and praxis of the Church (cf. fig. 4). In this way ministry is transforming both of the context and of the Church whilst it is itself once more transformed by these encounters. It is this process which gives rise to inculturated ministry.

5. Conclusion

The process of inculturation touches deeply on the issue of the Church's mission within a particular context. This mission expresses itself in terms of a diversity of ministries which emerge in response to mediated needs existing in the lives of people within the context. The inculturation model for ministry attempts to ground these ministries within an adequate theology which can aid in the process of discernment which necessarily must go on as the local church attempts to emerge within a context fulfilling the missionary mandate which has been passed on to it.