



INCULTURATION: AN ONGOING DRAMA OF FAITH-CULTURE DIALOGUE

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Inculturation emerged as a result of paradigm shifts in the missionary outlook of the Church necessitated by a heightened sense of culture, especially the plurality of cultures. This outlook saw culture as a tool for the transmission of the Gospel message to different frontiers. In view of this, dialogue with culture has passed from being an exception to the rule to becoming normative. Inculturation is a complex process, which must be undertaken gradually and critically. Overall, it aims to incarnate the Gospel in every culture by maintaining a healthy balance between tradition and progress. In this paper, the method of inculturation that is highlighted is the one developed by Charles Kraft and Anscar Chupungco known as “dynamic equivalence,” which seeks to build a “communicational bridge” between the Gospel message and human experience. This paper, therefore, embarks upon the discussion of faith-culture dialogue, keeping in mind Church’s efforts to proclaim the message of the Gospel: first, by first tracing the historical development of Inculturation, highlighting the Church’s disposition towards faith culture dialogue; second, by discussing the nature and dynamics of inculturation, focusing on its essential characteristics; and lastly, delineating the process of inculturation, which underscores dynamic equivalence as method.

Keywords: Inculturation, Faith, Culture, Dialogue, Dynamic Equivalence

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INTRODUCTION

Inculturation, as it is now known, emerged gradually. A reading of its history reveals the changing attitude of the Church towards culture, relative to evangelization. The Church's appraisal of culture is crucial for the acceptance of approaches, which are based on Gospel-culture dialogue. Gerard Arbuckle avers that the disposition of the Church towards faith-culture dialogue can be described as flexible and inflexible.¹ Filipino theologians explained the same attitude of appreciation and disfavor towards the said approach, notably: Leonardo Mercado and Jose De Mesa who remarked that the shift from ecclesiocentric to empirical and personalist approaches significantly influenced the said changes.² This paper, therefore, discusses the drama of faith-culture dialogue in the Church's efforts to proclaim the message of the Gospel: first, by tracing the historical development of inculturation, highlighting the Church's disposition towards faith culture dialogue; second, by describing the nature and dynamics of inculturation, stressing its essential characteristics; and third, delineating the process of inculturation, underscoring dynamic equivalence as method.

A SKETCH OF INCULTURATION'S EMERGENCE

In broad strokes, the emergence of inculturation can be traced back to the Church's attitude of flexibility or openness towards culture, which goes back to the Church's growth from Judaism up to the time before the colonial expansion of the 15th century. The key moments which exemplified attitudes of critical interaction and

accommodation include the birth of Jesus Christ, the Great Commission of the Apostles, the Council of Jerusalem in 49 AD, the Missionary Journeys of Saint Paul, the growth of the Church under the Roman Empire, and the missionary activity of the Church to Europe during the 7th century onwards.³ Central to these events is what Mercado describes as the building up of the "Church-for-the-kingdom" where the Church is viewed as the means established by Christ for the salvation of all, distinguished from "Church-for-itself" which is more concerned with the establishment of the Church as an institution.⁴ The "Church-for-the kingdom" underscores a Church that is not constrained to any physical boundaries because it sees the Kingdom of God as transcendent of any culture and immanent in every culture at the same time. In this period of flexibility, the Church was open to the culture of the Jews, Greco-Romans, and the Europeans, which cradled Catholicism during her infant years. As a result, there are discernible influences, both in the theology and liturgy of the Catholic Church, which can be said to have originated from these places. For example, Tertullian, in the third century used Roman juridical language to explain aspects of the faith, specifically, in the liturgy where the sacrament of baptism was viewed as forging a contract with Jesus Christ while at the same time breaking an agreement with the world.⁵

¹ Gerard Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for the Pastoral Worker* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 10.

² Leonardo N. Mercado, *Inculturation and Filipino Theology, Asia Pacific Missiological Series 2* (Manila: Divine Word Publication, 1992), 2. See Jose M. De Mesa, *Why Theology is Never Far from Home* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, Inc., 2003), 3.

³ See Robert Schreiter, "The Legacy of St. Francis Xavier: Inculturation of the Gospel Then and Now" *East Asian Pastoral Review* 44 (2007): 17. See also Gerard A. Arbuckle, "Christianity, Identity, and Cultures: A Case Study" *The Australasian Catholic Report* (January, 2013): 41-43. See also Gerard Timoner, "Theology of Inculturation: A Critical Appraisal," *Philippiniana Sacra* XL no. 119 (2005): 322-325.

⁴ Mercado, *Inculturation*, 5-6. Mercado makes a distinction between the notion of the Church-for-itself and the Church-for-the-kingdom, referring to the former as the visible Church on her pilgrimage to plenitude, *simul justus et peccator*, and *semper reformanda*. On the other hand, the Church-for-the kingdom is described as the eternal and universal kingdom and God's sovereignty over the world which the missionaries endeavor to realize in this world but which can only be realized at the end of time.

⁵ See Arbuckle, "Christianity, Identity, and Cultures" p. 41. Quoting Anscar Chupungco in "Liturgy and Inculturation," *East Asian Pastoral Review* 18 (1981): 264.





The shift to inflexibility was a mark of the 15th century European colonial expansion during which, as Arbuckle averred: “the missionaries shared the intolerant and prejudiced views of the *conquistadores* of the native cultures and religions.”⁶ De Mesa, for his part, refers to this as the classical period, which absolutized the Greco-Roman culture that eventually evolved into the western European-North-American way of life.⁷ This age of triumphalism and centralization oriented the efforts of the Church towards the establishment of the visible, institutional Church in those places where it had not yet been established. In this context, to be Catholic meant being subordinated to European cultural expressions. Moreover, juxtaposed with the expansionist mode, the Christian message was generally viewed as an integral part of the package of European civilization.⁸ This disposition was justified and rationalized by the conviction that conquest of pagan lands was a blessing to people from the non-Christian world. Such attitude, as described by Rolando V. Dela Rosa, made the missionaries treat the natives as little children to *Madre España*.⁹

To address this issue, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith was established in 1622 to appeal to the missionaries of the time to give more weight to the preaching of the faith instead of bringing France, Spain, or Italy into China.¹⁰ Moreover, resistance to this monolithic view of the faith was championed by some Jesuits who brought the Gospel to Asia, most notably: Francis Xavier, Matteo Ricci, and Roberto de

Nobili, who were back then missionaries to Japan, China, and India, respectively. Employing the method of accommodation, they asserted the need for the faith to interact with the local culture instead of merely imposing it. However, the condemnation of Matteo Ricci proved that Church authorities during that time were not yet prepared to accept such approaches.¹¹ This classical approach was intertwined with the western culture that was deemed as superior, hence the paradigm on which other cultures must be patterned.¹²

John XXIII, in his thoughtful remark, articulated the radical shift that would significantly impact the relationship between the Gospel and the culture as the Church was being led into the era of Vatican II: “The Church does not identify herself with any particular culture, not even European and Western culture...the Church is ever ready to recognize, to welcome and indeed encourage all things that honor the human mind and heart even if they have their origin in places of the world that lie outside this Mediterranean basin.”¹³ The changing tides ushered the Church to an emerging context or situation, looking beyond the Eurocentric model. As hitherto mentioned, the changes happened as a result of another paradigm shift that would influence faith-culture dialogue. Mercado and De Mesa concur in the idea that the impetuses for change are: the emergence of empirical approaches and the openness of theology to interdisciplinary approaches.¹⁴ The Church would consider as part of her pool of sources those contributions coming from secular fields or other specialized sciences, thus paving the way for the influx of cultural data, which introduced culture as a

⁶ Ibid. 43 quoting G. Voss, “Missionary Accommodation,” *Missionary Academic Study 2* (New York: Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 1964), 17.

⁷ Jose M. De Mesa, *Why Theology is Never Far From Home* (Manila: DLSU Press, 2003), 3.

⁸ Brian Stanley, “Inculturation: Historical Background, Theological Foundations and Contemporary Questions,” *Transformation 24*, 1 (January 2007): 21.

⁹ Rolando V. de la Rosa, O.P. *Beginnings of the Filipino Dominicans: History of the Filipinization of the Religious Orders in the Philippines*, Revised Edition. (Manila: UST Publishing House, 1990), 19. Quoting J.H. Elliot, *Imperial Spain*, 382 – 386.

¹⁰ Arbuckle, *Earthling the Gospel*, 12.

¹¹ Arbuckle, “Christianity, Identity, and Cultures,” 43.

¹² Mercado, *Inculturation*, 4. Furthermore, Schreier remarked: the religious landscape was seen through the lens of truth and error. Whatever deviated from Christian truth was error. If there was discernible coherence within those webs of error, it was achieved through the work of the devil, which created these schemes to delude people into his wily ways. Schreier, “The Legacy of Saint Francis Xavier,” 20.

¹³ *PP*, 19.

¹⁴ Mercado, *Inculturation*, vii. See De Mesa, *Why Theology*, 4.





locus theologiae.¹⁵ This development highlighted a Church that is dynamic and docile to human experiences. This is evident, for example, in the opening words of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *GS*, which reads: “the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”¹⁶

The use of approaches, which has acknowledged cultural diversity, emerged from the realization that evangelization in mission frontiers entails respect for the unique context or situation on which the Gospel is being proclaimed. Moreover, the need to adapt to local circumstances received encouragement from the Vatican II “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity *AG*.”¹⁷ In the *aggiornamento* of Vatican II, new directions were set with strong emphasis on the relationship that must exist between the Church and cultures as conveyed in the following statements culled from the other Conciliar documents:

The Church is not to be a huge, uniform monolith of Eurocentric cultural characteristics, but a fraternity of local Churches, each of which seeks to give life to the Universal Church, in accordance with the native genius and traditions of its own members.¹⁸

There must be a living exchange between the Church and the diverse cultures of peoples. Through a process of dialogue and exchange between cultures, local expressions of worship and theology should emerge.¹⁹

For a dialogue or exchange to occur, people must feel free from all physical or moral coercion to accept the Gospel. Genuine dialogue requires that people be open to listen to one another. It means taking every means possible to learn about the culture of the people with whom one wishes to dialogue.²⁰

Vatican II supported a paradigm shift that would influence the way that the Gospel is to be proclaimed to various cultures. The positive effects would be felt wherever the Gospel is being preached.²¹ The use of the word “re-emergence” implies that openness to culture always have a place in the approaches of the Church, in relation to evangelization. Although strategies differ and are imperfectly carried out, those periods when the Church exemplified openness to culture witnessed a Church that is more faithful to Jesus Christ’s proclamation of the kingdom of God to all peoples.

APPROACHES RELATED TO INCULTURATION

The flexibility or openness to culture, which exemplified the Church’s efforts to address the challenges of faith-culture dialogue, necessitated the emergence of various approaches. The various approaches are presented with the view of having

a clearer grasp of what inculturation means. As will be demonstrated later, inculturation does share some of the aspects the varied approaches do highlight respectively.

ACCULTURATION

Acculturation pertains to the encounter between one culture and another, or the encounter between cultures, which brings about cultural change.²² Change happens because people allow or even facilitate the modification of their culture as their encounter with other cultures opens them to other realities or opportunities for growth. For example, in the area of popular religiosity, some Filipino Catholics adorn their altars or *stampitas* with Chinese ornaments. This syncretism

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *GS*, 1.

¹⁷ *AG*, 5-6.

¹⁸ *SC*, 151.

¹⁹ *GS*, 246; *AG*, 616

²⁰ *DH*, 678. See also *AG*, 616.

²¹ Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel*, 15.

²² Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 8. See also Gerard F. Timoner, III, “Theology of Inculturation: A Critical Appraisal” *Philippiniana Sacra* XL, 119 (May-August, 2005): 339.





implies the integration of two systems of beliefs resulting from the intercommunication of ideas and forms of behavior, which introduces new behavior and entails an eventual change of ideas.²³ Like acculturation, inculturation facilitates the encounter between different cultures, which result in cultural changes. However, unlike acculturation, inculturation is deeper as it goes beyond external or physical similarities by discerning equivalence in terms of meanings or intended impact.

ADAPTATION

As an approach, adaptation adjusts to or suits the Gospel message to the traditions of the people, therefore, implying openness to changes in order to make the Gospel more attuned to the context. As a process, adaptation requires creativity and diligence in looking for those aspects of culture, which have correspondence with the Gospel message. Widely used during the Vatican II, adaptation as employed in the document *SC*, recognized the giftedness of every culture, therefore allowing variations or modifications for as long as the substance of the Gospel is untouched.²⁴ But the changes are superficial as these are limited to the peripheral non-essentials, which do not allow a more intimate encounter between the Gospel and culture. Consequently, since adaptation is limited to external changes, it does not produce the necessary internal change of attitude.²⁵ Adaptation and inculturation share in this one aspect: they both imply openness to changes in order to make the Gospel more

attuned to the context. But unlike inculturation, which focuses on essential meanings in order to lead to internal changes, adaptation merely deals with the peripheral non-essentials.

ASSIMILATION

This approach happens when one takes objects and customs from people to accept and integrate them into Christianity and Christian Life.²⁶ Chupungco cited practices during the age of patristic creativity wherein Greek and Roman practices such as anointing at baptism, the giving of milk and honey, and the foot washing of neophytes became part of Christian worship through the method of creative assimilation.²⁷ Both inculturation and assimilation accept objects and customs from people to accept and integrate them into Christianity and Christian life. But similar to acculturation, assimilation focuses on externalities whereas inculturation searches for essential similarities.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

“Contextualization” means the interweaving of the Gospel with every particular situation. Emerging during the early 1970s specifically in Asian, Latin American, and African theologies, this approach is directed towards the formation of a theology that is shaped by social, political, economic, and religious contexts.²⁸ Contextualization takes into account processes such as: secularism, technology, and the struggle for human justice, which characterize the historical moment of nations in the Third World.²⁹ This approach begins with the needs of

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *SC*, 38 – 40. However expressive of the celebrated *aggiornamento* of Vatican II, *SC* requires that any work of adaptation must be carried out under the supervision of ecclesiastical authorities and with the help of experts. Timoner adds that limiting variations or modifications to external aspects, implies a unilateral relation between the Gospel and culture, meaning, culture as the “other” have nothing to contribute or give to the Eurocentric theology. See Timoner, “Theology of Inculturation,” 338.

²⁵ K.P. Aleaz, “The Theology of Inculturation Re-Examined,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 25, 2 (2011): 232. Schineller adds, instead of getting inside, it remains on the outside or above, and is only willing to make or allow extrinsic, accidental, superficial changes in ways of being Christian.” See Schineller, *Handbook on Inculturation*, 17.

²⁶ Franz-Josef Eilers, SVD, *Communicating Between Cultures: An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*. Fourth Updated Edition (Manila: Logos, Divine Word Publication, 2012), 184.

²⁷ Chupungco, “Two Methods of Liturgical Inculturation,” in *Liturgy for the Filipino Church*, editor, Josefina M. Manabat, SLD (Manila: San Beda College, 2004), 19–20.

²⁸ Stanley, “Historical Background,” 22.

²⁹ Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel*, 21. Quoting R.O. Costa (ed.) *One Faith, Many Cultures: Inculturation, Indigenization, and Contextualization* (Maryknoll: NY Orbis, 1988), xii





the people in a concrete place, and from there moves to the traditions of faith which also means studying or getting acquainted with the situation before the Gospel can be contextualized.³⁰ Any local church will have a different context and will, therefore, elicit a different response than a neighboring local church. The problem with contextualization is its emphasis on the ever-changing context, which might result in the failure to maintain a healthy balance between constant updating and staying grounded in the history. Moreover, emphasis on context implies that the interaction between the Gospel and culture is something external and superficial. Similar to contextualization, inculturation aims to attune the Gospel to every particular situation. However, they are different in the sense that inculturation focuses on time honored customs or traditions unlike contextualization that deals with ever-changing contexts.

ENCULTURATION

The anthropological expression enculturation comes from life experience within a culture.³¹ This sociological concept, distinguished from inculturation as its counterpart in theology, refers to the insertion of the individual to his/her culture through a process of learning. It is a concept related to that of socialization, another term employed by social scientists to refer to the education of the individual by the society. To a great extent the individual teaches himself through a process of adaptive learning, the rules of which are given by society.³² Enculturation and inculturation are processes that facilitate the individual's insertion or education into

³⁰ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 13. Schreiter refers to two kind of contextual models: Ethnographic approaches which pertain to those that concern cultural identity; and liberation approaches concentrate on oppression and social ills.

³¹ Eilers, SVD, *Communicating Between Cultures*: 184.

³² Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 5. See also Timoner, III, "Toward a Theology of Inculturation," 337. Timoner quotes Marcelo Acevedo, S.J., *Inculturation and the Challenge of Modernity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1982), 7.

a particular culture. However, they are still different as inculturation is applied to theology while enculturation is used in anthropology or sociology.

IMPOSITION

As an approach, imposition is defined as "the process by which doctrines, religious customs, morals, and ways of praying and acting are brought from outside, from a foreign or alien culture and tradition, and imposed or forced upon the new culture."³³ This approach was practiced during the 15th century Western colonial expansion. An example of this was *PCP II*'s description of the manner by which Christianity was introduced to the Philippines: "the faith came to us, though not always without an element of duress."³⁴ This statement reminisces and interprets that faith came to the Philippines by way of the cross and the sword, which implies that it was imposed rather than proposed to the natives. In this approach, as Schreiter averred: the religious landscape was seen through the lens of truth and error and whatever deviated from Christian truth was error.³⁵ The stark contrast between this approach and that of inculturation is wide: whereas inculturation shows respect to the genius of every culture, imposition precludes any form of dialogue, because it is assumed that the Church has nothing to learn from the cultures being evangelized.³⁶

INTERCULTURATION

According to Werner Ustorf, the use of intercultural theology during the seventies was prompted by factors such as: the discovery that all theologies are contextually conditioned, and the pressure

³³ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁴ *PCP II*, 10, 7.

³⁵ Schreiter, "The Legacy of St. Francis Xavier" 20.

³⁶ Arbuckle, "Christianity, Identity, and Cultures", 37. See also Leonardo N. Mercado, *Elements of Filipino Theology* (Tacloban City, Philippines: Divine Word University, 1975), 2.





of the decolonization processes.³⁷ Similarly, Frans Wijsen avers that interculturality, as an approach, attempts to answer new questions in mission generated by contemporary phenomena such as: modernization, globalization, migration, multi-culturality, and religious pluralism, among others.³⁸ Interculturation expresses the idea that the process of inculturation is not simply the interaction between the Gospel on the one hand and culture on the other as if they represent two monolithic meaning systems, but between multiple cultural orientations.³⁹ In this context of pluralism, interculturality departs from forms of hegemonies and homogenizations by facilitating a kind of interaction between members of different cultural groups where each one has something to contribute. This interaction leads to the integration of contributions, which brings about the formation of something “new” without diminishing the value of each cultural component.⁴⁰ Both inculturation and interculturation emphasize sensitivity to the encounter between cultures. However, unlike inculturation, which stresses the interaction between the Gospel on the one hand, and culture on the other, interculturation, as its prefix “inter” suggests, is between multiple cultural orientations.

³⁷ Werner Ustorf, “The Cultural Origins of Intercultural Theology” *Mission Studies* 25 (2008): 229-230. See also Gerard F. Timoner, “Intercultural Theology as a Way of Doing Theology” in *Philippiniana Sacra* XLI, 121 (January-April, 2006): 7. (pp. 5-46).

³⁸ Frans Wijsen, “Intercultural Theology” *Exchange* 30, 3 (2001): 222. Furthermore, according to Wijsen, inculturation does not abandon the concept of inculturation but broadens it.

³⁹ Ibid. 221, 228. Similarly, Ratzinger insisted on the use of this model to deal with the issue of plurality of cultures vis-à-vis the culture of the Gospel. Holding that the Christian faith cannot be reduced to any one culture, interculturality according to Ratzinger, “offers a reflection that would display the riches of the one truth in the plurality of culture” in Francesco Follo, “Inculturation and Interculturality in John Paul II and Benedict XVI.” Retrieved 5 February 2014 from <http://www.oasiscenter.eu/articles/interreligious-dialogue/2010/03/29/inculturation-and-interculturality-in-john-paul-ii-and-benedict-xvi> quoting Ratzinger’s speech during the 25th anniversary of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, 11 May 2006.

⁴⁰ Daniel Pietrzak, Interculturality and Internationality: A Utopia or a Constructive Tension for a Franciscan Missiology? Retrieved September 9, 2014 from http://www2.ofmconv.pcn.net/docs/en/general/miscon06_india/Interculturality%20and%20Internationality%20%20a%20utopia%20or%20a%20constructive%20tension%20for%20a%20Franciscan%20Missiology.pdf

INDIGENIZATION

Sensitivity to cultural diversity impacted perceptions or views on leadership in the Church. The establishment of a local hierarchy as leader of a local church is the fruit of efforts that aimed to empower the indigenous members. As previously noted, it is the task of local Churches to integrate the message of the Gospel into their own cultural background. By the middle of the 20th century, especially in the Asian context, the growing sense of nationalism side by side with the so-called decolonization years stressed the recruitment of local people of different cultures as priests and religious.⁴¹ The local leadership, fit with a renewed sense of pride in their religious and cultural beliefs is responsible for developing the theology, liturgy, and practice of their local church.⁴² Indigenization emphasizes that theology is done by and for a given geographical area by local people for their area rather than by outsiders.⁴³

The 1974 *FABC* states: “indigenization renders the local Church truly present within the life and cultures of the people. Through it, all their human reality is assumed into the life of the body of Christ, so that all may be purified and healed, perfected and fulfilled.”⁴⁴ However, since its primary aim is the establishment of local leadership, indigenization has the tendency to focus more on the ecclesiological form than theological substance.⁴⁵ Indigenization is not inculturation in this respect: the former emphasizes governance of local churches that

⁴¹ Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel*, 14. See Stanley, “Inculturation: Historical Background,” 22. This method was used by Protestants in their mission during the early part of the 20th century to describe their aim of establishing churches which should be indigenous in governance. See Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel*, 14.

⁴² Schineller, *Handbook on Inculturation*, 18.

⁴³ Schreier, *Local Theologies*, 5.

⁴⁴ Kroeger, James H., “The Faith-Culture Dialogue in Asia: Ten *FABC* Insights on Inculturation,” *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* 85, 870 (2009), 11.

⁴⁵ Stanley, “Inculturation: Historical Background,” 22. Focus on ecclesiological form rather than theological substance is brought about by the perceived potential of all human culture to gravitate to a default position marked by human sinfulness.





should be authentically indigenous, in this sense, its emphasis is ecclesiological form, while the latter focuses on the theological content or substance. But both exemplify sensitivity to cultural diversity.

Initially, we have, in general shown how inculturation gradually gained currency in the Church and what are its contrasts and similarities to other approaches. The next task is to go into an investigation on the nature or concept and dynamics of this approach.

NATURE AND DYNAMICS OF INCULTURATION

Inculturation has been a product of the Church's paradigm shifts in her missionary approaches. Dialogue with various cultures henceforth has been mandatory. In light of this, this section answers the question, what is inculturation? Beginning with a discussion of the origin of the term, this section then surveys available descriptions of inculturation and explains how it is grounded in sound theology.

The first recorded use of the term "inculturation" was in 1962, prior to the opening of the Vatican II, when the Jesuit Joseph Masson wrote: "today there is a more urgent need for a Catholicism that is inculturated in a variety of forms."⁴⁶ It is worth noting that prior to Mason's pioneering use of the term inculturation, widely used as approaches (especially in protestant missions) were indigenization and contextualization but these were observed to be inadequate so that eventually, the former supplanted them. Then, in 1970, when the Asian bishops met with Pope Paul VI in Manila, they reflected, as noted in their final statement, on "the inculturation of

⁴⁶ Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 10 quoting Joseph Masson, 'L'Eglise ouverte ser le monde' in NRT, 84 (1962) 1038. See Stanley, "Historical Background", 22. See K.P. Aleaz, "The Theology of Inculturation Re-Examined," *Asia Journal of Theology* 25, 2 (2011): 233.

the life and message of the Gospel in Asia."⁴⁷ In 1977, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Pedro Arrupe, introduced the term to the Synod of Bishops who at that time were discussing "catechesis" as their main agenda.⁴⁸ Influenced by this Synod, Pope John Paul II echoed the word several times in the apostolic exhortation *CT*, describing how catechesis should be done or what catechesis should do in the spirit of inculturation.⁴⁹ From this point onwards, inculturation started to be widely used in Catholic Circles as evidenced by the following descriptions:

Pedro Arrupe, Letter to the Society of Jesus

Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and the Christian message in a particular 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.⁵⁰

Pope John Paul II, *RM*

Inculturation pertains to the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures. The process is thus a profound and all-embracing one, which involves the Christian message and also the Church's reflection and practice. But at the same time, it is a difficult process, for it must in no way compromise the distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Kroeger, "The Faith-Culture," 10.

⁴⁸ Stanley, "Inculturation: Historical Background," 22.

⁴⁹ *CT*, 53. The original text states: We can say of catechesis, as well as of evangelization in general, that it is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures. For this purpose, catechesis will seek to know these cultures and their essential components; it will learn their most significant expressions; it will respect their particular values and riches. In this manner it will be able to offer these cultures the knowledge of the hidden mystery and help them to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought. Two things must however be kept in mind.

⁵⁰ A. Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 11 quoting P. Arrupe, 1978, "Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation" *Aixala* (ed.) 3, 172. Arrupe's definition is important as it was a product of extensive discussion of the concept at the 32nd General Assembly of the Jesuit Order in 1974. This material would serve as an important source for Arrupe who would introduce inculturation to the Synod of Bishops in 1977. See Stanley, "Inculturation: Historical Background," 23.

⁵¹ *RM*, 52. *RM* was promulgated a decade after *CT*; redefined inculturation.





K.P. Aleaz

Inculturation is the assimilation of the Christian message and the Christian way of life into the particular culture of people, and assumption of the local culture together with the local Christian living into the Gospel message, thereby transforming it into a new creation of unity and communion within the local Church and as enrichment of the Church universal.⁵²

Arij Roest Crolius

The *inculturation* of the Church is defined as the integration of the Christian experience of a local church in the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only comes to be expressed in elements of that culture but becomes a force that animates, orients, and innovates that culture to the point of creating a new unity and communion, not only in the culture in question, but also as an enriching of the universal Church.⁵³

From the foregoing descriptions, we can cull the dynamics of inculturation, which we delineate here as: Aim, Process, Outcome.

As *Aim*, the dynamic character of inculturation is initiated: First, just as the sending of the Son by the Father to the Jewish culture commenced with the Incarnation, likewise inculturation starts with the sending of the Gospel to every culture, which Pope John Paul II expressed in his definition as “bringing the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture.” In this sense, inculturation is a movement of God, inviting His people to share in His mission, in the same way that He sent forth the eleven to go on their way to proclaim the Gospel, and in the same way that the disciples were emboldened to proclaim their faith when they received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (See Acts 2: 1-4).

As *Process*, inculturation is carried out through a series of dialogue. According to Arrupe, when

⁵² K.P. Aleaz, “The Theology of Inculturation,” 233.

⁵³ John F. Gorski, M.M., “Christology, Inculturation, and Their Missiological Implications: A Latin American Perspective,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, 2 (2004): 61, quoting Crolius from the article of Bartolome Genero, ed. *Inculturazione della fede: Saggi Interdisciplinari* (Naple: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1981). Emphasis mine.

the Gospel is incarnated in every culture, “it finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question.” For his part, Pope John Paul II remarked, “when the Gospel is brought to cultures, it seeks to know cultures and their essential components; it respects their particular values and riches.” Two main points are thus emphasized, namely: to engage culture in a dialogue, and to learn culture and learn from culture, through dialogue. Dialogue is thus understood: “conversation with the other and learning from each other whatever is possible. It is a form of meeting and communication to bring out a better grasp of the truth and to achieve better human relations.”⁵⁴ From this definition we gather three aspects of dialogue, namely: first, dialogue is a meeting, an encounter between different individuals;⁵⁵ second, dialogue is learning because it brings about the realization that no one possesses the truth in a perfect and total way but can walk together with others towards that goal;⁵⁶ lastly, dialogue is relationship because it fosters what Michael Barnes refers to as “critical generosity” which implies an attitude and a spirit of concern, respect, and hospitality towards the other.⁵⁷

Finally, Inculturation as *Outcome* refers to the result or product of Gospel-culture dialogue. According to Arrupe, the fruit of inculturation is to evangelize or make the Gospel the “principle that animates, directs, and unifies the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation.” Pope John Paul II, for his part, states that the reward of inculturation is to bring to cultures “the knowledge of the hidden

⁵⁴ Edgar G. Javier, SVD, *Dialogue: Our Mission Today* (Quezon City: Claretian Publication and ICLA Publications, 2006), 7.

⁵⁵ Michael Barnes, SJ, *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 20. Michael Barnes, quoting Emmanuel Levinas remarked that “dialogue is no unequivocal meeting of equals, but on the contrary, is founded on dissymmetry and difference.” See Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God who comes to Mind* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 151.

⁵⁶ Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, *Resource Manual for Catholics in Asia: Dialogue* (Thailand: FABC-OEIA, 2001), 35.

⁵⁷ See Barnes, *Theology and Dialogue*, 21.





mystery and help them to bring forth from their living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought.”⁵⁸ This author offers two points to be pondered here: first, the Gospel becomes the soul of culture, and when this happens, culture becomes a new creation, conformed to the culture of the Gospel; and second, culture, finds in itself already existing, expressions of Christian life.

Noted above were the benefits of inculturation towards culture, such as its transformation or configuration into the life and culture of the Church and the purification of its elements. On the other hand, the descriptions coming from John Paul II’s *RM*, Aleaz, and Crollius add another perspective to the outcome of inculturation, that of “mutual reciprocity”. The meaning of mutual reciprocity can be summed up by a quote from *RM*:

Thanks to this action within the local churches, the universal Church herself is enriched with forms of expression and values in the various sectors of Christian life, such as evangelization, worship, theology and charitable works. She comes to know and to express better the mystery of Christ, all the while being motivated to continual renewal.⁵⁹

Briefly, by embracing the cultures of local churches, the universal Church is enriched in the forms of her expression and values. An example of this would be: the liberation theology of Latin America and the *Misa ng Bayang Filipino*, among others, which express the universal values of justice and solidarity based on the experience or culture of the Latin Americans and the Filipino people, respectively.

DIMENSIONS OF INCULTURATION

Inculturation can be seen through different but interrelated dimensions. They are that inculturation is: a) a theological term; b) an interaction between two cultures; c) a process of exchange; d) a conversion-encounter with the person of Christ; e) a critical interaction; f) a recognition of the contextuality of culture.⁶⁰ The abovementioned dimensions correspond to the threefold understanding of inculturation as aim, process, and outcome. Inculturation as a theological term corresponds to Aim; Inculturation as Interaction between two cultures, a process of exchange, a critical interaction conforms to Process; and inculturation as a conversion-encounter with the person of Christ and recognition of the contextuality of culture is aligned with Outcome.

As a theological term, inculturation is grounded on sound Catholic doctrines, namely: Theology of the Incarnation, Theology of *Missio*, and the Spermatic Logos. These theologies exemplify God’s interaction with His people, hence are fitting foundations for inculturation.⁶¹ First, inculturation is patterned after the Theology of Incarnation wherein, by becoming human, Jesus Christ opted to share His life with the people in order to move them to conversion. This being said, to inculturate means to be immersed in the culture of the people for the purpose of knowing their culture and communicating the Gospel via the language of their culture. Similarly, Gerard F. Timoner avers that it is when the

⁶⁰ There are other authors who came up with similar short list. See Gerard Arbuckle, *Christianity, Identity, and Cultures*, 37-40; K.P. Aleaz, *The Theology of Inculturation Re-Examined*, 231 quoting D.S. Amalorpavadass, “Indian Culture. Integrating Cultural Elements into Spirituality” in *Indian Christian Spirituality* ed. By D.S. Amalorpavadass, Bangalore: NBCLC, 1982, 100; Timoner, “Theology of Inculturation,” 340. After defining inculturation, Timoner likewise came up with his own list which he referred to as “fundamental insights,” namely: interaction between Gospel and culture, process of dynamic exchange, of reciprocal assimilation, transformation of culture and rooting of Christianity on culture.

⁶¹ K.P. Aleaz, “The Theology of Inculturation,” 230. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel*, 18.

⁵⁸ *CT*, 53.

⁵⁹ *RM*, 52.



Gospel finds a home in a particular culture that genuine evangelization takes place;⁶² Second, the Theology of *Missio*, which is founded on Jesus Christ's mandate to "go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel," (Mark 16:15) also provides anchorage for inculturation. This "sending forth" has resounded to all generations of believers and the manner that it is carried out varies, depending on which mission paradigm the Church follows and inculturation emanated from such movements in the theology of mission.⁶³ Mission in the light of Vatican II undertakes a methodological shift that is preoccupied with the task of presenting the Gospel message to the world and communicating it to human beings with the same power and immediacy that marked the first Pentecost;⁶⁴ and Third, based on the Theology of *Logoi Spermaticoi*, the Church confronted the challenge of the plurality of cultures. Shorter avers that Vatican II, envisioning a positive dialogue with cultures, concurred with Justin Martyr's concept of the "seed of the Word" or spermatic logos, which holds that cultures are also recipients of the grace of God.⁶⁵ Hence for inculturation, the Word of God remains the principle of unity amid the multiplicity of forms in which the creative Spirit gives it expression.⁶⁶

⁶² Timoner, "Theology of Inculturation", 330 and 337.

⁶³ Leonardo N. Mercado, *Inculturation and Filipino Theology: Asia Pacific Missiological Series 2* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1992), 3.

⁶⁴ See Stephen Bevans, SVD, "Revisiting Mission as Vatican II: Theology and Practice for Today's Mission Church" *Theological Studies* 74 (2013): 262. Quoting Giuseppe Alberigo, Bevans remarked that the Vatican II and its documents reveal that mission was very much at its heart. One might even say that in its deepest intuitions, Vatican II was a missionary council." 87-94. See also Giuseppe Alberigo, "The Announcement of the Council: From Security of the Fortress to the Lure of Quest," in *History of Vatican II, 1 Announcing and Preparing Vatican II: Toward a New Era in Catholicism*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis) 1-54 at 42. Moreover, Bevans explained how the dogmatic constitutions of Vatican II imply the methodological shift characterized by "openness to the world" For example, *SC*'s acceptance of the vernacular (36) and sensitivity of liturgy document to local cultures and customs (37); *LG*'s vision of proclaiming the Gospel to the ends of the earth and that mission should treat cultures with respect (17); *Dei Verbum* describes that God speaks to women and men as friends, lives among them, and invites them into communion with God-self; and *GS* reveals the conviction that the Church finds its identity and purpose by being fully immersed in the service of the dialogue with the world. Bevans, "Revisiting Mission, 263-266. See also A. Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 191-204.

⁶⁵ Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 77, 196. According to Justin, the Spermatic Logos or seed-bearing Word had been implanted in the heart of every human culture, since all things were created through Him and with Him.

⁶⁶ Amaladoss, SJ, *Making all Things New*, 62.

Another dimension of inculturation is its potential to facilitate the interaction between the Church and the culture. As the Church responds to the Great Commission of her Founder and communicates the Gospel message to humanity, encounter with culture is inevitable. Anthony Arthur avers, "inculturation takes place at the intersection of mission and human experience."⁶⁷ Inculturation, therefore, is an interaction between cultures because it makes faith and culture present to one another.

Inculturation also highlights the process of exchange between the Gospel and culture. As mentioned hitherto, on the one hand, a culture that is animated by the power of the Gospel is converted or transformed. On the other hand, the Gospel, upon entering into new cultural phases and regions is enriched and renewed as it acquires new expressions while preserving the integrity of the message.⁶⁸ Out of this deep and mutually enriching encounter between the Gospel and culture, an inculturated Church comes into existence.⁶⁹ This inculturated Church is simultaneously a teacher and a student, eager to impart to culture the values of the Gospel and enthused to learn what new things culture has to teach.⁷⁰

Inculturation is marked by Critical Interaction. Inculturation must be a gradual process, a slow journey, and must be undertaken with great care. This reminder is expressed by Timothy Radcliffe who remarks, "inculturation can learn from Jesus Christ's gesture of not only embracing

⁶⁷ Arthur, "Mission, Culture, and Spirituality," 23.

⁶⁸ Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 13.

⁶⁹ Kroeger, "Faith-Culture," 12. In the same article, Kroeger adds, "this means that while the Church influences peoples' cultures and religions, the Church herself is likewise being shaped and moulded."

⁷⁰ Nathan Mitchell, "Culture, Inculturation, and Sacrosanctum Concilium," *Worship* 77, 2 (March 2003): 172. See Koeger, "Faith-Culture," Quoting *FABC Papers* 60, 18. As a result, the concrete shape of the local church will be, on the one hand conditioned by the culture, and on the other hand, the culture will be evangelized by the life and witness of the local church. Similarly, in *RM* 83, Pope John Paul II affirmed that inculturation is a task involving not only the transmission of the Church's own values but at the same time the acceptance of the good elements that already exist in culture.



culture but criticizing it at the same time: this He exemplified by challenging the law and welcoming the outcasts.⁷¹ The dialogue with culture demands critical reflection, seeing to it that the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the culture remains the ultimate goal. When this happens, cultural attitudes and structures are measured against Jesus Christ's values, which may result in the rejection of some cultural values, as well as the acceptance of others.⁷²

Lastly, another characteristic of inculturation is that it is a converting encounter with Christ. This finds poignant expression in Pope Benedict XVI's remark, "being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."⁷³ What defines inculturation, therefore, is not that it facilitates the formulation of new expressions but as Aleaz avers, transforming and getting transformed in the process.⁷⁴ This transformation and conversion happens when Christ is incarnated in the culture or experience of the people because, in effect, He becomes the power that animates their lives. And culture, when it is configured to Christ, is purified from whatever is contrary to Christ, as *AG* asserts: "whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God, he frees from all taint of evil and restores to Christ its maker, who overthrows the devil's domain and wards off the manifold malice of vice."⁷⁵ In their conversion, the people, according to *AG* "are able to discover a new identity, losing nothing of its cultural riches, but

integrating them in a new whole and becoming the sacrament of God's liberating love active among men."⁷⁶

PROCESS OF INCULTURATION

As dictated by the over-all orientation of this investigation in the threefold way of understanding inculturation, the focus is now on "inculturation" as a process or approach. In this section, the following are discussed: areas of inculturation, attitudes proper to inculturation, and the method of inculturation.

AREAS OF INCULTURATION

The word "area" is meant here a certain field of endeavor where culture and the Gospel interact for a possible application of the process of inculturation. Thus, there are many areas where the encounter between Gospel and culture can take place, they are: spirituality, liturgy and worship, ministry, catechesis, theology, and evangelization.⁷⁷

First, inculturation finds in spirituality various ways through which people express their primordial experience of God, hence a fertile ground on which the message of the Gospel can be planted. For example, the early missionaries to China and India turned to the people's indigenous expression of their faith in order to find expressions of the Gospel message; Second, in liturgy, Chupungco explains how the prayer of the Church can be at the same time a prayer of the people by being an expression of their own culture. Similarly, this was expressed by *SC*, which acknowledges the legitimacy of indigenous practices, stating thus: "The Church has no wish

⁷¹ Timothy Radcliffe, "Inculturation," *Review for Religious* (Sept – Oct 1994): 647. In the context of Justin Martyr's Spermatic Logos, Shorter explains that it is the human cultural traditions that must be converted to Christ and not the other way around because the former is not absolute whereas the latter is. Moreover, the Logos was always challenging human cultural traditions. See Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 79.

⁷² See Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel*, 20

⁷³ *DCE*, 1. Further, Shorter quoting Schillebeeckx, said that "Christianity is not a religion of the book but of a person." See Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation*, 60.

⁷⁴ Anderson Jeremiah, "Inculturation: A Sub-Altern Critique of K.P. Aleaz' 'Indian Christian Vedanta,'" *The Asia Journal of Theology* 21, 2. (October 2007).

⁷⁵ *AG*, 9.

⁷⁶ Kreoger, "Faith-Culture," 12. Quoting *FAPA* I, 138.

⁷⁷ See Aleaz, "Theology of Inculturation," 233. See Gorski, "Christology, Inculturation, and their Missiological Implications," 61. See Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 67-72.





to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not implicate the faith or the good of the whole community; rather does she respect and foster the genius and talents of the various races and peoples;⁷⁸ Third, in the area of ministry, inculturation stresses that local churches are not mere recipients or passive observers but are indeed active agents in fostering the incarnation of the Gospel message in the genius of their people. In this regard, Kroeger, avers: “each local Church has to discover time and again what ministerial structures she requires in order to fulfill her mission to offer to a humanity the salvation brought about by Jesus Christ;”⁷⁹ fourth, catechesis, as applied to inculturation, takes into account human experience, which includes: values and attitudes, ways of life, world-views, and even the problems of the community. In this case, the starting point and locus of inculturation is the community, which has the responsibility of appropriating faith in freedom and in the context of their lives;⁸⁰ fifth, theology as inculturated grows inside out, i.e., it brings about an interpretation of the Gospel that is docile to the experience of the people and at the same time faithful to the essential content of the message. Here, the community needs to interpret the Gospel, reaching across the cultural forms of its proclamation and making it relevant to their own situation. Such interpretation leads to discernment, commitment and action. This moment of interpretation and involvement is the creative moment of inculturation where the Gospel finds natural expression in symbol and celebration in the life of the Community;⁸¹ Lastly, this is akin to the demand of evangelization, which calls for a renewed courage to confront the present challenges in the proclamation and living out of the Gospel because of new emerging contexts.⁸² Evangelization, then, as an

⁷⁸ SC, 37.

⁷⁹ Kroeger, “Faith-Culture,” 21.

⁸⁰ Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 69.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *NE*, 6.

urgent call, takes seriously the task of allowing the Gospel message to penetrate the lives of the people in such a way that it becomes a creative and transforming force in their lives.

ATTITUDES PROPER TO INCULTURATION

Inculturation implies a relationship that must necessarily take place between the Gospel message and the culture into which it is proclaimed. Therefore, it behooves the agent of inculturation to exemplify certain attitudes in order to effectively and fruitfully undertake inculturation. First, inculturation requires openness to the leads of the Spirit. In the process of inculturation, a tension exists between the goal of making the Gospel the power that animates culture and the need to respect the genius and values of particular cultures. A mature spirit can navigate in the midst of this tension: it gives the wisdom to heed the counsel of the universal Church in preserving the integrity of the faith and fortitude to take risks if only to discover new avenues or opportunities for a creative proclamation of the Gospel; second, willingness to dialogue is called for. Challenged by cultural pluralism, inculturation holds that the truth of the Gospel also resides in the cultures of the people. Because of this understanding, inculturation, through careful discernment, seeks to discover the intrinsic wealth and value of culture. Because of the acceptance of pluralism, a respectful dialogue happens, influenced by the conviction that inculturation is a process or partnership in activities and mutuality in benefits; third, inculturation happens because of the Church’s humility, i.e., the acceptance that it does not have the monopoly of truth. As the theology of the Spermatic Logos teaches, God also bestowed other cultures with their own goodness. Vatican II has exemplified this gesture of humility and for that *aggiornamento* happened





and inculturation is one of its fruits. Because of this humility, the values of the Gospel find form in those elements natural to cultures.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are a few methods to choose from in order to proceed with inculturation as a process. In this paper, the preferred method is the one developed by Charles Kraft and Anscar Chupungco known as “dynamic equivalence.”⁸³ This method will be explained in conjunction with the previously discussed threefold approach: Aim, Process, and Outcome.

First, Aim: Communication of God’s Word. Kraft originally applied dynamic equivalence as a method for the translation of the Bible, being one of the most tangible proofs of God’s desire to communicate to His people in order to bring them to conversion. But there is a need for the Word of God to be communicated, as Kraft avers, via “conceptual translation to the receptors within their linguistic and conceptual frame of reference.”⁸⁴ This conceptual transmission to the cultural milieu of the people happens in liturgy, according to Chupungco, when liturgical texts, symbols, gestures, and feasts evoke something from people’s history, traditions, cultural patterns, and artistic genius.⁸⁵ An example of this would be Tertullian’s use of the Roman juridical language to explain aspects of the faith, specifically, in the liturgy where the sacrament

of baptism was viewed as forging a contract with Jesus Christ while at the same time breaking an agreement with the world.⁸⁶

Second, Process: Building a “Communicational Bridge”. Inculturation entails learning and discovering which components of culture have correspondence with the Gospel message. This can be achieved through Dynamic Equivalence, which is undertaken via the following steps:⁸⁷ First, Linguistic and Cultural Analysis. Culture is expressed linguistically. Every language, according to Kraft, has its own genius and for it to be communicated in another language, this uniqueness must be respected. In this initial phase, available materials or cultural data are analyzed based on their natural linguistic expression or form. As Kraft avers, “there is no exact correspondence between a given word in one language and the most nearly corresponding word in another language.”⁸⁸ Second, Decoding of Essential Elements of the Message: This next phase is to go beyond the linguistic or cultural expression and analyze the data deeper in order to look for meanings, which carry an equivalent impact in the Gospel message.⁸⁹ These meanings are implicit and therefore, through the decoding of the language, will be made explicit; Third, Paraphrasing of the Material. This means that the meanings that were decoded from the previous cultural analysis need to be articulated or expressed in a new way. This is to fully reveal or expose the meaning or content, which were hidden or veiled in the original language of the culture; Fourth, Re-Encoding the Material in the Receptor Language, which as Kraft explains is,

⁸³ Charles Kraft and Anscar Chupungco employed the method of dynamic equivalence in the translation of the bible and liturgical inculturation, respectively.

⁸⁴ Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Orbis Books, 1980), 261. According to Chupungco, Dynamic equivalence is a type of translation. It re-expresses the liturgical ordo in the living language, rites, and symbols of a local community. See, Anscar Chupungco, “Two Methods of Liturgical Inculturation: Creative Assimilation and Dynamic Equivalence” in *Liturgy for the Filipino Church: A Collection of Talks of Anscar J. Chupungco, O.S.B. given at the National Meeting of Diocesan Directors of Liturgy (1986-2004)*, ed. Josefina M. Manabat, SLD. Mendiola, (Manila: San Beda College, Graduate School of Liturgy, 2004),

⁸⁵ Chupungco, “Two Methods of Liturgical Inculturation,” 18.

⁸⁶ See Arbuckle, “Christianity, Identity, and Cultures” p. 41. Quoting Anscar Chupungco in “Liturgy and Inculturation,” *East Asian Pastoral Review* 18 (1981): 264.

⁸⁷ Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 275.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 267. Kraft refers to the nonequity of the forms of language and culture, meanings can never be exactly duplicated.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 270, 271. Dynamic equivalence is an extension of “formal correspondence,” which is simply transferring the word forms of the source language into the corresponding word forms of the receptor language. Due to the recognition of non-equity of words, the focus is directed towards equivalence in response instead of equivalence in forms. See De Mesa, *Why Theology*, 112.



anything that can be said in one language can be represented adequately, though never exactly, in another. As meanings or content (from culture) have been decoded and paraphrased these can now be used to express the message of the Gospel, which have equivalent meaning; Fifth, Re-writing the Material in the Appropriate Style. In this final part, it is already determined that there are meanings or content that are shared by the culture and the Gospel message, albeit expressed differently. The differences have already been narrowed after the processes of decoding, paraphrasing, and re-encoding. The task that remains is to re-write or reproduce message using the language of the people. In this way the message is expressed in the language of the culture, thereby reproducing the meaning of the message via the language that the people understand.⁹⁰

Two main points can be culled from these discussions, it is that dynamic equivalence, first, goes beyond surface level or the formal literal equivalence and digs deeper into the source cultures to look for meanings, which carry an equivalent impact;⁹¹ and second, Dynamic equivalence stresses the conceptual translation to the receptor's conceptual frame, a method also known as functional substitution.⁹² Hence,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 272-274. See Chupungco, "Two Methods of Liturgical Inculturation," 22. Dynamic equivalence can be compared to the method proposed by Catalino Arevalo and Peter Schineller known as hermeneutical or pastoral cycle. This method requires the pastoral agent's immersion or insertion into the situation and use of social sciences in order to understand its problems and possibilities. This process confirms that elements of the Gospel message are already found in the situation and that there are evils in the situation that need to be addressed. Both methods employ the need to understand culture deeper in order to discover which of its elements are expressive of the Gospel message. See Catalino Arevalo, "Inculturation in the Church: The Asian Context," *Landas* 25 (2011): 103.

⁹¹ Ibid., 270, 271. Dynamic equivalence is an extension of "formal correspondence," which is simply transferring the word forms of the source language into the corresponding word forms of the receptor language. Due to the recognition of non-equivalency of words, the focus is directed towards equivalence in response instead of equivalence in forms. See De Mesa, *Why Theology*, 112.

⁹² See Ibid., 261. Similarly, according to Chupungco, Dynamic equivalence being a type of translation re-expresses the liturgical ordo in the living language, rites, and symbols of a local community. See, Anscar Chupungco, "Two Methods of Liturgical Inculturation: Creative Assimilation and Dynamic Equivalence," in *Liturgy for the Filipino Church: A Collection of Talks of Anscar J. Chupungco, OSB given at the National Meeting of Diocesan Directors of Liturgy (1986-2004)*, ed. Josefina M. Manabat, SLD. Mendiola, (Manila: San Beda College,

Graduate School of Liturgy, 2004), 22

dynamic equivalence is premised on the existence of commonalities between cultures, which Kraft similarly posited, "beneath the vast array of differences between human cultures there is an equally impressive substratum of basic human similarity."⁹³

Third, Outcome: Where the Gospel Message becomes a Cultural Event. By drawing elements from the culture and tradition of the people that have equal meaning or value, the Christian message enters into a greater life involvement with the receptor language.⁹⁴ As the Christian message is inserted into the framework of a culture and assimilates its elements, it is able to absorb the thought, language, and ritual patterns of the culture.⁹⁵ In this way, the Christian message becomes, for the people, a "cultural event" whose language and ritual forms they are able to identify as elements of their own culture.⁹⁶ In other words, according to Kraft, living and speaking a dynamically equivalent message in terms of the receptors' "perceptual grid" makes them feel that "Jesus Christ walks their paths and eats in their homes."⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

At the onset, this study has essayed to answer the question: How does inculturation aid the Christian faith in the living tradition of the people? To answer this, three queries were posited, namely: What is the historical background of inculturation? What is the nature of inculturation? What is the method proper to inculturation?

Graduate School of Liturgy, 2004), 22

⁹³ Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 81.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 276. This life involvement includes a communication, which is deemed more effective as it is closely related to the experience of the participants.

⁹⁵ Anscar Chupungco, *Liturgies of the Future: the Process and Methods of Inculturation* (Collegeville Minnesota: A Pueblo Book, 1989), 29.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, 276.



As regards the first question, Inculturation as an approach gradually took place as a result of paradigm shifts in the missionary outlook of the Church necessitated by a heightened sense of culture, especially the plurality of cultures. This outlook saw culture as a tool for the transmission of the Gospel message to different frontiers. In view of this, dialogue with culture has passed from being an exception to the rule to becoming normative, proven by the emergence of various related approaches and instructions from official Church documents to continue exploring the field of Gospel-culture dialogue. The second question seeks light on the nature of inculturation. Outlined into Aim, Process, and Outcome, inculturation is a complex process, which must be undertaken gradually and critically. As its goal suggests, the incarnation of the Gospel in culture happens when a healthy balance between tradition and progress is observed, i.e. one cannot be too careless so as to compromise the substance of the faith or too careful so as to ignore the particular values of culture which are expressions of the Gospel message. As such, taking into consideration the various dimensions and theological bases of inculturation helps to maintain the soundness of this process. Finally, the last question pertains to the method of inculturation determined in article as dynamic equivalence. The process begins by identifying those areas where inculturation can be applied followed by highlighting those attitudes that must be exemplified by the agent of inculturation. The last part focuses on the method of dynamic equivalence which studies the essential components of the culture in question in order to discover which of its meanings or values have equal expressions in the Gospel message.

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