CHAPTER 2

What is "Inculturation"?

2.1. Introduction

The topic which this thesis explores depends on two basic terms: inculturation, and Supper Narratives. The search for inculturation necessarily demands it be defined. However, other key terms must also be defined in support of this.

Of these the last (Supper Narratives) is the most straightforward, and will be taken as referring to those accounts of the earthly Jesus' last meal with his disciples found in Mk 14:12-26, Matt 26:17-30 and Luke 22:7-23 and 1 Cor 11:17-34. Given the restricted focus of the research on the Supper Narratives, it must be pointed out that the research is not an exhaustive analysis of all references to the Last Supper and associated rituals in the early Christian period.

The definition of inculturation involves definitions of culture and theology, as well as looking how they may combine. There is an interrelationship between theology and culture. This is made explicit by the use of inculturation as a theological term. There is certain logic in setting out our preliminary definitions in the following order: "culture", "theology, culture and meaning", and, finally, "inculturation".

This progression allows us first to look at culture, and then the role of culture as part of a wider discussion of how culture and theology interact to provide meaning or understanding. Inculturation can be considered an example of this process. Kathryn Tanner has used a similar flow of argument in her examination of the role of culture in present-day post-modern theology (1997). It has the merit of ensuring that the definitions given subsequently do not include a term (in this case, culture) whose meaning is uncertain.

The final definition will be that of inculturation. This will necessarily focus on modern writing. The fact that inculturation is a term coined within the last 40 years does not mean that it is irrelevant term for describing theological methods used by early Christian writers. Terminology from later periods has long been a part of New Testament studies, both as terms of description and keys to interpretation[1]. Part of the definition will include examples of inculturation from earlier periods of church history (pp. 49-52, ¶ 2.4.1.). In this work, the writings of African theologians who are

not so confined by the boundaries of modern Western philosophical and theological categories will play a crucial role. Their writing about inculturation is liberating. They describe it without jargon in ways that more obviously correspond to the theological patterns of previous ages. They allow us to see that the neologism in fact describes something that has been part and parcel of Christian theology in other generations. Brief outlines of some of these theological projects will thus be included both as examples of the practice, but also as means of showing that the term inculturation cannot be judged irrelevant to the New Testament purely because of its own novelty.

2.2. "Culture"

Culture carries a variety of meanings and is a notoriously difficult term. Raymond Williams has described it as "one of the two or three most complicated in the English language" (1976, 76; cf. Allen 1998, 4; Tanner 1997, 3). The original Latin root has to do with the cultivation of crops or the rearing of animals (thus *colo,-ere* (Lat.), cf. Lewis & Short 1879) [2], an understanding found repeatedly in the ancient world the renaissance and the Enlightenment (Winthrop 1991, 51).

2.2.1. "High" Culture

A popular definition associates "culture" with what might be called "high culture". In this sense culture refers to the arts and the realm of aesthetics. Such ideas of culture have a long pedigree in European thought. This understanding of culture is explored in writers such as Bacon, Goethe (*Bildung*) and Arnold (Tanner 1997, 4-16). Culture implies refinement and civilisation. It could also be a means of political control, used to consolidate the modern state in Britain and France, and to engineer the shift in power from the aristocracy to the middle-classes in Germany (5)[3].

2.2.2. An Anthropological Definition: "Cultural Evolutionism"

A second, later understanding of culture sees it as an anthropological term. It is this second understanding which is the foundation of theories such as inculturation. This anthropological meaning derived from the "high culture" definition. The link between the two came from British theories of cultural evolutionism. In these theories, culture

was seen as referring to the "institutions of different social groups". Put crudely, "culture" was no longer the exclusive preserve of a refined elite. It was often associated with the view that society develops, e.g., from magic to religion to science (Tanner 1997, 16). Intellectual forms and institutions in different stages of a society could be considered as stages of cultural development. The different stages could be described as more or less cultured. Such theories also had a Christian theological component, reflecting the Victorian controversy over evolution (Kardiner & Preble 1961, 59-60)

2.2.3. Criticism of "Cultural Evolutionism"

Whilst the cultural evolutionists made the term "culture" applicable to the description of different stages of a society's development, they still tended to talk of culture rather than cultures. Culture was still considered to be a "single unitary ideal" (Tanner 1997,17). This need not be so. Nor are cultures necessarily logical or uniform. It is tempting to view them in these ways because they offer clarity. Cultures need not exhibit signs of internal consistency or logic, nor may there always be a consensus about particular thoughts or practices.

There were also metaphysical problems with the evolutionist agenda. The concept of culture was tied to such concepts as progress (i.e., that human society is evolving and necessarily improving). Herein lay the weakness of the cultural evolutionists' thinking. They used their own society uncritically as the control or benchmark by which other societies were judged. That said, a scholar such as Tylor, in many ways the founder of cultural anthropology, was aware of the dangers, even if he did not avoid them completely (Kardiner & Preble 1961, 63-4).

The criticism of cultural evolutionism for its metaphysical foundations did not mean that such investigations had to stop. Rather, researchers needed to accept the limits, constraints and weaknesses of the viewpoint from which they made their analysis.

A second weakness of cultural evolutionism was the weight that it placed on the role of the human intellect. Tylor's work acknowledged, but did not really come to terms with the role of emotion in behaviour (76). Intellect was accorded a dominant role. It was thought that through reflection a person could escape from unconscious cultural behaviour. Tylor's primitive philosopher at least had the merits of according his

subjects a degree of respect. Tylor's work influenced one of the best-known anthropologists, G.J. Frazer, the writer of the monumental *Golden Bough*. Frazer followed Tylor's intellectualism, but modified it: irrationality, or superstition, was the reason for old habits, now redundant, remaining potent (92).

In reply, modern anthropological theorists put forward a different view. While the cultural evolutionists argued that culture was the result of reflection and intellectual activity, modern theorists believe that culture is a precondition of rationality, that is, culture shapes thought or behaviour, rather than thought or behaviour shaping culture (Tanner 1997, 18; Winthrop 1991, 54). Caution must be exercised here. It is not the case that one is trapped within a culture, or that cultures are static. Whilst culture may suggest a degree of social determinism, this is not absolute. Human beings remain free to question or revolt against their contemporary culture. They are not cultural automata. Revolution, rebellion and dissent, as well as change and reformation, are the constant reminders of the weakness of culture as a method of complete control. The evolution of cultures itself is a criticism of such views. What is at issue is the idea that culture is only the result of human intellectual activity rather than being a factor that shapes it.

2.2.4. Culture and *Kultur*

The final move towards the anthropological definition of culture comes through its association with the German term, *Kultur*. *Kultur* was not identified with some concept of civilisation, but rather with a society's achievements. This had the effect of connecting *Kultur* with national achievement and identity rather than a universal ideal (McLelland 1982, 45). It could thus be used to make social groups distinct from each other (Tanner 1997,9). From this it followed that social groups should be considered in their own terms as they had their own distinct cultural characteristics. The way was open to think of culture as a plurality rather than a universal ideal. However, there was still a tendency to make the investigator's culture the benchmark by which others were measured (10-11).

This view of *Kultur*/culture also noted the effect that society exercised over the individual: culture shapes people.

2.2.5. Beyond "High Culture"

In the first half of the twentieth century there was a reaction to cultural evolutionism. "Culture" was considered to be pluralistic and value-free (Winthrop 1991, 51). A classic definition is found in Boas' writing:

> Culture embraces all the manifestations of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives, and the products of human activities as determined by these habits"
>
> (Boas 1930, 79)

 In part, this was precipitated by the use of "diffusion" rather than evolution (Winthrop 1991, 53). This anthropological idea of culture became common when German scholars working in America substituted the concept of *Kultur* for the "high culture" definition[4]. Culture could be defined in terms which are primarily historical (Gallagher 1997, 14-5) or anthropological (Tanner 1997, 25-7). These two sets highlight different aspects of culture: Gallagher stresses an historical dimension (history, genesis), whereas Tanner's analysis is more anthropological (social, human). The two sets are not exclusive. Rather they remind us that any examination of culture must always take place in both historical and anthropological contexts. A specific "cultural moment" cannot be fully analysed in isolation, nor can "culture" be studied as an abstract from humanity.

2.2.6 "Culture" in the late 20th Century

Thus, by the latter half of the twentieth century, definitions of culture were significantly different from those held previously, and these changes were occasioned by insights from modern empirical studies. Although pluralistic views can be seen as early as Montesquieu, these had been obscured by the politics of empire and colonialism in the nineteenth century, an operation which in part attempted to justify itself through notions of a superior culture (Shorter 1988, 22). In the latter half of the twentieth century, the pluralist understanding of culture was firmly established.

From this point another change can be noted. The "classical" study of culture suggests that individual cultures are clearly defined units or systems. We might say that they have firm boundaries. Yet this is not the case, It would be better to think of the edges as porous. It can be difficult sometimes to distinguish where one culture

ends and another begins: there is a degree of overlap between them (Tanner 1997, 53-6)[5]. Kroeber attempted to avoid the possible confusion which might result from the use of geographical language such as "boundaries" or "area", by using the concepts of "intensity" or "climax" to evaluate the relationships between cultures (Kardiner & Preble 1961, 193).

In such evaluations, the differences appear such as to provoke the conclusion that discrete cultures exist. At other times, differences can be seen, but we can question whether they justify the differentiation of two cultures. Part of the confusion arises from the slightly different meanings that can be applied to the term "culture". Luzbetak offers a long, but helpful, insight into this question. He notes that culture can be used in an extended sense (e.g. "Western culture"), as well as for what might be better termed "sub-cultures", and even in a purely metaphorical sense (e.g., "gang culture" (Luzbetak 1998, 171-2).

However, the pluralism did not stop with "culture" itself: it was accompanied by a diversification in the perspectives from which culture was analysed.

Thus, in this period, some, like Murdock, rejected completely the use of terms such as culture:

> It now seems to me distressingly obvious that culture, social system, and all comparable supra-individual concepts, such as collective representation, group mind, and social organism, are illusory conceptual abstractions inferred from observations of the very real phenomena of individuals interacting with one another and with their natural environments.
>
> (quoted in Sahlins 1976, 95)

Others adopted a materialist approach:

> A culture is made up of the energy systems, the objective and specific artifacts, the organizations of social and political relations, the modes of thought, the ideologies, and the total range of customary behaviors that are transmitted from one generation to another by a social group and that enable it to maintain life in a particular habitat.
>
> (Cohen 1974, 1)

Ethnoscientists equated language with culture, and used language as a a model for culture (Winthrop 1991, 56). Anthropologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss used structuralism as their model, making culture a system of signs:

> the mind imposes culturally patterned order, a logic of binary contrast, of relations
> and transformations, on a continuously changing and often random world.
>
> (Keesing 1974, 78-79)

Finally Geertz considered that culture uses symbols to transmit meaning and develop their thinking (Geertz 1973, 89): interpretation becomes fundamental to the experience of culture (Winthrop 1991, 56). A theological approach to culture came from Lonergan who noted that culture is an aid to reflection (1958, 236), and provides a set of meanings and values to inform life (1972, 301).

The diversification of approaches to culture increased in the 1980s. Again there was a movement in which culture was increasingly considered redundant, this time informed by sociobiologists (Winthrop 1991, 56).

In "practice" approaches, explanations are sought for:

> the genesis, reproduction, and change of form and meaning of a given social/cultural
> whole.
>
> (Ortner 1984, 149)

Culture continues to be viewed more as a process than a finished product. It becomes increasingly difficult to talk of concepts such as "tradition" (Wagner 1981, 50). This is a feature shared by a more widely known set of theories, collectively known as postmodernism.

Postmodernism has questioned whether or not there can be a reliable knowledge of culture. James Clifford has summarised the postmodernist agenda as follows:

> they see culture as composed of seriously contested codes and representations. . . .
> Their focus on text making and rhetoric serves to highlight the constructed, artificial
> nature of cultural accounts. It undermines overly transparent modes of authority, and
> it draws attention to the historical predicament of ethnography, the fact that it is
> always caught up in the invention, not the representation, of cultures.
>
> (1986, 2)

Postmodernism attempts to demythologise and democratise what has previously been the preserve of elites (Sampson 1994, 46). This includes theories of culture which appear to set values and norms. It becomes well-nigh impossible for one culture to criticise another.

In reply, critics have suggested that postmodern cultural analysis exaggerates what is exotic in a culture at the expense of elements which are more open to comparison and synthesis. The postmodern approach seems to stress otherness, when increasingly boundaries are considered to be dissolving (Winthrop 1991, 58). Postmodernism also queries whether there can be any fixed values, or indeed meaning. To this extent it accords with much other theory, but may make overly bold claims:

> The post-modern attack on the fixed and immobile accords with hermeneutical insights after Hegel and after Dilthey into the historical, contextual and finite nature of human understanding and of language. But this insight is to be distinguished from the post-modern suggestions that all truth and falsehood and all critiques of idolatry remain so contextually conditioned as to become *unstable* and radically pluralistic.
>
> (Thiselton 1992, 113)

Writers as diverse as Gadamer, Wittgenstein and Peirce all suggest, in diverse ways, that "inter-subjective agreement" is a precondition of effective communication (Apel 1980, 111).

Hermeneutical studies bring forward some of the strongest criticism of postmodernism. Thiselton notes two problems with postmodernist claims: (1) are the possibilities of meaning they claim linguistic or conditions of possibility, and (2) do they deal with presuppositions or acts of communication (1992, 100)? These concerns stem in part from confusion over the meaning of "possibility" demanded in French linguistic theory. Of particular concern is the way in which subsequent postmodern theory differed from the work of Saussure, and the relation between Barthes' theory of texts and intertextuality(101-2). These issues serve as reminders that postmodern theories, no matter what they claim, are built on other philosophical judgements. They may appear to be free of such claims, and indeed may strive to present themselves as such, but this is not the case (103).

Postmodernism also must face up to the conclusions which it demands itself. Theory which proclaims the death of dogma cannot itself become dogmatic (e.g. Barthesianism, cf. Hervey 1982, 152)

2.2.7. Final Definitions of "Culture"

Let us conclude this examination of "culture" by placing together several different definitions of culture. Culture is connected to both the realms of thought and identity. Hiebert sums up these ideas succinctly, defining culture as:

> the integrated system of learned patterns of behaviour, ideas and products characteristic of a society.
>
> (Hiebert 1995, 25)

Two definitions, the first from UNESCO, the second from the WCC, help to spell out more clearly what constitutes a culture in this period:

> Culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being value systems, traditions and beliefs...It is culture that gives man the ability to reflect upon himself. It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgment and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognises his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations [6].

> [culture is] what holds a community together, giving a common framework of meaning. It is preserved in language, thought patterns, ways of life, attitudes, symbols and presuppositions, and is celebrated in art, music...It constitutes the collective heritage which will be handed down to generations still to come.
>
> (WCC 1995, 19)

The above definitions show that world-views or belief systems rather than race or ethnicity are the defining features of a culture. Both verbal and non-verbal methods of communication are evident. Yet these remain somewhat static. Thus, it is better to finally adopt Allen's definition of culture, important for this study not only because of the role placed on symbols and symbolism, but also because it indicates the dynamic nature of culture:

> The term "culture" does indeed cover a broad range of topics: ideas, language, recipes for action, tools, products, norms, values, beliefs, art, and so forth. The term has also been used in conceptually polarized extremes: referring to either material or nonmaterial objects, and as being either an epiphenomenon or the center of the

social system. My intent in the use of the term "culture" is to emphasize its function as a symbolic reference system whereby humans manufacture and reproduce a meaningful, real world in action and interaction. This definition stresses human agency in the creation of meaning: it is my position that signs and symbols and discourses are cultural artifacts. They themselves do not produce meaning; humans produce meaning in concert with the cultural system. Significance must be enacted and experienced, or else it simply remains a potential. Meaning is only produced by human beings acting and interacting through two primary mechanisms: the focus of psychic or emotional energy and the process of association.

(Allen 1998, 4)

These definition shares similarities with the methodology outlined above (Ch.1., pp. 7-19, ¶ 1.3.1-4.). For, in all, there is a move away from ideological or idealistic presuppositions, inasmuch as culture is viewed as pluralist and as a human product. Allen's definition provides an introit to our next concern, the way in which theology and culture might produce meaning or understanding.

2.3. Theology, Culture and Meaning

Theology initially appears self-explanatory. It can be described as an activity: "doing theology" or "theologising". It refers to the ways in which we express views, ideas, and beliefs about God. The Greek origins of the word reflect this: θεός for "God", and λόγος literally "a word", or, by extension, "talk, dialogue, discourse". Our usual meaning takes "God" as an objective genitive, so the whole becomes " God-talk", or discourse and dialogue about God.

Anselm's dictum *fides quaerens intellectum* ("faith seeking understanding")[7] provides a definition of "theology". His inclusion of an action, "seeking", also moves us towards the question of how theology is done and what tools are used. Theology seems to be an activity involving faith as a presupposition, and understanding as an aim or goal. However, the terms "faith" and "understanding" need to be examined further.

2.3.1. Faith

"Faith" embraces a variety of meanings. If we examine the Christian tradition for help, we can see two different definitions. The Greek πίστις can mean both "trust"

and "believe in/that"[8]. The former is primarily a relational activity ("I trust someone") whilst the second is epistemological ("I hold a certain number of ideas about X "). The relational use sees faith activity primarily in terms of relationships whilst the epistemological views faith as an intellectual activity. Both have their place in Christian traditions even if one may at times appear to dominate the other. Whichever is preferred, faith provides the initial stuff, the subject matter, the text or message, of theology. However, this stuff or text remains silent without an interpreter. The person who reads, reflects, or engages with it is a necessary player in the theological process. Without the interpreter there is no conversation.

2.3.2. Interpretation

Thus far, we can say that there are two necessary elements in the theological process: the text and the interpreter. Here our examination of theological methods comes close to theories of reading and literary criticism. A text is no longer seen as the holder of a meaning which is quarried out by an impartial and completely objective interpreter. Reader response theories have shown that the reader has a decisive role in shaping an interpretation. Controversy centres not so much on the fact that reader and text interact as where the burden of the interpretation lies.

How to define interpretation? Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his monumental *Truth And Method*, uses conversation as a starting point:

> conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says....
>
> (1989, 385)

By extension, conversation is not just an activity between two speakers/listeners, but can describe any interaction between a text and an interpreter in which the aim is to understand the text (385).

We can thus note an overlap between Anselm and Gadamer: a process that leads to understanding. By implication this process involves a text (Gadamer) or faith (Anselm) and an interpreter. What Anselm describes as "seeking", Gadamer labels as "conversation" or "hermeneutics". Gadamer calls the entire process a

"hermeneutical conversation". It is tempting to see three distinct stages in such a "conversation": faith/text, seeking/interpretation, and understanding. However the stages of seeking/interpretation and understanding are not distinct: finding a common language coincides with the act of understanding and reaching agreement (388).

Postmodernist critics suggest the work of Gadamer is implicitly based on an outmoded high view of tradition which gives it excessive value. It is, they continue, an outmoded classicist view of culture (Tanner 1997, 131-4). Such criticism suggests that value is placed on the textual element rather than the interpreter. However, careful reading raises questions about the validity of such criticism, given that Gadamer does not locate meaning solely in a received tradition:

> Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose content interests the age and in which it seeks to understand itself. The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always co-determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence by the totality of the objective course of history.
>
> (1989, 296)

Gadamer attempts to circumvent many of the problems with his theory by suggesting that any object (or text) is really a combination of text and historical thinking, calling this fusion *Wirkungsgeschichte* (effective history):

> There is no longer a subjective interpreter and an objective textual meaning, but an intersubjective unity in time and a suprapersonal tradition whose traces in the individual – foreunderstanding, prejudice, foreconception, and so on- are preconditions of understanding itself.
>
> (Maclean 1986, 134)

2.3.3. Gadamer: Understanding & The "Fusion of Horizons"

Understanding is not just the end or goal, but part of the process. Gadamer famously called this sharing the "fusion of horizons", meaning the synthesis of the horizon (parameters of meaning) of the text and of the horizon of the reader (1989, 302-7)[9]. This fusion may well involve the translation of the text's meaning into the language of the interpreter. Such translations are not limited to translations from one language to

another, but can occur within a single language. In a sense an act of interpretation always comes between text and reader (388-9)[10], no matter how many dialects, one or many, intrude.

2.3.4. Bultmann: Interpreter and Process

If Gadamer's work highlights the difficulty of distinguishing between the process and aims of the interpretive process, Bultmann's writing on hermeneutics carries a reminder that there is a similar blurring of the boundary between interpreter and process. Understanding is not limited to the process and aim, but is also found within the identity of the interpreter. Arguing primarily against Barthian views, Bultmann stresses repeatedly that the interpreter is not a *tabula rasa*, but rather approaches the text with a pre-understanding: it is impossible to start exegesis without holding presuppositions of some kind (Bultmann 1985b, 145-6)[11].

Central to this is the view that some questions raised by the reader's life situation connect to the message of the text and provoke questions (Bultmann 1985a, 73; 82). It is clear from a later description that Bultmann connects this to existentialism (83-4)[12]. A rejection of existentialism does not, however, mean that Bultmann's whole theory of hermeneutics must be abandoned. All that his hermeneutical theory requires is the premise that the interpreter is capable of bringing questions to a text which s/he considers to address these self-same questions. This appears to be self-evident rather than controversial.

2.3.5. Culture as the Foundation of Pre-understanding

Whilst noting the importance of pre-understanding, Bultmann gives no indication of where it comes from in either of the essays quoted. He neither defines the "life situation", nor biases, habits, gifts and weaknesses. However, several of these terms, together with the focus that Bultmann lays on the paradigm of translation, suggest that culture might be considered one source. Communication, language (verbal and non-verbal) and, by extension, translation are evidently rooted in culture. So are less tangible objects: ideas, thoughts, beliefs. Culture surely is the crucible in which preunderstanding is formed, a necessary component in the shaping of a life situation. Culture can shape the life situation in two ways. It can, firstly, be a

component in shaping the identity or personality of the interpreter. Secondly, it can shape the context or situation in which the interpreter is working. It should be noted that these two roles can involve different cultures. An interpreter shaped as a personality by one culture may engage in interpretation within the context of a different culture. David Tracy makes even more explicit the role of culture in the theological enterprise.

2.3.6. The Role of Culture in Theological Discourse

Tracy describes society as consisting of three realms: the technoeconomic, the polity and culture. Culture provides the principal forum where reflection and development, often focussed on symbols and symbolism take place (1981, 11)[13].

There is a second, more complex question. What should happen to the preunderstanding as the process of hermeneutics develops? Bultmann here is very clear: preunderstanding should be transitory and open to change. The fatal error is to consider that one's preunderstanding is "definitive" (1985b,150) because this closes, rather than opens, the meaning of the text. If anything, the criticism that was made of Bultmann's own theological process of demythologising was precisely the one he warns about. His critics thought his use of existentialism as a, if not *the*, key to exegesis and interpretation skewed his own reading[14].

These two questions (the source of preunderstanding and what happens to it during the interpretive process) prompt further reflection on the role of culture in theology. So far the argument merely leads us to say *that* culture has a role to play. What is that role?

2.3.7. Attitudes to Culture In Theology

The short answer here is to say that there is no one simple definition of the place of culture in theological method. Whilst Shorter notes that the Roman Catholic church, for example, did not begin to consider pluaristic views of culture until the 1940s (1988, 18) and also comments on the dominance of classicist assumptions (19-20), it never can be said that a single solitary view was taken of culture. A few examples will suffice. Different approaches to appear in the controversies over the Jesuit

missions to India and the Far East (see below, pp. 49-52, ¶ 2.4.1.). Moving beyond Roman Catholic theology, it can be seen that Niebuhr traced the variety of Christian attitudes to culture from the New Testament onwards, trying to root each one in Scripture. He could identify five types:

- "Christ against culture", that the complete rejection of culture is demanded, is found in *1 John* (1951, 45-82).

- "Christ of culture", that Gospel and culture are basically in harmony, is not exemplified by any particular writer, but among the Ebionites (83-115).

- "Christ above culture" suggests that Christ fulfils what culture attempts to do (116-148).

- "Christ and culture in paradox" sees culture as flawed and unreliable. The Christian lives in two distinct worlds (149-189).

- "Christ converting culture", like the "paradox" model, considers culture to be corrupt, but sees Christ as the one who will convert both humanity and society. This conversion will demand neither a divorce from cultural concerns, nor an other-worldly or futuristic solution (190-229).

Bediako's finds a similar breadth of responses whilst using different categories. He examines the role of culture in theologians of two different periods: the post-apostolic and modern African. Tatian rejected Hellenistic culture (1992, 64-99). Tertullian wishes to protect Christian truth from corruption by the world (100-136). Justin Martyr took a more positive view, attempting to merge the Christian message with compatible elements of Greek philosophy (137-173). Clement of Alexandria also attempted to synthesise Greek philosophy and the Christian message, seeing Christianity as the fulfilment of Greek thought (174-222). A similar breadth is found in modern African writers. Idowu argues for the positive value of African religious thought (267-302). Mbiti sees African culture as a preparation for the Gospel and accordingly to be valued (303-346). Mulago argues that there is a *natural* basis in African culture for the integration of Christian theology into an African context (347-75). Finally, Byang Kato is considered to reject African concepts in favour of biblical ones (386-425).

This cursory selection shows that a diversity of approaches to culture may be adopted by theologians.

2.3.8. One Theologian, One Attitude?

It would be easy to assume, on the basis of the above summary, that a theologian may develop an attitude to culture, which shapes all of his or her theologising. Niebuhr's work certainly gives this impression when he identifies Paul with the "Christ and culture in paradox" model. However, Paul's use of culture is more complex. Examination of the Pauline letters show varied attitudes to both jewish and Graeco-Roman culture. He has a high, positive view of the Law, though this varies from letter to letter (e.g. Rom 7: 7-25; Gal 3;10-29, cf. Sanders 1977, 495-6). He is less enthusiastic about particular elements of it, considering, for example, circumcision less important than faith on the precedent of Abram (Rom 4: 1-12; Sanders 1977, 483). Spiritual circumcision of the heart is more significant than that of the body (550-1). This thinking is supported by a number of Old Testament precedents (e.g., Ps 51:16-17; Jer 4:4) behind Paul's thinking: similar criticisms also appear in some of the prophetic critique of the Temple cultus (below, Ch.4., pp. 146-8, ¶ 4.2.9.). Even then, Paul does not reject circumcision outright as a part of his theological discourse (Rom 2:25-29). How could he? It is central to the Law for which he maintains a high regard. Paul's answer is to re-define the role of circumcision, to claim an original, but now lost or overlooked, interpretation.

Thus we can conclude that Paul's attitude to elements of Jewish culture is not uniform, but polyvalent.

Paul's attitude to contemporary Graeco-Roman culture is even more ambivalent. The passages that most readily spring to mind are those in which he condemns participation in pagan religious practice (e.g., 1 Cor 8:7-13) even if he later tempers this advice (1 Cor 10:25-31)[15]. Yet he does use some pagan imagery positively.

On a number of occasions, Paul uses athletic imagery to describe perseverance in the Christian faith (1 Cor 9: 24-7; Gal 5:7; Phil 3:12-14; 2 Tim 4:7). On the face of it, there is nothing surprising in this. Such motifs are common in writers across the classical world (Thiselton 2000, 712-3), and the Corinthians, accustomed to the

Isthmian games held regularly nearby (Bond 2003, 190), would have readily understood the imagery (Barrett 1971, 217; Thiselton 2000, 710).

A study of Paul's context does begin to raise questions. Whilst modernity might consider sport to be a neutral term (an *adiaphora*), theologically, it was not always so. Jewish resistance to Greek sport is documented in the Maccabean history: the building of a gymnasium in Jerusalem for athletic activities (1 Macc 1:14) was contentious. Yet the Maccabean material should not be construed as a blanket condemnation of sport. Rather, particular activities associated with sport were condemned: nudity, idolatry[16] and violence (Poliakoff 1984, 59-61). In Paul's time, some kinds of sport might be theologically suspect. Paul uses this potentially suspect imagery to deliver his message about perseverance. That said, Paul uses the less controversial aspects of sport. His imagery is in keeping with both Jewish traditions which considered sport acceptable as long as it did not encourage idolatry, nudity or violence (63), and rhetorical traditions found in Cynicism and Hellenistic Judaism which used athletic struggle as a common motif (53).

This diversity of attitudes to culture shown by Paul reveals that there can be no straightforward assumption that a particular writer has *one particular attitude to culture*. To assume as much is to risk a gross over-simplification. It is better to say that Paul has different approaches to different cultures or cultural elements:

> ...Paul has different attitudes to pagan and Jewish cultures. His dismissal of pagan culture is firmer than that of Jewish culture; he can see more positive elements in Jewish culture and uses them within his own theology. Thus the use of Jewish interpretative traditions and values points, at times, to a positive rather than a negative or paradoxical use of that culture.
>
> (King 1997, 95)

This conclusion is reached simply by considering the texts themselves, but is echoed by Tanner's more sociological analysis of Niebuhr's assessment of Paul:

> In the Christian case relations with the wider culture are never simply ones of either accommodation, on the one hand, or opposition and radical critical revision, on the other, but always some mixture.
>
> (1997, 119)

This becomes even more obvious when we consider the use of imagery in Rev, which contains full-blooded attacks on Graeco-Roman culture, theology and politics.

It is impossible to differentiate between the three in this period. To read this text only as a political or a religious treatise does injustice to the richness of John's splenetic rant against the dominant culture of his time. And yet John, of all people, is probably the most adventurous in his use of the imagery of the culture which he loathes. Christ is described in imagery more normally used of Hekate, the goddess of death (Rev 1:18, cf. Aune 1997, 104; King 2001, 33-4), or of magic (the evil eye- Rev 1:14, cf. King 2001, 35). Such passages sharply and quickly refute the idea that use of symbols must imply a positive value or capitulation to the culture from which they come. The lie that use of imagery is based on a positive evaluation of its context has been knocked on the head, and scholars cannot assume this is the case. They also reveal a mixture of attitudes to the wider culture within which John is operating.

2.3.9. Conclusions

This brief overview suggests that culture is a key component in the theologian's search for meaning. It influences and shapes both text and interpreter. In Gadamer's view, the wider history of both provides both the means and material through which meaning can be investigated. In Bultmann, presuppositions and prejudices need to be examined. Yet the use of culture in theology should not be, and the variety of attitudes and reactions to culture need to be carefully investigated and researched in both text and interpreter.

2.4. "Inculturation"

We have already noted that any attempt to find the word "inculturation" itself in the New Testament would be doomed to failure. However, the process described by this term is not so new. It is with this history, and the history of terms related to this process, that we must begin.

2.4.1. Inculturation: Historical Precedents[17]

As the definition of theological method has shown, what is of prime importance is the role of culture in theology. Irrespective of the view(s) taken of a particular culture, the inculturating theologian holds that the symbols or language of a culture can be useful

in developing a theology that enhances understanding. This use of cultural elements and motifs need not reflect a positive acceptance of any culture in its entirety. Whatever attitude the theologian has to the cultural motif and its context, s/he views it as helpful in developing a Christian theology. Shorter suggests that the earliest clear exponent of inculturation is Justin Martyr (died circa 165 CE) in his definition of the "Spermatic Logos" (1988, 75-7).

 Within the post-apostolic period writers such as Minucius Felix, primarily engaged in apologetics (e.g., the *Octavius*, written *circa* 160-250 CE), make the case for Christianity using motifs important in Graeco-Roman culture. It is argued that Christianity is not a new religion, which would be construed a sign of weakness, but one steeped in *antiquitas* (that age imparts truths and value to a concept or belief to the extent that what is old is reliable, what is new is suspicious, cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 6; Glover & Rendall 1977, 308)[18]: this itself is an important Graeco-Roman literary and cultural motif (Jauss 2005, 330). Christianity is portrayed as no upstart faith, but one whose recent history is built on an ancient historical and religious foundation.

A diversity of approaches to mission emerged as the church expanded. Anton Wessels has argued that inculturation or contextualisation is characteristic of the key mission movements which engaged with Graeco-Roman, Celtic and Germanic cultures, at least to the extent that ideas and practices from those cultures were subsumed into what became European Christianity (1994). The enterprises of Cyril and Methodius saw some concessions to non-Latin cultures (Shorter 1988, 145). A recent revision of the Kongo church by Thornton suggests that , its growth was due to   its acknowledgement of Kongolese culture (145-8).

Moving ahead, scholastic medieval theology established its credentials, and its own development, by recourse to the newly (re-)discovered philosophy of Aristotle (Magesa 2004, 123). Shorter notes that the veneration of relics, monastic abnegation and the spiritual application of chivalry also indicate the inculturation of Christianity (Shorter 1988, 148-9).

This last point is interesting because the concept of chivalry, and its appropriation by Francis and Dominic, was pivotal in shaping the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola (Caraman 1990, 25-32), whose followers would become advocates of inculturation in

both the post-Reformation and modern eras. The Jesuit missions to India and the Far East engaged constructively with local cultures at least in part (thus de Nobili, cf. Johnson 1987; Shorter 1988, 160). Matteo Ricci's positive engagement with Confucianism was, however, too much for his Dominican and Franciscan contemporaries, who eventually managed to secure the suppression of his brand of theology (C. 2001). It is salutary to note that Ricci's efforts were very belatedly vindicated when many of his proposals vis-à-vis Chinese rituals were approved by Pope Pius XI (Shorter 1988, 157-9). In Africa, a more complicated story emerges. Paez's tolerant approach to Ethiopian Christianity culture looked likely to re-unite the Roman and Ethiopian churches, but this was scotched by his less tolerant successor, Mendez (Shorter 1988, 160-1). Yet this account is queried by Abraha, who notes a consistently high-handed attitude to Ethiopian culture by all the Portuguese missionaries (1995, 23-30). Jesuit practice was not uniform.

The modern missionary movement also engaged seriously and positively with cultural issues, even if this is not a full-blown form of inculturation. This positive note can be seen in their decisions to translate the Bible into vernacular languages:

> The decision to translate the Bible into the vernacular, to conduct religious education and to compose liturgical texts and hymns in the vernacular, not only created a mother tongue literacy, but also prompted and indigenous cultural revival.

> (Shorter 1996, 69, cf. Sanneh 1993, 139-151)

Positive attitudes to culture extended beyod these linguistic concerns. Vincent Lucas, the Anglican Bishop of Masasi in the 1920s, attempted a synthesis of traditional religious practice and Anglo-Catholicism in southern Tanzania (Fiedler 1999,118-122; O'Connor 2000,112-3). SPG missionaries similarly encouraged an *ashram* movement and indigenous art in India (113-115). These, together with the Benedictine Bede Griffith's work, might be considered a belated resumption of De Nobili's strategies (Shorter 1988, 160). Even Bultmann's engagement with post-Kantian philosophy, particularly Heidegger, might be viewed as an attempt to present the Gospel in terms familiar to his time and place. The Jesuit interest continued in the twentieth century, where the writings of the Pedro Arrupe explore inculturation (Shorter 1988, 10-12; 1994, 32).

In the African context, the African Synod held in 1994 by the Roman Catholic Church gave a positive endorsement of inculturation which is visible both in the *Message of*

the Synod (1994) and John Paul II's Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995). This positive endorsement of inculturation has brought forth major theological works on inculturation (e.g., Healey and Sybertz 1996) as well as a plethora of popular expressions (Magesa 2004, 9-76). It must however be noted that such research had also preceded the Synod (e.g., Nyamiti 1996; Schreiter 1991; Wachege 1992).

2.4.2. Inculturation

Inculturation, in a nutshell, refers to "an on-going dialogue between faith and culture or cultures" (Shorter 1988, 11). A number of related terms have been used to describe these processes, terms whose histories also highlight their strengths and weaknesses (Bosch 1998, 447-50; Bujo 1999, 55-68). The terms have all gone through periods of popularity in roughly the following chronological order.

2.4.2.1. What's In A Name? : "Accommodation"

The first term is "accommodation". This is sometimes used to describe the work of Ricci and de Nobili (Küster 2001, 21-22). Luzbetak notes, and criticises, the dominant role of cultural outsiders in formulating theologies based on the process of accommodation (Luzbetak 1998, 70). It appears, wrongly in his view, that this work is to be done by incomers. This method was later described as having three stages (accommodation, assimilation and transformation) by Thomas Ohm (Küster 2001, 22). The weakness of accommodation was its apparent superficiality. It was seen as dealing with the externals of religion. It did not appear to penetrate the core of belief, to get to the heart of the matter. Roest Crollius criticises accommodation and its cognate term "missionary adaptation" by saying that they:

> express rather an extrinsic relationship between the Christian life and message and
> a given culture.
>
> (1995, 11)

African Christian theologians, for a variety of reasons, found both terms unacceptable (Martey 1995, 67). These terms were more common in Catholic theology. Protestant theologians preferred the term "indigenisation". In modern Protestant missiology, "translation models" cover similar territory (Küster 2001, 22). The very title "indigenisation" has negative connotations which have led to its

rejection (Roest Crollius 1995, 111). However, the main criticism against the accommodation and indigenisation models is that they are static, hierarchical and ecclesiocentric (Küster 2001, 22).

2.4.2.2. What's In A Name? : "Contextualisation"

A term that has been more widely adopted is "contextualisation". However, contextualisation can give the impression that it is an exercise only in re-packaging the Christian faith, or of placing it in a new context. However, the role of culture in a theological process should be further reaching. This is brought out in Jon Sobrino's criticism of received theology:

> Here in Latin America we can read many of the old, classic treatments of Christology as well as more current ones. When we do, and when we notice their practical repercussions on the life and praxis of Christians, we cannot help but formulate certain suspicions. Basically those suspicions come down to this: For some reason it has been possible for Christians, in the name of Christ, to ignore or even contradict fundamental principles and values that were preached and acted upon by Jesus of Nazareth.
>
> (1994, xv)

It should be noticed that contextualisation and contextual theology remain terms still acceptable for many. Indeed these are the preferred terms of the World Council of Churches (Küster 2001, 24-5). Luzbetak notes that the two terms are virtually synonymous and, indeed, can be identified with the third term, "Incarnation" (1998, 192).

2.4.2.3. What's In A Name? : "Incarnation"

"Incarnation" was the term that African Catholic writers preferred, meaning:

> immersing Christianity in African culture [so that] just as Jesus became man, so must Christianity become African.
>
> (Ukpong 1984, 27)

However admirable this term was in describing a theological method by reference to a theological event rather than sociological or anthropological categories, it ran into a severe obstacle: Vatican disapproval (Martey 1995, 66). The term was put aside. Shorter, on the other hand, notes that the term was popular in the Second Vatican Council, and is still used (1988, 11). The term is useful inasmuch as it stresses

Christ's own *enculturation* (defined below, p. 56, ¶ 2.4.3.), makes Jesus its subject-matter, and stresses the role of culture in Christ's spreading of the Good news (80-1). It is problematic in that it limits the role of culture to Christ's own enculturation, encourages a "one-way view" of inculturation, based on an essentialist understanding, and, finally, might overlook his critical relationship with his own culture (81-2).

2.4.2.4. What's In A Name?: Inculturation

The term "inculturation' has been promulgated particularly within the Roman Catholic church, with a number of its key exponents coming from the Society of Jesus (Shorter 1988, 10). The Jesuit theologian Masson appears to have been the first to use the term in 1962. By the mid 1970s, inculturation was used in a number of documents including an official decree of the Society (10). In his "Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation", Pedro Arrupe offered what has become an oft-quoted and significant definition of inculturation:

> The incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this 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 the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a 'new creation".
>
> (1978, 172)

2.4.3. Criticisms of "Inculturation"

Küster brings two criticisms against the use of "inculturation". Firstly, he notes that it can often be reduced to meaning little more than accommodation (Küster 2001, 24). He suggests that this is the reality of contemporary official Roman Catholic thinking (24, fn. 35), but this remains at best a personal interpretation of the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* which needs to be re-assessed in light of subsequent publications[19]. We note also the denial of such superficiality in Arrupe's definition (above). In the hands of African theologians such as Ukpong, this mistake does not appear. In fact, their understanding of inculturation is closer to the theology of suspicion advocated by Sobrino and provides a concise definition of the process:

> The theologian's task consists in re-thinking and re-expressing the original Christian message in an African cultural milieu. It is the task of confronting the Christian faith

and African culture. In this process there is interpenetration of both....There is integration of faith and culture and from it is born a new theological expression that is African and Christian.

(Ukpong 1984, 30)

The charge that inculturation is little more than accommodation only sticks if it can be shown that there has not been a deep engagement with a particular culture's core values. Theonest Nkeramihigo identifies two factors which show genuine inculturation goes deeper:

-The awareness on the part of the members of the society involved in the culture that this contingent event is part of the inescapable fate of their existence.

-The awareness that, to ensure its survival, the society in conflict must transform this fate into destiny, and reconcile the two traditions by searching for a new parental figure that gives a concrete form to its present yearnings.

(1986, 68)

Such drives take the theologian far beyond superficiality.

If common anthropological categories are used, it is possible to talk of a culture operating on a number of levels. Luzbetak describes three levels: the first is the outward "shape" of a cultural pattern, the second is that of usage, purpose and meaning, the third its underlying psychology or mentality (1998, 75-8). Shorter notes that culture works on two levels: the phenomenological and the symbolical (Shorter 1988, 35). He also cites an alternative scheme devised by Bishop Donald James of the Mennonite church which identifies four levels: the industrial technical, the domestic technical, values and world view (35-6). Again, Zuern has identified a three tier system: tangibles, structures and intangibles (37). The point at issue here is not the number of levels, but the levels at which inculturation takes place. Accommodation engages on the first superficial level. Inculturation engages at the deepest level. Nkeramihigo's "awareness" implies engagement at these deeper levels. Shorter makes it clear that inculturation must work at the deeper levels:

If a person's ultimate concern lies in the practical, material level, we are obviously not in the realm of religion, but we *are* in the presence of an impoverished culture. Religion, however, is not simply about cognition or explanation. It is about communion and the efficacious, or good, life. Its essential concern is with relationships, and with destiny.

(1988, 37)

Shorter further explores this in a later book, *Christianity and the African Imagination* (1996, 15-32).

Secondly, Küster thinks that inculturation is easily confused with two precise sociological terms, acculturation and enculturation because the "distinct connotation of the individual terms is all too often levelled out" (Küster 2001, 24). Yet this objection had already been anticipated and refuted:

> The process of learning a culture is called *enculturation....* The term *enculturation* must be distinguished from *inculturation* (a synonym for *incarnation* and *contextualisation*) and *acculturation* (the whole set of processes involved in a culture change resulting from close and constant contact between societies over a longer period).
>
> (Luzbetak 1998, 192; cf. Shorter 1988, 5-6 [enculturation]; 6-8 [acculturation])

2.4.4. Inculturation As A Two-Way Process

Ukpong's definition highlights the fact that inculturation is a two way process. Shorter's criticism of Incarnation as a term implying a "one-way" traffic makes the same point by implication (1988, 81).

Two rather clumsy technical terms explain this. Inculturation *ad extra* describes how the original Christian message, to use Ukpong's phrase, "affects the cultural context of the local Christian church". Inculturation *ad intra* describes how a culture affects the way in which Christianity is lived and expressed, especially in the areas of liturgy, spirituality, theology and discipline (Roest Crollius 1995, 114). It would appear that the choice of inculturation or contextualisation comes from the premises on which each set of theories has been built. Proponents of inculturation theology tend to stress the role of culture, whereas those who prefer contextualisation begin from a socio-political analysis (Küster 2001, 25). Criticism of either term arises when they are perceived as having a narrow application. Ukpong's work on a holistic inculturation, which includes both cultural and liberative elements, further reduces the distinction of the two terms (Ukpong 1999a, 325; 1999b, 118). This line is being developed further by Kenya's Jesse Mugambi, who has argued that the focus on inculturation in Africa has neglected the liberative dimension, and that further work on inculturation must address such issues (Mugambi 1989, 22-5)[20].

Inculturation *ad intra* is the direction that causes most concern: just how much of the Christian message is open to alteration by contact with a culture? Luzbetak notes that while the local church is the primary agent in inculturation, there are other factors that must also be taken into account. The local church does not exist in isolation, and what it does must be viewed against the universal nature of the church (Luzbetak 1998, 71-2)[21].

2.4.5. Inculturation & Intraculturation

A further objection to the use of inculturation comes from Cardinal Ratzinger. He suggests that the term implies that there is a culture-free kernel of truth which is then injected into a given culture (Ratzinger 1993, 4). In passing, it might be suggested that the theory of a culture-free kernel may well be based on idealistic assumptions which underpin much "classic" Christian theology (Bosch 1998, 499). Alternative metaphysical theories, such as Wittgenstein's "family resemblances" (Wittgenstein1986, 31-2, n.65-7, cf. Ch.1, pp. 14-5, ¶ 1.3.4.2.) would not even have to deal with this as an issue. They also solve the problem of the relationship between the local and the catholic without recourse to a "meta-theology" or "culture-free" abstractions.

Whilst agreeing with Ratzinger's rejection of the culture-free kernel, it must be said that his view of inculturation cannot be sustained from the foundations on which it (inculturation) is based. His argument is a red herring: theologians of inculturation simply do not claim this (Shorter 1988, 82). Proponents of inculturation acknowledge that even the first expressions of faith in the New Testament writings and the sources that contributed to them were shaped by cultural presuppositions. Their researches are more liable to involve them in analysis of the cultural world of the New Testament (Ukpong 1994, 43-5). It has further led some, such as Manus, to propose that the term inculturation be dropped in favour of "interculturation" or "intercultural hermeneutics" (Manus 2003, 30-52, cf. Magesa 2004, 151)[22]. This is advocated to stress the shape that culture gives to every theological utterance or expression, and deny a "culture-free" expression of the Gospel at any point. Ratzinger's apparent criticism that modern theologians of inculturation work with a culture-free kernel of truth just does not ring true (cf. Bosch 1998, 454).

Shorter is even more critical of Ratzinger, suggesting that his criticism of inculturation is actually based on an outmoded view of culture:

> His dislike of the term 'inculturation' is apparently based on his opposition to an authentic re-expression of the faith in terms of the evangelised culture. His approach is close to that of Pius XII and the pre-conciliar church, which favoured the idea of a monolithic hybrid Christian culture, in which the cultural matrix was Western.
>
> (1994, 90)

Ratzinger's second criticism is that inculturation demands a debased understanding of culture in which faith and culture are distinct. Such a scenario is far from Ukpong's thought with its stress on the unity of faith and culture (Ukpong 1994, 44-45). It is also implicitly denied in Luzbetak's remarks about the universal aspect of the church and its consideration in inculturation theology (above, p. 57, ¶ 2.4.4.). The picture that Ratzinger paints, and then criticises, of culture as basically nationalistic and isolated, and faith as only a part of cultural expression does not match the relationship between faith, theology and culture that we have outlined above. We have noted that nationalism is not a based for the analysis of culture, and that cultures are both more fluid in nature and more porous in their boundaries than Ratzinger admits. Our examination of Gadamer is important at this point. It would be easy to assume that the process described by Ratzinger involves two distinct elements: the faith and the evangelised culture. Yet our analysis of theology which included insights from Gadamer suggests that such a modality must be put aside. Meaning must be found in the intersubjective meeting of the two (above, p. 43, ¶ 2.3.2.), rather than a meeting in which one dominates the other.

 The picture painted by Ratzinger does not seem to match reality of inculturation and its exponents. He would appear to be tilting at windmills. Nonetheless, his remarks do prompt us to ask an important question: what is inculturated? However, before considering that, it is worth quickly addressing the related questions of "who inculturates?"

2.4.6. Who Inculturates?

Thus far, the picture given of inculturation is that it is a conscious branch of theological activity: the theologian works to translate and embed the message at all

levels of a new culture. Because of mission history, this activity can often seem to be limited to outsiders setting the message in its new context. Two qualifications must be made.

The first is that outsiders are not the best qualified to undertake such work. Healey's "thirty second bicycle ride" through the African mind highlights the problems which the outsider has in fully understanding and being able to integrate message and culture (1981, 176). It is a commonplace of modern missiological thinking that the local church is the best agent for mission and, by implication, inculturation. What are the implications of this for the thesis that follows? We should not limit the process of inculturation in the New Testament to those occasions on which a particular writer is obviously engaging with a culture other than his own. The New Testament writers may engage in inculturation by theologising within their own cultural context.

2.4.7. Inculturation and Osmosis

The second is that inculturation need not always be a conscious activity. Legrand brings out this point in his discussion of Paul and his cultural task, suggesting that Paul does this spontaneously and without conscious reflection (2000, 145-6)[23]. Given that it would be impossible to prove a deliberate effort by an author to "inculturate", this observation gives us freedom to explore examples of inculturation *in their own right* rather than the sources and methods which led to their formulation. Given that inculturation involves the meeting of different cultures, it is also possible that this may be manifested in a number of ways. Inculturation does not demand a positive endorsement of the receiving culture: sometimes it will raise challenges and corrections to elements of it (Shorter 1988, 25-6).

2.4.8. What is Inculturated?

Inculturation in the modern period answers this question with essentially Christological answers. What is inculturated is Jesus. Given the problems noted in using "Incarnation", this identification focuses on the Paschal Mystery (Shorter 1994, 35-6), rather than the "Gospel" or the "essence of the Gospel" (Shorter 1988, 60-1). However, in the modern period this also includes what Shorter has identified as "Christian Patrimony"; Jesus Christ himself as mediated by the Church (63-5). Yet

Shorter, mindful of his own definitions of culture and cross-cultural dialogue, is careful to avoid tying this to 'Tradition" or any definitive or irreducible cultural expression (65-7).

A different definition must be used in the Early Christian period, where such a patrimony had yet to come into being. However, this is not unrelated to the problem faced by critical scholarship, that of trying to identify the Jesus of history to whom early Christian traditions refer. Schweitzer would place the origins of such endeavours with Jesus himself, as do inculturation theologians [24].

This involves both historical and theological questions. Gerhardsson has pointed out that the two are different:

> …it is…important to keep the purely historical question of the origin and transmission apart from theological questions of the content and meaning of the Early Christian message, even if the two questions are inter-related. In the first case one must go back to the concrete realm of history; and one cannot without further ado extend such an approach to questions of theology. In the second case, one may reasonably take as one's starting point "the faith vision" on which the message of Jesus and of Early Christianity was founded.
>
> (1998, xxii)

It is not possible to identify the theological content of the Early Christian message simply by claiming to have recovered its source materials, or its earliest form. In any case, such quests increasingly show how diversified the 'whole truth' of the faith message was within early Christianity, even if:

> The different voices in the early church's mixed choir wanted to sing a common song: the song about the incomparable One, who has been elevated by God to the heavenly realm but only after a mysterious ministry on earth
>
> (Gerhardsson 1979, 91)

Despite these difficulties, the whole critical effort has not ground to a halt, and the search for Jesus through and behind early Christian literature continues unabated. The danger of circularity in arguments and the confusion of the historical and theological questions still, however, remain. Nevertheless, the new quest for the historical Jesus has been able to add some more detail. Within this programme, more details about Jesus can be adduced by looking at the background to his life, and his teaching. Similarities and divergences from contemporary practice may be

seen in, say, reversal of contemporary paradigms for healing (Shorter 1983, 115-6; Vermes 1983, 68-9), and the significance which he placed on the Kingdom of Heaven (Ch.5., p. 235, ¶ 5.4.9.).

The faith-event of Jesus also claims him as Messiah. But did this begin with Jesus? Part of the problem of Jesus' actions and sayings, as we have them recorded, was their contrast to popular Messianic expectations which, though varied, did not seem varied enough to include the model of Messiahship offered by Jesus and rejected by all except those who became his followers and in which suffering played a key part. However, in many respects what he did and said matched Messianic expectations found in the Old Testament (Shorter 1983, 118), and may even have echoed Messianic expectations held by other sectarians, notably the Essenes (thus, O'Neill 1995b, 68-73). It does not seem unreasonable to assume that Jesus was acquainted with the Scriptures of his people, and may even have been aware of Essene beliefs and practice, even if not in complete agreement with them (Riesner 1992, 216). From this foundation, we can then posit three possible explanations for Jesus' words and actions:

1. Jesus was unaware of possible Messianic implications

2. Jesus was aware of possible Messianic implications, and acted and spoke clearly

3. Jesus acted ambiguously (which, given (1) would imply a *deliberate* ambiguity).

Option 1 appears unlikely. 2 and 3 remain the focus of the whole problem: either is possible. However, both would also admit, logically, that he was aware of what he was doing. This means that either 2 or 3 would admit a self-knowledge of his own Messianic status: they differ only in their description of how he chose to communicate that knowledge. This, in turn, suggests that Jesus knew the Messianic implications of his actions, and chose to act as he did, *in that knowledge*.

With this in mind, we can focus on the Last Supper, and what we might glean about it as a part of the "faith-event". It does not seem unreasonable to assume that Jesus might well have eaten a meal with his disciples (Ch.3, pp.109-10, ¶ 3.4.1.), and that this might have included elements of his teaching. Nor, given Jewish practice, that such a meal would have included blessing of food (Ch.3, p. 99 ,¶ 3.3.1.2.; cf.

Shorter 1983, 117-8). Given our remarks about Jesus' own self-understanding, it is also possible that he may have viewed the meal as Messianic (cf. Shorter 1983, 117).

Yet even these hypotheses are open to criticism (cf. Ch.1, pp. 3-4, ¶1.2.1.; pp. 20-1, ¶1.3.6.). This difficulty in defining a control account based on the faith-event is part of the reason why this thesis takes a different shape, opting rather to examine the Supper Narratives *via* their receiving cultures rather than against a highly contestable reconstruction of the Last Supper. Any theoretical control, in which an ultimately unverifiable depiction of the Jesus' Last Supper is made into the criterion of orthodoxy or history, is open to criticism. The claim that inculturation is found in the Supper Narratives will remain only as strong as the case made for the control. It will determine whether the thesis stands or falls, and it is not a firm foundation.

There is a second consideration. A control account against which the Supper Narratives might be examined runs the risk of implying that there is somehow a "culture-free" kernel of Last Supper data. Such a proposal goes clean counter to the definition of inculturation given above. The idea of a control account suggests that there is an earlier source, or even meta-narrative, which is free of cultural considerations. This would not be supportable even if it could be traced back to Jesus himself. To do so would demand that Jesus himself acted outside the cultural constraints of his earthly life. The methodology and critical considerations outlined in Ch.1 (pp.19-20, ¶1.3.5.) suggest that will simply not wash. Jesus himself sets his message in the context of his own life, even if the exact content of that process is hidden from our eyes by layers of tradition and redaction.

A thesis built on an examination of the Supper Narratives in light of their receiving cultures allows for a much greater amount of verifiable data to be brought to bear on the examination of the Supper Narratives, and is built on a firmer foundation than one in which an indefinable and potentially "kernel free" original event provides the foundation for research.

2.4.9. The Receiving Cultures of the Supper Narratives

A short definition of the cultures in which the Supper Narratives are received is that they are an amalgam of Judaic, Graeco-Roman and Early Christian. The most

immediate evidence for a measure of inculturation into Graeco-Roman culture is, of course, the use of Greek. We have already noted that Judaic and Graeco-Roman cultures were not distinct (Ch. 1, pp. 8-11, ¶1.3.2.), though the amount of interplay between them varied. Neither is early Christian culture distinct from the other two (Shorter 1988, 132; Tanner 1997, 96-7). It is the difference in interplay between the cultures that prompts us to look more closely at the date and provenance of each of the four narratives under consideration, and describe the immediate context of each in more detail.

2.4.9.1. The Context of 1 Cor

That 1 Cor was sent to Christians living in the city of Corinth has not been disputed, even if the exact number of letters which made up the Corinthian correspondence has (Conzelmann 1976, 2-5; Kümmel 1984, 276-8). The letter can be dated to the early 50s CE, either 51/2 or 52/3 (Conzelmann 1976, 13). Corinth itself was a city which had been refounded by the Romans: its make-up thus includes elements of both Latin and Hellenistic cultures. Jewish culture was also in evidence (15; Meeks 1983, 48-9; Sanders 1997, 71). The Christian community in Corinth appears to have included Jewish as well as Gentile adherents (Meeks 1983, 56; 216 fn. 29). It is likely that the epistle will engage with issues from both Graeco-Roman and Jewish cultures

2.4.9.2. The Context of Mk

Mk is the earliest of the canonical Gospels. It appears to have been written in the period around 70 CE. The major division in dating is whether the Gospel is pre- or post-70 CE. Much of the controversy focuses on the eschatological material in Chapter 13 and whether it is a *vaticinium ex eventu*, which is based on destruction of the Temple (Theissen 1992, 258-71), or an anticipation of it (Hengel 1985, 14-28). The location of the Gospel is difficult. Some argue for its composition in Rome, on the grounds on the number of Latinisms it contains (Hengel 1985, 28-30) and external evidence (Taylor 1966, 32), but this can be disputed. The bulk of the Latinisms are either military terms or have Greek equivalents, and the external evidence from Eusebius is ambiguous (Kümmel 1984, 98). Critics of a Roman origin argue rather for an origin in Syria (Theissen 1992, 236-49), or the East (Kümmel 1984, 98).It is likely that the intended readers, wherever they were located, included

some who did not know Aramaic, and needed terms to be translated (Mk 3:17; 5:41; 7:11; 7:34; 10:46; 15:22), or were unfamiliar with Jewish terms and customs (Mk 7:3-4; 14:12; 15:42). Mk stands close to a Semitic tradition in terms of the material which it contains, but is not directed at a purely Semitic readership:

> The sympathies of Mark are gentile in their range, but his tradition is Jewish Christian to the core.
>
> (Taylor 1966, 65)

Thus, examination of the Gospel may well reveal traces of all the cultural groupings in light of which the Supper Narratives are being examined.

2.4.9.3. The Context of Matt

The Gospel of Matthew may safely be dated after the destruction of the Temple, in the 80s-90s CE (Theissen & Merz 1998, 30) Ignatius' use of the gospel provides a *terminus ante quem* of 100 CE (Kümmel 1984, 120). In recent years, Thiede has argued for a considerably earlier date, on the evidence of P Magdalen 17, but his methodology has been strongly criticised (Peterson 1995), and no major re-alignment of Matt's date has followed.

Matt appears to have been written for a Greek-speaking Christians of Jewish origin. The majority preference is for Syria (Theissen 1992, 249-52), though occasionally Phoenicia has been proposed (Kümmel 1984, 119). The gospel either reflects a conflict within Judaism (that is, the Matthean community is still part of the wider Jewish community), or comes from the period after the Matthean group had separated from it (Theissen 1998, 30-1). Both scenarios suggest that Matt will be concerned with issues related particularly to Jewish culture.

2.4.9.4. The Context of Luke

Luke, like Matt, dates from the period after the destruction of the Temple. A *terminus ante quem* of 140-50 CE may be deduced from the writings of Marcion and Justin (Theissen & Merz 1998, 32). The dating of Luke is intimately connected with that of Acts, and this suggests a most probable time of writing between 70-90 CE (Kümmel 1984, 150-10), more likely between 80-5 CE (Fitzmyer 1985, 57). The place of composition is not known, and a number of alternatives have been suggested, but beyond "a large city west of Palestine" (Theissen & Merz, 1998, 32) there is no clear identification. That said, it appears that Luke wrote for "Gentile Christians in a

predominantly Gentile setting" (Fitzmyer 1985, 59). Luke may thus be expected to exhibit concerns with Graeco-Roman culture, but not exclusively so. His readership may well have included Jewish Christians (59).

2. 5. Inculturation: A Lukan Starting-Point?

Given the non-appearance of "inculturation" as a term in early Christian literature, it seems that we might do worse than look for some kind of equivalent to it, or manifestation of the phenomenon.

One passage immediately seems to describe the initial stages of the process that we have outlined above. Acts 2:5-13 seems to describe the Pentecost experience when Jews from Palestine and the Diaspora heard news about the mighty works of God in their own language[25]. Here there is no universal abstract, nor a demand to conform to another language. Each hears the message in a language that is already familiar. It is not even that the message is heard in a universal *lingua franca*: they hear in their own tongues, ταῖς ἡμετέραις γλώσσαις (Acts 2:11; Barrett 2002, 16) and more importantly, τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ (Acts 2:6), their vernacular (Haenchen 1971, 169, fn.2), a point exemplified in 2:7 (Dunn 1996, 27). Given the interplay between culture and language, it does not seem excessive to claim that this vocabulary contains within it an implicit approval for inculturation: the process in which people of different cultures hear, in their own language and at the deepest level, of the Christian message (cf. Gonzalez 2001, 39). Yet the passage also contains a warning. Not everyone finds this a comfortable or acceptable process: whilst some are amazed, others mock (Acts 2:13). Ecstatic possession is mistaken for drunkenness (Dunn 1996, 27).

Burkert (2000, 110) suggests that the subject matter of this passage may echo Greek religious experience. The phenomenon of speaking in different dialects is recorded in the liturgy of the Delian maidens (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo*: 3:155-164, composed between 800-600 BCE, probably on Chios)[26]. Some cautionary points must be made.

First, the vocabularies of the two passages are different. The *Hymn* uses φωνὰς and βαμβαλιαστύς (stammering) to describe the speech imitated. Later Graeco-Roman

accounts of ecstatic utterance maintain this preference, stressing babbling rather than the uttering of foreign languages (Johnson 1992, 42)[27].

Second, the difference in date (around 700 years) and location must be considered. The two passages spring from different times and place.

Third, care, too, must be taken not to make excessively bold claims that Acts 2 exemplifies the whole process of inculturation. Peter does not make his speech in all these vernacular languages and there is no evidence for it being translated. His speech (Acts 2:14-36) is a reaction to the mockery, not a continuation of ecstatic utterance: it refers primarily to Pentecost, not the miraculous speech (Dunn 1996, 28). Yet his speech echoes the above question of "what is inculturated?" focussing from 2:22 on Jesus. The use of what is familiar, of vernaculars, of people's own cultural expressions is endorsed positively as a gift of the Holy Spirit (Nissen 2002, 164), as is the faith-event of Jesus as his subject matter. These mark the beginning of a life-changing encounter: it takes place at the deepest cultural levels, of religion and relationship.

Luke presents an accidental glimpse of a process in which culture plays a role in a quest towards theological understanding. Our task is now to consider whether the Supper Narratives also follow this pattern.

Notes

1 Thus we can note the use of terms such as "redaction" within the technical language of scholars. Other theological terms such as "sacrament" also are used within New Testament theology. This reflects the theological language of the apostolic and patristic periods rather than the NT period itself. Whilst terms like μυστήριον (later used for "sacrament") are found within the New Testament, their meaning is unclear, and, indeed, still a source of controversy. The firm definitions of such terms come from a later period. With regard to hermeneutical keys, we can note Bultmann's use of Heidegger's existentialism or the use of Marxist terminology within liberation theology. Whilst both existentialism and Marxism are, on the face of it, anachronisms with respect to the New Testament, these approaches have not been judged as invalid purely on the grounds of timing.

2 On-line at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3D%239135

3 We can observe a parallel action in the modern missionary period in which "high culture" views may well have been influential in missionary practices which either demonised local culture and traditions or insisted on holding on to control of the church. These views are not redundant and can still surface in modern church life. We need only note Bishop John Spong's intemperate outburst about African bishops at the 1998 Lambeth Conference to see how even those who pride themselves in holding liberal views can quickly revert to claims which appear to suggest cultural superiority (Skidmore 1998).

4 Tanner notes that similar views were present in British views of society and culture, but considers the substitution of the German understanding of *Kultur* as key (1997, 12-16).

5 This is already apparent in previous remarks (Ch.1, pp. 8-11, ¶1.3.2.).

6This definition is quoted in Gallagher 1997,21. Gallagher in turn quotes from Carrier, H., *The Church and Culture since Vatican II*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985, p.19.

7 *Fides quaerens intellectum* was a working title Anselm (1033-1109 CE) gave to the work finally known as the *Proslogium*. Magesa (2004) uses this phrase as the basis for his description of inculturation. I became aware of this coincidence only after the publication of his book. Shorter also notes the importance of this definition of the theological task (1983, 30).

8 See Thiselton 1993, 409.
We can note that the tension between "believing in" and "believing that" is a major bone of contention in theology. Whilst the language may change, Bultmann's criticism of dogmatism, and support of existential theology over and against it shows his preference for "believing in". Whilst the temptation is to think that the two may be mutually exclusive, there is much to be said for H.P. Owen's view that " 'believing in' is impossible without some measure of 'believing that' " (cited in Thiselton 1993, 233).

9 Thiselton notes that Gadamer's "fusion" has been adopted by many as an image for the interpretive process (1993, 16). He further notes that Dennis Nineham is most critical of the idea that such a fusion can take place, and offers six criticisms of this position (1993, 53-60). Further criticisms of Nineham, based on similarities of his thought to Troeltsch are found on pages 69-73.

10 We must note in passing that there is criticism of Gadamer's theory. However, this criticism is not primarily concerned with the idea that interpretation involves the fusion of the two horizons, as the relative roles taken by the text and the interpreter. It is the degree of influence of each horizon that is debated, not the fusion itself. Thiselton examines this area further (1993, 317; 326).
The subjective role of the interpreter also raises a further question: is there not a danger of relativism, that every interpretation is correct because it is the right one for the (unique) reader? Ukpong's writing suggests controls that stop such subjectivity. In Ukpong (1995, 10) the following suggestion is advocated:

> Within the framework of inculturation hermeneutic, the biblical text is seen as plurivalent that is, capable of yielding many different but valid meanings depending on the point of departure of reading it (Croatto, 1987: 19). Yet a text is not considered as having any meaning at all. First of all any meaning derived from a text must be judged in light of the meaning of the entire bible. Second, the theology of any text must be judged against the basic biblical affirmations and principles like existence of God as creator and sustainer of the universe, love of God and neighbour etc. Hence the possibility of correct and wrong readings of the text is recognized.

There are two weaknesses to this argument. The first is that phrase "the meaning of the entire bible" which implies a single overarching meaning surely at odds with the plurivalency of meaning which is possible. The second is that the "basic biblical affirmations" might well lead to circular arguments or interpretations. The meaning of a text might be validated by a biblical affirmation which is, in turn, already dependent on that same text. Ukpong's 1996 article in *Semeia* modifies his earlier position:

> The inculturation biblical hermeneutic supposes that the biblical text is plurivalent and can be validly understood differently according to different contexts and perspectives. But this does not mean that the biblical text can mean anything. Instead it recognises that there are dynamics built into a text for guiding interpretation, and that these dynamics can function in different contexts to produce different but valid interpretations. Therefore, it advocates a multi-cultural approach to interpreting biblical texts whereby the

biblical message becomes available to people of different cultures according to their various contexts. It is a holistic approach to exegesis (McDonald:547-49).(sic)

Interpretation is done within the canon, and comparison with other relevant texts is done in the process of interpretation. The Bible is looked upon as a sacred classic- a book containing norms for Christian living as well as an ancient literary text. Historical critical tools and others are used precisely as tools to aid interpretation and not as ends in themselves (Stuhlmacher:1979, 85-90). With insights from the historical analysis of the text, the text is reread dynamically against the background of a contemporary context. This dynamic rereading of the text involves entering into the text conscious of the present context, with critical awareness, and allowing it to evoke in us responses, reactions, and commitment appropriate to its message and our context. The objective of interpretation is the actualization of the text within today's context.

This is to say that our context as well as that of the text have an important part to play in the process of assigning meaning to the relationship and the interaction of the actors in the text, in the appropriation of the message. With inculturation hermeneutics there is no question of treating a text merely as an object of analysis. The involvement of the interpreter in the dynamics of the text is demanded.
(1996, 191-2)

We can note the shift. The role of the reader's context is given a much higher role, and the previous emphasis on the "meaning of the bible" and "basic biblical affirmations" has altered. "Relevant texts" have assumed a greater importance. I am grateful to Prof. Gerald West of Kwazulu-Natal for pointing out this shift in emphasis.

Ukpong's repeated use of "dynamic" deserves consideration. "Dynamic equivalence" has long been a feature of translation to allow meaning rather than the letter of the text to be brought out by acts of translation or interpretation. These principles, too, are surely some of the tools used in interpreting. In addition to this, we need to remember that the language (verbal or non-verbal) in which the process takes place sets some limits, even if language itself is continuously evolving. Grammar and vocabulary prescribe limits within which valid interpretation can take place. The philosophy of language and the structures of language itself are surely of greatest importance in ascertaining the validity of a particular interpretation. This seems to be the direction that Thiselton is pursuing in following his work on Gadamer and Bultmann with analysis of the later philosophy of Wittgenstein.

11 Note Jeanrond's summary:

> Every act of text understanding operates, consciously or unconsciously, with a number of presuppositions. Text hermeneutics reflects not only on these general presuppositions but also on more specific reader orientations, such as expectation of the text content, attitudes towards the communicative perspective of the text, attribution of authority to the text (e.g., the "sacredness" of a biblical text), and suspicion over against the text's claims.
> (1992, 433-434)

12 Thiselton's study of Bultmann shows that care must be taken in describing the relationship of Bultmann's theology and existentialism. It would seem that Heidegger's thought resonated with, and provided descriptive language for, Bultmann's thinking. Bultmann's thought was already on an existential course before he came across Heidegger or his writings (Thiselton 1993, 217; 219). Also:

> *Neither the terms of the problem nor how Bultmann wishes to solve it has been dictated by Heidegger. Heidegger's role is to offer a conceptuality which seems almost to have been designed to achieve the very task with which theology was already grappling.*
> (1993, 232)

13 Thiselton notes that such views of culture are held by a number of different thinkers from different viewpoints:

> Cultural presuppositions, Hulme declares, become so much part of the mind of the people of the given culture "and lie so far back, that they are never really conscious of them. They do not see them, but other things *through* them". They constitute "*doctrines* seen as *facts*.". In due course, we shall compare this idea of cultural presuppositions with some of Wittgenstein's observations in his last writing *On Certainty*, on what G.E. Moore had regarded as certainties of "common sense". They are certainties, Wittgenstein argues, in the sense that they are like hinges on which all our everyday propositions turn. They perform a logical role not unlike that of the theological assertion "it is written". Such a proposition, Wittgenstein explains, "gives our way of looking at things...their form...Perhaps for unthinkable ages it has belonged to the scaffolding of our thoughts. (Every human being has parents.)"
> (1993, 74)

From this basis it might be suggested that the danger confronting the interpreter is not to be aware of his or her own presuppositions, and of the need to check and correct them.

We can also note Bujo's analysis of "Negritude". The impetus to form specifically African theology may have become increasingly political, but its origins are in issues of culture:

> Our renaissance will be more the work of African writers and artists than of politicians. We have seen from experience that there can be no political liberation without cultural liberation.
> (L.S. Senghor, *No Political Liberation Without Cultural Liberation*, quoted in Bujo 1999, 48)

14 We can note Barth's summary of Bultmann's use of existentialism as a hermeneutical key:

> Augustine used the language of Neoplatonism, Thomas Aquinas that of Aristotelianism, F.C. Baur and Biedermann were Hegelians, just as Bultmann is now a disciple of Heidegger. The impetus and energy with which he propounds his philosophy are undoubtedly reminiscent of those great exemplars. There is an element of philosophy in all theological language. But Bultmann attaches such an exclusive importance to his use of existentialism, and indeed it is the very hall-mark of his theology which is what makes it such a problem.
> (1972, 121)

In a later passage Barth gives his own definition of preunderstanding. It is important to note that the disagreement between Barth and Bultmann is not *whether* there is pre understanding, but *how* it should be used:

> Of course, everyone approaches the New Testament with some kind of preconceptions, as he does any other document. We all have our prior notions of possibility, truth and importance. We all know what we think is our capacity to understand. And, of course, as we seek to understand the New Testament, our first reaction is bound to be one of self-defence against its strangeness. We shall want to cling to our prior understandings and preconceptions. More than that, we shall always be trying to confine this strangeness within the strait jacket of our prior understandings and preconceptions. We shall always be trying to incorporate and domesticate its strange elements. But have we any right to elevate all this into a methodological principle?
> (124)

Similarly, Stanton criticises the role played by existentialism in Bultmann's methodology:

> His [Bultmann's] own particular way of asking questions of the text from an existentialist perspective became not just one approach among many others, but was elevated to a commanding height from which the whole New Testament landscape was surveyed.

> But even if Bultmann was inconsistent himself, he did quite rightly insist that the interpreter's pre-understanding is not in any sense to be regarded as definitive for it must be open to modification by the text.
> (1979, 67-8)

The last sentence suggests that *in principle* Barth and Bultmann may not have been so very far apart despite their criticism of each other's methodology. Thiselton notes that the disagreement between Barth and Bultmann is not centred on Bultmann's concept of preunderstanding:

> If Barth's criticism has any validity it is not because of Bultmann's view of preunderstanding, but because of the anthropological dimension necessitated by Bultmann's rejection of objectifying talk of God.
> (1993, 239)

15 This issue is examined further in Ch. 4, pp. 175, ¶ 4.4.7. ; pp. 177-8, ¶ 4.4.10..

16 The great athletic contests of the ancient world were connected to the pagan deities or heroes (Broneer 1962, 259). Tillyard (1913) argues that the Isthmian games have a funerary origin. Whilst there is some confusion about the exact dates and locations of the Isthmian games at the end of the 1st century BCE, there can be no doubt that such games were held in the area near Corinth in Paul's time(cf. Kajava 2002).

17 See also Magesa 2004, 113-132.

18 Thus , of the venerability of ancient religion:

> Hence the course of worship has continued without break, not impaired but strengthened by the lapse of time; for indeed antiquity is wont to attach to ceremonies and to temples a sanctity proportioned to the length of their continuance.

> (Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 6.3; Glover and Rendall 1977, 329)

It is an argument of this type which also lies behind Minucius' remarks about the Cross. He tries to show that the cross has a symbolic value which is not new, but rather long-held by the pagan disputant:

> You, indeed, who consecrate gods of wood, adore wooden crosses perhaps as parts of your gods. For your very standards, as well as your banners; and flags of your camp, what else are they but crosses glided and adorned? Your victorious trophies not only imitate the appearance of a simple cross, but also that of a man affixed to it. We assuredly see the sign of a cross, naturally, in the ship when it is carried along with swelling sails, when it glides forward with expanded oars; and when the military yoke is lifted up, it is the sign of a cross; and when a man adores God with a pure mind, with hands outstretched. Thus the sign of the cross either is sustained by a natural reason, or your own religion is formed with respect to it.

> (Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 29, Trans. Roberts & Donaldson. On-line at http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-04/anf04-34.htm#TopOfPage; also Glover & Rendall 1977, 29.6-8)

19 Against Küster, it is worth noting that the book in which Roest Crollius' article appears is claimed to have been prepared with the current Pope's blessing (Karotemprel 1995, 13; 17).

20 Cf. Manus 2003, 2-6 for a summary of Mugambi's work on the theology of reconstruction which addresses such issues.

21 Signs of the universal church might include the Creeds, Baptism and Eucharist. Theology that has taken place within a tradition may also need to be included. One example of this is MacKinnon's case for retaining the language of "substance" in Christology even though the term may now appear to be out-moded (1972).
The Anglican theologian Eric Mascall has also noted the need for theology to have a universal or catholic dimension as well as the local. Although his remarks are primarily directed to the divergences in Christology, they apply equally to the pitfalls of stressing the local nature of theology in a global context:

> Such pluriformity in Christology as this may be desirable, but it carries with it certain problems. Unless there is *some* community of meaning between the different systems which will allow for communication and translation, each of them will become a private activity of a little group, without relevance to one another or the life of the Church as a whole. Furthermore, how are we to decide whether the conceptual scheme of any particular system is adequate to meet the needs of Christology, and whether any theory stated within that system is, not only compatible with the axioms of that system, but also true in fact?
> (Mascall 1984,139)

African exponents of inculturation often begin with Nicaean and Chalcedonian definitions (Elenga 2001, 673). Such a starting point might be taken to indicate a failure to engage critically with received Christian tradition (675-6). It could however also indicate that these theologians are fully aware the role of faith in God as an indispensable component in theological method (Bloechl 1999, 5, ¶ 15) and their need to begin their theological enterprise within that tradition. An earlier section of Bloechl's argument reminds us that Heidegger, in his later writings, rejected modern claims that philosophers (and, by implication, theologians) could so distance themselves from a pre-existing order of thought that they could see it from the "outside". Philosophy at best can make the philosopher/theologian aware of his/her own limitations (3, ¶ 7). Certainly African theologians do not remain content to merely accept the Nicaean and Chalcedonian definitions, but consider them a crucial point in an endeavour to "re-appropriate the central figure of Christian faith in a context that entails new visions" (Elanga 2001, 676). Such a process does not intend to replace the earlier definitions with a new set of universals. Mascall's question centres on the nature of truth. Some remarks of Bloechl provide a useful conclusion to this discussion:

> Theology begins from a commitment to what it is appropriate to call "the truth" within the field itself, but which is neither true nor false outside that field. Theological reflection, in short, tries to remain *in* the truth which it articulates. However, this does not preclude an evaluation of its truthfulness, as expressed in doctrine and dogma. By truthfulness, I mean the degree of agreement with the truth, insofar as it can be determined. Naturally, this is almost never an easy task, as the history of dogma certainly confirms
> (1999, 6, ¶ 16)

22 Magesa (2004, 8) notes the use of "intraculturation", but continues to use the more widely used inculturation.

23 Elsewhere Legrand uses terms such as osmosis and symbiosis to describe the process which surround writings such as *Ecclesiastes*. The writings emerge from their culture spontaneously rather than as the result of a deliberate process (2000, 59). Magesa argues that inculturation may be symptomatic of a divine creative plan which

> occurs in its own way and at its own pace, not necessarily in the way or at the pace desired by the evangelisers.
>
> (2004, 2)

24 He does not use the term "inculturation", but the end result is not dissimilar:

> With his [Jesus'] death he destroyed the form of his *Weltanschauung*, rendering his own eschatology impossible. Thereby he gives to all peoples and all times the right to apprehend him in terms of their thoughts and conceptions, in order that his spirit may pervade their "Weltanschauung" as it quickened and transformed the Jewish eschatology.
> Therefore may modern theology, just by reason of a genuine historical knowledge, claim freedom of movement, without being hampered continually by petty historical expedients which nowadays are often resorted to at the expense of historical veracity. Theology is not bound to graze in a paddock. It is free, for its task is to found our Christian view of the world solely upon the personality of Jesus Christ, irrespective of the form in which it expressed itself in his time. He himself has destroyed this form with his death. History prompts theology to this unhistorical step.
> As Jesus gave up the ghost, the Roman centurion said, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk. 15:39). Thus at the moment of his death the lofty dignity of Jesus was set free for expression in all tongues, among all nations, and for all philosophies.
> (Schweitzer 1985, 158-9)

For Schweitzer, the imperative for what is here called "inculturation" finds its *fons et origo* in the death of Jesus himself.

25 This is the majority view, but there are some contrary views. C.S. Mann raises a number of possible interpretations of what happened (in Munck 1967, 274-5). Conzelmann agrees that both glossolalia and speech in many languages may lie behind the account, but concludes that the final bias is towards the latter (1987, 15).

26

And there is this great wonder besides --and its renown shall never perish --, the girls of Delos, hand-maidens of the Far-shooter; for when they have praised Apollo first, and also Leto and Artemis who delights in arrows, [160] they sing a strain telling of men and women of past days, and charm the tribes of men. Also they can imitate the tongues of all men and their clattering speech: each would say that he himself were singing, so close to truth is their sweet song.

On-line at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=HH+3+131

27

 For if it were a simple fact that insanity is an evil, the saying would be true; but in reality the greatest of blessings come to us through madness, when it is sent as a gift of the gods. For the prophetess at Delphi [244b] and the priestesses at Dodona when they have been mad have conferred many splendid benefits upon Greece both in private and in public affairs, but few or none when they have been in their right minds; and if we should speak of the Sibyl and all the others who by prophetic inspiration have foretold many things to many persons and thereby made them fortunate afterwards, anyone can see that we should speak a long time. And it is worth while to adduce also the fact that those men of old who invented names thought that madness was neither shameful nor disgraceful; [244c] otherwise they would not have connected the very word mania with the noblest of arts, that which foretells the future, by calling it the manic art. No, they gave this name thinking that mania, when it comes by gift of the gods, is a noble thing, but nowadays people call prophecy the mantic art, tastelessly inserting a T in the word.
Plato, *Phaedrus* 244a-b. On-line: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plat.+Phaedrus+244a

And that God gave unto man's foolishness the gift of divination[1] a sufficient token is this: no man achieves true and inspired divination when in his rational mind, but only when the power of his intelligence is fettered in sleep or when it is distraught by disease or by reason of some divine inspiration. But it belongs to a man when in his right mind to recollect and ponder both the things spoken in dream or waking vision by the divining and inspired nature, and all the visionary forms that were seen, and by means of reasoning to discern about them all [72a] wherein they are significant and for whom they portend evil or good in the future, the past, or the present. But it is not the task of him who has been in a state of frenzy, and still continues therein, to judge the apparitions and voices seen or uttered by himself; for it was well said of old that to do and to know one's own and oneself belongs only to him who is sound of mind. Wherefore also it is customary to set the tribe of prophets[1] to pass judgement [72b] upon these inspired divinations; and they, indeed, themselves are named "diviners" by certain who are wholly ignorant of the truth that they are not diviners but interpreters of the mysterious voice and apparition, for whom the most fitting name would be "prophets of things divined."
Plato, *Timaeus* 71e-72b.   On-line: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plat.+Tim.+71e

See also Cicero, *De Divinatione* 1.32. 70-1; Plutarch*, Moralia* 387b- 406f; 417c; 432-c-f. Test Job 48-52.