

Method in Contextual Missiology

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1. Introduction

The Mission of the Church is God’s mission. It can be articulated as a journey: the journey that God’s people walk towards the promised land. And God journeys with us as our Emmanuel. Sometimes he is present as a pillar of cloud: a cloud of unknowing. Sometimes as a column of fire to light the way. Other times as a gentle breeze which may escape our notice; yet others as tongues of flame which fill us with power. He comes as cleansing, purifying water; as man or woman; as parent or child; as wisdom and as compassion: so many myriad ways that God gifts us with his Spirit: the soul of the Church (EN75).

The mission of the church is a journey; a spiritual journey that all Christian communities walk in the presence of God’s actual spiritual touch. It is a journey in time and place: a journey in the present which emerges out of and launches into the varying contexts of our history and geography as the human community and as the people of God.

When Missiology wishes to reflect on this journey in order to see where we have been, where we are and to where we are being led, it presents itself with two tasks: A study of the context within which the journey happens and a discernment of the spirits amongst us. A study of contexts because the journey is a journey of human experience and the starting place for our reflection can be nothing other than that: our human experience. Experience is always contextual since that is a given of our human conditioned-ness. Even God had to become human in this way. Without some sort of understanding of the context and the way it conditions us and the expression and articulation of our humanity, we can easily misunderstand our experience, or ideologise it in terms of the current sets of vogue theories. Much theology and indeed much in the sciences in general both human and natural have suffered from a weakness in this regard.¹

At the same time human experience transcends context. The mere fact that we are never trapped by one context but move from one to another in time and space shows this to be true. Sometimes such a movement is a struggle as has been the struggle from the trap and prison of Apartheid in South Africa or the liberation from Communism in eastern Europe or the ongoing struggle against oppressive regimes in Asia and Latin America. We move from one context to another as we experience change and change is fundamental to human life. We move through contexts of life as child, as adolescent, as adult and as old people. And as we do so, our

¹Kuhn (1962) has demonstrated this with regard to the Scientific method. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology also provides a philosophical basis for this assertion. Most ethnologies also suffer in this regard. Today their value resides in interpreting them as culture texts within the culture of the author with which one can dialogue in order to allow an interpretation of the ethnos to emerge.

experience of God changes. Similarly, the way we understand and live our faith differs as we experience economic, social, political and cultural change around us. But we also transcend context in another way. Our common humanity allows us to resonate and empathise with people who are far from us and in vastly different contexts. This is why we are moved by human suffering elsewhere and inspired by human heroism wherever it may be found. This is one of the reasons why Jesus the Jew from the first century is also incarnate in the life and cultures of all peoples at all times and why we can claim him as infant Jesus of Prague or African healer (*nganga/ngaka/nyanga*).²

But our Christian experience is also spiritual. We are born again in water and the Spirit and the Spirit recreates our humanity (2 Cor 5) and gives us gifts to journey onwards as a Christian people (1 Cor 12; Rom 12). The Spirit of God is captured by a context but also leads us on through and beyond it. The presence of the Spirit is the guarantee of our faith and all Christians are called to the Spiritual life. The Spirit's presence is so varied in our life that we may sometimes lose sight of it. The presence of the Spirit is manifest in the gifts poured down and in the fruits of Spirit filled people (Gal 5). In order to discern the presence of the Spirit we have to go to the actions of Spirit filled persons: the praxis of the faith community. Discernment of the spiritual is essential to finding our pilgrim way to the promised land and God's reign. Such discernment is a judgement on the actions of the Christian community: by their fruits you shall know them. It is a reflection on action.

Missiology is called to provide us with a method for reflection as we walk the journey together with the Spirit. It is a reflection on human life and experience as well as on the presence of the Spirit within that life and experience. In this paper I wish to present a simple methodology for missiological reflection within a context. In this way I wish to help those who are doing Missiology as a Contextual Theology and who wish to reflect on the mission of the Church as it expresses itself in current praxis. Such reflection is a powerful means of determining the praxis required in order to move God's people forward on the journey.

2. A Method for Reflection as we Walk the Spiritual Journey: Some Presuppositions

A. From Praxis to Praxis

The mission of the Church expresses itself in praxis: "...by means of that activity through which in obedience to Christ's command and moved by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit, the Church makes itself fully present to all..." (AG 5). This missionary activity is the *complexus* of

²The terms given are three of the more common terms for healers in several different African (Bantu) languages. Generally *Nganga* or words like it are found in several central African languages; *ngaka* is more common in southern and south-western regions and *nyanga* in the south eastern groups. These three are not the only terms used for healer. The commonality between them should be clear. The concept of healer in African languages is similar but not identical to its English meaning.

practices, ministries, reflection, prayer and other signs which comprise the presence of the Spirit of God and the People of God in the world.

Our missiological method necessarily begins here: with the praxis. Using the methodology of Contextual Theology we reflect on this praxis in order to determine what is going on and why, so that we may come to some decisions regarding what we are called to do next. In other words the reflection leads necessarily to further action. It is what Holland and Henriot have called a “Pastoral Circle” and what I would prefer to call a “missiological spiral”.³

B. Affirming Theology as History

Bernard Lonergan (1971:178) has shown that the particular object of history is to reflect on the plethora of meanings and understandings present in a time in order to grasp "what was going forward in particular groups and at particular places and times" and in this way, to determine "how God disposed the matter...through particular human agents". This vision of the presence of God's Spirit inspiring, leading, calling and empowering people throughout history as he leads his people on their journey to the promised land, is central to an adequate understanding of the nature of the Church (cf. Küng 1967:5).

We do Missiology in order to look at how we have articulated God's mission so far, to reflect on this articulation and to come to some theological judgements about it, to discern the call of the spirit at this time and then to map out a course of action for the future. This SEE, JUDGE, ACT methodology has become central to all contextual, local and liberation theologies during the twentieth century.

C. Contextual Theology

³Holland and Henriot use the praxis methodology as a process of Social analysis. See figure 3 for my missiological spiral. Boff 1987 has provided the best epistemological underpinnings of this methodology. Bevans (1992) presents the praxis models as one of his models of Contextual Theology. Whilst this work may be useful for beginners it artificially separates into “models” what are in fact components of one methodology with different emphases in Contextual Theology.

By Contextual Theology, we mean the attempt to reflect upon the experience of faith which is lived in a particular context.⁴ We take as our starting point for the understanding of theology the definition of St. Anselm: "*fides quaerens intellectum*" (cur Deus Homo 1.II, c.11). It is faith which is searching for understanding and in particular, the lived experience of that faith within the community. To say that the community's experience is necessarily lived within a particular context is seemingly to state the obvious. But this reality has been frequently overlooked as being essential to the analysis of faith. Similarly, that the experience of faith is essentially a communitarian one, seems also to be a statement of the obvious. Nevertheless it does need to be stressed that Contextual Theology is by its very nature communitarian and that a work such as our own here can only represent the crystallisation of an experience of faith lived in community. Western theological modes with their emphasis on books and articles by individual authors (like this one!) is particularly weak in this regard.

The aim of Contextual Theology is to attempt to abstract a horizon⁵ of understanding within a horizon of a common experience of faith shared by a community of faith in order to articulate the presence of God within the experience. It is within the horizon of understanding that the Spirit's guiding principle, which is calling that people onwards in its journey towards the

⁴ The terms "contextualisation" and "contextual theology" seem to have entered into the missiological debate during the early 1970's in documents emanating from the World Council of Churches in Geneva. The term was used to replace the term "indigenization" in theological education. This latter term based on the metaphor of the soil was considered too static since it was interpreted as applying a static gospel to a static traditional culture and too regional since it was applied only to Africa and Asia. Contextualisation was considered a more dynamic concept since contexts change and exist everywhere. Whilst we concede the changing reality of contexts, we contend that it is text and not context which is the root metaphor of contextualisation. Otherwise contextual theology is really "situational theology". The text-context paradigm informs the "contextualisation" model especially as text relates to the Scriptures. In South Africa, the terms "contextualisation", "contextual theology" and "contextualisation of the gospel" are used to describe the process of relating the gospel (the text) to the response to it within varying contexts. Most South African authors are Protestant and the priority of "*sola Scriptura*" is evident in their emphasis on the relationship between the Scriptures and their context in the life of people. However a different emphasis is given to contextual theology by those authors influenced by the liberation theology of Latin America. Here the starting point is the community of faith and its experience of faith in its context. The gospel becomes the good news of the events taking part within that experience interpreted in the light of faith which the gospel illuminates. In this model contextual theology is group theology, the community's faith filled reflection about its context. In this second emphasis, the root metaphor is almost lost and the focus is, in fact, the community.

⁵The term "horizon" is used in the sense understood by Lonergan (1971:235-236). Lonergan follows a basically Gadamerian understanding. For Gadamer (1975:269), the "horizon" is "the range of vision that includes

Kingdom of God, is discerned. Thereby, the community is empowered to praxis. From this we can see that Contextual Theology is called also to transcend its horizon, for its experience can only be rendered intelligible (the epistemological moment) and its journey in faith rendered coherent (the praxis) when the context and the text are understood in terms of the One Spirit who calls all (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12) and the One God who is called to be all in all (1 Cor 15) as well as the one People of God to which all contexts and groups belong (cf. Eph 4,4-5).

D. The Understanding of Church

The question of the communitarian dimension of the experience of faith and of Contextual Theology leads directly to the question of Church. Jesus founded only one Church (Mt 16:18) and the credal confession of belief in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is common to many Christian denominations.

The World reality of thousands of separate churches stands in stark contrast to the will of Jesus (Jn 17:21) and to a correct understanding of the notion of the Church (cf. LG 8; WCC 1991:84). This fragmentation seems to be a reflection of the history of separateness which forms part of the fibre of the modern world, rather than of the will of God. There seems to have been an overemphasis on the diversity of the gifts of the Spirit at the expense of the reality of the Oneness of the source of those gifts (cf. 1 Cor 12). The struggle to respond to this fragmentation forms part of the mission of the church which is being called for at this time.⁶ Consequently, we feel that it is necessary at the outset to adopt an understanding of Church that will promote this process. Accordingly, we take as our point of departure the understanding of the Church as the “community of faith”. By this we mean “all who have been justified by faith in baptism [and who] are [thus] incorporated into Christ...[and who] therefore have a right to be called Christian” (UR 3). It is the communal articulation of this faith which manifests the Church and thus the Church is manifest as the community of faith (cf. LG 8). In South Africa, the various

everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point". This vision metaphor is transferred to the levels of knowledge and experience (Lonergan 1971:236; cf. Gadamer 1975:269,273).

⁶Bosch (1991) refers to this mission as an “emerging ecumenical paradigm” stressing the need to manifest the inter-relatedness of all the different types of ways in which God’s mission is accomplished rather than stressing

communities have been isolated as a result of historical divisions and the ideological conditioning of separatedness. Throughout the world too the Church has been a sign of a similar separation through denominationalism and sectarianism. But today we see a new movement towards a coming together in commonality of purpose. This, too, is a manifestation of being Church. By this we mean the emergence of a family of churches which are slowly coming to see their interdependence as a process of mutual openness occurs.⁷

On the Global level we see the emergence of interconnectedness of “Global” realities: the move to unity in plurality. Neuhaus, Schreiter and Bosch all allude to this in different ways.⁸ Perhaps we may discern the prompting of the Spirit in this urging us to a unity which respects differences.

E. The Guiding Anthropology

At the centre of culture, as of the Church, as indeed of the enterprise of theology, stand human persons. Consequently it is necessary to elucidate the vision of humanity which can inform our understanding of these three realities. Our anthropology is clearly a Christian one which views the human person as the object of God's love who, after the creation, “saw all that he had made and indeed it was very good” (Gn 1,30). This is the same humanity which God so loved “that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3,16). This optimistic anthropology reflects the understanding as outlined in *Gaudium et Spes* (12-39). Humankind is fundamentally good since the human person is created in God's image (GS 12). This image is not destroyed by sin but distorted so that the current

their difference in denominationalism, sectarianism and division. *Redemptoris Missio* stresses this in its emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the principal agent of Mission.

⁷ The term "community of faith" is useful since it has acquired an acceptance which transcends denominations. De Gruchy (1986:17,25,27,44,45 etc.) uses the terms "church" and "community of faith" interchangeably, indicating that this is his major metaphor. On the Catholic side, prescinding from the texts cited from the documents of the Second Vatican Council, African theologians such as Eboussi Boulaga (1984:167ff.) have emphasised this understanding of Church. George (1990:284) has pointed to the fact that "communion" has "only gradually...come to be generally recognised as the controlling notion of the Second Vatican Council's teaching on the Church".

⁸Bosch as we have indicated speaks of the emerging ecumenical paradigm. Earlier Neuhaus (1987) referred to the Catholic Moment. More recently Schreiter (1997) speaks of “The New Catholicity”

existential situation within humankind is one of division within and between human beings (GS 13). It is the healing of this division and the restoration of the fullness of creation that the incarnation, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus achieves, so that new life is available even now to those who are justified by faith and live in the Spirit. This presents us with an eminently positive view of the human person redeemed in Christ and called to be fully alive without denying the reality of evil and sin and the daily struggle against them.

We hold a vision which affirms the locus of human life as the world and the project of God as the restoration of God's Kingdom within the world. Human persons are Being-in-the-world and Being-with-others-in-the-world. Each person becomes himself or herself through the process of self realisation in the world together with others. This process of co-creation is what is meant by culture and is at the root of our affirmation that people are cultural beings. In this world, human persons are called to be oriented towards the goal of salvation understood as the coming of God's Kingdom. It is a goal which is not reached in isolation but, rather, in participation with God who becomes human in order to provide a way of life which is Being-together-with-God (cf. Roest Crolius 1980:258-266).

The Kingdom is not yet fulfilled but it is manifest to the extent that the community of faith witnesses its faith and lives out the truth of that witness. To the extent that Christ is present, incarnate, crucified and resurrected in the world and in history, the Kingdom is present amongst us (Fuellenbach 1987:71-5). This is human persons fully alive and if there is an emphasis we make in our anthropology it can be summed up in the famous quote of St. Irenaeus "*gloria enim Dei vivens homo*" (Adv. Her. Lib. 4, 20, 7; SC 100, 648). It is the community of human persons fully alive who participate in God's Kingdom and so share in the vision of God even today. Evangelisation and mission imply the witness and proclamation of this truth (EN 33-35).

3. Understanding the Praxis: the Hermeneutic Mediation

A. A Phenomenological Approach to Praxis

There is no such thing as "pure" experience. The same set of events often result in very different experiences in different groups of people. The fact of human conflict is the simplest demonstration of this truth. Human experiences are always communal, cultural and contextual

even our personal ones. In fact human events come to us as phenomena which enter into our horizon and affect our senses, mind, heart and spirit. Phenomena enter into our human consciousness to become at one and the same time part of us and yet with a life of their own. As they become part of us they become our experience. So finding a method to unravel and see our human experience is in fact very important in Missiology. Much missiological weakness can be sourced to the refusal to acknowledge this truth.

Any study needs to clarify at the outset what its object will be. This question turns out to be more complex than would appear at first sight and Boff (1987) devotes the first four chapters of his book to clarifying some of the issues involved. He is at great pains to indicate the ideological parameters which surround the identification of this object and his comments regarding the empirical method are particularly important in this regard (:20-24). In our methodology for missionary praxis we will not adopt a so-called empirical method using questionnaires, interviews and so on. The usefulness of such an approach is not denied but it is precisely because this method is often given more credit for “objectivity” and “truth” than it perhaps deserves that we wish to use another approach.

We wish to suggest that the Phenomenological approach offers a useful tool in our attempt to render intelligible or to understand the events of our experience. A Phenomenological approach tries to consider a phenomenon as it manifests itself and as it is received and interpreted by an active subject.

The value of the Phenomenological approach is seen in its willingness to take into account the two dimensions of subject and object without lapsing into an introspective subjectivism or the illusion of positivist empirical objectivity (Spiegelberg 1982:687-690). Both subject and phenomenon are somehow influenced by their own context both diachronically and synchronically. Consequently the object of the study is already mediated as it is manifested. This does not mean that phenomena and their meaning are reduced to mere subjectivist interpretation for the Phenomenological approach has its own methodology.⁹

⁹Phenomenologists are not in full agreement regarding the admitted steps and processes of the Phenomenological method. Spiegelberg (1982:682) has, however, attempted to synthesise the major elements of the method. He describes the method as follows:

An example may clarify. If we were to make a study of why non-practising Westerners of Irish descent living in the Durban area bring their children for baptism to Catholic Churches, we would need to recognise that this phenomenon is mediated before we see it by factors like: Durban, Western Culture, Irishness, family forces, psychological needs of the parents, the Christian (Catholic) tradition, and current lifestyle as well as a whole host of other things. In other words treating the missiological issue of baptism without considering ways in which it is mediated in human experience will lead to a misunderstanding of what's happening. Now this may be a statement of the obvious but nevertheless it is remarkable how little such factors are considered in theology and in ministry. Becoming aware of the levels of mediation helps us to enter into the phenomenon. So as we begin our method for contextual Missiology we need to explore the notion of mediation and media.

B. Mediating Phenomena in order to Understand them

Any phenomenon we are concerned with has somehow entered into our horizon (otherwise it would not be a phenomenon for us). As it enters into our horizon it becomes event and experience for us and our people. As such it affects our world. We may be concerned at the decrease in church attendance or the fact that Christians from our church go looking for and receive healing elsewhere. Perhaps we are concerned that people are being healed by means which do not make sense to us. Perhaps that our faith is of little importance to our children. Whatever the concern, it is the concern of a community and the starting point for reflection has to be the experience of the community **of which I am part**.

Our first task is to attempt to allow the phenomenon to manifest itself to us in as many different ways as we can. This is the SEE part. The more ways we look at it the more we see of it. This requires a certain amount of imagination and creativity in helping the community look

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1. The Investigation of a Particular Phenomenon.
 - a) Phenomenological Intuiting: opening the eyes, listening, reflecting, intuiting.
 - b) Phenomenological Analysis: Tracing the elements and structure of the phenomenon.
 - c) Phenomenological Description:
 - predication in terms of known classes
 - negative predication in terms of known classes
 - predication by metaphor and analogy.
 2. Investigation of general essences (eidetic intuiting)

for different media through which the phenomenon may appear. As a first step we should at least consider three ways of looking: What we in our community see; What those involved in the phenomenon see and What those who have looked at the phenomenon in some depth have seen. These are the views of the community of faith, the views of those inside the phenomenon and the views of the students of the phenomenon.

When we as a faith community look at what appears, we are concerned with how the phenomenon manifests itself to us in our context. We need to identify this context for ourselves so that we are situated: rooted. When we ask those who are part of the phenomenon what they see then we are concerned with the vision of those for whom the phenomenon is truth. Those directly involved in the phenomena we have used as examples would be people like the religious healers themselves, those who have been healed; those non practising Catholics who want baptism and so forth. When we ask others who have looked at the phenomenon in some depth what they have seen we are concerned with those who have tried to understand what is happening: the students of the phenomena. Here we could go to the literature and other sources of wisdom to look at what used to be called the *Status Questionis* but which I prefer to treat as a part of the viewing process. At this point it is important to insist that we do not just go to missiologists but to all who have studied the phenomenon: artists, anthropologists, scientists, philosophers musicians and muses. The more ways we see, the more the phenomenon will appear.

Doesn't this make things very complicated? Yes! Human life is complicated. Reality is complex. When we simplify we reduce. Let us acknowledge this and recognise that much of what is done in theological and missiological discourse is highly reductionistic. The search always seems to be for a fundamental key which simplifies and makes sense. There is much value to this but also danger. The key always leads to some understanding and some misunderstanding. It unlocks some doors but not others. Let us remain with the complexity for the moment. First let us see as well as we can before moving on to make judgements about things. This notion: suspending our beliefs about things and allowing the phenomenon to appear

as much as possible without making judgements about it, is called *epoché* and is fundamental to the Phenomenological method and one of its greatest strengths.¹⁰

C. Culture Texts

Robert Schreier (1985) has introduced theology to the happy notion of culture text as a way of analysing and understanding human and theological phenomenon. Culture texts are unities of human communication carrying messages which can be analysed into signs (or symbols) which carry the message and codes which set up the rules by which the message is communicated. Culture texts can be as simple as a word or as complex as a country. Human events as apparently diverse as religious rituals, city planning and sports event can be understood as culture texts. Thus the power of this analytical tool. All culture texts are true for those within them whereas they may not be true for those outside. This truth is guaranteed by the fact that the message is understood ie communication occurs. When we say that all culture texts are true, what we mean is that they communicate meaning through messages which everyone within the culture recognises and agrees upon. This is the meaning of the word **Com-unicate**: to unify together. The “one-ness” of this creates the truth. The culture text may not be true for those outside it. They may read other messages in either the sign or the code and thus *misunderstand*. Culture in this model can thus be understood in terms of an *understanding/misunderstanding* paradigm.

Any phenomenon we are studying in our missiological analysis may also be understood as a culture text. So it is true within itself and for those who are part of it. This is why *epoché* is so important. We may have our own notions of truth but all culture texts are true for those within them otherwise they would be unable to communicate messages.

We always stand within a number of culture texts at one and the same time. Such is the case as we let this phenomenon appear to us. These are the range of our own culture texts where truth

¹⁰ *epoché* is a greek term used by the Ancient Greek Skeptic philosophers for the suspension of beliefs about things. Husserl used the term for his Phenomenological Reduction in the search for the essences of things. For us the importance of the process is that it creates a space within which unexpected manifestations of the phenomenon may not be dismissed by our beliefs about the structure of reality. For us what is more important is a phenomenological *expansion* which *may* be later reduced by observing the interrelatedness of the different aspects of the phenomenon. Our position is closer to Merleau-Ponty than to Husserl. Cf Spiegelberg 1982:534-535.

is communicated for us. They include our own belief and values systems. Examples of these could include systems like: Science and the scientific method; Psychology as a therapeutic system; Catholicism; Evangelicalism; Traditional Religion and so forth. When we try to “understand” an emerging phenomenon. we attempt “stand under” it, or look behind it, using the truth that is available to us: our own culture texts. Each community will do this differently as each community will have its own idea of “Communal (or common) Sense”: the culture texts within which it lives and finds truth and meaning (cf Geertz 1973). These latter culture texts can thus be understood as the MEDIUM through which we SEE more deeply or STAND UNDER the emerging phenomenon in order to UNDERSTAND it or INTER-PRET it. They are epistemological lenses.

The culture texts that I use for this process come from my Western Culture. They are the Culture texts of: Medicine; Psychology; Anthropology; Sociology; Economics; Philosophy and Theology. Someone else doing theology within another communal framework will use their own culture texts. It is important to realise that what I am describing here is something we all do naturally in every situation. Here I am merely articulating this process in a more systematic way and calling for a more rigorous recognition of what is often intuitive when we do Missiology. It is also the reason why all Missiology is in some way Contextual Theology since all Missiology is done using culture texts of one kind or another.

Each time I *stand under* or *read through* the phenomenon I do so using the discourse and truth of one of these culture texts. Each one may become in turn the epistemological lens through which I see the phenomenon more deeply and allow it to enter into my (our) world of truth. In this way I bring the phenomenon into my world of truth. Note that this importation will distort the phenomenon often in ways that may make it unintelligible to those within the culture text of the phenomenon itself. The secularised non-practising Western Christian will find it unbelievable that their child can be refused baptism and the Pentecostal healers will refuse to see the value of more prosaic scientific explanations of what they do.

However my mediation of the phenomenon may also distort (or reveal) in a more positive sense. It may in fact provide more truth about the phenomenon since the phenomenon now enters another culture text of understanding (cf George 1990:49-50;242-250). In time, of course, both

(the original one and my Western one) culture texts may be abandoned or subsumed into a different way of seeing things (culture texts). In the scientific world this is what happened to Newtonian Mechanics and Dalton's Atom Theory. In the Christian world this is what happened in Vatican II and in the emergence of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Mediation is thus not a JUDGEMENT about phenomena. It is a way of seeing or rather letting phenomena appear. One of the most important roles of theologians and missiologists today is the ability to suspend judgement or practice *epoché* here in order to allow a wider vision to emerge. The theological task at this first stage is to look for different media through which the phenomena may manifest itself and thus through these different views to come to a greater understanding of what is going on. We are seeing more deeply.

Once we have a phenomenon mediated in different ways we can begin to attempt a description of it. This description needs to include all the different ways in which it has appeared to us and in which we have understood it. It is this Phenomenological description which will always be quite complex, which provides what Boff (1987:xxiv) calls the “(theoretical) *material* object” about which we can begin to theologise and make some theological judgements. This we do as a Christian community, a community of faith: Catholic Bishops Conference; WCC; local Church; local parish; Study Seminar. This judgement is a THEOLOGICAL judgement. It is theological because we do it as people of FAITH. This faith is articulate to us: we know something about it. As we judge the phenomenon from our own theological standpoint in fact, we begin to do Contextual Theology. We cannot however rush to this judgement when dealing with phenomena outside our culture text of our faith community. We have to discern the phenomenon first. Thus the importance of mediation.

D. The Necessity for Multi-disciplinary Mediation

How then does mediation work in practice? It is for each theological community to answer this question for itself. This is so since it is the theological community to whom the phenomena appears and it is the theological community which has to explore the methods of mediation: the culture texts available to it within which the phenomenon may appear. In order to illustrate what I am saying I wish to provide an example from my own study.

In a study made of the growth of Coping-healing churches in the South African context (Bate 1995) the plethora of experiences, practices, beliefs and testimonies associated with this phenomenon easily impress upon us the complexity of the phenomenon which is the churches' Coping-healing ministry. Nor did that study consider all dimensions of the Christian healing ministry ignoring as it did the more traditional healing ministry of the Church as expressed in hospitals, clinics, primary health care, hospital visitation and counselling as well as the more traditional expressions of the Sacrament of the sick and reconciliation. In limiting ourselves to the more recent emergence of a Coping-healing ministry in some way rooted in the Pentecostal Tradition and observing the manifestation of this ministry as it has grown in the South African context, we observed an explosion of different modes, understandings and assertions - a claimed new outpouring of the Spirit which was not part of the Church's former tradition.

In order to make some sense of all of this, we are called to look more intently and attempt to see our phenomenon more deeply before we can attempt a Phenomenological description. "Seeing more deeply", is the attempt to render the phenomenon more intelligible to us by varying the perspective. This process corresponds to what happens on Lonergan's (1971:9) "intellectual" level "on which we inquire, come to understand, express what we have understood, work out the presupposition and implication of our expression". Important in this respect is the question of standpoint, for the frame of reference of the beholder to a large extent provides the "epistemological lens" through which the phenomenon passes before it is seen. It is thus seen, on this deeper level, in terms of the categories of understanding which make up a particular framework of reference. It is the process of allowing the phenomenon to appear within the many different culture texts that are available to us and not limiting it to one: the religious, for example.

We were able to discover that the phenomenon of Coping-healing could be observed and understood from many standpoints. We made the decision to choose five different major perspectives or culture texts: the psycho-medical, the anthropological, the socio-economic, the philosophical and the theological. Note that the choice of mediation is a theological decision and another theologian coming out of a different community of faith might choose a different set of mediators and in this way reflect the important media within the community of faith he was part

of and attempting to articulate. These mediators are culture texts and they are given to us by our culture and context. The theologian has to get in touch with them and use them if he is truly to do reflective Contextual Theology (rather than ideological theology where the ideology is assumed, not questioned and is the only lens used).

So to recapitulate then: When a phenomenon is studied from a particular standpoint and an attempt is made to render it intelligible within the categories of that standpoint, we refer to this process as a “mediation”. In our example this means that the phenomenon is mediated by the frame of reference or epistemological categories of the observer who is psychologist, anthropologist, philosopher, sociologist, theologian (or a combination of more than one of these). These are culture texts for the observer since through them he receives true messages through symbols he can identify and codes he knows. What is seen and what is reported is done so in terms of the particular frame of reference concerned. Saying this is not saying much since we all mediate phenomena. The fullness of phenomena is never available to us and all that we observe is mediated. The importance of contextual theologies and the study of the so-called *paradigm shift* in epistemology is the attempt to highlight the reality of this process and thus to move away from the absolutisation of intellectual positions. The words of Clifford Geertz are relevant here:

...we need to replace the "stratigraphic" conception of relations between the various aspects of human existence with a synthetic one; that is, one in which biological, psychological, sociological, and cultural factors can be treated as variables within unitary systems of analysis. The establishment of a common language in social sciences is not a matter of mere coordination of terminologies or, worse yet, of coining artificial new ones; nor is it a matter of imposing a single set of categories upon the area as a whole. It is a matter of integrating different types of theories and concepts in such a way that one can formulate meaningful propositions embodying findings now sequestered in separate fields of study. [Geertz 1973:44]

4. Toward a Theological Judgement

A. Introduction: Describing the Mediated Phenomenon

The Phenomenological movement considers Phenomenological description to be "primarily...based on a classification of the phenomena...presuppos[ing] a framework of class names" (Spiegelberg 1982:693). Description can also be by negation to show the unique

dimension of a phenomenon as well as, more guardedly, "by metaphor and analysis" (:694). Clearly the attempt to describe our phenomenon as an anthropological one, a psychological one, a theological one and so forth, constitute a beginning of this process especially as regards description by classification.

The next step is to bring together the major elements of this initial stratigraphic classification in an attempt to look for commonalities, relationships, complements and even contradictions in order to synthesize these elements into a single description.

In this search for the interrelatedness between the different mediations, we aim to describe the phenomenon from our own standpoint. We begin this process by bringing together the various elements of the mediated phenomenon as perceived so far. In this way we accept the phenomenon in terms of all the truth it has revealed within the different culture texts where it has appeared. Using our example, then, we would show the ways in which the Coping-healing phenomenon is psycho-medical, anthropological, socio-economic and so forth. Then we would investigate how these different ways come together in relationship to one another.

The results of this process is our Phenomenological description: our "(theoretical) *material* object" (Boff 1987:xxiv) upon which we may now theologise. Our theological judgement is clearly part of the description of the phenomenon since we are ultimately speaking from the standpoint of faith. Developing our theological judgement is the last thing we do and somehow the easiest. Yet it is also, paradoxically, the most risky and wobbly part of the process. It is wobbly because all judgement implies balancing things one against the other and it is risky since it is a leap into faith and it will be challenged by others both within and outside our community of faith. Nevertheless we have to do this. It is the essence of the Contextual Theology to come to our judgement. It is the judgement that will provide us with the opening through which further action of the community pours out. It is the attempt to continue the praxis: to do Boff's (1987:78-84: cf. xxvi-xxvii) "second theology", based on the fruits of the description obtained .

In this way, we construct a Phenomenological description in a theological key: our theological judgement. The judgement then takes the form of a theological model which is constructed from the dialectic between the description we have obtained and the culture text

which is the faith experience of the believing community we are part of. Both this culture text and the description allow us to indicate criteria we use in making our theological judgement.

An example may once again clarify. In our judgement on the coping-healing phenomenon we choose now to ask the question: To what extent does the Coping-healing phenomenon we have studied, form part of the Church's healing mission and ministry?

The judgement we will make will clearly extend the scope of theology into the other disciplines considered. We see this process to be at the very heart of Missiology, the theological discipline which finds itself on the boundary between "Church" and "World". Any true Missiology must be multi-disciplinary if it is to respect the world it meets and the world's understanding of itself which is, at least on one level, expressed through the ways it categorises its thought in academic disciplines.

Explaining our methodology within the categories of Lonergan we might say that we now move on from the "intellectual level", with its intentionality of intelligibility in the search for understanding, to the "rational level" where we are concerned to pass judgement on the truth or falsity of our intelligible understandings. Thenceforth we go on to consider the "responsible level" where our search will be for the "good" in terms of faith values, thus indicating the direction for action. Lonergan (1971:235) refers to the "dialectic functional speciality" in which the aim is to resolve the conflicts which emerge from the various interpretations which have been proposed. Clearly the resolution which occurs will depend on the standpoint of the community making the judgement and in particular on the religious values which determine that standpoint.¹¹

All this should impress upon us how much the concept of culture is central to this theological model and methodology. The theological model we will develop is centred around a re-appropriated understanding of culture and has a lot to do with the notion of inculturation which is increasingly prevalent in theological thought especially in the third world where the importance of culture is taken more seriously. In fact we have already suggested elsewhere (Bate

¹¹ This understanding corresponds to Boff's (1987:208) "minor key" of dialectic in which the process is an epistemological one from the unknown to the known.

1995:280) how this model is a powerful missiological tool in indicating the direction the Church's mission should take in responding to all boundary phenomena occurring in the area between the Church and the world.

Should our schema seem too logical and systematic, it is necessary at this point to acknowledge Boff's (1987:214) comments regarding the "ongoing dynamic character of the relationship between theory and praxis". Whilst a work such as this can only be done in a theoretical key (:209) this does not imply the prioritisation of ideas and theories which then have to be put into practice. The two are in dialectical relationship - Boff's "major key" (:209) - and it is the "mutual overlap that provides the possibility of both a theory of praxis and a praxis of theory" (:211). Thus we acknowledge, the way in which the pastoral practices we may consider, as well as the history, tradition and experience of the author and the community whose faith he seeks to articulate always informs the theoretical part of theological work.

By the same token, we acknowledge the validity of our intention which is to make a logical and rigorous analysis leading to transcendental judgments concerning the nature of this praxis and leading to fields and projects for action. The ability of the community of faith to reflect in this way and of its theologians to intuit, focus and express this reflection is explicitly affirmed.

B. Criteria for Theological Judgement

The local community of faith has to articulate its faith at this moment and it is this articulation which is in dialogue with the Phenomenological description. The theologian may be the scribe of this articulation. He also may be a resource person who provides input which helps the community in that articulation. The first concern here is to answer the question: "What are the beliefs and values we share which are concerned with this phenomenon?". The question may also be posed in this way: "Which of our beliefs does it touch in any way?" The beliefs and values may be articulated in a number of ways. Some of the more common ones used by faith communities are:

- The scriptures as the literal word of God
- Gospel and faith values
- Interpreted Scripture (using a variety of interpretive methods)

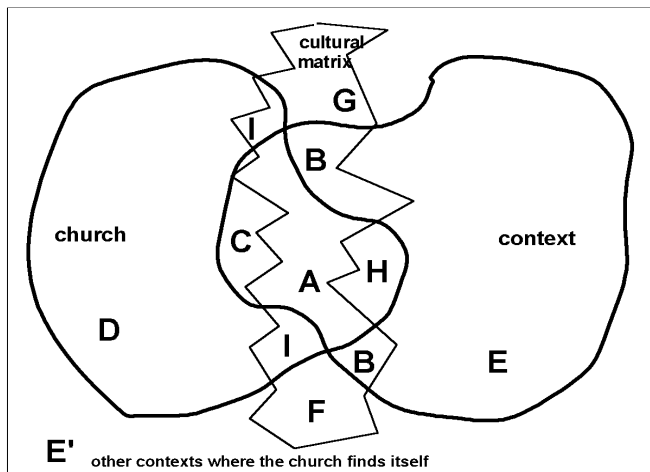
- The tradition and Teaching of the Church which reflects the ongoing presence of the Spirit in the church through the ages. These could include:
 - examples of true witnesses of the faith: the saints
 - the Teaching of the former Leaders (Pastors) of the People of God: Magisterium
 - comparison with previous teachings
- The self understanding of the Church which we currently have: our dogmatic theological position, for example:
 - The Church as One Holy Catholic and Apostolic
 - The Church as the presence of the Kingdom of God in the world
 - The Church as the site of *Martyria; Koinonia; Diakonia; Kerygma; Leitourgia*
- The writings of other authors currently engaged in researching and extending the conversation about “these things” (Lk 24, 18-19)

Many other criteria can be used for this judgement. Choosing the criteria for judgement is a major theological task of the Christian community and the theologian who articulates the faith of this community. In continuing with our own example we offer one particular model which has been used. This is a particular model for judgement of pastoral praxis and is an example of how the judgement step might be done. Much of this is taken from an earlier work of mine which has provide much of the example in this article (Bate 1995)

D. A Model for Judgement in Contextual Missiology

The reflection on pastoral praxis we are proposing 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. 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.

Figure 1 describes something of the human condition in a particular area. We identify three major parameters in this diagram. The context refers to the events, situations and forces in the



1 The Church, Context and Culture

life of the people of the particular area.¹² 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.¹³ 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

¹² Clearly the Church finds itself in many contexts and cultures. In our model only the context and cultures within which the local Church is emerging are considered. Area D does not imply a contextless cultureless Church but the Church within the other contexts and cultures which are not indicated in the diagram for the sake of simplicity. Since we are using the mathematical symbolism of Venn diagrams we use the relevant notation E' to refer to all other contexts besides E.

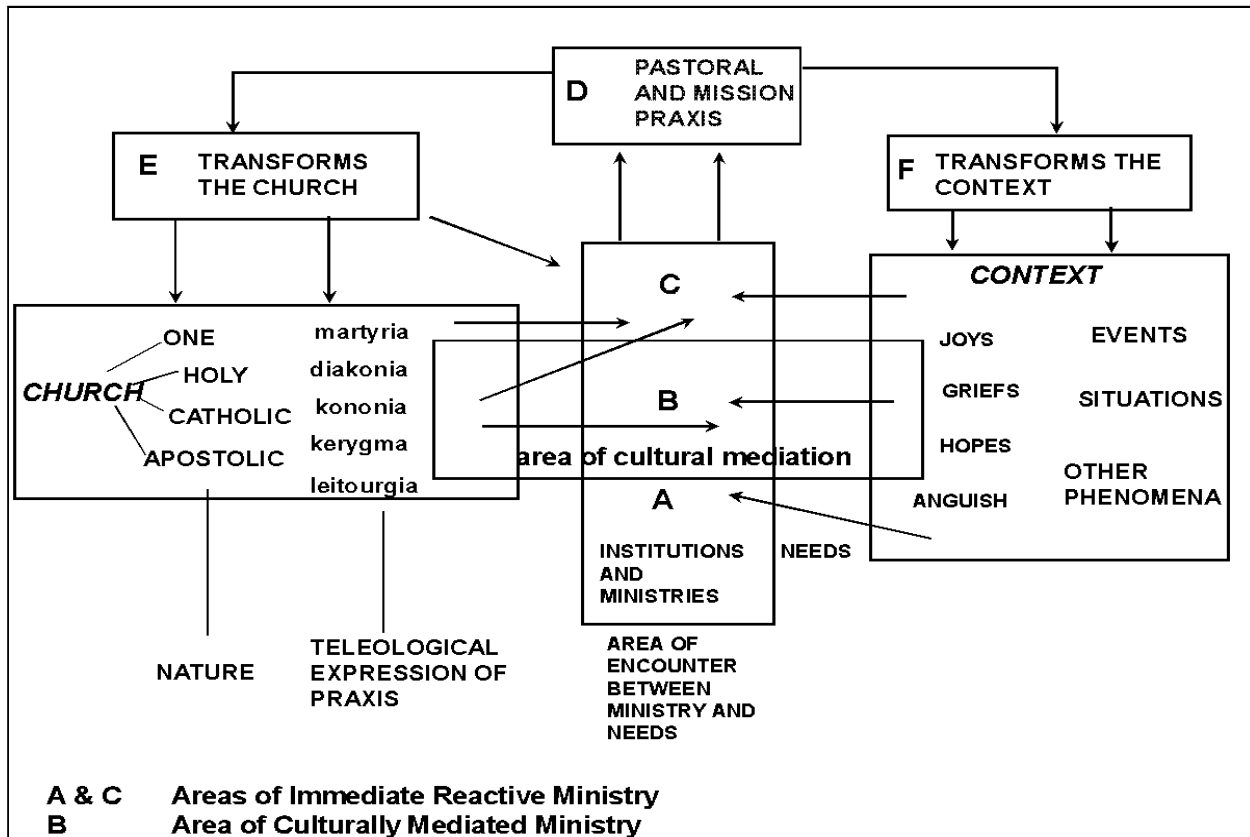
¹³ The cultural matrix represents the culture(s) within which the local Church is emerging. Again, our diagram does not imply that everything outside areas A,B,F and G is cultureless but rather that these areas reflect the cultural perspectives affected by the process we are examining.

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 we have been discussing is one such ministry.

Figure 2 is a schematic expansion of figure 1 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 figure 2 that the context generates a set of events, situations and other phenomena 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 but all of these ways will have some form of socio-culturally conditioning. In this way a set of culturally mediated needs and expectations emerges from the context.

These mediated needs encounter the Church on the level of its praxis. The Church itself can be understood in a number of ways. For the purpose of this model we have used two common ways of self understanding. The first relates to the creedal confession common to most Christians. Here the Church is said to have four fundamental marks inherent to its nature. It is ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC and APOSTOLIC. The second self understanding relates to the praxis of the Church (See Bate 1995: 237). This praxis can be expressed in terms of its goal or *telos*: The Kingdom of God and the way it is manifest in Church as the body of Christ, the Emmanuel. If the Christian community sees the fundamental commitment and final objective of the Church was to be at the service of the Kingdom of God, then a judgement based on how this ministry manifests the Kingdom of God would be a good judgement to make. The Kingdom of

God, in fact, can be said to be manifest in the Church through five principal dimensions and means. In *martyria*, the Church witnesses its faith in the risen Lord and people give their lives to



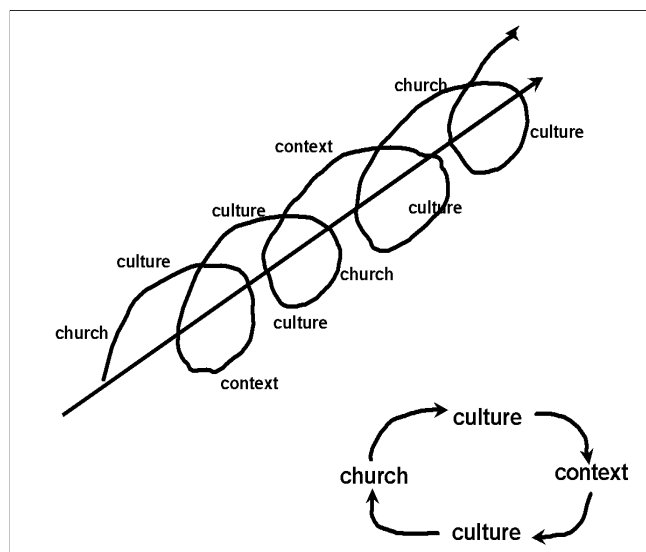
2 The Synchronic Encounter between Church and Context as Mediated by Culture

and for the Lord to allow his Kingdom to be manifest through them. In *koinonia* the People of God manifest the essential communal nature of God's Kingdom living the truth of being one body in one Lord. In *diakonia* the Kingdom is realised through the command to love and serve others and in particular the poor. In *kerygma* the Kingdom is proclaimed as Good News for the people of all places, times and contexts. In *leitourgia* the Kingdom is celebrated as the living presence of God amongst his people through worship and prayer. These goals (*tele*) of praxis express the goals of all ministries and institutions or a basic set of gospel values and attitudes by which we can express and judge praxis. The response of the Church in its praxis occurs on this level as a set of culturally mediated pastoral responses to a set of culturally mediated needs emerging from the context.

However in reflecting on its ministries, the Church is always thrown back onto its nature to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. The ministries are themselves a challenge to the Church's self understanding as one, holy, catholic and apostolic and the Church's nature is a challenge to the form nature and style of its ministerial praxis. It is the dialogue of this mutual challenge which informs the Church's praxis. Clearly it also informs the inculturation process.

Now the encounter of culturally mediated needs with the Church's expression of its praxis gives rise to new forms of ministry and pastoral practices: a new culturally mediated pastoral and mission praxis represented by D on our diagram. This praxis has a transforming effect both on the context which becomes "more Christian" and on the Church which becomes more "local" or inculturated. The process of inculturation is however itself mediated by the Church's nature to be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. This provides a corrective to the danger of a local Church losing its union and communion with the one Christian community and turning into just another sect or denomination. The praxis transforms the context (F) and in this way the Church becomes part of the context of the people. This context continues to surface events, situations and other phenomena and so we move through the whole process again. The model in figure 2 is synchronic. However this process, which is in fact the inculturation process, is quintessentially diachronic:

may be described
process: our
indicated in figure
cultural dimension
expression, as well
expression,



historical, and so it
as an ongoing
missiological spiral as
3. As time goes on the
of the need and its
as the ministry and its
become clearer.

3 The encounter between church praxis and context as historically mediated by culture

Our model, then, comprises the following main factors: Church, context and culture. We choose certain important elements which make up each of these factors. These elements represent a theological choice (or judgement). These are itemised in figure 4. It is these elements which provide us with the criteria for our theological judgement. This judgement is concerned with deciding to what extent the phenomenon is a genuine manifestation of the Church's mission.

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.

**Figure 4 The Role of Church, Context and Culture in
Determining Criteria for Mission**

Such a theological judgement is itself part of the construction of local theology, and indeed to the inculturation process. It will help to inform the praxis of the Church leading to practices which reflect the true expression of the Church's culturally mediated pastoral response to culturally mediated needs. These are our choices. They are not set in stone. Contextual Missiologists have to explicate and justify their own.

5. Using the Method: An Example

Let us take as example the theological judgement we have made on the Church's healing ministry as it is manifesting itself in the emergence of what I have called the "Coping-healing phenomenon"¹⁴ (Bate 1995). There the concern was to say how and to what extent this phenomenon is a ministry of the Church and a challenge to its mission. We hope to indicate the culturally mediated needs that this ministry is responding to as well as the culturally mediated forms that it takes. We then hope to be able to make some tentative judgement regarding its effectiveness in responding to these needs. From there we will indicate the challenges that this ministry is making to the whole Church in terms of fulfilling the Church's mission.

After this first situating of the phenomenon we will move on to a judgement of the ministry by predicating it against some of the criteria of the community's faith self understanding. Here we will examine the phenomenon in terms of the five goals of the Church's ministries and institutions outlined above as: *martyria*, *diakonia*, *koinonia*, *leitourgia* and *kerygma*. A further step would be to consider what consequences these ministries have on the level of the universal Church. Here we would predicate the Coping-healing phenomenon in terms of the four marks or notes of the Church as enumerated in the Nicene creed: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, in order to see to what extent our ministries reflect the Church whose nature is so bound up with her mission. Space constraints prevents us from doing this in the present article. From our judgement we hope to draw some challenges that the Coping-healing phenomenon poses, as a ministry, to the whole Church.

We described the Coping-healing phenomenon as culturally mediated pastoral practices responding to culturally mediated needs emerging from the context (Bate 1995:255-266). Our description has shown us that people making use of the Coping-healing ministry are coming as a result of perceived needs which they feel this ministry can fulfil. These needs were analysed as follows:

Psycho-Medical Needs

¹⁴For the reasoning behind the analysis and the judgements made the reader is referred to the original text. What is cited here is done so with the intention of making this somewhat theoretical work live in a practical example where it has been applied.

- (i) The need for a “miracle” cure of incurable disease.
- (ii) Emotional needs.
- (iii) Identity and ego needs.
- (iv) The need for caring others.

Anthropological Needs

- (i) The need to articulate perceived unwell-being.
- (ii) The need for understanding.
- (iii) Needs coming from culture change and acculturation.

Socio-Economic Needs

- (i) Deprivation needs emerging from socio-economic conditions.
- (ii) The need to move from social deviance (ill) to social acceptance (well).

Theological Needs

- (i) The need of forgiveness from sin and guilt.
- (ii) The need to fight and conquer demons and evil.
- (iii) The need to experience God's power in one's life.

In this way we see that the needs emerging from the context can be described in terms of different categories of needs which are obviously interrelated and overlap amongst themselves. Clearly part of our judgement will be concerned with the way in which the ministry fulfils these needs. In coming to our theological judgement we will use the five teleological expressions of praxis as our criteria in the following way.

*A. The Coping-Healing Ministry as Martyria*¹⁵

In the various practices of the Coping-healing ministry studied, we note that healing can be understood as a witness to the manifestation of the Kingdom of God in the life of a person or community. Healers heal in the name of Jesus Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Healing “demands a worshipping community” and that the healing is achieved with reference to the Church and its faith. Indeed the role of faith is central and where the healings are achieved through faith in Jesus Christ then the ministry truly witnesses to the power of the Lord. Many

¹⁵See Bate 1995: 269f for a fuller treatment

who are healed give their lives to the Lord. They are converted and become Christians. In this way the ministry is a means to evangelisation as it was in the Acts of the Apostles.

On the other hand we have seen that many of the conversions are not permanent and that many become disillusioned and leave when so-called miracle cures are only temporary remissions. Others become disillusioned when they are told that their faith is not strong enough for healing. This false use of faith which runs the risk of becoming “faith in faith” rather than faith in God is a counter witness to the Kingdom. A false witness to the Kingdom of God seems also to be given when healing caused by other psychological and anthropological factors is attributed directly to God's power. In such cases one might speak of a counter witness to truth.

*B. The Coping-Healing Ministry as Koinonia*¹⁶

We say that the Kingdom of God is manifest in the Church when the Church is a site of *koinonia*. By *koinonia* we understand all that impinges upon true community. Community implies relatedness, unity, sharing, concern for one another and openness to others. The Coping-healing ministry usually operates within the framework of a community of believers and usually attempts to situate the sick people within community so that they become part of it. In this way those who are ill have the opportunity of being part of a caring, affirming, loving group of people and this experience is itself therapeutic. Clearly this is an experience of *koinonia*.

We have also recognised that some of the healings achieved are related to the restoring of disturbed relationships between people as well as to the experience of personal and social reconstruction within a context of personal, interpersonal or social crisis and fragmentation. In all of these ways then we can say that the Coping-healing phenomenon manifests the gospel value of *koinonia*.

However we have also noted areas within this phenomenon which seem to militate against this value and its full expression. Several authors have shown the danger of groups which close themselves off to the outside world in order to create artificial subcultures which then do not participate in the world and its transformation but become alienated from it. Clearly religious

¹⁶See Bate 1995: 270f for a fuller treatment

withdrawal from a society in which people still have to live is not a true manifestation of real adult communion but can rather be a regression into an acceptance of a simplistic subculture within a complex world. The danger of too much control by the leader within the group and the arbitrary use of psychological techniques of emotional manipulation without a true understanding of their mechanisms can lead to the formation of unhealthy rather than healthy groups of people. When this occurs the Coping-healing phenomenon is destructive of *koinonia* and is not ministry.

*C. The Coping-Healing Ministry as Diakonia*¹⁷

Diakonia refers to the way in which the Church attempts through its praxis to make the Kingdom of God manifest in the world. It refers to all those attributes of care, concern and service which the community of faith is required to bring to its actions. The Coping-healing ministry clearly manifests *diakonia* when it helps in the personal and social reconstruction of people and in their humanisation. We have also seen how the ministry responds to people by responding to their need for esteem, belonging, hope, dignity and self-respect. It also provides a place of refuge for those who find themselves in times of crisis where the move to interiority and re-assessment is necessary. In this way it provides a means of coping with the complexity and anxiety of life and is valuable for the short term reassessment needed from time to time. In its fight against sin and evil it also promotes the realisation of God's Kingdom and manifests service. Some describe this process as realised eschatology. Clearly the ministry is fulfilling an important social role in “overcoming personal and social disadvantage by religious experience”.

On the other hand, some authors have questioned some of the practices operating in the Coping-healing phenomenon indicating how people can also be rendered a disservice through them. It has been suggested that these churches and the so-called healing they give provides a means of helping people to cope with evil without confronting it and defeating it. These churches have been accused of supporting a form of political quiescence and of the fact that they mitigate against the necessity to heal society of its ills by encouraging social withdrawal. In this way the

¹⁷See Bate 1995: 271f for a fuller treatment

value of a temporary withdrawal in order to deal with personal and social crisis through personal and social re-assessment is transformed into a disvalue by making this withdrawal permanent. We also note the conflict of interests which may exist between healers and patients. When the healer uses his gifts to satisfy his own interests rather than those of the patient, then manipulation will occur rather than healing. Such a conflict may also hamper the Coping-healing ministry when the search for success in order to have bigger and better churches, a secure healing practice, a good reputation and financial stability may result in a lack of care for those who are not healed and even a rejection of them and their faith. When such things occur, the Coping-healing phenomenon does not demonstrate *diakonia* and is no longer ministry but something else.

*D. The Coping-Healing Ministry as Kerygma*¹⁸

The *kerygma* is the message which is to be preached. It is the good news in all its fullness that Christians believe in and are called communicate to all people to the end of time. The Coping-healing ministry proclaims the *kerygma* when people are truly healed through God's power, His message is communicated into the lives of people and they are evangelised. Clearly the *kerygma* is being proclaimed when people are being brought to conversion and when the role of God and particularly the risen Lord is given the priority in the exercising of the ministry.

However, when faith in Jesus becomes faith in faith then a message other than the *kerygma* is being preached. Here we are seeing the influence of persuasion, positive thinking and other metaphysical cult movements rather than the gospel. A similar judgement must be made when the sick are blamed for their illness for not having enough faith. Other authors have indicated the falseness of the prosperity gospel as not being of the *kerygma* and the lack of an adequate *theologia crucis* in the message proclaimed. Such a selective use of the Scriptures can lead to a deformation of the *kerygma* and the preaching of another message.

*E. The Coping-Healing Ministry as Leitourgia*¹⁹

¹⁸See Bate 1995: 272f for a fuller treatment

We use the term *leitourgia* to refer to all which has to do with the worship of God in prayer, ritual, praise, ceremony, spirituality and piety. The Christian community is called to be a prayerful, worshipping community and all Christians are called to a relationship with God expressed in prayer and worship.

All that we have presented leads to the conclusion that worship is truly happening within the Coping-healing ministry. The ministry “demands a worshipping community and healing is achieved with reference to the Church and its faith”. The transcendence of God and God's power to intervene in power for the wellbeing of His people is both celebrated and often realised in the Coping-healing services. God's presence and power is acknowledged as operating through believing people to actualise the ministry. The means of healing are through prayer and ritualised action such as the laying on of hands, touch, blowing and so forth. There is no doubt that part of the purpose of the Coping-healing services is the ability to move people out of the ordinary to a state of being able to experience “otherness”. If the aim of this is to open people up to the transcendence of God, this may be a valuable exercise but when the focus changes and the aim becomes the pure manipulation of people's emotions to achieve particular psycho-emotive effects then the negative side of this process may emerge. When this is done by untrained, unaware people who ascribe all that happens to “the action of the Holy Spirit and God” we have moved away from *leitourgia* and into the dangerous field of amateur group dynamics.

F. Other Criteria

This reflection on the Coping-healing ministry in terms of the five means and dimensions of ecclesial praxis in manifesting God's Kingdom through the Church, has shown us that the Coping-healing ministry is often indeed a true ministry of the Church implementing *martyria*, *koinonia*, *diakonia*, *kerygma*, and *leitourgia* where it is practised. At the same time we have also noted areas where it is not ministry and actively countering the implementation of these five means of praxis.

¹⁹See Bate 1995: 273f for a fuller treatment

We could go on choosing criteria in order to make our judgement. In our model this would include judgements regarding how this ministry may be predicated against the five marks of the Church. Does it manifest and promote unity (One). Does it transform us and make us better Christians (Holy). Does it open people to the Universality of Gods salvation and his presence to all people or does it close us in narrow separate cultural groups (Catholic) and finally does it send us forth as witnesses of the gospel to those who need to hear good news and be healed (Apostolic). The important issue we are trying to stress here is that the local community of faith needs to articulate its criteria for judgement in a way that is clear. The theologian has a crucial role to play in this process. We need to justify the criteria we choose in judging. Much of the misunderstanding and argument and even mere debate becomes wasted effort since people are discussing from different criteria of judgement without ever clarifying this difference.

6. From Judgement to Action

The judgements we make are not theoretical. They are moral judgement on what Lonergan (1971: 36-49) refers to as the reasonable level. They are judgements in terms of our values: what really move us. Judgements done in this way always lead to action. For moral decisions about into the world of our behaviour. So whatever we judge that is what we are called to do. This is the true meaning of judgement and why it is not fundamentally an intellectual exercise. The judgement calls us forth to do in terms of what we really hold to be of value. Consequently we are led on to pastoral practice which is thought about reflected upon and acted out of conviction.

Some contemporary pastoral theology relies on what I would call an overemphasis on the learning of skills and techniques. The preoccupation with technology in our culture makes us believe that if only we can pick up the technique we shall do good work where as in fact what is necessary is the moral conviction of our beliefs and our vision. That is why a methodology like this one is so important for praxis today. When people make judgements rooted in beliefs and values about phenomena they have tried to understand then they make a contribution to the ongoing journey of God's people who walk together with the spirit to the promised land. It is easy to get lost on the journey and also to go around in circles. As we are open to the Spirit, know where we come from and where we are going, so our faith helps us see the guiding light.

In a world of confusion however we also need method. Hopefully these few words have provided one possibility.

7. The Emmaus Story: Reflecting on the Events

The Emmaus story in Luke's Gospel (24,13-35) provides a wonderful scriptural metaphor of what we have tried to express here. The main parts of the Emmaus story are the following: First these disciples of Jesus were walking on journey as we disciples of Jesus are also called to do. They were "going [on foot] to a village named Emmaus about 7 miles away". So this was no short journey. Secondly we notice that the disciples are busy discussing the events going on in their lives: They were "talking with each other about all these things that had happened". As they discuss Jesus comes and goes with them: "While they were talking and discussing Jesus came near." This indeed is what Jesus does: he comes to us as we reflect on the events of our life. Indeed in another place he says "when two or three are gathered in my name I am among them". Now this is a Jesus who we may not recognise. In the Emmaus story, "their eyes were kept from recognising him". Why is this? Why is Jesus so often with us and we don't see him. Often we don't know. Sometimes its because we don't expect him to be there. Often we do not recognise his presence when we share with one another. We don't recognise his presence (in this place, in other people and so forth).

Jesus wants to know about the events: "What things?" he asks them as he does us. And so the disciples recount the events in the presence of Jesus. In this way they allow that phenomenon to appear to him and also to themselves. This leads to a greater seeing: A seeing of how the events fit into the history of salvation: the story of the whole journey of God with his people: "Oh how foolish you are..." he tells them "Then beginning with Moses he interpreted to them the things about himself in the scriptures". Why does he do this? So that they can **see the things about himself in these events.**

As they reach their journeys end he is ready to leave them: "He walked ahead as if he were going on". But they urge him strongly to stay with them. They wish to learn more: to go deeper. So we are called to more and deeper reflection on a spiritual level in the presence of Jesus. They

“See” him and recognise him when he takes the bread, blesses and breaks it gives it to them. Here they are led onto a different level of consciousness. This presence of Jesus goes to the religious level. They see the things about himself on the level of identity. It is a Kairos moment when the Kingdom is upon them. It is where understanding gives way to faith and conversion on the moral religious level a true *judgement* which opens up to action: a change of direction. This is the fundamental expression of the Kerygma expressed by Jesus himself at the beginning of his ministry: “The Kingdom is at hand convert and believe in the good News” (Mk 1,15). It is the treasure moment of (Mt 13,44-46) and they say: “Were not our hearts burning within us”. This is the deeper conversion to Joy and action commitment: And so “They got up at that same hour [night] and returned to Jerusalem” (another seven mile journey).

The *Return* to Jerusalem is the completion of the praxis: the *act* part. After we encounter the risen lord we are called to go back to our life experience to transform and be transformed. The circle returns us to the life we had before but with new vision, new understanding and new commitment. We go to tell the others what happened to us: We evangelise.

What can we learn from this Emmaus story and how does it apply to what we have said so far? The first thing we can learn is that the events of Our life are important in the Spiritual Journey. Jesus is concerned about the events of our lives. He is to be found in them (though we may not always see him). Secondly we need to become aware that our ability to see is not as good as we sometimes think. We all need to be freed from blindness by Jesus. This applies to the events of our life which we may think we know so well. We need to cultivate the ability to SEE more deeply what is present in them. We need different media through which to see. There are many ways of seeing too. Seeing may be recounting the events to others and between ourselves. Jesus encourages us to recount them and he listens as we do. Seeing may be perceiving: trying to see more deeply and make things intelligible. Jesus opens our eyes so that we see how they relate to the events of his life and the Spiritual journey of the People of God. Thirdly we need to reflect on these events in the light of the good news and be deepened in our faith and commitment. We have to make faith judgements about what goes on in our lives. We have to make judgements which are inspired by the Kairos moment; by our faith: that which we truly believe. This judgement is a quest for knowledge about how the events of our life are linked to the events of

Jesus' life and the life of the People of God; because we walk the same journey. So we study the scriptures in order to interpret events. But Jesus also manifests himself to us in a sacramental way: ie through signs (the bread and wine of the Emmaus story). He brings us to Kairos experiences and through this we are converted. Finally the story teaches us that our conversion to the Good News in the events always brings commitment to action and movement to action. The Emmaus story is also a See Judge Act story. It is a powerful metaphor for our method in Contextual Missiology a model for reflection as we walk the spiritual journey.

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