Intercultural Theology:

An Approach to Theologizing in the Context of Pluralism and Globalization

By

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Abstract

This study proposes intercultural theology as an appropriate method of doing theology in the present context of globalization and pluralism.

Considering the limitations of contextual theologies, especially in balancing particular-universal tension innate in the understanding of the church and its theology, the thesis heralds the need for an urgent methodological change in theologizing. As an approach to doing theology, intercultural theology can be seen as a response to the post-colonial and post-Vatican II developments in the world and in the church respectively. The process of 'interculturation' of intercultural theology is presented as a dynamic notion that broadens the concepts of inculturation and contextualization due to its emphasis on mutual reciprocity.

The study ascertains that the identity of the church as catholic becomes more vivid through a process of dialectic interaction (interculturation) balancing particularity and universality. Similarly, the mission of the church is enhanced by the same process leading to communion in ecumenism, and to interfaith interaction in interreligious dialogue. Is there a perennial theological method amid the rapid changes in the world? Since interculturation is analogous with the current social process of glocalization, one can view intercultural theology as a theological method for the future. Its inherent vitality of ongoing mutuality tries to avoid every tendency of fragmentation and longs for a dynamic wholeness.

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Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly for more than all we can ask or imagine (Eph. 3, 20).

Dedicated to the missionaries of Scarboro Missions (SFM), in appreciation for their commitment to evangelization in the spirit of Vatican II

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INTRODUCTION

The move to understand all theologies as contextual is also a move to recognize the complex reality of theological pluralism. How 'contextual' should theology become? The concern for contextual theology is not only about its distinctiveness, but also about the engagement of a larger number of Christians in the enterprise of theological reflection. The issue becomes very vivid in the current context of pluralism and globalization, once again raising the perennial problem of the relation of the particular to the universal. Contextual theology cannot avoid addressing these competing attitudes in the contemporary world. Only a proper methodological framework can help balance the particular-universal issues and maintain identity and relevance while doing theology contextually.

Disclosing the inadequacies of present contextual theologies, this thesis will argue that 'intercultural theology' is an appropriate approach to theologizing in the emerging context of globalization and pluralism. Through the process of interculturation, intercultural theology can ensure the universality of theology not sacrificing its particularity. Intercultural theology with its thrust on ongoing reciprocity has immense potentialities for exploring deeper realms of ecumenism, interreligious dialogue and inculturation. Thus, intercultural theology can be called the theological method of the global age. In this new approach to doing theology, the process of 'mutual giving and receiving' will initiate paradigms shifts in the self-understanding of the church (*ecclesia ad intra*) and will open new ways of being in the world (*ecclesia ad extra*) by dialoguing with different cultures and religions. Such efficiencies of intercultural theology qualify 'interculturation' as an appropriate approach to doing theology not only for the present context of pluralism and globalization, but also for the probable social trends in the future. Toward this end, this study will be structured into three chapters.

The first chapter will establish the general context and the reason for the study, examining the challenges to contextualization of theology by the phenomena of pluralism and globalization which call forth the need for a methodological change in doing theology. It will disclose the dilemma of contextual theology in locating the locus of theologizing in the mid of multicultural orientations of the people today.

The second chapter will introduce intercultural theology, its origins and main proponents, its theological thrust and hermeneutics. In this chapter I will argue that intercultural theology is prepared to face the challenge of pluralism and globalization with its thrust on mutuality or reciprocity in intercultural encounter.

The third chapter will highlight the significance of intercultural theology to the life and mission of the church. It will discuss how the paradigm shift to intercultural theology propelled by globalization and pluralism transforms the self-understanding of the church as well as redefine its self- expression (mission) in the world. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the shift toward an intercultural ecclesiology and the new paradigms of missiology from inculturation to interculturation as well as from interreligious dialogue to interfaith interaction. The question of integrity of intercultural theology in light of the probable deviations such as multi-faith belongingness and syncretism will also be discussed in this final chapter.

In the conclusion, I argue that the process of intercultural theology with its facilitation of mutuality can balance the particular-universal tension keeping theology relevant and credible and leading the church to a dynamic wholeness.

I will employ a critical approach to explore the current intricacies of doing theology in the context of pluralism and globalization. Further, I will use an analytical process to propose intercultural theology as an appropriate response to the challenges of contextual theology. A

dialectical reading of intercultural theology will be presented in the subsequent sections of the thesis. The works of Walter J. Hollenweger, Hans Jochen Margull and Richard Friedli, the early proponents of intercultural theology, will form the primary sources for this research. Other primary resources will include the related literature produced by contemporary theologians in this field. The writings on contextual theology, inculturation, globalization and social change will serve as secondary sources.

The focus of the study is to propose intercultural theology as a suitable approach to doing theology from below. Hence priority will be given to methodological clarifications rather than to theoretical precisions. Since cultural implications of the phenomena of globalization and pluralism are not the thrust of this research, only their influences to doing theology will be considered in the research. As a Roman Catholic priest, I will be approaching the theme mainly from the perspective of the Catholic tradition. Finally, since intercultural theology is a new perspective in theology, the research is confined to the scarce materials available in this field.

Just as the world is rapidly changing, so is the context of theology too. If the nature of Christianity today is intercultural, can the nature of theology be otherwise? Competent theological methods are imperative for the church to be relevant to the evolving contexts. I am confident that the fruits of this research in intercultural theology can help church and theology respond faithfully and creatively to the evolving global village.

Chapter 1
Contextual Theology: Challenges from Pluralism and Globalization

Introduction

This chapter introduces the general situation of contextual theology today, trying to identify the relevant issues in doing theology in the current context. Contextual theology as a theology from below gives significance to the specific contexts of the Christian communities and their particular issues. But in recent times, the nature of the context is undergoing rapid changes mainly due to the phenomena of pluralism and globalization. In this emerging scenario, contextual theology is challenged to seek new ways of doing theology to be credible and relevant. In this chapter, I will attempt to shed light on the imbalances evident in theologizing in the current context; these imbalances call forth the need for a methodological change in doing theology.

1.1. Doing Theology in the Emerging Context

Theology is often defined as *fides quaerens intellectum*, or "faith seeking understanding," which represents the thinking of the medieval philosopher and theologian Anselm of Canterbury (c.1033-1109).[1] Understanding involves the human activity of interpretation. Theologizing always involves interpretation. Every human interpretation is done in the context of the interpreter. A given Christian theology is, therefore, an interpretation of Christian faith from a particular context, making faith sensible to the realities of that context. What makes Catholic theology precisely contextual is the recognition of the validity of the third *locus theologicus*, i.e. the human experience (context), in addition to the

[1] St. Anselm, *Proslogium; Monologium;An Appendix In Behalf of The Fool by Gaunilon and Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (La Sella, Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Company,1951), 33, 178.

two *loci theologici* - scripture and tradition.[2] The differences between the theological understandings of various interpreters correspond to the differences between their particular contexts.

Every theology is a theology of a particular context.[3] Since culture is an integral aspect of the context, theologizing as contextualization also includes inculturation. Stephen Bevans, while speaking about local theologies argues that 'listening to the culture'[4] is an imperative for contextualization.

If one works out of a classicist conception of culture, there can be only one theology- one that is valid for all times, all places and cultures. However, if one works out of an empirical notion of culture, not only can there be a theology for every culture but there can also be a theology for every period in history.[5] Applying the above inductive or empiricist approach, theology evolves as a result of the ongoing mutual interaction between the gospel tradition and the human context.[6] Further, in this process, the theology and the context do not stand as distinct realities; instead, the former becomes part of the latter, although not exhaustively. Thus, context as a starting point, the contextual peculiarities become significant determining factors of the nature of theology and the issues of the context become the issues

[2] Catherine Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 19.

[3] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 3.

[4] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 7.

[5] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 124, 300-302. According to Lonergan, the classicist notion conceives culture as normative and concludes that there is just one human culture. For empirical notion, cultural differences are legitimate and acceptable.

[6] Jose M. De Mesa and Lode L. Wostyn, *Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990), 72-73.

of theology. In listening to the culture, the issues of pluralism[7] and globalization[8] are identified as the two major features of the emerging context today.

1.2. Pluralism and Issues in Contextual Theology

The principle of pluralism focuses more on the plurality of reality than on its unity and argues that multiplicity is not simply diversity but rather significant individualities with unique values.[9] Pluralism thus implies a multiplicity of contexts and their unique identities and values. As a result, the local churches are duly recognized and every specific context becomes an opportunity for creativity in theology. Furthermore, plurality gives rise to dialectical tensions.[10] Thomas Reynolds identifies two inherent tendencies of pluralism: the pluralism of identity (loaded universalism) and the pluralism of dispersion (empty universalism). While pluralism of identity universalizes the local, the pluralism of dispersion localizes the universal. The pluralism of identity with its loaded universalism has the tendency of ethnocentrism and invokes damaging consequences of domination and fundamentalism. In the pluralism of dispersion, there exists no gravitational force for perpetuating ethnic identity and the differences are not taken seriously. Instead, it advocates

[7] Pluralism is not a recent phenomenon, but the awareness of it is recent, due to the awakening of historical consciousness. Pluralism views the reality as many and cultural pluralism recognizes every individual cultural entity as unique and equally valid. Thus, pluralism stands for the unique identity of the plurality/multiplicity of views, cultures, religions, etc. See Fred Reinhard Dallmayr, *Integral Pluralism: Beyond Culture Wars* (Louisville, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 12.

[8] Globalization is the process of interaction and integration among people, different nations, etc. It is a process driven by international trade, and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world. Globalization, in this study, stands for the increasing unification of the diversities of the world. For an introduction to globalization, see Malcom Walters, *Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[9] Victor Manuel, "Pluralism: Theory and Function," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* Vol. 18, eds. David L. Sills and Robert K. Merton (New York: Free Press, 2001), 237.

[10] Thomas Reynolds, *The Broken Whole: Philosophical Steps Toward a Theology of Global Solidarity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 103.

the consensual extension of 'us' which nullifies the significance of uniqueness.[11] In the dialectics of pluralism, the pluralism of identity often surpasses the latter due to the natural trait of ethnocentrism. Multiplicity of contextual theologies and the subsequent tendencies of mutual exclusivism, relativism[12] and absolutism[13] are some of the challenges of pluralism in the process of contextualization of theology.

1.2.1. Pluralism and Multiplicity of Contextual Theologies

When pluralism is considered a reality of human context, the plurality of contexts directly leads to multiple contextual starting points. Considering different social factors, Robert Schreiter proposes two contextual models in theologizing: an ethnographic model, which emphasizes cultural identity, and a liberation model which emphasizes social change from oppression and social evils.[14] Bevans identifies four essential realities of context that determine and influence the nature of contextual theology. They are: personal/communal experience, culture, social location and social change.[15] The enterprise of contextualization in ethnographic and liberation models interacting with the pluralities of the above four realities of context can bring out an understanding of numerous contextual and contingent theologies.[16] The human experiences of oppression and injustice are the starting points of theological reflection for liberation theologies, subaltern theologies, feminist theologies, etc.,

[11] Reynolds, *The Broken Whole,* 73, 101-106. In a pluralistic context, dwelling together becomes fragmented, not only as a reality but also as a possibility.

[12] By relativism is meant cultural relativism which is the point of view that all cultures are equal in value, hence the affirmation of universal values as impossible. By relativization of contextual theology, the particular contextual theologies lose universal characteristics of theology. Cf. Melville Jean Herskovits, *Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism* (London: Random House 1972), 32.

[13] Since this thesis is in the arena of intercultural theology, by absolutism I mean only 'cultural absolutism' which is the tendency to ascertain a particular culture as normatively best over other cultures and to impose the same on other cultural systems as absolute. Cf. Herskovits, *Cultural Relativism, 78.*

[14] Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 13-16.

[15] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 11.

[16] Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 21.

while black theology, Indian theology, Korean theology and Filipino theology are related to individual cultures and to various geographical locations. Missiology is presented differently and emphasized according to the typical characteristics of the mission fields. Similarly, soteriology is appropriated differently to the life situations of the faith communities. The values of the culture and the necessities of the situations compel the Christian communities to understand and interpret their faith in different ways and so varieties of theologies emerge.

Extreme diversities in the content of theologies can lead to mutually exclusive theologies. The brand name 'third world theology' itself is a challenge to the dominant theologies in the first world. Some of the aspects in feminist theology are very critical even of liberation theology.[17] The christology of liberation theology and the christology of Indian theology are of a contradictory nature. An Indian christology developed by Indian theologians focused on the pilgrim character of Jesus, who is also a suffering servant, whereas the liberation theologians of Latin America portrayed a revolutionary Jesus. [18] Similarly, a theology of mission is appropriated to the context of the mission territory. Interreligious dialogue may be the main focus of mission while working among fundamentalist non-Christian people who are antagonistic to Christianity and direct proclamation may be used while working among tribal groups who are receptive to the gospel. Liturgical inculturation appropriated to the cultural features of a particular ethnic group can be scandalous for another ethnic group living in the vicinity.[19] As George

[17] Sharon D. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 24. Here Welch criticizes liberation theologians for ignoring the gender factors when framing liberation theology; liberation has been only the liberation for men, following the patriarchal Biblical tradition.

[18] Cf. Michael Amaladoss, "Liberation Theologies and Indian Experiences," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theology* 66 (June 1985), 234-276.

[19] Liturgical inculturation initiated by Robert de Nobili in India (1605-1656) was in favor of the higher caste Hindus (Brahmins), which gave a wrong message to the lower caste Hindus Christianity is similar to the oppressive higher caste and that they distanced themselves from the Christian community. Cf. C. Joe Arun,

Lindbeck has rightly expressed, "pluralism with its mutually exclusive principles leads to absolute pluralism and legitimating such pluralism can create social distress."[20] Similarly, an uncritical celebration of an infinite number of mutually exclusive contextual theologies can invite rivalries and polarizations. The very thrust of the two models proposed by Schreiter is in inevitable conflict. If the ethnographic model looks into the issue of identity and continuity, the liberation model concentrates on social change and discontinuity.[21]

1.2.2. Local *versus* Universal: Relativization and Absolutization of Theology

According to Bevans, there is no such thing as theology other than contextual theology. European theology was also contextual theology, but it was not confronted by pluralism. Therefore, it was imposed as universal theology for all contexts.[22] Pluralism enhanced the distinct identities of individual contexts and thus encouraged the development of various contextual theologies. When each context forges its own theology tailor-made for that specific context, there come numerous contextual theologies of different natures. As a result, christology from a feminist theological perspective is presented differently from that of liberation theology, because of its focus on the gender affirmations.[23] The local/contextual expressions and articulations of the Christ event should not differ from the Biblical

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Interculturation of Religion: Critcial Perspectives on Robert de Nobili's Mission in India (Bangalore: ATC, 2007), 4-7.

[20] George Lindbeck, "Are There Limits to Religious Pluralism? If so, Why?" in *The Meaning and Limits of Religious Pluralism in the World Today,* eds. Allan R. Borckway and Jean Halperin (Harvard: Harvard University, 1984), 27.

[21] Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 15.

[22] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 1-6.

[23] Sharon D. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 24. Welch criticizes the liberation theologians for ignoring the gender factors while framing the Christology of liberation theology. Cf. also Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism.* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 45-46. In chapter six of the book (Pp. 81-96), Ruether asks the question: Can a Male Saviour Save Women?

understanding of the mystery of Christ.[24] Similarly, an ecclesiology with undue emphasis on a particular apostolic or cultural tradition can be a hindrance to the catholicity of the church.[25] When theology, contextualized in the West, was exported to other parts of the world, contextualism meant the absolutism and universalizing of the Western theological position. David J. Bosch observes that non-Western contextual theologies also have the same tendency. As a result, a new imperialism in theology replaces the old.[26] The Latin American theologians were inclined to promulgate their peculiar brand of liberation theology as having universal validity, but the theologians from Asian countries rejected their proposal saying that the 'captives' of their situations are different in their perspectives and sensibilities.[27]

The debates surrounding the global versus local churches are vividly seen in contextual theology itself. Liberation theology, feminist theology and eco-theology are categorized as 'global theological flows.' Robert J. Schreiter refers to them as "new universal theologies."[28] Similarly, against the tendencies of homogenization, there are theological trends like anti-globalism, ethnification and primitivism, which Schreiter calls 'cultural logics.'[29] With the emphasis on ethnic identity, cultural logics react against global theological flows and the tension of universal versus local continues to exist in contextual theology.

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[24] Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 21.

[25] The issue in 1Cor.1, 13-16 (division in the Corinthian community regarding their belongingness to Paul or to Peter or to Apollos) is still continued as a theological obstacle to ecumenism especially among the oriental and orthodox churches.

[26] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 421. The imperialistic tendencies will be disclosed more when dealing with globalization in the next section.

[27] The Christian Conference of Asia, *CCA News* 15 (June 1980), 6.

[28] Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 20.

[29] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 20-25. In fact, here Schreiter is renaming the liberation and the enthnographic models proposed in his earlier book, *Constructing Local Theologies,* as global theological flows and cultural logics respectively.

1.3. Globalization and Challenges to Contextual Theology

An important dimension of the phenomenon of globalization is the globalization of culture(s). As Schreiter puts it, "context as a concept has become increasingly deterritorialized."[30] The compression of space in globalization has been felt. Boundaries today are not the boundaries of territory but the boundaries of difference, and these boundaries intersect and crisscross, highlighting the issues of differences more than commonalties. In this way, the contexts are becoming hyper-differentiated with the speed of travel and communication.[31] In the globalization of various indigenous cultures, there is the tendency toward a homogenous culture which gets construed as the global/universal culture.

1.3.1. Globalization and Neo-imperialism

The most insidious effect of globalization is the homogenization of culture.[32] The result of this homogenization is normally the imperialization of the one dominant culture. This exaggerated 'one' culture becomes the culture of the globe, which is seen as the diffusion of American culture.[33] In the background of globalization, contextual theology can repeat the same historical mistake of presenting one contextual theology of a particular/local church as a theology for the universal church, leading to neo-imperialism. Globalization can accelerate the speed of such an imperialization due to the effect of deterritorialization. For instance, the North American traits of feminist theology are carried forth to different parts of

[30] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 26.

[31] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 26-28.

[32] Cultural homogenization is the homogenization of different cultural practices into one blended, uniform cultural practice that does not allow diversities to exist. Cf. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "One Rule to Rule Them All?" in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity,* eds. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 101.

[33] Tissa Balassuriya, "Globalization," in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies,* eds. Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 93.

the globe, homogenizing one particular theological trend as valid for all cultures.[34] There is always the tendency for new imperialism in theology too, which simply replaces the old, as has happened with traditional (European) theology.[35]

1.3.2. Globalization and Hybridization

The compression of space in globalization leads to the frequent crisscrossing of boundaries whereby the new generations discover multiple sources for their identities.[36] As a result, the contexts become highly hybridized.[37] The purity of culture remains a myth rather than a reality, but in a globalizing world this becomes increasingly impossible as a concept. As seen in the global theological flows and cultural logics of contextual theology, there are intense interactions among various identities which destabilize the tranquil conditions.[38] The reciprocal interactions between liberation theology and feminist theology (the global theological flows) and between black theology and African theology (cultural logics) indicate that local theologies are not only 'local;' but they are also crisscrossing their boundaries and discovering multiple contextual sources for theologizing. In this process of hybridization, Schreiter rightly observes that certain elements of differences are given more salience and certain elements of identity are easily forgotten.[39] People are now participating in different

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[34] Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 21.

[35] Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 428.

[36] Kwame Anthony*, In My Father's House: Africa and the Philosophy of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 93.

[37] Hybridization is a term generally used in biology to designate the combining of varieties of organisms. Similarly, cultural hybridization stands for the process by which cultures around the world adopt a certain degree of homogenized global culture while clinging to aspects of their own traditional culture. The result is a mixture, or hybrid. Cf. Nesto Gracia, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 12-16.

[38] Paul Duane Matheny, *Contextual Theology: The Drama of Our Times* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 69.

[39] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 26-27.

realities at the same time; subsequently there is multiculturalism and multi-belonging, together with attempts to express their unique identity. "But most often the localized weak are hybridized by the globalized strong. The weak become consumers of these hybridized cultural productions that have nothing to do with their own living context, thus throwing them into a state of self-alienation."[40] Thus hybridization[41] may serve the globally strong uncritically and we need a critical contextual theology to do justice in this scenario.

1.4. Whose Context? The Dilemma of Contextual Theology

We have already analyzed Bevans' statement that every theology is a theology of a particular context.[42] When mission was defined in terms of a 'deeper adaptation' or 'incarnation,' and later on of 'inculturation,' in the post-colonial era, this was a break-through in the understanding of doing mission.[43] It meant recognition of other cultures in their own right. Missionaries in different parts of the world especially in Africa and in other third world countries seriously considered inculturation and contextualization as significant elements of Christian mission. It included dialogue with people of other faiths (as was stressed in Asia) and liberation of all forms of oppression (as was emphasized in Latin America).[44]

What has happened to the (meaning of) context under the impact of pluralism and globalization? If contextual theologies first arose in response to universalizing theologies, what do these theologies mean today? The compression of time and the deterritorialization of

[40] Guen Seok Yang, "Globalization, Intercultural Hermeneutics and Mission," *Global Economics and Global Ethics* Vol. 4 (2009), 12.

[41] Chapter three of this thesis highlights the positive dimensions of hybridization which are critically contextualized using intercultural hermeneutics.

[42] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 3.

[43] As a matter of fact, it was just a rediscovery of the theology of the 'seminal word' of the early church. Cf. A. Roest Crollius, "What is So New About Inculturation?" *Gregorianum* 59 (1978) 721-738; Also see Jorgen Waliggo, *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency* (Nairobi: Paulines, 1986), 73.

[44] Cf. D. Irarrázaval, *Inculturation: New dawn of the Church in Latin America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 18.

space have changed the understanding of the human context. If 'listening to the culture' is imperative to doing theology, then listening to which culture? Whose context? Due to pluralism and globalization, most societies in the world are not multicultural in the sense of a patchwork quilt or mosaic of separate pieces with hard, well-defined edges, but of a cultural mix or cocktail, for which Ulf Hannerz uses 'creole' languages as a root metaphor.[45] As Wim van Binsbergen says, "there is a *plurality of overlapping cultural orientations*, in such a way that each person is always involved in a multiplicity of such orientations at the same time, while none of these orientations coincide with only one society or one territory."[46] He shows that the classic understanding of cultures as discrete bounded units are closed into themselves, but they produce a total field of life which has a wider circulation today outside anthropology, notably in philosophy of culture and theology.[47]

Identifying the culture and specifying the context are crucial for theologizing in our global age. As we identify today, there is nothing such as purely local; nor can we assert

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[45] A creole language is developed from the mixing of parent languages. The vocabulary of a creole language consists of cognates from the parent languages, though often there are clear phonetic and semantic shifts. Cf. U. Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 89. Cities like Amsterdam, Paris or London, but also Jakarta or Nairobi, create youth cultures that are mix of Hindu, Sikh and Muslim traditions, combined with secular-political and ethnic ideals, bound together particularly by reggae or rap music. It is well known that advocates and critics of globalization theories differ in their opinion about the cultural consequences of globalization. Some scholars speak of cultural homogenization. For example, G. Ritzer's book - *McDonaldization Thesis*, foresees a cultural differentiation and fragmentation. Cf. G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization Thesis: Exploration and Extension* (London: SCM Press, 1997). The same observations can be found in, S. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* that highlights the dialectical conflicts of cultural diversities. Cf. S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). *Jihad versus McWorld* is the title of B. Barber's book, in which the elements of fragmentation and reflexivity are treated in length. Cf. B. Barber, *Jihad versus McWorld* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). Some scholars even question whether cultures exist, as is the case in Hobsbawm and Ranger's book, *Invention of Tradition*. Cf. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: University Press, 1983); Cf also T. Ranger, "*The Invention of Tradition Revisited"* in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa,* eds. T. Ranger and O. Vaughan (Oxford: University Press, 1993), 62-111.

[46] Wim van Binsbergen, *Commodification: The Social Life of Things Revisited* (Rotterdam: Erasmus University, 1999), 122 (Italics mine).

[47] Binsbergen, *Commodification,* 123-125. According to Binsbergen, even the classical notion of culture as human context, produces the total field of life beyond anthropology. Every human expression through art, philosophy, theology, etc., is reflected also in the new developments of crossing boarders and owning multicultural orientations.

anything such as purely global without particular cultural affinities. Thus contextual theology has to face the dilemma of finding its proper *locus* in the context today. But the context is already there. As Martin Heidegger would say, 'we are thrown into the world' and being in the world is always "being-with."[48] 'Being-with' implies the existential oneness with other beings, emphasizing mutuality. Heidegger also points out the possibility of 'being lost in the world,' by losing identity and purpose.[49] In an era of pluralism and globalization, contextual theology needs to take into consideration the peculiarities of the context so that particular identities are preserved and at the same time, relatedness is maintained. Doing theology in the context thus implies, doing it in the context of multicultural orientations. Being in the context of multicultural orientations will certainly involve the Heideggerian notion of 'being with' (relatedness and universality) without losing identity (particularity). Hence doing theology in such a context should necessarily ensure the aspects of universality and particularity, mutuality and identity. It demands a paradigm shift in theologizing, in understanding the new context of theology and in doing theology appropriately. The result will be a credible and relevant theology. Therefore, the present dilemma is an opportunity for making theology more credible and relevant. A paradigm shift from contextual theology toward intercultural theology will help materialize this objective.[50] The upcoming chapters will discuss the benefits and relevance of an intercultural approach to doing theology which will reshape the self-understanding of the church (*ecclesia ad intra*) and also its self-expression (*ecclesia ad extra*) transcending the limitations of contextual theology in the emerging contexts of pluralism and globalization.

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[48] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 149-163. The 'thrownness' of *dasein* (being) is explained from pages174 to 179. As an existential philosopher of the last century, Heidegger was fascinated by the questions of human identity, purpose of life and existential oneness in a fragmented world.

[49] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 179.

[50] Frans Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church," *Exchange* 30 (2001), 222-223.

Conclusion

To sum up this chapter, let me reiterate that doing theology is conditioned by contextual features. Considering pluralism and globalization as the dominant contextual trends of the day, to be more relevant and credible, contextual theologies should overcome the following limitations: 1) a multiplicity of mutually exclusive theologies; 2) absolutism and imperialism of particular contextual theologies as the universal; 3) relativism in theology; 4) hybridization versus homogenization of theology. Homogenization of a particular contextual theology is challenged by other cultures as imperialization and there is often the tendency for the extreme expression of identity (ethno-centrism) breeding fundamentalism. Hybridization of different contextual theologies can lead to syncretism at the loss identities.[51] In gist, there is a tension between particularity and universality in the current way of doing theology, seeking identity and relevance. These limits of contextual theology propel us to look for a new way of doing theology. This paradigm shift from contextual theology is toward intercultural theology. The genesis and the fundamentals of intercultural theology will be introduced and analyzed in the following chapter.

[51] Matheny, *Contextual Theology*, 78.

Chapter 2
Intercultural Theology: Theory and Approach

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce 'intercultural theology,' its origins, its main proponents and its theological and methodological approaches. In exploring the conceptual and terminological understanding of intercultural theology, this chapter will examine how intercultural theology, as presented by its proponents - Hans Jochen Margull (1925-1982), Walter Hollengweger (1927-) and Richard Friedli (1937-), provides answers to the issues of contextual theology presented in the previous chapter. Furthermore, through introducing intercultural hermeneutics and discussing the theological assumptions of 'interculturation,' I will argue that the process of interculturation is the appropriate method of doing theology in the context of pluralism and globalization balancing the particular-universal characteristics of Christian theology.

2.1. The Genesis of Intercultural Theology

This section begins where the first chapter ended, with the dilemma of identifying the proper *locus* of doing theology in the context of pluralism and globalization characterized by many pluralistic overlapping cultural orientations.[1] The origin of intercultural theology can be found as a result of the search for a solution to this dilemma. Its historical and theological development was facilitated by the secular and theological responses to the phenomena of pluralism and globalization.

[1] Wim van Binsbergen, *Commodification: The Social Life of Things Revisited* (Rotterdam: Erasmus University, 1999), 122. See also footnotes 46 and 47, in chapter one of this thesis.

In 1980, Joseph Blomjous, a Dutch White Father and an important spokesman at the second Vatican council, proposed in his well-known fore-sight that "in the emerging context of pluralism and globalization, instead of 'inculturation,' missionaries should speak about 'interculturation.'"[2] It was not then a familiar term in missiology or to missionaries. 'Interculturation' is the central expression of so-called intercultural theologians today. Interculturation expresses the idea that the process of inculturation is not simply the interaction between gospel on the one hand, and culture[3] on the other, as if they represent two monolithic meaning systems, but rather between multiple cultural orientations.[4] In simple terms, intercultural theology is the theological reflection upon this process of interculturation, the blending of culture(s) and religion(s) in specific contexts.[5]

In addition to the cultural factors, the social and ecclesial developments of the early twentieth century call for a new way of doing theology, to keep the church and its mission relevant in the emerging contexts. I will highlight three such developments[6] that lead to this new perspective.

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[2] Cf. Joseph Blomjous, "Development in Mission (1959-1980): Inculturation and Interculturation," *African Ecclesial Review* 22 (1980/6), 293-298. Blomjous defined interculturation as the reciprocal interaction of different cultures, with mutual respect. He was later appointed the Bishop of Mwanza in Tanzania.

[3] Herein 'culture' is understood as a way of life or the human context, not the understanding of high culture which means art, literature, etc. Culture as a way of life refers to a shared social reality giving expressions to the human context. Cf. Catherine Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 53-56.

[4] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 455-457. Here Bosch makes a brief note on interculturation. M. Amaladoss also writes about the need for broadening the concept of inculturation. Cf. M. Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation:Can the Many be One*? (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998), 16-17.

[5] Frans Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church," *Exchange* 30 (2001), 222.

[6] The following description of these three developments is appropriated from the explanation given by Richard Friedli, one of the proponents of intercultural theology, in the article entered in the *Dictionary of Mission*, first published in German in 1987. Cf. R. Friedli, "Interkulturelle Theologie," in *Lexikon Missionstheologischer Grundbegriffe,* eds. Karl Müller andTheo Sundermeier (Berlin: Reimer, 1987), 181. I am here using the English translation of the same Dictionary published ten years later in 1997. Richard Friedli, "Intercultural Theology," in *Dictionary of Mission,* eds. Karl Müller et al. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 219-222.

Rise of non-Western Christianity: At the beginning of the twentieth century two-thirds of all Christians lived in Europe and North America. In contrast, at the beginning of the twenty-first century two thirds of all Christians live in the southern part of the world, where new models of church and local theologies are emerging.[7] Theologians in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific have started to question the presumption that European theology is a universal theology. Theologies, European theology as well, are always contextual. Often, many mission churches have become local churches which produce their own theologies. Therefore, the dialogue between various local theologies is obviously essential.

Influence of Secularization, Globalization and Multiculturalism: The presumptions of European theology have been questioned not only from outside, but also in its own context by secular philosophies. In Europe, there has been a process of societal differentiation (secularization) by which the Christian frame of reference has been marginalized to the fringes of society.[8] At the same time, globalization and migration have brought ethnic minorities to Europe with their own cultures and religions. European theologians have had to face multiculturalism and religious pluralism in their own countries. In this respect, they can learn from churches that have had to face multiculturalism from the beginning of their existence.

Recognition of local churches and local theologies: The second Vatican council (1962-1965) recognized and approved the shift that had been taking place in the understanding of

[7] Cf. Dana L. Robert, "Shifting Southward: Global Christianity since 1945," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (April 2000), 50-58. This shift was the central thesis in W. Bühlman, *The Coming of the Third Church* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978).

[8] Werner Ustorf calls this phenomenon "the recession of Christianity in Europe." Medieval philosophy could not withstand the rise of rationalism and as a result, the normative character of theology was at stake. Ustorf argues that the European theological trends paved the way for atheism and the secularization of society. Werner Ustorf, "The Cultural Origins of Intercultural Theology," *Mission Studies* 25 (2008), 244.

the church, culture and other religions.[9] Looking back at the second Vatican council, Karl Rahner said that the most important result of the council was that the church became aware that it had become a world church.[10] In its documents, the council challenges the local churches to become self-reliant, mature and local in such issues as finances, personnel and theology.[11] As a result, local churches gained greater confidence and local theologies emerged in different parts of the world. However, as local theologies within the 'universal' church they must have a world-wide dimension. But this is easier said than done. After having worked for 20 years in Latin America and coming back to Europe to be professor in pastoral theology in Innsbrück, Franz Weber noted that despite the fact that some of his European colleagues had taken up contextual theologies in Africa, Asia and Latin America with eagerness, nevertheless they did not change their Western outlook and presumption of superiority. European theologians treat third world theologies as if they are exotic fruits that supplement their traditional European dishes. He noted that the 'export business' that the church used to be had become a multi-national import business.[12] Even more than five decades after the official opening of the second Vatican Council, local churches are still struggling to recognize and develop their own identities, and to specify their place in the

[9] The following Vatican II documents herald the signals of this shift: Church in the Modern Word *(Gaudium et Spes)*, Ecumenism *(Unitatis Redintegratio)*, Missionary Activity *(Ad Gentes)* and the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *(Nostrae Aetate)*. John D. Dadosky has done a very concise presentation of this shift in the *ad intra* and *ad extra* dimensions of the church. Cf. John D. Dadosky, "Towards a Fundamental RE-Interpretation of Vatican II," *Heythrop Journal*, 49 (September, 2008), 742-763. Here he argues that in addition to communion ecclesiology, an ecclesiology of friendship is also reflected in the council documents. The latter, according to him, is based on the notion of mutuality, which can be taken as the fundamental element for intercultural theology as well.

[10] Cf. Karl Rahner, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979), 716.

[11] Not only the Vatican II documents like *Lumen Gentium* (LG 8, 26 & 27), *Gaudium et Spes* (GS 18 - 19) and *Ad Gentes* (AG 22) but also the subsequent apostolic exhortations and encyclicals *like Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), *Ecclesia in Africa* (1994) and *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999) carried on the same spirit.

[12] Cf. Franz Weber, *Mission:Gegenstand der Praktischen Theologie?* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999), 228. As cited by Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church," 222.

church universal. Therefore, it is not enough that the church just promotes various local theologies specific to the context but it should also help their dynamic synchronization for their organic growth in the universal church.

From the historical and ecclesial contexts described above, it is inevitable that theology today should tackle "the old issues such as unity and diversity in theology, particularity and universality of churches, localization and globalization of contexts and inculturation and interculturation."[13] Intercultural theology thus emerges as an attempt to do justice to local theologies and to the particular experiences of churches within the universal church.

2.2. The Exponents and the Expansion of Intercultural Theology

The term 'intercultural' is such a broad term that it is difficult to fix the first proponents of this notion in theology. However, Werner Ustorf has presented a traceable historical background for the use of the term – 'intercultural theology.'[14] Although the theological figures mentioned by different authors reflect their theological preferences, many of the authors share a kinship in thinking about the authorities in this field. I present here the important persons and their roles in the historical development of intercultural theology dividing them into two groups: the pioneers who propounded it, and the exponents who expanded its horizons.

[13] Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church," 222-223.

[14] Werner Ustorf, "The Cultural Origins of Intercultural Theology," 229-251. In 2011, Ustorf published a developed version of 'the origins of intercultural theology' under the title, "Intercultural Theology: Origin and Development," in *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes,* eds. Mark J. Cartledge and David Cheetham (London: SCM Press, 2011), 9-29. I will be using both these works for the presentation of the historical development of this theology.

2.2.1. Pioneers of Intercultural Theology

The term 'intercultural' was put to theological use in the 1970's by missiologists working in three European universities. It is primarily connected with the names of the Lutheran missiologist and ecumenist Hans Jochen Margull of Hamburg University[15] and of his friend Walter Hollenweger of Birmingham University[16] who belonged to the reformed tradition of Pentecostalism. These two scholars were exponents of church reform in the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva and advocates of a new, de-colonized theology that would include those traditions that were usually neglected by Western theology: non-Western and/or non-literary traditions.[17] In this ambition they were supported by a Catholic missiologist and historian of religions from Switzerland, Richard Friedli of Freiburg University.[18] Friedli, a generation younger than his two colleagues, tried to rethink the future of Christianity and of religions by including two new sets of data: (1) the phenomenon of a global 'cultural circulation' and, (2) the problem of coping with irreducible 'otherness' in terms of society, culture and religion. Both sets of data meant that people were becoming

[15] For a brief biography of Hans Jochen Margull (1925-1982), see "Hans Jochen Margull," the editorial in *International Review of Mission* 71 (1982), 394. Margull once predicted that Christianity was on its way to acquire a third world identity. For more contributions of Margull see Theodor Ahrens et al. (eds.), *Hans Jochen Margull* (Hamburg: Peter Lang, 1992).

[16] There are many books written by Pentecostal missionaries about the contributions of Hollenweger. Two of them give detailed biographies of Hollengweger (1927-): Jongeneel Jan A.B. (ed.) *Pentecost, Mission and Ecumenism: Essays on Intercultural Theology* (Frankfurt/Bern: Peter Lang, 2002). Lynne Price has written a theological biography on Hollenweger: Lynne Price, *Theology out of Place: A Theological Biography of Walter J. Hollenweger,* (London/ New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

[17] In fact they were trying to imbibe the post-colonial spirit of the local churches in different parts of the previously colonized world. The new energy and hope of the free and independent decolonized societies were also indications for a decolonized theology, according to them. See Hans Jochen Margull, *Hope in Action,* (Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press, 1962), 18-49 and Walter Hollenweger (ed.), *The Church for Others* (Geneva: WCC, 1967), 27-45.

[18] Richard Friedli (1937-) started his career as a theologian of religions. He published the pioneering *Theology of Religions* to which Margull had written the introduction. According to Ustorf, Friedli's book *Strangers at Home,* became more famous among Protestants than Catholics. Cf. Ustorf, "Cultural Origins of Intercultural Theology," 231; and Richard Friedli, *Strangers at Home: In Search of Criterion for Dialogue* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1974).

aliens to the world they knew. In this period of transition, all traditions, including that of the Christian faith, had to re-orient themselves, to be meaningful for the believers.[19]

From 1971 to 1981, the universities of Birmingham, Hamburg and Freiburg were in frequent communication with each other. Their missiologists had little sympathies for the continuation of colonial or hegemonic mentalities under whatever guise, and they agreed as well on the bankruptcy of nationalist and ethnic ideologies.[20] Hollenweger and Friedli were Swiss and thus coming from a multi-national and multi-lingual background. Margull was hypersensitive to anything that was reminiscent of fascist thought and was deeply transformed by his encounter with Buddhism in Tokyo and Kyoto (1965-1967) and by his involvement in setting up the sub-unit on interreligious dialogue of the World Council of Churches in 1971.[21] One of the joint achievements of these years of cooperation was the trilingual book series they edited from 1975 onwards: *Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity,* published in English, but with a number of French and German texts as well.[22] Using historical, socio-cultural and theoretical approaches, it addresses the question of the identity of local and global Christianity. This is done in the light of the continuing transformations (e.g. technology, globalization, migration and ecology) and the living together of people of different faiths and persuasions in the human community.

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[19] Ustorf, "Intercultural Theology: Origin and Development," 18.

[20] Cf. Ustorf, "Cultural Origins of Intercultural Theology," 230-232. Ustorf indicates that series of inter-university conferences held during that period (1971-1981) heralded radical departures from traditional methods of mission.

[21] Cf. Theo Sundermeier et al. (eds.), *Hans Jochen Margull* (Hamburg: Peter Lang, 1992), 7-11.

[22] The series *Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity* operates in an area that includes the disciplines of missiology, history of religions, ecumenics and intercultural theology. H. J. Margull, W. Hollenweger and R. Friedli were the founding editors of *Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity.* Started in 1975, so far it has published 153 volumes (as on December 2011). It is published through Peter Lang in Frankfurt, Berne and now also in New York. Today, Theo Sundermeier, J. Jongeneel, W. Ustorf and K. Koschorke form the editorial team. For the current status of the *Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity* please visit the website of Peter Lang at:http://www.peterlang.com/index.cfm?event=cmp.ccc.seitenstruktur.detailseiten&seitentyp=series&pk=98 (accessed on May 19, 2012).

From 1975 to the mid-1990s the word 'intercultural' was mainly to be found in the theological discussions of Europe and in international educational discourse.[23] Hollenweger produced a three-volume study *Interkulturelle Theologie*[24] and Friedli used the term in his book *Mission oder Demission*[25] and contributed the entry *intercultural theology* for a German (later translated into English in 1997) missiological dictionary.[26] About the same time, in 1985, the Catholic theological faculty of Frankfurt University established an academic association called *Theologie Interkulturell,* and a year later a book series under this very title was initiated.[27]

2.2.2. Later Exponents and the Expansion of Intercultural Theology

Intercultural theology earned greater momentum when more theologians, especially missiologists from different parts of Europe and North America adopted the vision. Among them, Theo Sundermeier of Heidelberg, Werner Ustorf of Birmingham, Robert Schreiter of

[23] Though Lynne Price has argued in her *Theological Biography of Hollenweger* that he (Hollenweger) was already doing intercultural theology in Birmingham *before* the tag appeared in 1975, to my knowledge it is still true to say that 1975 is the first location where the term 'intercultural' is used explicitly and with a theological program in mind. Later, from 1980s on, in Heidelberg, exploration of this theological approach was continued. Related but conceptually distinct attempts were made in other places. The term intercultural theology is often used today without any reference to its history in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, in his book entitled *The Transformative Imagination: Rethinking Intercultural Theology*, George Newlands does not make any attempts to trace the historical origins of the term. Cf. George Newlands, *The Transformative Imagination: Rethinking Intercultural Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 1988).

[24] The publication history of the term tells us that the two Swiss editors of the book series - *Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity* were involved in actively promoting the new term. Cf. Walter Hollenweger, "Intercultural Theology," *Theological Renewal* 10 (1979), 2-14. *Theological Renewal* published the same article with slight modification in1982 and 1988. *Interkulturelle Theologie* - three volumes published in Munich by Kaiser. The individual main titles are: *Erfahrung der Leibhaftigkeit* (1979), *Umgang mit Mythen* (1982), and *Geist und Materie* (1988). Cf also Walter Hollenweger, "Towards an Intercultural History of Christianity," *International Review of Mission* 76 (1987)*,* 526-556.

[25] Richard Friedli, Mission oder Demission: Konturen einer lebendigen, weil missionarischen Gemeinde, (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag. 1982), 12. "Zum Dank an Prof. Hans-Jochen Margull" (obituary), Zeitschriftfur Missions-Wissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft 66 (1982), 293. For details see Ustorf, "Cultural Origins of Intercultural Theology," 232-234.

[26] Richard Friedli, "Interkulturelle Theologie," in *Lexikon Missionstheobgischer Grundbegriffe,* 181-185. Richard Friedli "Intercultural Theology," in *Dictionary of Mission,* eds. Karl Müller et al. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 219-222.

[27] *Theologie Interkulturell,* 1986 ff. (now over 26 volumes) published from Düsseldorf by Patmos. Here is the website of *Theologie Interkulturell,* Frankfurt: http://www.thi.uni-frankfurt.de (accessed on May 21, 2012).

Chicago and Frans Wijsen of Nijmegen require special attention.[28] Sundermeier, together with Ustorf, dared even to think of the establishment of a *Department of Intercultural Theology* within the theological faculty in Heidelberg. This Heidelberg project[29] had developed sufficient academic gravity to influence the conceptual design of a major theological dictionary[30] and to convince the leading academic association for theology on the European continent (*Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaftfür Theohgie*) to adopt a declaration on *mission studies as intercultural theology* in 2005.[31] In the Central Europe, Wijsen published a series of articles both on intercultural theology and intercultural hermeneutics, taking the spirit beyond Nijmengen, Netherlands, to Louvain, Belgium.

Though launched publicly in 1975, the term 'intercultural theology' was not immediately adopted in the English-speaking world.[32] The turning point came perhaps in the

[28] I have only given the list of prominent representatives from different parts of the globe. There are many others like Guen Seok Yang (Sungkonghose, Korea), Chibueze C. Udeani (Salzburg, Austria), S. Wesley Ariarajah (Colombo, Sri Lanka) and Vince Marotta (Melbourne, Australia) who do research and write on the theme today.

[29] It was in October 1986, that Theo Sundermeier, the missiologist of Heidelberg University, together with Werner Ustorf, dared even to think of the establishment of a *Department of Intercultural Theology* within the theological faculty there. For details about the project read: Werner Ustorf, "Das Heidelberger Projekt einer interkulturellen Theologie" in *Beiträge zur Religion/Umwelt-Forschung I,* eds. Kurt Rudolph and G. Rinschede (Berlin: Reimer, 1989), 177-190. A preliminary report was published in 1989 but the institutional plans never materialized. Cf. Ustorf, "Cultural Origins of Intercultural Theology," 232-234.

[30] Volker Küster, "Interkulturelle Theologie," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* Vol. 4 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 197-199. The English version of this dictionary is currently published under the title - *Religion: Past & Present* (Boston: Leiden, 2009).

[31] "Mission Studies as Intercultural Theology and its Relationship to Religious Studies" (Declaration of 21 September 2005), *Mission Studies* 25/1 (2008), 103-108.

[32] The 1993 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* does have an entry 'inter-cultural,' on page 863, but simply as an example of combining the prefix 'inter' with an almost unlimited number of adjectives or nouns - even, and this is the message *ex silentio* if there is no defined meaning attached to it. Cf. *Oxford English Dictionary Compact Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 863. The term 'intercultural' had not yet entered the English language in any specific sense, it seems, and even less so the combined term 'intercultural theology.' Even the most well-known theological dictionaries and handbooks of the time are silent on this matter. The *World Christian Encyclopedia* contains a "contemporary dictionary... defining and explaining the majority of terms used in the Christian world" but the term 'intercultural' is not among them - and neither do the glossary and the dictionary in the second edition have it. See George T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson (eds.), *World Christian Encyclopedia,* two vols. 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). The same is true for the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* - Cf. Nicholas Lossky et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement,*(Geneva: WCC, 1991) and The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* - Cf. E.L. Cross et al

mid-90s. About this time Schreiter addressed the issue[33] and the American edition of the German *Dictionary of Mission* was published.[34] This does not mean that the issues which the tag *intercultural theology* tried to address had been unknown outside Europe. On the contrary, there existed a vivid discussion, and David J. Bosch of South Africa is a prominent example of this. He tried to give terminological expression to the mutual process of theological giving and receiving that characterizes the history of Christianity in its post-colonial and polycentric period. The term he chose in order to describe the step from the local incarnation (inculturation) of the faith to that of its participation in the ecumenical conversation with the other local incarnations was already around, namely 'interculturation.'[35] These insights rested on theological research into processes of local contextualization and of communication. The Fuller Theological Seminary of North America (California)[36] played a very significant role and, again, the name of Schreiter may stand here vicariously for quite a number of scholars.[37] Bosch does acknowledge that there is a difference of theological perspective when we think *interculturally,* cross-culturally, or

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(eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church,* 3rd ed.(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) and even for Jan Jongeneel's encyclopedic two-volume work on *Mission in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Cf. Jan A. B. Jongeneel, *Theology of Mission in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997).

[33] Robert J. Schreiter, "The Changing Context of Intercultural Theology: A Global View," *Studia Missionalia* 46 (1996), 359-380.

[34] Karl Müller et al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 219-222.

[35] Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 455-457. Please note that based on my own survey of the available theological literature, the term 'interculturation' was first used by Joseph Blomjous in 1981, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (see footnote 2).

[36] In the year 2003, a revolutionary change of name occurs at *Fuller Theological Seminary* (in Pasadena, California) from School of Mission to that of *Intercultural Theology.* http://www.fuller.edu/academics/school-of-intercultural-studies.aspx.(accessed on April 23, 2012).

[37] One can notice the shift taking place in Shreiter from local theology to intercultural theology, comparing his two major works: Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985); Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology Between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997). Two other important theologians are Norbert Hintersteiner and Volker Kuster. See: Norbert Hintersteiner (ed.), *Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today* (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2001); Volker Küster, *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology* (London: SCM. 2003); Volker Küster, "Von der lokalen Theologie zur neuen Katholizität," *Evangelische Theologie* 63 (2003), 362-374.

contextually. This process of searching for terms and terminological differentiation on both sides of the Atlantic was not just triggered by the insights ecumenical research and missiology had produced over the last thirty years or so, but also by the rude facts on the ground, that is, the visible and sometimes painful demographic changes in world Christianity. Reflections on these processes invaded main-stream theology only from the turn of the century on and were quickly and successfully picked up by other disciplines; we have many publications that appropriated this perspective, considering it a future theological trend.[38]

2.3. Intercultural Theology: Concept and Approach

According to the first proponents of this notion, Walter J. Hollenweger, Richard Friedli and Hans Jochen Margull, "intercultural theology is not a new theological discipline, but a new perspective and a new method of doing theology."[39] However, there are some conceptual presuppositions that differentiate this theological approach from other branches of theology. Besides, the very term 'intercultural' evidently explicates its identity as a method of theologizing.

2.3.1. A Conceptual Analysis of Intercultural Theology

The first descriptive definition of intercultural theology was published years later as an integral part of Hollenweger's research in this area and further systematized in his *opus magnum* on 'intercultural theology' in 1978. In his 'five guiding principles,' he states that:

[38] I am mentioning here some of the books published from the year 2000 that have appropriated intercultural approach in their presentations: Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford and New York: University Press, 2006); Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Philip Jenkins, *God's Continent: Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Frans Wisjen and Peter Nissen, *Mission is a Must: Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002); Mark J. Cartledge and David Cheetham (eds.), *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes* (London: SCM Press, 2011); Morris A. Inch, *Doing Theology Across Cultures* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House,2009); Martha Frederiks et al. (eds.), *Towards an Intercultural Theology* (Uitegeverij Meinema: Zoetermeer,2003); George Newlands, *The Transformative Imagination: Rethinking Intercultural Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

[39] Walter Hollenweger, "Intercultural Theology," *Theological Renewal* 10 (October 1978), 2-14. The same is expressed by Friedli and Margull: Friedli, "Intercultural Theology," 219-222; Margull, *Hope in Action,* 23.

> Intercultural theology: a) is that scholarly theological discipline that operates within a particular cultural framework without absolutizing it; b) will select its methods appropriately. Western academic theology is not automatically privileged over others; c) has a duty to look for alternative forms of doing theology (such as non-Western and narrative forms; d) must be tested in social practice and measured by its capacity for bridge building between diverse groups; and e) must not be confused with 'pope-theology' that escapes from self-critical reflection.[40]

This description clarifies and extends some of the assumptions of the notion and defines *intercultural theology* primarily as an inner-Christian hermeneutic project. It is significant indeed that Friedli's entry in the *Dictionary of Mission* in 1987 reintroduced this point by insisting that intercultural theology is open to 'interreligious theology' and that its element of mutual interaction will ensure mutual growth. Friedli elaborates this concept as follows:

> *Intercultural theology* means …a method which addresses forms of expression of the eternal message of the gospel (salvation of God for all people in Jesus Christ) that are different from those grown out of one's own …culture; these various forms of expression are received and reflected on by the members of the particular local churches with quite different cultural backgrounds…. Christian intercultural theology opens itself to a growing interreligious theology in which relationship with Christ and cultures are interpreted creatively through mutual giving and receiving.[41]

Together with Friedli, Margull also emphasizes the aspect of mutuality of intercultural encounter. "Intercultural theology does not think on behalf of others, but reflects its own premises in the presence of others, together with them, through reciprocal learning."[42] Friedli insists on the particular-universal balance as an inevitable condition for the survival of the church and argues that 'intercultural circulation' among the particularities will foster and strengthen the autonomy of the particular churches and catholicity of the universal church.[43]

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[40] Hollenweger, "Intercultural Theology," 11-12.

[41] Friedli, "Intercultural Theology," 220 (Italics mine).

[42] Margull, *Hope in Action*, 121.

[43] Friedli, "Intercultural Theology," 219.

According to Friedli, the method of intercultural theology depends on the social and cultural context. By culture, he simply means the living context of the human beings as explained by Catherine Tanner.[44] The academic and scientific theology of the Mediterranean tradition rooted in Europe is, therefore, still basically valid. But from the perspective of intercultural theology, its method and academic way of working can no longer be regarded as the exclusive and normative way of doing theology. The experiences with different religions in the basic ecclesial communities of the third world, and also in the cultural peculiarities of the West become the subject of theology. Thus, corresponding liturgical and pastoral language and theological methods take shape. Scholars working in the Western analytical method should explore the possibilities for spontaneous and scientific correlations and the mutual enrichment of various theologies which point toward mutual inclusiveness and dependence.[45]

Through intercultural theology, Margull believed that the approach of theological reflection is currently shifting from the position of *theological legislator* to that of *theological interpreter,* reflecting the peculiarities of contemporary society.[46] Theological discussion must competently acknowledge and make public sense of the historical situation, including the globalized and pluralistic context that Christians share with other religionists, humanists and even Marxists.[47] This is possible when and if we start decolonizing and de-imperializing the notion of what is 'true,' 'global' or 'universal' and, as well, let go of the romantic but erroneous predilection for the archaic, the simple and the non-contaminated

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[44] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 18.

[45] Friedli, "Intercultural Theology," 221.

[46] Margull, *Hope in Action,* 123. This is another way of stating the shift of the focus from 'theology from above' to 'theology from below.' This shift has been noticeable right from the advent of local theology especially in liberation theology.

[47] Max L. Stackhouse, *Globalization and Grace* (New York and London: Continuum, 2007), 19.

(misunderstanding, as it were, 'inculturation' as an act of appropriating 'truth'). This approach, according to Friedli, liberates Christ and his gospel from the captivity of any specific context; intercultural dialogue manifests new dimensions of the 'kindness and love of God' (Cf. Titus 3, 4) and hence leads to a qualitatively more comprehensive catholicity and ecumenism.[48] In short, the proponents of intercultural theology were mainly trying to highlight its methodological presuppositions and benefits rather than explaining its theoretical intricacies by proposing statements of definitions.

2.3.2. Terminological Analysis of Intercultural Theology

Since intercultural theology is a relatively new notion in theology, it is essential that its terminological nuances and suitability be scrutinized as part of exploring its theological approach. As already evident from the previous section, intercultural theology is being developed in response to the growing need of intercultural understanding and communication, but it is still at an early stage.[49] Different terms like multicultural theology, cross-cultural theology and trans-cultural theology are also being used. Although the implications of these terms are not the same, they are sometimes used synonymously to indicate similar ideas, but the focus shifts with the use of the 'prefix.'

The prefix 'multi' simply means 'having many of.' Multicultural theology takes into account the existence of many cultures. 'Cross' means more or less the same as 'inter' which means 'between.' But in theoretical studies, the term 'cross-cultural theology' seems to refer to the generalizations that are made about inter-cultural understanding. 'Trans' means 'across' or 'beyond.' Trans-cultural theology moves beyond the existence of particular

[48] Friedli, "Intercultural Theology," 219.

[49] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity,* 32. Here Schreiter does not give any details of intercultural theology but only argues for the need of it because contextual theology is not sufficiently equipped to address the peculiarities of the emerging intercultural reality.

cultures, or culture as such. 'Inter' means 'between,' 'from one to the other.' Inter-cultural theology refers to the theological understanding between two or among many different cultures and religions.[50]

Although not all theologians have accepted the term 'intercultural theology,' it does seem to have several advantages over several other terms that have been used so far. In the history of the theology of mission, the words, 'inculturation' and 'indigenization' were preferred over 'adaptation' and 'accommodation.' But they were focused on the purely cultural dimension of human experience and transformation of the local culture as the local incarnation of faith.[51] Later Stephen B. Bevans introduced 'contextualization,' broadening the concept of inculturation and indigenization to encompass all dimensions of human experience, including social change, in the process of theologizing.[52] Schreiter observed the limits of both inculturation and contextualization in the context of globalization, since cultural hybridity became the locus of contextual theology in the place of one particular culture.[53] However, it was Bosch who tried to explain the limits of both inculturation and contextualization[54] and argued that only the process of interculturation can do justice to universality of the church and the identity of the local culture:

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[50] Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church," 222-223.

[51] Alwayrd Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 10-11; Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Incultruation* (Mahawah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1990), 14-27; Gerald Abruckle, *Earthing the Gospel* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990),19-23. Shorter prefers the term inculturation rather than indigenization, but it seems to me that his usage implies a model rather than a general term. Cf. Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 10. Inculturation for Schineller is the insertion of faith into culture. He admits that contextualization is a wider term as it includes many other dimensions of human experience. Cf. Schineller, *A Handbook on Incultruation,* 18. Arbuckle speaks of contextualization as more superficial than inculturation and allied to the idea of adaptation. Cf. Abruckle, *Earthing the Gospel,* 21.

[52] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 26-27. Although Alwayrd Shorter used the term 'contextualization' for the first time in 1988, it was Bevans who introduced it as a broadened concept of inculturation in 1992.

[53] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 46.

[54] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 455-457.

> In a very real sense what we are involved in it is not just inculturation but *interculturation*…. We need an exchange of theology in which one way traffic is suspended first by bilateral and then *multilatera*l relationships. When this happens, the old dichotomies are transcended ….and the partners in this interaction are *not only benefactors but also beneficiaries.* By the giving and receiving at the same time, a kind of osmosis is taking place. This calls for a new disposition, to rethink the necessity and blessedness of receiving.[55]

While Schreiter opts for intercultural theology because the context of theology is already inter-cultural or inter-contextual (due to globalization),[56] Bosch highlights the significance of the process of interculturation in the pluralistic and globalized context by emphasizing multilateral relationship through the dynamism of mutuality in giving and taking among different theologies and cultures.

Therefore, conceptually and terminologically, intercultural theology broadens all other previous notions of doing theology in context; it balances the dynamism of the dimensions of particularity and universality of Christian theology. As a method of doing theology, it is not easy to make any canonical definitions for intercultural theology.[57] In other words, intercultural theology is a methodological commitment rather than an ideological one.[58] The success of this theology, therefore, depends upon the programmatic construction of the presuppositions and approaches according to the specific *locus* of theology.

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[55] Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* 456 (Italics mine).

[56] For more explanation on this necessary transition see: Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 46-60.

[57] It is not proper to make any canonical definitions of intercultural theology because the context and the subsequent method determine its theological nature. For example, in a highly inter-religious context, intercultural theology will focus on dialoguing with different religious traditions. In a context of oppression and suffering, there will be liberation motifs. It simply means that context will influence the content and nature of intercultural theology.

[58] As a programmatic commitment, the success of intercultural theology is to be measured in its real world scenarios. Walter Hollenweger and Joachin Margull tried to experiment these principles in the forums of World Council of Churches (WCC). Theologians are not often available for living the theories in the context, whereas those who practice the theories are not often considered theologians in the academic sense. Hence there is always the danger even with practical theology to turn out to be an armchair theology.

2.3.3. Intercultural Hermeneutics: Prospects and Limits

Intercultural theologians propose intercultural hermeneutics as a suitable interpretive tool for doing theology in the contexts of pluralism and globalization in order to make theology contextually relevant and universally credible.[59] When intercultural theology is considered as a method of doing theology, its hermeneutics becomes the most significant element. The concept 'intercultural hermeneutics' stands for the conviction that no culture or religion is the **one** culture or religion for the whole of humankind. To use the words of A.R. Mall:

> The concept *intercultural* deconstructs the monolithic, absolutistic and exclusivistic attitudes. Intercultural hermeneutics stands for the emancipatory process from all centrisms, be they Euro-, Sino- or Afro-centrism. The spirit of interculturality approves of pluralism, diversity and differences as values in themselves and does not take them as privations of unity and uniformity.[60]

In other words, intercultural hermeneutics is the hermeneutics of intercultural and interreligious encounter with multilateral relationships. Theoretically, intercultural hermeneutics takes us beyond the existence of particular cultures and religions without ignoring their particularities. Intercultural hermeneutics strives toward a genuine recognition of diverse hermeneutical traditions found in different cultures.[61] Vince Marotta explains the need for openness to this reality:

> Due to the fact that in different places and at different times people are confronted with different questions to which they respond differently, it implies the resultant sum total of these questions and answers differ from place to place and also from time to time. It is not an issue of absolute difference because there abound proven similarities in central questions of life as well as in response to the questions in respective cultures. Consequently, there is a declared need for a form of openness in which every culture as such in its essence would be perceived without prejudice.[62]

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[59] Chibueze C. Udeani, "Intercultural Hermeneutics for a Global Age," in *Intercultural Theology and Studies in Religions, ed.* Roger Mayer (Atlanta: Newman Press, 2007), 79-98.

[60] A.R. Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy* (Lahman: Rowan and Littlefield Publishing Corporation, 2000), 13.

[61] Vince Marotta, "Intercultural Hermeneutics and the Cross-cultural Subject," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 30 (Summer 2009), 271.

[62] Marotta, "Intercultural Hermeneutics and the Cross-cultural Subject," 271.

This is more evident today in a global age, where the entire human race is being culturally jolted in the process of globalization. Intercultural hermeneutics is, then, needed for understanding the interaction across cultures when it comes to the hermeneutics of cultures in a global age. It enables an outsider to a particular culture or religion to develop this non-prejudice of free openness in approaching other cultures and religions and to state more exactly what kind of hermeneutical consciousness this age should have, i.e. intercultural and interreligious hermeneutical consciousness.[63]

In the context of pluralism and globalization, intercultural hermeneutics entails the interaction of all parties in establishing the meaning. Meaning emerges out of interaction. The process of 'interaction' in the 'interstitial zone' situates meaning in intercultural hermeneutics.[64] That is to say, intercultural truth is sought not rationally but interculturally. In the midst of pluralism and globalization, "denial of difference can lead to the colonization of a culture and its imagination. Denial of similarities promotes an anomic situation where absolute pluralism prevails with no possibility of dialogue."[65] Therefore, taking into account the significance of difference and sameness, intercultural hermeneutics develops an intercultural anthropology by balancing distinctiveness, cohesion, equality and inclusion. A healthy sense of agency is also recognized in intercultural hermeneutics. Schreiter observes that there can be no passive or inert player in the intercultural activity, no subjects robbed off their subjectivity. Cultural transmission does not happen mechanically nor is it received passively. Together with the emphasis in transmitting the message, the agent should be

[63] Cf. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity,* 34-38.

[64] Homi K. Bhabha, *Locations of Culture* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), 1-24.

[65] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 35-36.

disposed to transform himself/herself with the readiness to be converted.[66] This is the proof of the efficiency of the agent.

Intercultural hermeneutics leads to a more integral view of universality. Using the words of Hans-George Gadamer, "the intercultural approach allows one to learn to look beyond what is close at hand - not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and in a truer proportion."[67] When we place ourselves in another's situation, it is an encounter within oneself. The coming together of two historical beings allows understanding to reach a higher universality where horizons are fused and the particularity of the self and other is overcome.[68] In the words of Richard Bernstein, "intercultural hermeneutics leads to intercultural imagination in which we are sensitive to the sameness of the other with ourselves and their radical alterity that defies and resists reduction of the other to the same."[69] The intercultural approach thus manifests itself through a paradoxical situation where one adopts universalizing (identifying commonalities) and particularizing (acknowledging distinctions) efforts to balance the trends of globalization and pluralism.

Intercultural hermeneutics reveals that cultures are never enclosed horizons. Cultures, like individuals, are always involved with others and are always in motion. Although the 'in-betweenness' of the interpreter fosters greater understanding, this is never a complete understanding of the other. To adopt an intercultural method is to acknowledge that the other person is not an end but a means to enlarge our understanding and knowledge of ourselves

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[66] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 34-38.

[67] Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 272.

[68] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273.

[69] Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 79. Cf. also S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Intercultural Hermeneutics: A Promise for the Future," *Exchange* 34 (June 2005), 93.

and others, through mutual giving and receiving. The intercultural mode of understanding would also appreciate that understanding is never complete and final.

Intercultural hermeneutics is not devoid of limitations. Adopting an intercultural mode of interpretation assumes that some sort of reduction occurs in the self or in the other. Although its aim is to minimize the social, economic and political impacts of reducing the other to the same, to be intercultural means to adopt a mode of understanding that provides no guarantee that the encounter with 'the difference' will be an equal one.[70] It further means that in intercultural hermeneutics, there is no scope for absolute pluralism, and in dialogical pluralism, there is always the chance of reductionism in the particularity.[71] Another important variable is the role of agency in the process of interpretation. The agents as facilitators are also the source of power or are influenced and controlled by another authority. The human elements of prejudice, ignorance and unavailability to openness can hinder, minimize or distort the proper hermeneutical process.[72] Therefore, intercultural hermeneutics, like any human endeavor, is dependent on the quality and disposition of the agents involved. To surpass these limits, the agents should be helped to develop an intercultural hermeneutic consciousness, which is inevitable in doing theology in a pluralistic and globalized world.

2.4. Interculturation: Assumptions for Theology

Wijsen provides the simplest definition of intercultural theology as "the theological reflection upon the process of interculturation."[73] The notions of inculturation and contextualization facilitated the local incarnation of Christian faith to different degrees; now

[70] Walter J.Hollenweger, "Intercultural Theology," *Theology Today* 43 (June 1986), 29-35.

[71] This reductionism affects contextualization in its wholeness, but keeps room for universal traits in the contextualization which are essential for a globalized world. In other words, the limit of intercultural hermeneutics helps contextualization to avoid any kind of mutual exclusivism in contextual theology.

[72] Ariarajah, "Intercultural Hermeneutics: A Promise for the Future," 97.

[73] Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology," 221.

the intercultural principle (interculturation), as I indicated in the terminological analysis, takes theology beyond inculturation and contextualization, because both the context and the process have been enlarged in the new notion of interculturation. In the new scenario of doing theology, the *locus* of theology is no more one particular local culture/context. The *locus* is inter-cultural or inter-contextual and therefore the process is no more inculturation or contextualization, but interculturation emphasizing mutuality. This transition both in the *locus* and process of interculturation is based on the following assumptions on the church and theology.

Interculturation assumes that local incarnations of the faith should not be *too* local. The church must be a place to feel at home. If we feel at home only in our particular church, and if all other churches are either excluded or made unwelcome or feel themselves completely alienated – then something has gone wrong.[74] We may be tempted to over-celebrate an infinite number of differences in the emergence of pluralistic local theologies and claim that not just each local worshiping community but even each pastor and church member may develop her or his own 'local theology.'[75] Over against these positions, it has to be said that our churches and worshiping communities also have to be 'de-provincialized.'[76] This can only happen if vital contact with the wider church is nurtured. While acting locally we have to think globally, in terms of the *una sancta,* combining the 'micro' with the 'macro' perspective. It is true that the church exists primarily in *particular* churches (*Lumen Gentium* 23), but it is also true that it is in virtue of the church's catholicity (*Lumen Gentium* 13) that the particular churches exist – and this holds true not only for the Roman Catholic church as

[74] Andrew F. Walls, "The Gospel as the Prisoner and Liberator of Culture," *Missionalia* 10 (1982), 93-105.

[75] Max Stackhouse, *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization and Mission in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 115.

[76] Stackhouse, *Apologia,* 116.

an international ecclesiastical structure, but for all those communities that call themselves 'Christian.' If the church is the 'Body of Christ,' it can only be one. In this sense and not as an idealistic supra-religious entity, the church is a kind of "universal hermeneutical community, in which Christians and theologians from different lands check one another's cultural biases."[77] Particularity does not mean isolation; so, even if we may celebrate various local theologies, it is equally true that "any theology is a discourse about a universal message."[78] This discourse certainly leads to tension, but it can be a creative tension if we pursue the model of "unity within reconciled diversity."[79] If we follow this road, our understanding of mission and church will indeed be qualitatively different from our earlier models, while we will at the same time experience vital communion with those former epochs.

During the process of interculturation, intercultural theology does not dispense with the methods of rational and analytical science developed in Western culture. It demands, however, that this critical examination be applied also to the total process of inner-ecclesiastic, inter-ecclesiastic, intercultural, and interreligious communication in which each local church, including the Western church, is only one of the participants.[80] Another significant presupposition is that theology is never static, but organic and dynamic. There is no end to theology as human beings continue to exist and continue to experience the reality in newer ways and communicate them in different languages. As a result, the understanding of the church, its mission and relation with other religions, etc., will continue to change as we

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[77] Paul Hiebert, "The Missiological Implications of an Epistemological Shift," *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin* (1985 May-June), 16.

[78] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), xxxvi.

[79] As quoted in Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 457.

[80] Friedli, "Intercultural Theology," 222.

move ahead historically. A detailed analysis of the significance of the method of intercultural theology for ecclesiology, ecumenism and interreligious interaction will be presented in the following chapter.

Conclusion

An overview of the beginnings of intercultural approach together with the exposition of the thoughts and enterprises of its earlier and later proponents is very relevant to this study because of the priority of these initiatives in the overall development of intercultural theology. This chapter has disclosed that the genesis of intercultural theology was as a response to the developments in the church and in the world, namely the post-colonial political situations and the emergence of globalization and pluralism. The terminological and conceptual analyses placed intercultural theology as a new perspective or a method of theology, rather than a separate theological discipline. Hence there are no canonical definitions for this approach, since the commitment to this perspective is programmatic rather than ideological. The *locus* of intercultural theology is the contemporary pluralistic and globalized world with its multiple cultural orientations. The process of interculturation, using intercultural hermeneutics, focuses on the reciprocal interaction of 'give and take' by balancing the dynamism of universal-particular dimensions of theology and creating an intercultural consciousness for the agents. It was also observed that the roles of agency and power are crucial to interculturation. Assuming theology is an organic and ongoing process, intercultural theology is ascertained as a more suitable method of doing theology relevant to the contextual peculiarities of the world today due to its emphasis on mutual reciprocity. From here, we are now prepared to analyze the impact and significance of this paradigm shift to intercultural theology in transforming the self-understanding (*ad intra*) and self-expression (*ad extra*) of the church in the world. This analysis will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3
Intercultural Theology: Toward a Dynamic Theology

Introduction

As a new perspective in doing theology, the significance of intercultural theology lies not only in finding relevance for theology in the changing circumstances of the world, but also in the paradigm shift it initiates in the self-understanding (*ad intra*) and self-expression (*ad extra*) of the church in the world, retaining the integrity of theology and moving toward a dynamic wholeness. This chapter will contend that the process of interculturation, as a suitable hermeneutical tool, helps redefine contextual theology, facilitating a new understanding of the catholicity of the church. The dynamism of the mission of the church will be further ascertained in this chapter through the approach of interculturation, leading to communion in ecumenism and to interfaith interaction in interreligious dialogue. Finally, I will argue that the integrity of theology is akin to its dynamic wholeness which can be achieved by the processes of symbiosis[81] and intra-religious dialogue[82] that tries to avoid fragmentation of any kind. I begin here by exploring the essential paradigm shift in contextual theology due to the cultural dynamics of glocalization.

[81] Symbiosis basically means 'living together' of two or more dissimilar entities in close relationship, qualified with the dynamic aspect of 'mutuality.' Cf. Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church," *Theological Studies* 64/3 (2003), 514.

[82] Intra-religious dialogue is an 'intra-personal' dialogue by which one consciously and critically appropriates one's own tradition and develops a deep commitment and desire to understand another tradition which means being open to a new experience of truth since one cannot really understand the views of another if one does not share them. In comparison with interreligious or multi-religious dialogue that happens in interpersonal level, intra-religious dialogue is taking place in the subjective level. Explaining intra-religious dialogue, Raimon Panikkar speaks about raising the subjective, personal, religious experience to a new level of methodological importance for religious understanding and cooperation. Cf. Raimon Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 30.

3.1. From Globalization to Glocalization: Contextual Theology Revisited

Social trends are generally not static in nature, but rather they are dialectically dynamic. The ongoing dialectic of globalization and pluralism has developed into the process of glocalization. Glocalization can be defined as the interpenetration of the global and local,[83] resulting in unique outcomes in different geographical areas according their specific identities and needs.[84]

Some sociologists like Ronald Robertson and James Harold would argue that the 'global era' is already gone and we are living a 'post-global era' or 'glocal era.'[85] Glocalization gets to the heart of what many contemporary globalization theorists think about the nature of transnational processes.[86] This view emphasizes global heterogeneity and tends

[83] The term 'glocal' and the process noun 'glocalization' are "formed by telescoping global and local to make a blend." Cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of New Words* (1991), 134. The word is used to describe a product or service that is developed and distributed globally, but is also fashioned to accommodate the user or consumer in a local market. Glocalization comprises two processes: globalization and localization. While localization mainly concerns human beings, individual subjects, organizations, communities or localities, globalization embraces the planetary processes. However, the underlying causes of global processes can be found in concrete localities. Glocalization is often interpreted as 'think globally and act locally,' which is perceived as possibly a proper strategy for the future sustainable development of the whole planet. For the evolution of glocalization from globalization see Habibul Haque Khondker, "Glocalization as Globalization: Evolution of a Sociological Concept," *Journal of Sociology* 1/2 (July 2004), 1-9.

[84] Glocalization proposes to mediate between the global system and local communities by ensuring that a globalized community would be stable and those local practices and beliefs would be respected. It often involves tailoring products intended for international distribution to the tastes of local consumers. The best example for glocalization can be found in the fast-food industry. International companies have learned that 'one-size-fits-all' versions of their products could fail in many markets. McDonald's Corporation, for example, has restaurants in more than 100 different countries. Instead of offering an American-style menu in a place like India, where many residents do not eat beef, McDonald's sells mostly chicken, lamb and vegetarian offerings.

[85] Massimo Pollifroni, "Globalization and Glocalization: An Epistemological Analysis," *Economia Aziandale* 3 (2006), 109. J. Harold explains the economic reasons of glocalization: J. Harold, *The End of Globalization: Lessons from the Great Depression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 37-96. Among sociologists Roland Robertson is considered the first one to advocate the concept of glocalization. Cf. Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity- Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities,* eds. M. Featherstone et al (London: Sage, 1995), 25-44. Jan Sucháček, a sociologist from Czech Republic explains the implications of this evolving phenomenon in human behavior. Cf. Jan Sucháček, "Globalization and Glocalization," in *The Scale of Globalization: Think Globally, Act Locally, Change Individually in the 21st Century*, ed. Jan Sucháček (Ostrava: University of Ostrava, 2011), 319-324.

[86] Some of the contemporary globalization theorists and their works are: A. Appadurai, *Modernity at large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Canclini N. Garcia, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); U. Hannerz, "The World in Creolization" *Africa* 57 (1987), 546-549; Jan Pieterse,

to reject the idea that forces emanating from the West are leading to economic, political and cultural homogeneity.[87] While globalization as a framework is naturally biased in favor of macro-cultural issues, questions were raised as to the viability of using this framework to study social realities. This has led to the rethinking of macro-micro relationships. Glocalization as a concept arose to help ease the conceptual difficulties of macro-micro relationships.[88]

Glocalization recognizes pluralism as well as focuses on the uniqueness and differences within and between specific areas of the world. In glocalization individuals have room to express themselves in order to adapt, innovate, and maneuver within a glocalized world. It is in this context that Robertson conceptualized globalization in the twentieth century as *"the interpenetration of the universalization of particularization and the particularization of universalism."*[89] Habibul Khondker, building on Robertson's framework, argued that globalization or glocalization should be seen as an interdependent process. "The problem of simultaneous globalization of the local and the localization of the global can be expressed as the twin processes of macro-localization and micro-globalization."[90] Macro-localization involves expanding the boundaries locally, as well as making some local ideas,

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"Globalization as Hybridization," in *Global Modernities,* eds. M. Featherstone et al. (London: Sage, 1995), 45-68 and Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1992).

[87] For example, Jan Pieterse argues that global heterogeneous views are "empirically narrow and historically flat." Cf. Pieterse, "Globalization as Hybridization," 63.

[88] The word 'glocalization' as well as the idea originated in Japan. The term was modeled on Japanese word *dochakuka,* which originally meant adapting or farming technique to one's own local condition. Cf. Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity - Heterogeneity," 28. In the business world this idea was adopted to refer to global localization - "the creation of products or services intended for the global market, but customized to suit the local cultures." Cf. Khondker, "Glocalization as Globalization," 5. Although the term 'glocalization' has come to frequent use since the late 1980s, there were several related terms that social scientists used and continue to use. One such related word, which has been in use in social sciences and related fields for quite some time is, 'customization.'

[89] Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture,* 100. Italics retained as in the original.

[90] Habibul Khondker, "Globalization Theory: A Critical Analysis" in *Globalization: Working Paper*, ed. Habibul Khondker (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 1994), 34.

practices and institutions global. The rise of worldwide religious or ethnic revivalist movements can be seen as examples of macro-localization. On the other hand, micro-globalization involves incorporating certain global processes into the local setting. Consider social movements such as the feminist movement or ecological movement or consider new production techniques or marketing strategies, which emerge in a certain local context and over a period of time, these practices spread far beyond their locality into a larger spatial and historical arena.[91] Overcoming space is globalization. Glocalization, however, is radically changing that reality. Increasingly, those who leave home and country can maintain the ties of family and nationality that characterize them.[92]

The main propositions of glocalization are not too different from the main arguments of intercultural theology: (1) Diversity is the essence of social life; (2) Autonomy of history and culture gives a sense of uniqueness to the experiences of groups of people whether we define them as cultures, societies or nations; (3) Glocalization removes the fear that globalization is like a tidal wave erasing all the differences, and considers current tensions and conflicts between cultures as problems of a transitory phase.[93] (4) Glocalizaton does not

[91] Consider how print industry or computer industry with a specific location of its emergence has now become global phenomena.

[92] Mohammad Shamsuddoha, "Globalization to Glocalization: A Conceptual Analysis" in *Sociology for the Twenty-First Century: Continuities and Cutting Edges*, ed. J. Abu-Lughod (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 127. This view is somewhat different from the way Anthony Giddens conceptualizes the relationship between the global and the local. Globalization, for Giddens, "is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world." Cf. Anthony Giddens*, Runaway World* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 31. While in this view local is the provider of the response to the forces that are global, one can argue that local itself is constituted globally and vice versa. As with universal theology, there is nothing such as purely universal, that which is not local.

[93] In chapter one of this thesis, we have seen some of the apprehensions on globalization. Many of the books and articles on the subject of globalization give the impression that it is a force that creates a uniform world, a world where barriers disappear and cultures become amalgamated into a global whole. Cf. Malcom Walters, *Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 33-69. Ironically, the phase of transition has been around. As we have entered the third millennia, many of the age-old problems of differences among cultures and religion are being recognized and accommodated.

promise a world free from conflicts and tensions but a more historically grounded understanding of the complicated, yet pragmatic view of the world of evolving identities.[94]

In the process of glocalization some of the cultural aspects may be adapted without any modification while others are modified and indigenized to suit the local contexts. Many of the late modernizing societies borrow ideas, knowledge and technology, most of which were generated in the early modernized societies in Europe and North America.[95] An objective consideration of history indicates that many of the traits that spread worldwide originated in certain geographical regions, yet as these traits were transplanted elsewhere, they became mutated and assumed different forms in different contexts.[96] Glocalization involves the blending or adapting of two or more processes, one of which must reflect the local aspects of some context. For glocalization to be meaningful, it must include at least one component that addresses the local culture, system of values and practices and so on.[97]

As mentioned in chapters one and two, the dialectic reciprocity of the intercultural approach is sensitive to contextual developments, although not conditioned by it. Sociologically, the evolution of glocalization is the result of the dialectical encounter between globalization and pluralism.[98] While being sensitive to the context, the contextual developments influence theology. However, the theological developments need not

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[94] Cf. Khondker, "Glocalization as Globalization," 7.

[95] Max Weber, a German sociologist, was correct to claim that Western rationality and science had become universal because of chronological precedence in inventions and innovations. Cf. Bryan S. Turner, *Max Weber: From History to Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 124.

[96] For example, parliamentary democracy evolved in England, with roots that go back to the *Magna Carta* of 1215. However, as Westminster-style parliamentary democracy was institutionalized in India, Malaysia, and other former British colonies, they mutated in light of the local milieu.

[97] Khondker, "Glocalization as Globalization," 12. But one can accept a hybrid version that does not necessarily involve local.

[98] Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture,* 104. The same dialectical process is not exactly the reason for the evolution of the notion of intercultural theology from the dialectical encounter between universal/globalized theologies and local/contextual theologies.

necessarily follow the cultural dynamics. In other words, intercultural theology is not contextually conditioned but it only strives for relevance in the context.[99] Intercultural theology becomes truly relevant in the context of glocalization not only through the dialogue between the universal message of the gospel and local culture but also through the reciprocal interaction between various local theologies and global trends.[100] As with glocalization, for intercultural theology to be meaningful, the process must include at least one local component. Theologies originated in different geographic regions (like liberation theology and feminist theology) have been open to mutual interaction among themselves. Through mutual enrichment they have found newer and dynamic identities in varying contexts.[101] In this manner, intercultural theology is a theological method not only for the present social scenario but also for all possible social trends in the future because of its openness to mutual interaction and mutual enrichment in any situation. Such a dynamic approach to doing theology necessitates clarity in understanding the fundamentals of the church as well as its theology.

3.1.1. Intercultural Ecclesiology of the Particular and the Universal

Intercultural theology facilitates an organic understanding of the particular-universal dimensions of the church of Christ, keeping them in continuous dialogue. Such an organic and dialogical perspective, along with an affirmation of its particularity and universality, is crucial to the self-understanding of the church. The very notion of catholicity itself is a

[99] If the nature of theology runs in parallel to the nature of the civil society, then theology is not any different from sociology.

[100] Not only that the current context of theology has multicultural orientations but that the subsequent process is also multi-dimensional. Therefore, the interculturation of theology is not merely contextualization but glocalization through the reciprocal process of mutuality.

[101] Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 133. For example, the Indian liberation theology is of course has its resources from the liberation theology in Latin America. But it is also influenced by the South Korean Minjung Liberation theology. Cf. K. C. Abraham, *Third World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 304.

'diversified unity.'[102] It is both a fullness that unifies and a diversity that is enriched and reconciled. A truly comprehensive ecclesiology will develop both the fullness and the diversity of the church. Yet prior to Vatican II, catholic ecclesiology tended to concentrate primarily on the aspect of fullness (possessing the 'fullness of truth'). When catholicity was imbalanced in favor of fullness or when universality was conceived as uniformity, it often led to triumphalism. Post-Vatican II theology, however, has been working to balance these two aspects. Francis A. Sullivan combines both the fullness of the church and its diversity in a single description. "As the 'fullness' of him who fills all things, it cannot lack anything of the plenitude of grace and truth which God has chosen, should come through Christ to all of humanity."[103]

In our contemporary understanding, these two dimensions are so mutually related that each one actually nourishes the other. The fullness of catholicity is what pushes Christianity toward diversity.[104] The church realizes its catholicity by its involvement with particular cultures. "The more fully inculturated its particular churches are, the more catholic the universal church will be."[105] In fact, if one were "to conceive of Christianity as the religion of a certain segment of humanity... the very basis of the church is falsified."[106] That is a challenge to catholicity.

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[102] Francis A. Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 92.

[103] Sullivan, *The Church We Believe*, 92.

[104] Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 30. To the extent that the church is a created participation in the fullness of divine life, it is capable of realizing itself in variety without detriment to its unity. Precisely because of its ontological richness, the church demands a plurality of forms in which to actualize and express its essence.

[105] Sullivan, *The Church We Believe*, 93.

[106] Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church*, 74.

The second Vatican Council, in the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, stated that "this Church, constituted and organized as a society in this world, subsists in (*subsistit in*) the Catholic Church" (LG 8). As is well known, this famous expression "*subsistit in*" was subsequently the object of many and contradictory interpretations.[107] In reality, an analysis of the council proceedings leads to the conclusion that "the phrase *subsistit in* is intended not only to reconfirm the meaning of the term *est*, that is, the identity of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church but also to reaffirm that the Church of Christ, …perdures (continues, remains) forever in the Catholic Church."[108]

At times, the notion of 'the church's subsistence' has been applied not just univocally but analogically to particular churches as well. For example, Pope John Paul II used '*subsistit in'* in the following ways: "particular churches in which there subsists the fullness of the universal church"[109] or that the "Catholic church herself subsists in each particular church."[110] The *fullness* of the universal church can indeed be predicated of every church, in the sense that, in each particular church, "the church universal with all her essential elements is made present."[111] Therefore, each particular church is constituted in the image of the

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[107] The notion became quite widespread that the council had not wanted to adopt as its own the traditional statement according to which the church of Christ is (*est*) the Catholic church — as was stated in the preparatory schema — so as to be able to say that the church of Christ subsists also in Christian communities separated from Rome. Cf. F. Gil Hellín, *Concilii Vaticani II Synopsis*: *Constitutio Dogmatica De Ecclesia -Lumen Gentium* (Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 64, 697.

[108] K.J. Becker, "*Subsistit in* — (*Lumen Gentium*, 8)" in *L'Osservatore Romano,* English edition (*ORE*) 14 (December1986), 11-14. U. Betti explains this notion as the following: "The verb 'subsists' has no other meaning than 'continue to exist.' If, therefore, the Church of Christ 'continues to exist' (*subsistit in*) in the Catholic Church, the continuity in existence means a substantial identity of essence." Cf. U. Betti, "Chiesa di Cristo e Chiesa Cattolica," in *Antonianum* 61 (1986), 743.

[109] John Paul II, *Letter to the Bishops of the U.S.A.*: "Pastors of particular churches in which there subsists the fullness of the universal Church," *Insegnamenti* IX/ 2 (1986), 1332.

[110] John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops of the U.S.A.*: "The Catholic Church herself subsists in each particular Church," *Insegnamenti* X/ 3 (1987), 555.

[111] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter - Communionis Notio*, 28 May 1992, n. 7.

universal church, such that in each one, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church is truly present and operative - *inest et operator* (LG 23).

The fullness of the particular church, however, does not come from its particularity, but rather from the presence in it of all the essential elements of ecclesiality, including the primacy of the successor of Peter and the college of bishops. Indeed, these elements, though not originating in the particularity of the churches, are interior to them.[112] In order that such fullness might exist, the particular church must be inserted into the universal *communio ecclesiarum*, which in turn is not possible without communion with the Roman see.[113] However, this ecclesial fullness is not sufficient to predicate the subsistence of the local church in the sense of *Lumen Gentium* 8, since subsistence implies not only the presence of all the essential elements of the church of Christ but also their indefectible permanence.[114] No particular church has such guaranteed permanence. Particular churches may even disappear, as has happened many times in the course of history.[115] In this context, it is more accurate to say with *Christus Dominus* that, in a particular church, the church of Christ is present and

[112] Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, Letter - Communionis Notio*, n. 13. "In this perspective too, we must see the ministry of the Successor of Peter not only as a 'global' service, reaching each particular Church from 'outside' as it were, but *as belonging already to the essence of each particular Church from 'within"* Cf also. John Paul II, Address to the Bishops of the U.S.A., 16 September 1987: *lnsegnamenti* X, 3 (556). Also see *Ut Unum Sint*, n. 97. This is an encyclical on *Commitment to Ecumenism* by John Paul II, issued in 1995.

[113] Therefore, for a Christian community to be truly a particular church, "there must be present in it, as a proper element, the supreme authority of the Church: the Episcopal College 'together with its head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart from him" (LG 22)." This might seem an insurmountable obstacle to the possibility of affirming that non-Catholic particular churches are 'true particular churches,' and certainly there is much in this area that calls for deeper study.

[114] Francis Sullivan argues that what motivated the approval of the change from *est* (is) to *subsistit in* was that it would make it possible for the Council to acknowledge the fact that outside the catholic church are not only elements of the church, but that there are churches and ecclesial communities. Francis A. Sullivan, "A Response to Karl Becker, S J, On the Meaning of *Subsistit In*," *Theological Studies* 67/ 2 (2006), 395-409.

[115] Not only that the particular churches of different cultural traditions have come to extinction historically, but also that even some churches of apostolic tradition among oriental churches have ceased to exist mainly due to persecutions. Cf. Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007), 3-7.

operative (*inest et operatur*) or that, in the particular churches, the universal church exists (CD 11; LG 23). In this sense, the universality of the church can be materialized only through spiritual and physical communion among churches, and interculturation can better facilitate the materialization of this communion. By constructive interactions, the church can keep on realizing its universality through various particularities by recognizing their unique traditions, identifying the similarities and being open for mutual enrichment. An intercultural ecclesiology can better explain the dynamism of this approach by maintaining rootedness in its particularities and enhancing relatedness through communion.

3.1.2. Interculturation and the Particular-Universal Implications of Theology

The intercultural approach addresses the particular-universal tension in theology very constructively. In the process of 'particularization of the universal and universalization of the particular,' particularity is not sacrificed for the sake of universality, nor is universality restrained for the sake of maintaining particular identity.[116] It is maintained through a constructive interaction wherein rootedness in one's own culture is affirmed, commonalities are identified and limitations are acknowledged.

Firstly, in the intercultural approach the focus on particularity at the proximity of the other itself is the first step to universality. The perception of one particular culture as part of a whole, discloses not only its unique identity, but also the role of that identity in the larger whole. Further, when we place ourselves in another's situation, it is an encounter within oneself. This coming together allows understanding to reach a higher universality where

[116] An intercultural process does not accept that there is anything as such universal which is not contextually conditioned. The concept of universality in intercultural theology is an essentially inherent factor in every particular culture, thus not outside the particularity. Cf. Chibueze C. Udeani, "Cultural Diversity and Globalization: An Intercultural Hermeneutical Perspective," *Ethics* 7 (June 2007), 7-14.

horizons are fused and the particularity of the self and other is overcome.[117] In this way, rootedness leads to relatedness, particularity leads to universality.

Secondly, the intercultural approach involves a subtle balancing act between recognizing the similarities underlying self and other, which will become the foundation for dialogue across differences, while maintaining differences and thus sustaining boundaries between the self and other. Looking at the other from one's own rootedness helps identify the similarities between the other and oneself and among many others.[118] The intercultural approach thus manifests itself through a paradoxical situation where one adopts universalizing (identifying commonalities) and particularizing (acknowledging differences) efforts to balance the trends of universalism (of globalization) and particularism (of pluralism).

Thirdly, intercultural theology reveals that cultures are always in the process of becoming. Cultures, like individuals, are always involved with others and are always in motion. While moving between these horizons interculturally, the subject understands that one cannot fully capture or comprehend the other in a dialogical encounter. Although the 'in-betweenness' of the interpreter fosters greater understanding, this is never a complete understanding of the other. To adopt an intercultural method is to acknowledge that the other culture is not an end but a means with which we can enlarge our understanding and

[117] Using the words of George Gadamer, "the intercultural approach allows one to learn to look beyond what is close at hand - not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and in a truer proportion." Cf. Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 272-273. See also footnote numbers 67 and 68 of chapter two.

[118] In the words of Richard Bernstein, "intercultural hermeneutics leads to intercultural imagination in which we are sensitive to the sameness of the other with ourselves and their radical alterity that defies and resists reduction of the other to the same." Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 79. Cf. also Wesley Ariarajah, "Intercultural Hermeneutics: A Promise for the Future," *Exchange* 34 (June 2005), 93. See also footnote number 69 of chapter two.

knowledge of ourselves and others.[119] The intercultural mode of understanding would also appreciate that understanding is never complete and final. Such an awareness of the limitations of comprehension would further mean that there is no scope for absolutism either in the universalization or in the particularization of the process; and it would remind us about the mutual dependence. Thus the intercultural approach not only maintains the universal-particular aspects of theology in a creative tension but also facilitates dynamism and newness.

The work of intercultural theology is incomplete until it considers the inter-relationships between different theologies that are part of the overall formation of a community's theological process.[120] Therefore, the task of local theologies is not only to remain local, but also to be universal in approach. This process can be accelerated by an interculturation which gives adequate identity to particularities of the culture, while at the same time linking the history of a particular people with overall Christian history and not ignoring their specific role in that holistic Christian enterprise.

3.2. Intercultural Theology and Paradigm Shifts in Missiology

This section is an attempt to examine the paradigm shifts in the understanding of Christian mission in the light of intercultural theology. In the context of this study, the understanding of mission embraces the *Ad gentes*[121] dimension of missionary enterprise as well as the entire self-expression or involvement of the church (*ecclesia ad extra*) in the world. Mission is understood as the task of the church to continue the mission of Jesus Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit throughout human history. As an activity of the Spirit in the world ever since creation, the church is privileged to participate in the mission of Christ who is its

[119] George Newlands, *The Transformative Imagination: Rethinking Intercultural Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 1988), 38.

[120] Paul Duane Matheny, *Contextual Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 69.

[121] By *Ad gentes* (to people/world) dimension, I mean the mission among the non-Christians.

supreme and normative (for Christians) expression of God.[122] The affirmation of the varied expressions of the Spirit's creativity in the cultures of the world allowed for new ways of theologizing outside the historical tradition. An understanding of mission that recognizes both the mission of Jesus Christ and the mission of the Holy Spirit in the whole creation, and relates the two, will also recognize and affirm the cultural specificity (contextuality) of all theologies.[123] If the confession of the oneness of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit are to be meaningful, classical and contextual theologies must emphasize the ongoing incarnational nature of revelation.

In recent years, mission has been defined as contextualization of the gospel message in the particular cultural contexts of the believing community. Adaptation, incarnation and inculturation are used to denote the process of interaction of the gospel message with a particular cultural context. David J. Bosch affirms mission studies as the theological discipline that remains true to both the missionary dimension of faith and the missionary intention of God, and the discipline that follows through the implications of *missio Dei* throughout the whole domain of theology.[124] As a recognized theological discipline, missiology has a distinctive focus and methodology of its own. However, the 'dimensional' aspect of missiology, that is, its task of highlighting theology's reference to the world, means that a missionary perspective permeates all theological disciplines.[125] Similarly, Orlando Costas has claimed that:

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[122] Cf. Arnuf Campus, "The Evolution, Involution and Revolution of the Concept and Reality of Mission and Evangelization," in *Mission is a Must: Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church,* ed. Frans Wijsen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 109-123.

[123] Kenneth Cracknell, *Theology on Full Alert* (London: British Council of Churches, 1986), 1-2, 8, 15, 132-35.

[124] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 426.

[125] Hans-Werner Gensichen, "Missiology as a Theological Discipline," in *Mission Theology: An Introduction,* ed. Karl Müller (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1987), 24-27.

> Missiology contends against all theological provincialism, advocating an intercultural perspective in theology. Missiology questions all theological discourse that does not seriously consider the missionary streams of the Christian faith; all biblical interpretation that ignores the missionary motives that shape biblical faith; all history of Christianity that omits the expansion of Christianity across cultural and religious frontiers; and all pastoral theology that does not take seriously the mandate to communicate the Gospel fully and to the heart of the concrete situations of daily life. By fulfilling such a critical task, missiology also enriches theology because it puts theology in contact with the worldwide Church with all its cultural and theological diversity.[126]

Missiology draws its life from the experience of crossing cultures and from the worldwide church in its global and local expressions of *missio Dei.* Therefore, missiology that loses contact with its roots in the missionary movement and its links with world Christianity will be indistinguishable from other theological disciplines. Although it is impossible to elaborate the paradigm shifts in various theological disciples in relation to intercultural theology and missiology, in order to understand the general trend, we are going to analyze the tangible shifts of the church's missionary dynamism in relation to inculturation (mission in the world), ecumenism (mission within Christian communities) and interreligious dialogue (mission with other religions).

3.2.1. From Inculturation to Interculturation

Carl F. Starkloff suggests that the process of sharing the gospel "involves a conversation between two partners – the universal gospel or fundamental 'good news' and the cultural uniqueness of each context in which that message is heard."[127] However, it must be noted that the gospel is always known through a culture and cannot be understood without a particular cultural expression. This universal gospel has been and continues to be shared

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[126] Orlando E. Costas, "Theological Education and Mission," in *New Alternatives in Theological Education,* ed. C. René Padilla (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1988), 15.

[127] Carl F. Starkloff, "Inculturation and Cultural Systems," in *Theological Studies* 55 (1994), 69. Starkloff uses the term 'inculturation,' by which he means the incessant dialogue between gospel and culture. On "good news" within an African indigenous religion, see Eugene Hillman, *Toward an African Christianity: Inculturation Applied* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1993), 50. Aylward Shorter addresses these issues in *Evangelization and Culture* (London: Chapman, 1994), 32-38.

through various limited cultural accretions in history while, at the same time, transforming cultures to reflect on God who loves all people irrespective of culture, religion, race or ethnic background. Therefore, for Christian missionaries it is imperative that they recognize evangelization as a mutual partnership of witness and dialogue in a particular culture with a religious perspective toward God. In addition, evangelizing efforts should continue to seek appropriate expressions of the gospel in every culture that reflect inclusivity within these cultures.[128] Such appropriate expressions sought within particular local cultures should have the capacity to enrich and inform diverse cultures and religious perspectives around the world. What is called a 'particular culture' is no more 'one culture' but a 'cultural mix,' with multiple local cultural orientations, and then the whole process has to be reinterpreted and re-appropriated. I have been arguing that such an approach is the intercultural approach.

In an intercultural approach, 'inculturation' can be called 'interculturation.'[129] Borrowing Schreiter's term, when mission is considered as 'communicative event,' the interlocutors, the context and the message have to be aware of the globalized cultural flows of modernity and the craving for identity. The communicative event thus becomes a moment of intercultural encounter. Many missionaries experience that they are no longer at home in their own culture and not yet home in the host culture.[130] They are intercultural ministers in the sense that they constitute an intermediate culture, creating space for particularities and universalities. Thus, "interculturation does not abandon the concept of inculturation but

[128] Not only Vatican II documents like *Gaudium et Spes* and *Ad Gentes*, but all the post-Vatican II mission documents of the catholic church (like *Evangeli Nuntiandi* 20, 55-56; *Redemptoris Missio* 50-54) deal with the dimension of local cultural expressions of the Gospel message.

[129] Kristeen Kim, "Missiology as Global Conversation of (Contextual) Theologies," *Mission Studies* 21 (June 2004), 39-53.

[130] Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 34-38; Cf. also Frans Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church," *Exchange* 30 (June 2001), 219-248.

broadens it."[131] Pedro Arrupe, a former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, defined inculturation as:

> the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular local cultural context, in such a way that the experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs, and unifies a culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about 'a new creation.'[132]

Arrupe points towards the synergic dimension of interculturation. What is happening is not just a synthesis of many cultural orientations and the gospel, but an organic and ongoing evolution of a new culture with the capacity to animate and direct toward renewed and deeper levels of identity.

As a theological concept, *inculturation* typically understood and practiced, does not go far enough in explaining the dynamic symbolic interaction between gospel and culture; gospel and diverse cultures; and gospel and other religions.[133] The concept does not take fully into account the complicated reality of the interaction between the accumulated Christian culture in which the gospel is carried and the various levels of meanings that other cultures and other religions manifest. For example, the meanings of emotional pain, forgiveness, reconciliation, illness, death, and so on, carry different implications.[134] Discovering how these conceptual realities are lived and transmitted within various cultures and how different religions interpret them is an important aspect of understanding how gospel vision can be

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[131] Wijsen, "Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the Church," 222.

[132] Pedro Arrupe, "Letter to the whole Society on Inculturation," in *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits* (Washington: Jesuit Missions, 1978), 2.

[133] See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 455. In critiquing the concept inculturation, Bosch argues that the West has often domesticated the gospel in its own culture while making it unnecessarily foreign to other cultures.

[134] See Anthony J. Gittins, *Reading the Clouds: Mission Spirituality for New Times* (Missouri: Liguori Press, 1999), 76–95. Gittins suggests that we are called "to become a community of healers and a healing community. We are called to cross cultural and religious boundaries and margins, in order to heal for wholeness."

shared and understood. Not only is this a theological task, but it is also an intercultural religious activity that informs all cultures including Christian culture.

The theological concept of *interculturation* can help delve into understanding conversation between diverse cultures and between plural religious perspectives.[135] As already mentioned in chapter two, this term began to appear in theological literature toward the end of the twentieth century. Bishop Joseph Blomjous (1908-1992) was credited in 1980 with coining the term 'interculturation' to preserve the mutuality and partnership of the inculturation process.[136] Undergirding his concern was the fact that the concept *inculturation* could give the impression that faith was merely transferred from one culture to another. This interpretation suggested that Christian mission was a one-way process of imposing a particular religious faith on another culture with a diverse religious perspective. Rather than the Christian vision of faith being shared, it was being received by non-European cultures as an imposition because of its alien cultural expressions and interpretations. As it stands, the inculturation concept is incapable of going further than the particularity of the intersection of Christian faith and culture(s).[137] This reduces everything outside the Christian religion to culture, ignoring the reality of gospel values percolating through the other religions.

Thus, interculturation builds upon previous definitions of inculturation emerging within Christian theological reflection.[138] I contend that *interculturation* suggests a

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[135] Though I am using the term in a theological and religious sense, this does not exclude it from other disciplines in which the concept of interculturation is invoked such as in the human sciences, communication theory, political science and education.

[136] Cf. Joseph Blomjous, "Development in Mission (1959-1980): Inculturation and Interculturation," *African Ecclesial Review* 22 (1980/6), 293-298. See also footnote number 2 of chapter two.

[137] Thomas G. Grenham, "Interculturation: Exploring changing Religious, Cultural, and Faith Identities," *Pacifica: Australian Theological Studies* 14/2(2001), 191–206.

[138] Peter C. Phan offers a helpful definition of inculturation as intercultruation that takes into account other religious perspectives as having an ability to transform Christianity and vice versa. These appear to be reduced to the generic concept of culture. He writes, "Inculturation is the process whereby the Christian faith is integrated into the culture of the people to whom the Good News is preached in such a way that *both* the faith is

theological and anthropological interaction that desires greater inclusivity and interdependence among different religious perspectives and secular cultural viewpoints for human well-being. There is a dialectical interaction between faith and culture within a paradigm of authentic interculturation.[139] The concept of interculturation envisions that we view 'truth' as a shared reality in the midst of pluralism and diversity.[140] It enables us to see that Christian mission is not one-sided but is a mutual partnership of witness and dialogue, a conversation regarding the gospel. This means that the process of evangelizing must always be cognizant of the fundamental 'good news' already contained within specific cultures (*Ad Gentes* 11). As obvious from the above description, this paradigm shift from inculturation to interculturation of faith redefines not only missiology but also affects the entire theological system in understanding and interpreting the faith and mission of the church.

3.2.2. From Ecumenism to Communion

Ecumenism[141] is inherently related to both catholicity and evangelization. While catholicity offers some motivation for participation in the ecumenical movement, the inner dividedness of Christianity is an obstacle to the evangelization of non-Christians (*Unitatis*

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expressed in the elements of this culture and transforms it from within, *and* the culture in turn enriches and transforms the previous expression of the Christian faith brought in from outside." Peter C. Phan, *Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes & Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 199.

[139] This is a process that takes place within specific cultural contexts, religious experiences, and worship practices that remains connected to the concept of global or universal church. I am thinking here, too, of a postmodern world where the deconstruction of meta-narratives or grand narratives is an imperative to enable a new space for dialogue to emerge in order that the other, the excluded other, is included in the conversation. The challenge is to reconstruct what has been deconstructed without imposing particular "ways of knowing" that intimate new forms of oppression. See Terry Veling, *Living in the Margins* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 86, 111.

[140] This does not mean that truth is relative but that the absolute truth manifests itself differently, in a myriad ways.

[141] The word 'ecumenism' is derived from the Greek οἰκουμένη (*oikoumene*), which means "the whole inhabited world," and was historically used with specific reference to the Roman empire. The ecumenical vision comprises both the search for the visible unity of the church (Ephesians 4, 3) and the 'whole inhabited earth' (Matthew 24, 14) as the concern of all Christians.

Redintegratio 1).[142] Although in the past ecumenism was sometimes perceived by catholics as a threat to catholicity, Vatican II teaches on the contrary that it is to be pursued for the sake of catholicity (UR 24).[143]

A core issue of ecumenism has been how to determine whether diversity is acceptable or unacceptable. Since catholicity is itself ideally a 'reconciled diversity,' it can reveal a way to unity without capitulation or absorption. In Avery Dulles's opinion, "ecumenism must become a search for plenitude through mutual enrichment. If the churches truly engage in this process, what will follow will be a genuine recovery of catholicity."[144] Thus the two realities of catholicity and ecumenism are mutually related. The recovery of catholicity overcomes division and accelerates ecumenism; the recovery of ecumenical unity enhances catholicity. Therefore ecumenism is intrinsically a part of the mission of the church. It is on this basis that Dulles states of 'Catholic ecumenism':

> It neither canonizes differences by accepting indiscriminate pluralism nor does it seek to obliterate all differences by imposing uniformity. It seeks rather to discern what differences are compatible with the gospel and Catholic unity, and to accept, with necessary corrections, as much as it can.[145]

Catholicity is not only the motivation for ecumenism; it is also the way to achieve ecumenism.[146] We have already proposed above that catholicity is in the process of becoming. The same is with ecumenism too.

Today we need a new ecumenism, an ecumenism which not only has its goal as dialogue between traditions and confessions, but also manifests a new 'coming together'

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[142] Sullivan, *The Church We Believe*, 93.

[142] Sullivan, *The Church We Believe,* 87.

[143] Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church,* 172.

[144] Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church,* 43.

[145] Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church,* 82.

[146] Sullivan, *The Church We Believe,* 87.

through the encounter among Christians of any and every tradition and confession.[147] Understanding this encounter in the light of intercultural theology with its incarnational notion of revelation would suggest that ecumenism, as a reconciled unity of diversity, is not more than a business alliance for higher productivity and marketing. With an emphasis on 'inter,' the encounter of churches will allow themselves to grow in mutual giving and taking, with a readiness for transformation. Such an interactive approach will allow the incarnational spirit in individual entities, not only to join their hands (unity) but also their hearts (communion), allowing themselves to be freely interacted and involved without ignoring their individualities yet recognizing their distinctivenesses as inevitable gifts of the body of Christ (the church) in its historical manifestations. In this new approach, intercultural theology rejects the hegemony of one particular tradition as the best and invites every tradition to reciprocal interaction which will allow 'incarnation' to take newer forms that cannot but lead to communion, the nature of the Triune God.

3.2.3. From Interreligious Dialogue to Interfaith Interaction

Today, the church approaches other religions with great sensitivity on account of the human and divine values enshrined in them. Over the centuries, they have borne witness to the efforts of seeking answers to those profound mysteries of the human condition (*Nostrae Aetate* 1) and given expression to the religious experience as they continue to do so today. Christ, the new Adam, through the mystery of his incarnation, death and resurrection, is at work in each human person to bring about interior renewal. This holds true not only for Christians but also for all people of good will, in whose hearts grace is invisibly active. As *Gaudium et Spes* explains: "since Christ died for all, and since all are in fact called to one and

[147] Nicholas Sagovsky, *Ecumenism, Christian Origins and the Practice of Communion* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners in a way known to God, the Paschal Mystery" (GS 22).

Taking the church's own vision and the terminology of some early Fathers, *Nostrae Aetate* speaks of these traditions as having 'a ray of that truth which enlightens all' (NA 2). *Ad Gentes* recognizes the presence of seeds of the word (gospel) and points to the riches which a generous God has distributed among the nations (AG 11). Again *Lumen Gentium* refers to the good which is 'found sown' not only in minds and hearts but also in the rites and customs of peoples (LG 4, 17). These few references suffice to show that the church openly acknowledges the presence of positive values not only in the religious life of individual believers of other religious traditions, but also in the religious traditions they belong to. *Ad Gentes* affirms that "the Holy Spirit was at work in the world, before Christ was glorified" (AG 4). Making such forward steps more resolutely, the official Vatican International Theological Commission issued a statement on religions in 1996, in which this distinguished body clearly affirmed that other traditions have a saving function and therefore can be "a means which helps for the salvation of their adherents."[148]

The church exhorts its members to practice dialogue as a mission of the church. The statements of *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) and *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991) present dialogue as an 'intrinsic element' in carrying out the mission of the church. The word 'mission' stands for that purpose. These recent documents affirm that in order to carry out this mission and achieve this purpose, Christians must not only proclaim - they must also dialogue (RM 34, 44; DP 75).

[148] International Theological Commission (Vatican), "Christianity and World Religions," *Origins* 14 (Spring 1997), 158.

As with intercultural theology, interreligious dialogue is an intercultural encounter or religious interculturation.[149] Paul F.Knitter prefers the term 'correlational' to give more emphasis to the interfaith relationship. He states that "a correlational dialogue of religions affirms the plurality of religions not because plurality is good in itself, but because it is a fact of life and the stuff of relationship."[150] According to him, a correlational model seeks to promote authentic and truly mutual dialogical relationships among religious communities of the world, analogous to the kind of human relationships that we seek to nurture among our friends and colleagues. Participants will witness to what makes them distinct, trying to show and convince others of the values they have found in their tradition. At the same time, they will be truly and courageously open to the witness of truth that others make.[151] This is a mutual back and forth correlation-ship, of speaking and listening, teaching and learning. The relationship between two human beings cannot thrive only by establishing each other's claims of difference, but also by appreciating similarities, common interests and common aspirations of all involved. In the same way, a correlational interaction of religions will be based on these essentialities of interpersonal relationships. Solidarity, mutuality, commitments, etc., are the byproducts of any genuine human relationship, and so too is the case with correlational religious co-existence. Relationship leads to responsibilities, and correlationality of religions leads toward being responsible to each other in harmony, trust and love.[152] For many theologians of the third world, the dialogue has to locate itself where praxis is taking place. The Indian theologian Michael Amalodoss endorses this position of

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[149] Wesley Ariarajah, "Interreligious Dialogue as Intercultural Encounter," 55.

[150] Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions: Multi-faith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 15.

[151] Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions*, 127.

[152] Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 244-245.

dialogue, and recommends the descent of dialogue from the experts to that of ordinary people, in their dialogue of life and struggle.[153] Thus the paradigm shift from interreligious dialogue to interfaith interaction is very promising, not only for mutual religious enrichment and religious harmony but also for its liberative motifs and tangible results in social transformation.

3.3. Interculturation and Integrity of Theology

Authentic interculturation that values sharing Christian faith through respectful dialogue of interaction and witness is a specific way of educating for human well-being. This has global implications as every culture and religious worldview interacts and collaborates with each religious, spiritual and cultural vision for human well-being. Within the process of a mutual interculturation, Christian spiritual values are shared within a particular local culture with a diverse religious worldview. In the process of interculturation, these local cultures do not remain isolated communities of faith. They are connected to each other, sharing, appropriating and integrating the vision of the gospel. Both Christian faith and specific religious beliefs and cultural identities rediscover themselves through a respectful dialectical conversation.[154] In this process of mutual relationality and reciprocity, theology can aspire for a dynamic wholeness because every aspect of faith and culture is kept in organic dialectics. But there are also identified dangers to Christian integrity[155] in the forms of multi-faith

[153] For Amaladoss, the role of the religions is one of providing inspiration, prophecy, challenge, hope in terms of the ultimate. In a multi-religious society, the various religions play this role together. Michael Amaladoss, "Liberation as an Interreligious Project" in *Leave the Temple: Indian Paths to Human Liberation,* ed. Felix Wilfred (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 166. Cf. also Knittter, *One Earth Many Religions,* 139.

[154] In this respect, interculturation can be viewed as a paradigm for Christian religious education that imaginatively fosters a way of being in continuous meaningful relationship within a diverse faith community. Breaux Veverka, in relation to education, suggests that "it is a community-building enterprise in which individuals come to understand themselves as a people who share a common vision of life." Breaux Veverka, "Re-imagining Catholic Identity," *Religious Education* Vol. 88/ 2 (1993), 241.

[155] The understanding of integrity here is based on the identity of faith in relation to its orthodoxy.

belonging and syncretism. Are these dangers to Christian integrity, or simply essential aspects of an evolving identity? The following subsections will highlight the possibilities of multi-faith belonging and syncretism, and their impacts on identity and wholeness of theology.

3.3.1. Multi-faith Belonging and Intra-religious Dialogue

Multiple religious belonging or hyphenated religious identity refers to the fact that it is possible, and even necessary, not only to accept in theory this or that doctrine or practice of another religion and to incorporate it into one's religious life but even to adopt and live the beliefs[156] as part of openly interacting with other religious beliefs. In other words, it stands for the possibility of practicing different religions by the same person. Multiple religious belonging emerges as a theological problem only in religions that demand an absolute and exclusive commitment on the part of their adherents to their faiths.[157] In the words of Catherin Cornille, "the more encompassing a religious claim to efficacy and truth, the more problematic the possibility of multiple religious belonging. Conversely ….it can be tolerated only when a religion has accepted the complementarities of other religions."[158] In the Christian theology of religions, non-Christian religions are considered as a part of God's plan of salvation of which Christ is the culmination point, and so Christ and non-Christian religions are related to one another. In the process of interculturation, through reciprocal relationship, non-Christian religions are not only complemented by Christianity, but

[156] Catherin Cornille, "Introduction: The Dynamics of Multiple Belonging," in *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity,* ed. Catherin Cornille (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 1.

[157] Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church," *Theological Studies* 64/3 (2003), 498. This seems to be the case with all 'religions of the Book.'

[158] Cornille, "Introduction: The Dynamics of Multiple Belonging," 2.

Christianity as well is complemented by other religions.[159] It is therefore only in dialogue with other religions that Christianity can come to a fuller realization of its own identity and mission and vice versa; other religions can achieve their full potential only in dialogue with each other and with Christianity.[160]

Historically, multiple religious belonging was common among early Christians;[161] it did not cause any anxious soul searching and theological qualms after the council of Jerusalem (around the year 48 CE – Acts 15, 1ff.). Multiple religious belonging, however, runs the risk of shallowness and trendiness, if practiced simply as a religious mix. Instead, there is absolute necessity of what Raymondo Panikkar calls the 'intra-religious dialogue'[162] or what Aloysius Pieris terms "*communicatio in sacris* or to be baptized by the church's precursors in the Jordan of Asian religion."[163] By this is meant a personal, interior experience of the encounter of two or more religious traditions and allowing them to interact while remaining fundamentally open to the unexpected and unforeseeable personal transformation such an encounter may produce. Thus, a sincere interfaith interaction will lead to intra-religious[164] dialogue for everyone involved, leading them toward higher realms of religious existence.

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[159] The declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith - *Dominus Iesus* (2000) makes a statement which on the one hand recognizes the inclusiveness of Christ's saving work and on the other hand affirms that "Jesus Christ has a significance and a value for the human race and its history" (D I 15).

[160] This position is not contrary to the statement of *Dominus Iesus:* "It would be contrary to the faith to consider the Church as one of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementarity to the church or substantially equivalent to her, even if these are said to be converging with the church toward the eschatological kingdom of God" (D I 21). The complementarity asserted here is place in the context of asymmetrical nature of the relationship between Christianity and other religions.

[161] In Acts 3, 46 we read that they went to temple area every day while in their homes they broke bread.

[162] Raymon Panikkar, *Intrareligious Dialogue*, 2. Here Panikkar writes: "I left as a Christian found myself a Hindu and I return as a Buddhist, without having ceased to be a Christian."

[163] Aloysius Pieris, *Love Meets Wisdom: A Christian Experience of Buddhism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 41.

[164] For a brief note on intra-religious dialogue please see footnote number 2 of this chapter.

3.3.2. Hybridity, Syncretism and Symbiosis

The process of interculturation can lead to hybridity and Schretier considers this status as a fact of cross-cultural existence.[165] Hybridity has come to mean all sorts of things to do with mixing and combination in the moment of cultural exchange. Homi Bhabha uses hybridity as an 'in-between' term, referring to a 'third space', and to ambivalence and mimicry especially in the context of what might, uneasily, be called the colonial cultural interface.[166] In Bhabha's terms 'hybridity is camouflage' and, provocatively, he offers 'hybridity as heresy' as a disruptive and productive category. It is 'how newness enters the world' and it is bound up with a 'process of translating and transvaluing cultural differences.'[167] The third space points toward the synthetic figure of the hybrid, emerged from a new cultural surplus. For Gayatri Spivak, the schema of hybridity is one that has often thrived on surplus leading to syncretism.[168] According to Peter C. Phan, both in hybridization and syncretism, the irreducible differences of cultures and religions are not respected. He prefers 'symbiosis' as the goal of every organic intercultural and interreligious encounter.[169]

Symbiosis is always 'inter-specific,' that is, it occurs only between different species; intra-specific relationships (relationships within similar entities) cannot be described as symbiosis. Phan advocates 'symbiosis' as a way of organic living together of differences. As a result of ongoing interaction, reciprocity and commitment, new identities are evolved. The

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[165] Schreiter, *New Catholicity*, 76-77.

[166] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 193.

[167] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 229-234.

[168] Perhaps only Gayatri Spivak's works have really taken seriously the privilege of this positioning Cf. Gayatri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1999). Her discussion of surplus value is best accessed through her works: *Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987) and *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1993). The emphasis of hybridity is on 'mixing,' whereas that of syncretism is on 'togetherness.'

[169] Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church," 514. Symbiosis is opposite to 'parasitism' in which one species benefits and the other is harmed in the process.

symbiotic interrelationship can be considered in two main categories: *mutualism*, when both entities involved benefit from the relationship and *commensalism*, when one entity benefits and the other (s) is/are not affected. He considers that 'symbiosis' can better balance the differences organically, wherein the particularities are not ignored but undergo spontaneous transformation, allowing for natural selection and identity formation.[170] The integrity of intercultural theology will be enhanced by the symbiosis process since interculturation is taken as an organic process of spontaneous reciprocity.

3.3.3. Balancing Identity and Relevance

Relevance without identity is empty and identity without relevance is futile. An authentic theology properly balances the factors of 'identity and relevance' and maintains credibility.[171] This hypothesis is based on the fact that the church has to remain relevant to the rapid changes of internal and external circumstances, yet not at the cost of forfeiting its identity. Jürgen Moltmann highlights this crucial aspect of theologizing:

> There is no Christian identity without public relevance and no public relevance without theology's Christian identity, since for Christ's sake theology is kingdom-of-God theology, while on the other hand, kingdom-of-God theology gets lost in the clouds of utopia unless it is based on the person and history of Christ and unfolded out of the experiences of his spirit. ….There is an implicit theology for modern time, a theology always already existent but a theology not critically thought through.[172]

It was mentioned in chapter one that some of the contextual theologies tend to sacrifice identity for the sake of relevance. However, even the official church was not mindful of the reality of relevance when the scholastic theology of the West was introduced for seminary training all around the globe.

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[170] Phan does not speak about the role of agency and power in this process.

[171] Gerald O' Collins, *Retrieving Fundamental Theology* (Mahawa: Paulist Press, 1993), 17-23. According to Collins, theology maintains identity when it doesn't stray from the foundations of the mystery of salvation in Christ and finds relevance while it is competent to give answers to the present day questions of the faithful.

[172] Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology* (London: Fortress Press, 1999), 1.

The 'four marks of the church'- *one*, *holy*, *catholic* and *apostolic* - stated in the Nicene[173] creed stand for the defining identity of the church in the world.[174] Among the four marks of the church 'one, holy and apostolic' are intrinsic to the church, whereas 'catholic' is both intrinsic and extrinsic in the sense that the inherent attribute of catholicity is to be tangibly drawn from the faith experience of believers all over the earth. The one, holy and apostolic church becomes catholic only when Christ is made known and celebrated by the whole creation (universally). Thus the identity of catholicity is of eschatological nature of 'already and not yet' longing for fulfillment. In other words, (the complete) identity of the church is in the process of becoming.[175] The implicit identity, as Moltmann points out, is in need of critical interpretation in varying contexts.[176] Hence, identity itself is in the process of realization, and only by being relevant to the particular contexts of the people, can identity be better realized.

Intercultural theology attempted to propose an evolving identity for theology[177] through ongoing, mutual and critical correlation between Judaeo-Christian tradition and

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[173] It is called Nicene because, in its original form, it was adopted in the city of Nicaea by the first ecumenical council, which was convened there in the year 325.

[174] The belief that the church is characterized by these four particular 'marks' was first expressed by the first council of Constantinople (in 381) in its revision of the Nicene Creed, in which it included the statement: "*We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.*" In Protestant theology these are sometimes called the attributes of the church. They are still professed today in the Nicene Creed, recited in the liturgy of Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and many Protestant churches' worship services.

[175] Martyn Percy, *Shaping the Church: The Promise of Implicit Theology* (Surray, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), 1-3.

[176] Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society*, 1.

[177] Although I have used the word 'process' in several places of this thesis, intercultural theology is not to be confused with process theology. Process theology focuses more on Theistic explanations whereas intercultural theology emphasizes the understanding and communication of faith in the ongoing dynamism of the context. If process theology is more ontological, intercultural theology is more epistemological. Process theology affirms that God is working in all persons to actualize potentialities. In that sense, each religious manifestation is the divine working in a unique way to bring out the beautiful and the good. Additionally, scripture and religion represent human interpretations of the divine. Cf. Robert Mesle, *Process Theology: A Basic Introduction* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1993), 65-68, 75-80, 101. However, intercultural theology is influenced by process hermeneutics which deals with ongoing understanding of the divine or faith in the evolving human cultures. For

human experience (context).[178] The context of theology is identified as a situation of multiple cultural orientations due to the phenomena of globalization and pluralism. Doing theology in the intercultural approach can minimize the chances of loss of identity. According to Hollenweger, intercultural theology is primarily an 'inner-Christian hermeneutic project.'[179] It is tested in social practice and its relevance is measured by its capacity for bridge building between diverse groups through reciprocal learning.[180] Friedli insists that 'intercultural circulation' among the particularities will foster and strengthen the autonomy of the particular churches and the catholicity of the universal church.[181] The identity of theology as an inner Christian project is focused in the process of theologizing and it is achieved through intercultural circulation like symbiosis, intra-religious dialogue, etc. In other words, in intercultural theology, the ongoing and reciprocal process of interculturation does not separate identity from relevance but facilitates their co-existence. In such a situation, balancing of identity and relevance is a byproduct of the theologizing process when it is done interculturally.

3.3.4. Toward a Dynamic Wholeness: a New Heaven and a New Earth

Wholeness as an aspiration can be materialized only when there is no fragmentation. "That the earthly and the heavenly city penetrate one another is a fact open only to the eyes of faith…" (GS 40). Vatican II's dogmatic constitution on the church, *Lumen Gentium,*

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more details and criticisms on process hermeneutics see: David J. Lull, "What is Process Hermeneutics?" *Process Studies* 13/3 (Fall 1983), 189-201.

[178] Jose M. De Mesa and Lode L. Wostyn, *Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1990), 72-73.

[179] It means that intercultural theology gives priority to Christian identity in the process of theologizing. Cf. Walter Hollenweger, "Intercultural Theology," *Theological Renewal* 10 (October 1978), 2-14.

[180] Hans Jochen Margull, *Hope in Action,* (Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press, 1962), 121.

[181] Richard Friedli, "Intercultural Theology," in *Dictionary of Mission,* eds. Karl Müller et al. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 219.

recognized the significance of *ecclesia particularis* (LG 8, 26 & 27) and encouraged the contextualization/inculturation for the revitalization of the indigenous identity of the local churches. The final chapter of the second principal document on the church, *Gaudium et Spes*, deals with the mutual relationship of the church and the world (GS 40-43).[182] Post-Vatican II teachings carried forward the same spirit for the realization of the local identity of the particular churches through the process of inculturation and indigenization. In his 1999 post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia,* Pope John Paul II writes:

> Culture is the vital space in which the human person comes face to face with the Gospel. . . . Evangelization and inculturation are naturally and intimately related to each other. The Gospel and evangelization are certainly not identical with culture; they are independent of it. Yet the Kingdom comes to people who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building of the Kingdom of God cannot avoid borrowing elements from human cultures (EA 20).

He goes on to insist that the process of inculturation "must involve the entire people of God" (EA 21).

We have been exploring an improved understanding of the process of inculturation and contextualization called interculturation. Interculturation is proposed as a more suitable concept to designate the inter-activity between/among culture(s) and religion(s). While interculturation does not deny the transformative role of the gospel in any specific culture and religious context, it does recognize that diverse cultures and religious perspectives will interact with and appropriate other cultural and religious symbols. Thus, the gospel will find new expressions that will ultimately transform the plurality of religious identities. Religious and cultural identities are as important for every generation as they are for Christian missionaries. Clearly, religious and cultural identities are not fixed or static but are constantly evolving, recreating, and transforming themselves through the continuous interacting

[182] Cf. John D. Dadosky, "The Church and the Other: Mediation and Friendship in Post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Ecclesiology," *Pacifica: Australian Journal of Theology* (October 2005), 302-322.

movements of religious and cultural experience with that of Christian culture and the Christian faith experience. New forms of both identities emerge still rooted in their various historical traditions. Academic theology plays an important role in providing and empowering pedagogical paradigms[183] that enable the understanding and sustaining of perpetually changing identities. In the words of Breaux Veverka, theological education is "one of the primary ways in which a community nurtures and sustains its particular identity, values, and ethos from generation to generation."[184]

The wholeness of inclusion of diversities and the fullness of faith in a pattern of intercultural exchange can be set on track only when theology encompasses sameness and difference, rooted in an orthopraxis appropriated for globalized and pluralistic (or glocalized) versions of a human society. The new wholeness as an absence of fragmentation and as a realization of the reconciliation between the local and the global or the particular and the universal will be a possible aspiration, not a theoretical utopia, when theology facilitates the penetration of heaven and earth (GS 40). It is an ongoing, mutual and dynamic penetration, recognizing the incarnational presence of the divine in all religions, cultures and territories. It calls for a change in approach. The new wine is in need of a new wine skin! (Lk 5, 36-39). The quest for theologizing in the context of globalization and pluralism demands a new approach to doing theology and thus *intercultural theology*!

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[183] I am thinking here of Thomas Groome's five movements for conversation in his "Shared Praxis" approach, combined with David Tracy's paradigm of the "Analogical Imagination". See Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 175-293; David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1989). Breaux Veverka suggests that "the task of 're-imagining' Catholic identity in the modern world requires a paradigm of education that takes seriously the particularity and distinctiveness of the Catholic tradition as a critical resource." See Breaux Veverka, "Re-imagining Catholic Identity: Toward an Analogical Paradigm of Religious Education," *Religious Education* 88/2 (1993), 241-245. Veverka further contends that the re-imagining strategy would include the themes of "openness, tradition, and sacrament to illustrate the kind of reflection and 're-imagination' of Catholic education that I have proposed."

[184] Veverka, "Re-imagining Catholic Identity," 241.

Conclusion

At the close of this chapter, let me reiterate that as a method in doing theology, interculturation has the potential for facilitating the realization of a dynamic wholeness of church and theology. Interculturation does not limit theology as culture conditioned but as culture sensitive, making theology relevant to the ever changing contextual peculiarities. The concept of catholicity as an identity of the church is achievable through interpenetration among the particularities leading to higher universality. The paradigm shifts from inculturation to interculturation, from ecumenism to communion and from interreligious dialogue to interfaith interaction, will balance identity and relevance because relatedness is achieved through rootedness by favoring sameness over differences. Moving in this direction, I would argue at this juncture that the phenomena of globalization and pluralism, and the subsequent *glocalization* and the situation of multilateral cultural orientations, are opportunities to surpass the elements of fragmentation in the world and in the church, through dialectal interaction. Intercultural theology can help create the proper disposition for this task whereby the dynamic wholeness of the church and theology can be set forth in the process of becoming through ongoing interculturation.

CONCLUSION

In the light of all the things just discussed, is it possible to describe exactly what intercultural theology is? Obviously it is a complex process. It is also obvious that contexts are complex that histories can be variously read, that experiences can be ambiguous, and that an encounter in faith is often dimly understood. Hence a conclusion at this juncture could be deceptive, whereas an inclusion of a summoning into an unremitting excess of ongoing creativity of mutuality might better explain the nature of intercultural theology.

I have been attempting to present intercultural theology as an approach to doing theology in the current context of globalization and pluralism. Much of this study has focused on ascertaining intercultural theology as a suitable method of theologizing rather than introducing it as a separate theological discipline. Hence the thrust of the study has been more on methodological appropriateness than on its definitional precisions. In this final section of the study, in addition to summarizing some of the highlights of the previous chapters, I will suggest a few potential contributions of this approach as well as a few limitations and I will point out areas for further research.

Chapter one presented the general context of the research. Reiterating the need of doing theology contextually, the inadequacies of present contextual theologies were indentified, not ignoring their strengths. Presenting pluralism and globalization as dominant contextual trends today, I have attempted to trace the tension between particularity and universality and the challenges of the attitudes of homogenization and imperialization in doing theology. The basic reason for these limits has been the failure to listen to the context with its evolving peculiarity of multicultural orientations. This new understanding of the context necessitates a new approach called intercultural theology.

Chapter two was organized around the exposition of intercultural theology, the background reasons for its genesis, its earlier and later exponents, its conceptual and terminological analyses and finally its hermeneutics. The emphasis on ongoing mutual reciprocity among multiple cultural orientations makes intercultural theology an appropriate method in the emerging context. Presenting intercultural theology as a new method in theology rather than as a separate discipline, the commitment to this perspective is considered more programmatic rather than ideological. Hence intercultural theology is more than an armchair theology. It is a theology of both *theoria* and praxis.

Chapter three analyzed the impact and significance of the paradigm shift initiated by intercultural theology in transforming the self-understanding (*ad intra*) and self-expression (*ad extra*) of the church in the world. The present social trend of glocalization and the methodological relevance of interculturation in this evolving cultural context are presented as signs of significance of this perspective as a theological method for the future. This chapter included the disclosure of the transforming potential of interculturation not only in balancing identity and relevance, particularity and universality, but also in facilitating the realization of the dynamic wholeness of the church and a theology seeking organic identity based on the incarnational and pneumato-centric ecclesiology. It also explained how interculturation broadened the understanding of mission through the processes of symbiosis and intra-religious dialogue, leading to communion in ecumenism and interfaith interaction in interreligious dialogue.

Having explained the fundamentals in the preceding chapters, I am now in a position to propose a few prospective aspects of an intercultural approach:

Balancing particular-universal dimensions of church and theology: I argued in chapters two and three that intercultural theology has the potential for balancing the particular-universal dimensions of the church and theology. This balancing is not merely a byproduct of

interculturation but it is due to the conscious focus on rootedness and relatedness as a priority of this approach, in comparison with other theological methods.

Balancing identity and relevance: The identity of the church is understood in relation to the world; it is an organic identity achieved through finding relevance in emerging contexts. Therefore, the identity in terms of propositional statements has to give way for new emerging identities of the church through interculturation with its elements of reciprocity and mutual enrichment. Thus, identity of the church and theology is not a finished statement, but rests on the ongoing mutual interaction in search of relevance.

Toward the convergence of Christian traditions and other religions: The paradigm shift in the self-expression of the church, as presented in chapter three, leads toward the convergence of different churches and religions, not at the loss of their unique identities but at the gain of identifying similarities and sharing common aspirations facilitated by ongoing reciprocity. The principles of symbiosis and intra-religious dialogue and correlationality and the concepts of 'interstitial zone' and 'in-betweenness' are helpful tools for accelerating this process.

The pace of theology is the pace of cultural change: As a theology from below, intercultural theology keeps abreast with the social changes. Listening to culture and interacting with it creatively through mutual enrichment keeps theology always dynamic. The accusation that the church is too slow to change can be minimized when change is a spontaneous result of interculturation. *Ecclesia semper reformanda* becomes a true dictum about the church when interculturation becomes the method of theologizing.

Integrity of church and theology: Interculturation is not any deviation from the proper mode of being for the church in the world. Indeed the Vatican II spirits of *resourcement* and *aggiornamento* are skillfully fused in this approach. As we saw in chapter three, interculturation is only going back to the roots (*resourcement*) of the spirit of the early

Christian community that embraced the best of different cultures and religions. Similarly, listening to the cultures and becoming mutually enriched and transformed are the essential elements of true *aggiornamento.* The notion of *intercultural* deconstructs monolithic and exclusive attitudes. Hence intercultural theology facilitates the fulfillment of the expectations of contextualization in any cultural trend and places every local theology as an integral part in the overall theological process of the church.

As a programmatic commitment, the limits of intercultural theology are mainly based on the chances of failure in the process. As mentioned in chapter two, the function of power and the disposition of the agencies (like theologians, missionaries, pastors, catechists and so on) can control the process of interculturation. The human weaknesses of prejudice, ignorance, unavailability and lack of hospitality can hinder or distort the interculturation process. Therefore, the same historical mistakes of imperialism may occur. But they will be trivial since such deviations are taking place right within the process of interculturation, not in the complete denial of the interlocutors involved in it.

As a new approach to doing theology, the success of intercultural theology depends on the competency of its hermeneutical process. Intercultural hermeneutics is an area that has to be explored and developed to facilitate the programmatic commitment of intercultural theology. Modern and contemporary hermeneutical concepts like 'fusion of horizons' by George Gadamer, 'conversation' by David Tracy, 'mutual self-mediation' by Bernard Lonergan and 'mediation and friendship' by John D. Dadosky will be helpful resources toward this purpose.[1]

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[1] Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 340-369; David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 60-79 ; Bernard J. Lonergan, "The Mediation of Christ in Prayer," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 2/1 (March 1984), 1-20 and John D. Dadosky, "The Church and the Other: Mediation and Friendship in Post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Ecclesiology," *Pacifica: Australian Journal of Theology* (October 2005), 302-322.

Finally, the removal of fragmentation is fundamental to the realization of wholeness. In listening to the present culture, like the recent process of glocalization with its focus on mutual transformation, we can find out how cultures dialectically interact to avoid fragmentation. Since interculturation, with its focus on dialectical interaction and mutual enrichment, broadens and transcends other previous notions like inculturation and contextualization, it should be considered a suitable way of doing theology in evolving contexts like globalization and pluralism and even beyond. The Biblical metaphor of a new wineskin (Lk 5, 36-39) is a very powerful invitation to initiate a proactive process. The call for a hermeneutic change is not a syndrome of lack of trust in the old methods, but an act of being responsible. If the old wineskin had been 'stretched to the limit' using it again risks losing the wine. I am hopeful that the new wineskin of intercultural theology can facilitate relevant manifestations of the liberating power of the gospel among all cultures, in all times, and will sustain the theological process toward a dynamic wholeness.

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